

EIGHT

STEPS TO

SAMADHI



**ANANDA RAJA YOGA
SCHOOL OF EUROPE**

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Handbook:

**ARYTT: Raja Yoga 2 - Eight Steps to Samadhi: The
Yoga Sutras of Patanjali**

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Chapter One: SUTRA 1: “AND NOW WE COME TO THE STUDY OF YOGA”

For India’s ancient seers understood, as modern man so far has not, that man lives as much by his philosophy of life as by his practical knowledge. Everything he does expresses, in a sense, this philosophy. The very way he moves his body reveals to the sensitive eye whether he sees life as a series of contests with threatening but nameless foes, or as a perpetual shopping expedition for familiar ideational antiques, or as a brave and joyous adventure into the shining unknown. Man simply cannot think and have no philosophy at all.

The Vedanta philosophy describes the true goal of yoga practice, lest yoga practitioners address themselves to scaling molehills, not mountains. It is a philosophy based on the actual experiences of enlightened yogis, and is therefore not a separate system of thought, but the same system with merely a different emphasis. Vedanta and yoga form two legs of a tripod.

The third leg is supplied by the system known as Sankhya. Where Vedanta describes the Ultimate Reality, and yoga presents the science by which that Reality may be realized, Sankhya examines man’s present state, and his need to seek a higher one.

Yoga is as closely tied to its sister philosophies as modern science is to the cultural attitudes of which it is a part. In fact, we are really talking of only one basic life view seen from different angles. Since in these lessons we have approached that essential vision through the teachings of yoga, I think it will be less confusing to the student if we refer to the different aspects of this basic view as yogic. The masters of India, certainly, waste little time in separating one philosophy from another. To them, such distinctions are merely academic. Basically, the three systems are one.

Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras (Yoga Aphorisms) begin with the sentence, “Now [we take up] the study of yoga.” Swami Sri Yukteswar, my guru’s guru, explained that that word, “now,” was intended to imply a continuation of philosophy: The science of self-development could be pursued sincerely only after the student had become convinced of his own deep, personal need for something higher. Yoga, in other words, was not intended for armchair philosophers. The foundation for right yoga practice must be those insights into life’s transitoriness which are the special emphasis of Sankhya philosophy. Since we have already explored many of those insights in these lessons, however, let us now view the whole yogic scheme of life from the other end of the funnel—the cosmic.

--From The Arte and science of Raja Yoga – Chapter. 14

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Tratto dalla Bhagavad Gita, di Paramhansa Yogananda

(2:39)...Sankhya yoga is an analytical and discriminative knowledge of the cosmos and consists of all those methods which give self-realization and the self-realization which ultimately unites the soul and Spirit. By Sankhya yoga the soul perceives the exact nature of the earth, soul and the cosmos, individually and collectively. But the karma yoga the devotee learns to dissolve the stored-up seeds of this life and all previous forms of existence. By practicing the technique of yoga, the devotee learns by gradual steps to attain the knowledge of the ultimate substance and all things.

--*Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Yogananda, Inner Culture, October 1939*

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(2:39) I have thus explained to you the ultimate wisdom of *Shankhya*. Now hear the wisdom of Yoga, equipped with which, O Partha, you will break the shackles of karma.

This last passage appears variously translated in different texts. In fact, however, the version given by Paramhansa Yogananda is clearly the most accurate. The word, “wisdom,” which appears in the original, is conjoined with “*Shankhya*,” and does not mean Gyana Yoga as some have it (spelling Gyana according to the pedantic, but unphonetic, tradition, as “Jnana”—a version my Guru deplored in personal conversations with me). Other translations refer to Karma Yoga, which doesn’t even appear in the original text. What the Gita does speak of is that which “will loosen the bonds of karma.” I have rendered the English translation more poetically by writing, “break the shackles of karma.” The meaning is, of course, the same.

Paramhansa Yogananda discussed the three main philosophies of India: Shankhya, Yoga, and Vedanta. He explained that the wisdom taught in Shankhya underscores the need to escape from maya, or delusion. Yoga tells the sincere seeker how to make good his escape. And Vedanta (literally, “Summation,” or “End,” of the Vedas) describes the nature of Brahman.

Classical Indian scholarship describes these three “philosophies” as different and even incompatible with one another. Yogananda explained that all of them are rooted in the same basic truth: Sanaatan Dharma. They simply emphasize the three basic aspects of the spiritual search: briefly, the why, the how, and the what of it. All three aspects are needed. One needs to know why it is necessary to seek truth, how best to go about it, and what one may expect (stated with as much intellectual clarity as possible, though emphasizing that direct experience alone conveys true understanding).

The Bhagavad Gita teaches all three “systems.” In fact, as Yogananda explained, these are not “philosophies.” Philosophy literally means “love of wisdom”—in the ancient Greek: philo (love) and sophia (wisdom). He explained that Western thinkers deserve the label, “philosophers,” but that the great rishis and yogis of India have never been so much philosophers as “seers,” who in every age have never been satisfied with merely theorizing about truth, but have seen and experienced it directly, themselves. No Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, or Friedrich Nietzsche could demonstrate a fraction of the control of life,

objectively as well as subjectively, that has been demonstrated from the most ancient times down to the present by the great “yogi-Christ” of India.

--From *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, by Swami Kriyananda

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Da Swami Kriyananda

Yoga teaches not dogma, but practice. Yoga teaches not all sorts of lovely precepts, although it teaches those too as a means to experience, but the whole emphasis of yoga is how can I experience it. The very first word of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is Now. Now we come to the study of yoga. That now has a very profound significance. It's not a throw away word. It means now that you are ready, now that you have studied those principles which make you understand why you should do these things and what you should do about it. Now comes experience.

Yoga stresses experience. And no truth especially to a yogi, but in fact it's true for everybody, if they only knew it. No truth is valid for you until you have experienced it. You need to bring peace and harmony to your own life...

In the Yoga Sutra, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the first Sutra, this is THE scripture on Yoga. The first Sutra says, “Now we come to the practice, the study, of yoga. That word now is very important. It pre-supposes a prior study that you have already studied the philosophy of Shankya. Why you should get out of this maya, this delusion, why you should try to find a better and truer life, this is Shankya. Then yoga tells you how to do. Vedanta, people aren't really ready for Vedanta, until they've refined their consciousness. Vedanta means that absolute reality. What is it? How does it relate to us? What do we attain when we attain that state? This is what Vedanta means.

--*Unity in Yoga Conference, 1995*

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The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali say, “Now we come to the practice of yoga.” And that “Now,” Sri Yukteswar pointed out, is an important word because it implies previous study. The study of Shankaya philosophy, the understanding of the need of getting away from delusion, from getting away from Maya. And actually you can't practice Kriya nearly so effectively until you have some of those basic insights.

--*Conference in Dallas, 1996*

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1-1. (*Atha*=now; *yoga*=of yoga; *anusasanam*=explanation).

The subject now being offered is yoga.

There are two important keys to understanding this first aphorism. One is that these teachings offer no mere debate on the subject. Patanjali is giving us his own realized wisdom.

The second key lies in that insignificant-seeming word, “now.” Now suggests that there has been another dissertation, prior to this, on a subject fundamental to the study of yoga. That subject is the first of the three basic philosophies of ancient India. But even that word, *philosophies*, is inadequate here, suggesting as it does the mere love of wisdom: *philos* (love), and *sophia* (wisdom). But what is taught in every one of those so-called “philosophies” of India, rather, is wisdom itself. If we call them, “philosophies,” it is simply because the English language offers no adequate substitute for the word. Even the word, *system*, which has often been applied to these yoga aphorisms (or *sutras*), is misleading. For Patanjali offered no particular *system* for achieving anything. Rather, he was saying, “These are the stages through which every truth seeker must travel, regardless of his religion, if he would achieve union with the Infinite.”

Of the ancient “philosophical systems” in India, then, these three were basic: *Shankya*, *yoga*, and *vedanta*. The purpose of *Shankya*, the first of them, was to persuade people of the uselessness of seeking fulfillment through the physical senses, since our physical bodies are not our true Self.

I won’t go into that system carefully here, since the subject of this book is yoga. Still, it is important for students of yoga to have a right understanding of the entire subject. All the three philosophies are, in fact, aspects of a single truth. *Shankya* offers the *whys* of the spiritual search; *yoga*, the *hows*; and *vedanta*, the *what*. In other words, *why* is it important to renounce attachment to the world?; *how* can we direct all our energy toward the heights; and *what* to expect, once our energy and consciousness have become one-pointedly directed upward.

Why should we—why should everyone—embrace the spiritual search? This is, essentially, the subject of *Shankya*. The answer is partly that we, as earthly beings, are divided in two. We are drawn upward, toward soul happiness, but at the same time downward, toward our past worldly habits.

There is also a universal, twofold impulse that guides us all: We all want to escape pain; and we all want also to find happiness. These basic needs manifest themselves on different levels of refinement—octaves, we might call them. At the highest octave, the desire to escape pain is seen as the true devotee’s intense desire to shake off the delusion of separateness from God, and to unite the soul with Him.

On a lower octave, those twin desires are experienced as a longing for worldly fulfillment, and a wish to avoid the disappointment that accompanies such fulfillment. What do I mean by worldly fulfillment? I mean three things, basically: ambition for money; the desire to escape worldly pain through drugs or alcohol; and the drive for sexual satisfaction. These are the three main delusions under which humanity labors as if under a yoke. True fulfillment can never be found in any of them. Subsidiary to those basic delusions, but disappointing nevertheless, are the desire for power; for fame; for popularity; for emotional excitement and emotional fulfillment; and for all kinds of ego-satisfaction.

There is a philosophical explanation for those disappointments. Underlying the restlessness at the surface of the ocean are its calm depths. Underlying our rippling thoughts, similarly, is the underlying vastness of God’s consciousness. Waves, regardless how high they

rise, cannot affect the over-all ocean level, for each wave is offset by an equally deep trough. Similarly, our emotions have no effect on our deeper consciousness, for every emotional high is balanced by a comparable emotional low.

Creation is ruled by the law of duality. For every up there is a down; for every plus there is a minus. Every pleasure is balanced by an equal displeasure; every joy, by an equal sorrow. The greater the pleasure, the more intense, also, is the displeasure. The greater the happiness, the greater, also, is its comparable unhappiness

Test these truths in your own life. Isn't it true that all your pains and pleasures, your sorrows and joys, are being constantly evened out sooner or later by their opposites? The pleasure of a "night on the town" is erased by the discomfort of a hangover. Less obvious "binges"—an evening of good, clean fun, for example; or the fulfillment of a long-awaited meeting; or the thrill of a long-desired kiss; or the satisfaction of promotion at work; or the long-delayed ego-fulfillment of a significant award—all these are inevitably balanced by their opposites. The one follows the other as the night the day.

Only a little reflection should suffice to convince you of this truth. Unfortunately, the mind is restless, and lights only briefly, like a fly, on any given object of contemplation. If you would gain the benefits of contemplation (yoga), and of spiritual realization (vedanta), the first necessity is stillness of mind. And that stillness is the fruit of yoga practice. Without yoga, there can be no true understanding of Shankya. Moreover, without some inkling of vedantic realities there can come no true understanding of either Shankya or yoga. It may seem like a hopeless puzzle. To achieve perfection in any one of the three philosophies, perfection is needed in all of them! The three philosophies are inter-connected.

Without some awareness, however slight, of the need for yoga, there will be no incentive to practice it. And awareness of this need is provided by shankhya. Indeed, most people stumble through life heedlessly, not knowing why they keep on suffering; not knowing why fulfillments are never permanent; and never realizing why their happiness flickers away even as they gaze at it. Indeed, happiness flickers before their eyes like a candleflame, burning them briefly even as they extinguish it. The poet Edna St. Vincent Millay wrote:

"My candle burns at both ends
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends -
It gives a lovely light."

Light? Yes. But lovely? Perhaps for a moments or two—but then? Accompanying that light, moreover, is always the menace of approaching darkness. And beside every pleasure, beating its wings to get in, hovers the moth of sadness.

Yes, it all seems so simple, so obvious! And yet, people wander for countless incarnations before they become willing even to consider the perfectly simple and completely obvious truth of their existence!

How many incarnations do they wander? Let me not frighten you by answering that question! Indeed, how long each person clings to his delusions is nobody's choice but his own.

But if you really want to understand Patanjali's yoga aphorisms, you must be ready to ponder at least a little the underlying truths of the shankhya philosophy. For even the oft-quoted aphorism of Shankya "*Ishwar ashiddha*, (God is not proved)," is an invitation to go beyond the intellect, and realize truth intuitively, on a superconscious level.

--From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

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Chapter Two: “YOGAS, CHITTA, VRITTI, NIRODH”

The Four Functions of Human Consciousness

Man, Buddhi, Ahankara, Chitta

From *Raja Yoga*

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.

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 *Awaken to Superconsciousnesses*

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.

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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.

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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*.

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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.

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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.

From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(2:14) *O son of Kunti, the ideas of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, are produced by the contacts of the senses with their objects. Such ideas are limited by a beginning and an end. O descendent of Bharata, bear them with patience.*

Poetic Rendition

When the frail senses indulge in forbidden experiences, then the fickle motley throngs of pain and pleasure, warmth and chill, come wildly dancing into the temple of life.

These troublesome crowds of dualities dance and sigh for a while, then quickly die, leaving confusion in the sanctum of the soul. Fear them not, though strong and everlastingly powerful they seem; they come and go, just bubbles in the sea of time. Ignore them and bear them with a brave, cheerful heart.

Spiritual Interpretation

The sense organs are created sensitive. Their nature is to feel pleurably or painfully. They have strong *likes and dislikes*. The sense impressions flow through the tunnel of fine nerve points, using the Life Force and mind as the rivers to carry them along. When good or bad, hot or cold, material objects contact the sensitive sense organs, then pain and pleasure, hot and cold, and other sensations are the result. These resultant sensations are transitory. They come and go. So bear them with patience.

Elaborate Spiritual Interpretation

In the western world, the general tendency is to remove the causes which bring about the experience of extreme cold and heat and pain. Buy a fur coat if you are too cold, or install a costly steam heating system even if you have to do so by borrowing money. Equip your house with an air-conditioning system if your climate is invaded by a hot spell.

The eastern Masters do not say that it is not necessary to adopt measures to overcome extreme heat and cold or those things which cause pain, but they teach that, while you adopt reasonable measures to conquer heat or cold or pain, you must develop a state of inner aboveness. Mentally you must never be affected by any sensations. The Masters of India even deem temporary pleasure as the cause of pain. Pleasure that comes like a straw-fire to illuminate our dark hearts with the lunar message of joy and then suddenly dies down, only deepens the darkness of sorrow. Hence, short-lived exciting pleasures produced by the contact of pleasurable events must be avoided.

A stone contacting a block of ice would become cold. A man holding a piece of ice feels cold. In both cases the stone and the human hand become cold, but the question is: is the stone as sensitive as the human hand? Does the stone feel cold as the human hand does? There is no doubt that there are cold and hot objects and that they produce cold and hot sensations in the human body equipped with sensitive organs, but it is obvious that the stone is not as sensitive to cold as the human hand.

The cold ice on a man's hand is reported through the sensory nerves and Life Force to the brain as a cold sensation. Then the mind reacts upon the sensation through perception and recognizes the sensation as cold. The coldness of the flesh is material, the cold sensation or perception is purely mental. Hence, all material experiences of cold and heat, in order to be cognized, must be converted into mental perceptions of cold and heat. If the brain were to be chloroformed, then the coldness of ice on the hand could not be perceived as cold by the mind. Hence, it is evident that the mind has a great deal to do with the recognition of cold and hot sensations which invade the body. The eastern teachers say that cold and heat sensations are transitory, inasmuch as the mind is, or is not, impressed by them. Continuous modified cold and hot sensations gradually make the mind accustomed to them, with the result that very little sensation of cold or heat is perceived. This is the reason why man's mind becomes acclimatized to extreme cold or hot weather. Therefore, it is evident that the attitude of the mind toward the invading sensations of heat and cold has a great deal to do in lessening or aggravating the mental perception of temperature. In other

words, if you have a strong, controlled mind, you will feel very little cold or hot sensation, for no such sensations can be perceived without the response of the mind.

So the eastern savants say that cold and heat, or pleasurable and painful sensations, are produced in the body through the contact of objects with the sense organs, and their influence can be neutralized if the mind can withstand them with an unresponsive state of mind. This mental victory and aboveness against the temporary inroads of the sensations, even while trying to seek a reasonable remedy against such sensations, leads to self-mastery and the ultimate knowledge that no material objects or material sensations can hurt the mind, unless the mind chooses to be sensitive and imagines itself hurt through its own ignorance. Hence, every soul should lay great stress upon mentally rising above cold or heat, pain and temporary pleasures, and thus free the mind from temporary invasions of pain and pleasure, or any other sensations.

The trouble is, that when a cold or a hot sensation invades the body, it tries to overwhelm the mind with the idea that it is going to last forever in its misery-making influence. The mind should especially be aware of this and try to adopt a transcendental indifferent attitude toward the inroads of sensations.

When the mind adopts a non-excitabile state toward sorrows and a non-attached state toward temporary happiness, fear, and anger, then it attains an unruffled divine state of poise. When the devotee withdraws his attention and Life Force from the muscles and heart and plies his boat of meditation over the river of spinal electricity, then the sirens of sound, touch, smell, taste, and sight take many forms and try to lure him away like Ulysses of old. If the mind becomes impressed by these subtle lures, then the soul's boat of meditation becomes entangled in the whirlpool of ignorance and cannot proceed any farther. However, this lure of the subtle sirens of the senses does not last long and soon wears off. Only the last vestige of pre-natal tendencies remains ingrained in the brain.

The devotee should ignore all the astral and mental impediments and keep the mind riveted to the pin-point of luminous light in the center of the Spiritual Eye, perceived at the point between the two eyebrows during meditation with closed eyes. By doing so, the devotee reaches the celestial land of permanency, from which he can never be thrown back into the whirlpool of reincarnations and misery.

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretation, Yogananda, *Inner Culture*, November 1938

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(2:15)"O, flower among men, the man who is calm and even-minded during pain and pleasure, the one whom these cannot ruffle, he alone is fit to attain everlastingness."

Poetic Rendition

O flower among souls, the blessed Being who is unchanged like the anvil under the hammer stroke of trials, the one who is even-minded during both sunny and cloudy days, during the hailstones of pain and the temporary springtime of pleasures, the one who calmly absorbs trials into himself as the sea quietly swallows rivers, he is ordained by the Gods to attain the kingdom of everlastingness.

Spiritual Interpretation

The basic principle of creation is duality. If one knows pleasure, he must know pain. One who cognizes heat must cognize cold also. If there were only heat or only cold, or only sorrow, or only pleasure, human beings would not have been bothered by the pranks of duality. Hence, as long as one is being influenced by the invasion of dualities he is under the domain of change and creation.

In order to take the attention away from the ravages of change, each soul must practice a neutral attitude to all earthly changes. Many people may reason: "Ah well, if we had an all-time, inner, neutral attitude, then how could we enjoy life?" The answer is that even though we enjoy pleasure after pain, still it seems hardly reasonable that, in order to appreciate health, we should have accidents and disease, and that in order to enjoy peace we must have excruciating mental suffering. Friendship could exist between two souls without first indulging in terrible enmity. Friendship could grow deeper and sweeter between them without ever experiencing bitterness. So, the mortal way of taking life as it is, by letting it become subject to these periodic incursions of pain and pleasure, is the erroneous way of carrying on this mundane existence.

The Saints have found that the real way of happiness lies in having a constant mental state of unruffled peace reigning in the heart during all the experiences of earthly dualities. Once this unruffled state of peace is attained, then the individual finds ineffable peace visiting the sacred sanctum of the mind. The changeable mind perceives the changeable creation and is ruffled, while the unchangeable soul and the unruffled mind behold the changeless spirit reigning everywhere behind the mask of change. The oscillating mind beholds all Creation distorted into waves of change, but the man who holds his mental mirror steady, calmly beholds naught but the one Spirit reflected in it, undisturbed by the waves of change.

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretation, Yogananda, *Inner Culture*, December 1938

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(2:39) Yoga signifies the union of one object into another. When the soul of man unites with the Spirit and becomes That, the union is described as Yoga. This Yoga, supreme union with Spirit, must be accomplished by every truth-seeking soul. Anyone who practices this supreme union with spirit is called a Yogi.

The Yogi must learn how to unite the consciousness of the earth into the consciousness of water. Then he must learn to unite the consciousness of water into the consciousness of fire. After accomplishing that, he must learn to dissolve the consciousness of life-force into the consciousness of ether. Then he must learn to unite the consciousness of ether into the consciousness of primordial force and mixture of forces.

Then the Yogi must learn to unite the consciousness of all material forces into the *mind*. Then he must learn to dissolve the mind in the inner discrimination. Then he must learn to unite the *buddhi* discrimination into the ego. Then the yogi must merge the ego in the *chittwa* or feeling. Then the yogi should dissolve the inner feeling into the primordial cosmic creative vibratory force. Then the yogi must know the art of ultimate union of his perception of cosmic creative vibration and the ultimate Spirit of the cosmos.

Ultimate Union

All the different forms of union as described before merge into the ultimate union of the consciousness of matter converted into the consciousness of Spirit. The yogi by gradual steps of self-realization must convert all consciousness of material forces into the consciousness of Spirit. This cannot be attained by mental imagination but only by intuitive development and meditation as taught by the great yogis of India.

A poet or religious fanatic may imagine this cosmos to be only mind. But that imagination cannot help him overcome death and attain immortality. But the yogi by daily meditation convinces his mind by uprooting all the delusions impinged on it by the cosmic delusive force and thus beholds the universe as a dream of God from which one can awaken when he is conscious of the omnipresent Spirit.

Anyone who practices the technique of uniting with Spirit is called a yoga-practitioner, but he who attains the final union with Spirit is called the real yogi. Self-realization consists of attaining the final union with Spirit and also the different states of intuitive consciousness attained by meditation which leads to the consciousness of that ultimate union of the soul and Spirit.

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Yogananda, *Inner Culture* magazine, October 1938

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(2:57) *He who is everywhere non-attached—not joyously excited after getting good, not disturbed by experiencing evil—has an established wisdom.*

Poetic Rendition

He who can glide like a swan in the waters of life without the feathers of his faculties getting wet in the deep sea of attachment, he who is not excited while riding on the crest of the waves of good experiences, and he who is not afraid while floating down the waves of evil happenings, has a wisdom ever-poised, unwavering as the pole star.

Spiritual Interpretation

In the above stanza the Bhagavad Gita tells the students what Patanjali said in *Yoga Darshan* philosophy about ***neutralizing the waves of feeling***. When the moon is reflected in the ruffled water in a tank, it looks distorted. To see the clear reflection of the moon the disturbed water has to be stilled.

Likewise, the soul, the true image of God, is reflected in the waters of the mind, ruffled with the waves of emotions, of sorrow, passing pleasures, and so forth. Hence, the Bhagavad Gita says, he who by the command of his will can dissolve the waves of pleasurable or painful experiences from the lake of his discrimination perceives the true image of wisdom within him.

Whenever the mind is excited and the soul is disturbed with it, it is impossible for the Self to preserve its wisdom unspoiled by excitement. A devotee who is able to remain calm during the advent of pleasure and pain finds he is not identified with the pleasurable and painful experiences of his body and mind...

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Yogananda, *Inner Culture*, February 1940

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(2:47) Action (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.”

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(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!”

--*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Kriyananda

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... 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.”

—*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda*

(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.

—*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda*

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(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...”

—*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda*

(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.

—*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda*

§

From *The Path*

...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*

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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*

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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*

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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

§

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 *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramhansa Yogananda

From *Raja Yoga*

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."

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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*

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."

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From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(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*

(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.

--*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Kriyananda

(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 *vruttis*, or eddies which draw the consequences of every action back to himself with the thought, "I did it; it is mine!"

--*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Kriyananda

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From 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 KRIYANANDA

"What is the ego?" asked a devotee.

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

--From *The Essence of Self-realization*, Yogananda

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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 live. 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 a talk in Portland, 1996

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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 *Keys to the Bhagavad Gita*

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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 *Secrets of Self-Acceptance*

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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 *Art as a Hidden Message*

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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.”

--From *The Hindu Way of Awakening*

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Chapter Three: INTRODUCTION TO ASHTANGA YOGA

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From *Demystifying Patanjali*, by Swami Kriyananda

2-29. The eight limbs of yoga are 1, Yama (self-denial); 2, Niyama (observance); 3, posture; 4, withdrawal of the energy; 5, Interiorization of the mind; 6, concentration; 7, meditation; 8, absorption.

We shall discuss each of these eight “limbs” in depth later on, so let me now give only an overview.

First, it must be understood that this is not *Patanjali's* system, uniquely his own. He has merely delineated the stages through which every spiritual seeker must pass, regardless of his religion or path to God.

Second, although this is the universal *path* to God, Patanjali word for the stages is *limbs*. His reason for doing so is that even the first one cannot be fully perfected until one has developed the others, including the last one. Thus, the “stages” are also comparable to the limbs on a body—eight, in this case, not four—all of them interdependent.

Third, Patanjali is not recommending specific practices so much as stages of perfection. He is not saying, "Do this," so much as, "Be this." Although there are specific and different things one can do to achieve those states of being, the practices varying from one culture, religion, and one individual to another, the states of being themselves remain unaltered.

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From *Raja Yoga*

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 superconsciousness.

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 by-paths 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 proves 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.

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From *Essence of Self-realization, Yogananda*

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."

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From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(3:3) *The eightfold (more literally, the "eight-limbed" ashtanga) path of yoga outlined by the ancient sage Patanjali was not describing one particular path to God. All who would unite their souls with God must follow that same path: yama and niyama (right action); asana (firmness of posture, and keeping the spine straight to enable the energy to flow freely through it); pranayama (control over the energy of the body); pratyahara (interiorization of the mind); dharana (one-pointed concentration); dhyana (absorption in deep meditation); and samadhi (oneness). Samadhi, as we saw earlier, is both conditioned and unconditioned: conditioned (limited), first, in sabikalpa, for the subtle bonds of ego-consciousness still remain to be wholly severed; and nirbikalpa, unconditioned by limitation of any kind.*

One who attains *nirbikalpa samadhi* has reached the highest state possible. He has only to free himself of memories of ego-identification with past incarnations. Otherwise, he is like Christ, Krishna, and Buddha. From oneness with God there is nowhere higher to rise. Religionists often claim for their own founders a state above that of any other saint or master. No such state exists. As Yogananda once put it, "When you become one with God, you *are* God." Indeed, there is no "you" to be anything else!

Thus, when Krishna told Arjuna to be a yogi, he didn't mean necessarily to be a *Hindu* yogi. All those in every religion who sincerely seek God walk the same path, ultimately speaking, for their devotion turns them inward to experience Him. It cannot be otherwise.

—*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Kriyananda

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(4:1-2) *When Dwapara descended to Kali Yuga, the science of yoga, the essence of which is based on an understanding of the subtle energies in the body, was lost. General understanding of this science degenerated to a definition of yoga as Hatha Yoga: mere physical positions and breathing exercises. Hatha Yoga in fact developed out of the third "limb," or stage, of Patanjali's exposition on the stages of enlightenment, which people mistakenly call his "Ashtanga Yoga system." It is not a "system," for what he did in fact was systematize the universal stages through which the spiritual seeker, whatever his religion, must pass. Those stages entail a gradual withdrawal of energy and attention from the outer body to the spine; raising the energy in the spine; and the gradual absorption of one's energy and consciousness in the love and bliss of God until the absorption becomes complete.*

—*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Kriyananda

From YOGANANDA

Anyone who practices a scientific technique of God-contact is a yogi; he may be either married or unmarried, either a worldly man or one of formal religious ties. A swami may conceivably follow only the path of dry reasoning, of cold renunciation; but a yogi engages himself in a definite, step-by-step procedure by which the body and mind are disciplined, and the soul liberated. Taking nothing for granted on emotional grounds, or by faith, a yogi practices a thoroughly tested series of exercises which were first mapped out by the early rishis. Yoga has produced, in every age of India, men who became truly free, truly Yogi-Christis.

Like any other science, yoga is applicable to people of every clime and time. The theory advanced by certain ignorant writers that yoga is "unsuitable for Westerners" is wholly false, and has lamentably prevented many sincere students from seeking its manifold blessings. Yoga is a method for restraining the natural turbulence of thoughts, which otherwise impartially prevent all men, of all lands, from glimpsing their true nature of Spirit. Yoga cannot know a barrier of East and West any more than does the healing and equitable light of the sun. So long as man possesses a mind with its restless thoughts, so long will there be a universal need for yoga or control.

The ancient rishi Patanjali defines "yoga" as "control of the fluctuations of the mind-stuff."* His very short and masterly expositions, the *Yoga Sutras*, form one of the six systems of Hindu philosophy. In contradistinction to Western philosophies, all six Hindu systems embody not only theoretical but practical teachings. In addition to every conceivable

ontological inquiry, the six systems formulate six definite disciplines aimed at the permanent removal of suffering and the attainment of timeless bliss.

The common thread linking all six systems** is the declaration that no true freedom for man is possible without knowledge of the ultimate Reality. The later *Upanishads* uphold the *Yoga Sutras*, among the six systems, as containing the most efficacious methods for achieving direct perception of truth. Through the practical techniques of yoga, man leaves behind forever the barren realms of speculation and cognizes in experience the veritable Essence.

The *Yoga* system as outlined by Patanjali is known as the Eightfold Path. The first steps, (1) *yama* and (2) *niyama*, require observance of ten negative and positive moralities—avoidance of injury to others, of untruthfulness, of stealing, of incontinence, of gift-receiving (which brings obligations); and purity of body and mind, contentment, self-discipline, study, and devotion to God.

The next steps are (3) *asana* (right posture); the spinal column must be held straight, and the body firm in a comfortable position for meditation; (4) *pranayama* (control of *prana*, subtle life currents); and (5) *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses from external objects).

The last steps are forms of yoga proper: (6) *dharana* (concentration); holding the mind to one thought; (7) *dhyana* (meditation), and (8) *samadhi* (superconscious perception). This is the Eightfold Path of Yoga*(6) which leads one to the final goal of *Kaivalya* (Absoluteness), a term which might be more comprehensibly put as "realization of the Truth beyond all intellectual apprehension."

"Which is greater," one may ask, "a swami or a yogi?" If and when final oneness with God is achieved, the distinctions of the various paths disappear. The *Bhagavad Gita*, however, points out that the methods of yoga are all-embracing. Its techniques are not meant only for certain types and temperaments, such as those few who incline toward the monastic life; yoga requires no formal allegiance. Because the yogic science satisfies a universal need, it has a natural universal applicability.

A true yogi may remain dutifully in the world; there he is like butter on water, and not like the easily-diluted milk of unchurned and undisciplined humanity. To fulfill one's earthly responsibilities is indeed the higher path, provided the yogi, maintaining a mental uninvolvedness with egotistical desires, plays his part as a willing instrument of God.

*"*Chitta vritti nirodha*"—*Yoga Sutra* I:2. Patanjali's date is unknown, though a number of scholars place him in the second century B.C. The rishis gave forth treatises on all subjects with such insight that ages have been powerless to outmode them; yet, to the subsequent consternation of historians, the sages made no effort to attach their own dates and personalities to their literary works. They knew their lives were only temporarily important as flashes of the great infinite Life; and that truth is timeless, impossible to trademark, and no private possession of their own.

**The six orthodox systems (*saddarsana*) are *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Vedanta*, *Mimamsa*, *Nyaya*, and *Vaisesika*. Readers of a scholarly bent will delight in the subtleties and broad scope of these ancient formulations as summarized, in English, in *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, by Prof. Surendranath DasGupta (Cambridge University Press, 1922).

--From *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946 edition)

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What is the way to know God? The first thing is that you must follow those rules of all religions. First, don't steal; don't kill. Don't commit adultery. Don't commit any evils. Secondly, follow the positive rules of all religions. Be kind, be sincere, be truthful, love your fellow men. But that is not enough to know God. When no one was with you before you were born, He was with you. He is the only real friend whose love is unconditional. When all your friends will bury you, He shall be with you. Remember that.

After following the right methods of living come the rules of posture. You must have right posture. You must sit upright; spine always straight. Fourth, switch off the life force from the body. And fifth comes meditation. You can not find God by muscular demonstrations. The life force must be shut off from the body, then the sensations cannot reach the brain. Why do you feel peace? The peace that you feel for so many hours at night, whence do you get it? Something cannot come out of nothing. That peace comes out of something. And the answer is, that God is behind the sleep land. That peace felt in sleep comes from God. So the masters said, "Practice Self-Realization by right eating, by right thinking, and by oxygenation and pranayama." Every mental state has a corresponding physical state, and every physical state has a corresponding mental state.

After posture comes switching off the life force. That is much faster in its results. In one life you can attain God-consciousness by Self-Realization. Meditation is to remember that state of divine joy (which you feel in sleep) with the full possession of your mind, in the conscious state. So the masters teach that by switching off the five telephones of sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound, you can produce that consciousness at will. Then after that you can interiorize your consciousness. You can turn your mind within and enjoy that peace. When you will be able to forget sensations, then you will be at the altar of God. Apply the test. No matter what method you are following, you will ultimately have to follow these methods.

--Convocation Speech, *Inner Culture*, March 1938

From KRIYANANDA

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Quatrain 31

The process of inner awakening is known as *yoga*. Yoga was discovered in India countless centuries ago, by men and women who were in their own right great scientists. The knowledge of this science of yoga spread among spiritual aspirants through the East. From this thirty-first stanza of *The Rubaiyat*, and from other stanzas of the poem, it is clear that Omar Khayyam knew and practiced yoga.

Yoga has been identified in modern times with a system of physical postures, or *asanas*. The benefits of this system (known as *Hatha Yoga*), while remarkable physically and mentally, are indirect spiritually. The true purpose of all yoga practice, however, is primarily spiritual.

Yoga means *union*. The union implied is the soul's expansion into Infinite Spirit, by the practice of scientific techniques of concentration and meditation. The yogi learns, by controlling certain psycho-physiological functions of his body, to enter progressively deeper states of meditation. He withdraws his mind from its familiar levels of

awareness—conscious (i.e., outwardly focused) and subconscious—into the ineffably blissful superconscious.

Important to this process of interiorization is control over the life-force within. Withdrawing the life-force from the senses to the heart and the spine assists the yogi to withdraw his attention from the outer world.

In the conscious state, the mind is made aware of the world by the life-force flowing outward through the senses. In the subconscious state, the attention withdraws somewhat from sensory awareness, as the life-force retires to partial rest in the hidden "grottoes," or *chakras*, of the spine. In the superconscious state, the consciousness and life-force together pass upward through the spinal "gates" to the brain, and thence outward into the omnipresence of Spirit.

Chapter Four: THE YAMAS

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

2-30. The *yamas* consist of non-harmfulness (harmlessness); non-deceit (truthfulness); non-covetousness; continence; and non-attachment.

In the path of right spiritual action, there are five attitudes to avoid, and five other attitudes to cultivate. These are the Do's and the Don't's of right action. All these attitudes must be understood primarily as mental attributes, not as specific actions.

§

From *Raja Yoga*

The basic moral principles of yoga are listed in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali under two general headings: *yama* (the restraints), and *niyama* (the observances). Under each of these two headings are five rules, or guidelines, making a total of ten (reminiscent of the Biblical Ten Commandments). The reason for offering such guidelines is obvious: Man does not easily perceive, except after much painful trial and error (and then often too late), the laws governing his own nature. Many of his actions, seemingly natural to him simply because they come easily, are actually self-destructive: drunkenness, for example, or (on a mental level) a bad temper.

Man is not free so long as he merely indulges his inclinations indiscriminately. He may say, "I am free to get drunk as often as I choose, and no one has a right to stop me." From a sociological standpoint he will be right. This is not, however, the true exercise of freedom. At best it is only the abuse of freedom, as may be seen from the fact that continued drunkenness leads to mental bondage. It is by understanding the body's laws and abiding by them that one attains true freedom. The universal moral principles are in reality guideposts to true, lasting freedom.

The principles of *yama* and *niyama* are intended as guidelines for everyone, but they are meant especially for those who are seeking to advance spiritually.

The five rules of *yama*, or control, are proscriptive. When a man can remove physical and mental inharmony from his system, he will not have to work to become harmonious. He is Spirit; all that shows him to be otherwise is merely a veil of delusion that has been cast over the eternal perfection of his true nature. Gold may be buried under mud, but if we clear away the mud we shall not have to work on the gold to make it more golden. The rules of *yama*, then, are: ahimsa, non-violence or non-injury; non-lying, or truthfulness; non-stealing; non-sensuality; non-greed. Each of these rules must be understood in a subtle as well as in an obvious sense.

From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*

Spiritual progress should be natural, not forced—like a growing tree, not like the frenetic struggle of minor actors to achieve fame.

Think how many things you do in the hope of resting *after* you've finished them. "Let me buy that racy sports car," you think, "or that handsome station wagon for the whole family. *Then* I'll be able to relax and really enjoy life."

Or you may think, "Once I get that new house, with the shaded porch and the large master bedroom; that sunny dining room so we won't have to eat any longer in the kitchen with the cucumbers; that sunken living room—ah, *then* I'll find peace and be able to enjoy life at last!"

Thus you acquire the habit of looking for more and more things, more and more ways of resting better and enjoying life more fully *after* the acquisition or *after* the accomplishment. The irony is that in the very seeking you lose the capacity to rest at all. Thus you never really get to enjoy life. Experiencing more and more stress in the seeking, you lose the ability to relax even after you've "arrived."

An important rule in life is: Don't be impatient. This rule is doubly important for meditation, for whereas the general stricture against impatience gives hope of finding inner peace in meditation, that hope is demolished if one applies to meditation itself attitudes that we've developed in the "rat race." To find God, it is better to be a long-distance runner than a sprinter. Today's meditative efforts will have to be renewed tomorrow, and again the day after tomorrow, and the day after that, and so on for as long as it takes to achieve the consciousness of the Eternal Now.

Paramhansa Yogananda was asked once, "Does the spiritual path have any end?" "No end," he replied. "You go on until you achieve endlessness."

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...”

Essential to effective meditation is a restful heart. Merely to affirm restfulness, however, is like affirming fullness in a milk pail riddled with holes. We must take practical steps to *achieve* restfulness. The holes in the pail must first be plugged. If they are not, you may keep on milking the cow, but your best efforts will at best have only temporary benefits.

