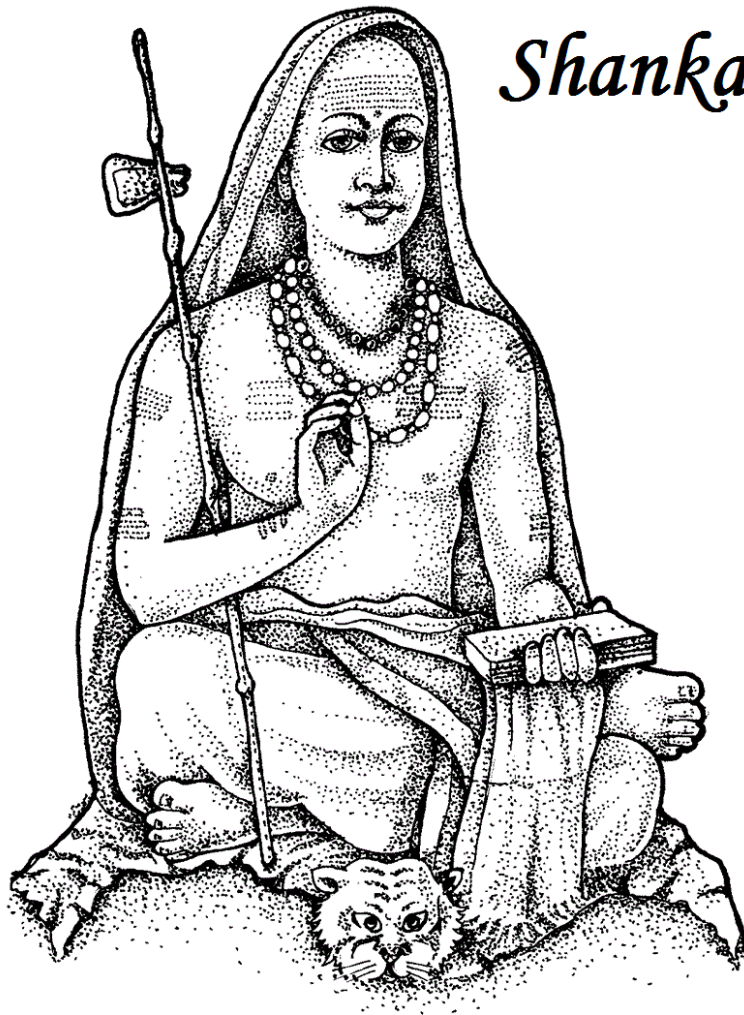


YOGA TEACHER TRAINING MANUAL

PHILOSOPHY

*Shri
Shankaracharya*



" Brahman is real. The universe is unreal. Brahman and Atman are one."

-Shri Shankaracharya

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THE HISTORY OF YOGA

THE BEGINNING

It is not easy to define the beginning of Yoga. Yoga is the Universal Law of **Union**. The highest purpose of yoga is the recognition and the experience of this **Union**. The vast meaning of Yoga is “oneness”. The essence of “oneness was always here from the beginning of the creation and will be here with no end. In this regard we can say that yoga exists since the beginning of the creation. In a way we can say that first came yoga and then the human existence. Although we don't know actually when Yoga starts we have different information from different researches. The Yoga knowledge traditionally is transferred mouth to mouth from the Guru to the disciple. We don't know how many years this process happened but when the capacity of the human mind become shorter starts as well the recording of yoga texts. Some wise Rishis start to decode yoga. So we have such texts as Vedas, Sutras of Patanjali and Bhagavad Gita.

VEDIC PERIOD

Between 3,500 and 2,500 years ago the Vedas were written, which formed the basis for Hinduism. Yogis at this time were often solitary types, living in forests. Their interests aimed at enduring physical hardship by sharpening their minds.

The word 'Yoga' was first mentioned in the oldest sacred text, the Rig Veda.

The Vedas were a collection of texts containing songs, mantras and rituals to be used by Brahmans and Rishis, who documented their practices and beliefs in the Upanishads, a huge work containing over 200 scriptures.

PRE-CLASSICAL YOGA

About 2,500 years ago, the *Upanishads* were written. The *Bhagavad Gita* is left as the oldest known yoga scripture, dating to 500 BCE. Yoga practice seems to soften a bit, becoming more meditative and less reclusive.

The Bhagavad Gita is the most renowned of the Yogic scriptures. Moving along to 2,500 years ago: this was about when people start moving from the fields and living in cities. When they realize that living so close to each other, pretty simply, we make each other sick! Respiratory infections abound. It makes sense for breathing techniques to find their way into yoga practice now. Once again, sitting and breathing gives way to more interesting discoveries and texts about how capable we are. We have all kinds of powers just waiting to be explored.

CLASSICAL PATANJALI'S

In the classical period of yoga, in the second century, Patanjali gave the first systematic presentation of yoga, organized into an “eight limbed path” the raja yoga path. Patanjali is often considered as the Father of Yoga and his Yoga sutras still strongly influence most styles of modern Yoga. Yoga Sutras form the defining text here, outlining the Eightfold Path of yoga: what to do and not do, how to relate with ourselves and others, how to sit, breathe, withdraw, focus, concentrate, meditate, and of course, enlighten. It's worth noting there is only a single mention of physical activity here, as preparation for proper sitting.

TODAY

A few centuries after Pantanjali, Yoga masters created a system of practices and techniques to rejuvenate the body and prolong life. They turned to the physical body and with radical techniques aimed to cleanse the body and the mind, as a way to achieve enlightenment. This exploration of both physical and spiritual connection and body centred practices led to the creation of Hatha Yoga. In modern times Swami Vivekananda brought the knowledge of Yoga to the West and yoga masters began to travel from India to the West, attracting attention and followers. This began in 1893 at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, when Swami Vivekananda wowed the attendees with his lectures on yoga and the universality of the world's religions. In the 1920s and 30s, Hatha Yoga was strongly promoted in India with the work of T. Krishnamacharya, Swami Sivananda and other yogis practicing Hatha Yoga. Krishnamacharya opened the first Hatha Yoga School in Mysore in 1924 and in 1936 Sivananda founded the Divine Life Society on the banks of the holy Ganges River. Krishnamacharya produced three students that would continue his legacy and increase the popularity of Hatha Yoga: B.K.S. Iyengar, T.K.V. Desikachar and Pattabhi Jois. Sivananda was a prolific author, writing over 200 books on yoga, who also established nine ashrams and numerous yoga centers located around the world. Life is a little different today. Many of us are sitting at desks for many hours every day. Then we sit in cars. At home we're sitting in front of another computer, or maybe the TV. So we have plenty of sitting in our lives. So, what do we need today from Yoga? We probably need to get up, reconnect with our bodies, and move. Unsurprisingly, the styles of yoga that are popular today are more physical, and circle around this need. Now we have Iyengar, Ashtanga, Kundalini, Vinyasa flow, many choices! Yoga likely came to the US in the 1800's, but its popularity really emerged in the 1960's. Yoga now is substantially more active. But for those who are serious seekers yoga is something beyond practicing on asana. Is a beautiful path of discovering the self and get the self – realization.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF YOGA?

Yoga is usually translated from the Sanskrit as meaning ‘union’, the union of the body, mind and spirit, as well as the union of the individual psyche with the transcendental Self or Atman with Brahman; or the union of the thoughts of all people. Put simply, as in the *Yoga Bija*, “Yoga is the unification of the web of dualities”. So, being in a state of Yoga requires going beyond binary thinking to acknowledge, for example, that the opposition between ourselves and heart is illusory. According to Swami Sivananda, yoga is the integration of one’s thoughts, words and deeds, or the integration of the head, heart and hands. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna that “Yoga is balance” and that it is the end of attachment to ego, identity and suffering. Embracing the oneness of the human experience and seeing others as a reflection of oneself allows for compassion and the concept that we are all essentially part of the same essential energy. Through yoga one attains contentment (*santosha*), by letting go of attachment to pleasure and aversion to pain by stilling the swinging pendulum between the poles of happiness and unhappiness. We do this by being present with what is-by being in the moment. In Sanskrit, there are two possible root words for yoga: ‘yuj’ and ‘yujir’, meaning mastery and yoke. One achieves union through the control of the vital energy, through mastery of *prana* and *apana*. In other words, the above roots describe both the methods and the goal of yoga. In the opening stanza of the yoga Sutra, for example, Pantanjali, the first who systematized Yoga, writes: “Yoga citta vritti nirodha”, which translates as “Yoga is the control of thought waves in the mind” (Prabhavananda 1981:15) or “Yoga is the cessation of movement in the consciousness” (Iyengar 1993:46).

Though, waves differ in quality depending on the state of mind, from the jagged alpha waves of active thought, to the gentle theta waves of deep relaxation. Yoga practices help to harmonize the body and mind through the vehicle of the breath, thereby making stillness possible. Yoga practices bring us back to the natural rhythms of the body and mind through repetition. Postures undulate between contraction and expansion thus stimulating the natural rhythms of peristalsis, for example. Rhythmic deep breathing in Yoga brings the heart rate into its rhythmic and optimal state. Evidence suggests that yoga also re-establishes the harmonious fluctuation of cerebro-spinal fluid necessary to good health.

Cultivating a harmony in the body's rhythmic systems also stimulates the mind to come into its relaxed theta state. At this point, one can approach a stillness of focus on one idea: the oneness of the universe, the infinite pure consciousness or the concept "I am one with the universe ". There is no word in yoga that better expresses this concept than OM.

In Yoga, Om is the primordial sound, the sound emanating from the ethers at the dawn of the universe. So, Om is the sound of space, of the beginning of the universe and is the eternal vibration. This resonates when we come to recognize ourselves as pranic (energy) beings and see everything in the universe as simply an energy essence manifest in material form. It follows that we are not separate either as human being, races, cultures etc. but we share a common spark; our fundamental reality is as Cosmic energy. Our dharma (ultimate purpose) is simply to realize that which we are already-One.

THE PERENIAL PHILOSOPHY

It is often asked whether a person can practice yoga and still be a good Christian or an active follower of any religion. At this point it is important for an instructor to point out that Yoga is not a religion, but a mystical path. It is an expression of the perennial philosophy. A religion may be defined as an institution with a certain hierarchy of priests that meditate between God and lay people, helping latter to find meaning in the scriptures and in this social existence. Unfortunately, where there is power and hierarchy there are abuses and dogma. Dogma is a closed or literal interpretation of scriptural texts that does not allow the congregation to explore the issues or experience the esoteric meaning for themselves. Through dogma, Joan of Arc was tried as a heretic because she said that she had experienced direct communication or communion with saints and with God. Gnostics, including Gnostic Christians, are those who believe in this ability of all aspirants to achieve personal contact with God. Indeed, this is the main premise of Yoga as a gnostic experiential practice, which teaches the direct experience and contemplation of Divine Truth. We are informed by the yogic texts and may accept them with provisional faith but true faith or knowledge comes through discovering the "Truth" through direct experience of higher states of consciousness.

There are Gnostics, also called mystics, at the base of all of the world's major institutionalized religions. For many reasons one could argue that Buddha and Jesus were mystics as well.

Mystics seek teachings from the wise or from Pure Consciousness and then set out to experience those truths within their own subtle bodies. Though yoga has spawned four of the world's religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, we do still have access to teachings which are purely yogic (such as Pantajali's Yoga Sutras) and cannot be attributed to one of the above religions. Although we cannot extract the yoga from these religions, from the other hand define them without reference to any of the yogic teachings or heritage-there would be virtually nothing left. Though yoga is fundamentally Gnostic and experiential and not religious, both mystical traditions and religions can be practiced either Gnostically or dogmatically, depending on the practitioner and the context. Some yogic sects fall into the trap of suggesting that only their guru is conveying the message of God. Clearly this goes against the aspect of Yoga philosophy which holds that we are all manifestations of Pure Consciousness. Conversely, some religious denominations are practiced by certain practitioners in a very Gnostic manner where individual and unmediated contemplation of the divine is the main practice. It is important to remember that "the paths are many but the Truth is one". In his Introduction to the Bhagavad Gita (Prabhavananda & Isherwood 1972), Aldous Huxley proposes that at the core of all religions are four basic truths that unify human mystical thought and experience. The first principle is that the material world is a manifestation of the Divine Ground, without which it would not exist. The second states that: "human beings are capable not merely of knowing about the Divine Ground by inference, they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known". The third principle of the perennial philosophy is that human being possesses a double nature: the material and the spiritual, it is possible to identify oneself wholly with the divine aspect of our natures. The fourth is that the only purpose of life is to identify oneself with the Divine Ground. The Indian saint, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886), stated "Truth is one, sages call it by various names". During his life, he explored the different paths to liberation as detailed in the scriptures of different religions. Through this quest to prove the validity of all religions.

His disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), explained, "religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man". After coming to North America for the Conference on World Religions, he continued to spread the message of his master in assuring us that all religions are true and that all have the right to uplift themselves and attain immortality.

THE PHILOSOPHY AND AIM OF YOGA

Although information about the universe is ever increasing, the human mind is never satisfied, it always yearns for more knowledge. However, as Kant, the great eighteenth century Prussian philosopher noted, the intellect ultimately comes to a point beyond which it cannot penetrate. The intellect cannot answer such questions as: What is the purpose of life? Who am I? Where will I go?

