



YOGASARA UPANISHAD OF SWAMI SIVANANDA Sivananda Daily Readings

(5 March – 24 March)

These writings of Swami Sivananda are from the book, 'Sivananda Daily Readings', compiled from the writings of Swami Sivananda by Swami Venkatesananda. These particular selections form the 'Yogasara Upanishad' —or, 'The Upanishad of Yoga'. In the original book, some of the mantras were spread out over a two or more days of daily reading to keep them page sized. Here, I have kept the notes and commentary of each of the fourteen mantras together to facilitate deeper study.

Now yoga is explained (1)

Notes and Commentary

Yoga is the state wherein there is no sankalpa vikalpa (thought or doubt). Yoga is the control of mind and its modifications. Yoga is the equal state between jivatma (soul) and paramatma (God). The word 'Yogi' signifies an aspirant or a student in the path of yoga, as well as a full blown developed adept in yoga. He who is fully established in the highest nirvikalpa samadhi (super-consciousness) is a yogi. He who practises yoga is also a yogi. A 'raja yogi' is otherwise known as 'dhyana yogi'. Dhyana means meditation. It is the continuous flow of one idea of God. Raja yoga aims at controlling all thought-waves or mental modifications. It concerns with the mind, its purification and control. Hence it is called, 'raja yoga, king of yogas'. It is otherwise known as ashtanga yoga (yoga with eight limbs).

A sutra means a thread or aphorism or terse saying. Each sutra is pregnant with high, sublime ideas. Without the help of commentary, it is difficult to understand the meanings of the aphorisms. Just as flowers or pearls are studded in a string or a thread, even so, philosophical or spiritual ideas are studded in a sutra or thread.

Food (ahara), sleep (nidra), fear (bhaya), and coition (maithuna) are common to both animals and human beings. But man has got intelligence, power of discrimination (viveka) and power of enquiry (vichara shakti); with the help of these special powers, he can realise his Self and can know his true nature. Even devas (gods) are envious of human beings. Because deva yoni (divine species) is mere bhoga yoni (enjoyment), they can enjoy only with a daivic (divine) body. Man

has got both karma yoni (activity) and bhoga yoni. He can do nishkamya karma yoga and attain jnana through chitta-shuddhi (purity of mind). He can take recourse to various yogic practices for spiritual unfoldment and can become a full blown yogi in this birth. Horses and dogs possess minds. But they have neither discrimination nor intelligence nor vichara shakti. Hence it is not possible for them to attain freedom.

You will find in Yajnavalkya Smriti that Hiranyagarbha was the original teacher of yoga. Patanjali Maharishi is only a compiler or explainer of the yogic principles and tenets taught and practised by Hiranyagarbha and others.

Yoga is the restraint of thought-waves (2)

Notes and Commentary

Now I proceed to explain the system of yoga philosophy in brief and bring home to the readers the salient and vital points in the yogic system. Yoga teaches how to control the vrittis (thought waves) of the mind and get freedom. Yoga teaches how to curb the outgoing mind and attain one's pure state of bliss by going beyond the mind. Yoga teaches how to transmute the unregenerate nature and attain the state of divinity. Yoga is a complete suppression of the tendency of the mind to transform itself into objects, thoughts, etc.

Raja yoga is an exact science. One can ascend the yogic ladder patiently through its different rungs. The highest summit of the ladder is asamprajnata samadhi (super-consciousness), wherein all the samskaras (mental impressions), which bring about successive births, are absolutely fried up. The eight limbs of ashtanga yoga are: yama (self-restraint), niyama (religious observances or canons), asana (posture), pranayama (restraint of breath), pratyahara (abstraction of senses), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (super-conscious state).

This is one kind of classification of yoga: karma, upasana, raja yoga and jnana. This is yogatraya (three-fold yoga). Upasana is bhakti. Another classification is mantra yoga, laya yoga, hatha yoga and raja yoga. Mantra yoga is recitation of mantras as "Om Namah Shivaya" of Lord Siva, "Om Namo Narayanaya" of Lord Vishnu, Gayatri, etc. Laya yoga is kundalini yoga. Nada anusadhana (concentration on anahata sounds of heart) is also laya yoga. Laya means dissolution. The mind is dissolved in God.

Hatha yoga relates to the restraint of breath (pranayama), asanas, bandhas, mudras, etc. 'Ha' and 'tha' mean the union of sun and moon, union of prana and apana. Hatha means any obstinate practice till the object or end is achieved. Hatha is sticking to some spiritual practices. Mauna (vow of silence), trataka (steady gazing), crystal-gazing, standing on one leg (a kind of austerity) etc., are all hatha practices. Hatha yoga is not separate from raja yoga. It prepares the student to take up raja yoga. Hatha yoga is concerned with the breath (prana) and the physical body. Pranayama purifies the pranamaya kosha (vital sheath).