The First Two Stages: The Ten “Commandments” of Yoga

The yoga teachings list ten attitudes for meditators. Five of them are proscriptive; the other five, prescriptive: the “don’ts” and the “do’s” of the spiritual path. The importance of these attitudes is that they prevent our energy from “leaking” out. This they accomplish first by plugging the holes in the pail, and next by helping us to accumulate the “milk” of inner peace.

The fact that these attitudes number ten invites comparison with the Ten Commandments of Moses. There is, however, a difference. For the *yamas* and *niyamas* are not commandments so much as recommendations. Their emphasis is not on what you will suffer if you break them, but on what your benefits will be from following them. They are *directions* of development. One can continue to perfect them indefinitely, until one attains spiritual perfection.

SECOND YAMA: AHIMSA

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

Thus, of the five *yamas*, number one, *Ahimsa or non-harmfulness (harmlessness)*, means primarily not to wish harm to any living creature—not even to any lifeless object. It is not feasible in this world never to step on harmless ants, for example. When inhaling, one inhales and kills countless harmless tiny creatures. When eating, even if one eats only vegetables, it is impossible not to kill them by cooking and, indeed, consuming them. If confronted by a tiger in the jungle, it is better to kill it than to allow it to kill you—this, for the simple reason that man stands higher on the evolutionary ladder. And if one man threatens to kill a whole village, let us say, it is better to kill him than to let him kill hundreds.

I was in Seville, Spain, a few years ago. A guide was showing me around the old castle. She said, “Alfonso X and his father, Ferdinand, drove the Moors mostly out of Spain, but Alfonso’s successor, Sancho, was more tolerant.”

“Tolerant?” I asked, “or indifferent?”

There are times when higher principles demand engagement in righteous war. One has to do harm, in order to prevent the perpetuation of still greater harm. To inflict one’s beliefs on others is wrong, but to prevent others (even by violence) from inflicting their beliefs on others: this is right, because necessary.

The war of Kurukshetra in the Bhagavad Gita is really symbolic of the inner war between right and wrong fought by every human in his own conscience must wage. It is a truth outwardly also: We must be firm in our principles, and not allow anyone to weaken them with such pleas as, “Let us be tolerant.” To tolerate harmful evil is wrong. Evil must be resisted.

Everything in this world is relative. There are good, better, and best; and there are also bad, worse, and worst. The principle of relativity applies to the merits and demerits of action as much as to the quality of things. The *yamas* cannot, therefore, be applied absolutely, as certain religious sects have tried to do. The important thing is not to *wish* harm to anyone—not even, as I said, to inanimate objects. For it is the *wish* to damage, to hurt, to cause suffering, that is the true sin. Even words—*especially* words!—can harm. My Guru used to say, “People say that women are weaker than men, but a woman with a six-inch tongue can kill a man six feet tall!”

Paired with harmlessness, of course, is the quality of kindness, for as one ceases to wish harm, there naturally appears in the heart a feeling of deep benevolence for all.

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

2-34. When negative thoughts arise (in the mind), or when one feels impelled to commit acts of violence whether out of craving, anger, or infatuation, and whether indulged in with mild, moderate, or extreme intensity—such thoughts and impulses are all based on ignorance and are certain to cause one pain. At such times, too, think their opposite thoughts.

Negative thoughts and impulses occur sometimes in the minds even of basically positive people. Remember, we have a huge population of citizens dwelling in these countries that we call our own personalities. Even saintly people may sometimes feel the sudden impulse to shout angrily at others. These thoughts and impulses must be brought under control; they must never be indulged in. And if, in a moment of laxity, they *are* indulged, one must be perfectly truthful with himself, and never excuse or justify that sudden “jerk” of the mind as due to any influence but his own ignorance.

When such thoughts or impulses arise in the mind, fill your mind with their opposites: when craving arises, tell yourself, “I need nothing! I want to share everything with all!”; when anger arises, be especially accepting of whatever happens in your life, of whatever people say or do to you; of however people behave around you; when you feel infatuation toward someone, or for any object, tell yourself, “I want God alone! In myself, I am ever free!” If a human face haunts you, think forcibly of some divine image and tell yourself “That is infinitely more attractive!”

2-35. In the presence of one who is firmly grounded in harmlessness, all hostilities cease.

Even wild animals will act tamely in your presence. Such will be your magnetic aura that, even if people are fighting among themselves, they will become kindly and calm.

I know many stories from the lives of saints I have encountered that support the truth of this saying. Cobras withdraw their hoods. Tigers become as friendly as pussy cats. Criminals convert to a better way of life.

The answer to threatened violence is to project a calm spirit of harmlessness.

But remember, the greater the opposing force, the greater must also be the magnetism with which you confront it.

From *Raja Yoga*

Ahimsa is a term that was popularized in our times by Mahatma Gandhi. By non-violent resistance he led India to political emancipation from Britain. But alas, he was not able to teach the Indian people the deeper implications of this teaching. It is seen by most people even today as the last hope of the underdog. Yet *ahimsa*, rightly understood, is the Ultimate Weapon of a strong man; it turns one's enemy into a friend, thereby banishing the possibility of further conflict.

In the practice of yoga, it is important to understand that the life flowing in our veins is the same life which flows in the veins of all creatures. All of us are expressions of God, in the same way (to use a favorite illustration of my guru's) that the individual jets on a gas burner, though appearing separate from one another, are only manifestations of the unifying gas underneath. If I hurt you, I am in a real sense hurting myself. The saying of Jesus, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," means, in a deeper sense, "Love thy neighbor; he is thy Self."

The goal of yoga is to realize the oneness of all life. If I am willing to hurt the life in me as it is expressed in another human being, then I am affirming an error that is diametrically opposed to the realization which I am seeking to attain. It is necessary, if I would truly realize the oneness of all things, for me to live also in such a way as constantly to affirm this oneness—by my kindness towards all beings, by compassion, by universal love.

Some people carry this teaching so far as to try never to kill anything. When any rule becomes so paramount in our minds that we can see nothing beyond it, it may only obstruct our development instead of opening a pathway to liberation. There is a sect in India that insists on boiling water so as not to kill the germs in the water when they drink it. They overlook the obvious fact that they kill the germs also when they boil the water. Every time we inhale, we kill germs. Every time we walk out of doors, we may step on some harmless insect. Every time we go driving, the windshield of our car becomes coated with the bodies of flies and gnats. It is impossible to practice *ahimsa* to literal perfection without killing ourselves, which is the worst crime of all.

What Patanjali referred to, essentially, was the attitude of the mind, rather than the literal acts of the body. It is one's attitude that can either lead him toward liberation, or hold him in greater bondage. An attitude of harmlessness (and its corollary, a feeling of universal benevolence) is what is meant by *ahimsa*. We could not in any case kill anyone: His soul is immortal. What we can do, however, by wishing harm to another living being, is develop in ourselves a consciousness of death that keeps us enclosed in darkness. In killing another person, we would be hurting ourselves far more than we could possibly hurt him.

The principle of *ahimsa* must be understood in subtle ways, not only in gross. If you harm anyone in the slightest way—if, for example, you kill his enthusiasm (which is in a sense the life within him), or if you deride him, or if you treat him with disrespect—in all of these ways you will be harming him, and also, by reflection, yourself. The perfect practice of *ahimsa*, then, may be seen to be rare indeed. For though not many men would actually kill their fellows, it is common to find people slashing at one another with angry words, or with

contemptuous glances. Patanjali gives us a test by which we can tell if we have developed our practice of ahimsa to perfection. He says that once this has been accomplished, even wild animals and ferocious criminals will become tame and harmless in our presence. Many were the instances in the life of my own guru, Paramhansa Yogananda, in which this promise was fulfilled.

In the jungles near Ranchi, where he had gone one time with a group of students and teachers from his school, he prevented a wild tiger from attacking their cows by standing between it and them, and looking at it with love. On several occasions in America he converted hardened criminals with a glance.

When you meditate, begin by sending out waves of blessing to all men. If there is anyone, especially, with whom you have had a difference, send him your love. Until you develop this attitude you will never be able to meditate deeply. Subconscious antagonism will keep you tensed physically, as well as egoistically aloof from the great stream of life into which meditation should help you to merge. As far as the yoga postures are concerned, an attitude of non-injury signifies that one should not do violence to his own body, either. As I have said before, relax into each pose; don't force yourself into it. Make your practice of the postures a process of self-exploration rather than of grim self-punishment.

§

From *Superconsciousness*

The “don'ts” are listed first. The holes must be plugged before the pail can be filled. These five attitudes are grouped under the heading of *yama* (control). It may seem strange to see these principles stated negatively. The reason for this is that they stand revealed as virtues when their opposite, negative qualities are removed. Each rule of *yama* serves the purpose, similarly, of permitting innate virtues to flower. Figuratively speaking, every *yama* removes the dirt covering the true gold of our being. What is left, once a negative tendency has been removed, is a soul-reality.

The first rule of *yama* was popularized by Mahatma Gandhi. It is *ahimsa* (non-violence). The reason for this negative emphasis (it could have been translated as “benevolence”) is that once a person succeeds in banishing from his heart the impulse to strike out at others, or to hurt them in any way (including seeking personal benefit at their expense), benevolence stands self-revealed as a natural quality of the heart.

The desire to hurt another living being in any way—or even to harm our environment, which too, in varying degrees, is alive and conscious—alienates us from our soul-reality, and affirms the delusion of ego.

Anything that separates us in consciousness from the vastness of all life amounts to a denial of that oneness which we should be seeking in meditation.

The important thing in all the attitudes of *yama* and *niyama* is not so much what we do outwardly, as our *inner* attitudes of the heart. It is not possible to live harmlessly, for example, in this world of relativities. Some harm is done, inevitably, by merely living. With every inhalation, hosts of germs are killed. Every outing in the car inadvertently causes the death of numerous insects. We walk out of doors and can hardly avoid stepping on a few ants. Nature herself decrees the survival of life by the death of other life. Even the vegetables

we eat are life forms. It is a tiger's nature to kill: Can its method of survival, then, be considered sinful? Murder is a sin for human beings for the primary reason that it degrades us, at our level of evolution, to kill other human beings. Murder is the opposite of life-affirming. It is an affirmation of death.⁽⁵⁾ Otherwise, it must be said that, from a broad perspective, death comes to all of us eventually. It cannot be, then, in itself, an evil.

There are situations, the *Bhagavad Gita* declares, in which a lesser harm must be inflicted to forestall a greater harm, and when to shrink from such a duty is itself an act of violence. Thus, at times it is necessary to fight—for example, in a defensive war. Again, according to karmic law, more highly evolved species should be protected from less evolved species, even if the protection involves killing. In the case of righteous warfare, the protection required is not that of a higher from a lower species, but that of a higher *purpose* from lower motives—safety of the innocent, for instance, from the will of an aggressor to destroy.

In every case, the essential rule of *ahimsa*, and that which removes it from relativity's uncertainties, is that the spiritual seeker maintain at all times a non-violent *attitude*.

By wishing harm to no living creature, even if it becomes necessary to kill it, we find welling up within ourselves a consciousness of relaxed acceptance of others and of life, no matter how we ourselves are treated. Thus, in the conscious benevolence that arises with acceptance, we find others responding to us accordingly. When we perfect the quality of non-violence, hostility ceases in our presence.

For the purposes of meditation, non-violence has a further purpose. The wish to inflict harm creates in ourselves an inner tension, which conflicts with the peacefulness we seek to develop in meditation.

§

From the Bhagavad Gita

(2:32) *O son of Pritha, blessed and fortunate are the Kshatriyas (warriors) who are summoned to fight in a righteous battle which comes to them unprovoked and thus opens the gate to heaven.*

Poetic Rendition

O you wavering offspring of Pritha, warriors like you should be inspired when the divine opportunity of fighting for an exalted cause knocks at the gates of your lives. For all those who respond to the celestial call of a righteous battle which comes without aggressive seeking will surely behold in it a secret door to heavenly happiness.

Spiritual Interpretation

It has been described in the previous stanza that there are two kinds of warriors—first, the warrior who is ready to engage himself in a righteous war for the protection of his family and country. Secondly, there is the spiritual warrior who is ever ready to protect the kingdom of peace and self-control from the invasion of inimical temptations which pour in through the secret pathways of the senses. The Gita says no warrior should waver because of the danger to his life or the killings which he might be compelled to perform, especially when he is engaged in protecting innocent women and

children from a bloodthirsty enemy. The Gita warns against the practice of using metaphysical doctrines of non-killings and similar teachings as a subterfuge for tolerating a merciless slaughter of innocence by conscienceless marauding armies.

Gandhi's Methods

The doctrine of non-violence as inculcated by Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy consists in resisting evil-doers by mental resistance which may lead even to the destruction of self at the hands of war-mad soldiers. A non-violent person may resist evil-doers not with physical force, but with spiritual force. Non-violence signifies passive resistance by love, spiritual force and reason, without actively using physical force as the medium of resistance. The non-violent man maintains that if it is necessary to shed blood in the protection of innocence, then let one's own blood be shed first. That is, if a person spiritually resists the wrong-doings of his enemies to the point of inviting his own death at the hands of his infuriated foes, there will ultimately be less blood shed in the world. The non-violent man teaches that if bloodshed is necessary in a righteous battle let him offer his own blood to be shed first.

Many of Gandhi's followers martyred themselves in following the doctrine of non-violence. When some of Gandhi's unarmed followers spiritually resisted the enactment of a law they considered unjust, they were attacked and beaten by their political enemies. Many of the followers of Gandhi who were battered and beaten down mercilessly, got up again and urged their enemies to again beat them, pointing to their broken skulls and limbs. It is said by witnesses of this display of tremendous courage on the part of Mahatma Gandhi's followers caused many political enemies to throw down their weapons and fly away, for they were ashamed to beat up brave people who resisted only by spiritual force and were not afraid to be hurt or killed in the practice of their convictions.

Sacrifice Of Self

The doctrine of non-violence maintains that the sacrifice of self would teach one's enemies to break their own swords with the awakening of conscience and the inner urging of repentance. Whether one can gain the independence of his own country by letting the best of his countrymen perish defenselessly resisting armed armies is a matter yet to be properly and thoroughly experimented upon. But it must be remembered that the resistance of evil by good and not evil means ought to be the ideal method of eradicating the plague of war which has stricken the nations of the earth down all avenues of historical time.

If one brandishes his sword against his enemy it excites him to use a superior weapon to defend himself. War breeds war. War can be killed by living the doctrine of peace in national life. Aggressive wars should be outlawed. Wars of defense are reasonable, but to be able to conquer the conquerors by non-violent methods is greater. Jesus could have borrowed twelve legions of electrically armed angels to destroy his enemies but he conquered them forever by his love and by saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The non-violent Jesus, though he allowed his blood to be shed and his body to be destroyed, still immortalized himself in the eyes of God and man by attaining victory over the weakness of flesh. Jesus temporarily experienced death only to experience immortal life

afterwards. A nation which can maintain its independence by peaceful methods would be the greatest example and saviour to the arming and warring nations of the earth.

Cowardice Not Encouraged

Mahatma Gandhi, the messenger of the non-violent doctrine, maintains, however, that it is better to resist with physical force rather than become a coward. If a man and his family were attacked by a criminal who levels his gun at them, and the man, being actuated by inner fear and without defending his helpless family, says: "Gunman, I forgive you for whatever you may do," and then flies away, this act would not be called one of non-violence but of cowardice. According to Gandhi, it would have been better for the man in such a situation to resort even to physical violence rather than hide his act of cowardice under the mask of non-violence.

To return a slap for a slap is easy, but to resist a slap by love is more difficult. The Bhagavad Gita says any warrior who uses physical or spiritual force to defend a righteous cause always derives a heavenly satisfaction in his soul even if he dies in the attempt.

According to the law of karma a man who dies on the battlefield with a courageous and clear conscience attains a blissful state after death or is reborn on earth with a valiant mind in a noble family.

Spiritual Warrior

When a spiritual warrior finds himself in a scene of psychological war in which his peace and self-control are invaded by worries and sense temptations, he should not waver nor become vexed but he should see in his inner battle an opportunity to conquer his restlessness and temptations and to establish the heaven of permanent peace within himself. A student of metaphysics, finding himself constantly invaded by battalions of temptations, usually become discouraged and thinks his moral and spiritual tests are stronger than his spiritual resistance and are thus calculated to crush him. The Gita advises every spiritual aspirant to disband such thoughts of weakness which naturally crop up during a severe psychological test. Instead, the spiritual novice should see in the psychological war a gateway and an opportunity to conquer evil by the power of increased good and to conquer restlessness by a power of increased concentration and to conquer sense temptation by increasing the joy of meditation.

Any devotee who tries to conquer his psychological tests and trials of delusion by the Christ command of his self-control will gradually find the permanent state of heavenly peace established in this life. According to the law of cause and effect any devotee who can hold on to the after-effects of meditation and maintain his peace to the end of this life in spite of trials, will prolong his happiness of this life into the immortal happiness extending beyond the gates of death unto eternity.

--The Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Yogananda, *Inner Culture* Magazine, March, 1938

§

From Affirmations and Prayers for Self-Healing: Non-injury

Non-injury is a fundamental rule in the spiritual life. It means primarily an attitude of mind. Outwardly, one cannot avoid doing a certain amount of injury—for example, to flying insects when driving one's car. The harm one does, however, by wishing harm to others hurts not only them, but even more especially, oneself. Spiritually, a harmful attitude separates one from the harmony and oneness of life.

Non-injury, on the other hand, embraces that oneness, and is in turn sustained by it. Non-injury is a powerful force for victory, for it enlists cooperation from the very universe, where harmfulness incites endless opposition.

Affirmation

I send out the rain of blessings to all, that love be nourished in hearts that, heretofore, have known only hate.

Prayer

Divine Mother, when others seek to hurt me, give me the wisdom to see that victory lies in blessing them, not in revenge. If I respond with anger, the loss will be mine, even if mine also is the outward victory, for inwardly I will have been hurt indeed. But if I return blessings for their blows, I shall remain ever safe within the impregnable walls of my inner peace.

§

From KRIYANANDA

The first *yama* is *ahimsa*, or “harmlessness.” A woman student of mine many years ago met a young man from one of the seedier sections of New York City, who told her that he enjoyed the feeling of power it gave him to carry a loaded pistol in his pocket. It pleased him to think that he could shoot anyone who dared to threaten him. Such people usually don't live long. I'm sure that *your* nature, as a student of higher principles, harbors no such potential for violence, but you might, in your desire to succeed, be willing (I hope you are not) to take advantage of others for your own personal gain.

Everyone wants power of some kind. Power is an attribute of the soul. Ego-based power, however, is what many people mistakenly seek. Their dreams of self-importance are like soap bubbles: colorful, larger than the substance they contain, but empty and evanescent. The stimulating popular game of clever one-upmanship is attractive to the ego, and fun for a time, but it leads in the end to an empty heart. True power comes not from pitting oneself *against* others, but from *winning their support*. If one harms others, even mentally, he sets himself against them; consequently, he shrinks inward upon himself.

Patanjali states that persons who have attained perfect harmlessness, having overcome the desire of the immature ego to impose its will on others—ruthlessly, or cunningly, or competitively—manifest such a power of peace that even wild animals will become tame in their presence.

In support of this statement, on one occasion Paramhansa Yogananda confronted a tiger in the jungles of Bihar. It was well into the night, and the tiger was approaching to kill a cow that had been placed in a stall with the door open, left that way by an absent-minded

driver. In the morning, the cow was to pull the Master and a few of his school students out of that jungle in a cart. The Master issued forth into the darkness to close the stall door. The tiger continued his approach, but the Master gazed at it with love, beholding God Himself in that form. So magnetic was the love he emanated that the tiger, instead of springing, rolled onto its back and let the Master stroke it. Then it rose up and stalked away calmly into the jungle.

True power enlists the support of others as well as of one's own higher Self. Egoic power, on the other hand, is as much a delusion as echoes in a canyon. A strong ego produces a feeling of increasing isolation from what seems to it an indifferent and hostile world.

--*Material Success Through Yoga Principles, Lesson Nine*

§

AHIMSA STORIES

The instructive mosquitoes served for another early lesson at the ashram. It was the gentle hour of dusk. My guru was matchlessly interpreting the ancient texts. At his feet, I was in perfect peace. A rude mosquito entered the idyl and competed for my attention. As it dug a poisonous hypodermic needle into my thigh, I automatically raised an avenging hand. Reprieve from impending execution! An opportune memory came to me of one of Patanjali's yoga aphorisms—that on *ahimsa* (harmlessness).

"Why didn't you finish the job?"

"Master! Do you advocate taking life?"

"No; but the deathblow already had been struck in your mind."

"I don't understand."

"Patanjali's meaning was the removal of *desire* to kill." Sri Yukteswar had found my mental processes an open book. "This world is inconveniently arranged for a literal practice of *ahimsa*. Man may be compelled to exterminate harmful creatures. He is not under similar compulsion to feel anger or animosity. All forms of life have equal right to the air of *maya*. The saint who uncovers the secret of creation will be in harmony with its countless bewildering expressions. All men may approach that understanding who curb the inner passion for destruction."

"Guruji, should one offer himself a sacrifice rather than kill a wild beast?"

"No; man's body is precious. It has the highest evolutionary value because of unique brain and spinal centers. These enable the advanced devotee to fully grasp and express the loftiest aspects of divinity. No lower form is so equipped. It is true that one incurs the debt of a minor sin if he is forced to kill an animal or any living thing. But the *Vedas* teach that wanton loss of a human body is a serious transgression against the karmic law."

--*Autobiography of a Yogi, 1946 edition*

§

SECOND YAMA: NON-LYING/ *SATYA*

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

2. Non-deceit, or truthfulness, means (again) to be truthful above all in thought. There are times when it is better to resort to kindly fiction. Benevolence is the main criterion, for divine truth is always beneficial. If you visit a friend in the hospital and see him pale to the point of death, it may be better to tell him, “Well, I’ve seen you look better!” than to say, “Good heavens, I’ve never seen you look so *terrible!*” Speak the beneficial truth, always, for truth (in its true, divine meaning) *is* beneficial.

Often, to be strictly truthful, it is better to remain silent. If someone asks you even a trivial question, such as, “How do you like this dress?” and you don’t really like it at all, say to her, “Molly, I can’t really say I like it, but the important thing is that it suits your taste. Tastes differ. I think we should wear whatever makes us happy.” Is this tactful enough? I’m notorious for speaking my mind *too* clearly, so if this doesn’t do it for you, find another formula that will be kind but that won’t compromise your integrity.

2-36. To one who is firmly established in truthfulness, his very word becomes binding on objective reality. (Whatever he says must come to pass.)

To be truthful is to be in tune with things as they really are. But the truthfulness of which I write is a dynamic truthfulness, spoken in the realization that truth itself is inspiring, and is far more than dull fact. Try to attune your awareness of what *is* to its highest octave as an expression of the bliss of God.

When you speak always from that level of consciousness, your every word will have power.

From *Raja Yoga*

Non-lying must be understood in a subtle sense also. Some self-styled moralists are actually so shallow as to counsel truthfulness on the ground that it is so difficult to remember all one's lies that sooner or later one is bound to trip oneself up. Well, better this much justification than none at all! But the real value of truthfulness goes considerably deeper.

It is the necessary attitude for us if we would overcome our own false notions about life. Our path to God is entirely a matter of ridding ourselves of our delusions. The scientist who probes deeply into the nature of things, refusing to permit any personal bias to influence his investigations, is, to a degree, practicing truthfulness. The person who examines without prejudice his own likes and dislikes is practicing truthfulness also, and in a more vital

form because a deep probe into the nature of reality demands above all that man's own vision be made crystal clear.

The untruthful person is always wishing that the world, or the more intimate circumstances of his own life, were different from what they are. "If only it weren't raining! If only he'd stop talking! If only she weren't so stupid." Granting that circumstances might always be improved, the first step toward that improvement is a recognition, and acceptance, of the state of things as they actually are. We can only work with what is.

There are higher, as well as lower, truths. To call a man stupid is not a higher truth, though he may in fact be a moron. The soul within us is ever wise, ever perfect. To be truthful, then, does not necessarily mean to be literally factual. It might be well to tell a dull fellow that he is bright, if in the telling we try also to penetrate his mind with an affirmation of his inner potential for intelligence. Truth is always beneficial. To make harmful statements, even if they are based on obvious, but superficial and temporary, facts, is in the deepest spiritual sense untruthful.

An attitude of truthfulness means to try always to see things as they are, to accept the possibility that one may be mistaken in his most cherished opinions, to entertain no likes and dislikes that might prejudice his perception of reality as it is. Truthfulness means to look always for the Divine Light that shines in the midst of universal darkness, to see God in everything and everyone, to affirm goodness even in the face of evil, and yet always to do so from a center of absolute honesty, never of mere wishful thinking.

When one attunes himself with Nature, he attunes himself to the power of the universe. His strength then becomes limitless. When one attunes himself to the Divine behind all natural, universal phenomena, he makes himself a channel for the Divine to flow in pristine splendor into the dark alleys and buried chambers of this relative world.

Patanjali gave us a test by which we might tell whether we have achieved perfection in this virtue. He said that a person in whom this principle of truthfulness becomes firmly established will develop the power to attain the fruits of action without even acting. His mere thought, his mere word will be binding on the universe. Relative facts will have to accommodate themselves to his will, attuned as he is to a deeper reality. A saint can heal others by simply saying to them with deep concentration, "Be well!"

In meditation, an attitude of perfect truthfulness is essential as a safeguard against hallucinations, as well as against attachment to the more common delusions of mankind. To overcome your hypnosis of human limitations, observe them dispassionately in meditation. Ask yourself, "Is this really I? Who am I, really?!" The deeper you pursue this question of self-identity, the more clearly you will see yourself as the ever-free soul, stripped of all egoistic delusion.

§

From Awaken to Superconsciousness

Another principle of the “don'ts” is “avoidance of untruthfulness.” Why, again, is this teaching stated negatively? Wouldn't it be simpler to say “Be truthful”? The explanation is that our natural tendency *is* to be truthful, once we've overcome the desire to distort the truth.

There is in this quality, also, a subtle as well as a gross application. For fact and truth are not always synonymous. A statement may be factual without bearing any relationship to higher truths. A person in the hospital, for example, may look quite as ill as he feels, but if you tell him, “You look terrible!” your statement might actually worsen his condition. If, on the other hand, visualizing him in good health, you declare with deep conviction, “You look great!” your words may invigorate or even heal him.

Here is a guideline to practicing the avoidance of untruthfulness. Bear in mind that the truth is always beneficial, but that a statement of fact may be either beneficial or harmful. If there is a chance that a statement will do harm, it must not be considered a truth in the highest sense. If you cannot speak sincerely without the risk of inflicting harm, the best alternative is to remain silent. (That may be one reason why certain ascetics in India practice perpetual *mauna* [silence]!)

Avoidance of untruthfulness is an important practice also for meditation. For the mind, influenced by tendencies that well up from the subconscious, is easily inclined toward self-deception. Hallucinations are an obstacle that people encounter in meditation; they are not visual, only, but may take other delusive forms—for example, “intuitive” guidance. Because they come from the subconscious, their effect is to draw the mind downward, away from superconsciousness.

There is a certain attractiveness in the passively pleasant world of the subconscious. It is easy to become caught in it, instead of rising on wing-beats of will power into the lofty regions of ecstasy. The mystical literature of all religions contains warnings against subconscious self-deception.

How is one to know when one is hallucinating? By testing the experience in the “cold light of day.” For one thing, true superconscious experiences are accompanied by intense inner awareness. They also produce beneficial and lasting results. Since an emotion, too, may be intense, it is important to add that the intensity accompanying superconscious experiences will also be calm.

There is nothing dull or vague about superconscious experiences. If a light is seen in superconsciousness, it will be a clear light, not smoky or indistinct. Any inspiration felt produces mental clarity, not vagueness or confusion. In matters where clarity was lacking previously, the experience produces clear insight and understanding. Often, the clarity will receive external substantiation.

Perfection in the avoidance of untruthfulness develops mental power to such an extent that one's mere word becomes binding on objective events. One has merely to declare a thing so for it actually to become so.

At this point, it becomes extremely important that our every statement be positive and kindly, at least in intent. (There is no way of determining other people's reactions.) For negative or unkind thoughts have the power to do harm.

§

From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(16:1) *Straightforwardness* means to be completely honest and truthful in all your dealings. Any corners that you "cut" in this respect will only weaken your powers of accomplishment, and will also weaken your ability to persevere to final success in any worthwhile undertaking. Both honesty and truthfulness harness one's power to the infinitely greater power of the universe. It is -- to use a simile we've found helpful before -- to turn that greater reality into something like the sounding board of a musical instrument, augmenting one's own efforts by making them "resonate" with the vibration of infinity.

Truthfulness might be included under "straightforwardness." It has, however, the further connotation of not *wishing* reality to be other than it is. Be truthful with yourself. Don't try to pretend even to yourself that your motives have been, perhaps, better than they may have actually been. Only when we face reality *as it is* can we begin to *make* it what it ought to be. If, for instance, we have spoken rudely, we can only become gentler in our speech after we've faced frankly the possibility that we may, in fact, have spoken harshly on occasion.

--*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Kriyananda

From KRIYANANDA

The second of the *yamas* is "non-prevarication." Not to prevaricate means more than not to tell lies. It also means not wishing, ineffectually, that things were other than they are. If you really want to improve matters, do so by all means, but don't stand limply around, wringing your hands! Work within the frame of what *exists*, however, not of what you merely wish existed. Face the facts fearlessly and with honesty.

The positive meaning of non-prevarication, of course, is truthfulness. Patanjali phrases the concept negatively because the obstacle to truthfulness is man's tendency to distort the truth. Patanjali says that this quality, when perfected, confers the power of materializing one's words and of reaping the fruits of action without acting. In material affairs, the benefit of truthfulness is twofold: First, it carries conviction, for truthful people radiate complete integrity. Second, any words they utter with concentrated will can be materialized, simply because they spoke them.

People who misuse this power, having once developed it, simply lose it again. Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* speaks of people following either the upward or the downward path. One sometimes meets people who can lie very convincingly. They developed that ability in other lives. If, however, they lie in this life they will eventually lose that ability. No *siddhi*, or spiritual power, and no human ability is permanent until spiritual liberation has

been attained. Thus, even if you have the charisma to convince others of untruths, they will “catch on” eventually, and will despise you the more because they once looked up to you. Make it a serious point, then, to be truthful always.

--Material Success Through Yoga Principles, Lesson Nine

§

THIRD YAMA: NON-STEALING/NON-AVARICE/ *ASTAYA*

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

3. Non-covetousness means not to want anything that isn't yours already. Enjoy them, but without personal attachment; don't send out grappling irons to them from your heart—the hooks of ego!

Yogananda once visited Radio City Music Hall, in New York. He told himself, “I have paid the price of admission. Everything in here, therefore, is mine to enjoy.” He went around, enjoying all the sights. “As I left,” he said, “I returned the building to the management, with gratitude.” The gratitude, I am sure, was not only for what he had seen, but also for the fact that he coveted none of it.

You can enjoy a sunset without coveting it. So why, when you see things in this world that please you, should you wish to possess them personally? Enjoy everything with the joy of God.

The positive side of non-covetousness is the awareness that you already *are* everything! When you know God, you will become one with all there is in all existence.

2-37. To one who is established in non-covetousness, all riches come.

When you have no desire for others' possessions, or for what is not yours by right, there comes an inner relaxation which produces the magnetism to attract whatever you need in life.

According to my life experience, what happens is that, when you happily accept things as they are, there comes a wholly positive expectation of life, which in its turn becomes magnetic enough to draw to yourself anything you need.

When I was in college, I developed a theory: "If you want to be lucky, expect luck to come to you, then go out and meet it half way." This attitude has produced astonishing results in my life—too many to enumerate here. But as I study Patanjali, I see that this *sutra* matches my own experience as he defined it.

From *Raja Yoga*

Non-stealing means more than simply not taking another person's property. It means also not coveting his property. It means not desiring anything that is not yours by right. It means actually not even to desire that which is yours by right, in the realization that whatever is rightfully yours will surely come to you anyway, but that your happiness is not conditioned by whether you get it or not. Desire only keeps one looking to the future for his fulfillment, instead of realizing that perfection is his already. You need only to realize more and more deeply your already-existing oneness with all life. Why feel that you need anything in the universe, when in truth you are the universe! Covetousness is like a rope that ties the balloon of consciousness to the ground, preventing it from soaring into the free skies of spiritual bliss.

In shuffling a deck of cards, although the sequence of the cards can be changed almost indefinitely, the number of cards remains the same. An increase of aces in one part of the deck will not mean an overall increase in the number of aces. To take from another person in order to gain for oneself is, similarly, to reshuffle the relationship of things. No overall gain is achieved thereby, and therefore no gain to our true self. To emphasize one's own ego at the expense of those of others is to give strength to a delusion. Ego is the supreme obstacle to the true vision of life's all-embracing unity.

Stealing, or coveting, need not be limited to material objects. There are many people who, in the words of Sri Yukteswar, "Chop off other people's heads to appear taller themselves." To speak unkindly to another being, or even of another human being, is to claim an exclusive virtue for oneself. Virtue is the result of attunement with the natural order of things. We cannot claim special virtue for ourselves, or, try to exclude others from it, without impairing that sensitive attunement with the totality of life, and thereby lessening our own virtue.

As a test of one's progress in the development of this virtue, Patanjali says that when non-stealing becomes firmly rooted in one's consciousness one will find wealth coming to him whenever he needs it. For when one truly recognizes that the very universe is his own,

and no longer cuts himself off from the rest of life by egoistically demanding his own "share" of it, he finds himself supported, no longer ignored, by the universal law.

In meditation, the slightest yearning for things will take the mind out of itself. The outward flow of energy from the heart must be channeled inward, and up toward the brain and the point between the eyebrows, if meditation is to lead to enlightenment. Until one can still the desires of the heart, perfect meditation will not be possible. Try, therefore, as you begin your meditation, to affirm mentally that you are complete, and completely at rest, in yourself.

In the practice of the yoga postures, too, try entertaining the awareness that all the energy of the universe is yours already to command. Open yourself mentally to its inflow, and direct it through your body by the direct exercise of your will. Radiate it also outward, in harmony and blessing to all men, for it is not enough merely to cease taking from the ocean of life; if the proscriptive rules of *yama* are practiced perfectly, they will release energy in a positive way. It is the soul's own nature to expand outward to infinity. The greatest fallacy, finally, of an attitude of taking is that it causes one's consciousness to contract into itself.

§

From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*

Another *yama* is "non-avarice." "Avarice" is not really the *mot juste*, implying as it does a desire for worldly gain (money, usually, or something of monetary value). The *yama* of non-avarice implies something much deeper.

What the spiritual seeker must renounce is the desire for anything that he does not acquire by merit. The implication is that if he does merit it, he needn't fear that he won't attract it. Even if he must work hard to attract it, he should remain relaxed as to the outcome, leaving the results wholly in God's hands. "What comes of itself, let it come" is his motto. This is a prescription for peace of mind even during intense activity.

Things are not often achieved effortlessly. The attitude of non-avarice, then, is not to stop striving, but even in the process of striving to renounce attachment to the results.

The secret of inner peace is desirelessness. In meditation, desire for anything external to oneself takes the mind out of the true Self, within. Any desire that pulls the mind outward works against success in meditation.

While meditating, then, tell yourself that you need nothing: You are complete in yourself. You are at perfect peace within. Say to yourself, "I own nothing: I am free! I own no one: I am free! In myself I am ever perfect, ever free!"

The quality of non-avarice, developed to perfection, generates a subtle magnetism that enables a person to attract things to himself effortlessly. He is never anxious, then, that his needs, whatever they may be, won't be supplied. They *will* be, infallibly.

From KRIYANANDA

Asteya, non-stealing, is the third *yama*. If a person tries to attain material success by stealing he may end up in prison. This eventuality, however, is too obvious to require elaboration. Stealing means, in a spiritual sense, much more than merely obtaining things illicitly. Essentially, what Patanjali referred to was *non-covetousness*: that is to say, not desiring anything that belongs by right to another.

Non-covetousness has an even subtler meaning. It means not seeking to diminish others in their own eyes, or in the eyes of other people. It means not trying to diminish their reputation or credit. It means giving sincere respect to all, and graciously recognizing any success others achieve as though it were one's own. *Asteya* means viewing no one as a rival, but seeing others as *colleagues* and friends. In addition, it means never gossiping about others or belittling their achievements. It means not trying to draw credit to one's self.

The more you show appreciation for others, the more others—not even the same people, necessarily—will show appreciation for you, in return. The more support you give others, also, the more supported you will feel in yourself.

One who becomes firmly established in the quality of non-covetousness seeks nothing that is not his by right. Such a person develops the power to attract whatever he needs in life. As Patanjali puts it, “All jewels come to him.” Indeed, by means that he himself may not be able to explain, he finds himself ever secure, financially.

--*Material Success Through Yoga Principles, Lesson Nine*

§

FOURTH YAMA: NON-SENSUALITY/*BRAHMACHARYA*

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

4. Continence might be put negatively, as the other *yamas* are, by saying simply, non-indulgence in sex. Actually, this *yama*, though put negatively, is *brahmacharya*, which means, “flowing with Brahma.” Continence, for most people, is a frightening prohibition. Sex, my Guru used to say, is the greatest delusion. From sexual desire proceeds all the outward direction of one's energies, and therefore all the involvement in other delusions: desire for wealth, for mind-numbing alcohol or drugs, for fame, power, and all the mighty host of warriors for evil described in the Bhagavad Gita.

Sex completely involves one's thoughts in outwardness. But the sense of touch, when transmuted, becomes the realization of God's bliss in all space.

Sex serves only the purpose of keeping the world populated. But Yogananda explained that Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden could reproduce without sexual union. Eve received inspiration from Adam, and with that inspiration invited compatible souls from the astral world to enter their family. Her energy, combined with that of those astral souls ready to incarnate, materialized their bodies—first, in the tiny forms of babies. The tree at

the center of the garden was the spine. The forbidden fruit it contained was the pleasure of sex.

My Guru said to me, “Men are more drawn to sex than women are, but women have their troubles, too: women are more drawn toward *maya* (delusion).” It is more the countless little things that trap women! Women also pay much more attention to their own appearance, an attitude which clearly reflects egoism. The message to woman on a poster during World War II was, “Join the navy and let the world see you!”

Sex, however, remains central to all human delusions. If girls don't have the same interest in the sex act itself, they spend (so it seems to me) even more time talking about boys than boys do about girls.