Is physical death the end of everything? It can be seen as foolish to search for truth with an instrument as limited as the intellect, to attempt to measure the unknown depth of eternal questions with a finite instrument. There are people known as saints or seers who can 'see' the past, present, and future. They have the ability to gather the dissipated rays of the mind. The answers to transcendental questions come to these people from the limitless source of wisdom gained during the hours of silent meditation. The seers and saints who have discovered the truth declare that this truth will take away all of the miseries and pain of life. They have realized their essential nature, which is eternally pure and perfect.

The founders of all religions 'saw' God; they saw through their own souls. What they saw, they reported and taught techniques to reach this state of experience. Transcending the intellect gives the yogi, saint or seer the highest mystical experience or 'samadhi'. Many religious teachers of today, on the other hand, seem busier with preaching than with practicing. Many people blindly follow religious leaders without knowing the purpose of life, and are satisfied with mere ritual and tradition. Each person needs to experience the truth within him/herself; only then will doubts and miseries vanish. Yoga gives practical and scientific techniques for finding and experiencing the truth in religion. As every science has its own method of investigation, so also the science of yoga has its own method.

Yoga says that the truth can be experienced only when one transcends the senses, and when the mind and intellect cease to function. A yoga teacher does not stop to

prove theories, nor argue with the class. A true teacher teaches with the authority of personal experience. This authority, in turn, is based on guidance received from his/her own teacher and from the scriptures. The teacher knows that much of the teaching is but the planting of seeds. For every idea the student understands, there will be a hundred that will come into the conscious mind only when the time is ready, when sufficient purity, strength and clarity of mind have been achieved. The aim of all yoga practice is to achieve truth, wherein the individual soul identifies itself with the Supreme Spirit, or God. Beyond the ever-changing consciousness of mind and intellect, there is a changeless, formless Spirit which is unaffected by anything, and which is veiled in the individual according to his/her stage of evolution.

ANALOGIES

1.The Spider and the Web

The pure consciousness (Brahman or Siva) is the spider who projects mind and matter, which is the web. The spider is now the subject, and the web is the object. Before the web was projected, it was one with the spider, symbolizing the universe in causal or unmanifest state.

When the web is withdrawn by the spider into itself, then there is no subject-object, but a union of the two, known as yoga. The spider is both the efficient cause (the life principle within the spider), and the material cause (its body). The spider's body provides the material from which its web is formed. But, there could be no web without the energy that is necessary to spin the web.

2. Sun and Clouds

The clouds are formed by the presence (action) of the sun. They, in turn, hide the sun. The sun, however, remains unaffected by the clouds even though hidden by them. The sun is Brahman, and the clouds are the creation which veils the sun. The heat of the sun is Maya.

3. Movie Screen

The screen is unaffected by the movie projected on it. One sees fires, floods, disasters of all sorts on the screen. Yet the screen remains unaffected by the apparent activity upon it. So, also, the pure consciousness is unaffected by creation, which is projected from itself by its active power of Maya.

Questions:

1. What is the aim of yoga?
2. Is there any blind faith in yoga?
3. What are the three factors that limit and condition our experience?
4. Describe the analogy of the movie screen.

WHAT IS ASHTANGA **OR THE EIGHT LIMBS OF RAJA YOGA**

PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRAS

Patanjali is considered to be an enlightened soul who lived in this earth between 500 B.C and 200A.D (possibly a contemporary of Buddha). He is said to have systematized bodies of knowledge coming from the four Vedas. The compilation of 196 Yoga Sutras (called Yoga Darshan in India) are his greatest work. Sutra is the Sanskrit word for 'thread'. Each sutra is a seed of knowledge that unfolds as it is contemplated deeply by the practitioner in relation to all of the other sutras. As a whole, they are like a spool of thread that continues to unravel to deeper and deeper layers of spiritual understanding.

The four chapters are:

Samadhi pada (the aim of yoga)

Sadhana pada (the practice of yoga)-Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara

Vibhuti pada (the resulting esoteric powers) Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi

Kaivalya pada (liberation)

According to Pantajali, in Yoga Sutra II:29, the word Ashtanga refers to the eight limbs of yoga. These steps lead one from the control of one's physical and mental environment to the higher esoteric states of meditations. They are as follows:

Yama (restraint)

Niyama (observances)

Asana (steady posture or posture easily held)

Pranayama (science of breath or mastery of the vital energy)

Pratyahara (withdrawal of the mind from sense objects)

Dharana (concentration)

Dhyana (meditation)

Samadhi (union with Brahman)

In the second chapter of the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali discusses Ashtanga in detail and the results of strict observance to this path. For example, with reference to *ahimsa* he writes, “When a man becomes steadfast in his abstention from harming others, then all living creatures will cease to feel enmity in his presence”.

With reference to satya, Patanjali states “When a man becomes steadfast in his abstention from falsehood he gets the power of obtaining from himself and others the fruits of good deeds, without having to perform the deeds themselves”. These sutras not only give the reader a glimpse at the profound blessings that arise from following the path of yoga but they clearly show the yamas and niyamas as guidelines for daily life and interactions. They are not commands, breach of which is considered sin, rather Patanjali demonstrates that actions have consequences and that we learn from those consequences.

The two primarily ethical limbs of Ashtanga, yama and niyama, are broken down into 10 guidelines for behavior as follows:

1.Yama:

Ahimsa (non-harming in thought, word or deed)

Satya (truthfulness in thought, word and deed)

Asteya (non-stealing)

Brahmacharya (purification of the sexual energy- sublimation)

Aparigraha (Lack of greed or minimalism)

Niyama:

Shaucha (purity or cleanliness of body and mind)

Santosha (contentment)

Tapas (austerity-purifying heat or struggle)

Svadhyaya (the study of sacred texts and the study of the self)

Ishvara-pranidhana (devotion or the constant awareness of the Divine Presence)

Ahimsa, non-harming in thought, word or deed, is perhaps the most well known ethical principle of yoga due to the life and teachings of Gandhi and his philosophy of non-violent resistance of oppression. *Ahimsa* is also related to the yogic practice of vegetarianism and such can be concretely related to students through this example. Most yogis choose to sustain themselves on grains, vegetables, beans,

fruits and products that can be taken from animals in a relatively harmless way, like milk and honey. Animals with a spinal column and brain feel physical pain when deprived of life and of the freedom to roam. And so, yogis choose to harvest plants as food, thereby doing the least harm to the Earth's creatures.

Non-harming thought to be even more of a challenge and involves constant mindfulness over one's speech, such as avoiding gossiping, backbiting and judgment of others that are so common in the West. For this reason, yogis economize their speech and find great peace in daily periods of silence. Observing silence between 8 and 10 o'clock at night for example, brings a calm and quiet atmosphere before going to sleep, thereby cultivating a peaceful, deep sleep. Thus ahimsa is linked to both *satya* (truthfulness) and *aparigraha* (minimalism).

Satya means truthfulness. This would seem to be fairly straightforward except that in practicing *satya* one must also do the least harm. Therefore, we must find a compassionate way of telling the truth. If there is bad news, it must be conveyed slowly to let the person's mind adjust. In some cases also, silence may be preferable to blatant honesty in order to spare a person's feelings.

Asteya means literally non-stealing. Again this becomes more difficult when applied to the mental level; we should try to avoid being jealous of others' possessions or happiness. This may also apply to stealing opportunities from others. When we accept opportunities, such as contracts or overtime work, that we are not really interested in, simply because they have been offered to us, we are stealing opportunities from others. Similarly, when we engage in 'rescuing' or over protective dynamics in our relationships, we are likely preventing the other person from learning from their mistakes, growing as a person in capability and in confidence. *Asteya* can also be applied to respecting other people rights.

The issue of **brahmacharya** is quite controversial so we are going to explore the teaching of this *yama*. Often it is translated as celibacy which often inspires clash in Western students who equate it inaccurately with repression and do not understand the value or purpose of *sannyasa*. According to the Yoga Sutras, *brahmacharya* increases one's immune power, longevity and ability to control the kundalini energy. It also helps one to have a maximum amount of physical, mental/emotional energy and prana available for spiritual growth at any given time.

However, in the Western context it may be more useful and less narrow in vision to translate *brahmacharya* as the conduct that leads to Brahman, as the ability to guide the senses or as the proper use of the senses. This necessitates and implicates all of the other *yamas* and *niyamas* and is a reminder that none of the above can be practiced in isolation. *Ahimsa* calls for *satya* (in order not to harm, one must be honest) and proper *satya* requires *ahimsa* (the truth must be kindly related). So now, let us relate this to the issue of sense control and sexual purification. If we behave in a way that is deceitful to our friends or spouse, this ignores both *ahimsa* and *satya* while also contravening *brahmacharya*. Importantly by viewing his/her partner as a manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness.

Aparigraha is the science of minimalism: high thinking and simple living. If your desk is full of clutter it is difficult to study. Physical clutter is a metaphor for the mind that jumps from one half-formed thought to the next. If we are always thinking of acquiring new possessions or of being successful it is difficult to calm the mind for meditation. This does not mean we need to live in a cave or renounce the world, but to be in a state of equanimity, it is helpful to hold onto only those things and thoughts that are necessary for our lives and our spiritual development.

2.NIYAMA:

Shaucha is a very important practice and yet very simple to integrate into one's daily routine. Purity is a symbol of our goal for our body and mind in yoga. The body is the vehicle necessary to reach our goal. Therefore we must take care of the body. It is of inestimable value for teachers to introduce students to a few of the most basic but life-changing practices which fall under the category of *shaucha*. Firstly, wearing light-colored clothing, especially white and cream as opposed to the fashionable black, uplifts the spirit of those around us. Secondly, bathing in cool or lukewarm water daily is important to remove toxins that have been released through the skin to refresh the mind for meditation and to remove dullness. Practically, in class teachers can take time to demonstrate and help beginning students to perform *jal neti*, *nasal* cleansing and intermediate students to perform *sutra neti*. The benefits for students with high fever, allergies or chronic congestion provide significant motivation for daily practice, once students have been exposed to and feel comfortable with the technique.

Santosha seems to describe the ideal yogi-content. According to sutra II:42 “as the result of contentment, one gains supreme happiness”. The secret of *santosha* is *aparigraha*. It is important to be content with what you have at any given moment. This does not mean that yogis do not strive to do more service or to develop themselves but rather than they cultivate the ability to enjoy each moment regardless of the circumstances. They recognize the slipperiness of the concepts of pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness. In hard times, this requires a lot of devotion (*Ishwara pranidhana*) the recognition that this manifest world is a subjective reality that is in a state of constant flux and that every hardship is a valuable lesson bringing one closer to realization. Many find inspiration in the saying: This too shall pass.

Of course in the yogic terms this applies not only to the hardships but to the joyful moments as well. The only thing that remains is the underlying peace one may find after renouncing attachment to a certain outcome and renouncing clinging to pleasure and happiness.

Tapas or austerity may sound very monastic. However, any spiritual practice involves struggle and discipline. *Sadhana*, another word for meditation is translated as struggle. So, taking time to meditate before every meal, for example and delaying sense gratification can be considered *tapas*. Waking up early to do yoga is also a kind of *tapas* especially if you are not a morning person. Through this kind of discipline one’s yoga practice blossoms and bears fruit. “As the result of *tapas*, impurities are removed. Then special powers come to the body and the sense of organs”(II:43). In the yoga tradition there is a day of fasting twice a month, 3 days before the new and full moon on a special day called *Ekadashi*. Fasting is an excellent example both of *saucha* (cleansing) and *tapas* (austerity). During a fast, the body begins to break down the stored matter on the walls of the intestines. Drinking warm lemon water at the end of the fast flushes these toxins from the body. This kind of practice also cultivates confidence and willpower. The energy conserved by not having to digest can be used to fuel meditation. Many people report special spiritual experiences at the culmination of a one-day (30-hour) fast.

Naturally, yoga involves study, *svadhyaya*: both study of the yogic texts and self-study or mindfulness. Even understanding and embarking on the path of *yama* and *niyama* takes considerable reflection and consideration. However, ***svadhyaya*** is not

merely intellectual musing but rigorous analysis into what is real and what is unreal and how best to live in the world. According to yoga philosophy, knowledge must be put to practical use. The purpose of academic study and study of the scriptures is to expand one's consciousness. This expansion of consciousness naturally affects one's behavior cannot truly be called knowledge but is perhaps just information.

Ishwara pranidhana is to recognize all of creation as a manifestation of divine consciousness. Many people find it difficult to have a relationship with an unqualified supreme being. This is why most religious traditions guide people to focus their affection on Ishwara, a visual or incarnate representation of divine attributes, in other words, an enlightened person of perfect yogi.

In the yoga tradition and in Hinduism, devotees gaze upon pictures of Krishna, Siva or another image that the human mind can fathom and relate to as sublime. Similarly Catholics gaze upon the image of Jesus or Mary and cultivate relationship with their essence. Yogic devotees repeat the name of this embodiment of holiness, a practice called *japa*. Before meditation, to purify and calm the mind, many yogis use a *mala* or rosary to chant a holy name or mantra 108 times. The purpose of projecting the divine one form and cultivating unconditional love for this essence, is to eventually come to merge with this icon and to recognize the self and all others as divine. If one is not naturally devotional or finds the use of icons distracting, love of animals, love of nature, service to the less fortunate, all of these can be vehicles to understanding the universe as the manifestation of one Supreme energy. *Ishwara pranidhana* is closely related to *brahmacharya*, in that we can make our relationships with our spouses and experience of the sacred.

