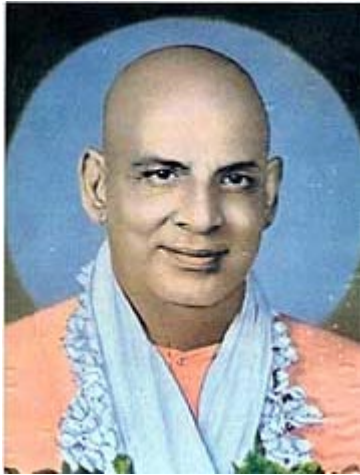


# THE YOGA SYSTEM

*By*

**SRI SWAMI KRISHNANANDA**



**Sri Swami Sivananda  
Founder of  
The Divine Life Society**



**SERVE, LOVE, GIVE,  
PURIFY, MEDITATE,  
REALIZE  
So Says  
Sri Swami Sivananda**



**Sri Swami Krishnananda**

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## **PUBLISHERS' PREFACE**

The present small book consists of lectures delivered by the author several years ago on the essentials of the Yoga system as propounded by the Sage Patanjali. These lessons were intended particularly for students who required a special clarity of this intricate subject, and the approach has been streamlined accordingly on a form and style commensurate with the receptive capacities of the students.

The section on Pratyahara is especially noteworthy and students of Yoga would do well to go through it again and again as a help in internal training.

20<sup>th</sup> February, 1981

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

*Dedicated  
To  
The Seekers of Truth*

# CONTENTS

PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS .....	1
THE AIM OF OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS .....	3
THE SPIRITUAL REALITY .....	4
DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY .....	6
THE MORAL RESTRAINTS.....	7
THE OBSERVANCES .....	11
ASANA OR POSTURE.....	13
PRANAYAMA OR REGULATION OF THE VITAL ENERGY .....	17
PRATYAHARA OR ABSTRACTION .....	20
PEACE OF MIND AND SELF-CONTROL.....	32
DHARANA OR CONCENTRATION .....	35
DHYANA OR MEDITATION .....	41
SAMADHI OR SUPER-CONSCIOUSNESS.....	42
APPENDIX .....	44
Practical Techniques .....	44
A. Concentration on External Points: .....	45
B. Concentration on Internal Points:.....	46
C. Concentration on the Universal:.....	47
Day-to-Day Practice .....	48

## PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

It is necessary, at the outset, to clear certain misconceptions in regard to Yoga, prevalent especially among some sections in the West. Yoga is not magic or a feat of any kind, physical or mental. Yoga is based on a sound philosophy and deep psychology. It is an educational process by which the human mind is trained to become more and more *natural* and weaned from the unnatural conditions of life. Yoga has particular concern with psychology, and, as a study of the 'self', it transcends both general and abnormal psychology, and leads one to the supernormal level of life. In Yoga we study ourselves, while in our colleges we are told to study objects. Not the study of things but a study of the very structure of the student is required by the system of Yoga, for the *known* is not totally independent of the *knower*.

How do we know things at all? There is a mysterious process by which we come to know the world, and life is an activity of such knowledge. A study of the mind is a study of its relations to things. The instruction, 'Know Thyself', implies that when we know ourselves, we know all things connected with ourselves, i.e., we know the universe. In this study we have to proceed always from the lower to the higher, without making haste or working up the emotions.

The first thing we are aware of in experience is the world. There are certain processes which take place in the mind, by which we come to know the existence of the world. There are sensations, perceptions and cognitions, which fall under what is known as 'direct perception' or 'direct knowledge' (*Pratyaksha*) through which the world is known, valued and judged for purpose of establishing relations. These relations constitute our social life.

A stimulation of the senses takes place by a vibration that proceeds from the object outside. This happens in two ways: (1) by the very presence of the object and (2) by the light rays, sound, etc., that emanate from the object, which affect the retina of the eyes, the drums of the ears, or the other senses. We have five senses of knowledge and through them we receive all the information concerning the world. If the five senses are not to act, we cannot know if there is a world at all. We, thus, live in a sense-world. When sensory stimulation is produced by vibrations received from outside, we become active. Sensory activity stimulates the mind through the nervous system which connects the senses with the mind by means of the *Prana* or vital energy. We may compare these nerve-channels to electric wires, through which the power of the Prana flows. The Pranas are not the nerves, even as electricity is not the wires. The Prana is an internal vibration which links the senses with the mind. Sensations, therefore, make the mind active and the mind begins to feel that there is something outside. This may be called indeterminate perception, where the mind has a featureless awareness of the object. When the perception becomes clearer, it becomes determinate. This mental perception is usually called cognition.

Beyond the mind there is another faculty, called the intellect. It judges whether a thing is good or bad, necessary or unnecessary, of this kind or that, etc. It decides upon the value of an object, whether this judgment is positive or negative, moral, aesthetic or religious. One assesses one's *situation* in relation to the object. Some psychologists hold that the mind is an instrument in the hands of the intellect. *Manas* is the Sanskrit word for *mind*, which is regarded as the

*Karana* or instrument, while *Buddhi* is the Sanskrit term for *intellect*, which is the *Karta* or doer. The intellect judges what is cognized by the mind, and makes a decision as to the nature of the action that has to be taken in respect of the object in the given circumstances.

The intellect is associated with another principle within, called *Ahamkara* or ego. '*Aham*' means 'I', and '*kara*' is that which manifests, reveals or affirms. There is something in us, which affirms '*I am*'. This affirmation is ego. No logic is necessary to prove the ego, for we do not prove our own existence. This is an affirmation which requires no evidence, for all logic proceeds from it. The ego is inseparable from individual intellection, like fire from its heat. The intellect and ego exist inextricably, and human intellection is the function of the human ego. The functions of the ego are manifold, and these form the subject of psychology.

There are certain ways in which the psychological instruments begin to function in relation to objects. The ego, intellect and mind perform the functions of arrogation, understanding and thinking of objects. There is also a fourth element, called *Chitta*, which is not easily translatable into English. The term 'subconscious' is usually considered as its equivalent. That which is at the base of the conscious mind and which retains memory etc., is *Chitta* or the subconscious mind. But the *Chitta* in Yoga psychology includes also what is known as the *unconscious* in psychoanalysis. All this functional apparatus, taken together, is the psyche or *Antahkarana*, the internal instrument. The internal organ functions in various forms, and Yoga is interested in a thorough study of these functions, because the methods of Yoga are intended to take a serious step in regard to all these psychic functions, finally.

Now, how does the internal organ function? The psyche produces five reactions in respect of the world outside, some of them being positive and others negative. These are the themes of general psychology.

There are five modes into which the *Antahkarana* casts itself in performing its functions of normal life. These modes are called *Pramana*, *Viparyaya*, *Vikalpa*, *Nidra* and *Smriti*.

*Pramana* or right knowledge is awareness of things as they are. This is the main subject of the studies in logic. Perception, inference and verbal testimony are the three primary ways of right knowledge. Some add comparison, presumption and non-apprehension to the usual avenues of such knowledge. How do we know that there is an object in front of us? We acquire this knowledge through direct sensory contact. This is perception. And when we see muddy water in a river, we suppose that there must have been rains uphill. This knowledge we gather by inference. The words of others in whom we have faith, also, convey to us true knowledge, as, for example, when we believe that there is an elephant in the nearby city, on hearing of it from a reliable friend, though we might not have actually seen it with our eyes. All these methods together form what goes by the name of *Pramana* or direct proof of dependable knowledge.

*Viparyaya* is wrong perception, the mistaking of one thing for another, as, when we see a long rope in twilight, we usually take it for a snake, or apprehend that a straight stick immersed in water is bent. When we perceive anything which does not correspond to fact, the mental mode is one of erroneous understanding.

*Vikalpa* is doubt. When we are not certain whether, for example, a thing we are seeing is a person or a pole, whether something is moving or not moving, the perception not being clear, or when we are in any dubious state of thinking, we are said to be in *Vikalpa*.

*Nidra* is sleep, which may be regarded as a negative condition, a withdrawal of mind from all activity. Sleep is nevertheless a psychological condition, because, though it is not positively connected with the objects of the world, it represents a latency of the impressions as well as possibilities of objective thought. *Nidra* is the sleep of the *Antahkarana*.

*Smriti* is memory, the remembrance of past events, the retention in consciousness of the impressions of experiences undergone previously.

All functions of the internal organ can be brought under one or other of these processes, and subject of general psychology is an elaboration of these human ways of thinking, understanding, willing or feeling. It does not mean, however, that we entertain only five kinds of thoughts, but that all the hundreds of thoughts of the mind can be boiled down to these five groups of function. The system of Yoga makes a close study of this inner structure of man and envisages it in its relation to the universe.

## THE AIM OF OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS

As all thoughts can be reduced to five types of internal function, all objects can be reduced to five *Bhutas* or elements. The five great elements are called *Pancha-Maha-bhutas*, and they are (1) Ether (*Akasa*), (2) Air (*Vayu*), (3) Fire (*agni*), (4) Water (*Apas*) and (5) Earth (*Prithivi*). The subtlety of these elements is in the ascending order of this arrangement, the succeeding one being grosser than the preceding. Also the preceding element is the cause of the succeeding, so that Ether may be regarded as containing all things in an unmanifested form. The elements constitute the whole physical cosmos. These are the real objects of the senses, and all the variety we see is made up of forms of these objects.

Our sensations are the five objects. We sense through the *Indriyas* or sense-organs. With the sense of the ear we come in contact with Ether and hear sound which is a reverberation produced by Ether. Touch is the property of Air, felt by us with the tactile sense. With the sense of the eyes we contact light which is the property of Fire. With the palate we taste things, which is the property of Water. With the nose we smell objects, and this is the property of Earth.

There is the vast universe, and we know it with our senses. We live in a world of fivefold objects. The senses are incapable of knowing anything more than these element. The internal organ, as informed and influenced by the objects, deals with them in certain manners, and this is life. While our psychological reactions constitute our personal life, the adjustment we make with others is our social life. The Yoga is primarily concerned with the personal life of man in relation to the universe, and not the social life, for, in the social environment, one's real personality is rarely revealed. Yoga is essentially a study of self by self, which initially looks like an individual affair, a process of Self-investigation (*Atma-Vichara*) and Self-realization (*Atma-*

*Sakshatkara*). But this is not the whole truth. The Self envisaged here is a consciousness of gradual integration of reality, and it finally encompasses all experience and the whole universe in its being.

While the psychology of Yoga comprises the functions of the internal organ, and its physics is of the five great objects or *Mahabhutas*, the philosophy of Yoga transcends both these stages of study. The Yoga metaphysics holds that the body is not all, and even the five elements are not all. We do not see what is inside the body and also what is within the universe of five elements. A different set of senses would be necessary for knowing these larger secrets. Yoga finally leads us to this point. When we go deep into the body we would confront its roots; so also in the case of the objects outside. When we set out on this adventure, we begin to converge slowly at a single centre, like the two sides of a triangle that taper at one point. The so-called wide base of the world on which we move does not disclose the truth of ourselves or of objects. At this point of convergence of ourselves and of things, we need not look at objects, and here no senses are necessary, for, in this experience, there are neither selves nor things. There is only one Reality, where the universal object and the universal subject become a unitary existence. Neither is that an experience of a subject nor an object, where is revealed a knowledge of the whole cosmos, at once, not through the senses, mind or intellect,-for there are no objects,-and there is only *being* that is *consciousness*. Yoga is, therefore, spiritual, superphysical or supermaterial, because materiality is shed in its achievement, and consciousness reigns supreme. This is the highest object of Yoga, where the individual and the universe do not stand apart as two entities but come together in a fraternal embrace. The purpose of the Yoga way of analysis is an overcoming of the limitations of both subjectivity and objectivity and a union of the deepest within us with the deepest in the cosmos.

## THE SPIRITUAL REALITY

And what is this deepest? The physical body, being outside as a part of the physical world, should be considered an object like the other things of the world, and it is constituted of the five elements. This material body of five elements acts as a vehicle for certain powers that work from within. Our actions are movements of these powers. There is an energy within the body which is other than the elements. This energy is called *Prana* or vital force. The Prana has many functions, which are responsible for the workings of the body. The organs of action, viz., speech (*Vak*), hands (*Pani*), feet (*Pada*), genitals (*Upastha*) and anus (*Payu*) are moved by the motive power of the Prana. But the Prana is a blind energy and it needs to be directed properly. We know we do not just do anything at any time, but act with some, method and intelligence. There is a directing principle behind the Prana. We think before we act. The mind is, therefore, internal to the Prana. But thought, again, is regulated by something else. We engage ourselves in systematic thinking and follow a logical course in every form of contemplation and action. This logical determinant of all functions in life is the intellect, which is the highest of human faculties, and it is inseparable from the principle of the ego in man.

All these functions of the psychological apparatus are, however, confined to what is called the waking state. The human being seems to be passing from this state to others, such as dream and deep sleep. Though we have some sort of an awareness in dream, we are bereft of all



consciousness in deep sleep. Yet, we know that we do exist in the state of sleep. This means that we can exist without doing anything, even without thinking. The condition of deep sleep is a paradox for psychology and is the crux of the Yoga analysis. It is strange that in sleep we do not know even our own selves, and still we know that we do exist then. An experience, pure and simple, of the nature of consciousness alone, is the constituent of deep sleep, notwithstanding that we are not aware of it due to a peculiar difficulty in which we seem to get involved there. In deep sleep, we have consciousness not associated with objects, and hence we remain oblivious of everything external. There is, at the same time, unconsciousness of even one's own existence due to there being the potentiality for objective perception. The result is, however, that the deepest in the individual is consciousness, which is called by such names as the *Atman*, *Purusha*, etc. This is the real Self.

Now, what is the deepest in the cosmos? We learnt that there are five elements. But this is not the whole picture of creation. There are realities within the physical universe as they are there within the individual body. If the Prana, mind, intellect, ego and finally consciousness are internal to the bodily structure, there are also tremendous truths internal to the physical universe. Within the five gross elements there are five forces which manifest the elements. These forces are the universal causes of everything that is physical, and are called *Tanmatras*, a term which signifies the essence of objects. There is such a force or power behind the elements of Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth. *Sabda* or sound is the force behind Ether. But this sound is, different from what we merely hear with our ears. It is the subtle principle behind the whole of Ether, on account of which the ears are capable of hearing at all. This is sound as *Tanmatra*. Likewise, there are the *Tanmatras* of Air, Fire, Water and Earth, called respectively *Sparsa* or touch, *Rupa* or form, *Rasa* or taste and *Gandha* or smell. These powers are subtle energies immanent in the elements constituting the physical universe.

Modern science seems to corroborate the presence of these, essences behind bodies. The world was once said to be made up of molecules or chemical substances. Further investigation revealed that molecules are not the last word and that they are made up of atoms. Research, again, proved that even the atoms are formed of certain substances, which have the character of both waves of energy and particles of force. They flow like waves and sometimes jump like particles. A great physicist has therefore preferred to designate them as 'wavicles'. These have been named electrons, protons, neutrons, etc., according to their structure and function. Their essence is force. There is nothing but force in the universe. There is only a continuum of energy everywhere. The *Tanmatras* of the Yoga system, however, are subtler than the energy of the scientist, even as the Prana is subtler than electricity.

Just as behind the Prana there is the mind, behind the *Tanmatras* there is the Cosmic Mind. Beyond the Cosmic Mind are the Cosmic Ego and the Cosmic Intellect, the last mentioned having a special name, *Mahat*. Beyond the *Mahat* is what is called *Prakriti*, in which the whole universe exists as a tree in a seed, or as effect in its cause. Transcending *Prakriti* is the Absolute-Consciousness, called *Brahman*, *Paramatman* and the like. So, whether we dive deep here or there, within ourselves or within the cosmos, we find the same thing-Consciousness. And the stages of manifestation in the individual correspond to those in the universe. The purpose of Yoga is to effect a communion between the individual and cosmic structures and to realize the

ultimate Reality. The Yoga places before us the goal of a union wherein infinity and eternity seem to come together. The aim of Yoga is to raise the status of the individual to the cosmic level and to abolish the false difference between the individual and the cosmic. The cosmos includes ourselves and things. The individual is a part of the cosmos. Then, why do we make a separate reference to the individual? This is a mistake, which Yoga effectively corrects. To regard the cosmos as an outer object would be to defy the very meaning of the cosmos. To imagine ourselves to be subjects counterposed before an object called the cosmos would be to stultify the comprehensiveness of the cosmos and to interfere with its harmony and working. The Yoga rectifies this mistake and hereby the mortal becomes the Immortal. As the individual is a part of the cosmos, this achievement should not be difficult. The individual is not separate from the cosmic, but there seems to be some confusion in the mind of the individual which has caused an artificial isolation of itself from the rest of the universe. This confusion is called *Ajnana* or *Avidya*, which really means an absence or negation of true knowledge. Here we enter the realms of depth psychology.

## DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

*Avidya* represents a condition in which one forgets reality and is unconscious of its existence. We have somehow forgotten the real nature of our selves, viz. the universality of our true being. This is the primary function of ignorance. But it has more serious consequences. For it also makes one mistake the non-eternal (*Anitya*) for the eternal (*Nitya*), the impure (*Asuchi*) for the pure (*Suchi*), pain (*Duhkha*) for pleasure (*Sukha*) and the not-Self (*Anatman*) for the Self (*Atman*). It is obvious that the world with its contents is transient, and yet it is hugged as a real entity. Even the so-called solidity or substantiality of things is challenged today by the discoveries of modern science. The *Theory of Relativity* has put an end to such a thing as stable matter or body and even a stable law or rule to work upon. Still the world is loved as reality. This is one of the functions of *Avidya*. So, also, the impure body which stinks when deprived of life or unattended to daily is loved and caressed as a pure substance. The itching of the nerves is regarded as an incentive to pleasure and to scratch them for an imaginary satisfaction seems to be the aim of all sense-contacts in life, whatever be their nature. The increase of desire (*Parinama*) after every sensory indulgence, the anxiety (*Tapa*) consequent upon every attempt at fulfilment of a desire, the undesirable effect in the form of psychic impressions (*Samskara-duhkha*) that follow in the wake of all sense-enjoyments and the obstructing activity of the modes of the relativity of things (the 3 *Gunas*) called *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, which revolve like a wheel without rest (*Guna-vritti-virodha*) point to the fact that worldly pleasure is a name given to pain, by the ignorant. Also, objects are loved as one's Self, while in fact they are not. All these are the characteristics of *Avidya* or *Ajnana*, due to which there is a total distortion of reality into an appearance called this universe of space, time and objects.

Another result which spontaneously follows from *Avidya* is *Asmita* or the sense of being. This sense is the consciousness of one's individuality and personality, the ego, *Ahamkara*, or self-affirmation. Forgetfulness of universality ends in an assertion of individuality. The wrong notion that the individual is organically separated from the universe and the consequent self-assertion (*Asmita*), the bifurcating attitude of likes and dislikes in regard to things (*Raga-Dvesha*) and a longing to preserve one's body by all means (*Abhinivesa*) are the graduated effects of

## THE MORAL RESTRAINTS

Avidya, which follow from it in a logical sequence. We do not know Universal Being. We know only the particular and the individual. We love and hate objects. We cling to life and fear death. The first mistake is to think, 'I am not the Universal'; the second to affirm, 'I am the particular'; the third to like certain things and to dislike others; the fourth to strive for perpetuating individuality by the instinct for self-preservation and self-reproduction. The error of forgetfulness of universality has produced affirmation of individuality, which has caused love and hate, or like and dislike, all which finally has led to desire for life and horror of death. This is our present state. We have now to wake up from this muddled thinking and go back to the truth of thinking universally. The union of the individual with the Universal is Yoga.

## THE MORAL RESTRAINTS

If *Pramana*, *Viparyaya*, *Vikalpa*, *Nidra* and *Smriti* may be called the painless functions of the *Antahkarana*, which are studied in general psychology, the other functions, viz. *Avidya*, *Asmita*, *Raga*, *Dvesha* and *Abhinivesa* may be regarded as the painful ones, because it is these that cause the unhappiness of all beings, and these form the contents of abnormal psychology.

The painful functions create pain not only to oneself but to others as well, because we have a tendency to transfer our pain to others. A personal affair becomes a social problem and the personal ego becomes a social assertiveness. One's likes and dislikes may seriously affect others in society. The Yoga psychology takes this fact into consideration. Hence, before contemplating any method to free the mind from its painful functions, it has first to be weaned from society and brought back home from its meanderings outside. Like a thief who is first arrested and then suitably dealt with, the mind has to be made to turn away from the tangle of the external world, and then analyzed thoroughly. Social suffering is the impact of these psychological complexities mutually set up by the different individuals through various kinds of interaction. Social tension is the collision produced by individualistic psychological entanglements. This is the reason for everyone's unhappiness in the world. No one is prepared to sacrifice one's ego, but everyone demands the sacrifice of the egos of others. Yoga has a recipe for this malady of man in general, for this internal illness of humanity. It asks us to bring the mind back to its source of activity, and if all persons are to do this, it would serve as a remedy for social illness, also. Thus, though Yoga is primarily concerned with the individual, it offers a solution for all social tensions and questions. Yoga alone can bring peace to the world, for it dives into the depths of man. Yoga is, therefore, a means not only to personal salvation but also to social solidarity.

The mind is to be brought to its source. Unfortunately, we cannot know where the mind is unless it starts working, like the thief whose presence is known from his activities. The outer problems are manifestations of the inner fivefold complexity. Ignorance is the first cause. But it is a negative cause when one is merely ignorant or stupid. Man does not stop with this acceptance. He wants to demonstrate his ignorance, and here is the root of all trouble. Affirmation of egoism is the first demonstration. When one wants others to yield to the demands of one's ego which goes counter to the egos of others, there is clash of personalities and interests, and this circumstance breeds unhappiness in family, in society, and in the world. Yoga makes an analysis of this situation. *Avidya* affirming itself as *Ahamkara* and clashing with others produces

the context of *Himsa* or injury. As *Himsa* is an evil which begets social grief of different types, *Ahimsa* or non-injury is a virtue. *Ahimsa* is akin to the Christian ethics which teaches us to 'resist not evil.' If even a single ego would withdraw itself, the friction in society would be less in intensity to that extent. *Himsa* is born of *Asmita*, *Raga* and *Dvesha*, and hence *Ahimsa* is a moral canon. *Ahimsa*, or the practice of non-violence, is not merely a rule of action but also of thought and feeling. One should not even think harm of any kind. To contemplate evil is as bad as committing it in action. Contemplation is not only a preparation for activity but is the seed of the latter. 'May there be friendliness instead of enmity, love instead of hate,' is the motto of Yoga. By love we attract things and by hatred we repel them. Love attracts love, and hatred attracts hatred. This great rule of Yoga ethics extends from mere avoidance of doing harm to positive unselfish love of all, with an impartial vision, love without attachment (*Raga*) or hatred (*Dvesha*). *Ahimsa* has always been regarded as the king of virtues and every other canon of morality is judged with reference to this supreme norm of character and conduct.

The ego tries to work out its likes and dislikes by various methods, one of them being the uttering of falsehood in order to escape opposition from others. The insinuating of falsehood in society is regarded as a vice. *Satya* or truthfulness is another virtue. Truthfulness mitigates egoism to some extent. Dishonesty is an affirmation of the ego to succeed in its ways in the world for its own good, though it may mean another's harm. Truthfulness is correspondence to fact. Yoga stresses the importance of the practice of truth in human life. There are dilemmas in which we are placed when we find ourselves often in a difficult situation. Sometimes truthfulness may appear to lead one to trouble and one might be tempted to utter falsehood. Scriptures give many answers to our questions on the issue. Truth that harms is considered equal to untruth. We have to see the consequence of our conduct and behaviour before we can decide whether it is virtuous or not. But, then, are we to utter untruth? A most outstanding instance on the point is narrated in the Mahabharata. Arjuna and Karna were face to face in battle. Krishna mentioned to Arjuna that Yudhishtira was very grieved because of his combat with Karna on that day, on account of the severity of which he had to return to his camp, badly injured. Krishna and Arjuna went to Yudhishtira and greeted him. Yudhishtira was happy to see Arjuna particularly, because he thought that he had come after killing Karna in battle. He exclaimed his joy over the good event, but when Arjuna revealed that Karna was not yet killed and that they had only come to see him in the camp, Yudhishtira curtly told Arjuna that it would have been better if his *Gandiva* bow had been given over to someone else. Arjuna drew out his sword. Krishna caught hold of his hands and asked him what the matter was with him. Arjuna revealed his secret vow according to which he would put to death anyone who insulted his bow. Krishna expressed surprise at the foolishness of Arjuna and advised him that to speak unkind words to one's elders is equal to killing them and Arjuna would do well to abuse Yudhishtira in irreverent terms rather than kill him and incur a heinous sin. Accordingly, Arjuna used insulting words against Yudhishtira in a long chain. But Arjuna drew his sword again, and Krishna demanded its meaning. Arjuna said that he was going to kill himself because he had another vow that if he insulted an elder he would put an end to himself Krishna smiled at this behaviour of Arjuna and told him that to praise oneself is equal to killing oneself and so he might resort to this means rather than commit suicide. Arjuna, then, praised himself in a boastful language. One can well imagine the consequence of putting Yudhishtira to the sword for keeping Arjuna's promise. Morality is not a rigid formula of mathematics. No standard of it can be laid down for

all times, and for all situations. Even legal experts like Bhishma could not answer the quandary posed by Draupadi. If keeping a vow conforms to Satya, killing one's brother in such a predicament or committing suicide is contrary to Ahimsa. Scriptures hold that truthfulness should not invoke injury. Manu, in his Smriti, observes that one must speak truth, but speak sweetly, and one should not speak a truth which is unpleasant; nor should one speak untruth because it is sweet. The general rule has been, however, that truth which causes hurt or injury, to another's feelings is to be regarded as untruth, though it looks like truth in its outer form. Our actions and thoughts should have a relevance to the ultimate goal of life. Only then do they become truths. There should be a harmony between the means and the end. 'Has the conduct any connection, directly or indirectly, with the goal of the universe?' If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, the step taken may be considered as one conforming to truth.

*Brahmacharya*, or continence, the other great rule, is as difficult to understand as *Satya* or *Ahimsa*. In every case of moral judgment, common-sense and a comprehensive outlook are necessary. Many students of Yoga think that Brahmacharya is celibacy or the living of an unmarried life. Though this may be regarded as one definition of it, which has much meaning, Yoga morality calls for Brahmacharya of the purest type, which has a deeper significance. Yoga considers Brahmacharya from all points of view, and not merely in its sociological implication. It requires a purification of all the senses. Oversleeping and gluttony, for instance, are breaks in Brahmacharya. It breaks not merely by a married life, but by overindulgence of any kind, even in an unmarried life, such as overeating, talkativeness and, above all, brooding upon sense-objects. While one conserves energy from one side, it can leak out from another side. Oversleeping is a trick played by the mind when we refuse to give it satisfaction. Overeating and overtalking are, results of a bursting forth of untrained energy. Contemplation on objects of sense can continue even when they are physically far from oneself. Brahmacharya is to conserve force for the purpose of meditation. 'Do you feel strong by the conservation of energy,' is the question? Brahmacharya is tested by the strength that one recognizes within. The virtue is not for parading it outside, but for the utilization of the conserved power towards a higher purpose. Unnecessary activity of the senses wastes energy. The *Chandogya Upanishad* says that in purity of the intake of things there is purity of being. In the acts of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching, we have to contact only pure things. Any single sense left uncontrolled may nullify the effects of control over the other senses. As the Mahabharata points out, we become that with which we associate ourselves, which we serve for a long time and which we want or wish to become, by constant thinking. Brahmacharya is therefore an act of all-round self-control. The Brahmacharin is always cautious. And no one should have the hardihood to imagine that he is wholly pure and safe.

The practice of Brahmacharya as a vow of abstinence from all sense-indulgence, particularly in its psychological aspect, and a rigid fixity in personal purity, generates a unison in the vibratory functions of the body, nerves and mind, and the Brahmacharin achieves what he may look upon as a marvel even to himself. Brahmacharya is often regarded as the king of principles, which embodies in itself all other virtues or moral values. In its observance, care has, however, to be taken to see that it comprises not merely avoiding of sense-indulgence and mental reverie but also freedom from the complexes that may follow, as well as satisfactions which one may resort to as a consequence of frustration of desire.

The Yoga system mentions two more important canons viz., *Asteya* or non-appropriation of what does not lawfully belong to oneself, and *Aparigraha* or non-acceptance of what is not necessary for one's subsistence, which, in other words, would mean non-covetousness. These may be considered to be two great social restraints imposed on man, apart from their value in Yoga practice, and, when implemented, they become healthy substitutes for the irking regulations invented in the social and political fields of life. Nature resents any outer compulsion, and this explains the unhappiness of humanity in spite of its legal codes and courts of law. One cannot be made to do what one does not want to. Law has to be born in one's heart before it takes its seat in the judiciary or the government. The Yoga morality as *Asteya* and *Aparigraha* acts both as a personal cue for spiritual advancement and a social remedy for human greed and selfishness. The Yoga student is asked to be simple. Simple living and high thinking are his mottoes. He does not accumulate many things in his cottage or room. This is *Aparigraha* or non-acceptance. In advanced stages, a whole-timed *Sadhaka* (aspirant) is not supposed to keep things even for the morrow. One need not, of course, be told that one should not appropriate another's property. It is simple enough to understand, and this is *Asteya* or non-stealing. The student should not only not take superfluities but also not accept service from others. Some hold that to keep for oneself more than what is necessary is equal to theft. These are the fundamental virtues in the Yoga ethics. That conduct which is not in conformity with the universal cannot, in the end, be good.

Yoga is search for Truth in its ultimate reaches and above its relative utility. Adequate preparations have to be made for this adventure. We have to become honest before Truth, and not merely in the eyes of our friends. This openness before the Absolute is the meaning behind the observance of what Yoga calls *Yamas*, as a course of self-discipline which one imposes upon oneself for attaining that moral nature consistent with the demands of Truth. Yoga morality is deeper than social morality or even the religious morality of the masses. Our nature has to be in conformity with the form of Truth. As Truth is universal, those characters which are incongruous with this essential, should be abandoned by degrees. Any conduct which cannot be in harmony with the universal cannot ultimately be moral, at least in the sense Yoga requires it. Does the universal fight with others? No. Non-fighting and non-conflict, or *Ahimsa*, therefore, is a virtue. injury to another is against morality. Does the universal have passions towards anything? Will it steal another's property? Does it hide facts? No, is the answer.

So, sensuality, stealth, falsehood are all immoral. By applying the universal standard, we can ascertain what true morality is. Apply your conduct to the universal, and if it is so applicable, it is moral. That which the universal would reject is contrary to Truth. *Ahimsa*, *Satya*, *Brahmacharya*, *Asteya* and *Aparigraha* are the *Yamas* for freedom from cruelty, falsehood, sensuality, covetousness and greed of every kind.

*Lust* and *greed* are the greatest hindrances in the practice of Yoga. These propensities become *anger* when opposed. Hence this fivefold canon of Yoga may be regarded as the sum total of all moral teaching.

Self-control needs much vigilance. When one persists in the control of the senses, they can employ certain tactics and elude one's grasp. One may fast, observe *Mauna* (silence), run

## THE OBSERVANCES

away from things to seclusion. But the senses are impetuous. Any extreme step taken might cause reaction. Not to understand this aspect of the matter would be unwise. Reactions may be set up against prolonged abstinence from the normal enjoyments. Hunger and lust, particularly, take up arms in vengeance. It is not advisable to go to extremes in the subjugation of the senses, for, in fact they are not to be subjugated but sublimated. After years of a secluded life, people have been found in the same condition in which they were before, because of tactless means employed in their practices. It is not that one is always deliberate in the suppression of one's desires, but this may happen without one's knowing it. Caution in the pursuit of the 'golden mean' or the 'middle path' has to be exercised at all times. As the Bhagavadgita warns us, Yoga is neither for one who eats too much nor does not eat at all, neither for one who sleeps too much nor does not sleep at all, neither for one who is always active nor does not do any work at all. The senses should be brought under control, little by little, as in the taming of wild animals. Give them their needs a little, but not too much. The next day, give them a little less. One day, do not give them anything, and on another day give them a good treat. Finally, let them be restrained fully and harnessed for direct meditation on Reality.

One of the methods of the senses is revolution, jumping back to the same point after many years of silence. Another way they choose is to induce a state of stagnation of effort. One will be in a neutral condition without any progress whatsoever. There may even be a fall, as the ground is slippery. A third way by which one may be deceived is the raising of a situation wherein one would be trying to do something while actually doing something else in a state of misapprehension. The senses hoodwink the student, he is side-tracked and he may realize it when it is too late. A fourth tactic used is frontal attack by threat. The Buddha had all these experiences in his meditations. Temptation, opposition, stagnation and side-tracking are the four main dangers of which students are to be wary. The Upanishad uses the term *Apramatta*, 'non-heedless', to denote this state of perpetual caution. The student of Yoga watches every step, like a person walking on a thin wire. A tremendous balance is required to be maintained in the operation of one's thoughts. No action is to be taken unless it is weighed carefully. The direction of movement is to be well ascertained before starting on the arduous journey.

The Yamas are the moral restraints. If the moral nature of the student does not cooperate with his efforts, there cannot be progress in Yoga, because morality is an insignia of one's nature. If we remain contrary to what we are seeking, there will be no achievement. To be moral is to establish a concord between our own nature and the nature of that which we seek in life. Yoga is our interview with the Supreme Being, and here our nature corresponds to its highest reaches. Morality is not dull-wittedness or incapacity; it is vigilance and all-sidedness of approach. It is not sluggish movement but active advancement. The moral nature also implies subtle memory and buoyancy of spirit.

## THE OBSERVANCES

Apart from the Yamas, there is another set of prescriptions of Yoga to every student, and these are the *Niyamas*, personal observances or vows. We should not, as far as possible, allow ourselves to fall ill, physically or mentally, because illness is a hindrance to Yoga. *Saucha* or purity of conduct, internally and externally, is a Niyama. The lesson supposed to be imparted by

the images of the three monkeys, one of them closing the eyes, another the ears and the third the mouth, is to see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil. One should not even convey evil by way of news, because this is to become the vehicle of the movement of evil from place to place. One should not commit evil even by giving expression to it in speech, by seeing it or thinking it. All this is internal purity. But external purity is not unimportant. People there are who think that Yogis remain unclean in body. It is wrong to imagine that in advanced stages of Yoga one should not put on clothes or take bath. That in conditions of meditation where one rises above body-consciousness one may not pay attention to bath, etc. is a different picture altogether. It is a consequence of spiritual expansion. Merely not to bathe or to be nude in the initial stage itself would be to put the cart before the horse. Health is as important as the power of concentration, for ill-health is a disturbance to mental concentration. Saucha also implies non-contact with those objects which communicate impurity or exert an unhealthy influence. One should avoid undesirable company; keep good company, or else, have no company.

