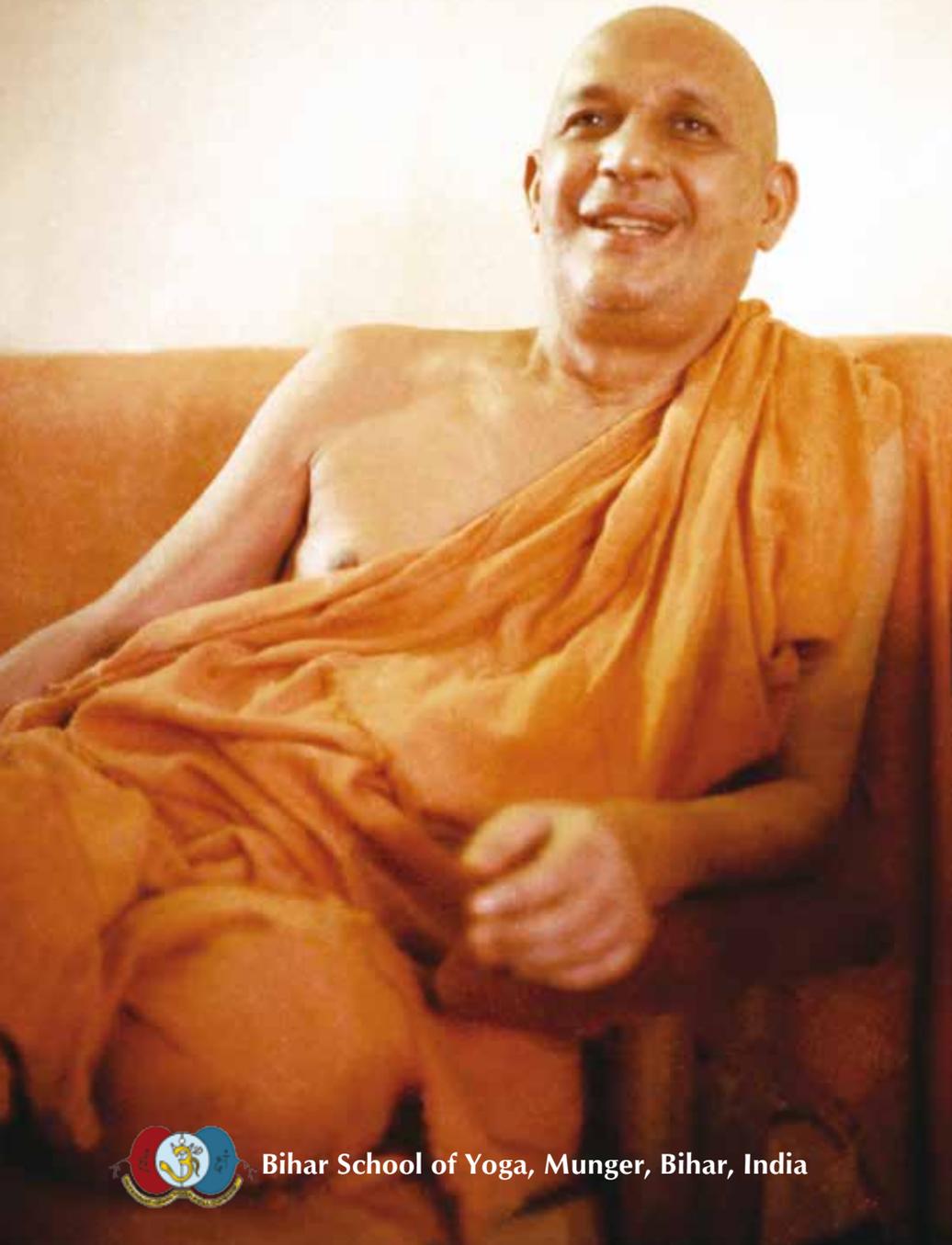


YOGA

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Hari Om

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TRIBUTES BY GURUBHAIS AND DEVOTEES OF SIVANANDA ASHRAM, RISHIKESH, TO SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI

He would carry a burden of responsibility and work that would have been beyond the capacity of five grown-up men! Ungrudgingly and without the least thought for the return, he would lend a helping hand where it was needed, unasked. Sri Swami Satyananda, a rare combination of mighty head, powerful hands and soft heart, a brilliant member in the adhyatmic circle of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, pledged to further the master's mission of disseminating, by practice and by precept, the spiritual wealth of jnana, bhakti, yoga and seva for the re-establishment of peace, love and bliss.

—HH Sri Swami Chidananda Saraswati

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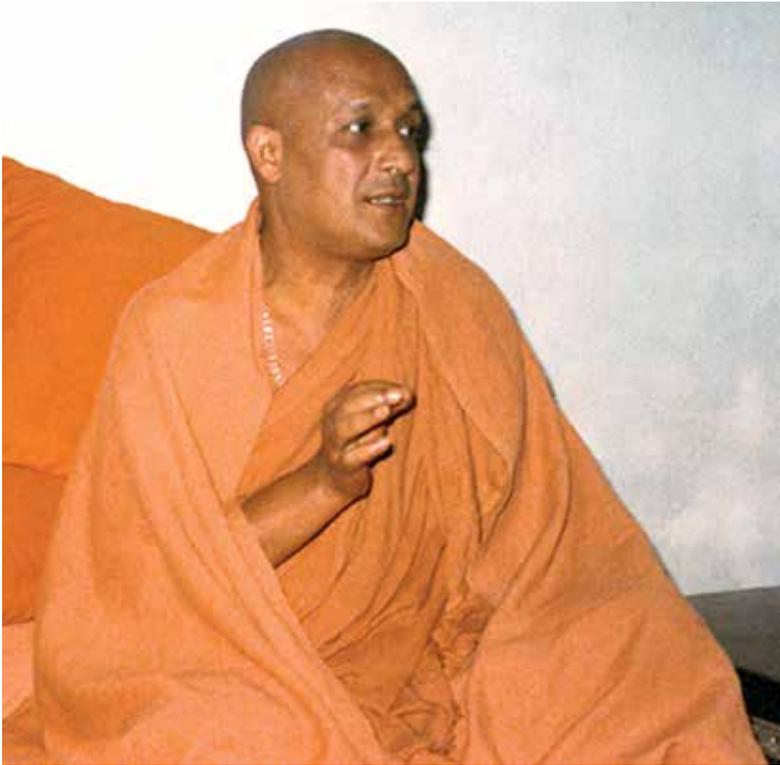
In 2022, YOGA magazine is dedicated to Sri Swami Satyananda's travels through India. This issue presents his talks and satsangs given in the **eastern part of India between 1976 and 1983.**

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The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

The Mantra *Om*



The *Mandukya Upanishad* explains the meaning and philosophy of *Om*. *Om* is the ultimate cosmic sound. Let us not consider it as a holy word. Let us also not confuse *Om* with religious divinities. When I talk about *Om*, I am talking about the sound principle; sound at various levels or vibrations. It is a combination of three sounds: A-U-M. These three sounds represent the three states of an individual. The individual consciousness undergoes changes during a lifetime. The three states are known as waking, dream and sleep.

Waking, dream and sleep are the three phases of experience of an individual. In these three different phases of experience, the

individual is passing through different phases of incarnation. Therefore, the sound 'A' represents waking, 'U' represents dream, and 'M' represents sleep consciousness.

According to our understanding, *Om* seems to be a combination of three sounds, but the Upanishad goes on to tell us that these three sounds are not transcendental sounds, they are empirical sounds which are subject to sensorial and mental experiences. After the three sounds of A-U-M, there is the fourth sound which is unheard, transcendental and non-empirical. Therefore, it has four *matras* or sounds. 'A' is one *matra*, 'U' is the second, 'M' is the third, and the fourth one is transcendental.

While the three *matras* represent waking, dream and sleep, the fourth represents *samadhi* or *moksha*. In the same way as an individual experience is divided into three, time is also divided into three. There are two categories of time: relative and absolute time. What is relative time? Past: that is gone; present: that is; future: that will be. That is called relative time. What is absolute time? Absolute time is known as timelessness. Time is a category of the mind; time is an experience of the mind. As long as you are aware of time, you have a mind, or as long as you have a mind, you have knowledge of time. If you transcend the mind, then naturally you transcend time.

What is that experience when you have transcended the reality of time? What is that experience when you have transcended the experience of mind? The Upanishads say, 'Timelessness.' It says, 'You are there for all the time you are there.' The whole time is understood or experienced in an atomic space. It is a very important topic, and it will become a little bit technical if I talk to you in the language of the Upanishads and physics.

The philosophy of the Upanishads with regard to *Om* and the theory of modern physics move parallel to each other. *Om* therefore is not a holy word, it is what we call the equation of total time and timelessness. If you have studied science, you will understand what I mean by equation. These great things

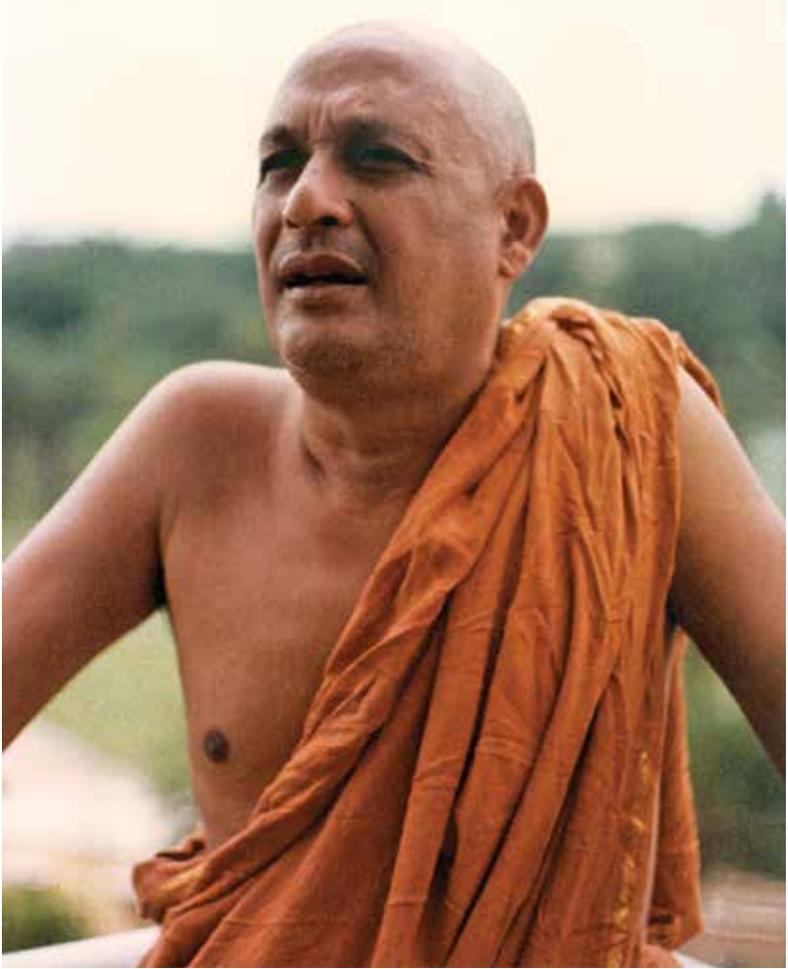
that are very deep have to be reduced to some sort of equation. Just as E represents energy and O represents oxygen, like that there are thousands of equation signs.