THE FOUR TRADITIONAL PATHS OF YOGA

There are traditionally said to be four different paths of yoga. Bhakti, Karma, Raja and Jnana Yoga are the main subject of the Bhagavad Gita. Ashtanga Yoga is the integral path outlined by Patanjali. Asana is integral to both Hatha and Raja (Ashtanga) yoga. A yoga practitioner may follow one path predominantly according to his/hers personality. However, these paths are in many ways linked and overlap significantly with one another. Furthermore, an integrated approach is more balanced and true in the sense that yoga system is a whole and holistic tradition. Cultivating one path naturally leads one to another. For example, practicing the surrender of bhakti and karma yoga lead one to a moment-to-moment meditation practice, which is attributed to the realm of Raja yoga.

Bhakti yoga is the yoga of devotion, meaning one lives life in order to please the divine. Devotees express their love for God often by singing spiritual songs and collective chanting. They also practice japa, which is a repetition of a mantra often using a mala or set of 108 beads. Japa and Kiirtan are types of spiritual practices that are relatively easy to perform thus Bhakti is considered to be the safest path. *Bhakti yoga* has two mudras (gestures) to express itself: reaching up towards the sky, the mudra of longing and bowing down on the ground with outstretched arms in a prostration position-the mudra of surrender. Devotees create a relationship with a divine personality, the Beloved, such as Krishna, Siva or a guru who represents God for them. The object of devotion is a symbol of the concept that everything in the universe is a manifestation of Pure Consciousness. It is said, if you can love one, you can better learn to extend that love to all. This externalization of the divine as other helps to cultivate a relationship of unconditional love and ecstasy making palpable the spiritual quest. Relationship, love and longing are natural to the human experience and bhakti yoga in its initial stages capitalizes on the dualistic tendency of the human mind and the dualistic nature of the material world. The next stage of *Bhakti yoga* is actually to use the longing for relationship with the divine, to fully identify with, merge and become one with that energy essence one has projected outside of oneself. At that point, the border between self and other dissolve and the devotee is in union, realizing that he/she is the Beloved. It is very important to know this and therefore to be able to see through dogmas untenable in yoga, such as the superiority of the icon over another or the

rejection of the bhakti process all together. Bhakti yoga is in fact an incredibly powerful path, often considered the first path of yoga, as its practice teaches fundamental lessons, like the surrender of the ego, unwavering faith and a sense of oneness with all of creation. One is less likely to succeed on the other paths without having first cultivated bhakti. That said, Bhakti yoga should be balanced by Jnana yoga in order to offset the potential for sectarianism and dogma.

Karma yoga is both 'seva', the yoga of selfless service and the performing of all actions without expectation. It is directly connected to Bhakti. In doing service for others who are in genuine need of help without desiring any personal benefit or thanks, we remove egoism and offer our energy and efforts to the collective and therefore to Cosmic consciousness. The Bhagavad Gita presents the idea of karma yoga as the fulfilling of one's duty or purpose (dharma) without attachment to the fruits of these actions. This path is applicable to all people because as Krishna points out in the Bhagavad Gita, in this material world, all are helplessly forced to act. There is no thing such inaction in that even passivity is a choice; to do nothing about a certain situation is your chosen course of action. Karma yoga is much about learning to act and not to react - learning to respond to situations without letting the ego's reaction dominates our behavior. Furthermore, letting go of ego craving for certain gratifying results brings often suffering, whereas performing right action without clinging to desired results allows for equanimity (santosha). So, Karma yoga can be seva- volunteer work or can be mindfulness and dedication in any daily action.

Karma yoga can also be searching out one's highest purpose in this incarnation and dedicating one's life to that purpose. These all involve very concrete actions. However it is quite broadening in perspective to recognize that karma can also imply energy service. Doing meditation is a very valid form of karma yoga. One person cannot solve all of the world's problems, so to speak. But, by starting with oneself one provides a positive example and one can radiate peaceful energy to the world. Yogis who live and meditate on remote caves, therefore, may be considered to be rendering an important social service. Meditation and the life of renunciation are not, as they are sometimes considered to be, selfish.

Jnana yoga is the yoga of knowledge or insight. If one follows this most perilous of paths, one believes in the careful and meditative contemplation of the holy books and of the nature of reality. Janna yogis analyze the phenomenal world with spiritual discrimination (viveka-discernment) saying 'Neti-Neti', 'not this-not this' meaning that in this world nothing is permanent or real. Only pure consciousness is eternal and therefore real. Jnanis affirm: 'I am not this body, I am not this mind,I

am pure consciousness'. This yoga, however is not the most common nor is it the most recommended in the yoga tradition, as only a very highly conscious person can achieve this kind of clear reasoning without falling into intellectual pitfalls, such as existential doubt. If Janan yoga is not balanced with Bhakti yoga, it may become dry analysis or it may flame the ego and create division rather than Union.

Raja yoga is also called dhyana yoga, the yoga of concentration and meditation. Some say that Raja yoga is the last four limbs of the eight-fold path. Others feel that **Raja yoga is Ashtanga Yoga**, the integrated path outlined by Patanjali in Yoga Sutras. Ashtanga, the eight-fold path, incorporates Bhakti, Hatha and Jnana yoga and maps out a path to meditative union. How is this so? Ashtanga shares many of the aspects of the Hatha yoga roadmap to union: asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dhyana and Samandi. Remember also that the second limb of Ashtanga is Niyama, the last two principles of which are swadhyaya and ishwara pranidhana, study of scriptures (Jnana) and devotion to the Supreme (Bhakti). With Ashtanga yoga, Patanjali presented a very holistic system that integrated many of the yoga practices in a unified manner. The limbs are not necessarily to be followed in a linear order. We can and probably should attempt Yama, Niyama, asana, pranayama and pratyahara concurrently in our lives. Through our effort to follow these steps, dharana, dhyana and samadhi come naturally. That said, there is a casual relationship that seems to exist. For example, asana helps to bring one into a proper position, physically and mentally for pranayama. Pranayama works to channel life force energy, thus making the directing of the senses quite natural.

Once the senses and the life force energy are being brought to focus, concentration of the mind and meditation flow effortlessly, leading to oneness and the expansion of consciousness.

GURU

At this point, we are going to explore the concept of Guru. "Gu" means dispeller and "ru" means darkness. Therefore a guru is an entity that helps the disciple emerge from the cloud of illusion and ego-identification and begin to perceive the light of Truth through yogic practices. The living Guru-disciple relationship is a powerful and long-held tradition in yoga not to be dismissed. Unfortunately modern adepts have been exposed to widely publicized abuses of the Guru-disciple relationship. But these should not detract from the healthy and important relationships that many have found with true Gurus. It is also a misconception that the guru is on a pedestal and that the devotee can never attain that level of consciousness or that the devotee should be subservient and passive in the relationship with the Guru. In fact, often the guru will not teach a disciple until that person demonstrates a strong desire to be taught and to learn by directly asking for teachings and to enter into a teaching and learning relationship. Gurus do not go out looking for disciples.

A Guru should resist the temptation to put the guru on a pedestal in a human way—mistaking the guru's human personality and identify with the Divine. It is the guru's essence of Atman, which is Divine, not the body or the personality. In fact, there is no purpose in having a guru unless one believes that one can either merge with the Guru and attain enlightenment. Also, it is important to say that many disciples eventually recognize their living Guru as a part of themselves as well as a representation of the Supreme. In other words, the duality of the experience of devotion falls away. This is the ultimate purpose of Bhakti yoga. So, these are two other aspects of the concept Guru. There is the inner guru, that divine spark or Atman which we have only to realize is our true nature. We get insights or glimpses of this reality regularly through deep meditation and through daily experience of the Theta state. So, even without a living Guru, one is constantly being guided by this inner Truth. Furthermore, if one does not have a living guru or one's guru has left the physical body, one may come to cultivate a Guru-disciple relationship with the Supreme directly. So there are the three layers of the concept guru:

- Living Guru
- Inner Guru
- Universal Guru(pure consciousness)

THE MIND OF THE ASPIRANT

A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY BY SWAMI SIVANADA

(Excerpted from his book *Sadhana*)

The person who sincerely takes to the spiritual path and begins to do systematic sadhana finds him/herself face to face with certain peculiar difficulties and disappointing experiences. This may dismay and discourage the beginner. But these problems and obstacles are common understanding of the methods of overcoming them.

PRE-CONCEIVED IDEAS:

Many sadhanas (spiritual aspirants) start their spiritual lives with well-developed pre-conceptions about sadhana, realization, guru, and the like. But true spiritual life is often quite different from what the individual fondly imagines it to be. Many things are found to be at variance with his/her mental picture. Realities at times turn out to be absolutely contradictory to fondly cherished pre-formed ideas.

More often than not, neophytes are unable to reconcile these rude shocks and unexpected eye-openers. They quickly retrace their steps and return to their former deluded, sensual life. This is the greatest of blunders. A peerless gem has been grasped and then foolishly thrown away. A priceless opportunity is lost. The mind will once again pursue with vigor the same sensual grooves. What takes place is that the aspirant does not wish to let go of the long cherished conceptions. The ego clings to them. For instance, there may be a certain idea of what constitutes sadhana. Or one imagines that the person whom one accepts as guru should prescribe certain sadhana. If this does not happen, dissatisfaction makes its appearance. The would-be aspirant thinks that a guru should behave in such and such manner. If the latter does not, loyalty wanes. To surrender to the feet of the guru, and then begin to doubt or dislike his/her conduct, is the most awful and colossal error that an aspirant can commit. A knife is laid at the very root of sadhana and spiritual life. Often the sadhaka enters the path with a particular estimation of his/her own spiritual progress and stage that has been reached. In fact, God alone really knows where exactly we stand. Yet, the sadhana will act according to previous notions. When later events prove him/her wrong,

disappointment appears and enthusiasm vanishes. All this is totally harmful. To be preyed upon by a series of disillusion and disappointments at the very start of spiritual life, is a terrible handicap. It cripples the capacity and urge for sadhana. Many lose heart, and become disgusted with spiritual life. Sadhana should be undertaken with keen enthusiasm and joy. It is best to begin the life of sadhana with an open mind. Be free of cramping preconceived notions formed out of your own egoism. Approach spiritual life with a sincere receptive attitude with the idea to learn. Be prepared to adapt yourself to them, instead of foolishly wishing them to adjust themselves to suit your mental pattern. Without this attitude, disharmony will mark the very beginning of your sadhana. You will fall into a state of dejection very hard to come out from. This will color the entire course of subsequent Sadhana. Valuable years will be wasted. Tyaga (renunciation) of pet notions and peculiar ways of thinking is quite necessary, if you wish to enter and proceed on the path smoothly. Then, as you proceed, you yourself will understand things gradually. They will become clear to you one by one.

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the three main obstacles that any spiritual aspirant encounters at the beginning of his/her path? How can these obstacles be overcome?
2. Give a few examples of preconceived ideas, and show how they can be obstacles to the spiritual path.
3. What is your highest duty?
4. Sometimes aspirants think that after starting sadhana they feel worse than before. Why is that?

BRAHMAN, BRAHMA AND THE THREE GUNAS

BRAHMAN, ATMAN

Brahman is the Infinite, Uncaused, Eternal, Supreme Reality of Vedanta philosophy. It is said to be beyond all qualities or attributes, beyond subject and object, to be the source of Being, Intelligence, and Bliss (Sat, Chit, Ananda).

Brahman is the screen onto which the cosmic drama (Maya) is projected. It is the upholder of the drama (creation), but it remains unaffected by it. Brahman cannot be defined or known by any process of the intellect.

To define is to confine, as Brahman is the Absolute, what could there be to confine it? The great non-dualistic philosopher Shankaracharya stated categorically that, “Brahman is real. The universe is unreal. Brahman and Atman are One.”

With his masterful statement, “ Only that is real that does not change nor cease to exist”, he points out the complete unreality of the universe and all things within it. Atman is the Absolute Consciousness in the individual.

It is one with Brahman, and unchanging, without limitations. Although Brahman and Atman are identical terms, Brahman refers to the Absolute when seen in the whole universe, while Atman refers to the Absolute when seen in the individual.

Define God - Brahman

(according the texts of Upanishad)

In ancient texts of Upanishad we find the definition of :What is Brahman - How do we know Brahman - What is attaining the highest by knowing Brahman

The meaning of Brahman in yogic philosophy is equal to the existence , knowledge, infinite.And who knows Brahman, the reality is shining into his own heart.

So Brahman is represented by the Sanskrit words:

Satyam = Truth

Gyanam = Knowledge

Anandam = Infinite

Limit of space but Brahman is unlimited, expands without limit, there is no place where it is no omnipresent.

Limit of time, birth and death are limits of time. But Brahman is eternal timeless.