Men, as a result of their sex drive, often become aggressive, which certainly is a negative symptom of ego-consciousness. But the reason sexual pleasure is to be avoided at all costs is that it depletes the body's energy. A single ejaculation of sperm is the equivalent, my Guru used to say, to the loss of a quart of blood. To describe the effect of sex on the human male, there is the expression, “He looks like a man on the last day of his honeymoon!”

The natural direction of male energy is outward, even as the male organ is outside the body. The direction of female energy, on the other hand, is more naturally inward, as the female organ is placed inside.

Women, too, have to pay energetically for the pleasure of sexual indulgence, though their sacrifice comes more through parturition (child-bearing). Women, however, who indulge too frequently in sexual intercourse age prematurely. My Guru said they also become sterile, owing to so much male heat entering their bodies. And of course, there are also their inevitable monthly periods—a drain in themselves.

There is, undoubtedly, a certain beauty in romance, but how quickly it fades! It is like a flower-bordered entrance to a life of increasingly shared misery! My Guru said of women, “There she sits like a queen, ruling you because you cannot rule yourself.” And, of men he said, “They become abusive for the same reason—lack of self-control.” The basic reason for our final, inevitable dissatisfaction with every human fulfillment is that we are all destined for the highest soul-satisfaction: union with the bliss of God. Nothing less can ever satisfy us for long.

Sexual self-control is vitally important on the spiritual path. It creates a vital store of energy in the body, and enables one to direct that energy upward, toward the brain. Men, especially, who achieve self-control become mentally brilliant.

Those who are not able to achieve total control should try to be as moderate as possible, gradually withdrawing the mind and energy, and redirecting it to a higher level. Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, says, “Of what use is (mere) suppression?” While indulging in the sex act, do not give in to it mentally. Rather, observe yourself objectively and tell yourself, “I am inwardly free!”

The positive side of continence is that it helps one to love all mankind, men and women equally, as your own in God. In marriage, continence increases the love between man and wife. Continence, moreover, is a great aid in overcoming ego-consciousness.

To gain the full benefits of continence, one must be completely continent for at least twelve years—an entire cycle of Jupiter.

2-38. One who is established in continence achieves full vigor.

I have gone into this truth extensively, above. What happens is this: vigor enters the body through the medulla oblongata, drawn by the will power. “The greater the will,” my Guru taught, “the greater the flow of energy.” Continence not only strengthens the will, but increases the available energy.

From *Raja Yoga*

Brahmacharya, or non-sensuality, is based on a little-known fact: Although man's inner peace is disrupted by physical and emotional tension, he cannot find inner harmony by merely releasing that tension outwardly in sense indulgence. The reason many people find this truth so difficult to grasp is that sense indulgence is accompanied, typically, by an apparent increase of inner peace, as well as a feeling of freedom. The libertine consequently looks down on people of self-control; he considers them simple-minded for rejecting a felicity so easily won.

But if one examines the lives of people who seek peace and freedom through sense indulgence, it soon becomes evident that, whatever their success in ridding themselves of inner tensions, they in no way become thereby shining examples of peace. In fact, if anything they are more nervous, moody, and irascible than their self-controlled and supposedly frustrated fellow men. Nor is their special sort of freedom particularly enviable. True freedom ought to convey a sense of power, of expanding awareness and well-being. The libertine's "freedom", by contrast, suggests little more than a sort of coming apart at the seams.

Why this loss, in the expectation of nothing but gain? The reason is that a true sense of peace and freedom is impossible if the release of one's tensions is accompanied by a dissipation of energy. Fulfillment cannot be attained in a state of unconsciousness. Peace is not a state of being merely dead to any further excitement. One of man's commonest errors is to imagine that he can achieve a state of inner balance and harmony by dulling his responses to the universe around him. When the pressure of desire builds up within him, he considers his only recourse to be to "let off steam." He enjoys the fleeting sense of power that comes to him at the time of release. His main aim, however, seems to be to revert to a state of relative numbness, wherein desire no longer importunes him. He sees the build-up of inner energy as something merely to be got rid of. He little dreams that this very energy is the key to his inner self-development, or that true peace and freedom require more, not less, of this energy.

For a person's degree of awareness depends entirely on the amount and direction of his inner flow of energy. A truly aware person is always one who possesses great energy. If the converse is not true (for, obviously, a man of great energy is not always exceptionally aware), it is because this energy must be directed toward the brain before it can result in a heightened awareness. To be continuously and consciously at peace, one must find a way of releasing his inner tensions without losing the energy with which his ensuing peace may be fully savored.

Observe how, when you feel happy, your energy and consciousness seem to soar upward. You tend to sit a little straighter, to stand more on the balls of your feet, to look upward more frequently, even to feel physically lighter. You describe yourself at such times as feeling "uplifted, light, on top of the world." Heaven itself is commonly thought of as situated somewhere up above us—as if it represented a sort of culmination of this upward movement in our own consciousness.

When, on the other hand, you feel unhappy, note how your energy and consciousness move downward, away from the brain. Your shoulders and back tend to slump forward, you walk more heavily on your heels, your natural impulse is to look downward. The very expressions you use to describe your condition at such times suggest the downward movement of your energy: "I feel depressed, downcast, heavy, in the dumps." Hell itself is commonly conceived of as being situated somewhere below us—as if it were a sort of terminal station on this downward journey of man's consciousness.

Two of the primary requirements for enjoying life to the fullest are the preservation of one's inner energy, and its upward direction toward the brain. These are among the most basic requirements also for spiritual advancement.

Every outward direction of energy constitutes, in a sense, an expenditure. As in business ventures, however, there are certain expenditures which are necessary if one would increase his inner wealth. Activities that are undertaken in a spirit of joyous service have the effect of putting one in tune with the infinite source of all power. The more consciously one acts as a channel for divine energy, the more he finds his inner powers actually increasing. If one expends his energy after uplifting it, his activities bring him more, not less, peace, freedom, and joy. It is the outward expenditure of downward-directed energy that results in mere dissipation, for it entails no corresponding inflow of cosmic energy.

An expenditure of downward-directed energy results from any sense indulgence where there is a wish merely for release of inner pressures; where the thought of self-indulgence, not of self-giving, predominates; or where the aim is not superconsciousness, but only a form of unconsciousness—if only a lessened consciousness of the inner discomfort produced by desire. All of these entail a downward movement of energy. It must be understood that not all sense pleasures entail sensuality, as defined by Patanjali. God never meant for this world to be shunned by His human children as a thing of evil. Any God-reminding activity, including pure sense enjoyments, can help to uplift the soul. But when we take from life without giving to it in return, we live like thieves and murderers. "No man is an island"; John Donne was right. To live rightly in this world we must maintain a sensitive awareness of our divine kinship with all life.

Any sense pleasure that does not heighten this sense of universal oneness, but that tends rather to emphasize our consciousness of egoic separateness from other beings, may be classified as sensuality. No physical experience in this relative universe can be absolutely either sensual or non-sensual. The important thing in any search for growing awareness and harmony is first to avoid as much as possible those experiences which are, by the criteria we have just considered, more sensual than spiritual. The more sense-oriented and selfish an experience, the more it deadens one's spiritual sensitivity. Sense experiences that are not strongly or grossly sense-oriented may even, with practice, be turned to good spiritual advantage.

That form of sensuality which is most obviously associated with a downward direction of human energy is sexual enjoyment. Sex pleasure dissipates one's energy in direct proportion to the consciousness of self-indulgence. Where there is self-giving love, there is to some extent an upward flow of energy in the spine, and thus also an inflow of divine energy in the form of love. There will still be a loss of energy, however, on other mental and physical levels; prolonged indulgence in sex, therefore, even by people who love one another deeply, cannot but be debilitating in the long run; by dulling the awareness, it becomes harmful even to the feeling of love itself. It follows that, while human love may incline naturally, in its early stages, to physical expression, the more a couple can learn to express their love for one another non-physically, the more perfect their love will grow over the years.

Even where there is pure, self-giving love, moreover, the more physical its manifestations the more all-absorbing it will tend to be. If you hold a matchstick up close to your eyes, you will not be able to see much of the surrounding scenery. Similarly, when one becomes engrossed in sexual love one's personal feelings cannot but obscure one's awareness of life's broader realities. That is why the Hindu Scriptures state that sexual indulgence, no matter how refined, increases the grip of egoism on the mind.

Much has been made during this past century of the harmfulness of repression. Little or no mention has been made of the uplifting effects of transmutation. If a person is fairly exploding with anger, it may sometimes be better for him to "get it off his chest" (though preferably without implicating the person with whom he is angry). The same is true with sexual expression, the desire for which is so inherent in human nature that to repress it can indeed lead to various physical and psychological problems. It is not repression, however, when a person seeks with understanding to redirect the flow of this energy upward toward the brain. Energy so directed can give one tremendous powers of accomplishment on all levels of life. Where there is the consent of the will there is not repression, but transmutation.

Water that is left to gather with no outlet in a pool may become stagnant, but if the water can be kept flowing it will remain sweet and pure. When one can learn how to direct his energy into wholesome channels instead of letting it stagnate in a pool of unfulfilled desire, or instead of wasting it on a field of clay, he finds that, far from there being any harmful effects in this deliberate effort at self-control, the effects are entirely positive: greater joy, a more dynamic power of concentration, greater physical strength. It is no accident that even in the West, where celibacy has been underrated and scorned as contrary to God's law, many creative geniuses have never married, or have remained celibate for long periods. Examples spring readily to mind: Brahms, Beethoven, Newton, Kant, Nietzsche, to mention but a few out of a veritable crowd.

Yoga teachings are never put forth as commandments. The yogi is taught not to feel guilty if he slips, nor to beat himself mentally if he cannot as yet live up to an ideal. He should, however, for his own sake—not for the sake of an indifferent society—strive gradually to redirect his energies upward from matter to Spirit. Growth must come naturally, not in violence to one's nature. Self-control in all things, however, is the direction of true growth. In a later lesson we shall give techniques that will help the student in this heroic effort.

The pleasure of sexual experience is fleeting, but the joy that comes from redirecting that energy upward toward the brain is unending. It fills the whole body. Even in sleep and in other non-meditative activities, every cell of the body dances with joy.

Patanjali says that when non-sensuality becomes confirmed (mentally as well as physically), the yogi attains great vigor. Swami Vivekananda attributed his phenomenal mental powers to a lifelong observance of this principle. Someone once gave him the entire Encyclopædia Britannica. Two weeks later he had already read the first thirteen volumes. A disciple of his remarked, "But you can't have retained much of what you have read!" "Question me on anything you can find in those thirteen volumes," challenged the swami. He answered every question correctly, even to dates and names of places.

Granting that he was a born genius, it is nevertheless possible for everyone, through perfect transmutation of the sex energy, to achieve extraordinary mental clarity and vigor.

This principle of non-sensuality must be applied also in meditation. It is more than a matter of not dwelling on sense pleasures instead of on the thought of God. As my *paramguru* (my guru's guru) Swami Sri Yukteswarji said, many people renounce sense pleasures only to seek them on a subtler plane in the form of visions and other spiritual phenomena. The goal of the spiritual path is union with God. Anything less than that constitutes only a type of self-indulgence. It can become a distraction from the true search unless it is offered back with devotion to the Supreme Lord.

In meditation, try to raise your energy and consciousness up through the spine to the point between the eyebrows. This principle should also be followed during the practice of yoga postures. Seek by means of these postures to direct the body's energy up toward the brain. Do not allow it to become wasted in physical or mental tension, or in restless movements.

§

From Awaken to Superconsciousness

The last *yama*, though placed fourth in Patanjali's *Aphorisms*, is *brahmacharya*—self-control, or, more literally, “flowing with Brahma (the Supreme Spirit).” Usually, this teaching is applied to the practice of sexual abstinence. It has also, however, a

broader application. For *brahmacharya* means control of every natural appetite, of which sexual desire is the strongest but not the only one.

The ideal behind this teaching is to live identified with the Spirit, realizing ourselves as the soul living through the body, and no longer as the ego centered in body-consciousness. We should live in such a way as to master our appetites, and not allow ourselves to be mastered by them.

The recommendation here is not extreme abstinence, although complete sexual abstinence is at least a possibility. The important thing is to achieve self-control, first by moderation, directing our efforts only gradually toward perfect self-control.

To accomplish self-control, the seeker is taught even in the midst of enjoyment to direct that sense of enjoyment upward to the brain. He should try to feel that sensory pleasure is feeding his inner joy at its source in the Self.

There is an amusing story about George Bernard Shaw, the playwright, who inadvertently illustrated this principle. He was sitting alone on the outskirts of a party when the hostess came over and asked him, "Are you enjoying yourself?" He replied, "That's all I am enjoying!"

We should seek, in a similar spirit, to discern behind every outer experience the joy of our own being.

In meditation, especially, seek the flow of pure joy in the spine. That is the true river of baptism, outwardly symbolized in many religions as a river, but actually experienced as a mighty current in the deep spine. It is here alone that the seeker's consciousness is purified.

Many saints in various religions have made light of the human need to replace inner truths with outer symbols. A saint in India remarked, smiling, "Oh, it's no doubt true that your sins leave you when you bathe in the holy river Ganges. But they sit in the trees along the bank, and the moment you come out of the water they jump on you all over again!" Bathe, then, in the peace of meditation, and especially in the river of the spine. That is where you will experience true, spiritual baptism.

The power that comes through perfect control of all our natural appetites is an accession of boundless energy. For our energy and, indeed, all that we can express of creativity and enthusiasm flow the more strongly, the more we can tap the wellsprings of life within ourselves.

§

From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(16:1) *Self-restraint* means retaining always, even during times of sense enjoyment, the feeling of being centered inwardly in the Self. This doesn't mean not to enjoy good things,

but to realize that the *source* of that enjoyment is not in those things, but in one's own heart. Sadhus and other religiously dedicated people sometimes recommend that one not permit himself to enjoy *anything*. This is a very dry attitude. To neutralize the *vrittis*, or vortices of *chitta*, as Patanjali recommends, does not mean to *deaden* one's capacity for feeling, but simply to calm one's feeling quality and make it 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.

Thus, in any sensory experience -- the enjoyment of food, or sex, or anything at all -- never give in completely to the sensation. Remain somewhat restrained in every expression of feeling. In this way, self-control will gradually come easily to you, and you'll develop effortless control over the senses.

--*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Kriyananda

From KRIYANANDA

The fourth of the *yamas* is *brahmacharya*, or self-control. This quality, again, refers to attitude above all. It is a state of mind. Outer self-control, unless it is balanced by a sincere attempt, at least, at inner self-control, serves little purpose. For the student of these lessons, *brahmacharya* is a useful concept in a broad sense, primarily. My purpose is not to make monks and nuns of the students of this course, but to help them to understand the importance of keeping a rein on their energies. Self-control, in this context, refers especially to words and thoughts. Self-control is, in fact, the essential meaning of *brahmacharya*. Self-control is *self-containment*, not self-suppression. The more your powers radiate outward from your inner being, instead of “fizzing” restlessly through the senses, the more you will have your energy under control and will therefore be able to direct it effectively, according to actual needs of the moment.

Excessive speech is a great drain on people's mental energy. This doesn't mean they should all be taciturn! The “strong, silent type” often exasperates everyone around him by his reluctance to communicate even the simplest thoughts. The “babbler,” on the other hand, commands nobody's attention, and soon loses the respect of everyone.

Try to be circumspect in what you say. Take into consideration its possible negative consequences on others' feelings. Show *respect* for all, if you want them to respect you. The clearer your awareness is in these matters, the more easily you will penetrate through mists of uncertainty to the heart of all difficulties.

--*Material Success Through Yoga Principles, Lesson Nine*

§

FIFTH YAMA: NON-GREED/NON-ACCEPTANCE/*APARIGRAHA*

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

5. Non-attachment is the fifth yama. It has often been translated to mean the non-acceptance of gifts. My guru, however, accepted gifts, as have most other saints I have known. Not to do so would be ungracious. The whole purpose of not receiving gifts is to strengthen one's non-attachment. This yama, then, is a mental quality, not a specific outward act.

The positive fruit of non-attachment is complete inner freedom. Non-covetousness, the third *yama*, is not wishing to possess what is not yours. Non-attachment is not considering what *is* yours to be, even so, truly your own. One good practice for developing this quality is to give away freely to others anything of yours that they may covet.

Feel that whatever you possess is yours only on loan from God. It isn't really your own.

What about your children? Yes, them too. God has sent them to you, and God will take them back again when He chooses. If a child of yours were to die and to be born next door, the chances are you wouldn't even recognize him (or her).

And what about your wife or husband? What about your other relatives? Love will certainly draw back to you all those you love now. But in the long, winding path of countless incarnations, you really have only one true friend: God. Cultivate your friendship with Him, and, as Jesus put it, "All these things shall be added unto you."

Make this your constant affirmation: "I need no one, in myself I am free! I need nothing, in myself I am free! I am free, ever free, in myself I am free! I am blissful, ever free, in myself I am free!"

2-39. One who becomes established in non-attachment develops the ability to remember his past lives.

The reason for this phenomenon is that attachment to this particular body, and to the places, possessions, events, and things of this particular time make this incarnation appear to be your only reality. When attachment to present reality is overcome, your view of reality naturally expands over a broader field.

From *Raja Yoga*

Non-greed has often been translated to mean the non-receiving of gifts. I read Patanjali's meaning differently. He says, later on, that when a person becomes perfected in this virtue he can remember his former incarnations. What has the non-receiving of gifts to do with such a memory? Patanjali is not even talking of specific practices, but rather of states of consciousness. Non-greed is closer to the right translation. It differs from Patanjali's third rule of non-covetousness in the sense that non-covetousness means not to desire what is not rightfully one's own, while non-greed means not to be attached even to what already is one's own. Non-greed, perfectly practiced, leads one to become non-attached even to his own body. It is by such perfect non-attachment that the blindness of temporary identifications is overcome, with the result that one can remember his past identifications with other bodies, other places and events.

The yogi should realize that everything is God. Greed, or attachment, limits the mind to one body, and obscures the truth that the soul is, in essence, infinite and eternal.

Paramhansa Yogananda once said to a disciple: "You have a sour taste in your mouth, haven't you?" "How could you know?" asked the surprised disciple. "Because," replied the Master, "I am just as much in your body as I am in my own."

Freedom from physical limitations is no imaginary state, though even as such it would be preferable to imaginary bondage. But it can only be achieved if one is so perfectly non-attached to his limitations that they are no longer limiting to him.

In meditation, you will find it helpful to free yourself mentally from all worldly identifications. Cut the emotional strings that tie you to your possessions. Completely relax your body. Affirm mentally: "I am not the body! I am Spirit! Ever Blissful! Ever Free!"

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From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*

A natural corollary to the *yama* of “non-avarice” is “non-acceptance.” Some authorities have understood this word (*aparigraha*) to mean the non-acceptance of gifts, the idea being that to accept them might incur a karmic debt. This explanation is inadequate, however, as becomes clear from an examination of the power said to develop with the perfection of this principle. Non-acceptance, when brought to perfection, bestows the power to remember one's past incarnations.

To remember our past lives, we must withdraw our consciousness and energy from the body and enter a state of superconsciousness. It is only when the soul is not identified with its present body that it remembers its previous identities.

“Non-acceptance,” then, pairs naturally with “non-avarice.” Non-avarice signifies non-attachment to what is not our own; non-acceptance signifies non-attachment to what we would normally consider to be our own. The point is that nothing, truly, belongs to us. Everything—our bodies, our actions, our very thoughts—is the Lord's.

If, in meditation, you give yourself so completely to God that you realize the truth that all is His, you will attain results quickly.

This fourth attitude, as I've listed it here, is listed fifth by Patanjali, the authority in this field. I've changed his placement only to clarify the natural contrast between non-avarice and non-acceptance. There has been considerable confusion on these two points, partly for the very reason that they are separated in their traditional listing. Evidently, Patanjali chose to put non-acceptance last for another reason: It leads naturally into the next set of attitudes, the *niyamas*.

§

From KRIYANANDA

Non-greed, the fifth and last *yama*, is often taken to mean “the non-acceptance of gifts.” The true meaning of this quality, however, is “non-attachment.” Patanjali's *yamas* and *niyamas* must all be understood as *attitudes of mind*, not as rules of specific behavior. Where gifts are concerned, whether or not a person literally accepts them is a secondary issue; usually it depends on special and particular disciplines (monastic, usually). Our friends will be offended if we refuse to accept gifts from them, given as outward tokens of their affection. My Guru himself, indeed, accepted gifts; I never knew him to spurn them. The virtue he displayed in this regard was *non-attachment*, not “non-acceptance.” He gave things away to others quite as freely, when he saw that they desired what he had. One time, as a young man, he gave away a motorcycle—instantly and gladly, though he had seemed to prize it greatly. On that occasion, he saw a perfect stranger eyeing the machine enviously, and said, “Take it! It's yours.”

It is considered a pious act, moreover, to make offerings—that is to say, to give gifts—to the Lord Himself. Wouldn't it be deeply distressing to find that our gifts were somehow unacceptable to Him?

The issue of non-acceptance, then, must be understood also on a level of attitude as in the case of *ahimsa*. Non-attachment doesn't mean we must refuse to accept gifts. Rather, we should refuse to accept anything as really belonging to us, egoically speaking. This attitude may be understood in the context of Sri Krishna's advice in the Bhagavad Gita, to be non-attached at least to the fruits of action. This, for everyone, is a path to inner freedom.

Non-attachment differs from the third *yama*, non-covetousness, in an important respect: Non-covetousness means not to desire anything that is not one's own by right. "Non-attachment," on the other hand, means not to accept as one's own even that which *is* his by right.

An attitude of non-attachment is important for people who aspire to material success. It is far *more* likely to bring them success than an attitude of clutching feverishly at things. Attachment actually limits one's ability to succeed, for it prevents him from thinking beyond specific goals, and therefore from visualizing an even greater success. Indeed, attachment even limits one's understanding of the limitless potentials of success.

Success should be understood as signifying, above all, the feeling of satisfaction one derives from an accomplishment. As long as one lacks that feeling, he will not find true success in life even if he becomes a hundred times over a millionaire.

Attachment is a mind-set, binding one and preventing him from ever finding true happiness. To be happy, it is necessary to be inwardly free. Non-attachment, paradoxical as it may seem, actually *attracts* prosperity. Indeed, it already *is* a kind of prosperity!

--Material Success Through Yoga Principles, Lesson Nine

§

CONCLUSION – YAMAS

From *Raja Yoga*

Conclusion. It may be said, finally, that all five of the rules of *yama* unite in a single purpose: to prevent the yogi from misdirecting his energies, that he may channel them all toward constructive purposes, and thereby achieve the power necessary to the highest forms of success:

By an attitude of non-injury (*ahimsa*) he no longer wastes his energy in animosities, of which the sum of all gains and losses is always zero. By strict truthfulness he no longer wastes his strength in creating and sustaining a private dream world of his own, or in wishing out of existence realities over which he has no control; allying himself with reality as it is, he finds that he can actually draw on universal forces to improve his circumstances. By an attitude of non-stealing, or non-covetousness, he no longer scatters his forces in desiring what is not rightfully his, and what therefore could not help him in his own path to perfection. By non-sensuality he withdraws his energy from over-identification with outward enjoyments, that he may freely enjoy the much greater, if exceedingly subtle, bliss of the soul. By non-greed, or non-attachment even to what is rightfully his, he keeps his energy free to move ever forward on the highway to infinity.

A bucket that is riddled with holes cannot be filled with milk. The mind of man, similarly, cannot be filled with divine peace so long as its powers are continuously drained by attachments and desires. The rules of *yama* are intended to help the yogi to seal those "holes," that he may begin to store in his body and brain the "milk" of divine peace.

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The Rewards/Powers associated with the Yamas

From *Raja Yoga*

The more the energy is withdrawn from the coccyx center, or *muladhara chakra*, the more one develops the power to follow inwardly, as well as outwardly, the rules of *yama* (control)—the "don'ts" of the spiritual path. As I mentioned in Step 4, the more perfect one becomes in these rules, the more he manifests their positive fruits. The fruit of perfect non-injury is that even wild animals and ferocious criminals become tame or subdued in one's presence. The fruit of perfection in non-lying is that one develops the power to attain the fruits of acting without even acting.

When the third rule of *yama*, non-stealing, becomes firmly rooted, one finds wealth coming to him whenever he needs it. When non-sensuality, the fourth virtue in this series, becomes firmly rooted the yogi attains great vigor. And when non-greed, the last of these

principles, becomes established even to the extent of non-identification with one's own possessions and body, one acquires the power to remember his previous identities in other bodies.

The more the energy is withdrawn from the sacral center, the more one develops the power to follow inwardly, as well as outwardly, the principles of *niyama*, the "do's" of the spiritual path. Perfection in these principles as one continues to advance spiritually confers upon one, as I mentioned in Step 5, subtle rewards also. From perfect cleanliness arises a disinclination for the pleasures of the body. From contentment one develops the power to realize divine bliss. Through inward austerity one develops the so-called miraculous *siddhis*, or powers. Through self-study (*swadhyaya*) one develops the power to commune with beings on higher spheres of existence. And by devotion to the Supreme Lord one develops the power to commune with Him.

§

Chapter Fifth: NiyAMAS

Introduction

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

2-32. The niyamas (observances) consist of purity, contentment, austerity (accepting but not causing pain), self-study (introspection), and openness to higher truths.

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From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*

The niyamas, or “do's,” of the path of meditation number five also, as I said earlier. They are cleanliness, contentment, austerity, introspection (self-study, or self-awareness), and devotion to the Supreme Lord.

Again, these qualities must be understood subtly. “Cleanliness,” for example, applies to purity of the heart far more than to bodily cleanliness, though of course it includes the latter. “Contentment” is not smugness, but an attitude that one should hold courageously in the face of the greatest vicissitudes. “Austerity” is not the performance of outward penances, but an attitude of dis-involvement with outwardness. Introspection (self-study, or self-awareness) would seem to be directed more obviously inward, but it implies much more than self-analysis. For self-analysis keeps the mind tied to the ego, whereas what is meant, primarily, is to hold the mind up for guidance by the silent whispers of intuition. Devotion to the Supreme Lord, finally, is a reference to devotion that is directed inward, not scattered outwardly in religious ceremonies and rituals.

Interestingly, there is a complementary relationship between the five niyamas and their opposite yamas. Contentment, for example, is complemented by non-avarice. Introspection (self-study) has a natural correlation to non-acceptance. Austerity ties in with brahmacharya; cleanliness, with ahimsa; and devotion to the Supreme Lord with the avoidance of untruthfulness.

The positive aspect of non-avarice, and the way to perfect oneself in this quality, is to live with an attitude of contentment regardless of any circumstance.

Non-acceptance, which means not accepting the thought that we own anything, has as its positive aspect the contemplation of being, not of non-being—of what we are, not of what we are not. Swadhyaya is the Sanskrit name for this niyama. Since dhyaya means “study,” authorities often translate it to mean “study of the scriptures.” Swa, however, refers to self. “Self-study,” then, is a more approximate translation of the word. And since all the yama-niyamas refer more to mental qualities than to outer practices, swadhyaya has a deeper meaning than intellectual self-analysis. It is a reference, rather, to ever deeper self-awareness—a process that transcends mental introspection and requires us to see ourselves and everything around us in relation to the higher, divine Self. “Dwell always,” it tells us, “in the consciousness of the Self within.”

With the dawning of this consciousness, we become aware of the Lord as our true Self.

First Niyama: Cleanliness/ Saucha

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

1. Purity used to be translated, “cleanliness.” Both words will do. That is impure, and unclean, which obscures the presence of God. If one doesn’t bathe regularly—several times a day, in hot climates—it becomes difficult to rise above body-consciousness. Purity means also to shun gross company; it means to avoid both telling and listening to dirty jokes; avoiding people whose vocabulary is unkind, boastful, or coarse; and avoiding those whose subject of conversation is heavily laced with ego and with contempt for others.

2-40. For one who becomes fully cleansed and pure spiritually, there arises a disinclination for physical contact with others, and for the touch of one’s own body.

It is the sense of touch, more than any of the other senses, which awakens sexual desire. Thus, complete purity, physical and mental, leads to effortless continence.

The positive aspect of this otherwise negative disinclination is that it makes one long for the touch of pure bliss in all space.

2-41. One gains, moreover, a purely sattwic outlook, the ability to concentrate onepointedly, a cheerful attitude, mastery over the senses, and an ability for inner communion.

Purity begins to look better and better! A purely sattwic outlook makes one see only the good in everything. Those people who tell themselves they owe it to—the world? themselves? their growing children? society? their self-respect?—to see the dark side of everything haven’t nearly the impact on everything and everybody that those have whose outlook on life is sattwic and forever cheerful.

All good things, moreover, come from sattwa: sense mastery, concentration, inner communion.

And all these things follow from having a pure consciousness.

From Raja Yoga

Cleanliness means not only physical cleanliness, but also a heart cleansed of attachments, and of the vain preoccupations of a worldly mind. Cleanliness of body is important for the yogi. Without physical cleanliness there can be no real beginning at self-mastery. The physically unclean person is forced into an awareness of his body that prevents him from soaring to loftier perceptions. The body is unclean not only when physical dirt and other foreign matter attach themselves to it externally, but also when unnatural foods are introduced into it internally—when one cannot properly eliminate waste products from his body.

The heart of man is impure when it longs for anything that is foreign to its own nature. Dirt is not dirt when it is out-of- doors on the ground. There, it is more properly thought of as earth. It is when earth is found indoors that it is considered unclean. To long for the things of this world is a mark of inner impurity not necessarily because the things of this world are impure in themselves (can anything made by God be considered essentially unholy?), but because the soul's true and natural realm is the spiritual. "Father," said St. Augustine, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." It is the nature of the soul to find fulfillment in itself, in communion with the Highest Reality.

Cleanliness, outwardly and inwardly, physically and mentally, is a necessary step towards freedom from the physical imperatives. Patanjali says that from perfect cleanliness there arises a consciousness of freedom from the body, a disinclination for its natural pleasures. By the same token, he says, one who has reached this state is no longer inclined to seek pleasure from others, physically, nor to commune with them on a physical plane; one's love for them becomes selfless and spiritual. For when the heart has been freed of internal impurities, one is able to see through the veil of matter and to discover in all men the spiritual essence that is his own Self. Once the dust of selfish desire has been removed from the rooms of man's inner consciousness, he is able to see that the things he has desired in this physical world are but Spirit, too, in essence.

The Sanskrit word from which I (and most writers) have taken the meaning, "disinclination" (for one's own body and for contact with the bodies of others), means also, "protectiveness." Protectiveness toward the body, and a sense of protection of the body from contact with others, while more a practice than a result of virtue (Patanjali's actual reference was to the *fruits* of cleanliness), is yet a valid and important aspect of this subject. For the vibrations of every man's consciousness are, in a sense, unique. If he mixes indiscriminately with others, even though desiring nothing from them, there will yet be an interchange of vibrations that may dilute his own personal life stream. The vibrations of other men, though not necessarily bad in themselves, may yet be subtly disturbing to one's own vibrations, to one's own particular line of inner development. To mix with few people, and to try to limit even this association to the company of spiritual people, can be invaluable to spiritual progress.

Yogis often, indeed, prefer total solitude during certain sensitive stages of their spiritual unfoldment. (I can offer a personal testimony on this point: I have a spot in the woods to which I go when I want to escape the continual demands that are made on my time. I am always amazed at the inner freedom that I feel, not only in escaping those demands, but

in being in a place that has no other human vibrations but my own. It is as if countless psychic strings had been untied, leaving me free inwardly to fly.) There are yogis who will never wear other people's clothing, who eat only from their own dishes, sleep in their own bedding, and who sit down only after first spreading out their own cloths upon which to sit. A widespread custom that has its basis in this same principle is the *namaskar*, a palms-folded greeting (meaning, "My soul bows to your soul") that is the common Indian alternative to the Western handshake.

Worldly people insist that one live among them, and be as much like them as possible, seeking God (if one must) in the noise and turmoil of the marketplace. It is true, of course, that God is everywhere, and that therefore He can be found anywhere. But to find Him it is important, no matter where one seeks Him, that one weed out of his heart everything that is extraneous to one's own spiritual nature. If one can go off to a quiet place, where the distractions are fewer, one's progress will be more rapid. Spiritual progress comes not so much by learning to cope with the world as by learning not to *depend* on the world. And while it is true that obstacles may help to awaken in one that energetic determination without which real growth is impossible, there are obstacles enough and to spare in oneself for it to be quite unnecessary to add to them deliberately. Anyone who courts the world in the name of increasing his spiritual strength is more than likely seeking an excuse to indulge his worldly, not his spiritual, inclinations.

Cleanliness on all levels helps to free the mind, that it may soar in the infinite skies. In meditation, approach God with a pure heart, offering up all your desires to Him. In the practice of *hatha yoga*, too, cleanliness must be considered a paramount principle. It is probably the essence of *hatha yoga* practice, involving as it does the removal of toxins and of other physical impurities, of tension, of obstructions to the flow of energy in the body. *Hatha yoga* concentrates less on increasing one's energy than on removing those impurities which prevent one from having the perfect strength and radiant well-being that are his spiritual birthright.

§

From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*

"Cleanliness" pairs naturally with ahimsa (non-violence). For only by renouncing the desire to do violence in any way to others do we develop that sweet innocence which is the surest sign of a heart inwardly pure and at peace. From cleanliness arises a disinterest in one's own body, and a loss of the need for contact with others. The need for human contact arises from a consciousness of separateness from others. Mental acceptance of separateness is, in its own way, an act of violence, for it offends against the realization of life's underlying unity. With perfection in non-violence we achieve that absolute inner purity which is recommended by the *niyama* of cleanliness.

From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(16:1) *Purity of heart* comes when one has removed from his heart any feeling that is foreign to his true nature. Thus, purity begins by removing anything that nourishes his consciousness of ego. This includes, of course, all the motivations for fear that were listed above. Included also must be an absence of selfish or "ulterior" motive. A person who is pure of heart is guileless, and never harbors the slightest wish to make use of anyone without his willing consent. He bears no malice toward others. Indeed, with such purity alone he

automatically manifests virtually all the spiritual qualities listed above: absence of malice, harmlessness, forgiveness, truthfulness (selecting these as examples, primarily).

Cleanliness is an outward reflection of an ordered mind. When someone keeps his person clean -- either his body or his clothing -- it is an indication of self-respect as well as of regard for the feelings of others. One time in America Paramhansa Yogananda met a man who was unkempt, filthy, and seemingly indifferent to what anyone thought of him (though quite possibly this was a pose intended to shock others, which would have shown definite interest in their opinions!). Yogananda asked him, "Why do you appear like that?"

"I'm a renunciate!" announced the other, proudly.

"But you've become attached in a new way," the master replied, " -- to disorder!"

--The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda

§

From KRIYANANDA

The secret of radiant health and wellbeing is cleanliness, within and without; wholesome emotions; good thoughts. Disease thrives where there is impurity, but good health flourishes where attention is paid to cultivating physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual purity.

--The secret of radiant health and wellbeing, Swami Kriyananda

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Cleanliness, the first *niyama*, means purity of heart, above all. In the business world, purity of heart means not to entertain hidden, ulterior motives. Be clear about your true intentions. The more you view your work as a service to others, the more others will sense your generosity and have confidence in you. Ulterior motives unmask themselves, sooner or later. They are revealed sooner, moreover, in a person's eyes and general demeanor.

Consider a statement I've often heard made by shopkeepers in India. At the end of the day they've said to me, "Sir, if you will buy from my shop I will be lucky, for you will be my first customer today." I wonder how shopkeepers manage to make this plea with a straight face! A wiser merchant would show interest in the customer's luck, surely, not in his own! Much better would it be if he simply made people feel that he was glad to see *them*.

--Material Success Through Yoga Principles, Lesson Nine

The reward (from Raja Yoga)

From perfect cleanliness arises a disinclination for the pleasures of the body.

Second Niyama: Contentment

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

2. Contentment (*santosha*) is described in the Mahabharata as the supreme virtue, for from it flow all the other virtues. Whatever your lot in life, be contented with it. There is a truth here which is not evident to everybody: contentment, by placing you in harmony with divine law, actually ensures that all your needs will be provided for. Even if your past karma is very bad, if in the midst of failure, loss, and disappointment you determine to remain contented, your needs will be fulfilled.

For contentment, when rightly practiced, is not a passive virtue. It presupposes, under all circumstances, an energetic, bright attitude.

True contentment is an act of divine faith. It is not an emotional state, for it thrives only in inner calmness. To say, "I have a nice home, a good wife, good children, a good income; I'm contented," is to miss the point entirely. Mere outward fulfillment is a condition: true contentment depends on no outer condition. It depends on serenity of heart.

2-42. Contentment leads to superlative happiness.

One cannot attain true happiness by merely hoping for it, gloomily! One must decide to *be* happy if he would go beyond contentment and achieve a state of vital, vibrant happiness.

§

From Raja Yoga

Contentment is often praised by yogis as the supreme virtue. If one can oppose with deliberate contentment the tendency of the heart to reach outside itself for its satisfactions, one feels joy inwardly unceasingly.

Every worldly satisfaction is possible only because of a joyousness in the heart. Without inner joy, external fulfillment is impossible. If one has inner joy, however, and knows that it is within that the source of joy truly lies, he can enjoy all things innocently as reflections of that inner consciousness. Purity and cleanliness mean freedom from the need for anything, in the realization that one already is everything. This realization brings supreme joy to the soul. The soul realizes that it is joy. But joy cannot be found by merely waiting for it to come, as if it, like outward fulfillments, were hiding somewhere over the horizon in futurity. Joy is always right NOW. Divine states have a way of coming (in the words of Jesus) "like a thief in the night." We should not pray, "Lord, why don't you give me your joy?" We should pray *with* joy, and we shall discover in the very act of expressing joy that we have opened our channels to Divine Joy.

Do not merely say, then, negatively, that you are not attached to this thing or to that person. Affirm always positively in your heart, "Whatever comes of itself, let it come, but I am ever content in my inner heart." This practice, Patanjali says, leads ultimately to the realization of Divine Bliss in every atom of creation, even beyond creation.

In the practice of the yoga postures, do them always with a sense of quiet enjoyment. Feel almost as if you were smiling while you practice the postures. Learn the rhythm and capacities of your own body, and lead it gently on the pathway to perfection. Western culture is not geared to think that one can be conscientious in doing one's duty, whether to oneself or to the world, and yet remain inwardly happy. The furrowed brow, the compressed lips—these, to the worldly mind, are the price one pays for having serious goals in life. But in fact one can accomplish a great deal more if he enjoys his work. One can advance far more rapidly in Yoga, too, if one bears in mind this teaching of great yogis, that contentment is the supreme virtue.