'A' represents the waking consciousness, when the body, mind and senses are functioning, depending on the objective experience. 'U' represents dream consciousness, when there is no object, no functioning in the senses, when the mind is completely isolated, bereft of the sensual contacts. However, when there is no experience or no experiencer and homogeneity pervades human consciousness, at the same time, the seed of incarnation is there, the seed of karma is there and karma is not obliterated, that is represented by 'M'. But when these three are brought together, and the sound is produced as *Om*, that represents the unity of different phases of time or timelessness.

The word *Om* was first found in the *Rig Veda*, and it is said in the Vedas that *Om* is the symbol of the cosmos. The whole cosmos is time, space and matter. Time, space and matter is universe, and time plus space plus universe is equal to *Om*. So, *Om* should be considered as the symbol of total creativity. However, it is also said that *Om* is the creator. It is a very peculiar concept.

When time and space come close to each other and they meet with each other in the nucleus, the object explodes. This object explodes into millions and millions of fragments. These fragments are what we call the different planets. We call them nebula. Time and space respectively represent the two forms of energy called plus and minus. Time represents plus and space represents minus. Object is the nucleus which is completely hidden and unmanifest.

During a certain moment in creation, time and space come close to each other. There is an automatic attraction between time and space. It is only during the period of total destruction of matter that time and space fly apart. During the process of creation, there is a natural coming together of these two forces. The funny thing is that when time and space interact with each other, they always interact in the nucleus. That is



the philosophy of nuclear fission; that is the secret of the atom bomb and the secret of the whole of creation. Millions and millions of different planets are nothing but fragments of the object which is the nucleus. Therefore, in this particular context, we can also consider *Om* not only as creation, but also as the Creator.

There is a difference between philosophy and religion here. In every religion there is a god as Creator and there is creation. God is the Creator and creation is different from him.

In philosophy, the Creator and creation are the same. Just as there is a pot maker who makes pots by putting a little mud on the wheel and creating the little earthen pots. The pot here has two causes, one is called the instrumental cause and the other is known as the efficient cause. If there was only a pot maker, the pot would not be there, and if there was only earth, even then the pot would not be there. The pot came into existence because of two causes – the pot maker and the earth.

So here an object has two causes – instrumental and efficient. Is this the situation of creation? Is there a God somewhere who takes a little flesh from here and a little bone from there, and a little blood from here and a little mud from there? Religions say, 'Yes, God took something from here and something from there and made man, animal, horses, donkeys, pigs and rats'. Philosophy says, 'No. This is the reply of a person who is very innocent, who does not want to think too much. He says God created and the problem is finished'. The intelligent man says, 'No, it is not possible. What should be the relationship between the creation and the Creator? Are they different or are they the same?'

In essence, Hindu philosophy believes that the Creator and the creation are inseparable. Of course, not the Hindu religion. The Hindu religion is as innocent as Christianity or Islam. "Who created this? Is he alive? Or did he transform himself in creation? Why? Does the creation exist at all? Well, why am I thinking?" All these funny questions have been raised in the Upanishads and they came to a scientific equation called *Om*, which represents the lower and higher stages of existence. This *Om* was emphasized and transformed into waves of sounds. That is known as Gayatri.

In the Vedas, the first equation of the cosmos is *Om* and the second explanation of the cosmos is Gayatri. Therefore, Gayatri is as important as the mantra *Om*. It is a mantra of 24 syllables which represent the same as A-U-M.

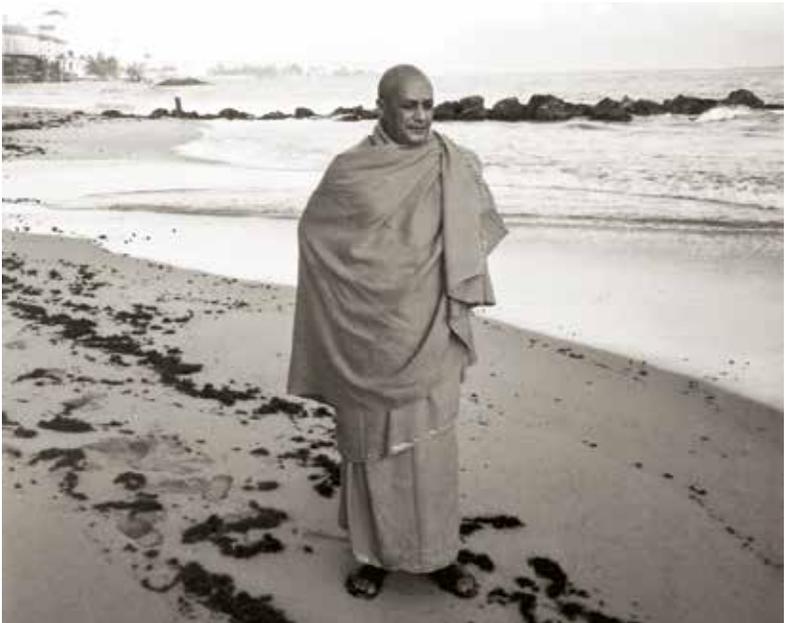
– 20 January 1981, Munger

Satsang

In spite of all the difficulties, I have no choice: whether I like it or I do not like it, I must do it. Your maid-servant may not like to do the work, but she will do it, because she is paid for it.

Many times after Swami Sivananda's samadhi, I have clearly felt his presence. I have heard his voice clearly, but even today I do not know how to contact him. If I want to contact him, I can't because I do not know the way. Every time I had that experience, it was very clear, pleasant, calm and quiet. It comes to me when I want to kick everything I have created, whenever I want to close something. I do not like ashrams. I have always believed a swami should live a different life, but I am not able to do it.

In the year 1982, when I was in Puerto Rico I was feeling slightly dull and depressed because of the weather there.



Although I was staying in a very good hotel, I did not like the weather. I was right on the sea shore. That was the last time that I felt his presence. He said, "You are now free from your ashram life." He made me free. That is to say, a slave became free. He released me. That order was given in Puerto Rico in 1982.

At that time about eight or ten swamis from America, Colombia and Europe were there. Swami Niranjan also was there. I called him and said, "Now my plan is clear, I am not going to work with the administrative side of Bihar School of Yoga or any institution anymore. You cancel your trips in America and return to Munger as soon as possible."

Therefore, as far as I can see, whatever I do is on Swami Sivanandaji's instructions. I also make it very clear to you that my personal spiritual attainments are very insignificant. As long as he works through me, everything will be fine, but once he withdraws himself, I will be like a fan without an electric connection. I prefer that too because sometimes I have felt that one must live unknown and unheard. One must live a life unknown and unheard, and when you leave this body, there should be nobody to lament, nobody to weep. It does not even matter if there is nobody to bury you or consign you to the fire.

Many times I have imagined dying somewhere in the jungle and nobody knows. Let them search for Swami Satyananda. Animals will be eating me. That is the best death that a man must aspire for. Otherwise people think that when they die, many people will offer condolences and say, 'Oh, he was a great man, and now we must erect a statue of him and now we must publish a book on him to glorify him.' This is not the way a sannyasin should be.

Swamiji, why is karma yoga so important and how can it be practised by people who lead a worldly life?

Karma produces samskaras; karma yoga does not produce any samskara. Every activity in which you are involved should be done with a total sense of renunciation. It also means that

you have to continue to do karma. Involve yourself in every action, discharge all the responsibilities as *purushartha*, duties. However, so far as the expectation of the fruits and the results is concerned – you should withdraw yourself emotionally and mentally, both.

This is the basic difference between karma and karma yoga. For instance, you work as a cashier in a bank, or you are a treasurer in a government office. The next morning when you go to the office, you come to learn that a few thousand rupees have been stolen last night by a band of dacoits. How worried do you get? Not at all, because you are not personally involved. But if you lose even twenty rupees from your own pocket, it worries you a lot because there you are personally involved. Your ego is involved there.

In karma yoga, there is no involvement of your individuality. There is duty and there is responsibility. The *Bhagavad Gita* says very clearly that for the purification of the mind and for the development of detachment, karma yoga is the best form of yoga. Householders or sannyasins are all supposed to do something in the family or in the ashram. In the ashram, most swamis and sannyasins do karma yoga and because of this they attain purity of mind and selflessness, they do not incur karma and samskaras.

All the swamis and sannyasins who work in the ashram do not incur samskaras for themselves because whatever they do, they do with a spirit of *nishkama bhava*, selflessness. If you ask them why they do it, they have a very clear concept. They will say, 'It is Guru seva'. When there is the concept of Guru seva, then the consequences of the karma do not at all belong to you because you are not working in an ashram for your personal profit. The motive is clear. 'I am a human being. I have incarnated as a jivatma. I have accumulated karma or *sanchit karma*. I have to work; I have to manifest my karma. I can manifest them in the form of Guru seva. When I manifest them as Guru seva, I detach myself from the accruing results or the accruing consequences'. It is a very simple philosophy.

The same spirit can be developed by every householder. Whom are you working for? You can say for the welfare of the family. Well, that is the nearest definition or philosophy you can develop. When you are working for the welfare of the family, you must also decide the intensity of your attachment with your family members because if your relationship with your family members is full of *raga* and *dvesha*, attachment and rejection, then even if you are working for them, the karma will rebound on you. If anything happens to your son, you will also be unhappy, and that is why the *Bhagavad Gita* says (2:47):

Karmanyevaadhikaaraste maa phaleshu kadaachana;

Your right is to work only, but never with its fruits.

Perform karma, that is up to you. You must do karma. So far as the consequences or the outcome of karma is concerned, it is none of your business.

What is karma sannyasa?

It is a concept. It is a way of thinking. It is not an external order. Sannyasa is a philosophy and if you think you can practise this philosophy, then you can stay with your family, with your children and at the same time, you can feel like a sannyasin. After reflecting on the *Bhagavad Gita*, I have introduced this idea of karma sannyasa. Many people like to be initiated into karma sannyasa because it brings them very close to a philosophy of life.

Many times people want to renounce, but after renunciation, where to go? We are not all Milarepas; we are not all Swami Dayananda Saraswat or Swami Vivekananda with a langoti, with the way we have been used to living, with the buildings and the cars, air-conditioners and attached bathrooms. It becomes very difficult to lead a family life, and at the same time you feel that you miss sannyasa because you cannot renounce these facilities. You think, 'Oh, I can't take sannyasa. I can't live like a sannyasin'. It is not true.

Many householders live family life as sannyasins. What exactly do they do? Do they have any interaction with their children? Do they have any interaction with their family duties? Yes, they have. Then how are they sannyasins? Do they still involve themselves with their family duties and responsibilities? Yes, they do. Then how are they sannyasins?

When you become a sannyasin, you are very aware of your limited participation. There is a point where you have to withdraw and that point is called *asakti*. In the *Gita* they call it *anasakta yoga*. Karma sannyasa is a very lovely idea, especially when you have seen life. You have enjoyed a bit of it and know what it is really going to give you ultimately. There is a saying in Hindi, *Gadha ko khilaya, na paap aur na punya.*" - feeding a donkey neither incurs sin nor virtue. That is the life of a householder, if sannyasa is not added to it.