Limit of object, everything exist because of a special form and identity but Brahman has no object limitation, nothing in the universe is different from Brahman

Non dual is equal to Brahman. Advayda = non second thing apart of Brahman.In that meaning if Brahman is eternal, all pervading and non dual, then Brahman according to Advayda philosophy must be right here, right now in everything that I choose to see. We meet contradiction meanings in philosophy.As we consider the reality like things that there are exist. Exist means being. For example what is around us and we can see it we used to say that they are real they exist.Applying now in this the meaning of infinite, existence is without any barrier of anything.If we think the waves of ocean we can similar understand the relation between every existence with Brahman. Even we look at the waves, even we look at the surface of the ocean , we can find everywhere water unbroken mass of water. There is existence and this is in everything. If we destroy a glass and we break it, it continues to be in a broken glass.By the same way if the whole universe is destroyed, even though names and forms manifest balance, when names and

forms are not there, everything resolves back to Maya, then balance continues but is not experienced.

Can we have waves without water? Can we have rings without gold? Can we have furniture without wood ? Nothing in the universe can be without existence. So we find Brahman in the existence of everything in the universe. There is not even one thing in the universe apart of Brahman. Speaking about knowledge we consider everything but knowledge has limitation of time, knowledge changes fast. Knowledge is different of each other. Every bit of knowledge has to do with awareness –conscious is common to every knowledge. Without consciousness there is no knowledge. The objects of knowledge are different of each other. There are limited by space , there are limited by time, there are limited by object. But consciousness itself is common to all kind of knowledge. And this pure knowledge has no limitation of time , space or object. This pure consciousness is the meaning of the reality – Knowledge.

In Sanskrit pure existence is called:

Sat = consciousness

Chit = Knowledge

Ananda = Brahman

So God in Advaita philosophy is pure existence, is pure consciousness. Is the pure light in our heart which enables us to experience the whole world. This consciousness is not limited by space and time is not coming and going by birth and death. The memories of our life are played in the screen of our consciousness. That which is infinite is joy – bliss. Our limitations are giving us unhappiness. So for example for sure one day this body will die. The person who I love one day will die too. But the experience of Sat , chit, Ananda is self bliss, self joy experience. So our true nature in yogic philosophy is I am Brahman. And the main goal of our existence is to realize Brahman as our self, as the light shining in our heart.

THE THREE GUNAS

Maya, or Prakriti, is said to consist of the three gunas (qualities): Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. The three gunas have been compared to three strands which constitute the rope of Maya, which binds us to this illusory world. Maya has no existence independent of the gunas.

They are present in varying degrees in all objects gross or subtle, including the mind, intellect, and ego. The gunas can be seen as operating at the physical, mental, and emotional levels. Everything within this universe of Maya is composed of the three gunas. At the end of a cycle, when the universe is drawn back into a state of non-manifestation (Night of Brahma), the gunas are in a state of equilibrium. At this time, Maya, in association with Brahman, exists as cause alone, without any of its manifestations. Then, due to karmic factors, the equilibrium of the gunas is disturbed and they begin to assert their individual characteristics. Different objects, subtle and gross, come into existence. The tangible universe begins to manifest. This projection of the manifested universe is known as 'The Day of Brahma'. Sattva manifests as purity and knowledge. Rajas manifests as activity and motion. Tamas manifests as inertia and laziness. These three 'qualities of nature' always exist together. There cannot be pure Sattva without Rajas and Tamas, nor pure Rajas without Sattva and Tamas, nor pure Tamas without Sattva and Rajas.

The difference between one being and another lies in the various preponderances of the gunas. As long as a person is attached to any of the gunas, he remains in bondage. Even the gods and angels are under the influence of them. The gods encompassing a preponderance of Sattva, humans of Rajas, and sub-human beings of Tamas. Sattva binds a person with attachment to happiness. Rajas binds with attachment to activity, and Tamas with attachment to delusion. Brahman alone stands above the three gunas, and is untouched by Maya. Yoga represents the scientific approach to the attainment of truth by going beyond nature and the gunas. The following story is often given to illustrate the three gunas. The gunas may be compared to three robbers who waylay a man in a forest. Tamas, one of the robbers, wants to destroy him. But, at the persuasion of Rajas, the second robber, he is bound hand and foot to a tree and relieved of all his treasures. After some

time, Sattva, the third robber, returns, frees the man from his bondage, takes him gently out of the forest, and sets him on the highway leading to home. Then Sattva takes leave of him because he too, being a robber, does not dare accompany the man out of the forest, for fear of the police. Tamas wants to destroy a man. Rajas binds him to the world, and robs him of his spiritual treasures. Sattva, too, must be given up if the aspirant seeks total freedom. Truth lies beyond the three gunas.

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF YOGA STUDENTS:

SATTVIC STUDENT -A (GUNPOWDER):

There are two types of sattvic students. The highest is the 'gunpowder' student; this is very rare. Very little work is necessary for this student to reach perfection. Master Sivananda spent only a few hours with his teacher. It seems that he didn't pass that one final exam in his last life, and had to return to finish off in this life. Although he reached the highest stage, he just failed to complete it. So, in this life, he must meet a teacher who just sets a spark to the gunpowder.

Examples: Ramakrishna, Swami Sivananda.

SATTVIC STUDENT -B (DRY WOOD):

The second type of sattvic student is a highly evolved person who, even early in life, is endowed with viveka (discrimination) and vairagya (dispassion).

Viveka understands the distinction between the Real and the Unreal. When there is discrimination, dispassion follows. The two go hand-in-hand. For one with discrimination, the mind cannot dwell with the unessential (unreal), but runs to the essential (the real). Discrimination without dispassion is meaningless. A sattvic student knows that there is no magic formula for liberation. The experience comes only through discipline. He goes to a teacher in order to experience the teachings. He is not a blind follower, he does not merely imitate. The sattvic student asks questions and works for his own salvation. Sometimes, the answers cannot fully satisfy the student intellectually at that time. As he evolves in level of understanding, the full meaning of the teacher's words are experienced. Growth is in the student's own hands, but he goes to the teacher because he knows he can advance through the teachings and through taking on a certain way of life.

RAJASIC STUDENT (WET WOOD):

The sadhana (spiritual practice) of a rajasic student is mainly preaching, not practicing. He is always reading and trying to convert without having personal experience. He is a follower who believes his teacher has a magic formula. The 'my' in everything is important: 'My teacher', 'my religion', 'my God'. His discrimination is of a passionate nature, not seeing the truth behind all the teachings (unable to see the oneness of all forms of God). There is an emotional attachment to the teacher, and he is unable to see beyond the teacher's form. If the teacher's attitude changes towards the student, the student will be emotionally affected. This is not true of the sattvic student, who has pure devotion and asks nothing but to serve his guru. Rajasic students are usually also interested in things like Palmistry, Astrology, and other occult sciences.

TAMASIC STUDENT (GREEN WOOD):

This type of student tends to misinterpret all spiritual teaching and will make the teacher's life miserable. He likes to argue for the sake of argument. No amount of teaching will have any effect upon him. He does not use his intellect in examining spiritual matters. The tamasic student is interested in occultism, and often resorts to the use of amulets and charms. He often gets involved in voodoo, worship of the dead, etc. Instinct, not intellect and discrimination, is functioning in the tamasic student. He has no discrimination, observes no rules or regulations and accepts no discipline.

Questions:

1. What is Brahman?
2. Define Vedanta according to the three statements of Shankaracharya.

3. Describe what is Maya and the three gunas

THE THREE BODIES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

The yoga system classifies three apparent 'vehicles' of the soul in its journey towards perfection. However, in reality, there is no bondage or limit which can be set on the spirit. In the ultimate sense, the soul or spirit is without division. Mind and bodies are the active powers which seemingly impose limitations and bring individual consciousness.

THE THREE BODIES

1. PHYSICAL BODY

The gross physical body, known as Stula Sharira, is composed of five elements: earth (prithivi), water (apas), fire (agni), air (vayu), ether (akasha). Its stages of existence are birth, growth, change, decay, and death.

2. ASTRAL BODY

The astral body, Linga Sharira or Sukshma Sharira, is the means of experiencing pleasure and pain. It is composed of **19** elements:

- 5** Organs of action (karma indriyas)
- 5** Organs of knowledge (jnana indriyas)
- 5** Pranas
- 4** Elements of antahkarana(inner instrument):

Mind (manas)

Intellect (buddhi)

Subconscious (chitta)

Ego (ahamkara)

3. CAUSAL BODY

The causal, or seed, body, known as Karana Sharira, is the blueprint of both the gross and subtle bodies. It contains the samskaras, subtle impressions of all lives

lived. The astral and causal bodies remain together. They leave the physical body at the time of death.

THE FIVE SHEATHS

1. ANNAMAYA KOSHA (FOOD SHEATHS) Physical body, pervaded by food. If you rearrange the food you 'll have this physical body. So body is a product of food it's a modification of what we eat and drink. it will go back into the food cycle after death. Existence, birth, growth, change, decay and death are its qualifications. Now Upanishads asking: are we this body?

First of all we have in our mind that the body is changing. From a little boy we change to a young man, to an adult and finally to an old person. And all of them is the same person. And if I am the same person for sure my body is never the same. The body is an object, as I can be aware of it. I am the knower of the body, i am the observer and the body is the observation object. So the known and the knower are two different entities. I have the feeling that I can see my hand but I never have the feeling that my hand is looking back at me. And this is true for the entire body . So i am aware of the body but the body can not be aware. So the body is not like me. The body is not me. All the sheaths are layers of our own existence. The lion of Vedanta is in the cave. Vedanta explains that we are conscious beings as we can experience through our senses this human body and the whole creation as well. But the body is not a conscious entity is just a very precious and complicated instrument that that works as a vehicle for the soul. So another thing is the body and another entity is the conscious being, who abides in this body . So we are not this body. For explain more about that, we can speak about the law of Karma in which the Hindu philosophy believes. The law of cause and effect, we can also see it as a cosmical and physical law which pervades the whole creation. The happiness and the misery which we experience right now is because of what we have done consciously or unconsciously in the past time. So whatever happens in this body right now, good or bad must have its own cause probably this cause has been generated before of the birth of this body or if now we create some causes through our action maybe we receive the results of these causes not right now but in a next life time after we leave this body. So according to Vedanta, we exist before this body and we ll be exist after this body dies. All religions believe that we are something beyond this body . This something is

inside us like something very subtle, that we call life force . What pervades this body is called prana.

2. PRANAMAYA KOSHA (VITAL SHEATH)

In the astral body, it is composed of the five vital energies: prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana, plus the five organs of action (karma indriyas): mouth, hands, feet, anus and genitals. It experiences hunger, thirst, heat and cold.

All this life force keeps our body alive. Our experience of breathing is prana, the experience of thirst, hunger, sickness is because of prana. We are healthy not because of our body but because of our prana. So we can say yes we are the life force . But if we make a deeper research asking if the life force is changing we can realize that yes life force is changing. One day we can feel sick one day we can feel very healthy. Maybe one day we feel more strong or more weak e.t.c. So the prana is changing but I am unchanged as I am the same person who was ill and then who was cured. Here again you are the knower, the prana is the known. You are conscious, prana is insensient. So for all these reasons you can't be the prana.

3. MANOMAYA KOSHA (MENTAL SHEATH)

In the astral body, thinking, doubting, anger, lust, exhilaration, depression, delusions are its workings.

Its constituents are:

- a) Manas (mind)- thinks and doubts
- b) Chitta (sub-conscious)- storehouse
- c) Jnana indriyas (sense organs, or organs of knowledge)- eyes (sight), ears (sound), nose (smell), tongue (taste) and skin (touch)

Upanishads say that there must be something deeper. What can be more interior, more subtle to the life process? The mind. Our thoughts, our memory, our ideas, our entire personality. It's true that we very often we identify our self with our thoughts, our ideas and we believe that we are this personality. Here comes again Upanishads and say: just a moment, are you aware of your mind? and we can clearly reply: yes I am aware of my thoughts. When I am happy I know that I am happy when I am unhappy I know that I am unhappy, when I have desires I know that these desires are mine. When I want chocolate the desire is there and this is the

object and is me who wants to have this object. So how can I be my mind, if mind is something that can be experienced by me? So again the mind is the object and me is the observer, one more time. Also mind is something that is changing constantly, we can have during the day 60.000 thoughts not apparently deferent thoughts and most of them useless. Because if all this thoughts were not useless we could be the wisest person of the planet. So even though I have so many desires I am only one person, just with many desires. Human desires are infinite the resources are limited this is economical principle. Even though desires are infinite I am still one. So how can i be my desires? The word personality means mask and in greek ancient drama actors used to wear masks to perform their roles, masks used to call personate that is how it comes the word personality. Personality means a mask and it is not you. So I am not the mind either, so who am i?

4. VIJNANAMAYA KOSHA (INTELLECTUAL SHEATH)

In the astral body, it consists of the buddhi (intellect) which analyses and determines the true nature of any object and ahamkara (ego) the self-assertive principle, working with the five organs of knowledge. Discrimination and decision-making are its functions. What is doing intellect , is to understand, when I am thinking “I am “, who is producing the thought? the mind and who is giving the understanding of the thought “I am” is the sheath of intellect. When I am telling “I am Mr Brown I am aware of what I am telling. So my intellect who is giving to me this understanding of my identity is the object. An object which is shining in the light of consciousness. it’s an object shinning in your light. It can’t be you. It’s also something that is changing. So many things we understand in school, or we have forgotten, or we didn’t understand in school and maybe we ll understand later. So intellect changes continually. Is a changing object and I am the unchanging witness. Intellect is close to Atman and shines in the light of Atman and seems to be more conscious than the body. But still borrows consciousness from you, it is not you. So you are not intellect either .