§

From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*

“Cleanliness,” for example, applies to purity of the heart far more than to bodily cleanliness, though of course it includes the latter. “Contentment” is not smugness, but an attitude that one should hold courageously in the face of the greatest vicissitudes. “Austerity” is not the performance of outward penances, but an attitude of dis-involvement with outwardness. Introspection (self-study, or self-awareness) would seem to be directed more obviously inward, but it implies much more than self-analysis. For self-analysis keeps the mind tied to the ego, whereas what is meant, primarily, is to hold the mind up for guidance by the silent whispers of intuition. Devotion to the Supreme Lord, finally, is a reference to devotion that is directed inward, not scattered outwardly in religious ceremonies and rituals.

Interestingly, there is a complementary relationship between the five *niyamas* and their opposite *yamas*. Contentment, for example, is complemented by non-avarice. Introspection (self-study) has a natural correlation to non-acceptance. Austerity ties in with *brahmacharya*; cleanliness, with *ahimsa*; and devotion to the Supreme Lord with the avoidance of untruthfulness.

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Contentment (*santosha*) is the second *niyama*. Scripture describes it as the supreme virtue. Contentment is akin to non-attachment. As I stated above, if you can be inwardly non-attached it will be easy for you also to be contented. Contentment, however, should also be practiced deliberately; it should not be sought in acquisitions... Contentment in the Self, even in the face of adversity, wins the respect and friendship of everyone, for it is a quality that everyone desires.

--*Material Success Through Yoga Principles, Lesson Nine*

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The reward (from *Raja Yoga*)

From contentment one develops the power to realize divine bliss.

§

From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(2:70) *He finds contentment into whom all desires move as channels of water into the ocean which is constantly being supplied and is ever without motion. He has not attained peace who is ruffled by the outrush of little desires.*

Poetic Rendition

As streams of rivers keep the sea ever filled and changeless in its apparent vastness, so rivers of desires absorbed in the ocean of human self keep him overflowing with energy, contentment, and a peace which never oscillates. He never feels the mind-brimful sea of peace who lets his vast inner powers flow out through the channels of continuously cropping desires.

Spiritual Interpretations

The above Gita stanza was one of the oft-quoted favorite verses of my great Master,—Swami Sri Yukteswarji. Often he would feel this vast ocean of peace which he created within himself by absorbing all material desires, and then he would express in a sonorous voice all he felt within, and a spiritually sensitive soul could feel my Master's perception of peace, transferred within himself. I often inwardly hear him recite the above Gita verse in Sanskrit as I used to in days long gone by.

When the vast reservoir of inner peace is let out through the complex channels of little desires, those accumulated waters of contentment are absorbed and lost on the soil of material perceptions. As a great dam of water can be scattered and lost by opening the various gates of the dam, so the peace of the soul is lost when a man indiscriminately opens the gates of all his desires.

The Vasty Deep

The sea unlike a small reservoir is vast in its flood of waters and keeps itself supplied by the rivers which flow into it. Besides, the sea is deep and seldom becomes shallow enough to lose its water on dry land.

So the mighty man of peace keeps his soul a sea of contentment. Instead of losing that peace through the avenues of small desires he lets all the rivers of desires become absorbed within himself. This keeps his sea of peace filled to the brim.

On the other hand, a man who has a small reservoir of peace and, instead of reinforcing it with more waters of peace from other souls, loses his contentment by letting its waters run out through a million channels of harmful desires, becomes unhappy, having lost his stored-up joy-giving peace.

Every man should be a vast deep sea of peace, drawing unto him the rivers of joys of other's souls and turning back towards the self the streams of desires which through ignorance are hidden within man.

In other words, do not empty your soul's peace by constantly diverting it by running after small but evergrowing desires. The wakeful soul desires less and less and finds his soul a sea of contentment. This does not mean however that we should not cultivate the desire of helping others to know God. In noble desires the soul does not lose its peace, but like watering channels which combine themselves with the stream of joys of others who have been fulfilled, the soul's good wish to bring back the reinforced joys of other souls into the sea of peace.

A desire to give joy to others and the outgoing activity of giving peace to others bring back great peace and joy to the soul. But the satisfaction of any lustful desire of yielding to the senses is spoken of as bringing dissatisfaction and loss of energy and peace.

Good Desires Are Helpful

Letting the soul-peace run through the channels of harmful desires is wrong, but reinforcing the soul with good desires which yield joy is extremely beneficial to the man who constantly cuts channels of wrong desires in his reservoir of soul-peace is constantly disturbed and ultimately comes empty.

Everyone should try to become an ocean of peace by bringing within rivers of joy from streams of goodness from other souls. When doing so he should dig the island bed of his soul sea deep with the dredging machine of soul powered meditation, so that the incoming joys of others and powers of goodness may find a vast place within to contain themselves instead of flowing out.

Thus the man who is an ocean of peace is constant and changeless in his joys, keeping himself a vast deep ocean in which he attracts all other goodness of souls to flow into good company, study of the scriptures, philanthropic activities, good desires, spiritual ambitions and meditation.

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Yogananda, *Inner Culture*, October 1941

§

From *Affirmations for Self-Healing*

Contentment has been said to be the supreme virtue. Contentment means living to the fullest the good of every passing moment. Above all, it means living *behind* the present moment, in the Eternal Now.

How much is lost in life by people who perennially wish things other than they are! who complain unceasingly, and tell themselves that the world owes them more than it is giving them!

We must smile inwardly with God, knowing that life is His dream. Contentment is the surest way of drawing the very best out of every circumstance.

Affirmation

Through life's mightiest storms, I am contented, for I hold in my heart God's peace.

Prayer

Lord, as You live eternally at rest in Yourself, so let me live also, contented ever, that I may be worthy of living in Your joy.

**

From YOGANANDA

Question: What is meant by being contented but not satisfied?—T.H.

Answer: **Contentment** has in it an element of cheerful renunciation. It also includes a keen realization of the possession of things that are really worth while. We attain contentment; we are not born with it. To be content does not mean passive resignation to evil, nor unnecessary and unproductive sufferings that might be cured, nor does it mean dumb submission to pain and injury, nor an expressionless existence.

Contentment and satisfaction do not come with the possession of things; neither does prosperity consist in the possession of wealth. The possession of and the care for things can become a real burden. On the other hand, the relief in the realization that we are no longer responsible for material possessions is often very keen. The perception of one's powers and limitations is in itself a source of contentment.

Habitual Wants

A created want becomes a natural want in time through habit. Whatever the want may be, it gives pain. The more wants we have, the greater the possibilities of pain, for the more wants we have, the more difficult it is to fulfill them, and the more wants that remain unfilled, the greater is the pain.

If desire finds no prospect of immediate fulfillment, or finds an obstruction, then pain immediately arises. Why do we desire and long for things? Why do we yearn for states of mind, of feeling, of soul qualities and attainments? It is because we remember that once we were perfect, and it is for that long-lost perfection that we yearn. We are all children of God.

Purpose and aim are the qualities which make or mar an individual's life. If we have a driving purpose in life, we can tap the resources of the Infinite for power, and if that stirring purpose is in tune with the oneness of all Creation, we shall come to find life growing richer and wider. Such motives build the eternal things of Spirit, and they never fail.

You Have Not Failed

If you fail while putting forth your best, your utmost cheerful effort, you have not failed. Get up and march on. You must be patient and persevering. Nothing is accomplished by those who are impatient or easily discouraged.

You may have every legitimate wish fulfilled in this life and enjoy all your possessions, provided you have them and enjoy them with the consciousness of God. Supreme knowledge is within us. No outside agency can bring it to us or take it away from us.

We can begin to know God by first knowing ourselves, and as we grow in our knowledge of God, we will advance in knowledge of ourselves. It is the nature of God to express His perfection through man, but man's mind is so filled with the outer things of life that there is no time or place for the inner Real Self to come forth.

Since the attainment of health, success, and happiness by material methods is limited and uncertain, you must learn how to receive health and energy from Cosmic Energy, how to receive the power to create at will the things you need by learning the art of super-concentration as taught by Self-Realization Fellowship, and how to receive happiness from the actual contact of the Supreme Inner Being and Force.

What Is True Happiness?

True happiness can come only from being in tune with the Infinite, just as lasting prosperity can come only by knowing the law governing prosperity. However, prosperity may be swept away in an instant, but no power can disturb your inner poise and knowledge once it has been attained. We gain strength by tuning our thoughts with the vibrations from God, until at last, like the wave that has become one with the ocean, we have become one with all Infinitude.

The yearning for our lost perfection, the urge to do and be the noblest, the most beautiful of which we are capable, is the creative impulse of every high achievement. We strive for perfection here because we long to be restored to our Oneness with God.

-- *Inner Culture* magazine, January 1940

§

Third Niyama: Tapasya/ Austerity

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

3. Austerity means withholding energy from going in any direction you'd like to take. It means accepting, but not causing, pain. Self-deprivation builds up energy to be dispensed in a more important direction, such as God-communion. This quality can develop pride, in which case it becomes its own enemy. It is most safely practiced, then, in a spirit of benevolence, of wanting to bless everybody.

To accept pain unflinchingly takes will power, but it also takes mental detachment from the body. To develop this ability, start in little ways. Place food in your mouth, and try not to taste it. Take a cold shower, and don't let the cold affect you. Willingly accept slights or insults from others, but don't be inwardly affected by anything they say. Tell jokes against yourself. When others laugh at you, laugh with them. Benevolence is the best way to overcome any pains received—yes, even physical ones. For a benevolent feeling toward your body lessens, or even eliminates, any pain felt there. And benevolence is also a way (obviously so) of overcoming any impulse to cause pain in others.

When one is truly committed to what he believes in, he should be willing to fail, or even to die, in his endeavor to accomplish it.

2-43. Austerity cleanses one's consciousness of impurities of both body and senses, resulting in the appearance of special powers.

Fasting is one example of a way to cleanse the body. Restraining the senses from outer distraction frees the mind to concentrate on worthwhile matters. (In our modern times, people customarily submit themselves to an incessant barrage of television, radio, telephone, the internet, etc.) It will strengthen our will if we teach ourselves to accept pain stoically, but we should never cause pain in others.

As in these ways our consciousness is cleansed of impurities and distractions, some among us develop the power to make things happen as we'd like them to; to understand something of our past lives; to see into the future; to be aware of events taking place far away. There are other powers also. All of us have these powers latent within us, for they are inherent in every soul.

From Raja Yoga

Tapasya, or austerity, is not a popular word in the West. To the Westerner, a contented life means one that is cluttered with the so-called "good" things: television, fine clothes, the best of foods, the latest in transportation. But these things, as we have already said, rob one of his contentment. The more distractions a person has, the more empty he feels in his heart. It is necessary to weed—indeed, to *thrust*—out of one's life the distractions that reach out coaxingly from every billboard, and from the dancing eyes of people who still hope to find their fulfillment in things.

There is a certain amount of sternness necessary if one is to stem this outward-pulling tide. To the dilettante it will always seem that the creative artist, concentrating silently on his work, is missing half the fun in life. But the artist knows that,

unless and until he can channel his energies, he will not be able to create things of lasting beauty.

Patanjali says that from this redirection of one's energies—from external matter to the inner self—one develops certain subtle powers, or yogic siddhis, that are latent in man. Once these powers, no longer spilled and wasted on the sands of matter, are gathered and directed one-pointedly by a consciousness that is in full command of itself, yogis claim that there is scarcely any feat of which one is not capable. It is said that great yogis can create and destroy galaxies. Certain it is that the fulfillment found in the Self is far greater than could possibly be found by a mind that imagines itself to be free in its scorn for self-restraint, while it runs undisciplined through the "labyrinthine ways" of sense indulgence.

Every act of the yogi should be deliberate. He should sit with a sense of setting his body down to rest, rather than of collapsing into a chair. He should move, talk, smile, and eat always with a sense that he is his own master, never with the feeling that his body is running away with him like a car on a hill when its brakes suddenly fail.

When you sit to meditate, discipline your mind to behave. Don't let it run away with you merely because it wants to, because that is its habit. Make the very first minutes of meditation as earnest and deep as the last.

In *hatha yoga* one should be very deliberate, and yet harmonious, in every movement, whether it be only the uncurling of a finger. Austerity, far from implying a grim attitude, is really the concomitant of an attitude of perfect inner contentment.

§

From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*

Austerity is the natural corollary to *brahmacharya* (self-control), for it means an attitude of taking energy that was formerly directed outwardly, and rechanneling it with ever increasing fervor into the spiritual search.

From KRIYANANDA

Tapasya, austerity (the third *niyama*), for the businessman means living an uncluttered life, in a consciousness of inner freedom. It means not casting about for unnecessary ways of keeping oneself busy. Austerity is necessary for the achievement of calmness and concentration. It is also necessary for achieving success, whatever one's field of activity. One who knows what he wants and directs his energies toward that achievement is far more likely to succeed than one who hopes vaguely to succeed, but isn't quite sure how to go about it. An uncluttered mind is a clear mind. It is essential for all forms of accomplishment.

--*Material Success Through Yoga Principles, Lesson Nine*

The reward (from *Raja Yoga*)

Through inward austerity one develops the so-called miraculous *siddhis*, or powers.

§

From *Rays of the Same Light – Week 41, Bhagavad Gita*

This passage is from the fourteenth Chapter, the 24th and 25th Stanzas. In these Stanzas Krishna describes the enlightened sage:

"Unaffected by outward joys and sorrows, or by praise and blame; secure in his divine nature; regarding with equal gaze a clod of mud, a stone, and a bar of gold; impartial toward all experiences, whether pleasant or unpleasant; firm-minded; untouched by either praise or blame; treating everyone alike whether friend or foe; free from the delusion that, in anything he does, he is the doer: Such an one has transcended Nature's triune qualities."

Commentary

In this passage we find expressed the positive side of austerity. Austerity, as presented here, doesn't mean fanaticism or exaggerated self-discipline. Rather, it signifies the calm realization that this universe is only a dream, and that nothing matters except God's love and the eternal joy of loving Him.

Strenuous effort is required, certainly—especially in the early stages of the spiritual life—to reject all delusive attachments and desires. The devotee can avoid discouragement by reflecting on the bright side of renunciation: the soul's eventual freedom in God. In that divine state, he should remind himself, the soul will be untouched by delusion of any kind. Devastating storms of emotion may rage around him: He will remain ever at the storm's center: blissful, self-possessed.

Renunciation without the thought of its higher purpose may set a person in conflict with himself. Or, again, one who embraces renunciation for its own sake may sink into that smug self-righteousness which is more or less the only reward people get who follow the spiritual path joylessly.

When a businessman reinvests some of his profits instead of spending them, it is in the hope of increasing his prosperity. And when a person refrains from replying cuttingly

to a verbal assault from a friend, it is to preserve their friendship. Mature human beings realize that worthwhile goals can be achieved only if they invest energy toward them instead of squandering it.

The same is true on the spiritual path. Renunciation represents an investment: the lesser interest in exchange for the greatest of all possible gains.

People often remonstrate, "When you go off and meditate, you are only avoiding life!" This charge can be answered with a simple question: Do they themselves reproach high school graduates for going on to college, instead of immediately seeking jobs? Certainly not! They know that a higher education will help them to find better jobs later on. The same is true for the spiritual search.

The devotee who meditates daily gains increasing mental clarity. In this sense, indeed, he finds immediate benefits from meditation, as well as long-term ones. His increasing inner clarity enables him to cope efficiently with the most mundane problems.

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

§

Forth Niyama: Swadhyaya/Self-Study/Study of the Scripture

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

4. *Swadhyaya* is often translated as study of the scriptures. *Swa*, however, means the self. The object of study, then, is the self. Self-study means more than introspection, for it means also, “self-awareness.” An example: I am now an old man, and have become a little wobbly. But I find it a blessing in one important respect, for I am forced, now, to be more aware of every move I make lest I take a good tumble! Be aware, whatever your age, of how you move; how you sit; of the tone of your voice; of the way you react to others, and how you show interest in them.

Be aware of how you laugh. Some people bray like donkeys! Some people laugh with a loud heartiness that betrays insensitivity to others. Some people’s laughter is nasal, displaying intellectual pride. Some people’s laughter is warm and embracing. There are many kinds of laughter. Listen to it in others. Others can be a good gauge for your own behavior—not to criticize, but to help you decide how you want to present yourself to the world.

Self-awareness also is a kind of introspection—not analytical, but often resulting in self-analysis.

In fact, introspection follows naturally on the heels of self-awareness.

2-44. Self-study and introspection aids communion with one’s *ishtadevata*, or chosen form of God.

God, of course, is without form. But just as He/She has produced all forms in the universe, so God has appeared to countless saints in whatever forms they loved best. Why not? It is not their mental creation: it is a superconscious expression of the Divine Itself.

How can self-study effect this end? That is more of a problem! Obviously, there is more meaning in both “self-study” and “introspection” than either of these concepts suggest. The usual translation, “study of the scriptures,” falls almost laughably short of the goal. Yet, in that expression there is a hint of deeper meaning. *Swadhyaya* must mean above all self-awareness of some higher kind—awareness of the true Self, surely. The more aware you become of your own higher Self—that part of you which is not involved in outward activities, but which dwells within you, watching everything that goes on in your life—the more you will approach awareness of the divine within you.

§

From *Raja Yoga*

Swadhyaya is usually translated to mean, simply, study (usually of the scriptures). But *swa* means *self*. The proper translation, then, is “*self-study*.” The proper study of man lies not in books or in the gathering of intellectual information; it is the supreme adventure of self-discovery. But again, *self-study* means a great deal more than self-analysis and the probing of one’s hidden motives. It means also, in a deeper sense, self-awareness.

It has been said that the difference between true yogic studies and those which are encouraged in school is that in school one seeks to gain learning, whereas in yoga one seeks to lose it. *Self-study*, in a yogic sense, signifies rooting out from one's heart those delusions and false attachments which prevent one from realizing who and what he really is: the Infinite Spirit.

Self-study begins with the careful observation of one's thoughts, feelings, and motives. As one advances in this practice, he discovers that central reality of his being which is beyond thought, form, and substance, which cannot be observed and analyzed, which cannot even be truly defined, though it is sometimes described by its essential quality: JOY.

Patanjali says that when one becomes perfect in his practice of *swadhyaya*, he attains the power to commune with beings on higher spheres of existence, and to receive their help.

Radio and TV programs surround us in the atmosphere, but we cannot enjoy them until we attune our radios or TV sets to those frequencies. Higher beings, similarly, exist, as also do higher levels of consciousness. The worldly man, however, unable to attune his mind sensitively enough to perceive them, can scarcely imagine their existence. By self-study, and the resulting discovery of deep states of consciousness within oneself, one attains those frequency-levels on which it is possible to commune with great souls. If one would be helped by them, he must make himself a fit vessel to receive that help.

This, it must be understood also, is the deeper purpose of yoga postures: not merely to give one a healthy body, but to prepare the body as one would a temple for communion with the Infinite Lord, and with those exalted beings who live always in His light.

§

From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(16:1) *Study of the scriptures*, again, is not an attitude, but can become so if one takes it to mean *reverence* for the scriptures. Reverence for them will surely lead to the study of them, also.

It is important to be discriminating, however, in one's choice of scripture, for not all writings that are purported to be scripture are founded equally in truth. People often accept as revelation the writings of some well-meaning but spiritual unenlightened person, or of persons less well-meaning but ambitious for personal glory.

Paramhansa Yogananda told the story of someone who wrote a treatise which he wanted to have people consider a scripture. He then buried his document under a tree, and began giving religious discourses. Fifteen years later, affecting to be guided by angels, he was "led," accompanied by a few followers, to that tree, where he dug. There, lo and behold! This "angel-materialized" scripture was "discovered." Thus, a new religion was founded, and although the document itself was later "lost," its copied versions continued to attract a large following.

Other false religions, similarly, have won people by methods other than scrupulous. What was appealed to was people's credulity, not their intuitive discrimination. Accept nothing that doesn't appeal to your highest sense of what is right and true. Even then, be guided by the supportive opinions of the wise. When wise persons in general agree on the spiritual authenticity of a document, that is when – so wisdom dictates – the document can safely be accepted as true scripture.

--*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Kriyananda

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The reward (from *Raja Yoga*)

Through self-study (*swadhyaya*) one develops the power to commune with beings on higher spheres of existence.

§

From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(1:1)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?"

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

From *Affirmations for Self-healing*

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 YOGANANDA

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 Chart."

- (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.

--Yogoda course, 1925

§

From KRIYANANDA

India's ancient seers found that the best way for anyone to get to the core of human nature is simply this: *for man to make a deep study of his own nature*. This, as we know, was the insight also behind the ancient Greek dictum: "Know thyself."

Objective self-study doesn't have to mean seeing oneself as others see him—from without, in other words. It can and should especially mean examining *without personal prejudice* one's own thought processes, in order to penetrate the countless layers of subconscious rationalization.

This task is so difficult that it may in fact require help from another person (a role played in India by the wise guru). Without such an approach, however, it is difficult to see how human nature could ever be understood at its depths. One cannot dissect consciousness with a surgeon's knife. Our understanding of other people depends entirely upon our depth of self-understanding. To see others objectively, moreover, requires first of all an ability to be objective with oneself.

For these reasons, Indian philosophy is introspective, and very rightly so. It claims, moreover, that self-study (*swadhyaya*, in the Sanskrit), if carried deeply enough, penetrates beneath the idiosyncrasies of human nature to reveal universals.

--From *Out of the Labyrinth*

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Swadhyaya, the fourth *niyama*, may be understood simply, without a long explanation, as *Self-awareness*. *Swa* means the Self; *dhyaya* means study. More is meant here than introspection, however, and more, certainly, than “study of the scriptures,” as this *niyama* is often translated. *Swadhyaya* means Self-awareness. This is a state of consciousness, which again should be developed deliberately. Even in the midst of a busy day at work, you can listen inwardly for higher guidance. Inspiration awaits you at the edge of your awareness, trying to guide you rightly. Inspiration, more than most people realize, is the highest secret of success.

--*Material Success Through Yoga Principles, Lesson Nine*

§

The Final Exam

Excerpts from an article by Swami Kriyananda

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...

§

Check List

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...”

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 I 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_ishit 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!**

§

Fifth Niyama: Devotion/Ishwara Pranidhana/Devotion to the Supreme Lord

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

5. Openness to higher truths is usually written as “worship.” So much more is meant by the word “worship,” however, than actually sitting in meditation or kneeling in a church. Using this word, therefore, may narrow the horizon to a limited time every day, and to a narrow location in space. In fact, our every thought should be directed in a worshipful spirit to God; our every act should be an act of worship. We should be open always to inner guidance, and open to receive God’s blessings even in the form of apparent misfortune.

From Raja Yoga

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.

§

From Awaken to Superconsciousness

“Devotion to the Supreme Lord,” finally, pairs with “avoidance of untruthfulness.” For perfect truthfulness entails far more than the truthfulness of George Washington’s famous confession, “Father, it was I who cut down the cherry tree.” Perfect truthfulness means facing unconditionally that there is only one reality in existence: God. Outside of Him (or Her), we have no existence. To give up the temptation to put off that moment when we must face the ultimate truth about ourselves—this fundamental and utter self-honesty permits of only one conclusion, summed up in the final *niyama*: “Devotion to the Supreme Lord.”

§

From The Essence of Self-realization

1

“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.”

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.”

§

From *Affirmations for Self-healing: Devotion*

No good end is ever reached without devotion. No true success is achieved unless the heart’s feelings are involved. Will power itself is a combination of energy and feeling, directed toward fulfillment.

In the quest for God, the unfolding of the heart’s natural love, in the form of deep devotion, is the prime requisite for success. Without devotion, not a single step can be taken towards Him. Devotion is no sentiment: It is the deep longing to commune with, and know, the only Reality there is.

Affirmation

With the sword of devotion I sever the heart-strings that tie me to delusion. With the deepest love, I lay my heart at the feet of Omnipresence.

Prayer

Beloved Father, Mother, God: I am Thine alone! Let others seek Thee – or seek Thee not; it matters not to my love for Thee. Through all life’s trials, my prayer is this alone: Reveal Thyself!

§

From YOGANANDA

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.

--*Inner Culture*, April, 1936

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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.

--*From Metaphysical Meditations*, 1949 edition

§

From KRIYANANDA

“Devotion to the Supreme Lord” is the last *niyama*. This is something many modern businessmen brush away as being of no consequence to their work. Remember the story of Krishna, however, in the *Mahabharata*, when he offered a choice to the two generals of opposing armies in the war of Kurukshetra: either the support of his entire army, or himself, present during the struggle, but not taking active part in it. Duryodhana was happy to receive the support of Krishna’s whole army. Arjuna was wiser, however. He told Krishna, “Lord, wherever You are, victory is ensured.”

The Supreme Lord does not participate directly in His universe: He works through channels, inspiring them because of their openness to His inspiration. The materialist receives only occasional hints of the Lord’s presence within—hints he grimly ignores! People who have faith, however, understand that without inner guidance and inspiration even the best undertaking is fated to crumble to dust at last. Without this final *niyama*, material success will forever recede from your grasp. Even if you succeed in grasping it momentarily, it will slip quickly away like water running through your fingers.

The reward (from *Raja Yoga*)

And by devotion to the Supreme Lord one develops the power to commune with Him.

Chapter Six: YAMAS E NIYAMAS IN MEDITATION

From Awaken to Superconsciousness – Chapter 6, Swami Kriyananda

The right attitudes constitute only the beginning of the spiritual journey, though to perfect oneself in them requires the effort of a lifetime, and encompasses the entire spiritual journey. Not only is right attitude necessary for achieving perfection in meditation: It also can be perfected only in meditation.

What, then, is meditation? Here is a good definition: *Meditation is listening*. It is listening not only with the ear, but with the soul—not only to sound, but to the silent language of inspiration. Each of the *yama-niyamas* might be described as a practice for perfection in the art of listening.

Take the first *yama*. Non-violence is listening to the inner silence—listening so sensitively that you perceive clearly the violence you do to your inner peace by inflicting harm on anyone, even in thought.

“Avoidance of untruthfulness” is “listening” to whatever *is*—in this case, learning to accept and to be completely comfortable with what can't be avoided. It means not judging. It means striving to hear, behind the inner silence, the soul's reassurance that all is well and as it should be.

“Non-avarice” means dwelling in the awareness of soul-freedom, the companion of meditative peace. It means “listening” to the silence behind the hubbub of worldly desires in the mind.

“Non-acceptance” is listening to the divine sounds within. (These will be described later.) It means knowing completely that these sounds represent your only reality. To accept anything as belonging to you, even your talents and personality traits, can only obstruct deeper Self-knowing.

Brahmacharya, or control of the natural appetites, is “listening” to your truer, soul-aspirations.

“Cleanliness” is listening to the all-purifying “music of the spheres,” heard in deep meditation, as opposed to the peace-besmirching influences of the world.

“Contentment” is listening in another sense: not to the siren-songs of desire, but to the anthem-like harmonies of the soul, enjoyable beyond any imaginable worldly fulfillment.

“Austerity” is listening to the voice of inner wisdom, however stern it may sound at first—to words or inspirations from within that gently but firmly draw us to become dis-involved from activity that pertains to anything but the Self. The very powers that result from perfection in *tapasya* (austerity) are perceived, in deep meditation, as merely temptations of the mind, their real aim being to involve us once again in delusion.

“Self-study” (*swadhyaya*) is, figuratively speaking, “listening” to the melodies of pure motivation, and learning to distinguish between them and the harsh caws of ego-motivation.

“Devotion to the Supreme Lord,” finally, is listening intently to the inner “Word,” which the Bible tells us was “in the beginning,” was “with God,” and “was” God. The “Word” is not, as many Christians believe, the Bible itself; nor is it any other scripture. It is *AUM*—the divine sound out of which the universe was manifested.

It is too early at this point to discuss in depth such esoteric experiences as the inner sounds. The important thing, here, is to understand with this mere hint of their existence that meditation is not so much a process of stilling the mind as of perceiving realities that exist beyond the mind. There is an inner world that can be perceived only when the attention has been turned away from material involvement and redirected toward the divine source within.

To repeat, “listening” itself, as I use the word here, entails much more than listening with the ears. It means, among other things, the stillness of expectation, and complete mental absorption in whatever inspirations come. It means *receiving*, as opposed to generating uplifting thoughts with the mind. It includes all of these, while providing to each of them a deeper dimension.

For in fact there is, literally, an inner music which, when heard, removes the mind from all worldly concerns, and banishes the delusion of any existence outside the Self.

Thus, “listening” as applied to the attitudes of *yama-niyama*, as well as to the yoga science in general, clarifies a misconception people frequently have who imagine that yoga teaches self-effort, but scorns the need for divine grace. As Paramhansa Yogananda put it in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, “A truth cannot be created, but only perceived.”

Divine grace is forever impersonal. It is not, like the human will, dependent on personal choices or inclinations. It has no favorites. Like the sunlight, it shines impartially everywhere. What keeps the sunlight from arriving equally everywhere is the presence of obstructions: clouds, buildings, the curtains covering a window. What keeps grace from reaching us is obstructions in our consciousness.

We may not be able to do much about obstructions to grace that, like clouds and buildings, are put there by Nature or by other people—illness, for example, or negative thought forms—but we *can* draw back the curtains that cover the windows of our own minds. These obstructions are our mental restlessness and worldly desires.

This, then, is the benefit of yoga practice: It draws back our mental curtains; it helps us to *listen* more intently to the divine call within. It is—to use another illustration—like turning the chalice of thought and feeling right-side up, that the wine of grace may fill it. If, instead, the chalice is turned upside down, grace, which (unlike the sunlight) is superconscious, will simply be withheld. Why should it spill uselessly to the floor?

§

Meditazione per Yama/Niyama

From The art and science of Raja Yoga – Chapter 4, Swami Kriyananda

Ahimsa

When you meditate, begin by sending out waves of blessing to all men. If there is anyone, especially, with whom you have had a difference, send him your love. Until you develop this attitude you will never be able to meditate deeply. Subconscious antagonism will keep you tensed physically, as well as egoistically aloof from the great stream of life into which meditation should help you to merge.

Complement: cleanliness

By renouncing the desire to do violence, we develop that sweet innocence...the sign of a heart pure and at peace

Right attitude is essential to right meditation. The first step in the development of right attitude is to learn to see others, not as rivals, but as friends. This is the principle of non-injury. Even if others, in their own ignorance, should hate you, think of them as your brothers or sisters in God, and bless them with His peace. This is not to say that you should cooperate with them in their ignorance, or offer yourself up as a doormat for their spite, but only that you should sincerely wish them a swift recovery from their disease of personal inharmony. Hatred can be as contagious as the flu; still the greatest sufferer is always he in whom the disease rages. Immunize yourself with extra-strong doses of compassion and impersonal, divine love.

In meditation, examine your heart for any feeling of ill will toward others. Carefully uproot any such feeling, and plant in its stead fragrant flowers of forgiveness. Only when your heart has been softened by universal benevolence may you hope to become receptive to the gentle vibrations of divine love. Do not imagine that you can win God's love until you have developed the power to win the love of man.

Satya (non lying)

In meditation, an attitude of perfect truthfulness is essential as a safeguard against hallucinations, as well as against attachment to the more common delusions of mankind. To overcome your hypnosis of human limitations, observe them dispassionately in meditation. Ask yourself, "Is this really I? Who am I, really?!" The deeper you pursue this question of self-identity, the more clearly you will see yourself as the ever-free soul, stripped of all egoistic delusion.

Complement: devotion

Perfect truthfulness means facing unconditionally that there is only one reality in existence, God.

Truthfulness, too, is an important attitude for right meditation. Otherwise one's meditations may reinforce rather than banish one's delusions. Inner states of consciousness can be deceptive. Many apparently spiritual experiences are rooted in subconsciousness, not in superconsciousness. Only by the strictest self-honesty can one escape the intricacies of self-deception.

Astaya (non stealing, non avarice)

In meditation, the slightest yearning for things will take the mind out of itself. The outward flow of energy from the heart must be channeled inward, and up toward the brain and the point between the eyebrows, if meditation is to lead to enlightenment. Until one can still the desires of the heart, perfect meditation will not be possible. Try, therefore, as you begin your meditation, to affirm mentally that you are complete, and completely at rest, in yourself.

Complement: contentment

To perfect non avarice, live with contentment regardless of circumstances.

Non-stealing implies another attitude that is essential to right meditation. It signifies a realization that one can never truly possess what is not one's own, and that one's own will surely come to him (a favorite saying of Sister Gyanamata's, Paramhansa Yogananda's chief woman disciple). This is not to say that one should not work hard, but only that one ought not to be anxious about anything. Whose world is this, anyway? God can work best to bring human hopes to fruition through the instrumentality of those persons who keep their minds open to Him by an attitude of perfect trust. When you meditate, offer all of your anxieties up to Him. Tell yourself: "Whatever comes of itself, let it come." Only a trusting, divinely

receptive attitude can prepare you to receive, in all their subtlety, the highest states of consciousness.

Brahmacharya

In meditation, try to raise your energy and consciousness up through the spine to the point between the eyebrows.

In meditation, seek the flow or pure joy in the spine.

Complement: austerity

Austerity means taking energy that was formerly directed outwardly and rechanneling it into the spiritual search.

Non-sensuality in meditation means to realize that real meditation is not possible so long as one remains in body consciousness. One must endeavor to go beyond the senses—to withdraw his energy from them so completely that he is quite literally, as the modern expression goes, “out of this world.”

Aparigraha (non greed, non acceptance)

In meditation, you will find it helpful to free yourself mentally from all worldly identifications. Cut the emotional strings that tie you to your possessions. Completely relax your body. Affirm mentally: "I am not the body! I am Spirit! Ever Blissful! Ever Free!"

Complement: Swadhyaya

Not accepting the thought that we own anything has as its positive aspect the contemplation of being, not of non being – of what we are, not of what we are not.

Non-greed as applied to meditation means the nonacceptance of, or non-identification with, anything that might limit one’s awareness. When you meditate, mentally relinquish all attachment to places, people, and possessions. Do not even be bound by the *self*-definitions to which you have been so long accustomed to confine yourself. You are not an American or a Frenchman, an artist or a businessman, a man or a woman, miserly or philanthropic, young or old. You are the immortal soul. Even your human virtues are but small steppingstones on the way to an infinite perfection.

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Conclusion

To become really settled in any of the principles of *yama*, you must practice all of the others also. They are all interdependent. To be perfectly non-attached (the last of these principles), for example, also implies an attitude of non-injury, for to grasp at anything—even something so elusive as a psychological trait—is always in a sense to harm it. Non-attachment requires also an attitude of strict self-honesty, or truthfulness, and is in turn a necessary attitude for perfect truthfulness. Non-attachment to what one possesses would be a mockery if at the same time one desired what one did not possess, in defiance of the principle of non-stealing. And true non-attachment would be impossible without *brahmacharya*, or mental detachment from the senses.

Perfect non-injury, similarly, requires also truthfulness, or complete recognition of realities other than one's own. It requires a complete respect for the rights of others, which is an aspect of the principle of non-stealing. It requires an attitude of non-sensuality, which is inevitably a kind of taking from life—besides being, of course, injurious to one's own body and nervous system. It requires, finally, an attitude of non-attachment (not, be it noted, of indifference), for only in complete recognition that everything, including one's own life and body, belongs only to God can one put oneself truly in harmony with the universe. Otherwise, egotistically, one will always play his flute out of tune with the symphony of creation.

Perfect truthfulness, similarly, means an attitude of non-injury in the sense of not wanting to punish others (which is to say, of not judging them) for being what their natures have made them. An attitude of non-stealing, or non-taking from life—in other words, of desirelessness—is essential if we would see all things truthfully and without bias. Non-sensuality, finally, gives one that mental poise by which alone one can be completely honest in his perceptions.

Non-stealing, similarly, is refined by an attitude of non-injury, vitalized by truthfulness, brought into clear focus by a deep understanding of non-sensuality, and simplified by perfect non-attachment.

None of these principles can be really perfected until divine perfection is attained. All of them require for their perfection that they be related always to that ultimate perfection. In relation to one's search for God they are all, in the last analysis, simply an effort to make oneself over in His infinite image.

In meditation, mentally cast all your limitations—of thought, desire, and self-will—into a divine fire to be melted and purified into cosmic wisdom and love. Affirm mentally, *“I cast my thoughts, desires, and all past karma into Thy flames of love. Make me whole! Make me pure! Make me one with Thee!”*

It might help you also to build an actual fire, and to place bits of wood into it, or to cast into it grains of rice, feeling each time you do so that you are casting from your heart some egoic imperfection.

Pray to God with love: “I am Thine; be Thou mine!”

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From Awaken to Superconsciousness – Chapter 5, Swami Kriyananda

The yama-niyamas are essential for anyone who would sail smoothly on the seas of superconsciousness. For there is no path to God other than recognition of these fundamental verities of our own nature.

Although the qualities described here are listed by the ancient sage Patanjali as the first two stages on the spiritual path, it is not a question of having to perfect them first, before proceeding on to the higher stages. Perfection in any aspect of the path requires perfection in all of them. What concerns us here is the perfection, not of deeds—an impossible feat in this relative universe—but of consciousness. Such perfection can be attained only in superconscious union with the Divine.

Be restful in your heart, therefore, even as you work to perfect yourself in right spiritual attitudes. Only by inner restfulness during outer activity will you achieve that supreme restfulness which lies beyond all activity.

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From Rays of the One Light – 40^a week, Swami Kriyananda

[The Bhagavad Gita lists these signs in Chapter Thirteen:]

"Humbleness, truthfulness, and harmlessness,
Patience and honor, reverence for the wise.
Purity, constancy, control of self,
Contempt for sense-delights, self-sacrifice,
Perception of the certainty of ill
In birth, old age, and frail mortality,
Disease, the ego's suffering, and sin;
Detachment, lightly holding thoughts of home,
Children, and wife—those ties which bind most men;
An ever-tranquil heart, heedless of good
Or adverse fortune, with the will upraised
To worship Me alone, unceasingly;
Loving deep solitude, and shunning noise

Of foolish crowds; calm focus on the Self

Perceived within and in Infinity:

These qualities reveal true Wisdom, Prince.

All that is otherwise is ignorance!"

Commentary

The above qualities are vital to the attainment of Self-realization. Though individual, they also express a unifying principle.

Humbleness means non-identification with the ego. This state can be achieved perfectly only in deep meditation.