Swamiji, can you say something about yoga nidra?

Yoga is a science in which we deal with the depth of the personality and not with the external mind, beliefs and intellect. I am talking to you now on certain aspects of yoga. You are understanding it with your *buddhi*, intellect. You know, you are missing a lot. Whatever I say is not getting imprinted. However, if you withdraw your mind a little bit and even if you do not understand what I am talking to you, everything will be imprinted.

Behind the *buddhi*, behind the mind there is *atman*, you may call it *chitta*. During yoga nidra, the *chitta* comes to the surface and whatever is spoken and instructed is imprinted on the *chitta* directly. This is the practice of yoga nidra.

I have done many experiments on yoga nidra with children, five or six years old. I give them yoga nidra and they sleep within five minutes. I give them instructions, "When you feel like urinating, please wake me up." You instruct the child three times for four or five days. On the sixth day, the child will wake up in the night and he will wake you up.

I tried yoga nidra on dogs. I trained a dog with yoga nidra. Unfortunately, he did not survive because I did not take care

of him and he died of paralysis. He was an Alsatian. I trained him with yoga nidra. I instructed him and he understood it and did it. Animals can be trained because animals also have certain frequencies. They communicate with each other through those high frequencies. If you understand the frequency, you can attune yourself with them. You can communicate at least with some.

I have trained one of my disciples in the Vedas, the shastras and other sciences, during yoga nidra when he was four, five, six years old. He did not get his education from outside and I have succeeded. If you allow me, I can take you anywhere I like in just three minutes. Of course I don't do it because I don't want to get into trouble. I have greater work to accomplish.

I am telling you that yoga nidra is such a powerful system to influence your mind, and why do we do it? When you want to plant a tree, you first prepare the soil. In the same way, if you want to achieve something in life which you are finding difficult, that is your *sankalpa*, resolve. Before you sow this sankalpa in your mind, you will have to prepare your mind through yoga nidra. In yoga nidra you arrive at a particular level of consciousness, and if you are able to manifest that level of consciousness then you should succeed in your sankalpa.

I have many friends and disciples in India, Australia and other countries who have dissolved a tumour in their bodies through sankalpa in yoga nidra. They have written many articles about their experiences in our magazines. A properly generated thought, when it grows properly can create a disease and can also remove a disease. A thought is very powerful. It can create an object. There is no difference between thought force and an object. Object and thought are the two stages of the same force.

You can create certain changes in your personality and in your physical body. In many families you find that certain members have very bad habits. For example, drinking habits. Hindu wives don't like it and for them it is a very great problem. Sometimes they run away to their parents. It doesn't work. They take all sorts of oaths and promises, it doesn't work. They give

a lot of love, it doesn't work. They quarrel a lot, it doesn't work. They try everything but they don't try yoga nidra.

Just put the man's head on your lap and teach him yoga nidra. After five minutes you can say, 'Okay, you are not going to drink from tomorrow'. He doesn't hear it, no, he should not hear it. He should not know what you have told him, but the samskara, the *bija*, the seed, has been implanted, it is imprinted. The seed has been put in: 'Don't drink from tomorrow.' Do this day after day.



Yoga nidra is not a mechanical practice, it is a very systematic practice and for that you must also have the understanding of the different stages of the human mind. When you are experiencing different stages of the human mind, there are certain external signs. You have seen people sleeping for one, two, three hours. I have witnessed boys and girls sleeping for many hours and how they behave for the first hour, how they behave for the second hour, how they behave for the third hour. I can say exactly at what time children are getting into the yoga nidra mood.

Listen to me carefully. That condition of chitta called yoga nidra chitta comes only for a short time. It is not for fifteen or twenty minutes. The manifestation of chitta, which is a product of yoga nidra, is not a prolonged one. Sometimes it comes for two minutes, then again you go into nidra. Sometimes you are half asleep, sometimes you are fully asleep. Yoga nidra chitta is a state of mind which manifests only for a short period and at that time you are completely exposed. The teacher of yoga

nidra must know when is the right time. It doesn't come just by knowledge. You have to practise it and by practice you become an expert and experienced. When you become experienced, you know when is the right time and just teach the person.

Yoga nidra has the word 'nidra' which is inadequately translated as sleep. *Nidra* literally means relaxation. Sleep is *sushupti*. *Nidra* is relaxation. So, what is yoga nidra? When you are not sleeping, it is yoga nidra. When you are not awake, it is called yoga nidra. There is a poem about this by a Muslim saint which says:

*Jahaan adhar daali hansa baitha,
Chugat mukta heer.*

Adhar means in between; *hamsa* means chitta. The word *hamsa* or swan is used for the chitta. Calm mind, pure mind. *Mukta* means pearl, *heer* means diamond.

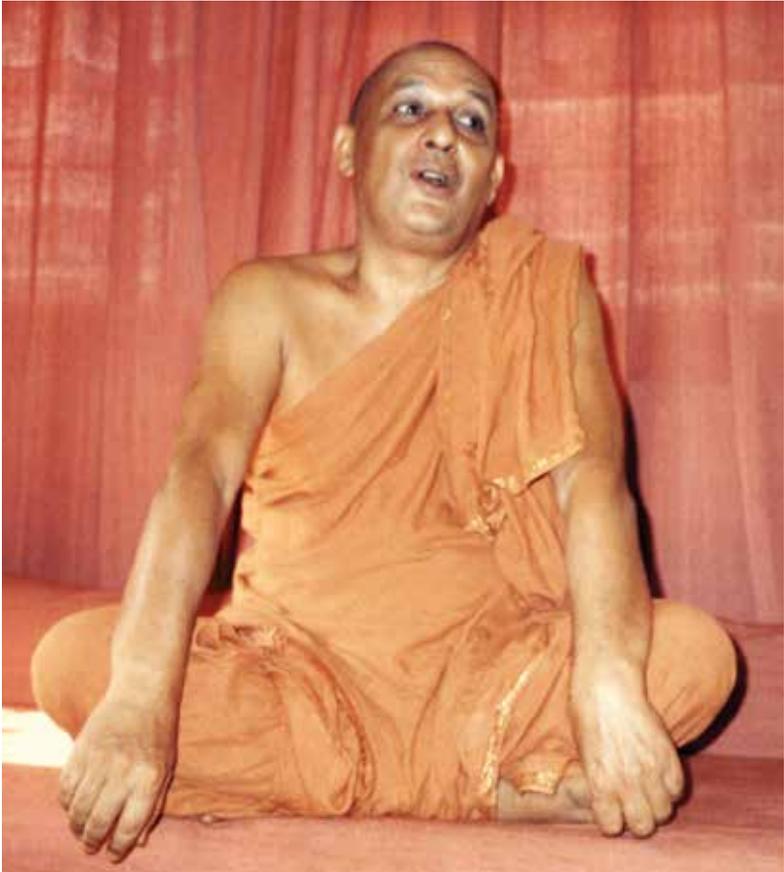
That is the state of yoga nidra. When you practise yoga nidra with your teacher, by yourself, or with a tape, please remember one thing that you will not sleep at all. Try your level best. If there is anything you have to avoid during yoga nidra, it is sleep. But at the same time, in yoga nidra, you do not know what is happening outside. Many times, you don't even hear the instructions of the teacher. Sometimes you hear the instructions of the teacher, as if they are coming from some remote corner.

There is a lot to be said about yoga nidra. It is fantastic, it is one of the most powerful practices, if only you can understand the behaviour of the human mind and its different stages which can change from time to time. Although we say that there are three stages of mind, *jagrat*, *swapna* and *sushupti*, waking, dreaming and sleeping, these are very broad divisions.

Yoga nidra can help you in meditation, however meditation is entirely a different practice. In meditation you have to follow one point. In yoga nidra you have to follow one flow.

– 17 July 1983, Calcutta Ashram, India

Satsang



Swamiji, we have had so many saints and we still have so many saints. How is it that we are still so poor, and that there is so much misery in our country?

Poverty is no sin. Poverty is not because we lack spirituality. In the last 100 or 200 years, there has been a constant attempt to exploit and confuse. Before that, everything was all right. Perhaps you know about the famine of Bengal. It was not because there were no saints.

Another important point is that from the beginning, spirituality has emphasized or rather encouraged simplicity which in the eyes of modern people is poverty. When you are poor, you are creative and you have to work hard. When you are rich, your creativity comes to a standstill. All your creativity and your genius goes towards sensuality. Wherever you find prosperity you find that people seek sensual pleasures. When they follow a life of sensual pleasures, there is a deterioration. Therefore, I think saintliness and spirituality should not be blamed for poverty.

In the last few years, in cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras, Kanpur people are becoming more prosperous. Their purchasing capacity has increased. But you know what moral confusion has taken place and what downfall and degeneration has taken place in the values of life and in people's health. You find that everyone is complaining about blood pressure, diabetes, cancer and many infectious diseases.

It is the tradition in India that mahatmas, swamis and saints ask every householder to live a very simple life. The money which you earn should be properly used, not just for your own self. When you have a lot of money and prosperity, you don't know what to do. You become self-indulgent, a *bhogi*. The mind becomes restless, but if you can use your wealth for a better purpose, that is different. So you should spend minimum on your personal comforts.

I lived in Sabarmati and Wardha for some time when Mahatma Gandhi was alive. Simplicity was his greatest virtue. He was very strict about his personal requirements. The length of dhoti, the breadth of dhoti, how it should be made. He did not even allow Kasturba to spend 6 annas. He said, "No, you have to weave your own dhoti." Vinobha Bhave was also the same and so are the thousands of people in India who live like Gandhi. They live a very simple life, although they are fabulously rich. Mr Birla had his dhoti up to the knees, wearing ordinary shoes and ordinary kurta. If you use the wealth for your own sense gratification, it makes you materialistic and

blinds your senses. Spiritual life cannot be perceived. If you study the annals of history anywhere in the world, the greatest sages and saints, the illumined people, the people with spiritual power and resistance were born only in this land.

I do not use the word poverty; I am replacing it with tapasya. Tapasya opens the doors to intuition. Bhoga closes the doors to intuition, you cannot penetrate. Therefore, when the mind is clogged and clouded and you are not able to take any proper decision about your life, even if you are a rich person, you must retire for some time. Go to an ashram or to a pilgrim place. Live on minimum things and you will find that you are developing more and more intuition, and you will be able to tackle the problems of your life.

One last point. India has always played the role of a Guru. Since the vedic period, through the wonderful literature of the Vedas and following them, the Upanishads, Shruti, Smriti, Puranas, Itihasa, Veda, Vedanga, Nigamas and Agamas, India has always played the role of a Guru; and it is the Guruji who is never rich, *chelas* have to be rich.

Swamiji, why is it that yoga and the yogic culture has not spread in this country, the way it has spread in the West?

In Europe, America, Australia, in Japan, to some extent in countries of South East Asia, and quite a bit in Middle Eastern countries, yoga is well received and well organized. However, it is not right to say that in India it is not known or popular or practised.