5. ANANDAMAYA KOSHA- (BLISSFUL SHEATH)

In the causal body, it experiences bliss, joy, calmness and peace.

Yoga philosophy teaches that the real self is not any of these bodies. To attain liberation one must stop identifying with the *sheaths* (the upadhis), and identify with the Self, which is beyond all the sheaths. Upanishads say there is something

more subtle than the intellect. When we are in a deep dreamless absolute blankness, there is no intellect there either.

There is no feeling of I am sleeping, if there is we are not sleeping. So intellect has shut down but something remains after that all. What is that saying I slept peacefully I had a deep sleep I don't remember any dream at all. We used to say I slept like a loaf, I don't know anything. There is something that realize this deep sleep which is associated with untroubled rest. This sheath of bliss, which is closest to Brahman, this is that gives us happiness in the awaken state also. But that too is also an object which is experienced. Who is the experiencer of that? You are not the sheath of Bliss either. So according to Upanishads you are not none of the five sheaths. Because they are objects that they change, they come and go. You are conscious of all of them. And we are wondering where is Brahman finally and after all. Where is the ultimate reality the Atman as we have reject the five sheaths?

Here comes the story as a parable to explain to us where is the ultimate reality.

Once upon a time it was a group of 10 people going for pilgrimage. When they reach to a river point they decided to swim and cross the river by this way. After all of them they had cross the river, one of them decided to count and check that all of them were there safe. And as he was counting he found the number 9 and being upset informed the others that someone was missing. After this announcement another person tried to count again and for one more time make it sure that someone was missing. The other person found again that the people were 9. After that, they start lament for the missing person till a wise man passed from that place and asked them why they cry for. People explain to him everything and the wise man said let's count one more time. So another person this time start to count the group and found them 9. Did you see that we are 9 now but before to cross the river we were 10. That's why we are crying one is missing. And the wise man said: all your misery is because you can't realize the one who counts every time. This is according to you the missing person but it's here and you are not aware of him. After they realize the reality their sorrow and misery disappeared.

This is what happens as well in the spirituality. The seeker looking out there for an object when is looking for Atman and realizes that Atman can not be found as an object nowhere. It can be found not because it is not exist, but because is the one who is seeking. In the field of spiritual knowledge we have the known and the

unknown. There are books we have read, places we have visited, foods that we have tasted and all these are in the field of known and also there are books that we have never read, places that we have never visit, foods that we have never tasted yet and all these are at the field of the unknown. Both are at the field of knowledge. Apart of the known and the unknown what is there? Is the knower. Is the subject of knowledge.

Now if we want to make the milk sweet we add sugar, if we want to know something we have to add consciousness to that . Now we can ask any question like how I will make the sugar sweet, because we know sugar is sweet by its self. Same with consciousness we don't have to become conscious of consciousness. Conscious is self luminous. It illumines everything else and reveals itself in the act of illumine . In every act of knowledge we the self are revealed. We as consciousness, are reveal our self in the act of consciousness.

It seems when we can't recognize the Atman like saying I don't have a tongue. But as I speak how I can say there is not tongue in my mouth? Same with Atman without that consciousness how you can deny something? Who is the one who is denying. It is like to say I do not exist but who is the one who is having this thought . So in conclusion the secret of the five sheath is the consciousness which is illumines. It's not also that we separate the conscious from the five sheaths like one is here and other is there. The five sheaths are not object without consciousness. They arise into consciousness. Consciousness is the witness of the five sheaths. Discovering the consciousness, we can realize the whole system of cave sheaths. Through the five sheaths, once we realize what pure consciousness is, we discover our true nature. After discover that we have discover an unchanging immortal reality. Mortality is in the body. Disease and decay is in the vital force. Happiness and unhappiness, desire and frustration are in the mind, ignorance and the knowledge are in the intellect. All of these are in the five sheaths. None of these is in the pure consciousness, which is already here. We are pure consciousness at this moment. We are immortal, pure, infinite consciousness, existence right now. If we see our selves as it is truly right now. All the spiritual life is meant to bring us not in the lecture or in notes but actually in a living reality.

Each sheath may be purified and transcended:

Annamaya kosha

(gross physical sheath) by asanas, proper diet.

Pranamaya kosha

(vital sheath) by pranayama.

Manomaya kosha

(mental sheath) by practice of yamas, niyamas and selfless service.

Vijnanamaya kosha

(intellectual sheath) by study of the scriptures, right inquiry (Who am I?) and meditation.

Anandamaya kosha

(bliss sheath) by Samadhi.

THE 5 MAJOR PRANAS

Name	Colour	Chakra	Region	Function
<u>Prana</u>	Yellow	<i>Anahata</i>	Chest	Respiration
<u>Apana</u>	Orange/Red	<i>Muladhara</i>	Anus	Ejection of urine, faeces, reproduction
<u>Samana</u>	Green	<i>Manipura</i>	Navel	Digestion
<u>Udana</u>	Violet/ Blue	<i>Vishudha</i>	Throat	Deglutition Separates physical from astral body
<u>Vyana</u>	Rose	<i>Swadhisthana</i>	Entire body	Circulation of blood

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS SHEATHS

We first look at an object. This information is relayed, via the retina of the eye, by the optic nerve to the brain. From the brain, it is transmitted to the mind (manas). If looked at from a distance, it will be extremely difficult to decide what the object is. Mind (manas) now starts thinking and doubting whether the object is a flower or a piece of plastic, or perhaps a piece of paper. In order to reach a proper conclusion about the nature of the object, it must be analyzed further, so we use intellect (buddhi). But, the intellect cannot directly come to any final conclusion without first inquiring and comparing with the subconscious mind (*chitta*). Intellect now analyses by touch, 'it is soft so it is not like paper' or 'it has the texture of a petal'. The intellect may want further evidence before a conclusion is reached as there perhaps could be paper as soft as this. So, it goes again into the subconscious to compare this experience of the object with all other sensual experience lying within the subconscious. It smells the object, and compares it with previous experiences. It tastes the object, and compares likewise. Intellect says, "it smells and tastes like a flower, but it could still be artificial" (doubting- manas). After diving deep into the subconscious and comparing this experience with thousands already stored there, intellect comes to a conclusion. There is no more thinking and doubting, no more analyzing. Now ego (ahamkara) asserts, "I know, it is a flower and not artificial". If, however, after searching and comparing, the intellect did not find any similar color, texture, taste or smell in the subconscious, then ego would assert, "I do not know". Everyone wants to do his/her best. Each of us would like to think that we are perfect. Yet despite repeated resolutions, we often find ourselves being less than what we would like to be. The cause of this predicament is the ahamkara, or ego. Shankaracharya stated in the **Viveka Chudamani**. "Calamity is due to subjection to ego, bad agonies are due to ego, desire is due to subjection to ego; there is no greater enemy than ego." This ahamkara is the cause of all bondage and is the chief barrier to the experience of inner reality. Ego is the self-arrogating aspect of the mind. It separates the individual from unity with others and with the Self, for the ego asserts 'I-ness'. Ahamkara is the greatest obstacle to tranquility; it occupies the mind with thoughts of whether we are better or worse, possess more or less, and have greater or lesser power than others. It is attended by desire, pride, anger, delusion, greed, jealousy, lust and hatred. The ego is the most difficult aspect of the

mind to control, for its nature is such that it deludes even while one is striving to overcome it. It is that part of the being that most strongly resists being controlled.

Questions:

1. What are the three bodies?
2. What is the physical body made of, and what are its experiences?
3. What are the nineteen elements of the astral body?
4. What are the experiences in the causal body?
5. Describe the relationship of the five koshas to the three shariras.
6. Describe the functioning of the five major pranas.
7. What is the difference of meaning of the word 'Chitta' in Vedanta and in raja yoga?
8. Describe the antahkarana. What does the ego do?

PRANAYAMA- YOGIC BREATHING

The sage Patanjali defines Yoga as “Chitta Vritti Nirodha” (Raja Yoga Sutras, 1.2) meaning, “Yoga is the suspension of the modifications of the mind”. Controlling the mind is not possible without controlling the prana, as the two are intimately connected. We can easily see this connection if we observe the breath of a person engaged in deep thinking or meditation. The breathing will be slow or, in some cases, suspended altogether. Alternatively, when the mind is affected by negative emotions, it will be seen that the breathing becomes irregular and unsteady. These observations strongly indicate the interdependence and interaction of prana and mind. See *The Complete illustrated Book of Yoga*, chapter 8.

PRANAYAMA OR YOGIC BREATHING

Hatha yoga gives attention first to the physical body, which it sees as the vehicle of the soul's existence and activity. Purity of mind is not possible without purity of the body in which it dwells, and by which it is affected. By the practice of asanas and pranayama, the mind becomes one-pointed and can progress quickly in concentration and meditation. Vital energy (prana) is found in all living things. We absorb prana through the food we eat, through the water we drink, through sunlight, etc. Knowledge and control of prana is called pranayama. The highest and most subtle manifestation of prana is thought. The grossest manifestation of prana in the human body is in the motion of the lungs. If the motion of the lungs is stopped, all other energy and movements in the body will stop automatically. In order to control the subtle prana, i.e. the thoughts, the yogi begins by controlling the breath. The nature of the mind is to be unsteady; it is affected every waking moment by things it sees, hears and experiences through the senses. In order to get control over the mind hatha yoga prescribes various pranayama, or breathing techniques. There are people who, consciously or unconsciously, are able to control prana, e.g. yogis, spiritualists, mind healers, faith healers and even hypnotists. Most people, often unknowingly, use the power of prana in daily life. If a friend is sick, you may gently stroke his head, thereby transferring prana. When you fall and hurt your knee, you immediately hold the breath and place both hands on the injury. The speech of one person may thrill the hearts of listeners, while the speech of

another will have no effect, although he/she speaks beautifully. In the case of the former, the speech is charged with prana. Great prophets and saints have wonderful control of prana, which makes their words inspiring and gives them tremendous will-power. Knowledge of the functions of prana and its control are best mastered slowly uncover the expert guidance of an unselfish teacher. The yogi, trained in the techniques of pranayama, is able to tune to the infinite source of energy, use this energy for spiritual growth and thereby reach the highest perfection. Yogic breathing attempts to control the manifestations of prana in the physical body. As students' progress, they are taught to control the prana by mental means. This process of controlling prana through mental concentration is called raja yoga. Thus, hatha and raja yoga are like the two sides of one coin.

MAGIC IN BREATHING

Real breath control means controlling the way we exhale, not the way we inhale. Energy is best renewed by the orderly release of breath, not by strenuously pumping the lungs full of air. Thus, in sustained physical exertion your power is enhanced when you concentrate on the slow expulsion of air from the lungs. Speakers, singers, swimmers, and runners know this. The rest of us can verify it by a simple test. When you step into a cold shower, the tendency is to gasp and tense the muscles. This only increases the torture. Instead, if you try breathing out in a steady purring breath, you will be amazed at how little the temperature of the water affects you. Exhaling helps the body accommodates itself to change. Careful breath control, with the emphasis on exhaling, aids relaxation. Most of us are only half-breathers. We breathe in because we can't help it, but we fail to breathe out completely. The result is that we sigh a lot, a sign of our need to exhale. The sigh is nature's way of deflating the lungs when we have neglected the breathing apparatus long enough. Normally, we breathe without apparent effort-about eighteen times a minute, 1.080 times an hour, 25.290 times a day. The more air exhaled, the more we can breathe in. The amount we take in, measured by a watch-size instrument called a spirometer, is known as vital capacity is the object of all breath discipline. Consciousness of breathing is a helpful habit to cultivate. Breathe out before you begin any task. Once you grasp the idea of correct breathing, you will find many rewards in terms of health and vitality.

Questions:

1. How does Patanjali define yoga?
2. What is prana?
3. Explain the relationship between prana, breath and mind.
4. How will pranayama help in the control of the mind?