A Yoga student is always happy, and is never worried or vexed. Yoga prescribes *Santosa* or contentment in whatever condition one is placed. Many of our illnesses are due to discontent. Contentment follows as a result of the acceptance of the wisdom of God. If God is wise, there is nothing to worry about, because in His wisdom He keeps us in the best of circumstances. Many changes have taken place in our lives, and many more may take place in the future. We have to be prepared. God's omniscience permits of no complaint. Man should be contented with what he has, though he may be discontented with what he is. Honestly felt needs will be provided where contentment and intelligent effort go together.

To be satisfied with the minimum of necessities for a healthy living is *Tapas* or austerity. One should not ask for more. Austerity is that discipline by which one feels internally contented with the barest of facilities in life. The practice of the 'golden mean' in everything is *Tapas*. Etymologically, *Tapas* is what produces heat. It stirs energy or power within the Yogin. The practice of Brahmacharya and of the Yamas in general stimulates supernatural power. The Yamas themselves constitute an intense *Tapas*. In a broad sense, moderateness in life may be said to constitute *Tapas*. Sense-control is *Tapas*. To speak sweetly, and not hurtfully, is *Tapas*. To eat a little is *Tapas*. To sleep less is *Tapas*. Not to exhibit animal qualities is *Tapas*. To be humane is *Tapas*. To be good and to do good is *Tapas*. *Tapas* is mental, verbal or physical. Calmness of mind and subdued emotions form mental *Tapas*. Sweet but truthful speech is verbal *Tapas*. Unselfish service to others is physical *Tapas*.

*Svadyaya* or sacred study is the fourth Niyama. *Svadyaya* is principally a disciplined study of such texts as deal with the way of the salvation of the soul. This Niyama helps the student in maintaining a psychic contact with the masters who have given these holy writings. When one reads the Bhagavadgita, for example, not merely does one gather knowledge of a high order, but one also establishes an inner contact with Bhagavan Sri Krishna and Maharshi Vyasa. *Svadyaya* is continued persistence in study of a scripture of Yoga. Study is a kind of negative Satsanga, when the positive company of a sage is not available. *Svadyaya* is a help in meditation, because the student thinks here in terms of the thought of the scripture or of the author of the text. *Japa* of a Mantra is also included under *Svadyaya*. *Japa* and study are both means to holy association and divine communion. *Svadyaya*, however, means repeated study of



a selected set of books on the subject of the Higher Life, and does not connote random readings in a library.

The last of the Niyamas is *Ishvara-pranidhana* or surrender of oneself to God. Whatever the commander orders, the army follows. Each one in the army does not start commanding things independently. Seekers of Truth take *Ishvara* as the Supreme Commander, and once they decide to abide by his will, their lives become the pattern of righteousness. Surrender to God implies acceptance of the divine ordinance and an abolition of one's own initiative to the extent that the seeker does not think individually but resigns himself to those circumstances which take place around him, without interfering with their occurrence. In advanced stages, the devotee is accustomed to all circumstances, and does not desire a change in their set-up. He does nothing with the notion of personality, but bears what comes. He does not wish to alter conditions, but tolerates everything. He allows things to happen, and does not wish to modify existence. To him, God is all. This is the essence of self-surrender in Yoga. The Yoga discipline requires that a student should score at least the minimum marks in the test of the Yamas and Niyamas. Students often commit the error of neglecting these fundamental observances in Yoga and going to Asana and meditation directly. Many even begin to think that they are already established in the Yamas and Niyamas, while they have not mastered even one among them.

Meditation is the seventh stage in Yoga. It is like striking a match which produces the flame. The flame must be there if the striking is properly done, and the matchstick is dry. But the manufacture of the match is a long process, and it takes time, though the striking of it is a second's work. That the effort of meditation does not bring satisfaction in many cases should show that the preparation is not sufficient. Meditation is a flow of consciousness, not a jump, a pull or push of consciousness. A calm river flows on its inclined bed, without effort. So does meditation flow if the previous steps are well laid. The foundation is never seen when the building on it is seen. But we know how important the foundation is for the building. The invisible power which the Yamas and Niyamas exert is the foundation of Yoga, and no one should have the hardihood to think that one is fully established in them. Caution is watchword in Yoga.

The Yamas and Niyamas are the beginnings, which really last till the end of Yoga. Even as education in the primary school level is important, since it paves the way for one's further mental build, the Yamas and Niyamas are the rock-bottom of Yoga. The student enters the practical field of meditation after being built up by the tonic of Yamas and Niyamas, which provide the power and courage needed to face all obstacles. Meditation is not difficult to achieve if the necessary preparations are made earlier. The Yama-Niyama process constitutes the instructions in Yoga psychology, which should give us sufficient warning on the path and make us vigilant pilgrims on the journey spiritual. With this, we place ourselves on the first step in practical Yoga, viz., Asana.

## ASANA OR POSTURE

Asana is the third rung in the ladder of the practice of Yoga. If the Yamas and Niyamas are the foundation of Yoga, Asana may be regarded as its threshold. 'Asana', literally, means a

seat. Here 'seat' does not mean a cushion or some such thing that is spread on the ground. Asana is a pose of the body or the posture which it assumes at the commencement of the practice. It is called a 'seat', because it is a posture of sitting and not standing. While there exist many Asanas, such as the 'Sirsha', etc., there is only one set of postures which can be taken as aids in meditation. A sitting posture is Asana, because to stand and meditate may lead to a falling down of the body, and lying down may induce sleep. The sitting posture is therefore the most conducive to concentration of mind. That there are many other Asanas like Sirsha, Sarvanga, etc., need not deter us from a choice of the Asana for meditation. The *Hatha Yoga* prescribes several postures for different purposes. These Asanas of the *Hatha Yoga* are coupled with certain other practices, called *Bandhas*, *Mudras* and *Kriyas*, in addition to *Pranayama*. While Asana is a pose, Bandha is a lock of the limbs of the body intended to direct the Prana in a particular channel and centring it in a given location. Mudra is a symbol. It also means a seal or fixing up of the limbs. The two types of Mudras are those which seal up the Prana and which symbolise meaning by a gesture. Kriya is a process of purification, so that the body may be fit for Asana and the others. The purpose is to make the body healthy and free from inertia as much as possible. *Neti* or cleansing the nostrils, *Basti* or washing the colon, *Dhauti* or cleaning the stomach, *Nauli* or churning the abdomen, *Trataka* or gazing for training the eyes by concentration, and *Kapalabhati* or chastening the brain and the skull are the main Kriyas in Hatha Yoga. The physical body is characterised by dullness, torpidity, etc., which bring about sluggishness and sleep, in which condition meditation cannot supervene. The Bandhas etc. free the body from *Tamas*, make it flexible, easily adjustable and healthy. This is the general effect produced by Asanas, Bandhas and Mudras. All these are the preliminary exercises, and Hatha Yoga is a preparation for Raja Yoga. While there are many Asanas in Hatha Yoga, there are only a few in Raja Yoga, and finally we come to a single Asana. This final Asana is called *Dhyana-Asana* or the meditative pose.

How does Asana help one in meditation? The relation between the individual and the universal has to be brought to mind in this connection. There is an organic tie between the individual and its environment, and the purpose of Yoga is to rouse to consciousness this inherent harmony. This is to be brought about in successive stages. Whatever one is, and whatever one has, should be set in tune with the universal. This is Yoga, ultimately. When the personal individuality is attuned to universal being, it is the condition of Yoga. The individual begins with the body, but there are many things within the body, as there are in the physical cosmos. There are Prana, senses, mind, intellect, etc., encased in the body. All these things within have to be in gradual union with the universal. The mind cannot be so attuned when the body is in revolt. Yoga requires union of everything in the personality with the universal. Asana is the initial step in Yoga, whereby the bodily structure is set in unison with the cosmos. When an individual thinks in terms of the ego, which is self-affirmation, with a selfish attitude towards the things of the world, there is internal disharmony. The more is one unselfish, the more also is one concordant with reality, and the more is the selfishness, the more also is the discordant note struck in one's life. Yoga is a systematized process of establishing permanent friendship with Nature in all its levels, -friendship in the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and spiritual levels. It is all love and friendship, and no enmity anywhere. This is Yoga. The Yoga system is an exact science which takes into consideration every aspect of life, in a slow process of unfoldment. The lowest manifestation is the physical or the bodily personality.

The Asana should be firm and easy. It should be steady and not cause discomfort of any kind. It should not make the student conscious of the body through tightness, tension, etc. It should be a normal posture in which he can sit for a long time. The Yoga prescribes certain minimum requirements in Asana, though a long rope is given when it is merely said that it is the firm and comfortable. Within the limits of the rule, one may have freedom in Asana. What are the limits? The extremities of the body should be locked, and the head, neck and spine should be in a straight line. These extremities are the fingers and the toes. If they are left exposed, the electric current generated in meditation may leak into space. Also, one should not sit on the bare ground, because the earth is a conductor of electricity and the energy may thereby leak again. A non-conductor of electricity is prescribed as good material to spread on the ground. In olden days a dry grass mat was used, called the *Kusa Asana* over which a deer-skin, and a cloth, both non-conductors of electricity, were spread. The *Gita* prescribes that the seat should not be too high or too low. The student may fall down if the seat is very high, and if it is too low, there is the likelihood of insects and reptiles creeping into the seat. The spine, too, should be kept straight. It should be at right angles to the base. One should not be leaning against any support or be bending forward. The reason is that if the spine is straight the nerves get relaxed and no part of the body exerts influence on another part. The flow of the Prana through the nerves is smoothened. If the body is twisted, the Prana has to make effort to flow through the limbs. There is a free movement of energy in the body when the whole system is in a state of relaxation.

Apart from the spine being straight, and the extremities being locked, the legs are to be bent in three or four ways. There are *Padma-Asana*, *Siddha-Asana*, *Svastika-Asana* and *Sukha-Asana*. One can choose any of these postures for meditation. The purpose of a fixed Asana is to enable the mind to slowly forget that there is a body at all. The body will attract attention, somehow. But the mind cannot, in meditation, afford to remain conscious of the body. The student gradually loses sensation of the limbs. He forgets that he is seated, that he has a body or the limbs. The first sign of successful practice in Asana is a sense of levitation. The body is felt to be so light that it may appear to be ready for a rise. This sensation comes when there is a thorough fixity of posture. This is the test. One will begin to feel a creeping sensation as if ants are crawling over the body. That should show the student's readiness for a rise above body-consciousness. Together with these sensations, he will also realize a kind of satisfaction, a happiness, a delight that comes due to lightness of the body in Asana. If one sits thus for two to three hours, one may not have any feeling even if someone touches the body. The Prana is so harmonious that it does not create sensation in the body. It is disharmony that creates sensations of things. When the highest harmony is reached, there will be no external sensation. With extremities locked; with fingers kept one over the other, or locked; with spine straight; head, neck and spine in one line, and at right angles to the base of the body; the Asana is perfect.

The Asana should be effortless. There should be no effort not only in the body but also in the mind. Absolute ease of relaxation is the sign of perfected Asana. The student should be in a most natural condition in which he is not conscious even of his breathing. If there is pain, jerk, or a pinching sensation, it should mean that the Asana is not properly fixed. There is a prescription given by *Patanjali* to quicken fixity of posture. And that is 'attention on the infinite'. Steadiness is nowhere to be found in the world. There is only oscillation and fleeting

of things everywhere. Fixity is unknown, as it is all motion in the world. There is only one thing that is fixed, viz., the infinite. All finites move and change. If the student can concentrate his mind on the infinite, he would imbibe certain qualities from it, the first being fixity.

Here concentration is to think nothing in particular but all things at once. Though no one can think of the infinite as it is, one can think everything in the sense of inclusion of everything that comes to the mind. This is the psychological infinite. The imagined infinite created in the mind helps the student in fixing himself in an Asana and in stabilizing his emotions. Contemplation on the infinite is thus a means to perfection in Asana.

When this bodily control is achieved, there comes freedom from the onslaught of what are called the 'pairs of opposites', such as heat and cold, hunger and thirst, joy and grief, and so on. Anything that creates a tension in one's system is a pair of opposites. These are overcome by a perfected practice of Asana. The pairs of opposites become active in our system when the Prana becomes restless. The restlessness of the Prana causes hunger and thirst. When the Prana is poised, there is a lessening of the feeling of the pairs of opposites. The Prana is calmed not only by the practice of Pranayama but also by Asana. When the body remains in a state of balance, the Prana too tends to be harmonious, even as the mind becomes tranquil when the sensations are harmonized. Distracted sensations disharmonize the thoughts. What the senses are to the mind, the body is to the Prana. As harmonized sensations create a harmonious set of thoughts, the harmonized body ushers harmony of the Prana. There is always a connection between the outer and the inner.

Also, we are asked to face the East or the North in meditation, because of certain magnetic currents produced from these directions, due to sunrise and to the effect of the pole of the North. The place selected, too, should be free from distracting noise, from gnats and mosquitoes, etc., and from the chirping of birds, and the like. A temperate climate is desirable (which means to say that one cannot engage oneself in the practice when it is too hot or too cold, because of chances of increase in body-consciousness thereby). When the student is seated in Asana, with a harmonious flow of the Prana through the nerve-channels, he has already entered the gates of meditation. Asana has a spiritual import. One knocks at the door of the palace of the immortal, here. While in Yama and Niyama one is in preparation, in Asana the gates of Reality are reached, though they are yet to be opened. The soul is there ready to meet the Sovereign of the universe. This is the first step in actual Yoga.

The Yoga prescribes at least three hours of daily practice in a steady posture, when one is supposed to have mastered Asana (*Asana-Jaya*). The body is the vehicle of the nerves, the nerves are the channels of the Prana, the Prana is an expression of the mind, and the mind it is which practices meditation, in the end. There is this long linkage, and so the moment a harmonious posture is assumed, the mind receives an intimation thereof. The body is at once calmed down in its metabolic process, and hunger and thirst are lessened. The forces of hunger and thirst are symptoms of an agitation of the Prana, and when the Prana is set in harmony, the agitation should come to a minimum. Hence, the student's hunger and thirst are reduced to the least. The cells of the body find more time to construct themselves rather than deplete energy and make progress through mellowed emotion. Even emotions can be subdued by Asana, for

here one inhales and exhales calmly, and so the cellular activity of the body comes down, the nerve-channels are opened up for a rhythmic flow of the Prana, and a rhythm sets in everywhere. Yoga is rhythm. Asana is therefore the beginning of Yoga, wherein one starts relating oneself to the cosmic order.

## PRANAYAMA OR REGULATION OF THE VITAL ENERGY

Simultaneously with the practice of Asanas, there should be effort towards the regulation of the *Prana*. So, *Asana* and *Pranayama* go together. There is an intimate relation between the activity of the physical body and that of the Prana. The Prana is the total energy which pervades the entire physical system and acts as a medium between the body and mind. The Prana is subtler than the body but grosser than the mind. The Prana can act but cannot think. The Prana is not merely the breath. The breathing process, -inhalation, exhalation and retention - does not constitute the Prana by itself, but is an indication that the Prana is working. We cannot see the Prana; it is not any physical object. But we can infer its existence by the processes of respiration. Air is taken in and thrown out by a particular action of the Prana. Some hold that there are many Pranas and others think it is one. The Prana is really a single energy, but appears to be diverse when viewed from the standpoints of its different functions. When we breathe out, the *Prana* operates in one of its functional forms. When we breathe in, the *Apana* functions. The ingoing breath is the effect of the activity of the *Apana*. The centre of the Prana is in the heart, that of the *Apana* in the anus.

There is a third kind of function called *Samana*, the equalising force. Its centre is the navel. It digests food by creating fire in the body and it also equalises the remaining functions in the system. The fourth function of the Prana is called *Udana*. Its seat is in the throat. It prompts speech and, on death, separates the system of the Prana from the body. The fifth function is called *Vyana*, a force which pervades the whole body and maintains the continuity of the circulation of blood throughout the system.

This fivefold function of the Prana is its principal form. It has also many other functions such as belching, opening and closing of the eyelids, causing hunger, yawning and nourishing the body. When it does these five secondary functions, it goes by the names of *Naga*, *Kurma*, *Krikara*, *Devadatta* and *Dhananjaya*, respectively. The essence of the Prana is activity. It is the Prana that makes the heart beat, the lungs function and the stomach secrete juices. Hence, neither breathing nor lung-function ceases till death. The Prana never goes to sleep, just as the heart never stops beating. The Prana is regarded as the watchman of the body.

The Prana is characterized by the property of *Rajas* or restlessness. One cannot make it keep quiet even with effort. The body which is of the nature of *Tamas* is made to move by the *Rajas* of the Prana. The Prana incites the senses to activity. Because of its Rajasic nature, it does not allow either the body or the mind to remain in peace. Such a distractedness is definitely not desirable, and Yoga requires stability and fixity in *Sattva*. So, something has to be done with the Prana; else, it would become a hindrance to internal tranquillity. The Yoga system has evolved a technique by which the Prana is made to assist in the practice of Yoga, and this is called *Pranayama*. As is the case with Asanas, the methods of Pranayama in Hatha Yoga are manifold.