Now there is communion with the Lord (3)

Notes and Commentary

The word 'Yoga' comes from the Sanskrit root 'Yuj' which means 'to join'. By the practice of yoga, the individual soul (jivatma) is united with the supreme soul (paramatma). Yoga means union with God. Then all samsara (cycle of birth and death) comes to an end.

Yoga kills all sorts of pain, miseries and tribulations. Yoga frees you from the samsaric wheel of birth and death. Yoga gives you various powers and liberation through jnana (self-knowledge). Therefore drink the elixir or nectar of immortality and become a yogi. "*Tasmat yogi bhava Arjuna.*" (Gita, Ch. VI - 46.) Union with God is the goal of human life. It is the be all and end all of our existence. It is the *summum bonum*.

The Lord (Ishvara) of raja, yoga is a special purusha (person) who is not affected by the five afflictions and the fruit of actions and desires. His name or symbol is Om. He is indicated by the mono syllable Om. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, etc.

Song of Real Sadhana

Do real sadhana, my dear children

Do real sadhana sadhana sadhana sadhana sadhana

To free yourself from birth and death

And enjoy the highest bliss I will tell you the surest way

Kindly hearken with greatest care

Do real sadhana sadhana sadhana sadhana sadhana

Acquire first sadhana chatushtaya,

Then proceed to the feet of sadguru,

After having shravan and manan,

Then do practise nidhidhyasan,

Do real sadhana sadhana sadhana sadhana sadhana

Remove first the old, old dehaadhyas,

By repeating Shivoam Bhavana,

Then remove the veil, avarana,

You will rest in your own swaroop.

Do real sadhana sadhana sadhana sadhana sadhana



Learn the yoga under a guru (4)

Notes and Commentary

Learn the yoga under a guru (preceptor). Then only will you be able to understand the subtle points. Get practical lessons also from him. Then alone you will grow rapidly. He will remove your doubts and show you the right path, because he has already trodden the path himself. He will point out the pitfalls, snares, etc., that tempt and deceive the aspirants on the path. He will inspire his disciples.

Just as water flows from a higher level to a lower level, so also the grace of the guru flows towards the disciple if the latter has a true receptive attitude and sincere faith in his guru. Just as electricity flows from a positive charge battery towards the negative pole, even so the power, energy, love, wisdom and spiritual current flow from the master mind of a yogi towards the lesser mind of the disciple.

Even in cooking and typewriting you want a guru to guide. When such is the case with ordinary matters and secular sciences, what to speak of the science of yoga which treats of sublime spiritual matters and transcendental questions? The mysteries of knowledge are handed down from guru to disciple.

Books also can help you. They will inspire you. They can guide you only to a certain extent. You will have to practise for yourself yama, niyama or the rules of right conduct before you approach a guru. You can start the minor practices asana, pranayama, some concentration exercises, etc., with the help of books. Books written by realised persons can serve the purpose of a guru till you come in personal contact with a realised yogi or adept. You can also get help from senior aspirants in the path of yoga.

Make a programme of your life. Draw up a spiritual routine. Stick to it systematically and regularly. Apply diligently. Never waste a single minute. Life is short. Time is fleeting. That "tomorrow" will never come - now or never.

Stand up with a firm resolve: "I will become a yogi this very moment." Gird up your loins. Do rigid, constant yoga sadhana or yoga abhyasa. If you are very sincere in your practice and if your mind is filled with burning vairagya (dispassion) and keen longing for liberation (mumukshutwa), you can reach perfection within six months.

A vritti is a 'whirlpool' in the mind-lake (5)

Notes and Commentary

Vritti literally means a whirlpool. It is a thought-wave in the lake of chitta. Chitta is the mind-stuff or mental substance. It takes various forms. These forms constitute vrittis. It gets transformed or modified (parinama). These transformations and modifications are the thought-waves,

whirlpools or vrittis. If the chitta thinks of a mango, the vritti of a mango is formed in the lake of chitta. This will subside and another vritti will be formed when it thinks of milk (milk-vritti).