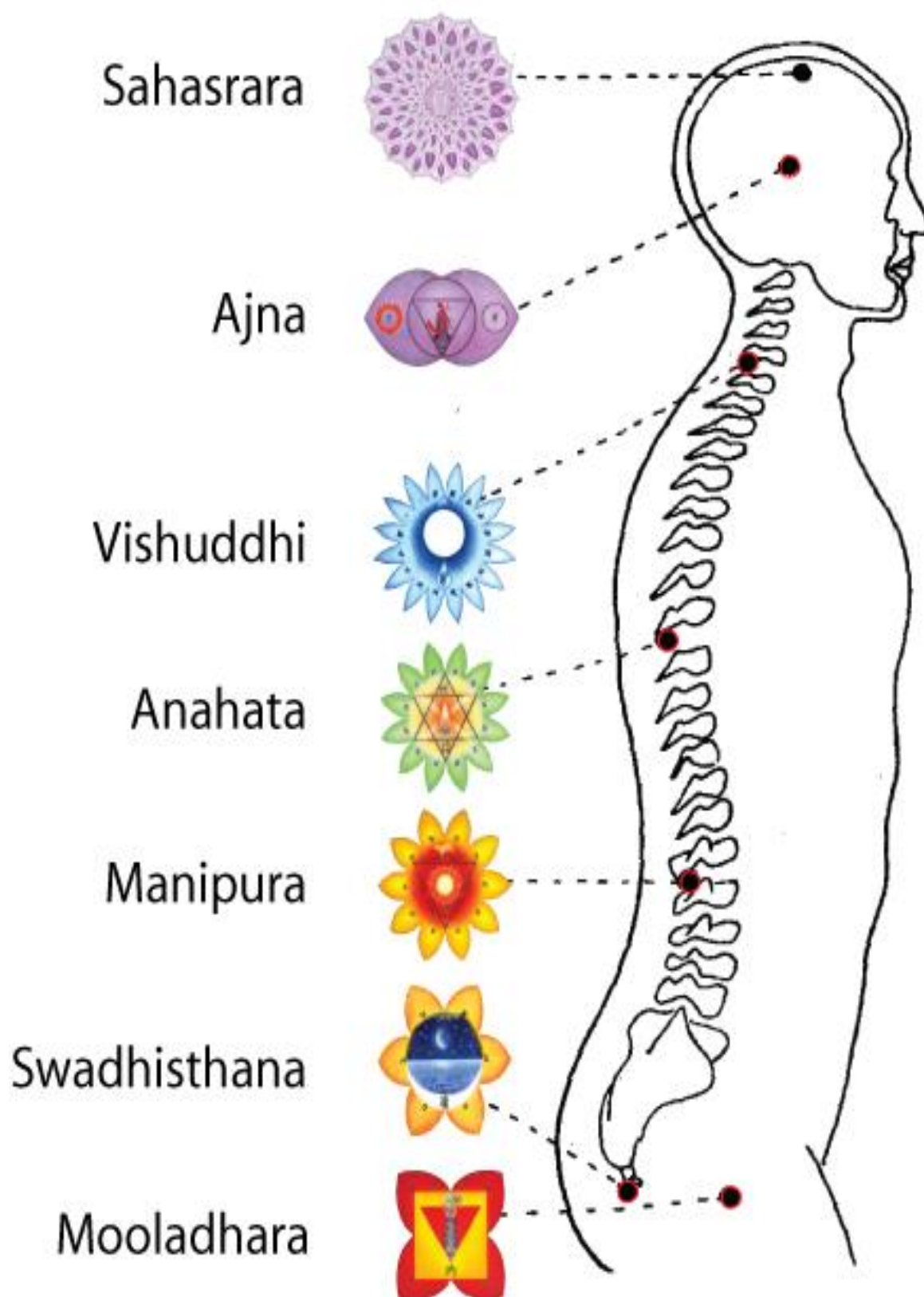
ASTRAL BODY AND THE MYSTERIES OF THE MIND

CHAKRAS

Chakras are the centers of subtle, vital energy in the Sushumna nadi. They are storage places for energy forces or centers of consciousness. These chakras have corresponding centers in the spinal cord and the nerve plexus in the gross physical body. Since the physical centers have a close relationship with the astral centers, the vibrations that are produced in the physical centers by prescribed methods have the desired effects in the astral centers. As suggested earlier, each chakra represents a state of consciousness. It is a center of subtle awareness and has a specific feeling, tone, bliss or joy. It is, in effect, a storage place for energy forces. A particular characteristic predominates at every chakra. There is a presiding deity in each chakra. The seven principle chakras correspond to the seven lokas, astral or mental planes.

The locations of the chakras and their correspondence in the physical body are:

1. **Muladhara:** located at the lower end of the spinal column, corresponds to the sacral plexus.
2. **Swadhisthana:** at the genital organs, corresponds to the prostate plexus.
3. **Manipura:** at the navel, corresponds to the solar plexus.
4. **Anahata:** at the heart, corresponds to the cardiac plexus.
5. **Vishuddha:** at the throat, corresponds to the laryngeal plexus.
6. **Anja:** between the eyebrows, corresponds to the cavernous plexus
7. **Sahasrara:** at the crown of the head.

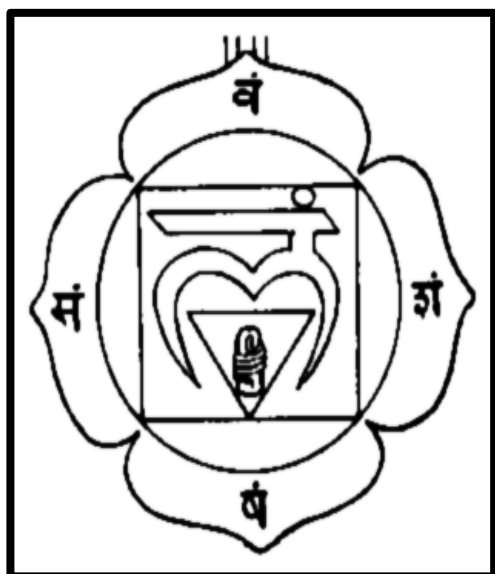


When the Kundalini is awakened, it passes from the Muladhara through all the chakras. At every center to which the yogi directs the Kundalini, a special form of bliss is experienced. Siddhis, or psychic powers, and knowledge are gained. Each chakra has a particular number of petals with a Sanskrit letter on each petal. The vibrations that are produced at each petal by the sound energy of the Kundalini Shakti is presented by a corresponding Sanskrit letter. Every letter denotes a mantra of Devi Kundalini, existing in a latent form. These can be manifested in the vibrations of the nadis felt during concentration.

The numbers of petals of the lotuses varies: Muladhara (4), Swadhisthana (6), Manipura (10), Anahata (12), Vishuddha (16), and Ajna (2).

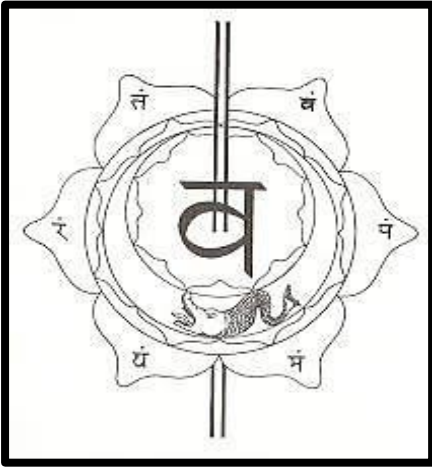
All the fifty Sanskrit letters are on the fifty petals. The number of petals in each chakra is determined by the number and position of the nadis around it. Each chakra gives the appearance of a lotus with the nadis as its petals. The chakras have their petals hanging downward when the Kundalini is at the Muladhara Chakra. When it is awakened, they turn upwards i.e. they always face the side of the Kundalini.

MULADHARA CHAKRA



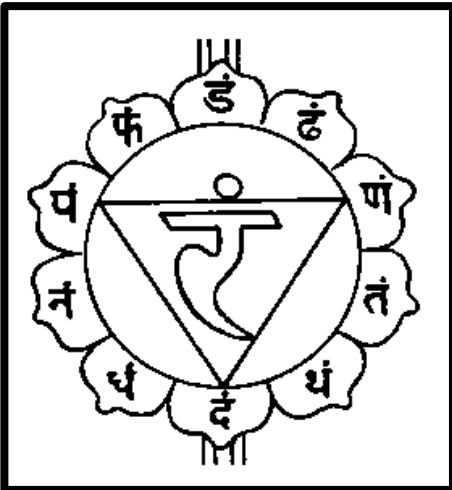
Muladhara, at the base of the spine, representing the Earth principle, with the bija Mantra lam. It is the base of (annamaya kosha), the body of nourishment, connected with the absorption of food and the evacuation of faeces. Brahma is the presiding deity. Here Kundalini lies dormant until the Brahma granthig (knot of Brahma), opened by rigorous sadhana and intense purification, allows her to rise. Meditation on Muladhara confers knowledge of the Kundalini, as well as the means of awakening her. It bestows breath and mind control, and knowledge of past, present and future.

SWADHISHTHANA CHAKRA



Swadhishtana, in the genital area, controls the lower abdomen in the physical body. Its element, water, in a white crescent moon, has vam as its bija. When it is activated, sadhaka becomes free from disease and acquires vibrant health. Feeling no fatigue, he becomes friendly and compassionate. Vishnu is the presiding deity. Meditation on Swadhishtana's gives control over the water element and confers psychic powers, intuitional knowledge and knowledge of astral entities. Many impure qualities are annihilated. It is the foundation of (pranamaya kosha)

MANIPURA CHAKRA



Manipura, at the navel, corresponds to the solar plexus. The contains the element Fire, with bija Mantra ram. When it is activated the sadhaka obtains calmness even in adverse circumstances. It is also the foundation of (pranamaya kosha). The presiding deity is Rudra. Concentration on Manipura removes fear of fire and gives freedom from disease.

ANAHATA CHAKRA



In the heart region, Anahata's element is Air. Its bija is yam. When it is activated, the heart becomes strong, develops adoration (bhakti) and knowledge (jana). Sadhaka becomes free of sensual pleasures and he follows the spiritual path. Represents the psychological body (manomaya kosha) Isha is the presiding deity. Anahata sound, the primal vibration of Sabdabrahman, is heard here. Meditation on Anahata chakra bestows pure qualities, cosmic love and psychic powers.

VISHUDDHI CHAKRA



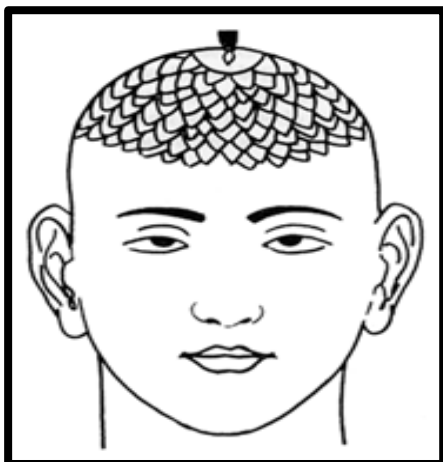
Vishuddha, at the base of the throat, corresponds to the laryngeal plexus in the physical body, as well as the fifth cosmic plane, with the bija ham. When it is activated the sadhaka's power of understanding increases. He becomes intellectual alert. His speech becomes distinct, clear and fluent. Represents the intellectual body (vijnanamaya kosha). The presiding deity is Sadasiva. One who meditates on Vishuddha attains high success, complete knowledge of the four vedas and knows the past, present and future.

AJNA CHAKRA



Between the eyebrows, Ajna, the seat of the mind, has OM as its seed letter. Represents the abode of joy (anandamaya kosha). When it is activated, the sadhaka gains perfect control over his body and develops spiritual aura. Paramasiva is the presiding deity. Meditation on Ajna destroys the karma of past lives, and gives liberation and intuitional knowledge. It is here that yogis consciously put prana at the time of death.

SAHASRARA CHAKRA

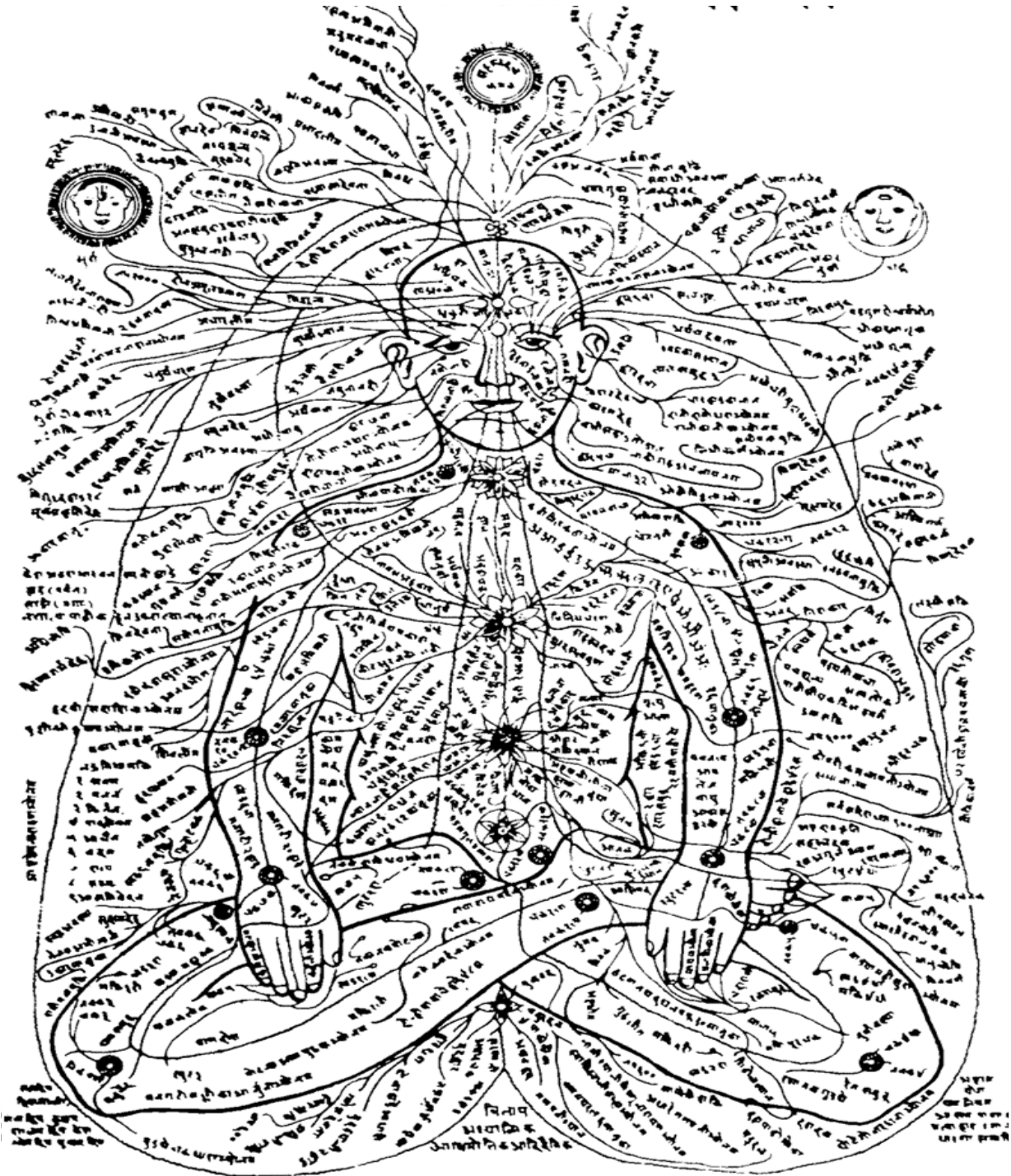


Sahasrara, above and beyond the other six centers, is situated at the crown of the head, corresponding to the pineal gland of the physical body. It has thousand petals. When Kundalini Shakti is united with Siva at the Sahasrara, the yogi experiences extreme bliss, attains the super conscious state, the highest knowledge, and becomes a fully developed jnani.