Truthfulness, again, can be perfected only in meditation, with the realization that there is but one Reality, before which all else is illusory.

Harmlessness is perfected with the realization, again born of meditation, that all beings belong to one's own infinite Self.

Patience reflects in varying degrees the consciousness that time, space, and movement are delusions. This realization, too, is born in meditation.

Honor can be perfected only with the realization that there is but One Being whose satisfaction deserves courting: the Supreme Lord.

Reverence for the wise means openness to their guidance, and willing cooperation with it. It means to be open to wisdom itself. Wisdom is theirs alone who meditate deeply. For it differs from knowledge. Knowledge is of the intellect, whereas wisdom is of the soul.

To the sincere truth seeker, God sends one of His awakened sons to guide him out of delusion. The master specifically appointed to this task is known as the *guru*. The disciple, by loving service to the guru, receives through him the gift of wisdom. This is what is meant in the Bible in the passage, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." (John 1:12)

Service to the guru is primarily an inner act. It means offering up to him, in deep meditation, all one's worldly thoughts and desires. It means constantly holding one's consciousness open to him for correction and inspiration. Above all, it means attuning oneself inwardly to his consciousness of God.

Purity arises naturally in the mind, the more one's thoughts and feelings become cleansed in crystal streams of ecstasy.

Steadfastness develops spontaneously, the more one's mental rhythms change from fixation on temporal pleasures to absorption in eternal realities.

Self-control, like all divine qualities, has to be worked on consciously. At the same time, progress in self-control ceases to demand strenuous effort the more one identifies himself with the soul, removing his attention from the world of the senses and the ego.

Contempt for sense-delights—that is to say, indifference to them—comes not so much with straining to acquire mental detachment from them as with the realization of a higher bliss, through inner communion with God.

Self-sacrifice springs from the absence of self-interest. It doesn't mean self-abnegation. Self-sacrifice might be better understood as joyous *self-offering*. This impulse arises naturally in the mind, once one realizes himself as the underlying Self of all.

Perception of the evils inherent in mortal life is possible, in the deepest sense, only when, in meditation, one dives beneath the waves of duality—of pleasure and pain, success and failure, hope and dread—which continually rise and fall on the surface of life. In deep meditation, the yogi realizes how limited human existence is compared to the vastness of God's ocean. For the soul, pleasure is not essentially different from pain. Both are simply affirmations of limitation.

Detachment from outer concerns is possible, in the deepest sense, only by attachment to the infinitely greater joy of divine communion. Non-identification with family, home, and possessions comes naturally to one who knows to the depths of his being that he belongs to God alone.

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

Unswerving devotion to God alone is not possible in ego-consciousness, but is the fruit of deep communion with God.

Love of solitude deepens, the more forcefully one feels himself called within by God. For the true devotee, indeed, worldly company holds no attraction.

Concentration on the inner Self, finally, is a fitting definition of wisdom. Any other attitude, as the Gita states here, is ignorance. A person may be completely illiterate. He may possess no worldly talents whatever. If, at the same time, he is blessed with the realization of who and what he really is in his soul, his wisdom is far greater than all the learning and experience of the worldly-wise.

One condition unites all the above qualities: It is the state known as Self-realization. Together, these qualities are perfected only with the attainment of divine union.

Most people on the spiritual path make the mistake of thinking that right spiritual attitude can only be achieved by mental affirmation. These attitudes, however, can be perfected only by the daily practice of deep, inner communion with God. For it is divine grace alone, finally, that lifts the devotee out of delusion and into Divine Perfection.

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

Chapter Seven: ASANA

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

2-46. Asana (the third “limb” of *ashtanga yoga*) means to be seated in a firm, pleasant, and relaxed position.

My Guru explained this position as that of keeping the spine straight, with the body relaxed.

This passage, be it noted, is the only place in the yoga sutras from which physical yoga enthusiasts draw their scriptural authority. It is spurious! Yet the very word, “yoga,” has become in the popular mind a system of elaborate bodily postions. Hatha yoga (the name of this system) is truly an excellent way of keeping the body in top condition, but it is simply a mistake to identify it with Patanjali’s yoga teachings.

The purpose of *asana* is to enable one to rise above body-consciousness. A straight spine is necessary, for when meditating the energy must be allowed to rise up the spine freely. The best way to relax the body completely is, first, to inhale and tense one’s body all over, equalizing the tension all over the body; then to throw the breath out and relax, again, all over. Do this three times. From then on, remain motionless for as long as possible. One may consider that he has mastered *asana* if he can remain completely motionless, with a straight, upright spine for three hours. Motionlessness will enable him to become aware of the inner energies in the body.

2-47. By reducing one’s natural tendency toward restlessness, and by visualizing infinity, true posture is acquired.

Sitting very still, and resisting the temptation to look around, to scratch, to shift about, to sniff or to swallow, is the state of *asana*. It will help very much also to visualize infinite space all around you.

My Guru counselled, after your last deliberate exhalation when you are sitting very still, to gaze millions of miles through infinite space, to the left; to the right; before you; behind you; and above. Visualize yourself seated, bodiless, suspended in vast space.

And then, only, begin your meditation practices.

From The art and science of Raja Yoga – Chapter 3, Swami Kriyananda

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 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.

When the body is full of tensions and toxins, it is difficult to rise above it in meditation. One of the main purposes of *hatha yoga* is the preparation of the body for meditation. The sitting poses themselves are intended primarily for their meditative value; less so for their physical benefits.

The important thing, as far as the body's posture in meditation is concerned, is that the spine be kept straight and the body relaxed. It is all right to sit in a chair, with the feet flat on the floor. There is, however, a definite advantage to sitting in one of the prescribed yoga positions. They exert certain beneficial pressures on the nerves, inducing calmness in the nervous system.

Each of the sitting poses has its own specific benefits. We have already discussed those of *Vajrasana* (The Firm Pose). From a standpoint of meditation, this pose helps to give the mind a consciousness of *nishtha*, steadfastness. Each of the other poses, similarly, exerts its own mental and spiritual influence.

Siddhasana (The Perfect Pose) is considered the classic pose of *hatha yoga*. *Padmasana* (The Lotus Pose) is said to be the classic pose of *raja yoga*. The difference between these two yogas may, in the present context, be described as follows: *Hatha Yoga* uses the body to push the energy up toward the brain; *raja yoga* creates a magnet of aspiration in the higher, spiritual nature that *draws* the energy upward to the brain. *Hatha yoga* is not actually a separate science from *raja yoga*; it is merely the physical branch of that spiritual science. Distinctions between the two are, therefore, to some extent academic; in each approach, something of the other will be present. Best, indeed, is a combination of both approaches: an effort to use the body gently to nudge the energy upward, and deep, devotional meditation that must in time draw everything beneath it upward in its wake.

It must be understood that all spiritual effort involves a self-offering of the ego on the altar of God, the Infinite Self. Yogis of both the *hatha* and *raja yoga* schools often make the mistake of thinking that spiritual enlightenment depends only upon the efforts of the aspiring devotee—as if by techniques alone one could harness the Infinite! A right understanding of the yoga techniques, however, in no way contradicts the need for *kripa* (divine grace), as the *sine qua non* of the spiritual path. The highest purpose of yoga is simply to place oneself in a position to receive fully a downpouring of Spirit. If God's grace is not experienced in the average human life, it is not because of divine indifference, but because man's energies and attention are diverted elsewhere.

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From Awaken to Superconsciousness – Chapter 2, Swami Kriyananda

For perfect relaxation, one might expect the best position to be stretched out flat on one's back. This may be true for physical relaxation, but not for superconsciousness. In meditation, it is important to sit upright, with a straight spine. A supine position induces a passive state of mind, even sleep.

To meditate, it is essential to sit erect with a straight spine. An erect spine aids us in raising our consciousness, permitting the energy to flow freely toward the brain. An erect spine also induces a positive attitude, without which it is easy, in the meditative peace, to sink into subconsciousness.

I once saw an advertisement for a meditation teaching. The “meditator” was leaning back comfortably in a “Lazy Boy” chair. His eyes were closed; his feet, propped up. The teaching that was being promoted can only have been a prescription for mental meandering!

The yoga teachings tell us to eschew idleness. They insist, therefore, on a posture conducive to mental vigor, that at the same time assists in releasing the energy to flow *upward*.

A number of positions are traditionally recommended for meditation. None of them is remotely similar to the illustration in that advertisement, for they all promote an attitude of alertness, of “meaning business” in one's quest for enlightenment.

The best meditation poses are *siddhasana* (the perfect pose) and *padmasana* (the lotus pose). *Siddhasana* is better suited to the *hatha yogi*, or practitioner of the yoga postures. *Padmasana* is said to be better suited to the *raja yogi*, or practitioner of the yoga science of meditation. The difference in effect between these two poses is slight, but the subtle effect of *siddhasana* tends to be an upward push on the energy from below, whereas that of *padmasana* is to *draw* the energy upward in a spirit of self-offering.

A word about *hatha yoga*. This system, which is thousands of years old, has its basis in Patanjali's third stage or *anga* (limb), called *asana*. *Hatha yoga* is not a separate yoga path, but is a physical adjunct to *raja yoga*, the yoga of meditation. *Raja yoga* masters give secondary importance to the yoga postures, since *asana* as the third stage of *raja yoga* refers simply to sitting still with a straight spine. *Raja yogis* speak highly of *hatha yoga*, however, as a system that affords great benefits to the body, and also to the mind in its interconnectedness with the body.”

The third stage of meditation, after the *yamas* and *niyamas*, is to prepare the mind for meditative listening.

Even in normal concentration, physical stillness is necessary. When a person shoots a rifle, he must hold his hands and his body still. If a shot is particularly difficult, he must even hold his breath.

A photographer, when shooting a photograph at a slow exposure, must hold himself his hands, his body, even his breath completely still.

Similarly, whenever we need to listen carefully, especially if the person we're listening to is speaking very softly or at a distance, we naturally hold our bodies very still, and breathe as little and as quietly as possible.

For meditation, the first requirement is to keep the body motionless even, as much as possible, to still the breath. How to accomplish this stillness of the breath? I'll discuss this point later. The question now before us is the first one: how to still the body.

Keep it relaxed. To quiet the body forcibly is to focus the mind on it, instead of on superconsciousness. What we must do is transcend body-consciousness, that our listening become a process of total absorption.

The next requirement for right posture the only other requirement, in fact is to keep the spine straight and erect. This position may seem counterproductive for relaxation, but the relaxation required in meditation is a relaxation upward, toward superconsciousness, not downward, toward subconsciousness.

It is natural, for one who wants to relax physically, to lie flat, surrendering to the force of gravity. There is, however, another kind of gravity, as I explained earlier. This is the dual gravity of our inner nature, the conflict between our desire for self-expansion and our desire for self-contraction; between the superconscious and the subconscious; between the call to

perfection and the desire, born of our deeply ingrained habits, to deny any such highfalutin pretensions and return to the delusive comfort of our animal origins. These subtler pulls are in opposite directions: toward the upper spine and the brain, and toward the lower parts of the spine and body. The pull downward, relative to our normal upright position, is that of the subconscious. The pull upward is that of superconsciousness.

The subconscious can be conditioned to cooperate with our upward aspirations. In most people, however, attached as they are to their bodies, the subconscious only prolongs their involvement in material desires. Its downward pull, like surrender to the force of gravity, produces relaxation of another kind: the release we experience in surrendering to our animal nature. Such relaxation is temporary, and ultimately disappoints every expectation we've ever held of it.

A word about **hatha yoga**. This system, which is thousands of years old, has its basis in Patanjali's third stage or anga (limb), called asana. Hatha yoga is not a separate yoga path, but is a physical adjunct to raja yoga, the yoga of meditation. Raja yoga masters give secondary importance to the yoga postures, since asana as the third stage of raja yoga refers simply to sitting still with a straight spine. Raja yogis speak highly of hatha yoga, however, as a system that affords great benefits to the body, and also to the mind in its interconnectedness with the body.

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From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(1:20)“He straightens his spine by making his head straight, and by pushing his chest forward and keeping his abdomen in. This position of the spine, curved in the front and not in the back, is called the bow of meditation, well strung and ready for battle with the senses.

The devotee who meditates with a bent spine does not get much Spiritual result because he throws his spinal vertebrae out of order, thus squeezing the principal Centers of the spinal nervous system which feed the senses. This pinching of the nerves in the vertebrae is injurious to a clear sense perception of material objects and also retards the flow of Life Force into the brain and Spirit. Squeezed spinal nerves do not feed the senses with the proper amount of conducting, outgoing energy necessary to have clear sense perceptions. Squeezed spinal nerve Centers obstruct the retirement of energy from the senses to the brain.

Every time the devotee, with a bent spine, tries to concentrate upon Christ Consciousness, at the point between the eyebrows, he finds his consciousness tied with the outgoing nerve current at the senses and unable to retire through the pinched nerves in the spinal Centers. Just as a rubber tube, squeezed in the middle, stops the flow of water forward or backward, so the pinched spinal Centers, due to displaced vertebrae, obstruct the life flow to the senses outward and the life flow inward from the senses to the brain.”

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

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(4:1-2)The third of these stages is *asana*, or perfect stillness of body, with an erect position and a straight spine. Patanjali, to reiterate what we've said, was describing the *stages* of withdrawal and absorption, and not specific yoga practices. The Hatha Yoga system was based on his third stage, and was intended to help yoga practitioners to achieve calmness of body and mind, physical and mental relaxation, and centering the energy in the spine.

--*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Kriyananda

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From YOGANANDA

Asana (right posture): the spinal column must be held straight, and the body firm in a comfortable position for meditation... Any posture by which your mind is calm and at peace is called Asana...

Where bodily motions cease and mental thoughts dissolve, God begins to appear as stillness and divine bliss on the altar of peace and changelessness... Do away with the motion for the sake of meditation. The way to God is motionless. It is in the stability of the Spirit. Where motions cease, God begins.

--*Autobiography of a Yogi and Inner Life* magazines, 1930s

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Meditation instruction: Sit still with a straight spine. Cover up your fidgety eyeballs with the sheet of your eyelids. Hold them still. Then loosen your mind from the consciousness of the bundle of your body-weight. Relax the nerve-strings that are pulling at the heavy muscles and bones of your body. For a while, forget the consciousness of carrying a heavy bundle of bones tied in the thick cloth of flesh. Rest. Free your mind from the consciousness of a beast of burden. Do not think of your body-load, but feel your soul untied from the constant material quality of heaviness. Mentally race in your fancy's airplane above, beneath, left, right, in infinity, or wherever you want to go. Feel and meditate on this, your mental freedom from your body. Dream, dwell, and feel this body-aboveness when sitting still; the territory of your freedom will constantly increase.

--*From Metaphysical Meditations*, Sixth Edition, 1952

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Meditation instruction: Sit upright and straighten the spine to resemble a straight lightning rod. Concentrate the vision between the eyebrows with eyes half open. (Do not frown while doing this; keep the facial expression serene.) Now slightly move the spine to the left and right by swaying the body, changing the centre of consciousness from the body and senses to the spine. Feel the astral spine and stop swaying the body. Then let your consciousness travel up and down several times, from the coccygeal plexus at the end of the spine to the point between the eyebrows. Then concentrate on the coccygeal plexus and mentally chant Om. Again, but slowly travel up the spine, mentally feeling the coccygeal, sacral, lumbar, dorsal, cervical, and medullary plexuses, to the point between the eyebrows, mentally chanting Om in each place. When you reach the central point between the eyebrows, return downward, chanting Om at the point between the eyebrows, the medulla, and the five

plexuses, and mentally feeling the centers at the same time. Continue to chant Om at the seven centers, feeling them while traveling up and down the astral spinal *Sushumna* passage. Practice the above until you distinctly feel that your consciousness is transferred from the body into the spine.

The practice of the above method will release your soul from the bondage of matter and sense attachment by enabling you to escape through the seven astral doors and become one with the Spirit.

--Yogoda Lessons, Super-Advanced Course

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From KRIYANANDA

“The spine is the trunk of the ‘tree of life.’ God’s joy is the ‘sap’ flowing through the trunk of the tree.”

--Conversations with Yogananda

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Whether you sit on the floor in a traditional cross-legged position, or even on a chair, is not greatly important. There are certain advantages to sitting cross-legged. The lotus pose, for example, and some of the other positions traditionally recommended in the yoga teachings, exert pressure on certain nerves and thereby help to induce physical relaxation. The disadvantage to these positions, for many Westerners, is that their bodies are accustomed to sitting in chairs. Relaxation, when their legs are bent in seemingly impossible pretzel shapes, is not only difficult, but, for many of them, impossible. The question of rising above body-consciousness becomes moot for them. Instead of asking themselves, “When will my spirit soar?” they wonder desperately, “Will I ever walk again?”

In fact, only two things are necessary: that the spine be kept straight, and the body, relaxed. A straight spine is important for two reasons: First, it induces a positive mental attitude, and second, it makes it easier for the life-force to flow toward the brain. So then—sit on a chair if you prefer, but in any case, keep your spine straight.

If you sit on a chair, choose one that is armless. The woolen blanket (and the silk cloth, if you use it to cover the blanket) should descend over the back of the chair, over the seat, and down under your feet.

Place your hands palms upward on the thighs, at the junction of the abdomen.

Keep your elbows back, your shoulder blades drawn slightly together, and your chest up. All the while, emphasize relaxation; don't be tense.

Hold the chin slightly back, parallel to the ground.

Look upward, and close your eyes.

--From Meditation for Starters

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“A bent spine is the enemy of realization. In meditation, always hold your spine straight, that the life force may flow through it unobstructed.

“Next, hold your attention fixed at the Christ center between the eyebrows. The more deeply you concentrate at that point, the more you will find your ego dissolving in superconsciousness.”

--*Essence of Self-realization*

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Make a habit of holding your body erect, whether standing or sitting. An erect spine induces positive mental attitudes. A bent spine, on the other hand, is the natural companion of negativity and discouragement. While standing erect, think of yourself as almost weightless. Stand more often on the balls of your feet than heavily back on the heels. Keep your chest raised. Look naturally upward, too, as if what interested you lay more often above the horizon than down on the ground. When speaking to people, again, gaze frankly into their eyes instead of timidly at their knees.

--*26 Keys to Greater Awareness*

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An impressive sight, in India, is the *danda swamis*. A *swami* is a renunciate, or monk. A *danda* is the long, straight staff that certain swamis carry, symbolic of the spine. The *danda* is an affirmation of the bearer's centeredness in the Self within. The straightness of the *danda* is a reminder to him to keep his spine always straight. Paramhansa Yogananda, as a Western substitute for the *danda* during his years in the West, carried a cane while walking.

An erect spine indicates a willing assumption of responsibility for one's own life: an attitude that begs assistance from no one, that blames no one, but declares, "All I need lies at my own divine center." The *danda* is a courageous statement: "I am the center of my own universe, the sole cause of all that happens in my life. No outer circumstances condition my inner sense of who I am. In my divine Self I am forever free!"

In your own life, similarly, try to live more in the spine. As you walk, mentally carry a *danda*. As Paramhansa Yogananda tells us above, only by accepting full responsibility for who we are and for whatever happens to us may we hope to change our destiny. And, as the passage above concludes beautifully: "Live from today onward guided by divine wisdom from within."

--*The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (Quatrain 57)

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Yoga teaches that the spine is like a river, its currents of energy flowing constantly, though most people are seldom aware of them. The principal task of yoga practice is to strengthen these currents, and at the same time to increase one's sensitive awareness of them. The true "river of baptism," extolled in many religions by the outward symbolic act of bathing, is the spine. *Danda swamis*, a class of monks in India, carry straight staffs to remind

themselves of their need to live more in the spine, and to keep it always erect that the currents of life may flow through it freely.

"Make straight the way of the Lord," said St. John the Baptist. Sit very straight and still in meditation. Feel the river of life in the spine, and direct its flow very slowly and deliberately upward to the brain, and thence to the point between the eyebrows. At that point feel that your river of energy and light is entering at last into the great ocean of cosmic light.

-- Your Sun Sign as a Spiritual Guide

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Chapter Eight: PRANAYAMA

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

2-49. The next stage in meditation is to calm the flow of the inner life-force.

Pranayama, as I pointed out earlier, is usually translated to mean “breath control.” In fact, however, *prana* means energy. In the human body, there is a close correlation between the two. When the inner life-force is disturbed, the breathing becomes irregular. When the life-force is calm, the breath becomes calm. It is the life-force, in reality, which controls the breath, but one can also use the breath—breathing calmly and deliberately, for example—to regulate or calm the life-force. Thus, it is not actually an error to mistake control of the life-force (the energy of the body) with control of the breath.

The important thing, in meditation, is not only to still the movement of the body, but after that also to withdraw the life-force from the senses to the spine. At death, the life-force follows this same process, but it is usually irreversible by people’s will power. In meditation, the process is under the control of the will. The energy must be withdrawn to the spine, and one’s sense-telephones, as Yogananda called them, silenced. Only then can one even begin to meditate in the true sense of the word. But wait! There is more! Next, the mind itself must be interiorized! And first, there is more to know about controlling the life-force itself.

From the Art and Science of Raja Yoga – Chapter 3, Swami Kriyananda

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.

As I mentioned in the first lesson, the Hindu word for “breath,” “life,” and “energy” is the same: prana. Prana surrounds us in the air we breathe. We shall learn in a later lesson how to draw on this prana by other means than the breath. The breath is, however, one very important means. We draw not only air into our body when we breathe, but also vitality, strength, courage. When we exhale, we throw out of our system not only carbon dioxide, but also mental and emotional impurities: discouragement, weakness, despair. But inasmuch as these are mental and emotional tendencies, we must use mental “lungs” to draw them into us or to expel them, even as we must use our physical lungs to inhale and exhale air. When a deliberate mental effort is made to absorb prana from the air that we breathe, then breathing can give us psycho-spiritual benefits as well.

Air, too, is full of prana, or energy. If you breathe in very slowly and deliberately, concentrating upon the energy in the air as it comes into your body, and filling your body from the toes up to the head with this energy, you will find that you can develop tremendous vitality simply by breathing.

The yogi, realizing that his dualistic involvements spring only from his own reactions to the world around him, and observing further that these reactions are always accompanied by upward or downward movements of energy in the spine, concentrates not only on improving his mental reactions, but also on controlling and neutralizing those inner movements of energy. In this esoteric technique lies an amazingly useful key. For specific likes and dislikes are so numerous and varied that it is almost impossible to root them all out and correct them. But they do have one thing in common: their link to the energy-flow in the spine. If this energy-flow can be brought under control, specific likes and dislikes will be more easily tamed also.

To demonstrate the truth of what I've just said, try a simple experiment. The next time you feel moody or depressed, try first to think your way out of your mood. You'll find that that isn't so easy! Next, try sitting upright and inhaling several times, vigorously and deeply. If that doesn't work, try raising your hands high above your head, looking upward, and inhale several times more. The combination of deep inhalation with a thought of upward motion should at least make you feel better. If you practice this simple exercise with enough will power, your gloom will almost certainly vanish. And it will do so without your addressing yourself at all to the particular thoughts that made you gloomy in the first place!

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From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*

The fourth stage of meditation is called *Pranayama* in Sanskrit. Pranayama means control of the body's energy. This stage is important because, to attain soul-freedom, the energy must be calmed, then directed inward from the senses to the brain.

Two things are important for bringing the energy under control: awareness, and will power. The greater the will, the greater the flow of that energy. And the greater the awareness of that energy, the easier it will be for us to redirect it toward the Spiritual Eye.

Paramhansa Yogananda created a unique system, which he called energization exercises, to help people in attaining this energy-control. His system helps to direct energy to the body and, afterward, to withdraw it again from the body in meditation. These exercises give awareness of the energy, and, by means of that awareness, the ability to manipulate its flow in the body at will.

By practicing these exercises daily, you'll develop exceptional ability to heal your body, and even a subject I'll discuss in the next chapter to achieve success in your outward undertakings. You'll find it possible to attract desired opportunities, and to draw inspiration at will.

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From the *Bhagavad Gita*

(Introduction) Pranayama (means) controlling the life-force in the nerve-telephones by switching it off from the senses)...

(1:10) By proper breathing exercises, as taught in the classes of "Highest Self Realization," the venous blood is burned out and the body is electrified. When the body stops decaying, the heart gets rest and learns to control the Life Force moving through the five sense-telephones of touch, smell, taste, hearing, and sight.

Of course, when the Life Force is shut off, the material sensations cannot reach the brain to snatch the attention away from God and entangle it in the material world. That is why Bhima, or proper breathing exercises, and the few strong soldiers of concentration, intuition, inner perception, calmness, self-control, and so on, can be awakened to fight the forces of the pseudo-Soul, or Ego.

It is the breathing exercises that are responsible for cutting off the nerve force through which the sense impulses reach the brain and invade attention with darts of material desires. Therefore, Bhima, or Soul-guided Life Force, is the principal enemy of Ego, or Bhisma.

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(1:20) In every process of meditation we send the thought and energy from the sense Centers to the brain, where God reigns. Most devotees who try unscientifically to enter the silence

only helplessly try to direct the mind to the brain while the outgoing energy keeps the attention tied to the sense Centers. In mentally retiring within, the scientific Yogoda devotee knows how to withdraw the energy as well as the mind from the senses. When the energy retires into the spine, the five sense-telephones of smell, taste, sight, hearing, and touch are automatically switched off, preventing mental disturbance by sensations.

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Swami Yogananda, *Inner Culture*, 1930s.

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(2:58) *When the yogi, like a tortoise withdrawing its head and limbs into its shell, is able to withdraw his energy from the objects of sense-perception, he becomes established in wisdom.*

Control of what Yogananda used to call the “sense telephones” is essential for deep meditation. Sense control by withdrawal of the energy is the true meaning of *pranayama*: “*yama* (control) of the *prana* (energy).” *Pranayama* is a condition, not a technique. The practice of *pranayama* is to achieve energy control.

This stanza offers one proof out of many that the Bhagavad Gita, while embracing all paths to God, places special emphasis on Raja Yoga in that it teaches *how* to achieve the goal, union with God, and doesn’t merely say, “Seek God.” Prana is often equated with the breath, and *pranayama*, with breathing exercises. In fact, there is an intimate connection between the breath and the flow of energy in the body. Paramhansa Yogananda often said, “Breathlessness is deathlessness.” Yogic breathing exercises have the purpose of enabling the practitioner to rise above the body’s normal need for breath.

Breathlessness is not *kumbhaka* in the sense of *forcibly* retaining the breath. Rather, true *kumbhaka* comes when the body no longer requires air for its maintenance. The purpose of respiration is to expel carbon dioxide from the lungs, and to take in oxygen. In *pranayama* exercises, the breath is used to produce a state of equilibrium in the body, in which state the physical activity of breathing is no longer required to maintain it in a condition of equilibrium.

When one rises above the need to breathe, the heart pump also slows down, then stops altogether.

There is a subtle connection, through the medulla oblongata, between the breath and the heartbeat. When breathing becomes unnecessary, the heartbeat, as just indicated, slows down and then stops. Between these two phenomena—the breath and heartbeat, on the one hand—and sensory awareness, on the other, there is a close connection.

The energy in the senses, as in the whole body, relaxes and withdraws—as happens, indeed, to a lesser degree in sleep. A sleeper may be called—he may even be shaken—before he is even aware of being wanted. This diminished involvement with objective reality occurs because, during sleep, the energy is partially withdrawn from the body and from the “sense-telephones”—even as the tortoise withdraws its head and limbs into its shell.

It is only when the “sense telephones” have been “switched off” that the mind can become wholly absorbed in the inner world of meditation. The energy in the motor nerves, too, must be withdrawn, as happens naturally when the senses are stilled.

--*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Swami Kriyananda

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(2:58) The kriya technique as taught by Lahiri Mahasaya is also a form of pranayam. It is the art of switching off the life force from the five senses. Breath control follows life control. Life control signifies the controlling of the heart. To quiet the heart at will is to be able to switch off the life current from the five sense telephones. By control of the heart, which is the switch board of the five sense telephones, the yogi can disconnect his mind from the five sensations. When the heart is controlled, breath control follows.

It is extremely erroneous to think that the unscientific holding of breath in the lungs leads to the control of the heart. Those who try to control the mind only by mental meditations find it takes a long time for the mind to control the heart effectively so that it can withdraw the life force from the five sense telephones. Therefore yoga can be called the quick or “airplane” method to God, since it advocates a psychophysical method by which the heart can be quieted down in a natural way, causing it to withdraw the life force from the five sense telephones.

The yogi says in order to control the heart one must control the body, lessen the carbon in the blood by eating more fruit, learn the yoga art of burning the carbon in the venous blood so that the heart will not have to pump dark blood into the heart for purification. By deep stillness the heart is released from much work, and then consciously the heart remains quiet, automatically withdrawing the life force from the five senses, thus preventing the sensations from reaching the brain and bothering the mind.

--*Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Inner Culture*, March 1940

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(4:29) *One practice of yoga offers the incoming breath (prana) into the outgoing breath (apana), and the apana into the prana, thereby, through pranayama (control of the energy), rendering breathing unnecessary.*

The physical breath, as we saw earlier, accompanies the upward and downward flow of energy through the *ida* and *pingala nadis* in the spine. Indeed, it is this spinal flow of the energies, known as prana and apana, which prompts the lungs to inhale and exhale. Actually, prana also, more broadly speaking, means energy itself. Prana is *Paraprakriti* (as opposed to *Aparaprakriti*, Nature); it is immanent as opposed to overt Nature: the hidden reality behind the whole material universe.

The slow, careful, conscious circulation of energy around the spine constitutes the ancient science known (since the time of Lahiri Mahasaya in the nineteenth century) as Kriya Yoga. This circulation magnetizes the spine, and redirects the mental tendencies, called *samskaras*, toward the brain in a way interestingly reminiscent of the realigning of molecules in a north-south direction in a bar of metal. Similar to the bar magnet, the spine becomes magnetized in the sense that the energy, flowing ever more unidirectionally up toward the

brain, is drawn into the deep spine, the *sushumna*, where, with the awakening of the Kundalini, it rises through the chakras, lifting all one's energy and consciousness upward toward God. Thus, the energy is brought to the spiritual eye, finally to become united with *sahasrara* (the "thousand-petaled" lotus) at the top of the head. That this yoga was taught not only in recent times (in the late eighteen hundreds) but anciently is evidenced by this stanza, and also by a later one, in Chapter 5 of the Gita (5:27,28), where Krishna describes the need for neutralizing the currents of prana and apana.

--*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Swami Kriyananda

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(5:27,28) *The muni (one for whom liberation is the sole purpose of life) controls his senses, mind, and intellect, removing himself from contact with them by neutralizing the currents of prana and apana in the spine, which manifest (outwardly) as inhalation and exhalation in the nostrils.*

We saw earlier in these pages that the physical act of breathing is intimately associated with—and is, indeed, *caused* by—the energy rising and descending in the spine through the *ida* and *pingala nadis*, or nerve channels. *Ida* begins on the left side; *pingala*, on the right. Breathing in the astral body takes place in these two *nadis*. The breath in the astral body is in the spine, and consists of energy, not of inhalation and exhalation with the lungs. The ascending energy is called prana; the descending, apana. One yoga technique (I once observed my Guru practicing it) involves alternately closing the right and left nostrils to allow air to pass only through the left, then the right, stimulating the prana and apana in the spine. Stimulating that flow of energy by deliberately breathing with one nostril at a time is an indirect technique, however. To control those currents with the attention focused on the outward activity of closing and opening the nostrils directs one's attention more to the breathing aspect of the exercise than to the energy-flow in the spine.

Kriya Yoga is the science that was particularly recommended by my own Guru and by his line of gurus... Kriya Yoga helps one (as we discussed earlier in this book) to equalize the incoming and outgoing breaths, and to absorb one's energy in the spine, where one feels the currents as a cool (rising) and a slightly warm (descending) current.

--*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Swami Kriyananda

From *The Essence of Self-realization*

"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.

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"*Pranayama* means control of the energy in the body, and its direction upward through the spine to the brain and to the Christ center between the eyebrows. This alone is the pathway of awakening. It isn't a matter of dogma or belief. It is simply the way we were all made by God.

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From YOGANANDA

Sri Yukteswar used the word *prana*; I have translated it as lifetrans. The Hindu scriptures refer not only to the *anu*, "atom," and to the *paramanu*, "beyond the atom," finer electronic energies; but also to *prana*, "creative lifetric force." Atoms and electrons are blind forces; *prana* is inherently intelligent. The pranic lifetrans in the spermatozoa and ova, for instance, guide the embryonic development according to a karmic design.

-- *Autobiography of a Yogi, 1946 edition*

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Prana means Life Energy. There are two kinds of Prana.

(a) the Cosmic Energy, the source of all living things.

(b) the specific Prana or energy pervading each human body.

The Cosmic Energy is the cause of the creation of planets and all living organisms.

The Life Energy in the body of all organisms is secretly supplied by the Cosmic Energy. But the Life Energy loses this contact the more it becomes individualized, selfish, body-bound, ignoring its Cosmic Connection.

The Cosmic Energy is finer than Electrons or any other vibratory force existing in Nature, and is conscious (but not self-conscious). It is the missing link between Consciousness and matter.

The Spirit vibrating outwards first becomes Cosmic Consciousness, then as it vibrates into grosser states, it becomes Conscious Cosmic Energy, followed by the grossest material vibration or matter. Hence the connecting link between the human consciousness and the gross body is established by the specific Life Energy.

The Soul vibrates into Consciousness, Consciousness vibrates into Life Energy, which in turn vibrates into the gross human body. Hence those that do not understand the functions of Life Energy find a great difference between mind and matter, or ignorantly deny the existence of matter.

Mind exists, matter exists, both are vibrations of Spirit. Invisible mind vibrating as Life Energy is converted into gross matter. Matter does not exist as it appears to us, it is nothing but vibrations of Life-Energy which in turn are vibrations of Consciousness.

To be able to understand the five functions of Life Energy is to be able to dematerialize the body into its original constituent principles.

The Life Energy in general as present in the human body is spoken of as Prana in Sanskrit; it is conscious Energy, it builds the human body out of a spermatozoon. Its seat in the human body is the Medulla.

1. Pran helps crystallization
2. Byan helps circulation
3. Saman helps assimilation
4. Udan helps metabolism
5. Apan helps elimination

--Advanced Course on Practical Metaphysics (1926)

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When the yogi by technique of meditation learns to switch off the life-force from the five sense telephones of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch, then he finds that his attention becomes disconnected with the body and united with God-consciousness. When a yogi, by switching off his attention from sensations, can enjoy ecstatic communion with God, then he realizes that he will never again crave to indulge in physical happiness and thereby remain continuously burning with material desires, love of sense-pleasures, and worries.

--*Second Coming of Christ, Inner Culture*, March 1940

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From KRIYANANDA

What is life? What do we mean, for example, when we say, "I feel so *alive* today?" Essentially, what we mean is that we have more *energy*. We instinctively identify life with energy, not with mere existence.

Then what is the breath? The body depends for its functioning on the intake of oxygen, and on the exhalation of waste matter in the form of carbon dioxide. But is the breath only a chemical? Not so, say the great yogis. They equate it with life, because they equate it with energy.

In India, in fact, one word, *prana*, is used for all three. For one thing, the breath is a valuable source of energy. Also, it acts as a strong stimulus to the natural energy-flow (or life-flow) in the body. Notice how, when you go to lift a heavy object, you always inhale first. Instinctively you understand that inhalation will help to bring you the strength you need for the work at hand. If you inhale energy consciously and deliberately while inhaling air, you will find that breathing is one of the prime means of drawing energy into the body.

Life, or energy, is more than the breath; nor is our understanding of life particularly enhanced by equating the two. But our understanding of the breath is greatly expanded by the association.

Proper breathing can help immensely to make you more “alive” and energetic. Begin from today to pay careful attention to your natural rhythms of breathing. You will soon discover in this seemingly simple life-function hidden spiritual treasures.

--Ananda Yoga for Higher Awareness (Appendix)

Prana means energy primarily and breath only secondarily because there's always a tie between the flow of energy and the breath. But *Pranayama*, control of energy, is what the real teachings are about. To learn to control that flow of energy within ourselves.

--Unity in Yoga Conference, 1995

Chapter Nine: PRATYAHARA

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

2-54. The fifth state on the path of contemplation is known as *Pratyahara*: interiorization of the mind, when the senses are withdrawn, and the *chitta* (essential feeling) is calm.

Until the stage of *pratyahara* has been attained, *real* concentration cannot be achieved. Real meditation means one-pointed concentration on the Inner Truth. Concentration, my Guru used to say, is the ability to concentrate one-pointedly on one thing at a time. Meditation is focusing that concentration on God or on one of His attributes (peace, calmness, bliss, love, power, sound, light, and wisdom).

2-55. From this follows supreme mastery over the senses.

It should be noted that Patanjali did not say, “permanent mastery.” He meant, only as applied to that particular day’s meditation. The discerning devotee will surely realize that there remains much more work to be done! We still have *Dharana* (concentration itself), *Dhyana*, (meditation), and *samadhi*. (oneness) to consider.

From the above, it is easy to understand why hermits retire to Himalayan caves for meditation!

From the Art and science of Raja Yoga – Chapter 3, di Swami Kriyananda

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.

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 supernatural, human being.

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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.

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From Awaken to Superconsciousness – Chapter 15, Swami Kriyananda

This fifth stage on the path of meditation (*pratyahara* in Sanskrit) can be perfected only after *pranayama*, the fourth stage, which brings the energy-flow in the body under control. As is true at every stage of the spiritual path, however, there is a homogeneity in the various stages that requires us to see the whole of it in every part as much so at the beginning as at the end.

The time to begin interiorizing your mind, then, is as soon as you set foot on the path in earnest. Without interiorization, you'll never be able to practice any of its stages successfully. And your meditations will never achieve fruition.

There must come a time on the path when former attractions no longer seem attractive; when life's excitements, its gains and its losses, simply don't matter any more; when people's opinions, including your own, become quite irrelevant to you; and when the only thing that matters is to remain in the peace and joy of your own being. Even if this attitude seems foreign to you at present, it will flower someday of its own accord in your mind, if you work now at interiorizing your mind. For you will realize that you are complete in yourself; that within you lies everything you once sought so ardently outside yourself.

To work at achieving wisdom, don't wait for it to come to you as a kind of prize for having meditated. Interiorization is not only a state one achieves: It is an attitude that must be cultivated conscientiously throughout the journey.