I may add something very important here. First of all, Indian culture, society and religion are organized in such a way that many times we do not need yoga at all. Maybe in the last two or three decades with big cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi developing, with technology being introduced and a technological culture being lived in this country, the cultural expression and behaviour is now becoming different. People are developing hypertension and are suffering from diabetes and insomnia. Heart diseases are forever on the increase, and

so are cases of cancer. This is particularly due to the impact of the technological culture.

In rural India, people did not suffer from the illnesses which could be cured by the practices of yoga. Of course, in books of ayurveda we have references to *madhumeh*, diabetes, we have reference to cancer, and we have references to high blood pressure. From all accounts, we know that these were not national or common diseases. In fact, the way in which other diseases have been dealt with so meticulously in ayurveda proves that those diseases were common in this country. Therefore, it was not necessary for those people to practise asana and pranayama or hatha yoga.

Imagine your grandfather living in a village, going to the bushes every morning, not to the attached bathroom, and then going to the ponds and rivers for a bath. Sleeping outside on the veranda in the night, in the open, with barely one dhurrie and one bedsheet. What pranayama did they need? What yoga did they need? The workers, labourers and farmers working in the fields during the month of May and June, *Vaisakh and Jyestha*; the owners of the land supervising them only with an umbrella and sometimes without an umbrella. What yoga did they need? They really did not need yoga at all. Their food also was very simple. The food which they took, and with the fasts which they observed from time to time like on Ekadashi, Poornima, Krishna Janmashtami, Sivaratri, hundreds of fasts in one year, the digestive functions were not sluggish; the liver was not sluggish. The intestines were functioning properly.

In this age we are not suffering from malnutrition, we are suffering from over-nutrition. You take a lot of fat, protein, vitamins, fruit, milk, curd, rasgulla, meat, eggs, honey, so you need yoga to digest those things. In the cultural climate of India and in the set-up of Indian society, particularly Hindu society, the practices of yoga were more or less applied. You should also understand what applied yoga is: Get up in the morning latest by 5 am and do surya pranam by offering water to tulsi

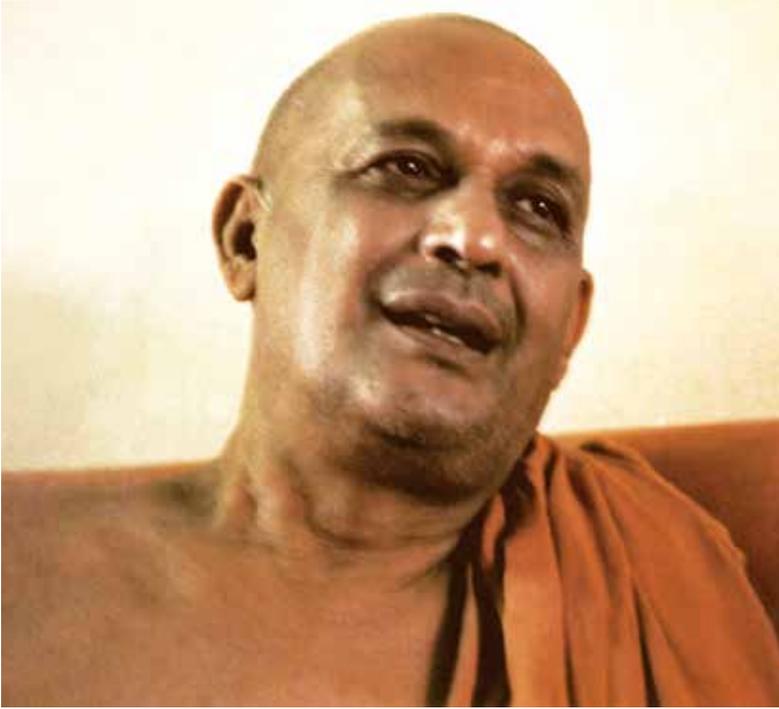
and *arghya*, oblations to the sun. That is more or less surya namaskara or surya pranam.

Now Indians have started to learn and need yoga. During earlier periods, the economic and other conditions in India were such that yoga had to be practised because India was very wealthy. It used to be known as *Sone ki chidiya*, the 'Golden Bird'. Now America is known as the Golden Bird. Today most Indians dream of going to America for a job, a career and to make their fortune. Earlier there was a time when people from the West and the Middle East used to come to India for opportunities.

The area of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal was known as the country of Doab. Anyone from the Middle East would say, "We should go to Doab" just as we now go to Gulf countries for opportunities. That was the wealth and prosperity of this country. From the dances, the drama, music and art, you can see that these things were developed in a country which was very prosperous. From this you can understand that society and the social, political and religious culture was very great in this country. As a result of that, people were given to indulgences. They were prone to *bhoga* and so yogic sciences were preached by different gurus from time to time.

During the period of Guru Gorakhnath and his Guru, Matsyendranath, there are stories of them only initiating rajas and maharajas into yoga, like Raja Gopichand and Raja Bharata. This means that these rajas or kings were so sensual and given to *bhoga*. They were indulging so much in sensual pleasures that it became necessary that they, including their ministers, chief ministers and officers, were taught yoga.

Today yoga is not popular in the same way in India as it is in Europe. The social, economic and political culture are the same in the West as they were in India about 2,000 or 2,500 years ago. You have to remain locked in your flat all the time with central heating. In the car you are closed, in the office you are closed, in the restaurant you are closed, everywhere you are closed. As a result of that, you get a sort of stuffy atmosphere



inside your body. Consequently, you suffer from lethargy, indolence, nervous depression, migraine, cough and so on.

Yoga is the only thing that you can practise. In the West, you can't go to the field in the hot sun and work for eight to ten hours a day. Yoga is the only thing that you can practise, in order to improve the quality, behaviour and responses within your body. The same thing will happen and is happening in India. Now in Calcutta, what can you do? Even if I ask you to practise some physical exercises, for how long? Eight hours, ten hours and where will you practise? It's not practical. The only practical thing now is to devote about one hour in the morning to the practice of hatha yoga, to the practice of raja yoga and other yogic sciences.

This is not the situation everywhere. If you go about a hundred miles out of Calcutta, you are in a different culture. One hundred miles out of Calcutta there is a different India,

and inside Calcutta it is a different India. If you go to Bihar, Santhal areas, 24 Parganas and Singhbhum District, it is an absolutely different India. You can't imagine what it is like and you can't compare it with anything like Kanpur, Madras, Agra, Trivandrum, Bombay or Delhi. There the peoples' mode of life, drinking and eating habits, their beliefs, philosophy and their responses to the events of life are entirely different.

The second point is that the West has a religion. I am not trying to criticize, but it is necessary to make a balanced reference to it. This religion is more or less an institutionalized religion. We call it organized religion. Just like I am a member of the Lion's Club and you are a member of the Rotary Club, the people who believe in religion are members of a great fraternity. The philosophy of that religion is preached in such a way that the majority of people following that religion have no base for hidden insecurities. As a result, there is a philosophical vacuum which creates mental diseases, and therefore psychological problems are very much present there and much less in India.

Another important point is that Christianity is mainly a puritanical religion where certain behaviours in life are considered sin. According to that understanding, everyone has committed a sin. My father has done that and your father has done that. Therefore, I am born and you are born out of sin. It means that any relationship between opposite sexes, whether approved by society, by law, or by religion is a sin. This has been taught for about eighteen hundred or nineteen hundred years. It is so ingrained in the brain, yet in the last hundred years modern psychology has been teaching them something totally different.

What their religion calls sin, psychology calls a process of health. What their religion calls sin, modern science says, "No, no, you do it and it will give you good health." I am talking about the sexual behaviour of each and everybody, consciously, subconsciously or even unconsciously. I am referring to the psychological philosophy of Doctor Sigmund Freud and his

followers. Prior to them, there have also been others but they have not been important.

As a result of that, the man in European countries has a split personality. Basically he is a Christian and culturally he is a Freudian. He believes in *this* life and he lives *that* life. What effect will it have on your mind when you live in one life but you practise another life? It is called schizophrenia. For example, you believe that drinking is bad, a sin. At the same time, your doctor tells you that you should drink because it is necessary for your health. So you drink. Now you have two ideas in your mind: I am bad, I should not drink; but I drink because it is necessary for my health.

It is the same with sexual behaviour. It is a sin but I have to do it because it is a natural urge, it is a compulsion of nature, it is the compulsion of my body and it is also said by the doctor that free sexual life confers good health. This is how they are torn into two and suffer from schizophrenia.

Therefore, yoga and tantra, particularly tantra, have come to the western society as a very consoling message. People have received new hope from the message of yoga and tantra, in which all those things which are considered evil in their society and religion are taken care of. So as a result of this philosophy of yoga and tantra, the gap between the ego and the super-ego is cemented and that is why it is very popular.

Another important factor is that western society in Europe and America is going through a period that I call anti-climax. When you climb a mountain and you go up to the top, that is one event. Then from the top, you have to return and come down, that is called anti-climax. That is what they are facing now in the field of prosperity and education, everywhere. It is exactly at this time that yoga has come to them.

Now with regard to India, the Government and the states do not patronize yoga very much. In Maharashtra, yoga is taught in every school, not on behalf of the Government, but by private teachers. Most of the doctors in Maharashtra teach yoga. Similarly, in Chandigarh, Kerala and Madras, yoga is

very popular and is taught in many schools and colleges. The picture of yoga in India is statistically not very clear. When the time comes and if accurate statistics are taken, it will be much brighter than the picture in Europe. I can assure you about it.

Swamiji, are natural attachments in life obstacles to spiritual growth?

Attachments do not create any block in spiritual life or spiritual growth. In the *Yoga Vasishtha* and the *Ramayana* a lot of discussion has taken place on attachment and it is found that there is a particular stage of evolution. In that stage of evolution, attachment develops inner faculties, but when you want to lead a life of *nivritti*, aloofness, and follow spiritual life and meditation, then of course attachment becomes a very serious impediment. For a normal human being, attachment is an indication of growth and inner development.

How can yoga be integrated through schools within the present structure of the education system? What is its application for delinquents and those who are unable to adjust in society?

In order to introduce yoga into education you have to put forth private efforts. You should not wait for the government to do it, or the education department. Private teachers must go to schools or school authorities must engage these private teachers. Children who are interested in practising yoga should be given the proper opportunity and facility to learn.