Countless vrittis are rising and subsiding in the ocean of chitta. These vrittis cause restlessness of mind. Why do vrittis arise from chitta? Because of samskaras (habits) and vasanas (desires). If you annihilate all desires, all vrittis will subside by themselves. When a vritti subsides it leaves a definite impression in the subconscious mind. It is known as samskara or latent impression. The sum-total of all samskaras is known as karmasaya (receptacle of works). This is sanchita karma (accumulated work). When a man leaves the physical body, he carries with him his astral body of seventeen tatvas and the karmasaya as well to the mental plane. This karmasaya is burnt by the highest knowledge obtained through asamprajnata samadhi.

Modification is a vritti in the mind. When the vritti subsides it assumes the subtle state of potency or samskara in the chitta or subconscious mind. This potency again becomes a vritti under suitable conditions, when the mind comes in contact with sensual objects or through memory of objects from stimulus within. There are degrees in the vrittis or modifications that arise from the mind. You can check or control the lower vritti with the help of higher vrittis or transformations. For instance, anger is a lower vritti or a vritti of a lower degree. Kshama (forgiveness) is a vritti of a higher degree. With the help of kshama you can control the lower vritti, anger. You can become a yogarudha (one who is established in yoga) by controlling all the vrittis of the mind. The yogi does not annihilate himself by controlling all the vrittis or modifications of the mind. By suppressing the transformations of the mind he acquires great powers. He becomes an (adept or perfect being) siddha.

Although the mind is one, it passes into many conditions or states, as it is made up of three qualities (gunas) satva, rajas and tamas. All these qualities enter into a variety of combinations. The modifications or vrittis of the mind are also various. Peace of mind is a satvic vritti. Lust is a rajasic vritti. Laziness is a tamasic vritti.

By destroying the vrittis one by one, you gain more and more mental strength (manasic bala) and spiritual strength (atma bala). Do the practice and feel the strength yourself. The annihilation of even one vritti will give you strength to destroy the second vritti that is tormenting you. Patience, perseverance and persistent sadhana are necessary. How difficult is it to get the M.A. degree? How much more difficult should it be, if you want to attain the state of immortality and absolute freedom? Just as you remove a small pebble that causes irritation to your feet, so also you should then and there remove every vritti that torments the mind. Unless and until you are able to do so, you have not gained any real mental strength or spiritual power. Just as you extract a tooth and then chuck it away, so also you should extract a disturbing vritti and cast it aside. Raja yoga teaches how to extract or root out the disturbing thoughts. You will have to pay a heavy price for mastering this yoga.

Ignorant people identify themselves with the body, mind and the vrittis of the mind. The mind and the body are instruments only. The real man is behind the mind. If you become one with the mind, body and vritti, you get various sorts of miseries and sufferings. The whole universe is created by the vrittis of the mind only. If these mental waves or thought-waves subside, you can attain the absolute state. Just as you can clearly see the bottom of a lake when the ripples and waves subside, so also you can cognise your real Self when the vrittis that agitate your mind subside.

Thought is a thing. Thought is a dynamic force (6)

Notes and Commentary

Thought is as much a thing as the yonder piece of stone. It has weight, colour, shape, size and form. Thought is a dynamic force. It is caused by the vibrations of psychic prana (sukshma prana) on the mental substance. It is a force like gravitation, cohesion or repulsion. Thought travels or moves. Thought has got tremendous power. Thought can heal diseases. Thoughts can transform the mentality of persons. Thought can do anything. It can work wonders. The velocity of thought is unimaginable.

Thought is a finer force. This is supplied to us by food. If you read Chhandogya Upanishad - the dialogue between Uddalaka and Swetaketu - you will understand this point well. If the food is pure, thought also becomes pure. He who has pure thoughts speaks very powerfully and produces deep impression on the minds of the hearers by his speech. He influences thousands of persons through his pure thoughts. A pure thought is sharper than the edge of a razor. Entertain always pure sublime thoughts. Thought-culture is an exact science.

Thinking is of four kinds, viz., symbolic thinking, instinctive thinking, impulsive thinking and habitual thinking. Thinking through words is symbolic thinking. Instincts are more powerful than impulses. Thoughts of body, food, drink, bath, etc., are habitual thinking. You can stop easily symbolic thinking. It is difficult to stop instinctive and impulsive thinking.

Thought is a great force. Thought has tremendous power. It can be transmitted from one man to another man. You can move the world through thought-force. The powerful thoughts of great sages (rishis) of yore are still recorded in the akasha (akashic records). Yogis who have clairvoyant vision can perceive those thought-images. They can read them. You are surrounded by an ocean of thought. You are floating in the ocean of thought. You are absorbing certain thoughts and repelling some in the thought-world.

Everyone has his own thought-world. Through practice of yama, niyama, pranayama and meditation, you can change impure thoughts into suitable pure thoughts. Meditation fills the mind with cheerful, powerful, satvic thoughts.