But the Yoga of meditation does not require one to practice many forms of Pranayama. Just as there is one Dhyana-Asana, there is one method of Pranayama, by which to purify the *Nadis* or nerve-channels and to regulate the Prana in Yoga. The Prana has to be purged of all dross in the form of *Rajas* as well as *Tamas*.

The Prana runs in various channels of the bodily system. It is intensely busy. Its agitated functions disturb the mind and do not allow it to get concentrated on anything. The *Rajas* of the Prana also stimulates the senses, and indirectly desire. Any attempt to stop its activity would be tantamount to killing the body. One has to employ a careful means of lessening its activity, of making it move slowly rather than with heaves and jerks. When we run a long distance, climb steps, or get angry, the Prana loses its harmony and remains in a stimulated condition. It gets into a state of tension and makes the person restless. So the student of Yoga should not engage himself in excessive physical activity causing fatigue. Steady should be the posture of sitting, free from emotions of mind, and slow should be the practice of Pranayama. The breathing should be mild, so that it does not produce any sound. One should not sit for Pranayama in an unhappy condition of mind, because a grieved mind creates unrhythmic breathing. No Pranayama should be practiced when one is hungry or tired or is in a state of emotional disturbance. When everything is calm, then one may start the Pranayama. Be seated in the pose of *Dhyanasana*.

In the beginning stages of Pranayama, there should be no retention of the breath, but only deep inhalation and exhalation. The Prana has first to be brought to accept the conditions that are going to be imposed on it, and hence any attempt to practice retention should be avoided. In place of the quick breathing that we do daily, a slow breathing should be substituted, and instead of the usually shallow breathing, deep breathing should be practiced, gradually. Vexed minds breathe with an unsymmetrical flow. Submerged worries are likely to disturb Pranayama. One may be doing one's functions like office-going, daily, and yet be calm in mind. But another may do nothing and be highly nervous, worried and sunk in sorrow. One should be careful to see that the mind is amenable to the practice.

In breathing for health, the chest should be forward during inhalation. We feel a joy when we take a long breath with the chest expanded to the full. Deep intakes of fresh air daily are essential for the maintenance of sound health. An open air life for not less than two hours a day should be compulsory. Pranayama is a method not only of harmonizing the breath but also the senses and the mind. Be seated in a well-ventilated room and take in a deep breath. Then, exhale slowly. This practice should continue for sometime, say, a month. Afterwards, the regular Pranayama with proportion in respiration may be commenced. The technical kind of breathing which, in Yoga, generally goes by the name of Pranayama is done in two stages:

Exhale with a slow and deep breath. Close the right nostril with the right thumb. Inhale slowly through the left nostril. Close the left nostril with the right ring finger and removing the right thumb from the right nostril, exhale very slowly through the right nostril. Then, reverse the process commencing with inhalation through the right nostril. This is the intermediary stage of Pranayama without retention of breath and with only alternate inhalation and exhalation. This practice may be continued for another one month. In the third month, the perfected Pranayama

may be started: Inhale, as before, through the left nostril; retain the breath until you repeat your *Ishta Mantra* once; and then exhale slowly. The proportion of inhalation, retention and exhalation is supposed to be 1:4:2. If you take one second to inhale, you take 4 seconds to retain, and two seconds to exhale. Generally, the counting of this proportion is done by what is called a *Matra*, which is, roughly, about 3 seconds, or the time taken to chant OM thrice, neither very quickly nor very slowly. You inhale for one Matra, retain for four Matras, and exhale for two Matras. There should be no haste in increasing the time of retention. Whether you are comfortable during retention or not is the test for the duration of retention. There should be no feeling of suffocation in retention. The rule applicable to Asana is valid to Pranayama, also. *Sthira* and *Sukha*, easy and comfortable, without strain or pain of any kind, are both Asana and Pranayama to be in a practice which is a slow and gradual progression of the process.

The length of time of Pranayama depends on individual condition of the body, the type of Sadhana one does and the kind of life one leads. All these are important factors which have to be taken into consideration. The normal variety of Pranayama in Yoga is the one described above, and it is termed 'Sukhapuraka' (easy of practice). The other types of Pranayama such as the Bhastrika, Sitali, etc., are only auxiliaries and not essential to the Yoga of meditation. There are many details discussed in Hatha Yoga concerning Pranayama. One of them, for instance, is that in retention a threefold lock (*Bandhatraya*) consisting of *Mulabandha*, *Uddiyanabandha* and *Jalandharabandha* is preferable. But these are all not directly related to the aim of Yoga. Pranayama is not the goal of Yoga but only a means to it. Ultimately, it is the mind which has to be subdued and Pranayama, etc. are the preparations. When one has to meet a great authority, many hurdles have to be overcome, and many lesser levels have to be satisfied with one's credentials. Likewise, we have these guardians of the bodily system, the Pranas, and they cannot be bypassed easily. They have to be given their dues. We have to do something with the body and the Pranas, befitting their status and function. We have our social problems and there are also personal problems. Social situations have to be tackled by the practice of the *Yamas*, and the system has to be calmed by the *Niyamas*. The Prana is a purely personal affair and its regulation is a precondition to higher discipline. A higher step is not to be attempted unless the lower need is attended to properly. There are no jumps but there is always a gradual progress through every one of the steps, though a step may be comparatively insignificant. By the practice of Pranayama, in this manner, is prepared the ground for a rhythm of the body, mind, nerves and senses. The Prana actually rings the bell to wake up everything in the system. The powers get roused when the Prana is activated.

The different Yoga scriptures detail the methods of Pranayama in lesser or greater emphasis. The *Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika*, the most important text in Hatha Yoga, stresses Pranayama more than the practice of Asana. What we are physically depends much on how our Pranas work. Healthy Pranas ensure a healthy body. We are not supposed to take in anything which will irritate the nervous system. The Yoga prohibits all extremes in practice. The Pranas are to be kept even throughout the year, in all weather conditions and mental states. The texts also enjoin great caution upon the Yoga practitioners.

There was a Sannyasin who read books on Pranayama, and thought it was all very good. In spite of instructions to the contrary by elders, the Swami went on practicing Pranayama,

concentrating his mind on the point between the two eye-brows, which should not be resorted to in the beginning stages without an expert guide by one's side. Once, he was at his practice inside his room for three days, and was found missing by others around him. After a search, it was found that his room was bolted from within and he was inside. No shouting by people could wake him and the door had then to be broken open.' Even shaking of his body by others could not bring him to consciousness; probably his Pranas were locked up in a centre and could not move up or down. His *Guru* came and keeping his palm on the forehead of the student, he uttered OM, thrice. The practitioner came to his consciousness. People thought he had attained *Samadhi*, but, to everyone's surprise, he was the same old person, with all his negative qualities, and exhibited no signs of one who had tasted *Samadhi*. Later, on his death, his body got so decomposed and melted that it could not be lifted and had to be swept. The student had no spiritual illumination, but only got into a knot through wrong *Pranayama* and spoiled his health in the end. Hence the insistent warning given in all scriptures of Yoga. The *Prana* should not be forced to get concentrated in any part of the body. One should not concentrate on any spot of the body above the neck, especially in the initial stages. Concentration on parts in the head directs the *Prana* to that centre, the blood supply gets speeded up to the area and it is then that generally people complain of headache, shooting pains, and the like. No meditative technique should be wholeheartedly resorted to without proper initiation. Also, one should not be under the impression that one can heal others by passing the *Prana* over their bodies. Beginners should not try these methods. One may pray to God for the health or prosperity of any person to whom one wishes good-will, but one should not place one's palm or pass the *Prana* over another in the earlier stages of practice; else one would be a loser. What little one has gained through *Sadhana* might get depleted by such interferences. Out of enthusiasm, one is likely to exhaust one's *Tapas* in these ways. In advanced stages, where one is full with power, there is, of course, no such danger, for one cannot exhaust the ocean by taking any amount of water from it; only if the reservoir is a small well, there is fear of its being emptied. This is the reason why many seekers do not allow people to prostrate themselves before them and touch their feet. This rule does not apply to advanced souls, but *Sadhakas* should definitely be careful. The gravitational pull of the earth draws the *Prana* down and it tends to pass through the extremities of the body. *Brahmacharins* and, sometimes, also *Sannyasins* are often seen putting on wooden sandals, which are non-conductors of electricity, as a protection against this natural occurrence. If someone touches the feet of a student, the *Prana* which he has conserved may pass on to the other, by means of the contact. The *Prana* can be drained off by misdirection and overstrain. Let the *Pranayama* continue slowly, and let no one be quick in the practice.

The *Pranayama* is not to be done after one's meal. It is better done before food, on empty stomach. No sound should be produced during inhalation and exhalation. In sitting, facing the East or the North is beneficial. There are certain signs which indicate one's success in *Pranayama*. These signs, no doubt, cannot be seen in persons who practice the technique for a short while alone. A lustre in the body, new energy, unusual strength which cannot be easily diminished by fatigue, and absence of heaviness in the body, are some of the indications of progress in *Pranayama*.



## PRATYAHARA OR ABSTRACTION

We are still in the outer court of Yoga. *Asana* and *Pranayama* form the exterior of Yoga proper. The internal limbs are further onwards, which form its inner court. Pratyahara or the withdrawal of the sense-powers is where this inner circle begins. As *Asana* is a help in *Pranayama*, so is *Pranayama* a help in Pratyahara. *Asana* is steady physical posture; *Pranayama* is the harmony or regularization of the energy within by proper manipulation of the breath. Pratyahara is the withdrawal of the powers of the senses from their respective objects. Pratyahara means 'abstraction' or 'bringing back'. As the rider on a horse would control its movements by operating the reins which he holds in his hands, the Yogi controls the senses by the practice of Pratyahara. To gain an understanding of the reason behind Pratyahara, we have to go back to our first lesson in Yoga. Why should we restrain the senses at all, would be the question. Yoga is the technique of the realization of the universal. The individual is to be attuned to the cosmic, and this is the aim of Yoga in essence. The senses act as obstructions in this effort. While the individual tries to unite itself with the universal, the senses try to separate it therefrom by diversification of interest. The main activity of the senses is to provide a proof that there is a world outside, while the Yoga analysis affirms that there is really nothing outside the universal. When we try to think as the universal would think the senses prevent us from thinking that way and make us feel and act in terms of manifoldness and variety. This is where most people find a difficulty in meditation. The senses do not keep quiet when there is an attempt at meditation. They rather distract the powers in the system within and retard focussing of consciousness. The senses release the energy along different channels of activity, the main courses being the functions of seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting. As long as we see the particular, we cannot believe in the universal. No one would believe in the existence of universality, because no one has seen it. The senses seem to be bent on creating a difference between the seer and the seen. The fact, however, is that there is no difference between the individual and the universal. The apparent difference has been created by the senses. One is hypnotized by them into an erroneous recognition. While one is omnipotent, they hypnotize one into the feeling of being impotent and one is made to undergo the pains of individuality. A millionaire can undergo the pains of penury in a dream. After a sumptuous meal, one may feel hungry in the dream-world. We have experience in dream of an expansive space, while we are confined within the four walls of a room. While we are in our own locality, we dream that we have flown to a distant land. A circumstance psychologically created becomes the cause of the difference in experience. Place, time and circumstances can be changed when the mind enters a different realm of consciousness. The senses in the dreaming state produce the illusion of an external world which is not there 'outside'. This means that we can see things even if they are not. It is not necessary that there should be a real world outside for us to see it. Dream makes the one individual appear as many. So two truths come to relief here: the one can become the many; and we can see a world which is not there.

This is exactly what is happening to us even in the waking state-the same law, the same rule of perception, the same experiential structure. That we see a world does not mean that it should really exist, though it has the reality of 'being perceived'. Only when we wake up from dream we learn what happened to us in dream, and not when we are in dream. Just as the senses of the dream-condition entangle us in an experience of the dream-world, the senses of the waking

state do the same thing to us. When the dream-senses are withdrawn, we awake from dream; when the waking senses are withdrawn, we enter the universal reality. This is the reason why Pratyahara is to be achieved in Yoga, which is the way to the realization of universality. If we do not restrain the senses, we would be in the dream of the world. When we bring the senses back to their source, the bubble of individuality bursts into the ocean of the Absolute. We do not partake of the nature of the world even as we are not anything that we see in dream. Pratyahara is essential to wake up man from the long dream of world-perception. These are subtle truths to be meditated upon, which are purifying even to listen. Even if one hears these truths, one's sins will be destroyed. This is the necessity for the practice of sense-control. As long as the senses cling to their objects, we are in a world. Yoga rises above mere world-perception to universal consciousness. There are many methods of Pratyahara. The texts hold these means as great secrets. No one should seek to do meditation without purity of heart. One is not to enter the path unless the preconditions are fulfilled. One should not merely force the mind into meditation without purified feelings. Desires frustrated are great dangers. To approach Yoga with lurking desires would be like touching a bursting dynamite. Let the heart be free, for it is the heart that has to meditate and not merely the brain. Thought can achieve nothing when the heart is elsewhere and the feelings are directed to a different goal.

Pratyahara may be said to constitute the frontiers of Yoga. When one practices Pratyahara one is almost on the borderland of the Infinite, and here one has superphysical sensations. Here it is that the need for a Guru is mostly felt. Here again does one experience tremor of body, flitting of mind, sleepiness and overactivity of the senses. When we attempt Pratyahara, the senses become more acute. More hunger, more passion, more susceptibility to irritation, oversensitiveness, are some of the early consequences of this practice in Yoga. To illustrate this condition we may give an example: if we touch our body with a stick or even an iron rod, we do not feel it. But our eyes cannot bear the touch of even a silken fibre, because of the subtlety of the structure of the eyeballs. So subtle does the mind become that it remains susceptible to the slightest provocation, impact or exposure. In the stage of Pratyahara we remain in a condition where we directly come into grips with the senses, as the police would come into a face-to-face confrontation with dacoits who were hiding themselves in ambush before and now fight with the police not even minding death. In a fight to death the strength of the fighting powers increases and gets redoubled at a pitch. If a snake, about to die in a struggle, bites a person, there is said to be no remedy, because its venom then becomes intensified in rage. The flame shoots up before passing out. Even so the senses, when they are grappled in Pratyahara, become overactive, sensitive and tremendously powerful. Here the unwary student may have a fall. What is one to do when the senses become thus active and fierce? One cannot bear the sight of sense-objects in this condition and here it is that one should not be in the vicinity of these objects. While one lives a normal social life, nothing might appear specially tempting. But now, at the Pratyahara stage, one becomes so sensitive that the senses may yield any moment. It is like walking on a razor's edge, sharp and cutting, fine and difficult to perceive. A little carelessness here might mean dangerous consequences. Subtle is the path of Yoga, invisible to the eyes and hard to tread. The Yamas and Niyamas practiced earlier will be a help in this state. The great discipline one has undergone in the Yamas and Niyamas will guard one against the onslaught of the senses. Because of the student's honesty, God will help him out of

the situation. This is the Mahabharata-war of practice, where one has to fight the sense-powers inclining to objects and enjoyments.

Pratyahara should also go side by side with *Vichara* or a careful investigation of every psychological condition in the process. The senses easily mistake one thing for another. *Samsara* or world-existence is nothing but a medley of misjudgment of values. The senses cannot see Truth. Not only this; they see untruth. They mistake, says Patanjali, the non-eternal for the eternal, the impure for the pure, pain for pleasure and the non-Self for the Self. This is the fourfold blunder committed by the mind and the senses. There is nothing permanent in this world. Everything is passing, a truth that we all know very well. Everyone knows that the next moment is uncertain and yet we can see how much faith people repose in the future and what preparations they make even for fifty years ahead. There can be nothing stable in the world because of the impermanence of the whole cosmos caught up in the process of evolution. Yet man takes things as permanent entities. The senses cannot exactly see what is happening in front of them. They are like blindfolded persons who do not know what is kept before them. It was the Buddha who made it his central doctrine of proclamation that everything is transient, and yet, to the senses, everything seems to be permanent, which means that they cannot see reality. There is not the same water in a flowing river at any given spot. There is no continuous existence of a burning flame of fire. It is all motion of parts, jump of particles. Every cell of the body changes. Every atom of matter vibrates. Everything tends to something else. There is change alone everywhere. But to the senses there is no change anywhere and all things are solid. Wedded to this theory of the senses, man is not prepared to accept even his own impending death. So much is the credit for the wisdom of the senses.

The senses also take the impure for the pure. We think that this body of ours is beautiful and dear and other bodies connected with it are also dear. We hug things as beautiful formations not knowing that there is an essential impurity underlying their apparent beauty. To maintain the so-called beauty and purity of the body we engage ourselves daily in many routines like bathing, applying soap, cosmetics, etc., and when these are not done, we would see what the body is, really. The true nature of the body gets revealed if one does not attend to it for some days. This is the case with everything else, also, in the world. All things manifest their natures when no attention is paid to them. When the body is sick and starved it shows its true form. In old age, its real nature is visible. Such is the beauty of the body-borrowed, artificial, deceptive. Why do we not see the same beauty in the body affected with a deadly disease, or when it is dead? Where does our affection for the loved body go then? There is a confusion in the mind which sees things where they are not, and constructs values out of its imagination. There is an underlying ugliness which puts on the contour of beauty by exploiting it from some other source, and passes for a beautiful substance, just as a mirror shines by borrowing lustre from a light-it is light that shines and not the mirror, though we usually say that the mirror shines. We mistake one thing for another thing. The beauty does not belong to the body. It really belongs to something else which the senses and mind cannot visualize or understand. The Yoga scriptures thus describe how this body is impure. From where has the body come? Go to its origin and you will realize how pure that place is. What happens to it when it is unattended to, when it is seriously ill, and when it is robbed of its Pranas? Where is the beauty in the body from which the Pranas have departed?