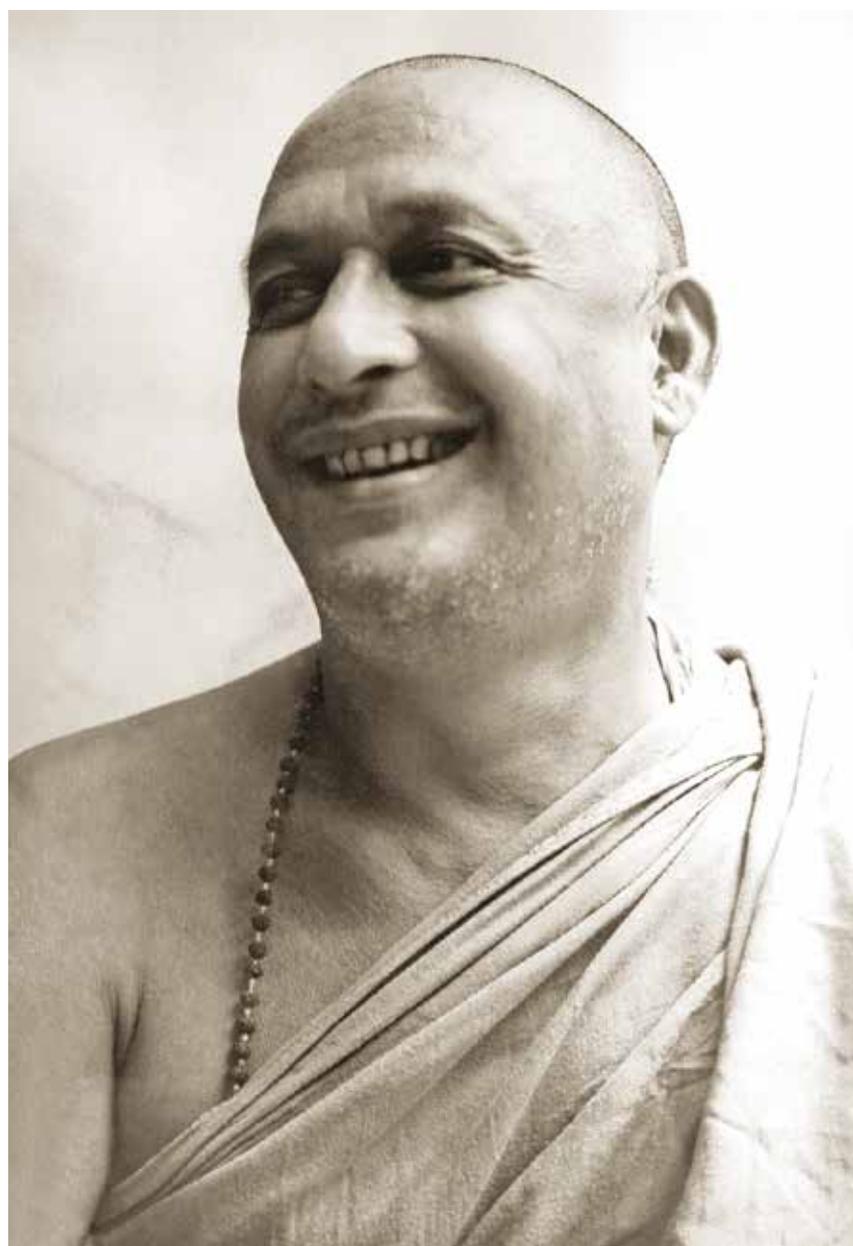
In India, there are many institutions, even private schools and Catholic convents, that have yoga as a subject. Teaching is given and examinations are held. In the same way, yoga teaching can be introduced with the help of private teachers, provided the school authorities or the members of the governing body, the head of the institution or the head of a particular department are interested.

The practices of yoga definitely improve the quality of brain, mind and emotions. So far as delinquents are

concerned, there should be institutions where all delinquents are kept together. If you teach them privately, it will not work very much. It is not only hatha yoga, but they have to be taught many other forms of yoga during the day. At times the practices of shatkarmas, then the practices of inner visualization called dharana, and side by side they should be exposed to karma yoga. This is very important. In your family structure, it is very difficult to provide them with the opportunity of karma yoga. In India, you don't have many ashrams and institutions that can provide you with the opportunity to do karma yoga. I have seen many orphanages and many other social institutions for children. There is always teaching and more teaching, academic teaching or religious teaching.

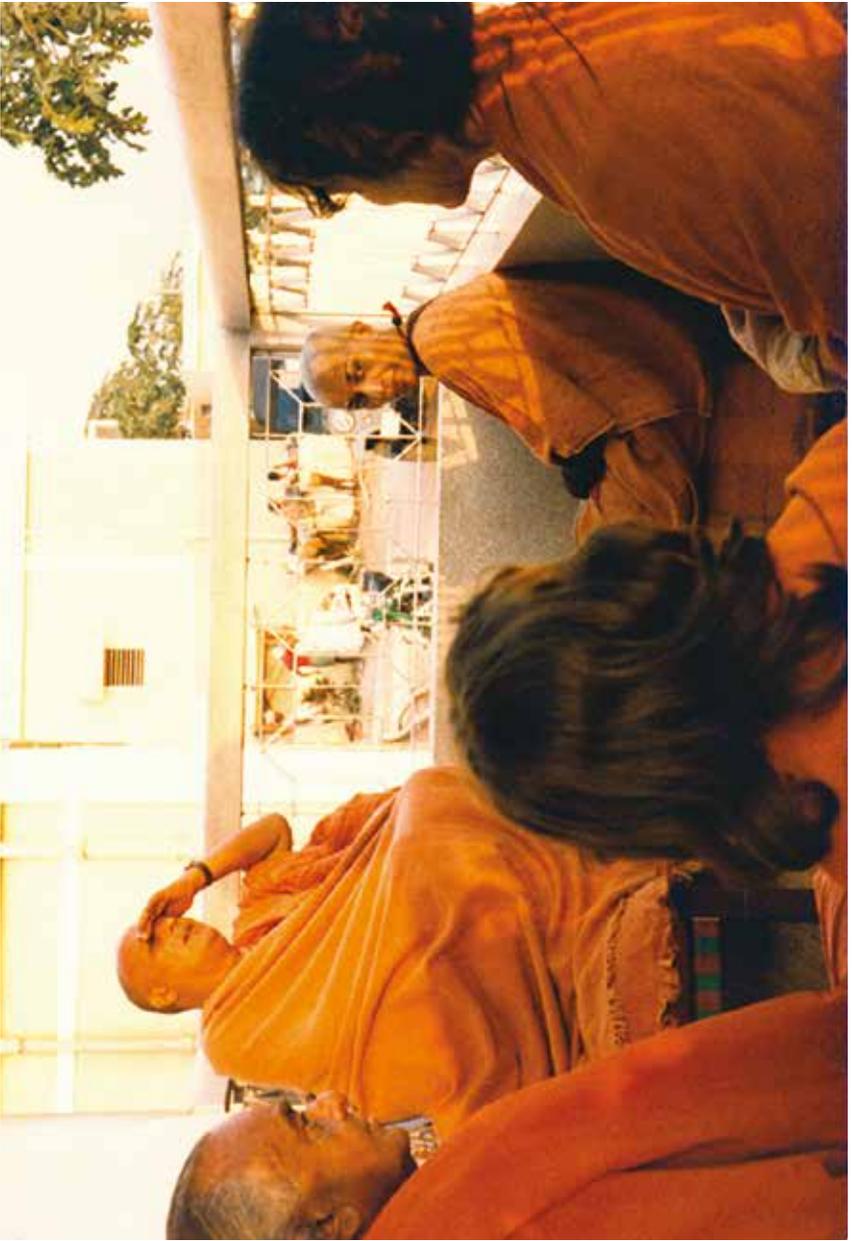
Religious teaching does not work in so far as delinquents are concerned. They don't accept it and they don't like it. The religious teachings which are imparted either in the Hindu, Christian, Buddhist or Muslim fashion are very artificial. They are far from reality. To expect a child, and especially if he is a delinquent, to behave like a Pope, is suggesting an impractical thing. Or to expect from a very young delinquent child, the behaviour which you expect from a swami or from a grown-up person is very impractical, and that is why religions fail.

Religions will fail. Religions will not succeed, because in religion the do's and don'ts are very difficult. Either you have to become a hypocrite or you have to be a delinquent. You can be nothing beyond this. The way the religious do's and don'ts are propagated and taught, the follower has to be a hypocrite because he can't fulfil it. Impossible. He doesn't have sufficient willpower and most people that you find around you, including yourself, are suffering from infirmity of willpower. When we are suffering from this infirmity, how do you expect to follow all those do's and don'ts. That is precisely the reason why religions have failed. They have only succeeded in creating wars and genocides, as has happened in the past and is happening in the present.



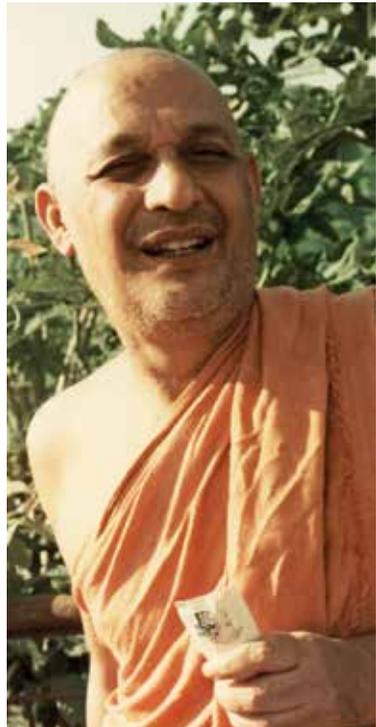






Religions have not created a healthy citizen or a healthy individual. If there is hypocrisy in this world today and if anyone is responsible for that hypocrisy, it is religion. So either you have to be a hypocrite or you have to be a delinquent.

Delinquent children cannot understand these do's and don'ts and the structure of your lessons. The structure of your instructions is quite beyond their comprehension and quite beyond their reach. These children will have to be exposed to a secular environment in which karma yoga is practised and when you give the practice of karma yoga, though it takes quite some time, they do improve.



I will give you a very small example. Three years ago a girl was brought to Munger. I think she was about eight years old. She was a terror. She would spare none excepting me. You had to go out carefully because she would just take your dhoti; she used obscene language and abused people, she did not care for anyone. The swamis started beating her and one day I came to know about it. At first I thought they might be exaggerating, and then I heard myself.

They wanted me to give her *dharma upadesh*, good instructions. You know me very well; I don't believe in all this. So, what happened? I issued a written instruction in the ashram: Anyone who misbehaves with her will be expelled from the ashram immediately. This is an order. And I signed it myself. I did expel one of the swamis for beating and abusing her. Today she has improved tremendously.

Delinquency or whatever you might call it has nothing to do with man's personal nature. It has more to do with the behaviour of a society. Society produces delinquents. Parents are responsible, religion is responsible, education is responsible. These grey-haired teachers are responsible because they do not understand that a child of eight is not a man of fifty. At fifty, my thinking is different and yet I want the child of eight to behave like me. It is unnatural. We want them to smile artificially, behave artificially, sit down artificially. We are always telling them what to do and what not to do. This produces delinquency in children.

Parents produce delinquent children and therefore it is not the children who should be taught yoga, it is the parents who should be taught yoga. They are the manufacturing plants for these delinquents. I have given you just one example of a girl who has been living in the ashram for the last three years. She is getting better and better. One day I asked her, "Do swamis beat you now?" She said, "No." I said, "Why?" She said, "Because you have put a note there." I said, "Why have I put a note there?" She said, "That is the way you are trying to make me more conscious of myself." I said, "Will you become conscious?" She said, "I hope I can."

Besides her there are many more people I have encountered in my career as a sannyasin. I have failed many times, because I have tried to correct them, and I have succeeded many times, because I have more or less seemingly ignored them. Of course I don't ignore, but I put up a show that I am ignoring them.