CHAKRAS	PHYSIOLOGY	BODY	FUNCTION	PETALS	COLOUR	SENSE	MOTOR	ELEMENT	PSYCHIC EXPERIENCE
Sahasrara	Crown	Pituitary brain	mind	1000	red	Mind	Mind	Mind	Red
Ajna	Third eye	pineal	Psychic Awareness command	2	Clear Or grey	Mind	mind	Mind	Golden egg drowsy
Vishuddhi	Throat	Laryngeal plexus	expression	16	Violet	Ears hearing	Vocal cord	Ether	Cold nectar
Anahata	Heart	Cardiac plexus	love	12	Blue	Skin touch	Hands	air	Blue
Manipura	Navel	Solar plexus	Digestion assimilation temperature	10	yellow	Eyes sight	Feet	Fire	yellow
Swadhisthana	Sacral	Prostatic plexus	The unconscious	6	Orange -red	Tongue taste	Sex organs	water	conscious
Mooladhara	Perineum	Sacro-coccygeal plexus	Excretory Secretory sexual	4	Deep red	Nose smell	anus	earth	red

KUNDALINI YOGA

Kundalini Yoga focuses on describing kundalini Shakti and the chakras, methods for arousing the dormant kundalini Shakti, and techniques for achieving union of Shakti with Siva in the topmost Sahasrara chakra.



The Nadis - Astral tubes

THE NATURE OF KUNDALINI

Shakti, Divine Energy, has two aspects, the static and the dynamic. One cannot have Shakti in the dynamic form without having it in a static form, much like the poles of a magnet. Such a polarity is necessary for maintaining equilibrium in the universe. The cosmic Shakti manifests in the human body as kundalini and prana. Kundalini is the static support for the moving vital forces. The human being is the microcosm, or inferior cosmos. Whatever exists in the outer universe exists in the body. Siva resides in the Sahasrara chakra at the crown of the head. Kundalini resides in the Muladhara chakra at the base of the spinal column. Muladhara means 'root-support'. Kundalini is the primordial energy that lies in the basal Muladhara chakra in a dormant, potential state. It is the cosmic power in individual bodies. It is not a spiritual force, but a spiritual potential. It is an electric fiery, occult power, the mighty pristine force which underlies all organic and inorganic matter. It is called the Serpent Power, because of spiral-like working in the body of the yogi. When awakened, it makes the hissing sound of a serpent and proceeds to rise upwards through the central canal within the sushumna. The rousing of the Kundalini Shakti and Her union with Lord Siva in the Sahasrara brings about a state of supreme consciousness and spiritual experience.

THE ASTRAL TUBES AND THE CENTRES OF SPIRITUAL ENERGY

Every portion of the physical body is associated with an astral counterpart. They are intimately connected and interdependent. All six centres, or chakras, and the Sushumna nadi are in the astral body. In the physical body, these chakras and sushumna nadi coincide with the nerve plexuses and the spinal column. There are 72,000 nadis, or astral tubes, in the pranic sheath. To advance in kundalini yoga, the purification of these nadis is essential. There are two nadis on either side of the Sushumna known as Ida and Pingala; they correspond to the left and right sympathetic nervous cords in the physical body. When the prana flows through Ida and Pingala, the person is busily engaged in manifold worldly activities, bound by time, space and causation. Sushumna nadi, the central one, is the most important. When the prana is in the Sushumna, the yogi is beyond all limitations of mind and time.

SUSHUMNA NADI

When we study the construction, location and function of the spinal cord and sushumna nadi, we can really say that the spinal cord was called the sushumna by yogis in ancient time. Yoga students should have a thorough knowledge of this nadi. The Sushumna extends from the muladhara chakra, located in the second vertebra of the coccyx region, to the brahmarandhra, the opening of the skull. Western anatomy recognizes a central canal in the spinal cord made up of grey and white brain matter. The spinal cord is suspended in the hollow of the spinal column. In the same way, the sushumna, within the spinal column, has subtle sections. Its color is red like fire. The sushumna pierces all lotuses and is pure intelligence. Within the sushumna there is a nadi by the name of vajra which is as lustrous as the sun with rajasic qualities. Again, within this vajra nadi, there is another nadi, the chitra, of sattvic nature and pale in color. The qualities of fire (agni), the sun (surya), and the moon (Chandra) are the three aspects of Brahman. Within this chitra, there is a very fine, minute canal through which the kundalini, when awakened, passes from the muladhara to the sahasrara chakra. In this canal exists all the main chakras, each representing a different state of consciousness. The lower extremity of the chitra nadi is the door of Brahman. The kundalini passes through this door to its termination point in the cerebellum. The chitra is the highest and most beloved of all nadis. Brilliant with five colors, it is the center of the sushumna, and is called the Heavenly Way. Another description says that “the chitra is beautiful like a chain of lightning and shines like a lotus in the mind of the sages. She is extremely subtle, the awakened pure knowledge, the embodiment of all bliss, whose nature is pure consciousness”.

THE AWAKENING OF THE KUNDALINI

The kundalini is awakened at a speed dependent upon the degree of purity, the stage of evolution, the amount of purification of the psychic nerves and the vital sheath, and the degree of dispassion and yearning for liberation. Purification of the heart is very necessary. Nature will awaken the power and give the student knowledge when he is ready. Nothing of deep importance will be revealed before the student is ready, and able to absorb it totally. No teacher can give the student the power nor lead him to self-discipline. Among factors which rely on the awakening of the kundalini, the following are probably the most important:

1. SELFLESS SERVICE

It is difficult to find a better method for mental and spiritual purification than serving others without regard of reward. Passive goodness is insufficient. Active service is essential for one's spiritual growth. Give as the sun, as the trees, as the flowers that we may sustain and perpetuate the evolutionary cycle of the universe and its strongest force, which is love. Love vibrates in the form of service. Regard others' happiness and pain as your own. There is no stranger or alien in this world. We are all in the process of evolution. As you develop this spirit of selflessness, ideas of egoism and 'mine-ness' melt. The kundalini will awaken by itself.

2. SERVICE OF A GURU

A proper guide is absolutely necessary as we attempt to awaken the kundalini. We work in time and space, using our bodies and minds as laboratories in our experiments with perfection. In the process of trial and error learning, we can use the knowledge of others who have travelled a similar path before us. This is why the guru and his store of spiritual knowledge, learned from his own guru in turn, is essential. The nature of the guru-student relationship bears some discussion. The guru tests the student in various ways; many students lose faith and are not benefited. These days, it is difficult to understand the nature of the relationship that should exist between the student and guru. Such spiritual relationships are both difficult to find, to understand and to practice. Such a relationship is beyond the typical student/teacher one. It encompasses all the devotion of a parent/child or husband/wife relationship. It involves dedication and the lessons learned are not always easily discernible and measurable by concrete standards. The guru can elevate the mind of the student, and transmit a certain spiritual power to the sincere aspirant. While the guru is necessary, he can ultimately only lead the student to the door of his own wisdom; the student will have to progress by means of his own self-discipline and desire for purification.

3. YOGIC DIET

The diet should be regulated and light, agreeable, nutritious, sattvic (pure) and balanced. One should consciously try not to overeat, nor eat foods which are especially difficult to digest or highly spiced. We are what we eat. The purity of the

mind has a great deal to do with the purity of food. The grosser and more processed the foods we consume, the less close we are to the natural source. For the best meditation, fruits and milk are especially beneficial. Moderation in diet is the wisest yogic rule.

4. PLACE AND TIME FOR MEDITATION

Regularity of time and place for meditation is essential. Have a spot that is private, where the distractions are minimal. Sit there every day at the same time. Early morning hours are good as they are particularly sattvic. You should never attempt meditation on an overloaded stomach.

5. MENTAL CONTROL

In a basic sense, all yoga is aimed at mental control. You should be as conscious of the activities of the mind as you can be at all times. Know that you can command your subconscious to aid you in your purification process. Sow seeds of goodwill at all times. Do not let your thoughts dissipate. Gain one-pointedness. Know that your thoughts and words are powerful instruments; do not waste them. Develop mental control and you will be led to bliss consciousness. The importance of thought power should be emphasized. Swami Sivananda has pointed out that each thought is a vibration that never perishes. It goes on vibrating. If the thoughts are noble, holy and forceful, they set up vibrations in other sympathetic minds. For instance, all people who are concerned with global peace should send out thoughts in accordance with their capacity. The result is that often, without conscious knowledge, the consequences of one's mental work can be felt. They work with great forces already set in motion. One should make it a point to devote meditation time to the projection of peaceful thoughts. This will combine with similar thoughts; the total of such combined thoughts cannot be measured.

6. ASANAS AND PRANAYAMA

With the practice of asanas, pranayama, mudras, bandhas and meditation, heat and energy are produced. After a long period of continuous practice, the sushumna will be freed of impurities. At that point, the awakened kundalini passes upward through the sushumna to the sahasrara chakra, the thousand petaled lotus. When the kundalini is

awakened, it does not proceed directly at once to the sahasrara chakra. You will have to take it from one chakra to another. Once the kundalini is awakened, it is very difficult to take it up to the manipura at the navel, to the ajna at the forehead, and then to the sahasrara at the crown. It demands a great deal of concentration and patience on the part of the practitioner. The yogi is tempted to remain in the lower chakras, rather than continuing his practices. He mistakes the lower states of bliss for the higher. The yogi should shun all psychic powers as these serve as obstacles in his path. He may be fixated on the powers rather than on the final goal of illumination. One must constantly be on the alert. Even after reaching the ajna chakra, the student could conceivably fall back to the lower chakras. As the kundalini current rises through the spine, it sometimes crawls like an ant or, in especially pure yogis, it jumps and reaches the sahasrara rapidly. Sometimes, it rises in a hopping manner, or in a zig zag manner. Sometimes it swims quietly, in a fish-like manner, in an ocean of bliss. The yoga practitioner will get help within as he moves from one chakra to another. A mysterious power, a mysterious voice will guide him at every step. He should have faith in this power, and allow it to lead the way, since it is the student's own intuitive nature unfolding. The moving kundalini may cause heat so intense that physical ailments occur, but this can be considered as a form of karmic purgation. You may experience the vibrations of prana in different parts of the body as shocks of electricity as the kundalini becomes active. Know that the power has awakened. Other experiences that may indicate the awakening of the kundalini are the beholding of divine visions, experiencing divine smells, hearing mystical sounds, gaining inspiration and insight and removing doubts. The student may feel as light as air or may possess inexhaustible energy. Yoga postures come easily and the breath may stop without any effort.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MIND

Most people believe only what their senses perceive. They accept as unquestionable, knowledge acquired through these sources. They do not understand that their senses are imperfect instruments and that the mind is constantly employed in correcting mistaken reports of the senses. Even extrasensory perception (ESP) is limited and imperfect. It is dependent for its knowledge upon the mind, which itself is imperfect. The highest Truth is perceived only when we transcend the three dimensional plane created by the senses and mind and go beyond time and space. Astral travel, telepathy, and many other things that cannot be clearly explained, are, in reality, phenomena of a four dimensional world. The astral and physical bodies are connected by a subtle cord along which vital current passes. Physical death ensues when this cord is severed. Mind and matter are the veiling power of the consciousness that creates the world. This veiling power is known in Sanskrit as Maya Shakti, which makes the whole (purna) seem to be the 'not-whole' (apurna), the infinite seem finite, and the formless appear to have form. Humanity shares the subconscious plane of the mind with the lower animals. It is first stage of mental development in the scale of evolution. In the subconscious mind lies all the knowledge and impressions received from various sources. Self-consciousness (ego consciousness) comes with the unfolding of the intuitional mind (higher mind). This gradual growth of ego consciousness is an important part of yoga philosophy's explanation of human evolution.