Why do we not see beauty in a corpse? What was it that attracted us in the living body? The reports of the senses cannot be trusted.

We also mistake pain for pleasure. When we are suffering, we are made to think that we are enjoying pleasures. In psychoanalytic terms, this is comparable to a condition of masochism, wherein one enjoys suffering. One is so much in sorrow that the sorrowful condition itself appears as a satisfaction. Man never has known what is true bliss, what happiness is, what joy is. He is born in sorrow, lives in sorrow and dies in sorrow. This grievous state he mistakes for a natural condition. “On account of the consequence that follows satisfaction of a desire, the anxiety attending upon the wish to perpetuate it, the impressions produced by enjoyment, and the perpetual flux of the *Gunās* of Prakriti, everything is painful”, say Patanjali. It is only the discriminative mind that discovers the defects inherent in the structure of the world.

The consequence of enjoyment is the generation of further desire to repeat the enjoyment. Desire is a conflagration of fire which, when fed, wants more and more of fuel. The desire expands itself. ‘Never is desire extinguished by the fulfilment of it’, is a great truth reiterated in the Yoga texts. The effect of the satisfaction of a desire is not pleasure, though one is made to think so; the effect is further desire. One cannot say how long one would continue enjoying; for it has no end. Man does not want to die, because to die to this world is equivalent to losing the centres of pleasure. The mind receives a shock when it hears news of death that is near. Desire is the cause of the fear of death. The consequence of the satisfaction of a desire should therefore teach a lesson to everyone.

Also, when we are possessed of the object of desire, we are not really happy at core. There is a worry to preserve it. One does not sleep well when there is plenty of satisfying things. Wealthy men are not happy. Their relatives may rob them of the wealth, dacoits may snatch it away, and the government may appropriate it. Just because we have our object of desire, it does not mean that we can be happy. One was unhappy when one did not have the object, and there is now again unhappiness because of its possession.

There is another cause of dissatisfaction. Unwittingly we create psychic impressions subtly in our subconscious mind through the satisfaction of a desire. Just as when one speaks or sings before a microphone, grooves are formed on the plate of a gramophone, and the sound can be relayed any number of times; so also when one has the experience of the enjoyment of an object, impressions are formed in the subconscious level and they can be relayed any number of times even if one might have forgotten them, though many births might have been passed through and even when one does not want them any more. The impressions created by an act of enjoyment are for one’s sorrow in the future.

There is a fourth reason: the rotation of the wheel of the *Gunās* of Prakriti. Prakriti is the name that we give to the matrix of all substance, constituted of the properties called *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Sattva* is transparency, purity and balance of force. *Rajas* is distraction, division and bifurcation of one thing from another. *Tamas* is inertia, neither light nor activity. These are the three modes of Prakriti and our experiences are nothing but our union with these modes. We are dull when *Tamas* operates in us, we are grieved when *Rajas* functions, and we are happy when

Sattva preponderates. We can be happy only when Sattva is ascendant, not otherwise. And we cannot always be happy, because Sattva will not rise at all times. The wheel of Prakriti revolves and is never at rest. Sattva occasionally comes up and then goes down. When it comes up we feel happy and when it goes down we are unhappy. In a moving wheel, no spoke can be fixed or be in the same position always. Happiness in this world, thus, is impermanent; it comes and goes. All this world, constituted physically and psychologically in this manner, is a source of pain to the discriminative mind. Even the transient joy of the world is found only to be the result of a release of biological tension, a titillation of nerves and a delusion of the uninformed mind.

We also mistake the not-Self for the Self, a very serious error we all commit daily. When we love anything, we transfer the Self to the not-Self and infuse the not-Self with the characters of the Self. The Self is that which knows, sees and experiences. It is the consciousness in us. That which is seen or experienced and that which we regard as an object, is the not-Self. The object is not-Self because it has no consciousness. That a being like man has consciousness is no argument against his being an object, for what is seen is the human form and not consciousness. The 'objectivity' in things is what makes them objects. It is not the objects that know the world; it is unbroken consciousness which knows it. It is not the world that feels a world, but the knowing subject. The consciousness becomes aware of the presence of an object by a mysterious activity that takes place psychologically. How does one become aware of a mountain, for example? It is a little difficult to understand this simple phenomenon, though it is one that occurs almost daily. The mountain which is in front does not enter the perceiver's eyes or mind. It is far and yet the mind seems to be aware of its existence. It is not that the eyes come in contact with the object; the object does not touch the subject physically. How, then, does it know the object? One may say that the light rays that emanate from the object impinge on the retina of the eyes of the subject and the latter knows, then, the object. But neither has the object any consciousness nor do the light rays have it, and an inert activity cannot produce a conscious effect. How is, then, an object known? The secret of the relation between the subject and the object seems to be hidden beneath its outer form. It is the senses that tell us of our having had the knowledge of an object by means of light rays. The eyes alone cannot see, and the light rays alone cannot reveal the object. The light rays may be there, and the object may be there, but if the mind is elsewhere, one cannot see it. Other than the instrumental factors, something seems to be necessary in perception. The mind plays an important role here. Now, is the mind a substance, an object? Or is it intelligent? The minimum that could be expected in perception is intelligence. We may suppose that the mind is intelligent, as we may say that a mirror shines. Even as the mirror is not what really shines, the mind is not intelligence. As it is the light that shines and not the mirror, it is some transcendent consciousness which illumines even the mind. It is not easy to understand the nature of this consciousness as it is itself the understander. Who can explain that which is behind all explanation? It is the knowledge behind all understanding. Who is to understand understanding? It is the mysterious reality which is in us, by which we know everything, but which cannot be known by anyone else. This intelligence, or consciousness, acts on the mind even as light on a mirror. The mind reflects itself on the object even as a wall can be illumined by the reflection in the mirror. The object is located by the activity of the mind and the intelligence in it perceives the object. Intelligence does not directly act; it is focused through the medium of the mind. A ray of intelligence passes through the lens

of the mind and confronts the object. Intelligence beholds the object through the instrumentality of the mind.

How does intelligence come in contact with unconscious matter, which we know as the object? How can consciousness know an object unless there is a kinship between them? Granting that there has to be such a kinship, it cannot be said to be a material relation, as certain philosophies of materialism may hold, for matter has no understanding. It has no eyes, and no intelligence. Who, then, sees matter? Matter cannot see matter, as it is blind. Intelligence, without which everything becomes bereft of meaning, is different from matter. It is intelligence that knows even the existence of matter. How does it come in contact with matter unless the latter has a nature akin to it? Materiality cannot be the link between the two, for matter cannot be linked with consciousness. Unless consciousness is hidden in matter, consciousness cannot know matter. Matter, in the end, should be essentially conscious, if perception is to have any acceptable significance. There should be Self even in not-Self, consciousness should be universal, if perception is to be possible. But the senses cannot see the universal consciousness. They only see objectiveness, externality, localized thinghood. They falsely project a phantom of 'outsideness' and create an 'object' out of the universal reality. The object is artificially linked with the subject. When the senses visualize an object outside, which appears as a material something, there is a transference of values taking place between the subject and the object. The Self within, which is universal consciousness, affirms its kinship with the object, but, as it does this through the mind, there is love for the object. All love is the affinity which the universal feels with itself in creation. This universal love gets distorted when it is transmitted to objects through the senses. Instead of loving all things equally, we love only certain things, to the exclusion of others. This is the mistake of the mind, the error in affection when conveyed through the senses, without a knowledge of its universal background. While spiritual love is universal, sensory love is particular and breeds hatred and anger. Individual desire brings bondage in its train.

The Self is mistaken for the not-Self, and vice versa, in the sense that the universal is forgotten and gets localized in certain objects and the senses commit the blunder of taking the non-eternal for the eternal, the impure for the pure and pain for pleasure. Pratyahara is greatly helped by this analysis, for the senses, by this understanding, refrain from clinging to things. The entanglement of the senses in their respective objects and their organic connection with the objects is so deep and strong that it is not easy to extricate consciousness from matter. Just as one cannot remove one's skin from one's body, it is difficult to wean the senses from things. The organic contact artificially created between the senses and objects should be snapped by *Vichara* or philosophic investigation. This is a stage in *Vairagya* or dispassion for what is not real.

It is not necessary that in a state of Pratyahara the senses should always be active. Many a time they appear to lie down quietly and yet cause great disturbance to the student. When they are positively active, the student becomes conscious of them, but, when they resort to subterfuges, it is difficult to perceive them. The activities of the senses have stages or forms of manifestation. A mischief-maker might be maintaining *silence*, but thereby it does not mean that he is inactive, because he might be scheming over a course of action in which he wishes to

engage himself at a proper time. At times, his activities might get *thinned out* due to the work of the police and when he is harassed from many sides. When he is overworked, he might get fatigued and in this condition, again, he may not do anything. Yet, it does not follow that he is free from his subtle intentions or that he is really free from activity. Sometimes, it might also happen that he *suspends* his activity for other reasons like the marriage of his daughter or the sickness of his son. This suspension of action does not also mean a closure of his plans. When all circumstances become conducive, he will resume his work in *full vigour*.

This is also the way of working of the desires. They may be *asleep, attenuated, interrupted* or actively *operative*. When we sleep, the desires also sleep; they regain strength for further activity on the following day. They also get tired and then cease from work for a while. They lie dormant (*Prasupta*) when there is frustration due to the operation of the laws of society, the absence of means for fulfilment, or the presence of something obstructing satisfaction. In frustration, the activity is temporarily stopped. When one is in an environment which is not conducive to the expression of desire, one suppresses it by will, and here it is in a condition of induced sleep. In cosmic *Pralaya* or the final dissolution, when all individuals get wound up in a causal state of the universe, the senses with their desires lie latent; they remain in a seed form. The desires are not wholly blind, because they know how to create circumstances for their expansion and fulfilment. Even instinct has intelligence. Sometimes intelligence gets stifled by instinct. Intelligence often justifies instinct and accentuates its work.

Though this may be one of the conditions of desire in ordinary persons, it gets thinned out and becomes thread-like in the case of students of Yoga. Sadhana attenuates desire, makes it feeble, though it is not easily destroyed. The desire loses some strength in the presence of the spiritual Guru, inside a temple or place of worship, because it is not the atmosphere for its exhibition. This is another condition of desire, where it remains feeble or thin (*Tanu*).

There is a third state of desire, where it may be occasionally interrupted (*Vichhinna*) in its activities. One may have love for one's son, but for a mistake committed or an unpleasant behaviour of his, one may get angry with him. Here the love for the son has not vanished but is temporarily suspended in a state brought about by passing circumstances. This frequently happens between husbands and wives. Love is suppressed by hate and hate by love due to situations that may arise now and then in society. For the time being, the object of affection may look like one of hatred. We see, among monkeys, the mother-monkey will not allow her baby to eat and she may even snatch away from its mouth the piece of bread it has. This does not mean that the monkey hates the baby and we can also observe the extent of attachment the mother-monkey has for her baby. Love and hate are mysterious psychological conditions and we cannot know where we stand at a given time until we are strongly opposed by contrary forces. Sometimes one feels depressed and at other times one is in a mood of joy. There is often dejection and melancholy. Small unhappy events easily put out people, though all the while they might have been happy. Suddenly, also, they may be elated due to some joyful news conveyed to them. These are waves which arise in the lake of the mind due to the movement of the wind of desire in different directions. The mind dances to the tune of the senses.

There have been instances where seekers, for a long time, appeared to be sense-controlled persons and then began to indulge in unwanted activity. Sometimes, when no progress is tangible, one may think that one's efforts have all gone waste; but then suddenly one may realize also a great joy. This happened in the case of the Buddha. He lost hopes even on the day previous to that of his illumination. He had decided that his end had come. But the bubble burst the next day, and light dawned. Seekers may go down or go up on the path winding like a hill-road, with many descents and ascents. The student of Yoga should be vigilant and should not make decisions or pass judgments by looking at the moods of the mind day by day. Things may appear all-right for a time; but there may also be a cyclone of emotions subsequently, shattering one's hopes and expectations. This is the guerilla warfare that the desireful senses wage when one tries to control them or restrict their activity. When we constantly watch the senses, they show resentment and react and want to jump upon us. None tolerates restriction on one's freedom.

Whatever be the condition of desire,-sleep, attenuation or interruption-it is still there, and has not gone. It can gain strength at a convenient time. We may go on pouring water over fire with a view to extinguish it, but if a spark is left, though the large fire is put out, it may create a huge conflagration again. This happens often in forests, with a small log of wood smouldering in a corner. The spark that is left manifests itself in an opportune moment. Though the desire may be thin, it is not destroyed, and becomes powerful when suitable circumstances present themselves.

Desire, when it is placed wholly in favourable circumstances, becomes fully active (*Udara*) and then one cannot do anything with it, as with the wild forest fire. The raging flames cannot be put out with a bucketful of water. The student's little discrimination will get extinguished due to the might of desire. The whole world is fire, said the Buddha. Experience is the fire of desire; the eyes are this fire burning, the ears and the other senses are burning with desire. The mind and the faculties have been caught up in this fire. The world is a burning pit of live coal, according to the Buddha. The four conditions mentioned are only a broad division of the working of desire. But it has many other forms in which it may lie concealed or act. The mind creates certain mechanisms within itself for its defence against attack from Yoga. It runs away from the spot where it can be observed and the student might miss his aim. And it can follow any of the four techniques mentioned already. It can divert its activity along another channel altogether. This is one of the defence-mechanisms of the mind. If the student in a higher state of mind observes that the lower mind is attached to an object, there will naturally be vigilance kept over it. But it employs a shrewd device of giving up that object and deftly clinging to something else, thus creating an appearance that the attachment has gone. Loves are shifted from one centre to another. The student might find himself in a fool's paradise, if proper caution is not exercised here. He might think that the affection has been snapped, while it is as hard as before, only fixed in another centre. The river has taken a different course and is inundating another village. When a tiger is being pursued, one does not know on whom it will pounce.

The mind also can resort to another method, different from this common technique. If one is persistent in spotting out the desire wherever it goes, it might stop going to any outer



object, but be internally contemplating on the desired end. There can be enjoyment of an object within, if all other avenues are obstructed. One can imagine the objects and acquire a psychological satisfaction when all other channels are blocked. If the best is not available, the mind gets satisfaction in the next best, and if nothing is given, it will enjoy its object in thinking. If the vigilance goes to the extent of observing even this, the mind will try to manipulate itself by projecting its negative characters on certain persons or objects. If a small monkey is pursued by a bigger one, the former will make a chirping noise and draw the attention and support of the other monkeys to someone nearby, and then the whole group will jointly offer an attack on the third party, so that the original skirmish is forgotten by displacement of attention. There are people who try to become virtuous by pointing out the defects of others. Small persons become great by casting aspersions on noble souls. Wonderful is the trickery of the mind. The desirous condition will find an evil spot in someone or something, to the dissatisfaction and disgust of the vigilant mind, and thus side-track the activity of the latter. One might here become more conscious of the defects of the outer environment than of what is happening inside. In the meantime the lower mind works its way. Dreams, phantasies, building of castles in the air, seeing defects outside, are some of the defence-mechanisms which elude the grasp of the vigilant intelligence. Whatever be one's efforts at subduing the mind, the same will never be too much before the impetuosity of the senses. The Bhagavadgita gives a warning when it says that the force of the senses may sweep over like a whirlwind and carry away one's understanding. The Manusmriti says that the senses have such power that they can drag away even a wise man's mind from the right course. The Devimahatmya says that *Maya* can pull by force even the minds of those with much knowledge.

In Pratyahara, reactions are often set up and the student may get frightened about what is happening. Patanjali, in his Sutra, details out the difficulties. Apart from the positive hazards mentioned above, there are certain other negative types of problems that come on the way. Illness (*Vyadhi*) may come upon one due to indiscriminate eating, pressure exerted on the Pranas in one's practice, undue exposure, over-exertion, etc. Sickness is a great obstacle in Yoga. Sickness may be physical or psychological, engendered by one's disobedience to Nature or by reactions to one's practice. It can so happen that the student gets fed up with everything after years of practice and concludes that all things are useless. He gets into a mood of despondency (*Styana*). He may start thinking that he is alone and there is no one to help him. This thought may become so intense that he may not be able to think of the ideal before him. Outwardly, there may be weakness, recurring head-ache and sleeplessness. He may not get sleep for days together. There may develop pain in the body and absence of appetite for food. The stomach may lose the strength to digest anything. These are temporary reactions from the Prana and the mind under the process of control. These are passing phases of which one need not be alarmed. Due to concentration of mind on a particular line (not spiritual concentration but concentrated attention on a particular effort) one may have occasional irksome feelings. These are outer symptoms which may annoy the student for a considerable time. Pratyahara is, in a way, a tussle between the inner and the outer nature. This should explain the reason behind reactions. The inner war is as complicated as the outer and there are as many manoeuvres employed inside as in wars outside. The inner battles are more difficult to win than the outer ones, because in the outer several persons and tools can be employed, while in the inner no such things are available. The inner war is perpetual, without rest. A truce seems to be declared only in sleep, swoon and death. There may come about a languishing state of the body wherein one cannot sit even in an Asana.