Try to relate everything you see and do to the inner Self. When you behold a beautiful flower, try to sense the essence of its beauty in the Self. When hearing beautiful music, try to hear its source in the music of the soul; listen with the inner ear inside the right ear, especially. When eating good food, try to taste it at the point between the eyebrows.

Draw every sense enjoyment inward, that you enjoy it at your own highest center. This attitude is, in its own way, as important for the meditator as meditation itself...

An attitude of *titiksha* is the first step to interiorizing the mind, and to bringing its reactions under control. To practice *titiksha*, concentrate on your reactions to things rather than on the things you think cause the reactions. Don't run riot with your feelings. Tell yourself, when fortune smiles, that no good thing lasts forever; and again, when misfortune frowns, that misfortune is never unalloyed or permanent.

An important way of practicing *titiksha* is to watch the breath. By retracing this reactive process from the periphery of awareness ever more deeply to our center in the spine, we develop that mind-set which ultimately brings us to *pratyahara*: interiorization of the mind.

The Fifth Stage: Pratyahara

The process of *pratyahara* begins with observation of the breath. Awareness of the breath is traced back to the corresponding movements of energy in the spine. Gradually, the breath becomes calm, and the reactive energies are brought under control. As the meditator ceases mentally to dance the jig of life's ups and downs, he develops centeredness in the inner Self. It is after this point is reached that meditation, properly so called, can begin.

In *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam Explained*, Paramhansa Yogananda makes an extraordinary statement regarding the inner world of the soul. After describing the interrelationship of the mind and body through the nerves, he writes:

As the life-force moves down the spine and out to the body and its senses, the mind is drawn outward also. Sense-stimulation from within impels one to seek fulfillment in sense-pleasures.

The same nervous system, however, constitutes the one and only path to spiritual enlightenment, regardless of formal religious affiliation. When the energy can be coaxed to reverse its flow from the senses to the brain, it reveals to our consciousness another world.

I began this discussion by mentioning how the mantra Hong-Sau, can be used to dissolve the consciousness of pain. All pain originates in the thought of ego (Why is this happening to me?). By mentally chanting Hong-Sau at the seat of that pain, one dissolves the ego's connection to the pain, and thereby lessens, or even dissolves, the pain itself.

Try doing this while you sit in the dentist's chair (I mention the dentist's chair because it was my first example), or at any other time that you experience pain, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally. Don't limit your practice to those times when you want desperately to rise above pain. Do it in response to any sensation, whether light or intense, pleasant or unpleasant, simply as an exercise in interiorization of the mind.

Concentrate at the center of the sensation. Then watch the breath at that center. Don't control the breath. Simply watch it. As it comes in of its own accord, follow it mentally with the chant Hong. Feel as you do so that the word itself is relaxing and dissolving your ego-identification with that sensation.

Then, as the breath flows out, follow it mentally with the chant Sau. Feel, with the utterance of this word, that you are coming ever more deeply to rest in the peace within.

The Hong-Sau mantra is not a specific for banishing pain. I show how it can be used for that purpose in order to clarify the point that interiorization of the mind must be practiced in daily life also, if we are to succeed in attaining interiorization in meditation.

What I've really given you, however, is a wonderful technique for developing concentration in meditation. The purpose of the technique is, as I said, to help you to interiorize the mind. Its more fundamental purpose is to help you to rise above body-consciousness altogether, by stilling the breath...

Meditation Exercise

To practice interiorization of the mind during normal waking consciousness, try this walking meditation. Walk alone, if possible, during this exercise, for its purpose is to interiorize the mind, not to externalize it in the company of others. At the same time, I am aware that walking meditations are often practiced in a group. Such practice has the advantage of formalizing one's practices; it can make you regular in them. So take it, if you like, as my personal preference. To me, this practice is too intimate for anything but solitary practice.

Throughout this practice, make it a point to relate to God, to God through Nature, and to your own higher Self.

Don't walk vigorously. In other words, don't hike. Walk easefully. Express in outward action the peace you feel in meditation.

Now, be aware of the energy as it moves through your body. Feel yourself surrounded by a great, inverted vortex of cosmic energy, spinning slowly around you, and drawing you upward toward its source in infinity.

Bring that energy down, after a time, into an awareness of its manifestation in your physical environment.

Listen to the birds singing: Hear the Divine Consciousness singing through them. Ask the Divine Mother if She hasn't some special message, in their singing, for you.

Listen to the sounds in your vicinity: to dogs barking, people's voices in the distance, cars moving. Feel the Divine Mother communicating with you through all those sounds.

Gaze at the sunlight as it trembles on a leaf; at the clouds sailing overhead; at the trees, the bushes; at countless objects around you. Share those visual impressions with the Divine Mother, as if also with your higher Self.

Feel the wind on your skin, the warmth of the sunlight or the coolness of the evening air. In every thought, in every impression, make the Divine Mother a participant.

If thoughts come to you in the form of words, share them with the Divine Mother as though you were talking *to* Her. Don't only think *about* Her, in the third person. Talk *to* Her.

Feel yourself as the breath of divine love and joy. Walk joyfully on an earth where all beings rejoice in their unseen, heavenly origin.

From the *Bhagavad Gita*

The spine is the primary channel through which the energy flows. The energy's upward flow is blocked by certain plexuses in the spine, from which energy flows out into the nervous system, and through that system into the body, sustaining and activating the different body parts. When the yogi in deep meditation withdraws his energy from the outer body to the spine, and then up the spine to the brain, he finds that passage blocked by the outward flow of energy from those plexuses (called centers in English translations of the yoga treatises; in their Sanskrit original they are called chakras). The energy at each chakra must be withdrawn into the spine in order to continue its upward journey.

--The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda

Driving the chariot of spiritual endeavor between the two armies signifies the withdrawal of energy into the spine, and the awareness which comes to the meditating devotee that there are actually two forces within him, vying together to draw him in opposite directions: downward and upward. The purpose of meditation, according to yoga practice, is to raise the energy in the spine, in so doing to transfer all the lower energies into higher energies in the spine, and finally, then, to focus them at the point between the eyebrows, uniting them ultimately with the highest pole in the body at the top of the head (the *sahasrara*).

--The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita

(2:58) The Gita says that the most scientific way to do away with the invading taste sensation of the candy would be to learn the technique of switching off the mind and especially the life energy flowing into the nerves of taste. In that case, no sensation of candy could reach the brain through the sensory nerves of taste and stimulate the brain cells for the entrapping of the mind.

The ordinary man finds his mind identified with the life force in the five telephonic senses; thus, whenever objects of sensory temptations contact the optical, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, or tactual nerve endings and sense perceptions, he succumbs to their allurements. The yogi must be a good switchboard operator of his five sense telephones and be able to switch off his mind and life force flowing through the five telephones of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. In this way the yogi can completely disconnect his mind from the tempting sensations of the five senses.

When a man is sleeping deeply, if his eyelids are opened and a rose is held before him, he will not see it. Nor could he smell the rose during deep slumber, nor hear if spoken to during sleep. Similarly, no one in the state of deep sleep can taste food put in his mouth, or feel sensations of gentle touch.

The Bhagavad Gita says very few people can escape temptation when they keep their minds identified with the senses. Of course, this does not mean the yogi should not see, hear, smell, taste, or touch by constantly remaining in the superconscious state, but that he should

be able at the slightest command of will to withdraw the mind and energy from any of the five senses when it is continuously invaded by a sense temptation.

Identification Of Mind

For an example: during excitement of the sex impulse in the sex nerves, it is almost impossible to control the mind. That is why people in general succumb to sex transgressions during the manifestation of sex impulse. According to the yogis the sex impulse results from the identification of the mind with the physiological sex nerves. Hence trying to control the physiological sex nerves by mind is ineffectual.

The yogi knows the art of withdrawing the mind and energy from the sex nerves so completely that no sex sensation in the body or any outside object of sexual temptation could overcome his mind. In other words, the yogi can withdraw the mind and life force from the sex nerves during the manifestation of a sex impulse and thus completely release his mind from physiological and mental sex temptation.

When the mind is identified with sex or any of the sense sensations, it finds itself unable to understand the difference between its own happiness and the pleasures of the senses. Identification of the mind with sex misleads people in general to consider the temptation of sex as a temptation of the mind. When the yogi learns how to withdraw his mind and energy from the senses, he realizes his mind loves to concentrate on its own real joy found in the soul contact and interiorization of the mind; the pleasures of the senses then seem foreign and repugnant.

If a hungry person feeds somebody else, he can never thus appease his own hunger. Similarly, when a soul is hungry to find its own lost soul happiness, if it attempts to find happiness through sense enjoyments, it will never find real joy and will never be able to find satisfaction even by continuous indulgence in sense enjoyments. All sex and sense addicts find themselves disillusioned and dissatisfied because they fail to seek their own real happiness in soul contact...

The yogi knows that the body is a house in which he lives with two sets of telephones—the sensory and motor telephones. Through the motor telephone he works his muscles and limbs and causes motion in organs. With sensory telephones he receives sensations of sight, smelling, hearing, taste and touch from the outside world into his brain. The yogi learns that just as by will all movement in the body can be stopped, so also at will he can switch off his mind and life force from the five sense telephones, thereby preventing the forced inroad of unwelcome sensations.

The ordinary person can only disconnect his mind from the senses in the unconscious state of sleep. The yogi learns that the true way of happiness lies in the art of switching mind and life from the five senses at will; and not in an unconscious state. An ordinary animal cannot withdraw his limbs into the body when it is attacked, but the tortoise can do so. Likewise, the ordinary person cannot disengage his mind from the senses when they are tempted, but the yogi is like the tortoise and can withdraw his limbs of mind and life force away from the onslaught of the five senses when they attack his peace.

The above stanza of the Bhagavad Gita tells the yogi to follow the art of scientifically and psychophysically controlling the senses. A real yogi can withdraw his mind from all the

sensations of the material world and unite his mind and energy with the all-intoxicating joy of inner ecstasy or *samadhi*, and thus forget the lesser joys of the senses, even as the tortoise can withdraw his limbs when they are the objects of attack. In the state of high yoga perception and deep interiorization of the mind, the yogi feels the retirement of the senses of smell, taste, sound, touch and sight all commingling into the cosmic sound which ultimately melts into cosmic consciousness. This last expression can only be understood by those that have gone into a deep state of concentration.

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretations (2:58), Inner Culture, March 1940

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(2:68) Therefore, O Mighty-armed (Arjuna), withdraw your sense-faculties (the power to see, hear, etc.) from the senses themselves, and from sense-objects. Thus will your wisdom become firmly established.

—*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda*

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(3:7) *That man, however, succeeds supremely, O Arjuna, who disciplines his senses by an effort of mind, who remains inwardly non-attached, and who engages his organs of activity in God-reminding activities.*

...Sense-control is never a question of bullying the senses. What must be done is *withdraw* the energy from them. The will acts directly upon the flow of energy. Yogananda stated, “The greater the will, the greater the flow of energy.” The *direction* of that flow can be inward as well as outward—upward as well as downward.

Therefore also Krishna speaks of *inner* non-attachment. Depriving oneself of material things may, and often does, feed the hidden fires of attachment! No activity engaged in merely to impress others (or even God) will, in the end, bear divine fruit. Spiritual progress is achieved above all by desiring it intensely, and not by inflicting violent discipline on the body.

With a willing attitude, with joy and devotion, it is possible to find God. Without the whole-hearted assent of one’s will and of one’s whole consciousness, that noblest of all ends—the pure consciousness of Bliss itself—cannot be achieved...

—*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda*

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(3:28) *O Arjuna, he who understands how the gunas work in human nature, and who knows therefore that (even) what the senses perceive depends on their indwelling **power** of perception, withdraws his mind and removes his attachment to things at the very source of his perception.*

When a person sees (let us say) something ugly, he might close his eyes and simply refuse to see it. On the other hand, he might withdraw mentally from the perception of it, and then deliberately project joy and a oneness of beauty onto everything around him. Thus, the ugliness will not affect him, for he will see it as a manifestation of Eternal Bliss, which, in the

last analysis, underlies all existence. He may even—as the great artist Leonardo da Vinci did when he beheld ugliness—gaze at it in a new way and see it as an aspect of the Divine Beauty.

I am not saying that one should be indifferent to ugliness, squalor, and evil when he encounters it. He should not, however, allow anything to disturb his inner peace. Even if he sees wrong in the world, and accepts it as a manifestation of *maya*, he can remain inwardly undisturbed by it, and can work impersonally to improve matters in this world. The practical point here is that if one is himself affected by squalor or evil, he will be far less able to improve anything than he will if he is able to remain inwardly attuned to the flow of God's joy.

Withdrawal of the power behind the senses enables one to influence for good whatever he perceives in the world, and to act always in a state of inner freedom.

—The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda

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(5:10) *As the lotus leaf is untouched by water, so the yogi who acts without attachment, self-offered to the Divine, is not affected by sensory experience (whether gross or subtle).*

...When the life force is withdrawn from outward body awareness during deep meditation, the yogi beholds currents of energy trickling back through the flesh, like little rills of rainwater in a forest, to the great river of energy in the spine. When all of the body's currents are in this way withdrawn, they then pass successively into, and through, the three luminous *nadis* (channels) of life force in the astral spine: the *sushumna* (which is outermost), the *vajra*, and then the *chitra*. Passing through the *chitra*, the energy and consciousness enter the innermost channel, the *brahmanadi*, which constitutes the spine of the causal body. It was through the *brahmanadi* that Brahma, the Creative aspect of AUM, in His aspect of Creator of individual beings and their three bodies, descended into outward manifestation. It is through this final channel of *brahmanadi*, therefore, that the soul must once more ascend in order to become again one with the Spirit. As the yogi withdraws his energy up through this final channel, he is able fully to offer his separate, individual consciousness into Infinity.

During this process, he beholds wondrous astral phenomena. This stanza of the Gita is a warning not to be attached to such visions, either, lest they divert him from his goal of complete union. The opening of *brahmanadi* is at the top of the head. On reaching this point, the yogi becomes reunited with omnipresence, for the last sheath has been removed that closes him off from Infinity...

—The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita, Kriyananda

From YOGANANDA, *The Second Coming of Christ*

In meditation the mind becomes interiorized and withdraws the life force from the muscles and nerves and concentrates them in the brain cells where the evil mental habits are

grooved. This concentrated life energy in meditation burns out the grooves of mental habits which are lodged in the brain.

-- *Inner Culture*, September 1938

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Any devotee who knows the technique of yoga concentration knows that when concentration becomes interiorized, he finds his life force and attention withdrawn from the motor nerves, sensory nerves, and heart and accumulated in the coccygeal region. Then during deep meditation the accumulated life force and consciousness in the coccygeal region begin to travel through the sacral, lumbar, dorsal, cervical, and medullary plexuses to the Spirit in the brain.”

“Rivers of Light”

The yogi devotee in deep meditation finds his consciousness and life force in the form of luminous rivers of light flowing from coccygeal, sacral, and lumbar regions (or belly which covers these regions) to the ocean of light of Spirit in the brain. These rivers of light are nothing but life forces and consciousness withdrawn from the sense regions by meditation and reversed through the plexuses to the Spirit.

Anyone who cannot understand this technical metaphysical experience should reflect that consciousness flowing through the five rivers of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch makes man conscious of matter. But by meditation, when consciousness and life force are really withdrawn from the five senses, they look like several rivers of light or life force (with consciousness and many other forces in the spine) flowing upward toward the ocean of light of Spirit in the brain.

In the above words Jesus signified that not only those who believed intellectually in him but those who were in tune with his Christ Consciousness and the Holy Ghost or Creative Vibration would understand the meaning of his deep sayings about “rivers of living water” flowing from the inward parts of the devotee.

-- *Inner Culture*, June 1940

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There are two ways of knowing God: (1) By loving God by mind, by heart, and by soul. To love God “by strength” means to switch off the vitality or life force from the five sense telephones of sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste, and thus free the mind from disturbances of Satan. A man could not inwardly love God and concentrate at the same time on any sense pleasure. After the mind is interiorized and disconnected from sensations, then the devotee can use that free mind to love God. When the devotee can love God with a free inwardly concentrated mind, then he begins to love God in his heart. After the devotee feels God saturated in his heart, he feels Him in the deepest recess of the soul. After feeling God in the soul, he feels him everywhere. This is the transcendental way of knowing God by withdrawing the mind from all nature.

-- *Inner Culture*, 1941

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From KRIYANANDA

This same nervous system, however, constitutes *the one and only* path to spiritual enlightenment, regardless of a person's formal religious affiliation. When the energy can be coaxed to reverse its flow from the senses to the brain, it reveals to our consciousness another world. This stimulation of the nerves at their inner source awakens the desire for self-fulfillment and for Self-realization. With progressive interiorization, through daily meditation, one develops subtle, inner perceptions vastly more satisfying than their muted echoes from the senses. The knotty problems of life and death are resolved, and the heart's feelings are extricated at last from the need for further incarnations of material involvement...

Important to this process of interiorization is control over the life-force within. Withdrawing the life-force from the senses to the heart and the spine assists the yogi to withdraw his attention from the outer world.

In the conscious state, the mind is made aware of the world by the life-force flowing outward through the senses. In the subconscious state, the attention withdraws somewhat from sensory awareness, as the life-force retires to partial rest in the hidden "grottoes," or *chakras*, of the spine. In the superconscious state, the consciousness and life-force together pass upward through the spinal "gates" to the brain, and thence outward into the omnipresence of Spirit.

-- *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Quatrain 31*

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The Master could, if he so chose, withdraw his mind completely from any pain his body suffered. One day, long before I came to him, he demonstrated this inner freedom. It was when the concrete "wishing well" was being installed at Mount Washington.

The well slipped from the grasp of the men lifting it, and dropped onto the Master's foot, which was crushed under the weight of a thousand pounds. His automatic reaction wrote itself eloquently on his face: Physical pain made him wince involuntarily.

"I will show you something," he said to those present. "I will focus my concentration on the point between the eyebrows." As he did so, instantly every trace of pain vanished from his face. He could walk back and forth easily.

"Now," he said, "I will lower my mind from the spiritual eye." Instantly, his physical expression again displayed the body's automatic reaction to the pain.

Several times he repeated this demonstration. Years later he told us, regarding another pain his body was enduring: "Last night I wanted to feel pain as others do, so I brought my mind down to the body and held it there for a time."

I (Walter) realized then that, just as it takes effort for most people to rise above body-consciousness, so it takes a master an effort of will to bring his mind down to the body.

He would say, "Tell yourselves constantly, 'I am not the body: I am not this form which changes and passes away! I am eternal bliss!'"

-- *Conversations with Yogananda*, 130

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“The senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch are all separate suggestions of God. I can disconnect them one by one. I used to do that as a boy. I came to realize that this is all God’s movie: true not only to the senses of sight and sound as movies are, but also to the senses of smell, taste, and touch.

“For hours I practiced disconnecting the senses, one by one, by withdrawing the energy from them and bringing it back again, until I’d gained full control over the suggestions they gave to the mind.”

-- *Conversations with Yogananda*, 279

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Chapter Ten: DHARANA

“Dharana (means) concentration: holding the mind to one thought.”

--Autobiography of a Yogi

Concentration means being able to free the mind from all objects of distraction—including one’s own thoughts and emotions—and to direct it toward a single object—whether reposing it in a single state of awareness, or directing it toward a single goal.

--Money Magnetism, Swami Kriyananda

Concentration consists in the art of focusing one hundred per cent attention on one thing at a time. Most efficient people possess the power of concentration as the by-product of the vocation or avocation they follow. People can reason without knowing logic, but its study makes them reason better—similarly, though they possess the natural power of concentration, still they can greatly improve it by the conscious knowledge of the art of concentration.

--Yogoda System Introduction, 1923

From Raja Yoga

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.

On every level of mental activity, *it is concentration that is the key to success*. The student taking an exam, but plagued with a popular song running through his head; the businessman trying to write an important contract, but worried over an argument that he had that morning with his wife; the judge, distracted by the fact that a teenager to whose defense he is trying to listen bears a striking resemblance to his own son: All of these persons could tell us something of the disadvantages of poor concentration. But I don't suppose anyone really needs to be told that lack of concentration means inefficiency. What is *not* generally known is that a concentrated mind succeeds not only because it can solve problems with greater dispatch, but also because problems have a way of somehow vanishing before its focused energies, without even requiring to be solved. A concentrated mind often attracts opportunities for success that, to less focused (and therefore less successful) individuals, appear to come by sheer luck. A person whose mind is concentrated receives inspirations in his work and in his thinking that, to duller minds, may often seem the proof of special divine favor. Yet such seeming "favors" are due simply to the power of concentration. Concentration it is that awakens our powers and channels them, dissolving obstacles in our path, literally attracting opportunities, insights, and inspirations. In many ways, subtle as well as obvious, concentration is the single most important key to success. ...

What is concentration? Concentration implies, first, an ability to release one's mental and emotional energies from all other interests and involvements, and second, an ability to focus them on a single object or state of awareness. Concentration may assume various manifestations, from a dynamic outpouring of energy to perfectly quiescent perceptions. In its higher stages, concentration becomes so deep that there is no longer any question of its remaining merely a practice: The yogi becomes so completely identified with the object of his concentration that he and it, as well as the act of concentration itself, become one. In this way he can even, temporarily, become one with something external to himself, gaining thereby a far deeper understanding of it than would be possible by aloof scientific objectivity, that pride of Western heritage which has the disadvantage of setting man apart from nature, not in harmony with it. But in concentration on our own higher realities, identification with them becomes lasting. For in this case there is no other, more personal, reality to come back to. We are those realities. We *are* the infinite light, and love, and joy, and wisdom of God. Even now, our concentration should be developed with these higher directions in mind. And even now, our concentration should be so deep that the consciousness of diligent practice is refined into an effortless process of divine becoming.

Obviously, then, the most effective technique of concentration will be one which both interiorizes the mind, and permits a gradual transition from technical practice to utter stillness. The technique of watching the breath fulfills both of these requirements—better, perhaps, than any other technique possibly could. For not only is the breath one of the most natural focal points for the attention, but, as we shall see, the more deeply one concentrates on it, the more refined it becomes, until breathing is automatically and effortlessly suspended in breathlessness: Meditator, the act of concentration, and the object of concentration become one. In the state of breathlessness, moreover, the senses themselves become automatically stilled, permitting an undisturbed continuation of the concentrated state. Once the mind is so perfectly focused, its concentrated power may be applied to any object one wishes. But because attentiveness to the breath involves the will in an act, not of doing, but of inward *becoming* (by concentration on the breath one acquires the consciousness of being air, or infinite space), the natural direction of the mind in this technique is toward super-consciousness. (If the will is not involved at all, the mind tends to slip downward into sub-consciousness.)

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From Awaken to Superconsciousness

It is important to realize that the experiences of higher meditation are in no way mind-born. They are received, that is, not created. Once the mind is interiorized, it becomes like an upturned crystal chalice, ready for filling. Calm, interiorized, and uplifted, it receives the first clear intimations of the ecstasies that await it in superconsciousness.

I don't mean that the meditator is vouchsafed no spiritual experiences before he reaches the sixth stage of meditation. Inner sounds and lights, tear-inducing love and joy, healing peace all of these and more are enjoyed by many meditators from the very beginning. To perceive them clearly and steadily, however, instead of in fleeting glimpses, is another matter.

The moon, reflected in a lake's surface, rarely appears as it does in the sky. What is seen are reflections, leaping, glimmering, darting here and there in a thousand ripples, its light ever lacking in definition. Only when the surface of the lake is completely calm are the reflections in it perfectly clear. When that happens, one might almost be seeing the moon itself.

Dharana, the sixth stage, means concentration. This concentration implies not only a focused mind: It implies the rippleless first stages of superconsciousness, when the ego perceives clearly at last levels of reality of which it has received only flickering glimpses before. At this stage, even the thought I am concentrating is a distraction, and betrays an imperfection in one's mental focus.

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.

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From *The Essence of Self-realization*

A newcomer to the Self-Realization Fellowship church in Hollywood asked Paramhansa Yogananda, "Why are techniques necessary for developing concentration? Can't a person simply flow with the inspiration he feels when he prays?"

"A violinist may feel inspiration," Yogananda replied, "but if he doesn't learn techniques that have been developed through the experience of great musicians, he will never become more than an inspired amateur. Yoga techniques, in the same way, are necessary to help you to plumb the inner silence."

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"Master," lamented a disciple, "I have such difficulty in concentrating! I am faithful to my practice of the yoga techniques, but I never seem to get anywhere with them."

"Mechanical practice is not enough," the Master replied. "There must also be sincere interest in what you are doing. You must deepen your devotion."

"Just observe people at the movies. Don't they become yogis? See how still they sit during the suspenseful parts; how engrossed they are in the plot as it unfolds. All that absorption, simply because their interest has been aroused!"

"Meditate in that way.

"Once you've convinced your mind that you really want to meet God in the inner silence, it will be easy for you to sit still and to meditate deeply."

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From *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*

The bow, in the *Mahabharata*, symbolizes the spine. When a bow is strung, the string resembles the spine itself; the arched front looks somewhat like the front of the body. The arrow, as it is loosed from the bow, symbolizes the power of concentration. In this respect one can visualize also the eyebrows as the two curving halves of a bow, wherein the point between them stands for that part of the bow where the arrow is firmly placed.

Dronacharya's best pupil was Arjuna. There is a story about Drona's proposing a test for his students. He asked them, each in turn, to strike off the head of a bird seated on the highest limb of a tree. Each pupil, as he approached the teacher, was asked, "What do you see?"

Each reported the many things within his range of vision. A typical answer was, "I see the bird, the tree, the passing clouds." Dronacharya knew, in each case, that the archer would miss the head of the bird. In fact, so it proved.

Finally, Arjuna stepped up for his turn. "What do you see?" asked Drona.

"I see the head of the bird," replied the young warrior.

"Nothing else?" asked the Guru.

"Nothing else!" came the answer: "only the head of the bird."

"Loose your shaft!" said Dronacharya proudly, certain of Arjuna's success. Arjuna alone passed the test.

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(6:10) Free from the hopes (engendered by) desire, and untouched by any craving for possession, the (waves of feeling in his) heart controlled (by yoga concentration), the yogi, retiring alone to a quiet place, should try to unite his little self with the Supreme Self.

...For most aspiring yogis, however, although they might well find unbroken solitude a mistake (leading to greater restlessness, then laziness and gradual inertia—as opposed to what Krishna calls non-action), it would nevertheless be a great aid to them in their sadhana (spiritual practice) if they could spend some time—a week or two, or even longer—every year, and at least one day a week, in seclusion. Meditating for long hours, reading books that are spiritually uplifting, taking long walks "with God," doing a little mental work such as writing in a spiritual diary: All these activities can provide a spiritually strengthening balance to constant outward activity.

During one's periods of seclusion, one should maintain complete silence, and not speak outwardly to anyone. He should make it a practice, instead, to talk mentally with God, or to carry on a mental dialogue with his guru (if he is blessed to have one). His guru will

convey more understanding to him in this way than he could teach, outwardly. (It is, indeed, fairly normal for true gurus to be *maunis*, never speaking outwardly. Their method of teaching is in any case more by thought transference than by outward speech.)

It should be understood, finally, that true solitude begins when the energy is withdrawn into the spine, stilling the senses, and when the mind contains not a ripple of restless thought. One who can enter this state has no need for outward solitude.

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(6:12) *Seated firmly there, with one-pointed concentration of the mind, and neither roaming mentally nor reacting to sense stimuli, let him seek self-purification by yoga practice (using the techniques prescribed by his guru).*

(6:13) *Holding the spine, neck, and head firmly erect and motionless, let the yogi focus his gaze at the starting point of the nose (**nasikagram**) between the two eyebrows; and let him not gaze elsewhere, but keep his gaze calmly one-pointed.*

This stanza completes the Gita's instructions on the right posture for meditation, including the position of the eyes. Translators have often taken this stanza to mean, "Focus at the tip of the nose." *Nasikagram* (the Sanskrit word), however, means not only "front" (which has been taken to mean the *tip*), but also "*origin*." As Swami Sri Yukteswar stated, "origin" is the right meaning. There is nothing spiritual to be gained by concentrating on the tip of the nose! Krishna is clearly referring to the point from which the nose protrudes from the face, where the air enters the head: the universally recognized seat of the spiritual eye, the Kutastha, which, as Krishna has already indicated, lies at the point midway between the two eyebrows.

Why *gaze* at this point? The direction of one's gaze is an indication of one's state of consciousness. It also helps to *induce* the state of consciousness one desires. A downward gaze is associated with the subconscious, and tends to induce subconsciousness. Gazing straight ahead is not only associated with wakefulness, but helps one to be "awake and ready" if he feels himself growing sleepy. And an upward gaze is associated with superconsciousness. It is natural for a person who feels inspired by some thought, or if he is entertaining hopes for the future, to gaze upward almost by instinct.

There is more involved in the ideal meditative position of the eyes. First it may be pointed out that saints in every religious tradition have been seen, and so depicted by artists, as gazing upward. Popular thought imagines them beholding visions "in the clouds," but the gaze in ecstasy is in fact drawn upward. For saints, this position is not a practice but a natural *consequence* of their being in a superconscious state.

For the meditating yogi, a good practice is to gaze upward—not with crossed eyes, but with the gaze slightly focused on a point in the near distance—as if looking at one's thumb, held outward and slightly high, at arm's length.

It is best (but more difficult because of visual distractions) to meditate with open eyes, the gaze (as we've seen) slightly upward, and the lower eyelids slightly raised. Thus, closed eyes are naturally associated with sleep; wide open eyes, with wakefulness; and slightly

raised, finally, with the lower lids in a “half open and half closed” position, is associated with superconsciousness.

Interestingly, the eyes of worldly people, whose consciousness is heavy with their descending flow of energy, tend to show more white under the irises. The eyes of yogis generally show none, or little, of that white area. This, too, is a result of the upward “lift” on the lower lids accompanying a raised consciousness.

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(6:44)...Infinitely more important than chanting AUM is it to *listen* to AUM in the right ear in meditation. Closing the tragi of the ears with the thumbs (the elbows resting lightly on a crosspiece of wood), AUM is chanted mentally at the point between the eyebrows while the mind concentrates on the sounds appearing (as has been stated) in the right ear. One should concentrate on only one sound at a time. The very concentration on that sound will attune one to subtler levels of sound, until one hears the Cosmic Vibration. This yoga technique should be learned personally in its various ramifications from a true teacher. It is an important part of the path taught by Paramhansa Yogananda.

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(7:18) ...Swami Sri Yukteswar enjoyed recounting the following fable to show the importance of seeking God’s will alone, not one’s own.

A certain yogi, having developed a degree of psychic power, came upon a tree during his wanderings in the Himalayas which he intuitively recognized as a “*kalyana kalpataru*,” or magic wishing tree. “How splendid!” he thought delightedly. Sitting beneath the tree, he wished for a palace.

Instantly a beautiful palace materialized before him, right there in the forest. He entered it, and found that it was perfectly matched to all his wishes. The edifice was empty, however. “Let there be beautiful furnishings: sofas, chairs, carpets, wall hangings, paintings, artistic curtains.” Lo! it all became so.

“This place is already wonderful beyond my wildest dreams!” he thought. “But it lacks people to enjoy it with me and to rejoice with me in my good fortune. I wish these rooms to be filled with laughing, happy men and women.” Suddenly—lo! it was so. People thronged the room he was in: the reception hall, the dining room, the staircases, the foyer.

He enjoyed these delights for a time. Then he thought, “Let me go now from room to room, that I may see and take pleasure in *all* my new treasures!” He went by himself, exulting in his good fortune. After some time he came to a room on the ground floor that was empty of human beings. The window stood wide open. Because this miracle had come into being out in the forest, the surrounding woods were as Nature had made them. Suddenly he heard a tiger roaring outside the palace gates.

“Ah!” he thought in alarm. “I’m here in this room all by myself. The window is open, and I’m on the ground floor! What if that tiger should leap in through the window and eat me?”

He forgot that all this had been produced under the magic spell of the wishing tree. Instantly a tiger appeared outside, leapt in through the window, and devoured him before he could cry for help.

The moral of this story is that if, by the practice of concentration, one has developed a strong mind, he will be sitting under the wishing tree of his own spinal energy. He should offer all his desires, his understanding, and his will up to God alone for fulfillment.

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(18:42) *The inherent duties of a Brahmin (the highest caste) are mind control (concentration), sense control (by the practice of **pranayama**), self-restraint, purity, forgiveness, integrity, wisdom, meditation to attain Self-realization, and faith in a higher truth.*

From Affirmations for Self-healing

Concentration is the secret of success in every undertaking. Without concentration, thoughts, energy, inspiration, purpose—all one's inner forces—become scattered. Concentration is the calm focus of one's full attention on the purpose at hand. Concentration means more than mental effort: It means channeling your heart's feelings, your faith, and your deep aspirations into whatever you are doing. In that way, even the little things in life can become rich with meaning.

Concentration should not involve mental strain. When you really want something, it is difficult *not* to think about it! Concentrate *with interest* on whatever you do, and you will find yourself absorbed in it.

Affirmation

Whatever I do in life, I give it my full attention. Like a laser beam, I burn from before me all problems, all obstructions!

Prayer

Help me to see Thee, Lord, as the Scriptures describe Thee: "the most Relishable"! Help me to concentrate on Thee my gaze, my love, my aspirations, my entire being.

§

From YOGANANDA

Mental efficiency depends upon the art of concentration. Man must know the scientific method of concentration, by which he can disengage his attention from objects of distraction and focus it on one thing at a time. By the power of concentration, man can use the untold power of mind to accomplish that which he desires, and he can guard all doors through which failure may enter. All men of success have been men of great concentration, men who could dive deeply into their problems and come out with the pearls of right solutions. Most people are suffocated by distraction and are unable to fish out the pearls of success.

The man of powerful concentration must ask God to direct his focused mind on the right place for right success. Passive people want God to do all the work, and egotists ascribe all their success to themselves. Passive people do not use the power of God in intelligence, and egotists, though using God-given intelligence, forget to receive God's direction as to how the intelligence should be used. I can blame inertia as the cause of failure, but it hurts me to see intelligent egotists fail after making real intelligent effort.

--*Inner Culture*, January 1936

**

How can you quicken evolution? By consciously condensing all your experiences, by the power of concentration. By concentration you gather your attention, focusing it to a point. By condensation you again use your attention to quickly do a thing which ordinarily would take a long time. I will tell you of such an experience:

A friend of mine said I was all right as a spiritual man, but that I could not succeed in business. I replied, "I am going to make five thousand dollars in business for you within two weeks." He said, "You will have to show me. I am from Missouri." I did not rush to invest money on unwise things. I used concentration, disengaged my mind of all disturbances, and focused my attention on one thing. (Most of us have the searchlight of our attention turned outside all the time instead of inside—we should turn the searchlight of the mind on the divine source. Every change in business, every change in the planetary system, in the physical system—everything is recorded there. We are living on one side of the universe; the other side is more tangible than this side.) So I touched that source. Ordinarily men do not concentrate—the mind is restless, and the restless mind jumps at conclusions and races for something that does not belong to it. You must obey the law. Remember, concentrate and then ask Divine Power. Thus, as soon as I contacted that source, there were shows to me lots of houses. But I did not sit quietly in my room and say, "The Heavenly Father will open the ceiling and drop five thousand dollars in my lap," because I had favored Him with a fervent prayer. I bought the Sunday papers and looked at real estate advertisements. I picked out a few houses, and told my friend to invest his money in them. He said, "Everything seems pretty shaky," and I said, "Never mind, doubting Thomas, don't try to spoil success by your doubts." In two weeks there was a real estate boom and prices of houses went way up high. He sold the houses and had a clear profit of five thousand dollars. I showed him that the power of God or mind works wherever we apply it with faith.

--"Quickening Evolution," *East-West magazine*, January 1929

§

From KRIYANANDA

This passage is from the 6th Chapter (of the Bhagavad Gita), the 19th Stanza, in the poetic translation of

Sir Edwin Arnold:

"Steadfast a lamp burns sheltered from the wind;

Such is the likeness of the Yogi's mind

Shut from sense-storms and burning bright to Heaven."

Two steps to deep concentration are recommended here. First, during meditation one should withdraw his consciousness from sense objects and focus it on God. Second, he should withdraw his energy from the senses. For only when physical sensations no longer invade the brain is it possible to concentrate one-pointedly, unaffected by any outer distraction.

The devotee, to protect the candle flame of his concentration from the gusts of restlessness, must try to banish from his mind all images, all worldly scenes, the words of others, the remembered episodes in his life, all thought of physical pleasures, his plans for the future. Nothing must tempt him to stray from his fixed purpose while his soul calls to God.

To protect his concentration from sensory invasion, he must first control his response to outward stimuli. He should train his will not to respond to sensations of heat or cold, comfort or discomfort, restlessness or fatigue.

With a little discipline of the body at the beginning of meditation, and with the strong determination not to move or fidget about, the body's demands will grow weaker. After even five minutes of this discipline, one may find it easy to sit for a long period without even wanting to move.

Most of the difficulty encountered in meditation is due to physical tension. Once tension is removed by the practice of deep relaxation, one finds meditation itself becoming increasingly enjoyable.

Again, with a little mental self-discipline at the beginning of meditation, one finds it increasingly easy to remain without thought.

Tell your mind firmly the moment you become settled on your seat to meditate, "This is my time for God." If restless thoughts try insistently to engage your attention, reassure them, "We'll discuss these things later"!

Once your mind is calm, try meditating on the image of a flowing brook. Let its crystal waters sweep away your remaining restless thoughts. If any stray impression enters your mind, toss it lightly into the flowing waters, and watch it dance swiftly away.

As your mind becomes still, practice calming the senses also, one by one:

Concentrate on the sense of sight. Withdraw the energy from your eyes. Imagine a mist descending over your outward vision, releasing your attention for contemplation of the divine light within. Remember, it is because of people's attachment to the sights of this world that they fail to behold the heavenly scenes within.

Next, concentrate on the sense of hearing. Withdraw your energy from the eardrums and from the thought of earthly sounds. Feel those sounds merging into the rushing water of the brook, dissolving themselves in its steady murmur.

Gradually let your concentration shift to the sounds you hear in your inner ear—preferably, so yogis say, in the right ear. Imagine the voice of infinity speaking to you through the inner sounds.

Next, concentrate on the sense of touch. Feel that the surface of your body is not your skin, but an aura of light surrounding your body. Expand this aura. Feel as if, with every outgoing breath, you were gently inflating a shining balloon of radiant light.