It is important that delinquent children should be taught yoga in a very non-religious style. There is no use trying to give them the examples of Sri Rama. There is no use trying to give them the examples of Mahatma Gandhi. Why don't you give them the example of Krishna? Krishna himself, I think, he was a juvenile delinquent, if you study the *Srimad Bhagavat*. Forget that Sri Krishna was an incarnation of Vishnu as an ordinary baby, he was a perfect example of a juvenile delinquent. He was a headache for society. What a headache he used to create

for Yashoda. What a headache he used to create for everybody, he even had enmity with Kamsa. Kamsa was angry with Gokul because of the misbehaviour of Krishna with Kamsa's messengers and emissaries. It made Kamsa full of wrath and anger. That is why he tried to put an end to Krishna's career. But of course Krishna was strong, a very powerful figure from childhood. Ultimately, he managed to kill Kamsa.

Swamiji in practising meditation or concentration, I not only get dullness, lethargy and sleepiness, but the joints of the body become very stiff. What can be done about this?

In raja yoga, concentration or dharana is the sixth step after yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, and before dhyana and samadhi. Sometimes we are not prepared for the sixth step. We listen to others who say that concentration is very good and we must do it, so we jump immediately to the sixth step, without preparing our mind, body, philosophy and lifestyle. Concentration is not an abstract practice. When you concentrate, biochemical changes also happen in the physical body.

It has been found by scientists that during any practice of yoga, and especially during concentration practices, biochemical changes take place in the body. This means that prior to concentration you must fulfil other requirements, like pranayama and pratyahara.

There is invariably depression in the nervous system. On account of this depression, when you concentrate sometimes you get pain in your spine. This depression can take place sometimes in the sympathetic nervous system and sometimes in the parasympathetic nervous system. So before you attempt to practise concentration, you must purify your body with the help of pranayama. I mean to say hatha yoga.

Of the eight steps of raja yoga, the first two steps are yama and niyama. *Yama* means discipline. *Niyama* means routine. What is discipline? Satya, ahimsa, brahmacharya, asteya, aparigraha are five disciplines according to your grihastha

ashrama or according to your sannyasa ashram. If you are a householder, a sannyasin, a student or a vanaprastha ashrami you have to practise these five yamas accordingly.

Then come the five niyamas. *Shaucha*, purification, means hatha yoga. Neti, dhauti, basti, kapalbhati, trataka, nauli have to be practised. So one should not be in a hurry to earn the benefits of concentration. Nowadays many books are published on concentration, we do it and we praise concentration very much. And though it is right, preparations have to be made. Shaucha is from hatha yoga. These six kriyas of hatha yoga are purificatory practices. So yama and niyama must be practised according to your ashrama. If you are a sannyasin, you must practise it accordingly. Or if you are a householder, you must practise it accordingly.

When you sit for the practices of concentration, the swara changes. The breath which flows through the left nostril and the right nostril alternately changes. Sometimes when you are practising concentration, if the ida nadi is flowing you will get a lot of pain in the body and sleep. You feel dullness, because ida nadi creates depression in the system. It has a tendency to cause depression and as a result you get a lot of pain. If you are practising concentration when the pingala nadi is flowing, you will find no matter what you do, your mind will continue to jump. Pingala nadi is surya nadi and ida nadi is chandra nadi. Pingala nadi has vitality, *prana*. Ida nadi has mental energy. Actually before you practise concentration, you should try to awaken your sushumna by practices of pranayama. It does not all happen at once, it takes quite some time, quite a few years.

If you are practising advanced concentration, say for half an hour or one hour, you must also look after your diet. If you take any item of food which is difficult to digest, it will cause lethargy, indolence and sleep. It will create tamasic vrittis. If you take onions, they will deposit uric acid in the joints. During concentration, this uric acid is deposited in the joints and you get pain. So you should keep all these things properly in mind.

Can a person who is preoccupied with household life spend time in the pursuit of yoga? Is it worth his while?

There is no such thing as a 'householder'. You must use the proper term, called pravritti and nivritti. *Pravritti* means involvement, *nivritti* means retirement from involvement. All of you are on the pravritti marga, you are involved in responsibilities, duties and there are many sannyasins at the Ramakrishna Mission, Sivanandashram, who are also on the pravritti marga. They are not nivritti, they have not become free from involvement. That is also pravritti. This pravritti marga is explained in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Pravritti with nivritti – there are people who are involved, but they are detached. That is the life of a householder, a grihastha, whereas nivritti with pravritti is the life of a sannyasin.

Many times the disciples of Buddha, Shankaracharya, Swami Sivananda, Swami Vivekananda, and many others lead a life of nivritti with pravritti, and householders lead a life of pravritti with nirvritti. Therefore, the life of a householder should not be underestimated. Many times there are certain affairs in the life of a householder on account of which he feels that a householder may not be fit for yoga because he marries, has relationships with the family, wife or husband. He has children, goes to work, and tells lies. Sometimes he is dishonest, sometimes he is selfish.

You see these are the things which many householders encounter during their life and as a result of this many feel that such a householder may not be fit to start yoga or to practise yoga. But in my opinion, this is the view of puritans.

Yoga is for householders. Just as medicine is for sick people, medicine is not for healthy people. Yoga is not for yogis, for yogis it is *jnana*, knowledge. For householders, it is yoga. Therefore, the path of yoga is especially designed for the people who are following the path of pravritti.

– 18 July 1983, Calcutta Ashram

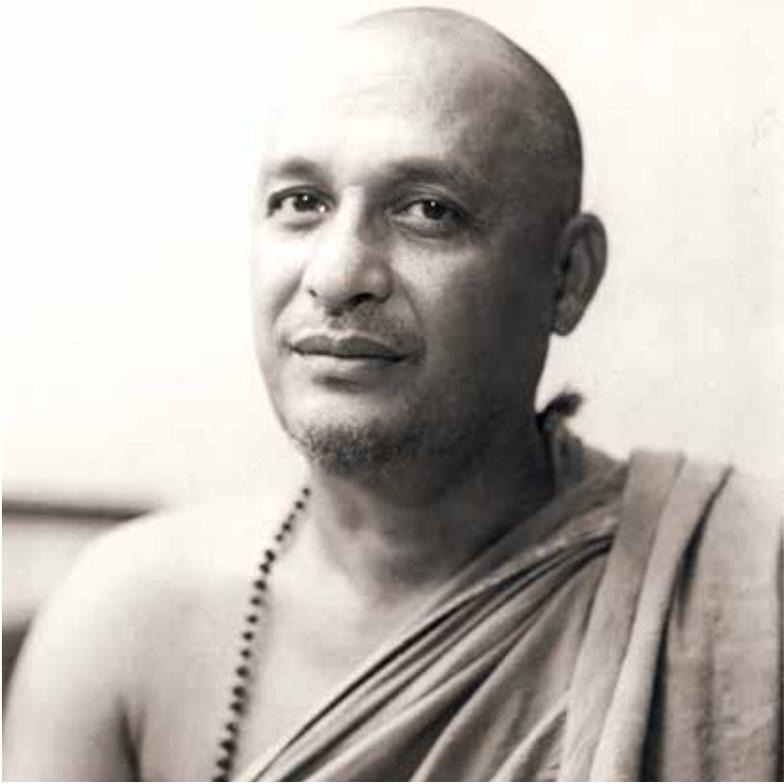
On the Road from Dhanbad to Munger

As all religions grow and become organized, they take on external rituals and trappings. They form rules and regulations and lose internal freedom. Nuns and monks used to shave their heads for a certain reason, but now they have forgotten why they do so. Sannyasins have rules too, but they must work out for themselves what those rules are. In the beginning, we may tell a disciple to shave his head but after some time he starts to question 'Why?'

Religion and sannyasa

Hinduism has survived because of its flexibility. It has not rejected anyone or anything and this is why the pantheon of Hindu gods is so large – one man worships a stone, another a god, another a goddess. A Hindu may say, "Okay, God is formless and omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, but we need a form to focus on and to make us one-pointed in our devotion." Even if a Hindu doesn't agree with someone's ideas, he accepts his rights to worship. He is brought up to respect all religions, creeds and faiths. He may say, "We accept that God is formless and so on, but not everyone does so." Parents teach children to accept all religions, philosophies and ideologies but to keep Hinduism. The essentials don't change, the external changes. Hinduism today is different from what it was one thousand years ago. The essentials are the same but the external aspects have changed. There are two aspects to religion:

1. The essentials – *Sanatana dharma* are the universal laws that are found in all religions. Christianity does not say kill and steal from others. There are certain points that all religions agree on. The difference is that one says you must do good



- or you will end up in hell when you die, and the other says you will suffer in your next birth.
2. The non-essentials are the rituals and social aspects. For example, Christianity used to expound reincarnation, however the priests found that some people were exploiting the masses like charlatans who used to say, 'Pay me so much, I will do a ritual and you will not have to suffer when you die. Forget all the religious doctrines and live your life the way you like, just give me money and I will save you'.

According to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed passed in the 4th century, it was agreed that people would go to hell, not into another birth and be given another chance. This is a social decree, not a divine dispensation. There are

many apparent inconsistencies in religions. For example, in Christianity people may argue, 'If God is omniscient, all powerful and so on, why doesn't he stop suffering on earth? If he is all-beneficent, why doesn't he destroy evil in an instant? If he is so powerful then he can do all the work. After all I am only a human being, how can I hope to do anything?'

In Hinduism, too, we see the same. One year after a person dies the shraadh ceremony is performed. Mattresses, blankets, rice, money and different items of comforts are gathered and given to the brahmin pandits who are supposed to send it to the departed for their comfort in the other worlds. Some people say that these people have already reincarnated, so how will these things reach them if they are in another body?

Such discrepancies are found in all religions but only in the external aspects. Realizing this, Hinduism accepts everything and merges. It doesn't reject, realizing that any view is as good as mine. This is why you see elements of all religions in Hinduism.

Any religion which remains rigid, upholding only one book and only one way will be subject to conflict and will die out. Only the religions which adapt will survive. The fighting in the Middle East is an example. It goes back to Biblical times. Christianity and Islam are said to have come from Judaism. One said only my way is right and the other would not accept any other God other than their own.

But if they are one family, why do they fight?

Distant friends don't fight, only close friends or family do. Hinduism, by accepting, will survive. Even though it changes on the outside, on the inside it remains the same. This principle has enabled Hinduism to resist many invasions. For example, Hindus only fought the Muslims because they went against their own principles. When the Muslims came, they abused Hindu women yet in their own faith they revere women and keep them very well-guarded. The Hindus said, "How can you demand virtue from your own women but you defile

our women?" Hindus don't eat beef and Muslims don't eat pork. The Muslim invaders asked the Hindus to eat beef. The Hindus rejected this and fought back. As soon as the Muslims developed a third force within themselves of benevolent rulers, Muslim saints and so on, they began to question other Muslims, "Why do we force our views on others?" When their benevolent attitude spread, they were accepted by the Hindus.