The student feels tired even of meditation. Dullness that sets in may make all things slow and one starts taking things easy without the enthusiasm and vigour with which the practice commenced. This happens after a few years of effort. *Styana* is a condition of sluggishness of the body and mind. Also a kind of doubt (*Samsaya*) may start harassing the mind because of there being no palpable progress in *Sadhana*. One does not know how far the destination lies. The student trudges on but does not know the distance covered. There is no guide-map to indicate the distance yet remaining. The inability to know where one is standing creates uncertainty in the mind. Doubts may also creep in by study of too many books of a variegated nature written by different authors, each one saying something different from the other. It is with difficulty that one becomes a good judge of the multitude of ideas served through conflicting literature. Absence of a proper understanding of one's true position is a cause of doubt, on account of which one changes the place of residence, changes one's Guru, changes one's Mantra, changes the mode of meditation, etc. These changes are done with the hope that some sizable result will follow from them. But in the changed condition one finds oneself where one was and feels a necessity to make a further change. It is not easy to realize where the real mistake lies. Such a dubitable character is an obstacle in Yoga. The reactions that the mind and senses produce take many forms and the instability of the mind whereby one does not stick to any one thing or place is an instance. Stickability to one thing is also a great concentration of attention and hence the difficulty in its practice. The mind gets bored with seeing the same people, same place and the same things. There is desire for variety due to disgust for monotony. This is the outcome of doubting, due to which the student gets lost in the wilderness of life. The state of mind wherein it is unsettled and is confused by heedlessness (*Pramada*) is another obstacle. Doubts arise on account of carelessness in thinking. The student has allowed the enemy an entry while in sleep and he wakes up when the enemy has already taken possession of him. Because of want of vigilance, the calamity has befallen him. Once we are convinced of the validity of the practice and the competency of the Guru, what need be there for a change? How did this happen? It occurred because one had no conviction even before. A faith that can be shaken up cannot be called a conviction; it is only a temporary acceptance without proper judgment. No success in any walk of life is possible without a correct assessment of values. It would be foolish to go headlong without considering a situation from all sides, with its pros and cons. It is not good to jump into a mood of emotion in Yoga, for Yoga is not a mood of the mind. Yoga is steadfast practice in which one's whole being is dedicated. The student should be firm in his views and substantial in the core of his personality. He should not reduce himself to a silly person who can be changed by the empty logic of people. The student's understanding has to be powerful enough to withstand and overcome the argumentation of the senses. Once he listens to the plea of the senses, he will believe in the reality of outer circumstances rather than the inner significance of Yoga. *Pramada*, or carelessness, is verily death, says Sanatkumara, the sage, to Dhritarashtra. Heedlessness is death; vigilance is life. This is more true in the case of spiritual seekers. A kind of lethargy (*Alasya*) in the whole system, bodily and mental, sets in as another obstacle. One will not be doing any meditation but only drooping heavy with idleness. This is the *Mohana-Astra* or the delusive weapon cast against the seeking mind in its war with desire. Lethargy paralyses the action of the mind to such an extent that the mind cannot even think in this state. The thinking power goes away, *Tamas* creeps in, and one becomes torpid in nature. The Yogavasishta says: 'If it were not for idleness, the great catastrophe, who would not be successful in the earning of wealth or learning?' Lethargy puts a stop to onward progress. Again,

this lethargic condition is not to be mistaken for a mere inactivity of the body and mind. It is rather a preparation for a contrary activity that is to take place after a time, and it is comparable to the cloudy sky, looking dull and silent, before the outbreak of thunder and lightning. Just as lack of appetite is only an indicator that the body is going to fall sick, lethargy is an indication that something adverse is going to happen. Keeping quiet, saying nothing, doing nothing, is dangerous to the student of Yoga. One does not know when the bomb will burst. Torpidity is a breeding ground for the mischief of the senses and their coterie. They first paralyze the person by lethargy and then give him a blow by sensual excitement (*Avirati*). It is easier to kill a person when he is unconscious. The student is put to sleep by *Tamas*, and then there is a violent activity of the senses. The cyclonic wind has risen from the dusty weather. The mind jumps into indulgence of various sorts and this is what they call a 'fall' in Yoga. Having fallen into this condition, to mistake it for an achievement in Yoga is, indeed, worse. Such mistaking of delusion for success is the other obstacle, the illusion (*Bhrantidarsana*) by which one thinks one is progressing higher while falling down. The senses whip one to dance to their tunes and one also gets induced to a hypnosis by the senses. Even if, by chance, one recovers consciousness from this unwanted condition into which one has been led, it is not easy to regain the ground that has been once lost. Losing the ground (*Alabdhabhumikatva*) is a further obstacle in Yoga. One cannot start one's practice again with ease, due to the Samskaras created by the ravaging work of the senses during the state of gratification. The lack of ability to find out the point of concentration (*Anavasthitatva*), even if the ground is to be gained with difficulty, is a serious obstacle, again.

The nine conditions mentioned above are some of the major obstacles in Yoga, in addition to the psychological complexities to which reference has been made already. They cause the tossing of the mind and its drifting from the path. Here the student has to be cautious. But there are certain other minor obstacles, of which at least five may be named as the chief ones. One of them is pain (*Duhkha*) which takes possession of the seeker. There is a sense of internal grief annoying him constantly. 'Where am I, and what am I doing', is his silent sorrow. It is all darkness and there is no light visible in the horizon. This brings in an emotional depression (*Daurmanasya*) and one becomes melancholy. One sees no good in anything and no meaning or value in life. Life loses its purpose and it is all a wild-goose chase. This becomes the conclusion after so much of effort in the practice of Yoga. This is the point at which the seeker reaches at times, a condition well described in the first chapter of the Bhagavadgita. 'It is all hopeless' seems to be the cry of Arjuna. This is also the cry of every Arjuna in the world, of every man, every woman and everyone who rotates through the wheel of life. While one attempts at regaining strength by picking up one's courage, there sets in nervousness (*Angamejayatva*). The body trembles and one cannot sit for meditation. The student is nervous about someone saying something about him, and so on. There is also an incapacity to tolerate anything that happens in the world. One develops sensitiveness to such an extent that even a small event looks mountainous in importance. There is tremor and uneven flow of the Prana. Irregular and unrhythmic inhalation and exhalation (*Svasa-prasvasa*) disturbs the nervous system and, indirectly, the mind.

## PEACE OF MIND AND SELF-CONTROL

What are we to do when we are in the midst of these opposing forces? Many methods are prescribed, but the first one mentioned in the Yoga texts is what the patient does when he falls ill. He does not start analyzing his body, but goes to the doctor. It is better for the student to go to the *Guru* and take the advice of his superior wisdom. *Ekatattva-Abhyasa* is a famous recipe of Patanjali. *Ekatattva* means 'one reality', 'one objective', 'one target'. *Abhyasa* is 'practice'. So, his prescription is repeated resort to one concept, one truth. In practice, the student is to take only one item at a time. This term, *Ekatattva-Abhyasa*, is a broad one, meaning many things. What is the one reality? Teachers have given many definitions. Patanjali does not offer to define it. Let not the one reality come first. It is better that the *Guru* comes instead. Concentration on reality comes later, because it is like the taking of the medicine, and the medicine is yet to be prescribed. Let no one define reality for oneself, for the definition may be a wrong one and one may go to extremes in an emotional enthusiasm. Discretion, they say, is the better part of valour. The 'practice of the one reality', taken in its simplest meaning, from the point of view of the uninitiated novice, may be regarded as a kind of concentration on any given object or one thought. This is, in short, what they call *Trataka* in Yoga. *Trataka* is the fixing of one's gaze, either externally or internally, on a point of attention. Together with this process, a breathing exercise may have to be practiced to calm disturbances in the mind. Patanjali asks us to expel breath (*Prachhardana*) and retain it (*Vidharana*). Some think that this is instruction for inhalation and retention. A deep inhalation and retention may be an immediate remedy, but not a final one. It is not a medicine but a first aid treatment provided, tentatively. The needed remedy will be prescribed later on. Expel breath and hold on, and with this, think of one thing alone, is the teaching. *Trataka* is external or internal, the latter being a little more difficult than the former. While external *Trataka* may take the help of the vision of the eyes, the internal one has to employ the mind solely. Hence, external *Trataka* is advised as the first step. Here, the student may gaze at a point or a dot. It is difficult for most people to stick on to this practice, because they do not have a long-standing regard for a dot;-they cannot love it. However, the psychological part of *Trataka* is to focus the mind on one point, and this is done even by habituation to a dot. But it can be made more interesting by placing a picture of one's *Ishta-Devata* (chosen deity) in the front. Krishna, Rama, Devi, Siva, Vishnu, Buddha, Christ, or any other ideal which is to one's satisfaction may be the object of *Trataka*. Gaze at the picture. Look at the divine face and draw inspiration from the mighty source, and offer prayers. This outer gaze or visualization may be practiced for a considerable time. Later, the gaze has to be fixed mentally on an internal picture. This method will be more appealing than looking at a dot or a point, though the latter, too, is effective enough, if one accustoms oneself to it. There are also persons who prefer to concentrate on certain *Chakras* (psychic centres) in the body, and this may be called a sort of internal *Trataka*. A *Chakra* of the body, picture of the *Ishta-Devata*, dot, point, etc., are objects in the lower forms of *Ekatattva-Abhyasa*. There are finer ones which will lead to meditation proper in a higher sense.

These practices bring a temporary peace to the disturbed mind,-expulsion and retention of breath, and attention on one thing to the exclusion of others. But Patanjali has certain other psychological exercises to assure peace to the mind. While *Ekatattva-Abhyasa* is a personal attempt that the student makes from his own side, without concern to society, there comes a call

from difficulties of a social nature. Whatever be the student's effort to carry on his practice internally, there are occasional happenings from outside which cause concern and sometimes agitation. Something has to be done with these sources of trouble and methods have to be adopted for dealing with people. The achievement is to be such that there should be no reaction from persons in regard to oneself. To the extent there is reaction, there is also disturbance. Patanjali is of opinion that these reactions are due to one's weaknesses and an incapacity for self-adjustment with others. Here I am reminded of a philosopher's saying, which exhausts the teaching on social conduct for the acquisition of mental peace: 'Give me the will to change what I can, the power to bear what I cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference.' If you *can* change a thing, there is no anxiety. If you *cannot* change a thing, there should, again, be no anxiety, for there is no point in worrying about what cannot be done. Anxiety comes in when you try to do a thing which you really cannot do. This is lack of 'wisdom to know the difference' between the 'can be' and the 'cannot be.' There are the 'good' people, 'bad' people, 'happy' people and the 'unhappy' people. We have daily to deal with these persons when we come in contact with them. What should be our attitude when we meet a good person? Not one of jealousy, for that will not bring peace to the mind. We have to be happy (*Mudita*). There is the story of an ancient philosopher who saw a well-dressed and beautifully ornamented graceful person, and exclaimed, 'how happy I am'! When the latter asked him why he should be happy on seeing another's prosperity, he replied, 'it does not matter whether you have it or I have it. I am satisfied that *it is*.' The limited mind wants to own things for itself. In existence there is really no such thing as 'belonging'. Things *are*. 'To belong' is not part of the law of the universe. If we see a good person we should be pleased that goodness exists in the world and not be intolerant because it is seen in another person.

There are also the bad and the wicked ones who do harm to others and delight in others' pain. Though the various laws prescribe different reactions towards these people, Patanjali is mainly concerned with the attitude of a student of Yoga in regard to them. He suggests indifference (*Upeksha*) towards undesirable elements. We may ignore the very existence of such a person and by that we get freed from having to deal with evil. It simply does not concern us; our reaction should be such that there will not be any counter-reaction from others, and for this we have to keep a balance of mental attitude. It is not always necessary that we should be judging or passing remarks on people even if we may regard them as a nuisance. Non-interference will obviate many of our troubles in life.

To the happy we should show kindness (*Maitri*) and to the grieved we should show pity (*Karuna*). This fourfold attitude is meant to avoid mental disturbance due to external causes or the presence of certain persons and things which require of us some sort of relationship with them. Where, however, we have absolutely no relations of any kind, the difficulty does not arise.

Side by side, there is a necessity for the development of dispassion (*Vairagya*) and for continued practice (*Abhyasa*), which two, when carried to perfection, are the whole process of Yoga. The student should not do anything which will excite the senses. Pratyahara is not possible without a detached consciousness. Dispassion is not any force exercised by the will, but, rather, an understanding. The Yoga texts say that there are various stages of dispassion and one cannot suddenly jump to its pinnacle. The first stage is called *Yatamana-Samjna*, or the

consciousness of effort necessary towards the attainment of dispassion. 'I am fed up, and I want to be free', is such consciousness, an attempt towards the achievement of success in the chosen direction. The second stage is *Vyatireka-Samjna* or the consciousness of separating the essentials from nonessentials in the effort. Here, the student sifts the situation of his life, whereby the necessary and the unnecessary are discriminated and the true target of effort properly fixed. What really causes attachment, worry and anxiety has to be clearly known and diligently avoided. It is not that the whole world troubles a person always; only certain things seem to be needing attention. In the beginning, one might think that the whole world is bad, but slowly one realizes that a few situations alone are one's troubles. There comes the third stage where one confronts the actual point of the trouble and a single cause is detected from among the several suspected ones. This is *Ekendriya-Samjna*, or the consciousness of the 'one sense' which is the sole cause of the difficulty on the way. The student thought once that the tongue was troubling him or the eyes were the trouble, etc. All the senses were held under suspicion and watched, as the police would make an initial arrest of all those whose bona fide is doubted in a case on hand. When the guilty one is found out after examination, the others are released. First, all the senses are rounded up; and then it is discovered that the mind alone is the mischief-maker. Here, in the third stage, the culprit is caught red-handed. The fourth state is *Vasikara-Samjna* or the consciousness of mastery on account of absence of longing for all things, whether seen or heard. Nothing that is seen in this world, and none of the joys of heaven which are only heard, can now attract the student of Yoga. It is not so much a physical isolation of oneself from objects as freedom from craving (*Trishna*) for them. The 'will-to-pleasure' is the evil, not the objects which are made its instruments. It is immaterial where one is placed; one cannot run away from the world, for it is everywhere. Desirelessness (*Vaitrishnya*) is supreme control (*Vasikara*). Distance from objects is not dispassion, for 'while the objects go, the longing does not go', says the *Gita*. One is not in physical contact with objects in dream, and yet one enjoys them there. Pleasure is excited even when objects are not physically present. Contrariwise, there is no pleasure even if there be objects in one's proximity, if only the mind is detached from them. Thinking of objects is the first stage of desire. By thought one brings oneself near to them. Complete mastery is that condition in which the senses do not long for and the mind does not think of objects. When these do not function at all in relation to objects, that is said to be the highest dispassion and the zenith of Pratyahara.

To enable self-control, we can effectively take help from the symbol given in the *Kathopanishad*, wherein the senses are compared to horses, the body to the vehicle which they drag, the sense-objects to the roads along which the vehicle moves, the intellect to the driver, the mind to the reins controlling the horses and the individual soul to the rider in the vehicle. The driver directs the horses by means of the reins, the leather-strap or rope which he holds in his hands. This body of ours is the vehicle pulled by the horses of senses. The analogy, in a slightly different form, comes also in Plato, who, perhaps, never knew the existence of the Upanishads. The significance of the symbol is how we have to conduct ourselves in order to be successful in life. The entire life of a human being has to be one of *Pratyahara* in varying degrees. The driver is always cautious that the horses do not hurl the chariot into a ditch, and cannot afford to lose hold of the reins at any time. Vigilance is life, and life is Yoga. A good life is one of perpetual effort in the control of the senses, the passions of the appetitive self. The restive horses run amuck if they are not properly directed, and the vehicle may not reach its destination. They are

usually wild and bent upon going their own way. When they tend to go out of direction, hither and thither, the driver tries to bring them back by pulling the reins. Even so has one to bring the senses to the point of control. The Upanishad exhorts that the senses are extrovert in their activity and can never look within. Rare indeed is that person who, in the midst of the ravaging senses, finds time to behold the light inside. The senses live in a world of objects, of *Samsara* or earthly existence, and the need for *Pratyahara* therefore is on account of the necessity to rise from the mortal to the immortal. The Upanishad prayer is: 'Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from mortality to immortality.' This is the aim of self-restraint, of *Pratyahara* in Yoga.

*Abhyasa* is steadfastness in assiduous practice conducted with patience, unremittingly. The practice is not merely to be regular but also attended with a deep love (*Satkara*) for it. It should be carried on for a protracted period (*Dirghakala*) and without break (*Nairantarya*). The continuity of practice should be full with devotion, for, when it is merely forced on the mind without its liking, it will not lead to success. Even a baby does not like to be controlled by force; it craves for affection. The mind has to be made to understand where its blessedness lies. Unless there is understanding there cannot be love, and without love there is no effort. One cannot blindly be thrust into something and made to have a liking for it. *Vairagya* and *Abhyasa* are both results of a great understanding (*Viveka*), a discriminative grasp which is the basis of Yoga. The appreciation necessary is not merely an opinion that one holds, but a firm conviction. To fix oneself in a perpetual attitude, and not to have varying moods, constantly changing, is *Abhyasa*. There should be a uniformity of conduct on account of perception of a harmony in things. People change their opinions because their judgments are not correct. Sufferings in life are partly due to one's slavishness to moods and hasty judgments which one makes of persons and things. Spiritual practice is effort at fixity of consciousness. *Ekatattva-Abhyasa*, mentioned earlier, is such steadfastness in one reality, a concentration of oneself on a chosen ideal or a given mode of conduct. It is not easy either to cultivate *Vairagya* or be steady in *Abhyasa*. Hard labour is necessary. To keep oneself balanced in the midst of the tumult of the world is not a simple task. The process of *Pratyahara* will reveal that life is a battle, a struggle for existence.