Chitta is the mind-stuff from which the vrittis arise (7)

Notes and Commentary

The thinking principle is a comprehensive expression equivalent to the Sanskrit term antahkarana. Antahkarana is a broad term used in vedanta. It includes manas (mind), buddhi (intellect), chitta and ahamkara (egoism or self-asserting principle).

The one mind assumes the three other forms, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara according to the different functions it performs (vrittibheda), just as one man is a judge in courts, president in a sabha, store-keeper in a store and general secretary of a managing committee. Manas is a sankalpavikalpatmaka (willing and doubting), It thinks whether to go to a place or not, whether to do this or not, and whether this is good or bad. The mind is of a doubting nature.

Buddhi (intellect) nischayatmaka (certitude). It is the determining faculty, It is that light of buddhi that determines one way or the other. I must go to Dehra Dun by this evening train. I must do this work. This is good. Chitta does the function of anusandhana (contemplation) and dharana (concentration). The function of memory also belongs to chitta. According to yoga philosophy, chitta is the mind-stuff or the mental substance; and the mind, intellect, and egoism are various processes in the mind-stuff.

Ahamkara is the self-arrogating principle. It does the function of abhimana (identification). It creates mamata (mineness). This is the root cause of all human sufferings. All vrittis hang upon this one "Aham Vritti" ('I' thought). It is the root cause of human ignorance.

It should be distinctly borne in mind that the thinking principle - mind - is not the Atman (Self) who is the fountain-source of all consciousness or knowledge. Just as a piece of iron moves in the presence of a mighty magnet, so also the little mind moves in the presence of the majestic Atman. Just as a minister works with fear in the presence of a king, so also the mind works in the same way in the presence of the king of kings, the Atman. Just as a mirror borrows its light from the sun, so also the mind borrows its light from the Atman, the Supreme Being.

Perception comes only when the mind is connected with the centre and external instrument (8)

Notes and Commentary

Modification of mind is known as parinama. When milk is changed into curd, it is also parinama. Even so the mind gets modified into a vritti by assuming the form of the object it perceives. Knowledge of perception is a kind of transformation (parinama) of the mind.

Some people sleep with their eyes open. The object is there. The centre of vision is there and yet they cannot see the object. Why? Because the mind is not there. Therefore three things are necessary for perception of an object viz., the physical instrument, the external fleshy eyes which

act as windows to the soul; the centre of the vision in the brain and the mind. It is the mind that really sees. It is the commander of the five senses. The senses carry the vibrations from outside to the mind. They are avenues of sense-knowledge.

According to Sankhya philosophy, it is the purusha or soul that is the real perceiver of an object. The sense transmits the sense-vibrations to the mind, and the mind in its turn presents the vibrations to the prime minister of the soul, the buddhi or intellect, the discriminative faculty, which is very close to the soul. Now, reaction comes in. With the reaction of the buddhi egoism manifests side by side. Then the whole thing is presented to purusha who really perceives all objects.

If the physical instrument, eye, is not in a good working order owing to cataract or any other disease, you cannot have perception of an object. The eye may be all right, but if the centre of vision that is situated in the occipital lobe of the brain at the back of the skull does not function properly owing to the diseases of this particular lobe of the brain, in that case also you can have hardly any perception of any object. The eye and the centre of the vision may be in sound condition, but if the mind is not linked with the centre and the external eye, you can hardly have perception of any object. Sometimes a man says: "I did not hear. I did not see. My mind was elsewhere." You will find such instances in your daily life.

When you are deeply engaged in solving a mathematical problem, you do not hear any sound though your friends shout loudly by your side. Tram-cars and motor-cars run about in the street. If you are deeply engaged in something, you do not hear them. Why? Because your mind was not linked with the organ of hearing. The indriyas cannot do anything by themselves. They need the help of their master, the mind, at every moment. It is the mind that sees, hears, tastes, smells and feels. Senses simply transmit the sense-vibrations from outside to the mind.

The table that you see is a mental kalpana (imagination). This table, though you see it externally, really exists in your mind. A mental picture or image plus external something is the table. That which exists outside is unknown and unknowable. Mind reacts to external vibrations and you see the external universe. If there is no mind there is no universe. Where is the world for you during deep sleep? Hence this world is termed as manomatra jagat or manahkalpita jagat. This mind is the universe. There is no world apart from the mind.

How can a tiny lens produce a big image of a mountain? A small image is produced by the lens, the retina and the optic centre. It is the mind that develops and enlarges it. All the pictures do already exist in the mind. What you perceive as a big mountain outside is only the mental image plus some external unknowable something.