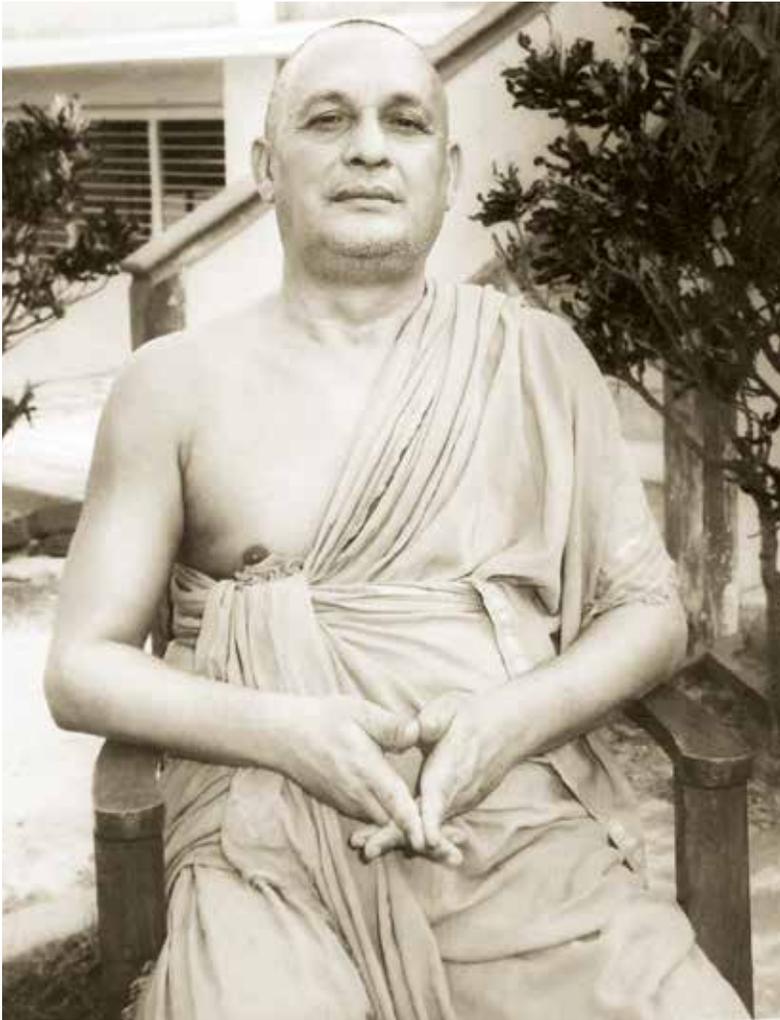
Education should not try to provide everything. This only results in confusion. The main aim of education is to attain efficiency in society. If we try to bring in ethics and morals, we create more confusion than if we merely attempt to create productive individuals who can do their work well by the age of 18 or 19. Then they have less mental problems, problems of identity, and so on. If we tell a man it is wrong to drink but all his friends and the whole society does so, then he becomes confused. If we say smoking is bad, he cannot believe us because all his friends do it.

Ethics and morals are an individual's choice, not a social responsibility, however society demands certain things from us in terms of our personality and behaviour. The evolution of society and the individual goes through karma. We must match up to the demands of the times. However, education cannot hope to meet all the demands. We must look closely to determine whether the process so far has been successful. We should not try to do everything in school. Ethics and morals must arise from an inner desire.

If you come to sannyasa, I do not say, "Do not drink alcohol." I do not make this imposition. However, any other institution will say, "Do not drink." This assumes that you want to drink and provides a temptation. In sannyasa you must want to do something or you cannot be successful. This is the basis of right ethics and morals. It is up to society to provide itself with capable, efficient workers and it is up to the individual to develop other aspects of his personality, intuition and so on.

– November 1978

Two Questions



What is your opinion about sexual life and food?

Sexual life is a necessary step in the evolution of consciousness, and as such, those who need this fulfilment of sexual life should understand that it is not anti-spiritual. I would not say that it is

spiritual, but it is not anti-spiritual either. Rather it is one of the dharmas of the individual by which we try to metabolize our emotions. Yoga has nothing to say about the sexual life of an individual. In yoga we believe that there are people in society who have a different structure of hormones. They really do not want sexual life and they really do not need it, not even as an urgent necessity. For them, the way of living without sexual life is quite good. Then there are people who have very imbalanced or excessive hormones. They are over-sexual which does sometimes effect the normal ethics, structure or pattern of society. People who have such imbalanced hormones can bring about a balance by the practice of kriya and other techniques of yoga.

So far as food is concerned, yoga has nothing particular to say about it. When a person is suffering from a certain disease, he has to be given a certain diet, just as in allopathy - don't eat sugar and don't eat starch and so on.

Labourers should sleep eight hours and children about ten hours. In many cases, in yoga it is advised not to take ghee because it is a fat. In yoga, all these dos' and 'don'ts as far as diet is concerned depend upon the condition of the person or when one is practising meditation. When you meditate for long hours or when you do anushthana in Navaratri or in the month of Shravan, or you want to do Gayatri anushthana, then not only a meat diet but even a fat diet is given up. It is not because it is impure but because you are sitting in an anushthana where the hydrochloric acid of the digestive juices in the body function differently so that you can utilize that digestive prana for your *dhyana*, meditation, rather than ingesting food stuff. If the digestive juices are subjugated during meditation, then dyspepsia can also take place. I have met many swamis who are very good sadhakas, but suffer from chronic dysentery and dyspepsia because they eat a lot and sit for a long periods of time.

We do not consider sex and food as immoral or unholy but according to the quality of the aspirant, the sadhana which he is doing and the purpose for which he is doing it, do's and don'ts are recommended.



How can we develop visualization?

A lotus, an animal or any image which you see in the depth of meditation is nothing but your own consciousness. When your consciousness or your mental awareness becomes completely purified, the image becomes clear before you. If you can see a rose flower within as clearly as you can see one outside in the garden and if the quality of perception does not differ, I admire that purity of your thought. Verily that man has concentration who is able to see things with his eyes closed as much as he sees with eyes open. When

the difference between the thought perception and outer perception dissolves into nothing, then your thoughts become like a mirror. When your thoughts are completely cleared up, then you can see the rose inside you with the same clarity as you see the rose outside. If you are not able to see the rose inside you, it means that your mind is not completely clear. It means that there is a barrier between the thought of the rose and being able to see it within.

When the mind becomes pure and distractions lessen, then all becomes clear. There is no need to repair the mind. Whenever there is concentration, meditation, one-pointedness, there is detachment from the outside world for some time.

– 22 July 1982, Bokaro, Jharkhand (previously Bihar)

Satsang



Is there any form of external stimulus which can accelerate the manifestation of knowledge?

Through the practice of yoga one can gain all knowledge from within, without depending upon any external environment or stimulus. The comprehension of all dimensions of knowledge takes place within and one can gain knowledge of any part of the world or any part of the body, as the microcosm of this



world is within ourselves. There is a miniature universe within our personality and any event taking place in any part of the world is simultaneously taking place within us at the same time.

When one is able to tune oneself into the greater depths of one's own existence, one will be able to draw all knowledge from within and never from without. However, everyone cannot gain this great knowledge in one birth, because our body, or the medium through which we experience or gain knowledge, is not adequate or capable enough to develop it. For example, if an event is taking place in Japan, it is at the same time taking place within ourselves. Instead of tuning into the event there you can tune into the event from within yourself, so that it does not take place at two different places. For this to happen a basic faculty has to be developed and that is the ability of withdrawing oneself instantaneously, within a moment's notice, like switching off a light and the light is gone immediately. This ability enables one to tune oneself into happenings anywhere else. In order to avoid any confusion, with so many events taking place in the world, one needs to be especially psychic with this type of cosmic telepathy and must work through a psychic medium with someone else as an operator. It is very difficult without the psychic medium.

Swamiji are these practices in telepathy obstacles on the path of our spiritual evolution?

Yes, for those who continually practise telepathy and other such related sciences, it is very difficult to progress spiritually, as these psychic phenomena must be transcended in order to enter the spiritual domain.

What is the meaning of a rishi?

The word means seer. A rishi must be a siddha and jivanmukta, above the psychic states. A true guru should be a rishi in order to act as a dispeller of darkness.

When can we start practising sirshasana?

I will attend to the topic sirshasana rather than only attending to your question. *Sirshasana* means standing on the head. Ten years ago a research was conducted on this. It was found that people up to the age of thirty-five and forty can begin sirshasana any time. Those who are above forty-five can continue sirshasana. In sirshasana ventilation takes place at a greater speed in the brain and the consumption of oxygen is greatly reduced. Therefore, you can start sirshasana up to the age of thirty. From forty-five onwards you can continue, you cannot start.

Those who have a very healthy constitution can do it. I do sirshasana even now, I am fifty-five, fifteen to twenty minutes, there is no problem. There are people I know who have started sirshasana at the age of fifty, fifty-five and they have benefited. However, sirshasana is not the first of the asanas. When the blood system is purified; when the pranas are properly distributed throughout the body; when *nadi shuddhi*, the purification of the nervous system, has taken place; when bile and all other systems in the body are in equilibrium and you have practised sarvangasana, bhujangasana, surya namaskara and pranayama, you can start sirshasana even at the age of fifty.

If the body is not purified and there are tensions in the body, there is a lot of cholesterol, foreign matter, and the nadis or the nervous system is not pure, the stomach is heavily loaded, and the mucus membrane is full, filthy, dirty and decomposed, then it is better not to start sirshasana even at the age of twenty-five.

– 26 July 1976, Gomia, (Bokaro District), Jharkhand

Samadhi



Enlightenment is the nature of every being. You don't have to develop or import it. Man is very fortunate that he is able to realize this supreme state. All beings in the world are permeated through and through by the divine principle but they are not aware of it. Man alone has become aware, and he has been developing this awareness right from the beginning of civilization.

The divine experience

If you would ask what is the real form of enlightenment at the point of realization, some would say light and others knowledge. I think the best term for it is 'experience'. But experience of what? Experience of totality, one without a second. That experience cannot be described. If you have eaten mangoes and I have never tasted them, you are not going to be able to explain their taste to me. In the same manner, if I have experienced enlightenment and you have not, I can never explain it to you and you can never understand it.

The divine experience is very different from the mental experience of pain and pleasure, the emotional experience of love and hate, or the sleep experience. After that experience, man no longer remains an experiencer. When salt merges in water, it becomes one with the water. In the same way, when the experiencer experiences the non-empirical experience, he no longer exists as what we call an ordinary experiencer. The knower of Brahman or God becomes God. He loses his individuality, his limitations. That is the divine experience which man has when he becomes purified.

Enlightenment is something like a state of becoming. You become that, you live that, you are that. You are not a seer, a knower, or a witness of that experience and you cannot exercise it. That is why many saints have lived like fools. People either call them mystic visionaries or crazy men. There are many names for enlightened people. In the West they are known as cynics, and in India they are called avadhoots.

Objective awareness

In yogic terminology this divine experience is known as *samadhi*. Samadhi is not a state of ecstasy, trance or unconsciousness, as some people believe. It is a state of awareness, beyond time and space, where the mental body no longer functions. The state which we are experiencing now is not samadhi, because there is simultaneous awareness of so many things. We see, taste, smell, listen, feel, think and know. These mundane

experiences are an expression of the interaction between the senses, mind and object.