Now, reach out in all directions around you with finger-rays of astral light. Touch, feel, and explore the greater reality of the Spirit around you. Try to sense behind everything the subtle presence of divine consciousness.

Finally, concentrate on the senses of taste and smell. Withdraw your energy from the tongue—from the palate—from the nostrils. Feel as though you were drinking great draughts of peace and happiness from a crystal chalice at a fountain of eternity.

Offer up the energy of your senses to God. Ask Him to fill you with His bliss.

The deeper you go in meditation, the more your energy will withdraw naturally from the outer world of the senses. It will awaken you to the infinitely more wonderful world of the Spirit within.

When you find your mind becoming freed of restless thoughts, mentally build a dam across the brook that you first visualized. Watch the waters slowly rising, until they become a large lake.

Gaze calmly into the mirror surface of this lake. See reflected in its water the blue sky. Expand your consciousness into the overarching heavens. Feel, in infinite space beyond our earth's atmosphere, the vast calmness of Spirit.

Stilling the senses is one of the best ways to rise above body-consciousness. Stilling the mind and the emotions is the way to enter the kingdom of Spirit.

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

--Rays of the Same Light, Week 26

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.

--*Conversations with Yogananda, 216*

He always sat, stood, and walked with a straight back. Sometimes, in comportment, he appeared abstracted, but it was clear that his mind was actively occupied either with some deep, inner experience, or with reflections concerning a matter that was demanding his active attention. His powers of concentration were enormous. Whatever he did had his full focus. I never saw him vague, dull, or absent-minded; in this sense, though he was often deeply concentrated within, he was altogether different from the popular image of the "absent-minded" professor—one who looks about vaguely for his glasses, let us say, though they happen to be sitting on his nose! Indeed, the Master had fun, sometimes, over that classic "professorial" image.

--*Conversations with Yogananda, 303*

Capitolo Eleven: DHYANA

“**Meditation** is to religion what the laboratory is to science.”

“When you can hear the sound of Aum which is going on in all parts of the creation, then you have reached the seventh state, *dhyana*.”

Paramhansa Yogananda

§

From *Raja Yoga*

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 proves 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.

**

What is meditation?

It is not, as so many people assume it to be, a process of “thinking things over.” Rather, it is making the mind completely receptive to reality. It is stilling the thought-processes—those restless ripples that bob on the surface of the mind—so that truth, like the moon, may be clearly reflected there. It is *listening* to God, to Universal Reality, for a change, instead of doing all the talking and “computing” oneself.

§

From *Awaken to Superconsciousness*

The seventh stage on the path is called dhyana, or meditation.

The reason I use the Sanskrit term here, then, instead of the English, is not because it contains subtle connotations the English misses, but because it excludes connotations that are suggested by the English.

For the word meditation embraces all the practices in this book. Dhyana, on the other hand, refers only to this particular stage on the path of meditation. Dhyana signifies that stage when the mind, calm and fully receptive, loses itself in the light (or in some other divine attribute) and finds its ego-consciousness dissolving in that light. If one is communing with AUM, the sound vibration is experienced in the entire body. The soul marvels in the realization: This is what I am! Not a physical body, but a blissful manifestation of AUM.

The light that one beholds in deep meditation, or the sound that one hears, or the love or the joy, redefine one's self-awareness. One recognizes oneself as a manifestation of Infinite Truth, and longs to become absorbed in it.

Spiritual awakening is an unlearning, finally, in the sense of being a process of divine remembering. Ah, yes! the soul murmurs. I recall everything now. This is what I am!

Dhyana, the seventh stage, is the true state of meditation. At this point the ego, contemplating the supernal reality, forgets its separate identity and becomes the soul.

§

From *The Essence of Self-realization*

1

“The soul loves to meditate, for in contact with the Spirit lies its greatest joy. If, then, you experience mental resistance during meditation, remember that reluctance to meditate comes from the ego; it doesn't belong to the soul.”

4

“To meditate a short time with depth is better than to meditate for long hours with the mind running wild.

“In the beginning, therefore, don't force yourself to sit for a long time. Strive for shorter, but deeper, meditations. Then gradually, as you become accustomed to going deep, lengthen the time you sit in meditation.”

5

“Don’t feel badly if you find yourself too restless to meditate deeply. Calmness will come in time, if you practice regularly. Just never accept the thought that meditation is not for you. Remember, calmness is your eternal, true nature.”

6

“In meditation, try to go beyond thinking. As long as thoughts enter the mind, you are functioning on the conscious level.

“When dreaming, you are in subconsciousness; then you are more aware in the astral body.

“When your consciousness withdraws still more deeply, into superconsciousness, then you are centered in bliss, in the spine. In that bliss-state you are aware in the causal body, the soul.”

7

A devotee was having difficulty remaining awake during meditation. To him, Yogananda made this suggestion: “Squeeze your eyes shut several times, then open them wide and stare straight ahead. Repeat this practice once or twice more. If you do this, sleepiness will cease to bother you.”

8

“While meditating, don’t concentrate on the results of meditation. Meditate, rather, to please God. If you seek results, you will be disappointed if they don’t come.

“In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna counsels action without desire for the fruits of action. Meditation, too, should be approached in this spirit.

“Meditate without attachment to the fruits of meditation.”

9

A disciple was digging a cesspool at the Master’s desert retreat. He kept on digging all day long, without stopping to see how far he had come. That evening, to his amazement, he found that he had dug a deep hole.

When Paramhansa Yogananda saw what he had accomplished, he said approvingly, “That is how the devotee must seek God—continually digging, digging, without looking to see how far he has come. Then one day, suddenly, he will find himself there!

“As Lahiri Mahasaya used to tell his disciples, ‘*Banat, banat, ban jai!*—doing, doing, at last done!’”

10

“Do not expect a spiritual blossom every day in the garden of your life. Have faith that the Lord, if you surrender yourself to Him completely, will bring you divine fulfillment in His time, which is the right time.

“Having sown the seed of God-aspiration, water it daily with prayer and right action. Remove from your mind the weeds of lethargy, doubt, and indecision. When the sprouts of divine perception appear, tend them with devotional care.

“One morning you will behold, fully grown, the fairest flower of Self-realization.”

15

“Meditate more and more deeply, until calmness and joy become second nature to you.

“To be ecstatic is not difficult. It is *thinking* that it is difficult that holds you apart from it. Never think of divine joy as distant from you, and it will be with you always.”

17

“Visualize your consciousness expanding like a blue light, encompassing all space. Imagine the stars and galaxies shining like the lights of a distant city within the infinitude of your being. Meditate on your vastness within.

“You will find in this visualization an important adjunct to the meditation techniques. It will help to remind you of your inner, divine nature.”

20

“Just behind the darkness of closed eyes shines the light of God. When you behold that light in meditation, hold onto it with devotional zeal. Feel yourself inside it: That is where God dwells.

“If, on the other hand, you behold no light in meditation, then concentrate at the point between the eyebrows, and gaze deeply into the darkness that you see with closed eyes. Try, by your devotion, to penetrate that thick veil.

“In time you will surely behold the inner light, for it is ever there, shining in your forehead. Just as all human beings have eyes, so does everyone have this spiritual eye within his forehead. It awaits only his discovery in deep concentration within.”

22

“If you want to be a Master in this lifetime,” Yogananda told a disciple, “then, along with your other meditation practices, practice *Hong-Sau* at least two hours a day.

“As a boy, I used to practice *Hong-Sau* sometimes for seven hours at a time, until I entered the breathless state of ecstasy.”

26

Once, after a meditation at his desert retreat, Yogananda said to the disciples who were present, “This is the kingdom of OM.* Listen! It is not enough merely to hear OM. You must merge yourself in that inner sound.

“OM is Divine Mother. OM Kali! OM Kali! OM Kali! Listen: Oh, how beautiful it is! OM Kali! OM Kali! OM Kali!”

From YOGANANDA

“Yogoda” leads up to the “Highest Technique of Concentration or Meditation.” The latter is based on psycho-physical science and develops all-round efficiency in its students. It has been widely practised in India for more than 7,000 years. It teaches one how to focus all mental power on one object at a time, on business or cosmic consciousness, thereby strengthening the power of attention, the key to all success.

It can be applied to various ideals of life—to business, or to intellectual, social, moral, or spiritual development. It is not musing in darkness, chasing after fleeting thoughts with eyes closed, in a state of dreamy passivity during periods of “sitting in silence,” which is so commonly taught, but it teaches during the time of lesson the art of fixing attention on definite, audible, cosmic vibrations, and visible, luminous, electronic currents of life. It teaches the method of going consciously to the subconscious and superconscious. By gradual steps it brings a fuller and more active realization of the infinite treasure within. It harmonizes life’s duties and is productive of the highest bliss and poise. It is the technique of quickly riveting attention upon one line of action or thought, by fascinating psychophysical, supra-physical methods. The inner eye is opened, and the life current made visible...

Meditation is that specific form of concentration which is only applied in connection with consciously tuning into Cosmic Consciousness, the Home of Cosmic Supply. By this method one can not only attain everything that the power of human attention can accomplish, but can also acquire the power to control one’s destiny, failure, disease or death. This method teaches one how to reinforce the human faculty with the Superhuman Faculty of Cosmic Consciousness.

--*Yogoda System, Introduction, 1923*

Is Prayer Meditation?

Question: In what way is meditation different from prayer?—R.H.

Answer: Ordinary prayer consists in addressing our desires, half in belief and half in doubt, to an unknown God. Never pray with disbelief in your heart, or with a sense of hopelessness, thinking that God will not listen to your prayers. The only way to know God through prayer is by persistency, regularity, and depth of loving effort.

Pray intelligently, with a bursting soul, seldom loudly, mostly mentally, without displaying to anyone what is happening within you. Pray mostly in your own words of love and yearning, not in the borrowed language of others all the time. Pray 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.

Concentration on God

Meditation is very different from the usual prayer. *It is concentration used only to know God.* Don't remain on the surface of words. Your soul must dive deep into the ocean of perception. God-contact can be accomplished through regular, intense, long-continued meditations. During meditation, any material vibration sent forth by the ego, or body consciousness, helps to awaken the material desire to revive the consciousness of the body, and to dispel the consciousness of the vastness in Spirit. 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.

You must remember that during deep meditation, when the breath becomes calm, a very enjoyable state of peace is produced, but due to the ego-consciousness, the thought of the body returns, and the fickle, loud breath revives, rousing all material desires and sense-distractions. You should not be discouraged at this, but, by deeper meditation, learn to calm the breath and the senses.

Out of the Silence

Never mind if you cannot at first contact God 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 have made you unable to hear His call within. Stop, be calm, meditate deeply, and out of the silence will loom forth the Divine Presence.

God responds to law. All those 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. God can never hide from the person who exercises devotion, love, the law of meditation, and the soul-call. God never fails to listen to all soul-calls, but He does not always respond in the way that we expect Him.

Ever-New Joy

When ever-new, ever-increasing joy fills your silence, then know that you have contacted God, and that He is answering through the receiving instrument of your soul.

Use your deepest meditation mingled with your utmost devotion in the silent hours of the night, at the break of dawn, or in the hidden glow of twilight, in seeking an answer to your desires. Meditate and use your will power steadily day after day, week after week, year after year, until the cosmic silence of ages is broken and you receive your answer. You will not have to wait for ages, for you will find in deep meditation that God's Spirit of Bliss will hover around you and talk to you through the voice of peace.

--Inner Culture, September 1939

Cosmic Meditations

Because of long concentration on the little body and its necessities, the soul has forgotten its omnipresent nature. God is omnipresent. The cosmos is His body. Man's soul,

made in His image, has in it the seed experience of Omnipresence. This consciousness of omnipresence is hidden in the little soul as a tree is secreted in a small seed.

Just as from a seed grown in the proper soil there springs forth a tree, so also, proper meditation, instilled in the soul will manifest the omnipresent consciousness.

A mundane soul is busy with its own little body and its cramped relations, so its consciousness does not extend beyond the gates of its own home. The spiritual man, through the spreading light of sympathy and meditation, learns to feel the woes and pain of other souls. He feels that the world, or cosmos, is his home.

A man, aspiring to expand himself into the all-pervading God consciousness, must learn to meditate upon the cosmos. Meditation means constant thinking of the vastness within and without, so that the soul may forget its attachment to the little body and may remember its vast body as God. The ocean is the wave, the wave is the ocean; the ocean must know it is the wave and the wave must know that it is the ocean. So, the Spirit ocean knows it has become the soul waves, but the soul waves, by meditation, need to recall that they are the Spirit ocean. The little soul wave has to forget its mental smallness, born of concentrating upon the body, and must concentrate upon the Cosmic Spirit as its own big body, in which the little body is just a part.

Looking at the body constantly causes the mind to think of itself as confined in the flesh. Meditation upon the Infinite, as it grows deeper, making the meditator, meditation, and the object of meditation one, convinces the mind that it is not only encased in the little body, but is in everything. The mind, meditating upon the body, becomes limited by it. The mind, meditating upon the Infinite, become unlimited. Meditation is the art of transferring the attention from finite things (the little body and the little portions of space in which mortals live) to the Infinite.

That is why the meditating aspirant must do away with little body attachments. He must learn to be proof against warm or cold climates. He must learn to overcome hunger and pain. He must learn to conquer all the appetites and attachments which govern the little body, for as long as the mind is focused on the body and its relations, the soul cannot remember its omnipresent nature.

The following Cosmic Meditation will help the spiritual aspirant to release his soul from the confinement in finitude to its eternal freedom in Infinity.

Every morning or evening, or any time, in a quiet place, meditate in the following manner: (The best results will be found by using the "Portable Temple of Silence.")

1. As soon as you wake up, sit upright, look out of the open window into the limitlessness of the sky, or mentally visualize it if you cannot see the sky from your window. Mentally picture your mind watching your body, the room, and the sky simultaneously as its encasing body. Keep on meditating for a few minutes until you feel that you are the body, the room, and the sky. This same meditation can be very fruitfully practiced in the daytime or in the moonlight, on a mountain top, or at the ocean, or before beautiful scenery.

2. Meditate in the following way: Sit upright on a chair or on your bed. Close your eyes. Think that you are sitting on the center of the floor of your world-home, of which the sky is the roof, then picture in your mind that this world-home is decorated with snow on the north and south poles, and inlaid with mountains, rivers and pools of oceans filled with frothy, pure-white lilies of wavelets. Behold the ferns of forests which bedeck your earthly house; now behold in your mind's eye all your relative nations, races, families, your loved ones, friends, and so forth, gathered around you playing the drama of life on the stage of time. Then say mentally: "Hello, everybody; my dark, white, brown, and yellow colored fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and friends. "Try to feel all races as your very own family and loved ones. Mentally say again: "Let us all bow to our One Father, God, Who made us all in His image. Let us bow to our same grandparents, Adam and Eve, whose one blood runs in all our veins. Let us thank God for putting us in our one big home of the earth; let us live happily and harmoniously and do His will, that our home may become as He wants it to be.

3. Meditate with closed eyes. Mentally say: "I dissolve my body in darkness." Watch the limitless dark space of Eternity spread above, beneath, in front, behind, ahead, within and without--everywhere. Then, all at once, visualize a sealed rainbow balloon of light surrounding your body. Remember this rubber balloon of light can never burst, no matter how you blow your luminous breath into it. Throw the breath out very slowly and visualize this balloon of light as expanding with your luminous breath until it becomes big enough to contain the star clusters, universes and planetary and solar systems, including your earth and body, and everything.

4. Close your eyes. Look up mentally and keep on travelling mentally as far as you can go into the sky. Look to the right mentally as far as you can, and then look to the left as far as you can. Look down as far as you can; then bring your eyes to a focus between the eyebrows and concentrate at the central space in the heart and mentally say: "I am a tiny speck of space in the heart, and I am all space, alive with everlasting, ever-new Bliss at every point of space, spreading from within my body to the limitless beyond. My body, mind, brain, intelligence, body cells, stomach, and so forth, all constitute the living intelligent space in which I swallow and absorb everything, and out of which I disgorge the glittering universe according to the will of my spirit."

--Advanced Super Cosmic Science Course (1934)

Metaphysical Meditations

I Will Meditate

Beloved God, since no earthly engagement is possible without using the powers borrowed from Thee, I will renounce everything that interferes with my engagement to meditate on Thee in daily awakened silence.

Today I will meditate no matter how tired I think I feel. I will not allow myself to be a victim to noise while trying to meditate. I will transfer my consciousness to the inner world.

Through the gateway of meditation I will enter God's temple of peace everlasting. There I will worship Him at the altar of ever-new contentment. I will kindle the fire of happiness to illuminate His temple within.

I will meditate regularly that the light of faith may usher me into the immortal kingdom of my Heavenly Father.

I will cultivate calmness of mind, knowing God is ever with me. I am Spirit!

Divine Mother, I will pull away the starry veil of the blue, I will tear away the cover of space, I will melt away the magic carpet of thoughts, I will shut off the diverting motion pictures of life, that I may behold Thee.

I know God can be realized through meditation with the intuition's perception, but not by the restless mind.

I will open my eyes to the joy of meditation; then I will see that all darkness will vanish.

I will make my inner environment perfect through meditation, that it be impervious to all adverse outside influences.

I will begin each day with concentration and meditation on the supreme Being.

I will bathe in the sacred pool of God's love hidden behind the ramparts of meditation.

**

Keep your mind at the point between the eyebrows, where the spiritual eye is located. If you concentrate long and deeply through the spiritual eye, you will get the right answer to any problem. Meditate until the light of God appears. Never go to sleep until you have contacted the divine joyful vibration of God. Always remain in the mental sphere of happiness born of meditation, no matter what happens. Concentrate upon the great peace within, and you will see the shadow of world limitations melting away. Out of it you will see that behind this motion picture of delusion there is a world eternal—the infinite astral world.

--Inner Culture, July 1941

From KRIYANANDA

Secrets of Meditation

Meditation is the necessary complement of prayer. Prayer is talking to God. Meditation is listening for His answer. Without both of these ingredients, divine conversation is impossible.

Meditation is including God in *your* reality.

Meditation is possible only in perfect stillness. How can God hold a meaningful discussion with you if you keep on interrupting?

Stillness, in meditation, is not a mental vacuum. It is rapt attention.

Attention, in meditation, must be of the heart as well as of the head. If it is mental only, it becomes either voracious or too abstract. If it is of the feelings only, it becomes emotional and therefore restless. The heart's feeling should be directed upward toward the seat of intellect at the point between the eyebrows.

Meditation should be expansive, not contractive. Begin your meditation with a prayer that the whole planet be blessed.

Contractiveness is a manifestation of ego-consciousness. The ego is centered in the medulla oblongata at the base of the brain. Focus your attention there, until you cognize that as your human center of awareness. Then relax that focus; release your attention to flow forward in concentration toward the point between the eyebrows.

When the upward-blowing energy gets blocked in the medulla oblongata, it reinforces the ego. Relax the energy in the medulla, that the energy flow onward and outward ever more expansively.

Do not think, in meditation, "How can the Divine serve my desires?" Think, rather, "How can I give myself more perfectly to Thee?"

God is both personal and impersonal. In relation to you, He is very personal, but His infinite reality is impersonal. In your relation to Him, therefore, strive to become more and more expansively impersonal. Love Him for Himself, not for yourself. He who made you made also the stars and galaxies, spinning on mighty tides of infinite space.

The secret of meditation is...

1. relinquishing outward attachments, and affirming divine freedom within.
2. sitting upright with a straight spine; feeling that your strength emanates from your spine rather than from the muscles of your body.
3. holding your body perfectly still; gradually freeing yourself from the compulsion to move.
4. deep relaxation: Inhale, tense the body; throw the breath out and relax. Release into the surrounding atmosphere, like wisps of vapor, any lingering eddies of tension that you feel.
5. to feel space in the body, and gradually expand that feeling from the body outward, into infinite space.
6. to focus your gaze and attention at the Christ Center between the eyebrows—the seat of ecstasy in the body.
7. to pray with deep faith—not as an outsider to heaven, but as one whose true, eternal home is heaven.
8. singing to God, out loud or silently, to awaken devotion in the heart.
9. loving God in whatever form you hold especially dear, and praying, “God—my Father, Mother, dearest Friend—I am Thine forever: Thine alone!”
10. offering gifts of love upward from your heart to the Christ Center between the eyebrows, like the soaring flames in an all-purifying fire.
11. dwelling on the thought of great saints, past and present, who have known God; attuning your consciousness to theirs.
12. radiating blessings from your heart outward to all the world.
13. putting resolutely aside every plan, every project, and focusing on the moment. (The world will be there still, when you finish your meditation!)
14. to enter instantly into the silence within, and not waste precious time in mental wandering.
15. to send any vagrant thoughts in your mind soaring, like little balloons, upward through skies of Infinity until they disappear in the blue distance.
16. Releasing yourself from the limitations of body and ego; identifying yourself with Infinity.
17. to visualize God in one of His eternal aspects—as infinite light, cosmic sound, eternal peace, love, or joy; seek to unite yourself with Him in that aspect.

18. affirming contentment, rather than expecting God to do all the work of bringing you out of darkness into His infinite light and joy.
19. dwelling on the thought of God's love for you, and destroying in a bonfire of devotion any lingering doubts.
20. one-pointed concentration; absorption in the peace within.
21. receptivity to God's grace, in full awareness that God's power alone can liberate the soul.
22. offering yourself up wholly to the Lord, holding nothing back.
23. visualizing your breath as a flow of energy in the spine, upward with inhalation, and downward with exhalation, until the flow seems a mighty river.
24. to visualize the energy in the spine rising in joyful aspiration toward the point between the eyebrows.
25. listening intently to any sounds you hear in the inner ear; becoming absorbed in them.
26. visualizing yourself seated at the heart of eternity; sending rays of divine love outward from your center to all the universe.
27. steadfastness: for the more you meditate, the more you will want to meditate, but the less you meditate, the less will you find meditation attractive.
28. affirming that you already *are* those high truths towards which you aspire: inner peace, divine love, and perfect joy.
29. unifying your inner and your outer life: offering every problem up for resolution to the peace within; allowing that peace to infuse your outward activities.
30. to keep your concentration positive, and not meditate to the point of fatigue or boredom.
31. seeing God as the sole Doer, and seeking His guidance in everything you do.

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Meditation, properly speaking, begins once the thoughts and emotions have been stilled. It is a state of intense inward awareness, a state in which one's attention is no longer engaged in cheering onward the parade that life marches past us of projects and problems, but is wholly engrossed in the superconscious experience. Meditation may be defined also, more loosely, as any practice of which the goal is superconscious awareness.

-- *Meditation for Starters*

“Is there any real difference between the vedantic samadhi and the Zen satori states? I gather that Zen Buddhists claim that satori comprises some form of ultimate self-realization, but that the Hindus claim it is only a relatively low stage of samadhi. Zennists of course believe that there are not “stages” in enlightenment, and of course they also believe that various self-disciplines as outlined by yoga are not the ‘correct’ path to enlightenment. Could you clear this up for me from your viewpoint, which I value?”

November 9, 1968

Dear (BC):

From what I have read, Zen *satori* appears to be a state of sensory awareness—an elimination of ego and of personal prejudice and reactions, a sort of unjudgemental acceptance that involves, not a defining state of consciousness, but a sort of flow that goes *with* life’s experiences instead of trying to arrest and analyze them. To understand life in this way may depend on a sudden change in outlook, a sort of mental awakening. There would be no stages in the attainment of this sort of awakening. And a good one it is, for yogis too.

But *samadhi* is a very different state, in that it is first of all *above* the senses, transcendental. It, too, implies a sort of awareness, but one that depends not upon mental attitude, since the mind itself is transcended in an experience of *oneness* with life, not merely an observation of it.

Zen is itself a stage on the pathway to this attainment. The word, *zen*, comes from the Sanskrit word, *dhyana*, which Patanjali’s *Yoga Aphorisms* speak of as a necessary step on the path to *samadhi*. But once the ego has been eliminated in *dhyana*, or deep meditation, the next stage is to claim one’s *true* Self—Infinity!

--Letters to Truthseekers: Zen and Yoga

Meditation is the act of *listening* for, and hopefully, in time, listening *to*, God’s whispered response in the soul... Meditation is more than a practice conducted at specific times of the day. It is a habit of mind, a way of life. Try sharing your thoughts and feelings with God all day long. Listen for His guidance, His approval — yes, even His silent laughter within! When you share your life with Him, your meditations also will be much deeper.

--from an article, date unknown

The sincere seeker should make it a practice to meditate at least one and a half hours every day. Better still, he should make it one and a half hours *twice* a day. This recommendation, however, is for those especially in whom the meditative habit is already established. Beginners generally would do well to meditate less. They should discipline themselves first to intensity. Only after achieving intensity will they find long meditation beneficial.

In any case, one should allow his taste for meditation to grow naturally. Never should he force it. The more deeply he experiences divine joy in his soul, the more he will want to

meditate deeply and long; he won't need urging from anyone. The longer he meditates *with deep concentration*, at that point, the better.

There is a peculiar notion that one encounters nowadays, that meditation is addictive! People have actually compared meditation to the taking of drugs. Indeed, it may be averred that deep meditation is far *more* enjoyable than any drug! To confuse soul-joy with drug addiction, however, or with spiritual error of any kind, is absurd. Meditation is the way *out* of bondage, not into it!

One wonders how such misconceptions ever develop. Perhaps this one got its start because meditation helps one to withdraw temporarily from outer reality, and people for whom no other reality exists assumed that meditation, like drug addiction, separates one from all reality. Or it may be that people whose minds are restless, because they are uncomfortable in the presence of others who are calm, seek thus to justify their own superficiality.

The truth is, in any case, that meditation, because it calms the mind and silences the ego's demands, actually makes it much easier to tune in to reality at all levels. Moreover, unlike subconscious, or drug-induced, experiences, meditation actually gives one *authority* over outer reality—a proof that the state of consciousness into which it lifts one constitutes a *higher* level of reality.

Even the meditative novice finds that he can relate better to others, and understand and help them more deeply. Meditation even intensifies the enjoyment one experiences through the senses! After deep meditation, the world seems filled with new wonder and beauty; colors appear more intense; music thrills one more deeply. One returns to outward awareness far more refreshed than after a deep sleep. And all things seem vibrant with joy, the more deeply one lives in the joy of God within!

The first step toward divine union is to spend some time alone with God every day—"sequestered," as the Gita puts it here; one's thoughts controlled; one's passions stilled. This is the inward pilgrimage. It is the "strait and narrow" path to liberation.

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

--Rays of the Same Light, Week 22, Bhagavad Gita

Articles and Stories about Meditation

Stories of Mukunda: Forty-Eight Hours in Eternity

by Swami Kriyananda

Seven and eight hours at a time though Mukunda often meditated, he would nevertheless tell himself that *some* day he must have a really long meditation. What, indeed, were seven or eight hours out of a twenty-four hours day? Didn't men work that long daily merely to supply their bodily needs?

One morning Mukunda awoke with the thought, "A whole year has passed! Twelve months I've been promising myself that long meditation. Will it always be 'tomorrow'?" Determination awoke in his heart. Schoolwork, the little duties of daily life, errands he had planned for that day—all hurried breathlessly out onto the stage of his mind, anxious to divert him from his lofty purpose. With growing resolution he turned mentally away from them.

"Why not today?" he asked himself. "Who not right now—*this very morning!*"

His resolve now inflexible, he climbed the stairs to his little attic room. There he seated himself in the lotus posture, practiced *Kriya Yoga* for some time, then called to the Divine Mother in an inward chant that rose from the depths of yearning. Hours passed. Gradually, in the expanding kingdom of his consciousness, there dawned a shining memory—a clear realization that he was the infinite light! A prodigal son no longer, he had returned to claim the heavenly glory that was his divine heritage.

Two full days passed: forty-eight hours. To Mukunda they seemed scarcely forty-eight minutes. During the ecstatic period, his body, made weightless by his absorption in Infinity, had risen from the floor in levitation.

It was reluctantly that he left the divine silence to return to the pandemonium of ma's bustling world. The sounds of servants at their household chores, the voices of family members in the rooms below, the hubbub of people and traffic in the streets outside—all struck discordantly on his ear, though with no power to disturb his seraphic peace.

Mukunda descended the stairs, his body still so light that his feet barely touched the steps. In the passageway to the kitchen he met the cook. This faithful servant had for many years been suffering with a pain in his back. Mukunda touched him; the man was instantly healed.

It was lunch time. Mukunda's relatives were seated, Indian fashion, on mats around the edge of the dining room floor. The family* had not paid much attention to his two-day absence; on other occasions, too, he had vanished for comparable periods. They knew he was in the habit of going for meditation to strange places—to eerie crematory grounds, for example. They preferred not to ply him with questions about his spiritual activities.

Mukunda joined them. While he ate, he was conscious of a transcendent detachment from everything. His body, those of others in the room around him, the food he was

eating—what more, these, than fleeting dream-pictures in the inexhaustible mind of God? Strange, that he could ever have considered them substantial.

Looking up, Mukunda noticed his sister-in-law regarding him curiously. Bodi, like her husband Ananta, had never approved of her younger brother-in-law's devotion to non-material realities. (Unseemly, she called it. Impractical, too.) Her expression now reminded him of more down-to-earth aspects of his daily existence. Smiling inwardly, he thought, "Why not have a little fun with the family?"

Withdrawing his consciousness partially from the body, he recaptured some of the body-aboveness that had been his during those forty-eight hours in eternity. His heartbeat stopped; he entered the yogic trance. With conscious intent, he withdrew his energy from every sense but that of hearing.

His body, deprived of energy, fell silently backward to the floor. Bodi, watching him, uttered a frightened cry. Quickly she stepped over to him and felt for his pulse. There was none. The rest of the family, terrified, gathered around the inert form.

A doctor, frantically summoned, ordered that the boy's body be carried to a couch. After careful examination, he pronounced the pathetic verdict: death!

"This," declared Bodi solemnly, "is what comes of practicing yoga!"

Stunned by the tragedy, the relatives cried out one by one in praise of the child who, they imagined, had forever fled this earth.

Present in the room with them was a maid-servant, lovingly called "Maid Ma" by the family, whom she had served for many years with almost motherly devotion. Maid Ma had complained often to Mukunda about the extra work he made for her in bringing young friends home with him. Hotly she would argue that it disrupted the household routine. Nevertheless there was love between them. Mukunda had long been touched by the way Maid Ma had tried to make up for the loss of their mother.

Now it was Maid Ma's turn to express her feelings. Tragically she cried, "It's true he was mischievous. But for all that, dear God, he was a *good* boy." Then, disconsolately, she moaned, "Oh, now I won't have anyone to fight with any more!"

Mukunda, at her first words, had begun to smile to himself. Now he could contain himself no longer. Convulsed with merriment, he called to her, "Oh, yes, you will!"

"You!" she shouted. "I *knew* you were only playing!" Seizing a stick, she threw it violently in his direction.

The doctor's face was a study in amazement. This "resurrection" was a matter hopelessly beyond his professional comprehension.

The family scolded their little prankster with mock severity, however. There were much too relieved to be really cross.

To paraphrase Maid Ma, Mukunda was indeed good—but he did take pleasure in a little occasional mischief!

*(1) Mukunda's mother had died in 1904, when he was eleven. This beautiful incident of forty-eight hours in eternity occurred during Mukunda's high-school years.

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Peace and Quiet, by Paramhansa Yogananda

Question: How can I gain peace and quiet?—W.I.

Answer: Permanent peace and quiet are gained only through meditation and contacting God. All religions teach the value of this. It is well known that still waters run deep. All the worthwhile things of life are evolved in the stillness. This is the wisdom of all ages and climes.

Restlessness and noise are two of the most troublesome factors in life, which you must conquer before you can begin to acquire the peace which is necessary to know God. You must choose as quiet a place as possible for your meditation time, and use the same place all the time if possible. Early in the morning before others are up or late at night when all activity has ceased, are the best times.

Keep to yourself as much as possible if you want to gain perfect peace and quiet. This does not mean that you should not see your friends and others, but it is well known that a great deal of valuable time is wasted in idle chatter and unnecessary contacts, which only result in restlessness and nervousness. Avoid wasting time.

Cultivate emotional poise. To overcome restlessness, start out with a firm determination that you will do each piece of work in its turn without unnecessary fret or fuss, without burdening your mind with useless queries. Limit your thoughts to the task at hand. Dismiss the task just finished and allow the next task to take its turn. If you have entrusted someone else with part of your work, dismiss that part from your mind.

Value of Meditation

Hold yourself in readiness to react comfortably, instead of irritably, to the ordinary incidents of life. If you do not follow some such policy, there are dangers ahead. You will not be able to get in tune with reality—with the Cosmic Truth. How can you know Reality, the eternal order of the universe, unless you learn how to calm yourself?

To help get rid of restlessness, you must understand the value of meditation in the sense that the Yogis of India understand it, namely, “concentration to know God.” You can be helped very much by definite Self-Realization technique, which includes proper diet, posture, and the acquiring of efficient mental discipline and character habits. By patiently following this technique, a large measure of self-control can be attained, which leads to peace and quiet as well as to a realization of the eternal realities of the universe, which is God's manifestation.

If we meditate on our blessings, on what we have to be thankful for rather than upon the trials, ills, and worries that beset us or disturb us, we shall begin to know God. The best and highest reward in our life of God Consciousness is the realization of unceasing happiness, which we call “Peace” or “Bliss.”

God can be found only by knowing the technique of meditation. He will then throb as joy in your mind, as joy in your heart. You will then be more active and more successful.

Repeat the following prayer before each daily meditation: “Heavenly Father, bless my understanding, bless my thoughts, bless my activity, and bless me that I may use divine discrimination which quickly leads to Thee.”

--Inner Culture, February 1940

Through Oneness in *samadhi*, the dualities of human experience disappear. Everything is perceived to change into Spirit. In this state, the man in *samadhi* can perceive the spiritual ocean, with its waves of creation; or see the same spiritual ocean, transcendently calm, existing without the waves of creation.

In the first state of *samadhi*, the yogi (one who unites his soul with Spirit by right meditation) is so absorbed in Spirit that he is oblivious of the material and created universe. A somewhat similar experience on a lower plane is experienced when one is so absorbed in books or thoughts that he is unaware of what is happening around him. This state is not unconscious, for unconsciousness implies lack of awareness, both inwardly and outwardly. Such unconsciousness is easily brought about by the use of drugs, anesthetics and other outward means. The full spiritual consciousness of *samadhi*, however, can be attained only through the regular, continuous, right discipline of meditation, and has nothing in common with unconsciousness.

The first state of *samadhi*, in which the yogi finds everything withdrawn and absorbed into Spirit, is called *sabikalpa samadhi*. The higher and greater state of *samadhi* is *nirbikalpa*, in which the yogi, after realizing the Spirit alone—without creation—perceives it also, simultaneously, both as above creation, and as manifested in all creation. Here his consciousness becomes the cosmic consciousness. The domain of his consciousness now extends from his body to include the whole universe. He becomes the Ocean of Spirit, and watches the bubble of his body floating in it. His consciousness perceives all motion and change of life, from the circling of the stars to the fall of a sparrow and the whirling of the smallest electron.

The yogi who has entered into these two states of *samadhi* finds that solids melt into liquids, liquids into gaseous states, these into energy, and energy into cosmic consciousness. He lifts the four veils of solids, liquids, gases and energy, and finds the Spirit, face to face. He sees the objective universe and subjective universe meet in Spirit. His expanded material self mixes with the greater spiritual Self and knows their unity. The spiritual Self, being the first cause, and capable of existing without material manifestation, is therefore greater than the material self.

Thus, the negative conception of God is removed. The yogi, instead of finding cessation of life and joy, becomes the fountain-head of eternal bliss and life. The tiny bubble

of laughter becomes the sea of mirth itself. By knowing God, one does not lose *anything*, but gains *everything*.

* Samadhi means: oneness of human consciousness with cosmic consciousness. The human consciousness is subjected to relativity and dual experience. In meditation, there are: The meditator, the act of meditation, and God (as the object of meditation) . Samadhi is the final result of deep, continuous, right meditation, in which the above mentioned three factors of meditation become one. Just as the wave melt' in the Sea, so the human soul becomes the Spirit.

** The *Aum* vibration

Chapter Twelve: SAMADHI

Samadhi: perfect union of the individualized soul with the Infinite

From Demystifying Patanjali, by Swami Kriyananda

2-45. By complete openness to God, samadhi is attained.

Most translations say, “By complete surrender to God,” but that word *surrender* suggests someone who finds himself with his back to the wall, escape impossible, and finally—as a last resort and only to save his life—surrendering himself to an enemy. None of these images applies to someone who, himself, desperately desires oneness with God! This, then, is what I mean by complete openness. Yes, we must, and must *desire to*, give ourselves to Him completely.

When there remains no corner of our selfhood that we hold back from God, then alone can samadhi come.

From The art and science of Raja Yoga, Swami Kriyananda

Chapter 3

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.

The fact is, once the yogi attains breathlessness in *samadhi*, the body is kept alive by the direct flow of energy from the medulla oblongata. It is possible in this state to remain breathless for days, months, even for years. The body appears lifeless, outwardly, but inwardly one is filled with the consciousness of infinite life.

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Chapter 9

There are several explanations for how it is possible to remain breathless for long periods of time without in any way damaging the body or the brain. (Indeed, the rejuvenating effects on the entire being of superconscious breathlessness are truly wonderful.) My guru explains some of the physiological reasons in his lessons; I won't repeat them here. The fact is, once the yogi attains breathlessness in samadhi, the body is kept alive by the direct flow of energy from the medulla oblongata. It is possible in this state to remain breathless for days, months, even for years. The body appears lifeless, outwardly, but inwardly one is filled with the consciousness of infinite life.

In 1961 the director of the Zoological Institute in Darjeeling, India, told me of a scientific expedition he had once in the Himalayas. He and his companions came upon a yogi seated on the ground, well above the snow line, in a state of samadhi. The yogi must have been sitting there motionless for at least six months, for his fingernails, very long by this time, had grown into the bark of a tree beside him in such a way that the slightest movement on his part would have snapped them off.

Periods of breathlessness may come to you, while practicing Hong-Sau, long before you enter superconsciousness. Don't be alarmed; they can't possibly hurt you, as long as you let the breath flow naturally, and don't try to hold it in or out of the lungs by force. When your body needs to breathe again, it will do so. By increasingly deeper calmness, however, you will find that you need less and less fresh air to sustain your body.

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From Awaken to Superconsciousness – Chapter 16, by Swami Kriyananda

At this point, spiritual progress becomes a matter of progressively deeper Self-remembrance. The soul, recalling its true nature, identifies itself more and more fully with that divine memory. It realizes itself, first, as only a projection of Pure Consciousness. Then, finally, it realizes itself as, in fact, Pure Consciousness.