The mind becomes steady by conservation of energy through these efforts at self-control. When the powers of the senses get attuned to the mind, so that they have no existence of their own apart from the mind which is their source, there is *Pratyahara*. The prodigal sons now return home. After a life of long dissipation, the senses come back to their resting place. There is now no flickering of mind but only a steady flame of illumination. It is fully concentrated and moves not from the thought of its goal.

## DHARANA OR CONCENTRATION

Now comes Yoga in its essential essence, and now also "begins the last stroke that the Yogi deals, which decides his fate. This is the stage of *Dharana* or concentration of the whole of one's psychic being (*Chitta*). A perennial flow of *Dharana* is called *Dhyana* or meditation. If *Dharana* is the drop, *Dhyana* is the river. Many concentrations make a meditation. Qualitatively they are non-different, but functionally there is a distinction between them. In his

work, 'Concentration and Meditation', Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj has explained the subject in great detail.

Different schools prescribe different methods of concentration. The Buddhists have their own method, and the Jains another. The orthodox systems in India have various techniques of their own. The way in which one concentrates one's mind determines to some extent what kind of person one is and what *Samskaras* or psychic impressions are within oneself. The nature of the target one chooses also is a clue to one's inner make. When the student enters into Dharana, he can know something of his personal structure. He becomes an observer of himself and an object of his study.

The rationale behind the practice of Dharana has been earlier explained under the context of Pratyahara. The reason behind the effort at concentration of mind is the same as that underlying the need for Pratyahara. It is a psychological necessity with a deep philosophical background. Unless the 'why' of concentration is properly answered, one will not have satisfaction within and hence cannot take to the practice wholeheartedly. Many students desire to practice concentration. If they are asked 'why', they have no good reply. There should be clarity first, for it is the index of conviction and an absence of it is a lack of any settled ideal before oneself. Concentration is the channelizing of the Chitta or the psychic structure within towards universality of being. This goal is achieved by many stages, with a graduated movement of the finite to the infinite.

It was pointed out that worry and grief constitute an obstacle in the practice of Yoga. As a matter of fact, Patanjali specially mentions these as some of the central opposing powers in the field of Yoga. Unfortunately, life is always beset with sorrow and if we are to search for a man free from vexation of every kind, we would, perhaps, not find one. Yet, Yoga cannot be successful if mental stress is to pursue man like a hound, wherever he goes. It is necessary for one, before any attempt at Pratyahara, Dharana or Dhyana, to extricate oneself from these tormenting forces of the world. And the student may, from the point of view of this situation, be able to understand what an amount of effort is necessary on the path to keep the mind in balance; for *balance* is said to be Yoga. It is only when the balance is upset, due to some factor in life, that worry sets in. Hence, the first step in Yoga is not Pratyahara or Dharana, but a psychological disentanglement, or a stock-taking as people do in business, and a striking of the balance-sheet of the inner world. One has to find out where one stands. How can one do concentration or meditation if pains are to eat into one's vitals? There are many problems that are brought upon oneself through economic situations, social circumstances, family conditions, etc., as also personal health and mental stability. These are important aspects that have to be taken into consideration. Supposing that the student is deeply annoyed with someone, will he be able to sit for concentration at that time? No. Because the mind is already engaged in something else and is not prepared for concentration. It has already been given some work and it is trying to reconcile itself with negative conditions that have been thrust upon it. Yoga is a positive state, different from all moods of the day. There is nothing of the negative in the Yoga way of life, neither in the mind nor in the perspective of one's vision. Misgivings about Yoga are due to a want of proper understanding of its meaning. All anguish is to be set right. How to do this is a personal problem. It has to be dealt with on an individual consideration, as the answer varies from person



to person. Just as a physician does not treat patients collectively but pays them all individual attention, each question has to be taken separately and solved, unless they are all of a similar character.

It need not be emphasized that a Guru is necessary, and also one should be capable of practicing sense-control, especially sex-control. The student cannot desire the things of the world and also the beatitude of Yoga. Again, treading the path of Yoga always implies some loss in the eyes of the sense-world. The student should decide what he wants. Does he want comfort, praise, name and fame, etc., or is he honest in pursuing the way of self-restraint and concentration of mind? The attempt at Yoga can be shaken up in the earlier stages by such pressures as hunger, heat, cold and the need for a proper place to live. There should be no other necessity of a student. It is necessary to minimize desires. When one takes to Yoga, one has to be honest with it. There cannot be any joke in Yoga or an experimenting with it to see if some miracle comes out of it. The entire being of the student goes to Yoga and not merely a part of his personality. therefore, self-analysis is of paramount importance here, and he alone can answer his questions finally, for these are so personal that they are related to his own thinking and he alone can solve them. Many of our problems arise not from conditions outside but from our own thinking. We expect some events to take place in the world. But they do not occur. What are we to do, then? Are we to change the world? If we try to change external conditions, we often become victims of disappointment, the reason being that the world is not wholly outside us. We have either to adjust the world to ourselves or ourselves to the world. Many have attempted the former alternative, but they all have gone the way they came. First of all, we have to learn to live; otherwise, we would be the losers and no one will hear our cries. This is the way of self-analysis, whereby the student understands his current condition. The analysis of bodily and social relations should also be carried further into moral and spiritual questions, for only then can there be concentration and meditation of the mind. There should be balance of powers not only in the social and economic levels, but also in the mind and soul. There should be contentment with the creation of God. Here the student is truly pleased, and this pleasure itself is an act of concentration. As concentration of mind has much to do with inner satisfaction, there cannot be concentration of mind when there is unhappiness. An unhappy man cannot be a student of Yoga. We do not go to Yoga because people do not want us in the world, but because there is something substantial and positive in Yoga.

Psychological contentment brought about by self-analysis is a great help in concentration. Sometimes, when one is affected too much by thoughts of the contrary, thoughts pertaining to things and conditions opposed to or different from the aim of Yoga, Patanjali says that one has to practice thinking or the feeling of the opposite (*Pratipaksha-Bhavana*). This is to affirm the opposite of what is happening. If a particular sense-organ is troubling the student, he gives intense work to the other organs so that the energy will be drawn by them, and the troublesome element is divested of strength. If one is sexually agitated one might think of Hanuman or Bhishma. Let the mind think how Hanuman acquired his powers, his character and his glory, or the prowess of Bhishma, and meditate on them. The desire would slowly wane because of the higher thought occurring to the mind by continued contemplation. If one is prone to be angry, one might think of the Buddha. What a calm personality,-poised, kind, sympathetic, sober, unagitated by events taking place outside, a veritable pacific of understanding and affection.

Then the anger goes away. When anger overpowers the mind, such thoughts would not naturally come to it. But a daily practice will create in the mind *Samskaras* or impressions which will in course of time prevent the rise of such negative thoughts and, even if they come, they will not be vehement or powerful enough to disturb internal peace. This is the method of 'substitution' in psychoanalysis.

The three methods which the mind employs usually are repression, substitution and sublimation. Sublimation is the proper course to adopt, but it cannot always be done for obvious reasons. People repress desires into the subconscious due to social taboo, but later on this causes complexities. Repression is not a remedy. When one cannot fulfil one's desires, one swallows them, which, in the long run, become complexes that may turn into illness of various kinds. The moods of people are nothing but the occasional eruption of repressed emotions and attitudes. Repression is not the method prescribed by Patanjali, though he suggests substitution as a middle course leading to sublimation by Yoga.

The point of concentration may be external, internal or universal. The student may think something outwardly, inwardly or not either way but an invisible something. Any means may be chosen for the purpose of concentration. The outer thinking may be regarded as the beginning, the inner thought as the middling state and the thought of the universal as the last stage. One begins with the outer, goes to the inner and reaches the universal. We see the world outside and we always think of it, because we feel it is real. The thought of the world cannot be set aside because reality cannot be ignored. If the mind perceives reality in the world, it cannot be abandoned because reality is never an 'other' to oneself. We artificially bring about a concentration in our mind when it is otherwise engaged in what it regards as real. Here, we naturally become failures. So, before starting the practice of concentration, the student has to establish a proper relation with the world and society by the practice of the Yamas and Niyamas. If the world is up in arms and cudgels, one cannot practice Yoga by being in it. For peace with the world and peace with oneself, Patanjali prescribes the Yamas and Niyamas, respectively. Asana and Pranayama are intended for establishing peace and harmonious relations with the muscles, nerves and the vital force. Pratyahara establishes peace with the mind. Yoga is the science of peace. The world outside having been properly coordinated with our personality by the Yamas and our having come to proper understanding of ourselves by the Niyamas and by Vichara or self-analysis, having also achieved some sort of control over the muscles by Asana, the nerves and Prana by Pranayama, having brought compromise within by Pratyahara, the student is face to face with the problem of concentration.

What is one to concentrate upon? First of all, the point of concentration has to be external, so that one may concentrate with greater ease, because the mind has always a tendency to go outward. But this need not mean going senseward. We may give the mind some freedom, of course, but it should be within a limited circle. The ambit of the activity of the mind should gradually become smaller and smaller. One moves, but in more and more limited circles. The circle of the mind's work becomes smaller as it rises to higher states of concentration. In the most initial stage, the student can concentrate on any one point. A wide margin is given in the beginning as is done with a child or a wild animal under training.

*Satsanga* and *Svadhya* are some of the methods which one can adopt in limiting the activity of the mind to smaller circles. Instead of going to any place at leisure, one attends Satsangas or visits holy places or shrines. And instead of browsing through all sorts of literature at random, one reads philosophical and elevating scriptures. All this is an achievement in the concentration of mind by way of limitation of the circle of its activity. Instead of chatting with persons at any time, one restricts speech only to a necessity. The long rope has been cut short. The radius has been reduced in length. This practice is the beginning of a true religious life. Having lived a life of religiousness rather than that of worldliness one further tries to limit the circle of the mind in Yoga. And now, the stage has come when, instead of going to holy places, one settles down in one place for a spiritual way of living, and one has pinned the mind to a still smaller circle. Having settled in a particular place, one chalks out a daily programme which should be such that it will not contain any item that is not directly connected with the practice of Yoga. Occasionally, a few may be indirectly related, which, however, are to be slowly snapped later by gradual effort and only the direct connections with Yoga be maintained. The programme of the day which the student chalks out for himself depends entirely upon the aim of Yoga, which is the determining factor in the day's programme. What he will do during the whole day will depend on what he wishes to make of his entire life, for many days put together constitute life. The daily programme should therefore correspond to the life's programme. Nothing non-spiritual may engage the attention of the student on any occasion. In the programme of the day, certain items should be essential, such as study of scriptures (which one cannot dispense with until one gets so absorbed in the mind that there is no need for any study). Sacred study is necessary because in such study one keeps oneself open to higher thoughts, ennobling one's character. Simultaneously with this practice, there should be recourse to *Japa* (repetition) of the *Mantra* (mystic formula). *Japa* is directly connected with *Dhyana*. The relation between *Svadhya*, *Japa* and *Dhyana* is sequential and very significant and they form a complete course of Yoga. *Japa* is a more intensive *Sadhana* than *Svadhya* and *Dhyana* more intensive than *Japa*.

*Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* are considered as the internal and true Yoga, while everything else is an external accessory to it. *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama* and *Pratyahara* constitute the external (*Bahiranga*) Yoga, while *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* are the internal (*Antaranga*) Yoga. The internal Yoga is a pure activity of the mind-stuff (*Antahkarana*), independent of the senses. While the senses had a part to play in *Pratyahara*, they do not operate in *Dharana*, any further. We have come nearly to the innermost point of the personality and the outer activities as well as relations are given up. The mind has become powerful because now it does not waste energy through sensory activity. Most people complain that the mind is weak, that the will has no strength, because much of the energy leaks out through the channels of the senses. The senses are factors of dissipation of the centralized energy in the human system and until this channelization of energy by way of sensory activity is stopped, the will would remain naturally weak and this is why so much emphasis is laid on the control of senses. The mind which conserves energy in itself becomes more powerful than it appeared earlier. It is now ready to gird up its loins for the ultimate steps in Yoga, concentration and meditation. It has nothing to vex it, because it has severed all its connections outside by an inner withdrawal. Concentration now begins.

Concentration does not come suddenly, in spite of all efforts on the part of a student. The mind has been habituated to think in terms of diversity and to turn it away from multitudinousness and to bring it to a point is really hard to achieve. The mind does not accept it. In the beginning, there is repulsion and later on there arises difficulty in the practice of concentration. But if the practice goes on with proper self-analysis and understanding, the mind will be able to appreciate what it is for and what it is expected to do. Any unintelligent activity is not easily taken in by the mind because thought is logically constructed. Before making preparations for chalking out a programme one should try to be methodical and logical in thinking, for the mind will not accept chaotic ideas. It appreciates only system, symmetry, harmony, beauty, order, etc. The mind dislikes any thing thrown pell-mell, because it is made in an orderly fashion. Without knowing the why of it one does not like anything spontaneously. The way in which the mind functions is what is known as logic. One should not hastily move to things and jump into any conclusion. Many people suffer from this travesty, because they cannot take all aspects of the matter into their judgements. All persons cannot consider every side of an issue, and this pinches the mind from various directions. A programme that one may have to change constantly is not a well-thought-out programme. Let there be no need to change what one has decided to do. Let it be thought and arranged well, even if it would take many days to make the decision. Let there be beauty in thinking, as there is beauty in the outer world. The more is one logical, the more is also one's happiness. Hence, it is necessary to prepare the ground with a thorough-going analysis of the situation of one's personality. 'I want God', should not be the student's sudden answer when he is asked what he is up to achieve. One cannot say one wants God unless one has also an idea as to what God means. Many people have the notion that wanting God is preparing to meet a big person with mighty powers. Many would like to seek God so that they may have a tremendous authority to wield over others and may parade their knowledge over the world. If God is Perfection, it is surprising that He should be identified with a personality like that of man.

Logical thinking is, therefore, a help in bringing about concentration of mind. The test of logicity in thought is that one feels a delight the moment one arranges one's thoughts in a method. One feels a comfort within because of the completeness introduced by the system of logic in the mind. Logicity is a form of psychological perfection, and all perfection is joy.

After having properly thought out the programme for life and for the day, the programme of one's Sadhana has to be considered. 'What is my Sadhana going to be?' Thus may the student of Yoga cogitate seriously. Merely because one has heard a lecture on Yoga, it does not mean one has a clear path set before oneself. After much hearing, there may still remain some fundamental difficulty, that of choosing a proper method of practice and coming to facts, not merely doctrines. When one touches the practical side, an unforeseen problem arises. This is an individual difficulty and cannot be cleared in a public lecture. It is, therefore, necessary to find out one's temperament, first, and decide upon the nature of one's case. In as much as every mind is special in its constitution, proclivity and temperament certain details peculiar to one's mind have to be thought out clearly for oneself. Though it is true that concentration is the purpose of all Sadhana, the kind of preparation for this concentration varies in different types of Yoga. Concentration is an impersonal action of the mind, because, in this inner adventure, the mind attempts gradually to shed its personality by accommodating itself, stage by stage, with the

requirements of the law that determines the universe. The individual, being veritably a part of the cosmos, cannot help owing an allegiance in some way, at some time, to the organism of the cosmos, and concentration, in the language of Yoga, is just this much, viz., the acceptance on the part of the mind that it belongs to a larger dominion, call it the Kingdom of God, or the Empire of the Universe.

Patanjali, in his aphorisms on Yoga, has suggested varieties of concentration of the mind on points which can be external, internal or universal. A protracted and intensified form of concentration is called meditation.

## DHYANA OR MEDITATION

The pinnacle of Yoga is the absorption of the mind in the object of its concentration. The whole technique borders upon an attunement of the subjective consciousness, in its wholeness, to the structure of the object of concentration. Normally, the object is severed from consciousness so that it exists as an independent, material something, totally incapable of reconciliation with the nature of consciousness. However, under the scheme of the Samkhya, it does not appear that in the perception of an object the consciousness stands entirely independent of the influence exerted by the object upon itself or, on the other hand, the attachment and the relationship which it wishes to project, for some extraneous reason, in regard to the object itself. According to the Samkhya system, the object is totally independent of the subject which is consciousness, the object being a mode of *Prakriti* and the consciousness being the *Purusha* manifest through an individuality when it is engaged in an act of cognition or perception. However, the *Purusha*, according to the Samkhya, is infinite in its nature and hence its assumption of the role of a percipient locally placed as a finite entity in respect of the object of its knowledge is unimaginable. This involvement of the infinite *Purusha* in an association with finitude consequent upon its relationship to *Prakriti*'s modes is its bondage. The freedom of the *Purusha* is its return to its original status of infinitude by way of abstraction of its relations with every form of objectivity, which is *Prakriti* in some degree of its manifestation. The Yoga system of Patanjali is, in the end, a gospel on the necessity of severing all relationships on the part of consciousness in respect of every type of involvement in externality or objectivity, beginning with social relationships, involvement in the physiological organism of the body, the psychic structure of the *Antahkarana*, or the internal organ, the causal body of ignorance, and ending in the very impulsion to enter into any mode of finitude, whatsoever. *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* are these stages of the gradual withdrawal of consciousness from outward contact and a simultaneous rising into wider and wider dimensions of itself, culminating in infinitude which is its quintessential essence. While the dissociation of consciousness from relations with society, body, mind and intellect, etc. is achieved through the practice of *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana* and *Dhyana*, which are intelligible to the seeker of Yoga to some extent, the higher attunement known as *Samadhi* at which we have only meagre hints in the Sutras of Patanjali, is more difficult of comprehension and may appear humanly impossible for minds which are socially involved and sunk deep in body-consciousness to the exclusion of the awareness of any other value.