If you say: 'there is nothing outside', why do you run after food and water when you are hungry and thirsty? If everything is within, you should get satisfaction from hunger and thirst from within only. But it is not the case. There is something outside, call it avivarta (appearance) of Brahman,

vilasa (expansion) of maya, chamatkara (trick) of avidya (ignorance), parinama (modification) of Vishnu, electrical waves of scientists, combination of anus (atoms) of Kanada or tatva (elemental) vilasa. It does not matter much.

Pleasure also must be given up as pain (9)

Notes and Commentary

Pleasure that is derived from sensual objects gives pain to one who discriminates. Worldly-minded persons who have lost the faculty of discrimination, rejoice in sensual objects on account of lack of discrimination. They weep in old age. You weep when you are born. You weep when you die. You weep in the interval also. Where then is pleasure in the world? Learn to discriminate. Become a yogi. Yoga will I put an end to all sorts of pain. Yoga will destroy all kleshas (afflictions). Wake up. Open your eyes. Practise yoga, my child!

Sensual pleasure is momentary, deceptive, illusory and imaginary. A mustard seed of pleasure is mixed with a mountain of pain. Enjoyment cannot bring about satisfaction of a desire. On the contrary, it makes the mind more restless after enjoyment through intense craving (trishnas and vasanas). Sensual pleasure is the cause of birth and death. This body is nothing but a mass of flesh, bone, and all sorts of filth.

Place before the mind the fruits of Self-realisation or life in the soul or Brahman or the eternal such as immortality, eternal bliss, supreme peace and infinite knowledge. If you remember these points always, the mind will be weaned from the cravings for sensual pleasure. Vairagya, viveka and mumukshutwa (dispassion, discrimination from the real and unreal and keen longing for liberation from birth and death) will dawn. You should seriously look into the defects of the sensual life and into the unreal nature of worldly life.

Just as pure gold which has been treated in the crucible with borax, etc., and rendered pure, shines brilliantly, so also the yogi, whose mind is rendered pure by the agents of vairagya and abhyasa, becomes a lustrous person.

Prakriti operates through three gunas (10)

Notes and Commentary

Satva, rajas and tamas are the three gunas or qualities of the mind. Satva is purity or light or knowledge. Rajas is passion or activity. Tamas is inertia or darkness. By checking rajas and tamas you can increase the satva. When the satva is increased the mind becomes steady like the flame of a lamp in a windless place. He who is satvic can do real concentration and meditation and can enter into samadhi (super-conscious state) easily. A rajasic man loves power and objects of sense. A tamasic man does vicious actions on account of ignorance. Satva cannot stand by itself. It is

mixed with disturbing rajas and tamas. When there is preponderance of satva, rajas and tamas get controlled. But they lurk in the mind all the same.

Where there is increase of satva, there is brightness, lightness, joy, purity, strength, peace and illumination. Your important duty is to increase satva and control the senses and the mind.

Other duties are secondary only. A sensible man only can understand this point.

The mind is wandering (ksipta) and unsteady through the disturbing energy rajas (passion) which makes the mind run towards various sensual objects. The mind becomes (mudha) forgetful when it is filled with tamas (inertia). Deep sleep supervenes on account of excess of tamas.

Dharana (concentration) is fixing the mind on an idea or a point or object either internal or external (11)

Notes and Commentary

It is very difficult to say where concentration ends and meditation begins. Meditation follows concentration. Purify the mind first through the practice of yama (self-control) and niyama (discipline). Then take to the practice of dharana. Concentration without purity is of no use. There are some occultists who are much advanced in concentration. But they have no good character. That is the reason why they do not make any progress in the spiritual path. Some foolish, impatient yogic students take to dharana at once without undergoing the preliminary ethical training. They want to have a long jump. They break their legs and fall down. This is a serious blunder. Ethical perfection is of paramount importance.

Concentration is steadfastness of mind. If you remove all causes of distraction, your power of concentration will increase. A true brahmachari (celibate) who has preserved his virya (vitality) will have wonderful concentration. Attention plays a prominent part in concentration. He who has developed his power of attention will have good concentration. You should be able to visualise very clearly the object of concentration even in its absence. You must call up the mental picture in a moment's notice. If you have good practice in concentration you can do this without difficulty. He who has gained success in pratyahara (abstraction) by withdrawing the indriyas (senses) from the various objects will have good concentration. You will have to march in the spiritual path step by step, stage by stage. Lay the foundation of yama (right conduct), niyama, asana (posture), pranayama and pratyahara to start with. The super-structure of dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi will be successful then only.