Experience takes place because of duality, and ego creates this duality. Transcending duality is the main purpose of spiritual life. Duality does not refer only to two, but more than two – multiplicity. It means perception after perception, where the experience, experiencer and experienced are all taking place concurrently.

Many people have fantastic experiences which they mistake for the divine. For example, one may be able to hear music clearly and completely without the aid of the ears. This is an experience, no doubt, but it is not the ultimate. One can have thousands of similar experiences during meditation, but none of them are absolute because you are experiencing them. As long as there is experience and experiencer, there is ego; and where there is ego, there cannot be absolute.

Journey of the ego

Ego is a very subtle principle of life which follows the soul like a shadow follows the man. Throughout the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, the same ego migrates in different names and forms. At the time of death, the ego withdraws itself from the manifested state to the unmanifest state. It enters into the causal body as dormant potential, and the moment you are given birth by your mother, the ego manifests. With the additional experiences and impressions which accumulate in the course of daily life, the ego becomes more and more fixed.

In yoga, the ego is known as *asmita* or I-ness. It is the normal self-awareness by which you know yourself as an individual. It is the ego which brings you back each morning from your death-like sleep. It is because of this principle that dreams are broken and sleep is disturbed. In pratyahara, although the mind is dissociated from the sensory nerve channels, the ego is still present. In dharana, when concentration takes place and you begin to see visions, there is still ego, otherwise you would have no awareness, no knowledge of the experience.

Ego remains with you right up through the early stages of samadhi. There is a point when samadhi begins, and another point where it becomes full. Between these two points there is a large range of human behaviour, and at one stage, different emotions of human life become very keen. Fear comes out, ego becomes very terrible, sexual fantasies become immense. There are references to these experiences in the lives of Buddha and Christ. It is said that Christ was tempted by Satan. Mara, or the devil, came to Buddha and troubled him the whole night. From the yogic point of view, these references describe the stage after the awakening of enlightenment, when samskaras and karmas quickly burst out.

The last animal vestiges come out, and passion, anger, greed, ego, attachment, vanity, pride, jealousy, neurosis, fear of death and many other things may appear. That is the reason why it is recommended that when the awakening begins, up to the time it becomes stable, the aspirant should cut himself off and go into seclusion. Otherwise it will create chaos. He will abuse everybody, and do all kinds of funny things. That is also the rule when there is awakening of kundalini. The sadhaka should seclude himself, and minimize his worldly activities.

Due to the play of Satan, many yoga practitioners develop very big egos. Such people should seclude themselves from social interactions for a while and perfect their samadhi. When a person is steadfast in spiritual awareness, then he becomes fully illumined. When samadhi becomes stable, virtues automatically bloom forth and the behaviour is divine. You will never find such a person criticizing or abusing. He will have innate humility. He will not only show love, but will have love for all.

The range of savikalpa samadhi

The moment you start to lose awareness of sense objects, samadhi begins. But this is not the final experience. The awareness must plunge deeper into this domain until ultimately it reaches the sphere of pure consciousness. Here

the experiences are completely withdrawn just as in deep sleep. There is no motion, no object to be perceived by any medium or channel of the senses.

In yoga there is a book of four chapters known as the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, in which it states that samadhi is not a static point, but a field of superconsciousness composed of three separate domains. The first domain is savikalpa samadhi, a relative state, in which the mind is still functioning with a slight vibration.

Patanjali has charted the territory of savikalpa samadhi thoroughly and has left us a good road map to follow. Savikalpa begins with the state of dhyana yoga in which a smooth, unfluctuating flow of concentration is maintained towards the object of meditation. As the samadhi becomes deeper and deeper, the aspirant enters finer and finer realms of consciousness, and the object of meditation becomes subtler and more cosmic, until finally it disappears entirely.

Within the broad region of savikalpa, we have several progressive states. The first is *savitarka samadhi*, the state where there is only thought and nothing else. Here the object of meditation is represented by words, knowledge and sense perceptions. Then comes *savichara samadhi*, a state of reflection which is devoid of language and thinking, in which only imagination and vision are functioning. Next there is *ananda samadhi* where you have a feeling of total bliss. Finally, you reach *asmita samadhi*, where you attain complete awareness and knowledge of the Self.

During the progressive stages of savikalpa, various experiences of a psychic nature occur, such as the experience of light, scents, fire, sun and the moon, angels, devas and divinities. Many people mistake these psychic experiences for the ultimate experience. They may have some fantastic vision and think that it is total enlightenment. But it is the small remnant of ego in the mind which is experiencing all these things. Therefore, they come under the category of savikalpa samadhi.

Asamprajnata samadhi

The second domain of samadhi described by Patanjali is *asamprajnata samadhi*, the intermediate state. This is an unconscious state, yet a very dynamic one. Here there is no experience of the self, of any events, or even of the unconscious but still consciousness is functioning in a very dynamic way. Just as fish can swim, unseen and unknown, under the surface of the water, the inner awareness can be active underneath the surface of human consciousness. Asamprajnata samadhi is an intermediary state in which consciousness is trying to evolve to a higher dimension. It is like leaving your car at the airport, and waiting for some time in the transit lounge before boarding the plane.

In order to get to the third and highest stage of samadhi, you first must cross the great barrier of asamprajnata. This state of vacuum is also known as *shoonyata* or the void. At this point you become totally unconscious, totally helpless. It is not within your power to move or think in any way. Your connection with the inner guru and light of your soul alone determines your movement during this intermediate state of shoonyata. It may be possible for you to come out of this void into the highest stage of samadhi, or you may return time and again to the stage of savikalpa samadhi. When you are in this state of unconsciousness, there is no experience. You only know when you return from it that you had gone into it and that you came out again. The experience of savikalpa can be noted, it can be known, but not the void experience of asamprajnata.

Nirvikalpa samadhi

After crossing the uncharted area of asamprajnata, one enters the third stage of *nirvikalpa samadhi*, the domain of infinity. This is a totally subjective state in which there is only experience but no experiencer. It is the essence of what *is*, not what can be seen or known. Here, you are no longer a participant in the drama of life, but a creator. Neither Patanjali nor anybody else has

said much about this tenuous state except that it is a perfect, absolute dimension, where one is free from the effects of karma and further incarnations, and total knowledge is gained.

It is important to note that savikalpa can be attained by most people, but to reach this stage of samadhi is not a matter of personal or individual effort. It is impossible to say what decides success or failure in the final attempt to attain nirvikalpa samadhi.

Living in the world

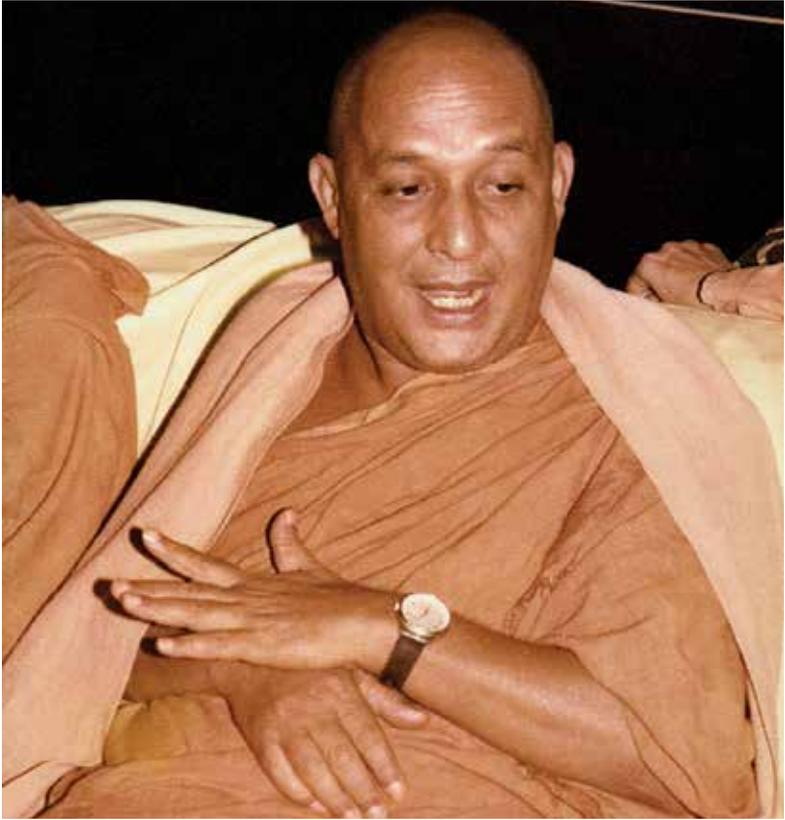
Many people wonder what happens to man's life after this experience. Of course, it will vary according to the different stages of attainment. At one stage, there seems to be aversion to desires, while at the next and higher stage there is an acceptance, with an understanding of desire in relation to a greater life rather than in relation to oneself.

At a certain stage of evolution there is no care for oneself, but immediately after that, at a higher stage, there is a greater awareness of this body, not as an individual unit, separate from everything else, but as a part of the cosmic body.

At a certain level in spiritual life, you may feel like renouncing all your possessions. But then at a higher level, you will again start accumulating everything, just as you did in the beginning as a householder. Previously you have been collecting things instinctively, you were not clear about their purpose or meaning for you were almost completely submerged in ignorance. When you became enlightened, however, you still accumulate property, friends, knowledge or desires but with an unselfish purpose. You develop compassion for all living things, not only for your own wife and children.

Things remain the same, but the background changes, the vision is completely purified. You learn to live as part of the cosmic being and to combine this greater awareness with everyday life.

According to all canons, samadhi is the state where one's total being can operate. That is why samadhi is the ultimate



and the summum bonum of life. Just imagine if you had only one leg to walk on, but after some time a surgeon came and made it possible for you to walk on both legs. What a great relief that would be! Or if you were blind and could not see this beautiful world, and a surgeon restored your eyesight. Can you imagine your happiness, your bliss? In the same way, the experiences of the senses, the mind and emotions are also limited. When samadhi lights up the soul, you experience infinite fulfilment, satisfaction and bliss. That is why people everywhere are taking up the practices of yoga in order to attain it.

– 21 January 1980, Munger



What can a householder do for spiritual advancement?

If you are a householder, you should start practising sadhana while you are discharging your normal obligations. In the course of time, increase the period to one, two or three hours, but continue to do your duties. When you are free you can devote your whole time, if you can properly organize the affairs of your family.

If you are not yet married and you do not have those commitments, then go to an ashram, live there and fulfil the obligations of nature in the form of karma yoga for a few years. After that, if you feel like going ahead, there are many nice places in India where you can follow your sadhana.

—12 October 1982, Ganga Darshan



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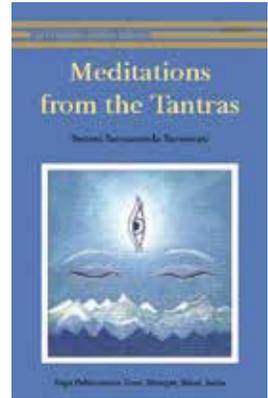
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