While concentration is defined as the tethering of the mind to a point of attention, whether external, internal or universal, meditation is described as a flow which is continuous, as a movement from the meditating subject to the object of meditation. There are four factors involved in *Dharana*, or concentration, namely, the exclusion of extraneous thoughts which are irreconcilable with the thoughts of the object of concentration, the thought of one's own subjectivity as a concentrating principle, the process of concentration, and the object on which the concentration is practiced. But in *Dhayana*, or meditation, there are only three processes and the question of excluding extraneous thoughts does not arise here, since the thought in meditation has deepened itself to such an extent that it can have no awareness of anything outside the purview of the object of meditation.

### SAMADHI OR SUPER-CONSCIOUSNESS

Though the higher reaches of meditation are inseparable from what are known as *Samapattis* or *Samadhis* in the language of Patanjali, a logical distinction can be made between the two in the sense that *Dhyana* or meditation is constituted of the threefold process mentioned, and in Samadhi the whole process gets united with the object, comparable in some way to the entry of a river into the ocean, in which condition the river ceases to be what it was and becomes the ocean itself. Here Patanjali has an interesting thing to tell us, viz., that in this condition the percipient, the object and the medium or the process of perception stand parallel to one another, on an equal status, as if three lakes or tanks of water merge into one another, mingling one with the other, with water in every one filled to the same level on the surface. The three have become one, and one cannot know which is the subject, which the object and which the process of knowing.

The act of meditation leads to the attainments known as *Samapattis*. While the object chosen for purpose of meditation can be any particular unit or entity, whether perceptual or conceptual, the final requirement is an absorption of consciousness in the structure of the cosmos itself, which is constituted of the five great elements or *Mahabhutas*,—earth, water, fire, air and ether.

Patanjali speaks Of *Vitarka*, *Vichara*, *Ananda* and *Asmita* stages in these attainments, which are again sub-divided into the stages known as *Savitarka*, *Nirvitarka*, *Savichara*, *Nirvichara*, *Sananda* and *Sasmita*. These *Samapattis* are the graduated attunements of the meditating consciousness with the cosmological categories enumerated in the Samkhya philosophy. The lowest forms of the manifestation of *Prakriti* are the five elements mentioned, which in their gross form enter into every minor form of the world, constituting the diversity of the objects of sense perception and mental cognition.

Patanjali has a specific recipe to enable the mind to contemplate upon the object *as such* in its pure form, divested of the phenomenal associations it is involved in as an object of sensory perception. When we speak of an object, for instance, we mean thereby a blend of an *idea* and a *descriptive characteristic* going together with the *thing-in-itself*, which cannot be known except as clothed in the idea of it and the form in which it is perceived. Here we are reminded of a similar enunciation by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant who ruled out the possibility of

knowing things-in-themselves apart from phenomena conditioned by space, time and what he called the categories of the understanding, such as quantity, quality, relation and modality. This is the reason, perhaps, why he did not conceive of it being practicable even to have a metaphysics of reality, because all knowledge is phenomenal, limited to space, time and the categories. Kant held that the ideas of God, freedom and immortality act merely as regulative principles working through the reason but cannot become objects of the reason since its operations are limited to phenomena. Here the Indian sage scores a mark which the philosopher of the Critique could not envisage, viz., that it is possible, nay, it is necessary, that the thing-in-itself has to be known, not merely by actual contact in a process of knowledge, but in union with it, which is Yoga proper. The words which Patanjali uses to designate the phenomenal categories are *Sabda and Jnana*, and the thing-in-itself is *Artha*. The aim of Yoga is to unite consciousness with the thing-in-itself, i.e., with *Artha*. Though, under normal conditions, it is not possible to contact the object *as such* because of the interference of space and time and the logical categories of the mind, there is a way unknown to logical philosophy, by which the subject and the object can become one, attain Yoga or union, which is the perfection of experience.

In the *Savitarka Samapatti* the object or *Artha* is contemplated upon as involved in *Sabda* and *Jnana*, its name and idea. But this is a different kind of awareness from that which obtains in ordinary perception of things, for, in a *Samapatti* there is an absorption of consciousness in the contemplated object, and the form does not any more remain as an external object to be contacted by sensory activity even in this state of a threefold involvement. In the higher stage known as *Nirvitarka Samapatti*, the physical form of the object, independent of *Sabda* and *Jnana*, is the object of absorption. Here the object may be taken as the whole physical universe of five elements, or any particular object chosen for the purpose of meditation. In the cosmological enumeration of the categories of the Samkhya, the evolutes which are higher than the five physical elements are the five *Tanmatras*, or subtle potentials of these elements, known as *Sabda, Sparsa, Rupa, Rasa* and *Gandha*, which mean respectively sound, touch, form, taste, and smell, as the objects of experience. When these *Tanmatras* become the objects of meditation, or rather, absorption, as envisaged in terms of space and time, the attainment is known as *Savichara Samapatti*. When the same become objects of absorption independent of and transcendent to space and time, the experience is called *Nirvichara Samapatti*. By the time this stage is reached by the Yogin, a complete mastery is attained over the elements and the forces of Nature, and a perfection ensues which brings immense joy, not born of contact with anything, but following as a result of the attainment of freedom by union with the Cosmic *Ahamkara*, and *Mahat*, which are the omniscient and omnipresent Ground of the whole universe. This joy is an attainment known as *Sananda Samapatti*, when the experience reaches its heights and the entire universe is known as One's own Body and not as an object of perception any more, when there is no such thing as a universe, but a pure Cosmic Experience-Whole in which the Cosmic Subject is in union with the Cosmic Object. There is a realization of the Absolute-‘I’. This Universal Self-Experience is known as *Sasmita Samapatti*.

All the six stages of *Samapatti* stated above come under what is known as *Sabija Samadhi* or union with the remnant of a seed of Self-Consciousness though of a Universal Nature. When even this Self-Consciousness is transcended and only the Absolute reigns supreme in experience *par excellence*, there is *Nirbija Samadhi*, or the seedless attainment of

Supreme Independence. The Final Attainment thus experienced is *Kaivalya Moksha*, or utter Freedom in the Absolute Reality.

## APPENDIX

### Practical Techniques

I shall give you some practical hints, in stages, to attain the state of Meditation. Otherwise, the mind will jump from one object to another, because it is used to think of objects only. To bring the mind to this state of awareness of meditation, stability or harmony has to be practiced in every walk of life. Harmony is of various grades.

1. You must be harmonious in your relationship with other people in the world. You should be friendly; you should have no hatred towards anyone. You should not harm or deceive anyone. You should not steal or appropriate what does not belong to you. You should have no disgust for any person or thing; you should have affection for all persons and things. All this constitutes harmony in outer relationship with the society and the world. You should not take from the world more than what you have given to it by your service.
2. You must be harmonious within your own personality. The human individual is often out of balance with himself. You should take care of the minimal needs of the body: e.g. cleanliness, a bath regularly, to eat only when you are hungry - i.e. eat only if your tongue waters when you see a dish of food. Treat your body as your friend. Live in ventilated places; breathe fresh air; spend at least two hours a day in open air. Adopt simple living and high thinking.
3. You must have harmony of muscles and the nervous system. We are generally in a state of restless activity and agitation. So we are asked to practice *Asanas* or physical postures, for the stability of the body. Though for the health of the body you may practice many *Asanas*, you should sit in one *Asana* alone for meditation. By staying in one, single, steady, comfortable posture, you bring about a harmony in the nervous system and the muscles.

Why is this posture prescribed? Because some energy, you may call it electric power, is generated in the body when the mind is concentrated in meditation. Now, if the extremities of the body are left open, the electricity that is produced in meditation will leak out. So, the purpose of posture is to lock up the fingers and the toes so that there is a circulation of energy throughout the body, and there is no leakage of energy outside. Also, to prevent leakage, you are asked to sit on some nonconductor of electricity, e.g. deer skin or mat, not an iron seat (that will give you a shock). Sit there, locking the fingers and toes, and keeping the spine, neck and head erect, in one straight line. If you cannot sit straight in the beginning, sit straight leaning your back against a wall.

4. Bring the breathing process, *Prana*, into harmony. *Pranayama* is a normal state of breathing. Usually we are not in a normal state of breathing. And we are not happy when we breathe dis-harmoniously. The *Pranas* are disturbed because you long for objects in the world. And



5. to desire an object is to be out of tune with the law of the universe, because the object is not outside the law of the universe; the object is an integral, vital part of the cosmos. So, when you imagine anything is outside, consciousness is disturbed, agitated, unhappy. So, this harmony is achieved not merely by control of breathing through the nose, but by reduction of desires. If you entertain too many desires in your mind, Pranayama will be useless, or may be even harmful. A person with no control over desires should not practice Pranayama. First, you must be ethical and moral in your conduct.

In the beginning, do not practice technical methods (like alternate breathing); just practice normal inhalation and exhalation. Take in a slow, full, deep breath and exhale slowly. Generally, you do not take a slow, deep breath, you take a fast, shallow breath.

The purpose of Pranayama is to reduce the rate of breathing. And, when the Prana becomes calm by this process of slow breathing, the mind also becomes calm. The Prana is connected with the mind. When the Prana is reduced in its activity, the mind is also reduced in its activity. Between the Prana and the mind are the senses. The senses are the meeting point between the Prana and the mind. The senses become active, whether the Prana works or the mind works.

5. So, the fifth harmony is the control of the activity of the senses. The senses cannot be controlled so long as you live in the midst of attractive objects. So, in the beginning stages of Yoga practice, you should try to live for at least some time in a year in such places where objects are not tempting to the senses. This is the reason why seekers of Truth try to live in Ashramas, monasteries or secluded places. When you try gradually to abstain from sense indulgence, by living in such holy atmospheres, the senses get automatically subdued. As the senses are in contact with the mind, control of the senses also involves a little control of the mind.

When the mind is accustomed to a life of seclusion and solitariness, and the senses do not ask for tempting objects, you are ready for concentration and meditation. This is really the field of Yoga. All the stages earlier are only preparatory. From concentration onwards is proper Yoga.

6. Now, concentration is of three forms:

#### **A. Concentration on External Points:**

The mind is accustomed to think of external objects only; so, it would be dangerous to suddenly cut off the mind from external objects. You should not try to concentrate on internal centres in the beginning of your practice.

You must pick an external object that you have an interest in, that you have a love for. Believers in God usually try to concentrate on an external picture or symbol of God. You may keep a portrait of Lord Krishna or Jesus Christ in front of you, and gaze at the picture with open

eyes. Where the eyes are, there the mind also is. You are not looking merely at a painted picture, but at a symbol of a living personality. So, when you gaze at a picture of Christ or Krishna, you immediately feel in your mind the qualities that these personalities were endowed with.

After three or four minutes of gazing at the picture, close your eyes and mentally imagine the picture. Concentrate on the form you saw. Continue this internal concentration as long as your mind is not disturbed. If, after a few minutes of closed-eyes meditation, you feel that the mind is wandering, then again open the eyes and look at the picture. After, again, gazing the picture for a few minutes, close the eyes again to habituate the mind to internal meditation.

Practice this process for a few months until you can concentrate without a picture. When you can concentrate, merely by closing the eyes, on the form of the portrait, without the external support of a painted picture, you have achieved the first success in meditation.

Feel that this internal picture is not merely in one place, but is in every place. When you begin to feel a uniform presence in all places, the mind ceases from all distraction. The other method to bring about this harmony of mental perception is to think of the vast space. Inasmuch as space is everywhere, you try to concentrate on all directions at one time. You can also concentrate on the light of the sun pervading the whole space. Or you can concentrate on the vast ocean which is everywhere. You can gaze at the flame of a candle or a dot on the wall.

When you gain success in this, you can change your object of concentration; you will have such mastery of mind that you can concentrate on any object. The purpose of this concentration is to make the mind think only of one thing, and not think anything else. So, ultimately, it matters little what object you choose for concentration if the purpose is served, i.e. to think only of that thing and nothing else.

When you are accustomed to this external meditation, you can turn to internal meditation.

## **B. Concentration on Internal Points:**

Internal meditation means concentration on certain centres (*Chakras*) of the body. The most important and most favourable Chakras (for beginners) in meditation are the Chakra between the eyebrows, and the Chakra in the heart.

In the waking state, the mind functions in the brain, in the dream state it works near the throat, and in deep sleep it goes to the heart. In deep, objectless meditation also the mind goes to the heart. So, the ultimate purpose of internal meditation is to bring the mind to the heart. This is done in three stages: the mind comes from the external object to the head (i.e. the centre between the eyebrows), then the mind comes to the heart. Meditation on the point between the eyebrows is in two stages :

- (1) external gaze at the centre of eyebrows, and
- (2) to close the eyes and think of the spot alone (as a spot of light). Slowly, you begin to feel that the mind descends from the head through the throat to the heart. When you do this,

you will fall asleep if you are careless. You must do this with caution and alertness; otherwise you will sleep and mistake it for meditation.

The other method of internal meditation is to directly meditate on the heart. You can imagine a blossoming lotus in the heart, or the light of the rising sun in the heart. The best form of meditation on the heart is to feel consciousness as seated there. From this internal point of meditation on consciousness in the heart, you can slowly proceed to the universal.

### **C. Concentration on the Universal:**

Just as Consciousness is in your heart, it is in the heart of everybody. Try to meditate on this Consciousness as present everywhere, in everything (outside and inside) uniformly. This is the absolute form of meditation, i.e., the Supreme State.

To help achieve this Universal of Meditation, you can chant Om (Pranava) in a methodical manner. There are three types of OM chanting :

- (1) short - about one second, i.e. 30 in 30 seconds;
- (2) middle - each chant for five seconds, i.e. 6 chants in 30 seconds;
- (3) long - each chant for fifteen seconds, i.e. 2 chants in 30 seconds.

The elongated process is the best form of chanting. It makes the cells of the body subside in their activities; the nervous system becomes calm. You need not take any tranquilizers. If you are disturbed, chant this elongated way for fifteen minutes. The whole system will become calm and quiet. When you chant like this, feel also that you are expanding slowly into the Cosmos.

OM is not merely a sound that we make, but a symbol of a Universal Vibration. This is really the Vibration that was made at the beginning of the creation of the world. This Universal Vibration (of creation) is the controlling force behind everything in the world. So, when you chant OM and create this Vibration in your system, you set yourself in tune with the Vibration of the Cosmos. The Forces of the Universe begin to enter into your body; you will feel strong and energetic; your hunger and thirst will decrease; you will feel absolute happiness even if you have nothing (i.e. no material possessions) and are absolutely alone, unknown and unseen by people. You will have no desire for anything in the world, because you have become one with all things.

When you become the friend of the Universal Forces, then the world will take care of you in times of difficulty, and you will have no fear from anywhere. Then it is that you become a Saint or a Sage. In this state, if you have any desire, it will be immediately fulfilled, because you have become the friend of all Forces in the world. In this state of Ecstasy of Bliss, great Saints sing and dance (because they possess everything in the world). Here it is that you will realize that you are a Child of God. God Himself will perpetually take care of you and you will have no fear, just as the son of a King has no fear because the King protects him always and everywhere in the kingdom.

### Day-to-Day Practice

This is almost a complete outline of the essentials of the practice of Yoga. But, when you actually begin to practice it, you will find it is very difficult. So, you have to be very honest in your pursuit. Swami Sivananda taught us that Sadhana has three prongs, like a Trisula (trident):

1. **A Daily Routine of Practice.** Have a fixed procedure of practice every day. One must keep fixed hours and discipline his personality. In daily routine, three items should be very important:
  - (a) **JAPA** - chanting some Mantra over and over to maintain the same consciousness (this is often useful when meditation is difficult);
  - (b) **STUDY** - reading scriptures or texts on Yoga, e.g. Upanishads, Bhagavadgita, The Sermon on the Mount, The Imitation of Christ;
  - (c) **MEDITATION** - should be performed at a fixed time and in a fixed place every day (you should not change the place); face the same direction daily (either the East or the North) and sit in the same Asana (i.e. posture) every day.
2. **An Annual Resolve.** Vow to give up bad habits like harming or hurting others, telling lies, and incontinence; these three must be given up (slowly) by degrees. *Ahimsa, Satya, Brahmacharya* are to be practiced. If you break this resolve, you should fast one day. Because of the fear of fasting, you will be careful not to break the vow.
3. **A Spiritual Diary.** When you go to bed every night you should review what you have done since morning. This diary may consist of questions you may ask yourself, e.g. “How many times have I forgotten God today?” “Did I get angry today?” etc.

With these methods, you can take to serious Sadhana, or practice of Yoga. And when your efforts are followed with earnestness of purpose, you shall achieve success in this very life.