Asana is bahiranga sadhana (external practice); dhyana is antaranga sadhana (internal). When compared with dhyana and samadhi, even dharana is bahiranga sadhana. He who has steady asana and has purified the yoga-nadis and the pranamaya kosha (vital sheath) through pranayama will be able to concentrate easily.

You can concentrate internally on any of the seven plexus or chakras or centres of spiritual energy, or at the tip of the nose, or tip of the tongue or externally on the picture of any devata (deity), Hari, Hara, Krishna or Devi. You can concentrate on the tick-tick sound of a watch or the flame of a candle, or on a black point on a wall, or on a pencil or rose flower or any pleasing object. This is concrete concentration. There can be no concentration without something upon which the mind may rest. The mind can be fixed easily on a pleasing object such as jasmine flower, mango, orange or a loving friend. It is difficult to fix the mind in the beginning on any object which it dislikes such as faecal matter, cobra, enemy, ugly face, etc. Practise concentration till the mind is well established on the object of concentration. When the mind runs away from the object of concentration, bring it back again and again to the object. Lord Krishna says: "As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goes forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under the control of the self." (Gita Ch. VI - 26.)

If you want to increase your power of concentration you will have to reduce your worldly activities. You will have to observe mauna (vow of silence) for two hours daily. A man whose mind is filled with passion and all sorts of fantastic desires can hardly concentrate on any object even for a second. His mind will be oscillating like a balloon. Regulate and master the breath. Subdue the senses and then fix the mind on any pleasing object. Associate the ideas of holiness and purity with the object.

You can concentrate on the space between the two eyebrows (trikuti). You can concentrate on the mystic sounds (anahata dhvani) that you hear from your right ear. You can concentrate on Om picture. The picture of Lord Krishna with flute in hand and the picture of Lord Vishnu with conch, discus, mace and lotus are very good for concentration. You can concentrate on the picture of your guru or any saint also. Vedantins try to fix the mind on Atman, the inner Self. This is their dharana.

Dharana is the sixth stage or limb of ashtanga yoga or raja yoga of Patanjali Maharshi. In dharana you will have only one vritti or wave in the mind-lake. The mind assumes the form of only one object. All other operations of the mind are suspended or stopped. He who can practise real concentration for half or one hour will have tremendous psychic powers. His 'will' also will be very powerful.

When hatha yogis concentrate their minds on the six supports (the sad-chakras), they concentrate their minds on the respective presiding deities also, viz., Ganesha, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra Ishvara and Sadashiva. Control the breath through pranayama. Subdue the senses through pratyahara. And then fix the mind either on a form or the formless Brahman. According to hatha yogic school, a yogi who can suspend his breath by kumbhak for 20 minutes can have very good dharana. He will have a very tranquil mind. Pranayama steadies the mind, removes vikshepa (distraction) and increases the power of concentration. Those who practise khecari mudra by

cutting the frenum lingue and lengthening the tongue and fixing it in the hole in the palate by taking upwards will have good dharana.

Those who practise concentration evolve quickly. They can do any work with scientific accuracy and great efficiency. What others do in six hours can be done by one who has concentration within half an hour. What others can read in six hours, can be read by one who does concentration within half an hour. Concentration purifies and calms the surging emotions, strengthens the current of thought and clarifies the ideas. Concentration helps a man in his material progress also. He will turn out a very good amount of work in his office or business house. What was cloudy and hazy before becomes clear and definite. What was difficult before becomes easy now and what was complex, bewildering and confusing before comes easily within the mental grasp. You can achieve anything through concentration. Nothing is impossible for a man who practises regular concentration. It is very difficult to practise concentration when one is hungry and when one is suffering from an acute disease. He who practises concentration will possess very good health and very clear mental vision.

If you read with concentration the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana or the eleventh skanda of Bhagavatam several times, you will get new ideas each time. Through concentration you will get penetrative insight. Subtle, esoteric meanings will flash out in the field of mental consciousness. You will understand inner depths of philosophical significance. When you concentrate on any object do not wrestle with the mind. Avoid tension anywhere in the body or mind. Think gently of the object in a continuous manner. Do not allow the mind to wander away.