Samadhi (oneness), the eighth and final stage on the meditative journey, comes when the soul, losing body-identity altogether, merges in the greater reality of which the body and everything else in creation is only a manifestation. The identity it abandons is not its physical body only, but its subtler bodies as well. Once that subtlest wall of separation is demolished, there is nothing to prevent it from merging into the Infinite. The wave, having played on the surface of the sea for many lives, merges back again into the sea its motion dissolved at last in perfect stillness.

Samadhi is not a state of mind. It is cosmic consciousness, the state where the soul perceives itself as truly center everywhere, circumference nowhere. In that state, no ripple on the sea of consciousness remains. Thoughts and feelings are completely stilled. This emptiness is the state of nirvana. The soul, in that emptiness, knows only that it exists. It is stripped to its ultimate, irreducible essence: the stark realization, I AM.

This is not, however, the final state. It is a release: It is not final attainment. Into this emptiness then bursts a new reality: Bliss absolute; Love eternal. From knowing nothing but

its self-existence, the soul discovers that it knows everything. From stripping the onion of its last peel the last kosha covering the heart the soul proceeds to discover that it is everything. In possessing nothing, it finds that it possesses everything. It is *Satchidananda*: ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss.

There are several stages of *samadhi*. To attain divine perfection, not only must the ego transcend itself in soul-consciousness: The soul must convince itself that it truly is free in Infinity.

Those who imagine that God seeks to impose a state of ego-lessness on the soul have little idea of how completely we must persuade Him that we long for Him alone.

At first, the ego's addiction to a separate existence allows the soul only brief flights of ecstasy before selfhood reasserts itself. The bird, imprisoned for eons in its little cage, fears to come out even though the door of the cage stands wide open. After a time, deciding that no threat is posed by that openness, the bird hops briefly outside two or three hops, only fluffs its wings, then hops hurriedly back to the reassurance of its cage again. Again it hops out, and ever and again returns, still preferring its delusive security to freedom. Then at last it begins to think, Why, outside the cage is where I really belong! At last, taking courage, it leaves its cage altogether, and flies out the window to embrace the freedom it had so long denied.

Different terms are used by saints of East and West to describe the final stages of liberation. Paramhansa Yogananda used the terms *sabikalpa samadhi* and *nirbikalpa samadhi*.

Sabikalpa samadhi, he said, describes that stage in which the soul first emerges from its ego-cage and merges in the cosmic light or sound (or into any of the other six aspects of divine consciousness). *Sabikalpa samadhi* is temporary, not permanent, oneness. The soul knows freedom in that state, but the memory of ego-bondage lingers, and pleads as if from the back of a deep cave, Enjoy your Self for a time if you must: but please, remember me!

Repeated sorties from the ego are required before the soul can retain its divine state of awareness even after it returns to outer consciousness. At this point it is no longer aware of the ego in human terms, but knows it as a manifestation of the infinite reality. In this state, it finally is able to retain its consciousness of inner freedom even while performing its normal human functions in this world. This, finally, is the state of *jivanmukta*, a state of eternal freedom because the soul is released from bondage to its former consciousness of I and mine. This highest *samadhi* Paramhansa Yogananda termed *nirbikalpa samadhi*. Other great teachers have named it variously *sahaja samadhi*, for example: effortless *samadhi*.

Nirbikalpa samadhi does not yet represent final emancipation, because the soul is still not free from all past karma. Final emancipation is attained when all the old seeds of karma have been destroyed. This final state of emancipation was attained by Buddha, Jesus Christ, Krishna, and others, including several great masters of modern times. Other masters are not less in the state of their realization, but only in that they have some past karma still to work out. Many such masters, my guru told me, keep some of their old karma as a way of drawing them back to help their disciples. For in that state, he explained, it doesn't matter when the old karma is destroyed. What hurry is there, after all, once you've attained cosmic consciousness? In *nirbikalpa* there is no longer any danger of slipping down the ladder,

through succumbing to nostalgia for the little self. The ego no longer exists. There is only its remembered reality of many incarnations. Long-buried impressions still need persuading that they, too, were parts of a divine play God alone dreaming the entire sequence: butcher, baker, and candlestick maker.

Only when the soul is convinced down to its last layer of consciousness that it is free, is final liberation attained.

Many people, somewhat aware of the Indian teachings, are familiar with the term avatar. Few people, however, even in India, understand it except superficially. *Avatar* means divine descent into the material realm. An avatar is one who, having attained final liberation, returns to this world out of compassion to help all humanity to fulfill its spiritual destiny. An avatar, as distinct from lesser saints and masters, has a universal mission. He (or she) also has the power to bring as many souls to freedom as come for guidance and enlightenment. His power is no longer circumscribed. Like the power of God Himself, it is infinite.

Oneness, then, is the final goal of meditation. Well before that ultimate goal, however, one reaches the point where meditation is no longer needed as a formal practice, for every moment of one's life, every flicker of human consciousness, every atom of one's body is permeated throughout with divine bliss.

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From Essence of Self-realization, Chapter 20, by Swami Kriyananda

"Once the mind is interiorized," Paramhansa Yogananda said, "and withdrawn from its identification with the world and with the body, the inner light comes into clear and steady focus. The inner sounds become all-absorbing. Aum fills the brain; its vibration moves down the spine, bursting open the door of the heart's feeling, then flowing out into the body. The whole body vibrates with the sound of Aum.

"Gradually, with ever-deeper meditation, the consciousness expands with that sound. Moving beyond the confines of the body, it embraces the vastness of infinite vibration. You realize your oneness with all existence as Aum, the Cosmic Vibration.

"This state is known as Aum samadhi, or union with God as Cosmic Sound. Aum is that aspect of the Christian Trinity which is known as the Holy Ghost, or Word of God.

"By still deeper meditation, one perceives in the physical body, underlying the Aum vibration, the vibrationless calm of the Christ Consciousness, the reflection in creation of the unmoving Spirit beyond creation.

"In ancient spiritual tradition, the Christ Consciousness is spoken of as the Son. For just as, among human beings, the son is a reflection of the father, so in cosmic consciousness the Christ in Sanskrit called Krishna, or *Kutastha Chaitanya* reflects in all things the consciousness of God, the Father, beyond creation.

"By ever deeper meditation, one expands his awareness of the Christ Consciousness beyond the limits of the body to perceive his oneness finally with the Christ Consciousness, which underlies the manifested universe.

"By deeper meditation still, one goes beyond creation and unites his consciousness with that of the Father, Satchidananda, the vast ocean of Spirit.

"In these progressive stages of realization are discovered, in reverse order, the three aspects of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

"Jesus was called the Christ. Most people are not aware that Christ wasn't the name given him at birth. It was a title signifying 'the anointed of God,' or, 'chosen by God.' (Luke 23:35)

"In the same way, Krishna in India was really Jadava the Krishna or Christna, as it is sometimes written to show that the meaning is the same.

"Jesus was a master. He had attained Christ Consciousness. Anyone who attains that state of consciousness may justifiably also be called the Christ, for he has dissolved his ego in the infinite consciousness.

"Aum, the Holy Ghost, is also referred to in ancient traditions as the Mother, for it represents the feminine aspect of God.

"The Roman Catholic Church teaches that one must go through the Mother to reach Christ. To them, of course, the Mother signifies Mary, the mother of Jesus. For all that, the truth is there, though far deeper than the generally accepted understanding of it.

"For, to reach Christ Consciousness, you must first unite your consciousness with Aum, the Cosmic Vibration.

"Self-realization means the realization that your true Self is not the ego, but God, the vast ocean of Spirit which manifested for a time the little wave of awareness that you now see as yourself."

"What is *samadhi*?" asked a visitor. "I've read about it in books, but I'm afraid it has no clear meaning for me."

"*Samadhi*," Yogananda replied, "is the realization that you are much more than this physical body. By 'realization' I don't mean an intellectual grasp. 'Realizations' of that sort are imaginary. I mean the state of being in which one is actually conscious of himself in all space, everywhere.

"I remarked to someone the other day, 'You have a sour taste in your mouth, haven't you?'"

"How did you know?" he inquired. He was very astonished.

"I know,' I replied, 'because I am just as much in your body as I am in this one.'

"In *samadhi* you know what is going on at a distance. Indeed, for you it is not distant. Your consciousness embraces omnipresence. You see the human body as an infinitesimal part of your infinite reality.

"There are two stages of *samadhi*. In the first, the consciousness merges into the Infinite during meditation. The yogi cannot preserve that state, however, once he comes out of his meditation. That state is known as *sabikalpa samadhi*.

"The next state is called *nirbikalpa samadhi*. In this state of consciousness you maintain your divine realization even while working or speaking or moving about in this world. *Nirbikalpa* is the highest realization. Once attaining that, there is no further possibility of falling back into delusion.

"I made this distinction in a chant I once wrote:

In *sabikalpa samadhi* yoga

I will drown myself in my Self.

In *nirbikalpa samadhi* yoga

I will find myself in my Self.'

§

From the Bhagavad Gita, by Paramhansa Yogananda

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.

Samadhi is the great general of the metaphysical army which leads the soldiers of devotion, vital celibacy, spiritual memory, discriminative intelligence, extreme dispassion, negative good power, positive good power, proper bodily posture, reversed Life-Force, and withdrawn consciousness from the senses to battle the soldiers of Ego, Bhisma, and King Material Desire.

There are different stages in the realization of Oneness. There is the realization of Oneness of the Ego and the soul, and that of Oneness of the Soul and Spirit. There are really three kinds of Samadhi: *Jara*, or unconscious trance; *Swabikalpa*, or perception of Spirit without the Waves of Creation; and the third and highest state is that of perception of the Ocean of Spirit with the Waves of Creation.

In the *Swabikalpa Samadhi* state the attention and the Life-Force are switched off from the senses and are kept consciously identified with the ever-joyous, ever-wise Spirit. In this state, the soul is released from the Ego consciousness and becomes conscious of Spirit beyond Creation. By repetition of this state of *samadhi*, the soul absorbs the fire of Spirit Wisdom, which roasts out the seeds of mortal desires. In this state, the soul, as the meditator, its meditation on the Spirit, and the Spirit as the object of meditation, become one. The Wave of Soul meditating in the Ocean of Spirit becomes merged with the spirit. It does not lose its identity, but only expands into Spirit. In this state, the mind is conscious of the Spirit within only. It is not conscious of Creation without.

In the most advanced, or *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* state, the soul does not expand itself into the big Spirit, but realizes itself and Spirit as existing together. This is the highest and most enjoyable state in which the Ego consciousness, the soul consciousness, and the Ocean of Spirit are seen all existing together. It is the state of watching the Ocean of Spirit and the Waves of Creation at the same time. In this state the individual does not see himself any longer as John Smith related to his body and his outer environment, but he sees that the Ocean of Spirit has become not only the Wave of John Smith, but also all the waves of all lives and of all things. In this state, the soul is conscious simultaneously of Spirit within and of all Creation without.

The *Swabikalpa Samadhi* and *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* states are described in the following ancient Hindu song:

"In the *Swabikalpa Samadhi* Yoga (union)

You will drown (melt) yourself (Ego) in yourself (Spirit).

In the *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* Yoga

You will find (see) yourself (Ego) in yourself (in Spirit)."

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Yogananda, Chapter One, East-West magazine, 1930s

(2:50)...The Gita advises the devotee to concentrate at the point between the eyebrows in the Christ Center and go into ecstasy or Samadhi with Spirit. In the state of ecstasy the false consciousness of the ego as the doer of all actions in the body dissolves. Hence the vanished ego's prenatal seeds of good and evil actions, accumulated in the brain, finding no egotistical consciousness as the soil on which to grow, become destroyed without germinating into further actions.

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Yogananda, *Inner Culture magazine*, August 1939

(2:54) **(2:54)** *Arjuna said, "O Keshava, what are the characteristics of the man who has ever-calm wisdom and is steeped in samadhi? How does such a man of steady wisdom behave while he speaks, or sits, or walks?"*

Poetic Rendition

"O Keshava, my fancy is fired with curiosity regarding the bright behavior of the samadhi-saturated man of unwavering wisdom. Pray relate to me as to how such a grand soul speaks, sits and wanders about."

Spiritual Interpretation

After attaining the vibrationless state of ultimate union with Spirit a soul never falls down even when his mind turns part of its attention to attending to mundane matters and bodily affairs. The mind of such a yogi even when it works in the physical plane never becomes attached to it. His discrimination becomes constantly fixed in the Spirit even when he sleeps, works and performs various actions. In fact, he beholds the material world as a God saturated cosmos.

Even in the wakeful state the mind enjoys the state of nirbikalpa samadhi or the state in which the devotee sees nature and God together. To be in ecstasy with God and be in the wakeful state without losing consciousness is a very high state called the Paramhansa state, when the "royal swan" of the soul floats in the cosmic ocean, beholding its body and the ocean as the manifestation of the same Spirit.

--Bhagavad Gita Interpretations, Yogananda, Inner Culture, November, 1939

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From *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*, Swami Kriyananda

(2:60) ... Paramhansa Yogananda warned that as long as ego-consciousness persists, one should not consider himself safe from delusion. "Remember, you will not be safe until you reach *nirbikalpa samadhi*." Even in the lower samadhi stage known as *sabikalpa*, the ego must return from its infinitely expanded consciousness to outward awareness. One who reaches *sabikalpa samadhi*, therefore, can still fall. My Guru told me of more than one case in which this had happened. "Sadhu, beware!" the great master Sri Ramakrishna once warned a disciple, who subsequently did fall from the spiritual path.

The thing to watch out for is the slightest flicker of excitement in the heart, in the contemplation of any aspect of delusion. That little stir of energy should be seen as the first warning signal. The slightest stirring in the heart should be a sign to the aspiring yogi to withdraw immediately from even the thought of delusion.

(3:3) ...The eightfold (more literally, the “eight-limbed” *ashtanga*) path of yoga outlined by the ancient sage Patanjali was not describing one particular path to God. All who would unite their souls with God must follow that same path: *yama* and *niyama* (right action); *asana* (firmness of posture, and keeping the spine straight to enable the energy to flow freely through it); *pranayama* (control over the energy of the body); *pratyahara* (interiorization of the mind); *dharana* (one-pointed concentration); *dhyana* (absorption in deep meditation); and *samadhi* (oneness). *Samadhi*, as we saw earlier, is both conditioned and unconditioned: conditioned (limited), first, in *sabikalpa*, for the subtle bonds of ego-consciousness still remain to be wholly severed; and *nirbikalpa*, unconditioned by limitation of any kind.

One who attains *nirbikalpa samadhi* has reached the highest state possible. He has only to free himself of memories of ego-identification with past incarnations. Otherwise, he is like Christ, Krishna, and Buddha. From oneness with God there is nowhere higher to rise. Religionists often claim for their own founders a state above that of any other saint or master. No such state exists. As Yogananda once put it, “When you become one with God, you *are* God.” Indeed, there is no “you” to be anything else!

(3:15) ... All things are manifestations of the Cosmic Vibration. The meditating yogi first hears the sound of AUM in his right ear. As he deepens the experience, he comes to hear it in his whole body; as the whole body vibrates with that sound. Thus, feeling AUM all through the body, he loses identification with self-consciousness, centered in the medulla, and gradually expands with the AUM sound until he is identified with that vibration in all creation. This stage is known as AUM *samadhi*.

(3:21) ... Those are greatest among human beings who help to bring masses to God. In this way only can a master’s greatness be acclaimed. He is outstanding (among other masters) only for the good he does on earth. Otherwise, every *jivan mukta*, having achieved *nirbikalpa samadhi*, is as great as the greatest *siddha*, or perfected being. He may have past karma to work out; even so, he is one with God, and there are no gradations in that oneness.

(6:20) The state of complete inner tranquility, (which is) attained by yoga meditation, wherein the little self (the ego) perceives itself as the Self, enjoys itself as the Self;

(6:21) that state in which bliss, transcendent above the senses and accepted as such by intuitive intelligence, can never be expunged;

(6:22) the state which, once attained, is considered the treasure beyond all other treasures: In that state (alone) does the yogi become immune to grief even (in the face of) the greatest tragedy.

Paramhansa Yogananda has been quoted already as saying, “You must be able to stand unshaken amidst the crash of breaking worlds.” In these stanzas Krishna explains the state of consciousness in which so firm a stance becomes finally possible.

(6:23) *That state is known as yoga, the condition in which one becomes immune to any pain. The practice of yoga should therefore be followed resolutely, with undaunted feeling.*

Stanzas 20–22 describe the progress from conditioned (*sabikalpa*, or *sampragyata*) samadhi to unconditioned (*nirbikalpa*, or *asampragyata*) samadhi: the state of ultimate union with God, referred to here in Stanza 23 as “the condition in which one becomes immune to any pain.” In the first state, *sabikalpa samadhi*, ego-consciousness, though dormant, is still present. Thus, the intuitive intelligence (combining as it does, feeling with discrimination) is still active; the little self, filled with awe and wonder, recognizes the Supreme Self. Gradually, as it becomes established in that state, the little self slices through the last strand binding it to littleness.

This, then, is “permanent extinction,” the state in which the yogi’s ego-consciousness is slain and burned to ashes, to remain ever thereafter but a memory in omniscience. That memory can be resurrected, as happens sometimes when a liberated soul is sent back (by the will of the Creator) into manifested existence as an avatar, for the salvation of many souls still wandering in delusion. The consciousness of eternal, absolute inner freedom is never lost.

§

From Autobiography of a Yogi, di Paramhansa Yogananda

Chapter 14

"Poor boy, the mountains couldn't give what you wanted." Master spoke caressingly, comfortingly. His calm gaze was unfathomable. "Your heart's desire shall be fulfilled."

Sri Yukteswar seldom indulged in riddles; I was bewildered. He struck gently on my chest above the heart.

My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet. Soul and mind instantly lost their physical bondage, and streamed out like a fluid piercing light from my every pore. The flesh was as though dead, yet in my intense awareness I knew that never before had I been fully alive. My sense of identity was no longer narrowly confined to a body, but embraced the circumambient atoms. People on distant streets seemed to be moving gently over my own remote periphery. The roots of plants and trees appeared through a dim transparency of the soil; I discerned the inward flow of their sap.

The whole vicinity lay bare before me. My ordinary frontal vision was now changed to a vast spherical sight, simultaneously all-perceptive. Through the back of my head I saw men strolling far down Rai Ghat Road, and noticed also a white cow who was leisurely approaching. When she reached the space in front of the open ashram gate, I observed her with my two physical eyes. As she passed by, behind the brick wall, I saw her clearly still.

All objects within my panoramic gaze trembled and vibrated like quick motion pictures. My body, Master's, the pillared courtyard, the furniture and floor, the trees and sunshine, occasionally became violently agitated, until all melted into a luminescent sea; even as sugar crystals, thrown into a glass of water, dissolve after being shaken. The unifying light alternated with materializations of form, the metamorphoses revealing the law of cause and effect in creation.

An oceanic joy broke upon calm endless shores of my soul. The Spirit of God, I realized, is exhaustless Bliss; His body is countless tissues of light. A swelling glory within me began to envelop towns, continents, the earth, solar and stellar systems, tenuous nebulae, and floating universes. The entire cosmos, gently luminous, like a city seen afar at night, glimmered within the infinitude of my being. The sharply etched global outlines faded somewhat at the farthest edges; there I could see a mellow radiance, ever-undiminished. It was indescribably subtle; the planetary pictures were formed of a grosser light.

The divine dispersion of rays poured from an Eternal Source, blazing into galaxies, transfigured with ineffable auras. Again and again I saw the creative beams condense into constellations, then resolve into sheets of transparent flame. By rhythmic reversion, sextillion worlds passed into diaphanous luster; fire became firmament.

I cognized the center of the empyrean as a point of intuitive perception in my heart. Irradiating splendor issued from my nucleus to every part of the universal structure. Blissful *amrita*, the nectar of immortality, pulsed through me with a quicksilverlike fluidity. The creative voice of God I heard resounding as *Aum*, the vibration of the Cosmic Motor.

Chapter 21

Numerous bewildered seekers in the West erroneously think that an eloquent speaker or writer on metaphysics must be a master. The rishis, however, have pointed out that the acid test of a master is a man's ability to enter at will the breathless state, and to maintain the unbroken *samadhi* of *nirbikalpa*.*(5) Only by these achievements can a human being prove that he has "mastered" *maya* or the dualistic Cosmic Delusion. He alone can say from the depths of realization: "*Ekam sat*,"—"Only One exists."

Chapter 26

In the initial states of God-contact (*sabikalpa samadhi*) the devotee's consciousness merges with the Cosmic Spirit; his life force is withdrawn from the body, which appears "dead," or motionless and rigid. The yogi is fully aware of his bodily condition of suspended animation. As he progresses to higher spiritual states (*nirbikalpa samadhi*), however, he communes with God without bodily fixation, and in his ordinary waking consciousness, even in the midst of exacting worldly duties.

The first state of *samadhi*, in which the yogi finds everything withdrawn and absorbed into Spirit, is called *sabikalpa samadhi*. The higher and greater state of *samadhi* is *nirbikalpa*, in which the yogi, after realizing the Spirit alone without creation perceives it also, simultaneously, both as above creation, and as manifested in all creation. Here his consciousness becomes the cosmic consciousness. The domain of his consciousness now extends from his body to include the whole universe. He becomes the Ocean of Spirit, and watches the bubble of his body floating in it. His consciousness perceives all motion and change of life, from the circling of the stars to the fall of a sparrow and the whirling of the smallest electron.

The yogi who has entered into these two states of *samadhi* finds that solids melt into liquids, liquids into gaseous states, these into energy, and energy into cosmic consciousness. He lifts the four veils of solids, liquids, gases and energy, and finds the Spirit, face to face. He sees the objective universe and subjective universe meet in Spirit. His expanded material self mixes with the greater spiritual Self and knows their unity. The spiritual Self, being the first cause, and capable of existing without material manifestation, is therefore greater than the material self.

Thus, the negative conception of God is removed. The yogi, instead of finding cessation of life and joy, becomes the fountain-head of eternal bliss and life. The tiny bubble of laughter becomes the sea of mirth itself. By knowing God, one does not lose anything, but gains everything.

Chapter 43

In *sabikalpa samadhi* the devotee has spiritually progressed to a state of inward divine union, but cannot maintain his cosmic consciousness except in the immobile trance-state. By

continuous meditation, he reaches the superior state of *nirbikalpa samadhi*, where he moves freely in the world and performs his outward duties without any loss of God-realization.

§

Samadhi Poem

Vanished the veils of light and shade,
Lifted every vapor of sorrow,
Sailed away all dawns of fleeting joy,
Gone the dim sensory mirage.
Love, hate, health, disease, life, death,
Perished these false shadows on the screen of duality.
Waves of laughter, scyllas of sarcasm, melancholic whirlpools,
Melting in the vast sea of bliss.
The storm of *maya* stilled
By magic wand of intuition deep.
The universe, forgotten dream, subconsciously lurks,
Ready to invade my newly wakened memory divine.
I live without the cosmic shadow,
But it is not, bereft of me;
As the sea exists without the waves,
But they breathe not without the sea.
Dreams, wakings, states of deep *turiya* sleep,
Present, past, future, no more for me,
But ever-present, all-flowing I, I, everywhere.
Planets, stars, stardust, earth,
Volcanic bursts of doomsday cataclysms,
Creation's molding furnace,
Glaciers of silent x-rays, burning electron floods,
Thoughts of all men, past, present, to come,
Every blade of grass, myself, mankind,
Each particle of universal dust,
Anger, greed, good, bad, salvation, lust,
I swallowed, transmuted all
Into a vast ocean of blood of my own one Being!
Smoldering joy, oft-puffed by meditation
Blinding my tearful eyes,
Burst into immortal flames of bliss,
Consumed my tears, my frame, my all.
Thou art I, I am Thou,

Knowing, Knower, Known, as One!
Tranquilled, unbroken thrill, eternally living, ever new peace!
Enjoyable beyond imagination of expectancy, *samadhi* bliss!
Not a mental chloroform
Or unconscious state without willful return,
Samadhi but extends my conscious realm
Beyond the limits of the mortal frame
To farthest boundary of eternity
Where I, the Cosmic Sea,
Watch the little ego floating in me.
The sparrow, each grain of sand, fall not without my sight.
All space like an iceberg floats within my mental sea.
Colossal Container, I, of all things made.
By deeper, longer, thirsty, guru-given meditation
Comes this celestial *samadhi*
Mobile murmurs of atoms are heard,
The dark earth, mountains, vales, lo! molten liquid!
Flowing seas change into vapors of nebulae!
Aum blows upon the vapors, opening wondrously their veils,
Oceans stand revealed, shining electrons,
Till, at last sound of the cosmic drum,**
Vanish the grosser lights into eternal rays
Of all-pervading bliss.
From joy I came, for joy I live, in sacred joy I melt.
Ocean of mind, I drink all creation's waves.
Four veils of solid, liquid, vapor, light,
Lift aright.
Myself, in everything, enters the Great Myself.
Gone forever, fitful, flickering shadows of mortal memory.
Spotless is my mental sky, below, ahead, and high above.
Eternity and I, one united ray.
A tiny bubble of laughter, I
Am become the Sea of Mirth Itself.

§

From Whispers from Eternity, 1946 edition

Through Oneness in *samadhi*, the dualities of human experience disappear. Everything is perceived to change into Spirit. In this state, the man in *samadhi* can perceive

the spiritual ocean, with its waves of creation; or see the same spiritual ocean, transcendently calm, existing without the waves of creation.

In the first state of *samadhi*, the yogi (one who unites his soul with Spirit by right meditation) is so absorbed in Spirit that he is oblivious of the material and created universe. A somewhat similar experience on a lower plane is experienced when one is so absorbed in books or thoughts that he is unaware of what is happening around him. This state is not unconscious, for unconsciousness implies lack of awareness, both inwardly and outwardly. Such unconsciousness is easily brought about by the use of drugs, anesthetics and other outward means. The full spiritual consciousness of *samadhi*, however, can be attained only through the regular, continuous, right discipline of meditation, and has nothing in common with unconsciousness.

The first state of *samadhi*, in which the yogi finds everything withdrawn and absorbed into Spirit, is called *sabikalpa samadhi*. The higher and greater state of *samadhi* is *nirbikalpa*, in which the yogi, after realizing the Spirit alone—without creation—perceives it also, simultaneously, both as above creation, and as manifested in all creation. Here his consciousness becomes the cosmic consciousness. The domain of his consciousness now extends from his body to include the whole universe. He becomes the Ocean of Spirit, and watches the bubble of his body floating in it. His consciousness perceives all motion and change of life, from the circling of the stars to the fall of a sparrow and the whirling of the smallest electron.

The yogi who has entered into these two states of *samadhi* finds that solids melt into liquids, liquids into gaseous states, these into energy, and energy into cosmic consciousness. He lifts the four veils of solids, liquids, gases and energy, and finds the Spirit, face to face. He sees the objective universe and subjective universe meet in Spirit. His expanded material self mixes with the greater spiritual Self and knows their unity. The spiritual Self, being the first cause, and capable of existing without material manifestation, is therefore greater than the material self.

Thus, the negative conception of God is removed. The yogi, instead of finding cessation of life and joy, becomes the fountain-head of eternal bliss and life. The tiny bubble of laughter becomes the sea of mirth itself. By knowing God, one does not lose *anything*, but gains *everything*.

* Samadhi means: oneness of human consciousness with cosmic consciousness. The human consciousness is subjected to relativity and dual experience. In meditation, there are: The meditator, the act of meditation, and God (as the object of meditation) . Samadhi is the final result of deep, continuous, right meditation, in which the above mentioned three factors of meditation become one. Just as the wave melt' in the Sea, so the human soul becomes the Spirit.

** The *Aum* vibration

§

From the Path – Chapter 37, by Swami Kriyananda

"Do you know where I wrote my poem, '*Samadhi*'?" he asked us one day. "It was on the New York subway! As I was writing, I rode back and forth from one end of the line to the other. No one asked for my ticket. In fact," he added with a twinkle, "no one saw me!"».

§

From The Essence of Self-realization – Cap. 18, by Swami Kriyananda

16. Paramhansa Yogananda told the monks, "Memorize my poem, *Samadhi*, and repeat it daily. It will help to awaken within you that lost memory of what you are in reality: sons of Infinity." Yogananda disse ai monaci: «Imparate a memoria la mia poesia *Samadhi* e recitatela ogni giorno. Vi aiuterà a risvegliare in voi quel ricordo perduto di quello che realmente siete: figli dell'Infinito».

§

From Conversations with Yogananda, by Swami Kriyananda

~ 95 ~

"Sir," I asked, "what stage must one have reached to be called a master?"

"He must have attained Christ consciousness. The stages of enlightenment," he continued, "are, first, to be conscious of the *AUM* vibration throughout the body. Next, one's consciousness becomes identified with that *AUM* vibration *beyond* his body, and gradually throughout the universe. One then becomes conscious of the Christ consciousness *within* the *AUM* vibration—first in the physical body, then gradually in the whole universe. When you achieve oneness with that vibrationless consciousness everywhere, you have attained Christ consciousness.

"That final stage lies beyond vibration itself, in oneness with God the Father, the Creator beyond the universe. When, still in that highest state of consciousness, you can return to the body without losing your inner sense of oneness with God, *that* is complete freedom. All true masters, even those who are not yet fully liberated, live in that *nirbikalpa samadhi* state. That is what Jesus Christ had. It was what he meant by perfection, in saying, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' To be a Christlike master, one must have attained that state."

On another occasion, the Master gave this very simple explanation: "You are a master when you can use your senses, but they don't use you."

~ 98 ~

Samadhi is no "Sunday outing," no lark one experiences for the mere fun of it! It creates an absolute revolution in one's consciousness. *Samadhi* is altogether different from anything the ego can possibly imagine.

Dr. Lewis once told me, “I kept asking the Master to give me a *samadhi*. One day I backed him into a corner, so to speak, and insisted that he give me *samadhi* ‘this very minute’!

“The Master looked at me deeply, demanding almost fiercely, ‘Are you ready for it, if I give it to you “this very minute”? Can you accept a complete change of outlook on everything?’

“My will faltered. I looked down. ‘No, Sir,’ I had to confess. ‘I guess I’m not ready yet.’”

I (Walter) am reminded of something Boone told me. “I once asked Saint Lynn to give me a taste of ecstasy. He answered, ‘If I gave it to you now, you would not be able to bear your life as it is.’”

~ 242 ~

“The following story,” said the Master, “happened before my time, but my father was personally acquainted with it. A maharaja had been excavating a lake on his property, and beneath the mud at the bottom, three yogis were discovered in good condition, seated in the lotus pose. An engineer working on the project estimated that they must have been there at least three hundred years.

“They were in *samadhi*. To reawaken them to outward consciousness, the maharaja had someone apply hot pokers to their feet. Finally they succeeded in bringing them back.

“‘You should not have done this,’ they told him severely. ‘We were very near liberation. Now we shall have to be reborn, and to continue working toward that goal in new bodies.’ It was not possible for them to keep their bodies any longer, having been out of them for so long.

“Before dying, they said to the maharaja, ‘You have committed a serious transgression by disturbing our deep state of communion. You will have to pay the price.’ In fact, soon after these yogis left their bodies in death, the ruler and his whole family died. That was his punishment for disturbing the harmony of those yogis’ inner communion.

“On the other hand, the yogis themselves, by being so rudely forced out of their inner state, were paying a price for seeking liberation for themselves alone. Divine Mother didn’t want them to merge in the Infinite without first helping others, too.”

~ 339 ~

“The simple thought that you are not free,” the Master said one day, reiterating a thought he’d expressed earlier, “keeps you from being free. If you could only break that simple thought, you would go into *samadhi*.”

“*Samadhi* is not something one needs to acquire. You have it already. Just think: Eternally you have been with God. For a few incarnations you live in delusion, but then again you are free in Him for eternity! Live always in that thought.”

~ 424 ~

I (Walter) asked Rev. Smith, during my first year as a disciple, “Is the Master *equally* conscious of *everything*?” The concept of being constantly in cosmic consciousness, even while acting in a physical body—the state Master called *nirbikalpa samadhi*—was, perhaps not surprisingly, quite beyond my comprehension. Rev. Smith, to whom I’d addressed the question, wanted others to think his explanations came from his own personal knowledge. Nevertheless, based on what he said, and matching it against what I heard later from the Master himself on this subject, I think the following is a fairly exact explanation of the Master’s teachings on this subject:

“In cosmic consciousness, you are *inwardly* conscious of everything. Your human mind, however, must be aware of things specifically. When you yourself concentrate on one flower out of several, then, although you are aware of that one flower especially you are also aware that there are others. You see those others there, but to your present awareness they are peripheral.

“The case is similar in the case of a master. He is aware of everything, everywhere, but at the same time, whatever calls for his specific, human attention, since it is in his direct line of vision, he addresses particularly. His human mind functions in a human way. Inwardly, however, his inner consciousness embraces all existence.”

§

From The Path – Chapter 10: Paramhansa Yoganada, by Swami Kriyananda

Samadhi (cosmic consciousness) is the state of infinite awareness that comes to the yogi once the hypnosis of ego has been broken. Christian saints have sometimes described this state as "mystical marriage," for in it the soul merges into God and becomes one with Him.

From The Path – Chapter 21: I am Spirit, by Swami Kriyananda

The body in this trance state is immobile; one's absorption in God at this point is called *sabikalpa samadhi*: qualified absorption, a condition that is still subject to change, for from it one returns to assume once again the limitations of ego. By repeated absorption in the trance state, however, ego's hold on the mind is gradually broken, until the realization dawns: "There is no John Smith to go back to. I am Spirit!" This is the supreme state: *nirbikalpa samadhi*, or unqualified absorption a condition changeless and eternal. If from this state one returns to body-consciousness, it is no longer with the thought of separate existence from the ocean of Spirit. John Smith no longer exists: It is the eternal Spirit, now, which animates his body, eats through it, teaches through it, and carries on all the normal functions of a human being. This outward direction of energy on the part of one who has attained *nirbikalpa samadhi* is sometimes known also as *sahaja*, or effortless, *samadhi*.

Divine freedom comes only with the attainment of *nirbikalpa samadhi*. Until that stage the ego can still and alas, sometimes does draw the mind back down into delusion. *With nirbikalpa samadhi*, one becomes what is known as a *jivan mukta*, free even though living in a physical form. A *jivan mukta*, however, unimaginably high though his state is, is not yet fully emancipated. The subtle memory, "I am John Smith," has been destroyed; he can acquire no new karma, since the post of ego to which karma is tied has been broken. But there remains even now the memory of all those prior existences: John Smith in thousands, perhaps millions of incarnations; John Smith the one-time bandit, John Smith the disappointed musician, John Smith the betrayed lover, the beggar, the swaggering tyrant. All those old selves must be made over, their karma spiritualized, released into the Infinite.

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From Keys to the Bhagavad Gita, by Swami Kriyananda

In a state of samadhi, the tongue goes back into a position that locks the energy into the brain. In hatha yoga it's called kechari mudra. You put the tongue behind the palate and the tongue touches certain nerve centers behind the nasal passage. It seems sort of peculiar, but it's not at all uncomfortable when you practice it. But the practice isn't the same as when it happens automatically when the mind goes into samadhi. At that time, in addition to the energy being withdrawn from the body, there is a certain energy that is drawn from the brain down into the mouth. It has a sweet taste, and that energy keeps the body sustained for a long period of time so that one doesn't need to eat. One can remain for very long periods of time in samadhi without having to come out. And the curious thing is that the taste has been described—and it seems to me, too, when I taste it—as a combination of ghee, which is clarified butter, and honey. How similar to this "land of milk and honey," isn't it? Ghee being butter, coming from milk. The ecstatic state brings that taste into the mouth.

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From “The Science of the Future”, Yogananda

Talk at the Unity in Yoga Conference, May 27, 1995

Yogananda told me something very interesting, he said, "Until you are in *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* you are not yet safe." Because even though in Samadhi you are out of the ego, when you come back to the ego, it can always trip you up again. People say, "Oh it's just his ego." My answer to that is of course it's his ego. What else could it possibly be? All we have is ego. We've got to work our way up to soul consciousness. The choice is, is my ego expansive or contractive? Am I working to serve other people? Am I trying to understand a broader reality? Or am I thinking more I, I, I, me, mine, mine. If you have an expansive ego that's soul consciousness if you want to call it that, but it's still ego consciousness. You don't go beyond the ego until you reach that level of complete merging.

Even *Sabikalpa Samadhi* when the ego is merged in the Infinite, you have to break that hypnosis on the mind that calls you back to this body until finally in *Nirbikalpa Samadhi* you are at a point where you cannot fall again. And then what Yogananda said that surprised

me is that even then, that's really the beginning of the work in a way, you've got many, many incarnations behind you. Of let's say, John Doe as a pirate, John Doe as a missionary, John Doe as a merchant, John Doe as a housewife, John Doe as a dancer. And he has to go through the karma of all those incarnations, and see God acting in those forms. See that it was not he, that it was God doing that. And when finally he's gotten rid of this thought, that I did it. When he can just convince the mind, as Yogananda said, "All they have to do is convince the mind they are free, then they're free." But it's ultimately up to you. You have to make that stand at any moment in your spiritual journey. Live in the thought, I am free.

Now as soon as you have this thought, I am free, no body can hurt you. No body can touch you because it's your karma, it's their karma, don't let anything bother you. The more you can live in this thought, "I have my inner reality and this is all that there is."

You know the state of *nirvana*? *Nirvana* is not extinguishment the way most people think. I was writing this book on meditation recently and most of it came after meditating and I'd sit down and write and the ideas would be clear. And one came to me that was really fascinating. The thought of suicide. Most people think of *nirvana* as total extinction. Buddhists think of that. Well who in this world is seeking total extinction? Only suicides. The trouble and what's wrong with suicides, they botch the job. You still got your astral body after you've killed the physical body. And that astral body is still full of samskars and karmic seeds, and so on and so you'll have to come back again and again.

So from that definition what makes *nirvana* good? Successful suicide. So, okay, we can talk all about the abstract concepts we don't understand and we can accept practically anything on that level, but to bring it down to bed-rock reality, the suicides in this world are not the kind of people you want emulate. Buddha was not the suicidal type. He had compassion, love, greatness, calmness, all these things that don't come from total extinction of consciousness, but only from total extinction of desire. Total extinction of I did this, I did that. He got rid of that and in that state is absolute consciousness.