Retire into a quiet room; sit on padmasana. Close your eyes. See what happens when you concentrate on an apple. You may think of its colour, shape, size and its different parts such as skin, pulp, seeds, etc. You may think of the places (Australia or Kashmir) wherefrom it is imported. You may think of its acidic or sweet taste and its effects on the digestive system and blood. Through law of association ideas of some other fruits also may try to enter. The mind may entertain some other extraneous ideas. It may begin to wander about. It may think of meeting a friend at the railway station at 4 p.m. It may think of purchasing a towel or a tin of tea and biscuits. It may ponder over some unpleasant happening that occurred the previous day. You must try to have a definite line of thought. There must not be any break in the line of thinking. You must not allow other thoughts which are not connected with the object on hand to enter. You will have to struggle hard to get success in this direction. The mind will try its level best to run in the old grooves and to take its old familiar road or old beaten path. The attempt is somewhat like going uphill. You will rejoice when you get even some success in concentration. Just as law of gravitation, cohesion, etc., operate in the physical plane, so also definite laws of thought such as law of association, law of relativity, law of continuity, etc., operate in the mental plane or thought-world. Those who practise concentration should thoroughly understand these laws.

When the mind thinks of an object, it may think of its qualities and its parts also. When it thinks of a cause, it may think of its effects also.

If emotions disturb you during concentration, do not mind them. They will pass away soon. If you try to drive them, you will have to tax your will-force. Have an indifferent attitude. The vedantin uses the formulae: "I don't care. Get out. I am a sakshi (witness of the mental modifications)" to drive the emotions. The devotee simply prays and help comes from God.

Train the mind in concentration on various subjects, gross and subtle, and of various sizes, small, medium, and big. In course of time a firm habit of concentration will be formed. The moment you sit for concentration the mood will come at once quite easily. When you read a book, you must read it with concentration. There is no use skipping over the pages in a hurried manner. Read one page in the Gita. Close the book. Concentrate on what you have read. Find out parallel lines in Mahabharata, Upanishads and Bhagavatam. Compare and contrast.

For a neophyte, the practice of concentration is disgusting and tiring in the beginning. He has to cut new grooves in the mind and brain. After some months he will get great interest in concentration. He will enjoy a new kind of happiness, the concentration-ananda. He will become restless if he fails to enjoy this new kind of happiness even on one day. Concentration is the only way to get rid of the worldly miseries and tribulations. Your only duty is to practise concentration. You have taken this physical body to practise concentration and through concentration to realise the self. Charity, Rajasuya Yajna, are nothing when compared with concentration. They are playthings only.

Through vairagya (dispassion), pratyahara and practice of concentration, the dissipated rays of wandering mind are slowly collected. Through steady practice it is rendered one-pointed. How happy and strong is that yogi who has one-pointed mind! He can turn out voluminous work in the twinkling of an eye.

Those who practise concentration off and on will have only occasionally a steady mind. Sometimes the mind will begin to wander and will be quite unfit for application. You must have a mind that will obey you at all times sincerely and carry out all your commands in the best possible manner at any time. Steady and systematic practice of raja yoga will make the mind very obedient and faithful.

There are five yoga bhumikas or stages or five stages of the mind, viz., kshipta (wandering), mudha (forgetfulness), vikshipta (gathering mind), ekagra (one-pointed), niruddha (controlled or well restrained). By gradual and well-regulated practice of concentration daily, the rays of the wandering mind are collected. It becomes one-pointed. Eventually it is curbed properly. It comes under proper control.

If the aspirant pursues what is not fitting, his progress is painful and sluggish. He who pursues what is fitting gets easy progress and quick intuition. He who has no past spiritual samskaras

(tendencies) of previous birth makes painful progress. One who has such samskaras makes easy progress. In one whose nature is actually corrupt and whose controlling faculties are weak, progress is painful and intuition is sluggish. But to one of keen controlling faculties progress is rapid and intuition is quick. In one overcome by ignorance, intuition is sluggish; to one not so overcome, intuition is rapid.

Dhyana or meditation is the keeping up of the flow of one idea, like the flow of oil (12)

Notes and Commentary

Meditation is of two kinds, viz., concrete and abstract. If you meditate on any picture of concrete object, it is concrete meditation. If you meditate on an abstract idea, on any quality (such as mercy, tolerance), it is abstract meditation. A beginner should practise concrete meditation. For some, abstract meditation is more easy than concrete.

The aspirant can take up the practice of meditation after he is well up in pratyahara (abstraction of senses) and concentration. If the senses are turbulent, if the mind cannot be fixed on one point, no meditation is possible even within hundreds of years. One should go stage by stage, step by step. The mind should be withdrawn again and again to the point when it runs. One should reduce his wants and renounce all sorts of wild, vain desires of the mind. A desireless man only can sit quiet and practise meditation. Satvic (pure) light diet and brahmacharya (celibacy) are the prerequisites for the practice of meditation.

Consciousness is of two kinds, viz., focusing consciousness and marginal consciousness. When you concentrate on trikuti, the space midway between the two eye-brows, your focusing consciousness is on the trikuti. When some flies sit on your left hand during meditation, you drive them with your right hand. When you become conscious of the flies it is called marginal consciousness.

A seed which has remained in fire for a second will not undoubtedly sprout into leaves even though sown in a fertile soil. Even so a mind that does meditation for some time but runs towards sensual objects on account of unsteadiness will not bring in the full fruits of yoga.

Samadhi is of two kinds, samprajnata and asamprajnata (13)

Notes and Commentary

Samadhi means super-conscious state, wherein the yogi gets super-sensual experiences. Samadhi is of two kinds viz., samprajnata or sabija or savikalpa and asamprajnata or nirbija or nirvikalpa. In savikalpa samadhi there are triputi (triad) - the knower, knowledge and knowable. There is alambana (support) for the mind to lean upon. The samskaras (tendencies) are not fried. In nirvikalpa, there is neither triputi nor alambana. The samskaras are fried in toto. The nirvikalpa

samadhi only can destroy birth and death, and bring in highest knowledge and bliss. Savikalpa samadhis of various kinds - savitarka and nirvitarka, savichara and nirvichara, sa-ananda, and asmita.

When you get full success or perfection (siddhi) in raja yoga by entering into asamprajnata samadhi (nirvikalpa state) all the samskaras and vasanas (conditioning) which bring on rebirths are totally fried up. All vrittis (mental modifications) that arise from the mind-lake - come under restraint. The five afflictions, viz., avidya (ignorance), asmita (egoism), raga-dvesha (love and hatred), and abhinivesha (clinging to life) are destroyed and the bonds of karma are annihilated. Control the mind and the sense, become desireless, develop the power of endurance, contemplate see the Self in the self. Samadhi brings on highest good (nishreyas) and exaltation (abhyudaya). It gives moksha (deliverance from the wheel of births and deaths). The afflictions, egoism, etc., have their root in avidya (ignorance). With the advent of the knowledge of the self, the ignorance vanishes. With the disappearance of the root cause, viz., ignorance, egoism, etc., also disappear.

In the asamprajnata samadhi, all the modifications of the mind are completely restrained. All the residual samskaras also are totally burnt. This is the highest samadhi of raja yoga. This is also known as nirbija samadhi (without seeds) and nirvikalpa samadhi. Dharma megha in raja yoga means "the cloud of virtue". Just as clouds shower rain, so also this dharma-megha samadhi showers on the yogis omniscience and all sorts of siddhis (powers). Karma is the seed for life state, life period and life experience. Nirbija samadhi will burn all the seeds.

The yogi separates himself from the three gunas (qualities) and attains kaivalya (14)

Notes and Commentary

By increasing the satvic modifications of the mind such as kshama (patience), love, mercy, magnanimity, generosity, truthfulness, celibacy, you can destroy the rajasic and tamasic mental vrittis. Internal fight is ever going on between gunas - satva, rajas and tamas, between good vrittis and evil vrittis.

If satva predominates in the mind, thoughts of God, Brahma-vichara (enquiry into truth) will manifest. The mind will be one-pointed. The meditative mood will come by itself without any exertion. In spiritual neophytes the satvic state of mind will not last for a long time. Rajas and tamas will try to rush in. You will have to be very careful and vigilant. You will have to watch the mind through careful introspection. Your important duty is to increase the satva in the mind. A satvic man will be ever virtuous, God-loving, dispassionate and powerful. A rajasic man will be ever engaged in worldly activities. He wants to lord over people. He has a domineering attitude. He wants powers. He is much attached to wife, children and property. The dross or impurities of the mind - rajas and tamas - should be removed by heating the mind in the fire of vairagya and

abhyasa (dispassion and spiritual practices of sadhana). Then alone you will become a dhyana yogi.

Eventually the purusha (soul) realises his own native state of divine glory, isolation or absolute independence (kaivalya). He has completely disconnected himself from the prakrti and its effects. He feels his absolute freedom and attains kaivalya, the highest goal of a raja yogi. All klesha-karmas are destroyed now. The gunas, having fulfilled their objects of enjoyment and evolution, now entirely cease to act. He has simultaneous knowledge now. The past and future are blended into present. Everything is “now”. Everything is “here”. He has transcended time and space. The sum-total of all knowledge of the three worlds, of all secular sciences is nothing, nothing, compared to the infinite knowledge of a yogi who has attained kaivalya. Glory, glory to such exalted yogis. May their blessings be upon us all!