Yoga philosophy separates mind according to its three functions:

1. Subconscious (*instinct*)
2. Conscious (*reason*)
3. Super-conscious (*intuition*)

The dawning of the pure, or higher, mind exerts its influence to pull the intellect towards it. At the same time the lower, or impure, mind is exerting its influence to draw the intellect back. This battle between higher and lower minds for control of the middle mind (intellect) started when intellect was in its infancy. The subconscious is the seat of desires, passions and appetite. The task of the intellect is to reason, and that of the higher mind is to radiate intuitive knowledge. (Intuition is direct, experiential perception.) In mythological stories and legends, the fight between the higher and lower minds is portrayed as temptation by the devil or demon on one hand, and being helped by a guardian angel, deva or saint on the other. Yoga's science of mind has gone beyond even the higher mind and discovered the source of all knowledge. Herein lies the eternal peace and joy that everyone seeks. The subconscious, instinctive or automatic mind controls the involuntary functions of the body. It is the seat of the lower emotions and animal instinct, and carries on the automatic functions of our daily activities. Conscious mind or intellect can control and guide the subconscious. It is the basic requisite for the ego or 'I' consciousness. Reasoning is the function of the intellect. Super-conscious, or higher, mind is above intellect. Its purpose is to achieve intuition and higher consciousness. Beyond these three levels of the mind is the pure consciousness known as spirit, soul, or Self, Which is formless, timeless, changeless, and infinite in its nature.

MIND, TIME AND SPACE

Mind can only think in terms of before, now and after- or past, present and future. But according to Yoga philosophy, reality, God, or truth can only be experienced beyond time and space. Mind can perform its functions only in terms of time and space as a background. Just as the artist needs a canvas (or similar material) to create his work, so the mind uses the elements of space and time for its creations. The German mystic Meister Eckhart said, "Nothing hinders the soul's knowledge of God as much as time and space. Time and space are fragments; whereas God is one. Therefore, if the soul is to know God, it must know Him beyond time and outside of manifold things. God is one". Time and space exist in the waking and dream states. In the deep sleep state there is only the experience of 'I am' and 'now'.

When there is concentration of mind or the mind is in a very happy mood, time appears to move quickly. But when there is agitation and distraction of the mind owing to worries and anxieties, time appears to move slowly.

In a dream, a whole series of the events of twenty years may appear in fifteen minutes, yet in those fifteen minutes, time is equal to twenty years in the waking state. This demonstrates the relativity of time, or in other words, its unreality. Einstein pointed out the unreality of time in his Theory of Relativity. He explained time as a form of perception (a way that we view the world), like the color sense. Einstein discarded the notion of Absolute Time – of a steady, unvarying, inexorable, universal flow of time streaming from the infinite past to the infinite future. He went on to say, ‘there is no such thing as a fixed interval of time independent of the system to which it is referred, and there is no such thing as ‘now’ independent of a system of references. Mind is not limited by velocity, as is the case with all phenomena in the physical universe. It can reach a distant star in a moment, for both time and space are creations of the mind. Yogis explain, as humans evolve, they will develop the ability to function on higher mental planes, and to transcend physical limitations. Yoga declares that the final liberation from the clutches of time and space is possible only when the mind itself is transcended.

Questions:

1. Describe the three planes of the mind.
2. What is the difference between instinct and intuition?]
3. What is time?
4. How does the yogi transcends time and space?
5. How many nadis are there in our astral body?
6. Describe ida, pingala and sushumna.
7. What are the seven major chakras?
8. What is kundalini?

THE ABSOLUTE AND EVOLUTION OF PRAKRITI

The one Absolute became the universe, limited by time, space, and causation. These limitations are like colored glass through which the Absolute is seen, and when it is seen, it appears as the universe. The nature of the spirit is infinite, formless, inactive, unchanging, without division and witness of the mind. Mind and matter are parts in the whole that manifest themselves in many degrees and qualities. They have form, are active and ever-changing. Spirit or consciousness, remaining in one aspect changeless (Siva), changes in another aspect as active power (Shakti) and is expressed as mind and matter. Therefore, a human being is the spirit or pure consciousness, the absolute one encased by the veiling power of the mind and body (the analogy of the screen and the movie projected upon it). If the Absolute becomes limited (known) by the mind, it is no more absolute as it becomes finite. Therefore, to 'know' the Absolute is a contradiction in terms; a God known is no more God.

Knowledge, according to Vedanta philosophy, is of two kinds:

- a) **Jnana Swaroopa:** the perfect experience of consciousness.
- b) **Jnana Vritti:** knowledge of objects, the ordinary imperfect experience of the world owing to association with the mind and senses.

Vivarta Vada, Sankara's famous explanation of the relation between the Absolute and the finite world, is expressed in the story of 'The snake and the rope'. In the darkness, the rope is mistaken for a snake. When light arrives, the illusion of the snake created by the lack of illumination is removed, and once again, the rope appears in its true reality.

So, also the world is only a superimposition on Brahman. Owing to ignorance (Maya), we believe in the existence of the finite world, like the snake in darkness. When the knowledge of oneness dawns, the world disappears, and once again, only the Absolute exists. Kundalini is the sum total of all powers in and throughout all the universes, both manifest and astral. (Kundala means 'coiled', signifying energy).

Tantra Yoga is the yoga that deals with Siva and Shakti. The corresponding terms in Vedanta philosophy are Brahman (Siva) and Maya (Shakti). Siva is pure consciousness and Shakti is its active power. Just as milk is made up of water, fat, minerals, but together they are milk, so too Siva and Shakti are one and the same. Before creation, the entire universe existed in an unmanifest state, or pralaya. This can be likened to an egg with a pulsating embryo inside. Though no movement is visible, activity is taking place inside. There are no disturbances until a vibration takes place, the shell breaks and the chick emerges (creation). This vibration that brings about the creation of the universe is caused by the karmic tendencies lying in a causal state. From this original vibration (Nada Brahman or OM) the universe is created in six different stages:

1. **Cosmic Mind**- Hiranyagarbha and Brahma are other terms employed
2. **Akasha** – Ether, Space
3. **Vayu** – Air
4. **Tejas** – Fire
5. **Jala**- Water
6. **Prithivi**- Earth

These same processes (evolution and involution) take place in the individual, as an exact replica of the universe. The kundalini descends from the sahasrara (highest chakra or thousand petalled lotus) to the muladhara (the lowest center), and rests there. While the kundalini rests in the lower centers, the individual enjoys sensual and sexual experiences. As the kundalini begins to rise on its return journey to its source in the sahasrara, layer after layer of mind is experienced giving rise to great joy, and finally to the ever blissful conditions of nirvikalpa Samadhi, as the divine kundalini power attains union with its source. This process of the upward movement of kundalini and final union with consciousness (Siva) is called kundalini yoga.

Questions:

1. Describe the analogy of 'the snake and the rope'.
2. Describe the terms Siva and Shakti.
3. What are the two kinds of knowledge?
4. What is the meaning of the word 'kundalini'?
5. What is the meaning of 'pralaya'?
6. What are the six stages of creation?

CONQUEST OF DEATH

Mortality means decomposition. Anything that is made of two or more ingredients must eventually decompose (die). When the body dies, the astral and causal bodies separate from the physical body.

Heaven and Hell are temporary abodes, where the soul enjoys the fruits of its good actions (karma), as long as its merits last, or suffers because of its bad actions. After that time the soul will put on a new body and strive to achieve its further evolution. All actions, good or bad, are like chains that bind the soul to the wheel of birth and death, for both generate karma. There is no action that is either good or bad in itself. Its quality depends upon the motive behind it.

Three kinds of impurities hinder attempts to meditate successfully:

- a) **Mala**, or selfishness, (the grossest impurity) is found in all human beings in varying degrees. It can be removed through the practice of selfless service (karma yoga).
- b) **Vikshepa Shakti**, or tossing of the mind, causes unsteadiness. This impurity is overcome by pranayama, devotion and chanting.
- c) **Avarana Shakti**, the veiling power of the mind, is the most subtle. Its effect is to hide the reality of 'Self'. It produces body consciousness. Vedantic meditation and right inquiry into 'Who am I?' remove this veiling power and allow the Self to be experienced.

The literal meaning of Vedanta is 'the end of knowledge'. Vedanta philosophy may be seen as simply an exposition of the sacred syllable OM. OM is the Hindu 'word' of creation. In the Bible, John I-1, it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". OM is also known as pranava (that which pervades life or runs through the prana or breath).

Bondage of the soul is death and freedom of the soul is the liberation or **OM** consists of **A+U+M**. According to the rules of Sanskrit grammar, A and U when joined together become O, and thus A, U, M, produces the sound 'OM'. The sound A is guttural, it comes from the throat. U (OO) proceeds from the middle of the vocal regions, the palate. 'M' is labial and nasal, which comes from the extremity of the vocal organ or the lips. Thus, 'A' represents the beginning of the range of sound; 'U' represents the middle, and 'M' represents the end. It covers the whole field of the vocal organs. Thus, OM represents all language and, since world and language are interrelated, it represents the entire world.

From the standpoint of Vedanta, A represents the gross material universe, which is observed in the waking state. U represents the astral plane and dream state. M represents the experience that lies above and beyond mind and the deep sleep state. Vedanta defines reality as 'that which persists in all circumstances'. All three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep are unreal, because each in turn disappears to give way to the other. Only the witness of these states (the 'I') does not change. Beyond the three states lies the 'turiya' or fourth state. Yoga philosophy declares that only the realization of the Self or God can bring the peace, joy, and liberation that everyone strives for.

Questions:

1. What is mortality? What is death?
2. What is heaven according to Vedanta?
3. What are the three impurities?
4. Describe the meaning of 'OM'.
5. What is reality?

MEDITATION

Much has been said and written about meditation, yet it takes years to understand its nature. It cannot be taught, just as sleep cannot be taught. One may have a king-sized posture-pedic mattress, an air-conditioned room, and the absence of all disturbances, but sleep may not come. Sleep itself is not in anyone's hands. One falls into it. In the same way, meditation comes by itself. What is meditation ? In the second sutra, Patanjali defines the meditation in Sanskrit language like this: "Yogas citta vrtti nirodhah" which means the restraint of the modification of the mind-stuff is Yoga. The modification of the mind is like a lake which is disturbed by the thoughts. In sutras 3-4 is mentioned that the seer abides in its own nature. And the self appears to assume the forms of the mental modifications. For example, what happens with the cloth, if we deep it in the blue color it will become blue or in red water it becomes red. Same with the mind if it is deepen constantly into some kind of thought it will be the same color with this thought. In meditation what we are doing, is to choose a color and we deepen the mind into this color. (God) Meditation is an experience that cannot be described, just as colors cannot be described to a blind person. The meditative estate transcends all limitations. In it there is neither past nor future, but only the consciousness of I AM in the eternal NOW. The consciousness is possible only when all the mental waves are stilled and the mind ceases to exist. Meditation is a state of consciousness, it is the fourth of "turiya" state . the other three being: waking state, dreaming state and deep sleep state.

An other aspect of meditation is repetition – regulation. So even you are not in mood (daily), after some time it becomes a spiritual food for the mind and it comes natural to seek to have your meditation practice. The thought is always an obstacle don't struggle with it. The more you struggle the more energy these thoughts they steal. Let the thoughts to be there do not give energy to them. Replace them with the thoughts of God. Chant a mantra, chant the name of the god. How to avoid negative thoughts? Avoid negative people,, who agitate your mind. Is the same when you eat bad food, your stomach reacts with disease. Same happens with the thoughts. Avoid criticism,

gossip, negative words, negative news. Be careful of the company, not political discussion. Meditation is helped by simplicity. Keep your life simple

How to meditate:

- *Meditate regularly. At the same time and at the same place if it is possible.
- *Try to have a separate room or place for the meditation practice.
- *Switch off your mobile
- *Detach your self completely from the world.
- *You can dedicate this time to God, to your master, Guru, or inner self
- *But also during the day you can dedicate your actions to God.
- *Consciously regulate your breath. Begin with 5 minutes abdominal breathing to bring oxygen to your brain.
- *In the beginning allow the mind to wander. Do not force the mind to be still, get the seat of the observer and observe the thoughts as you are watching a movie.
- *Select a focal point where the mind , like a bird in need of a perch, may rest when it's getting tired.
- *Focus on a neutral or uplifting object or symbol, holding the image to the place of concentration.
- *Do not be impatient, as this takes a long time.

If you meditate for half an hour per day, you will be able to face life with peace and spiritual strength. Meditation is the most powerful tonic for the mental and nervous system. Divine energy freely flows to the adept during meditation, and exerts a benign influence on the mind, nerves, sense organs and body. It opens the door to intuitive knowledge and realms of eternal bliss. The mind becomes calm and steady.

Questions:

1. Why can meditation neither be described nor taught?
2. What are the external aids to meditation?
3. Why should we be regular in time, place and practice in meditation?
4. How long and how often should one meditate?
5. What are the first steps when you sit for meditation?
6. What do you do if your mind is not concentrated during meditation?
7. Describe the higher states of meditation?

WHAT IS MY PURPOSE IN LIFE?

In their search for happiness, most people turn to external objects and events for satisfaction. We think, “If I just had a new car”, or “If I could just get that fantastic job, I would be happy”. The mind may be stilled and at peace for a short time on attaining the desired object, but eventually it tires of its new toy or experience, and seeks pleasure elsewhere. External objects fail to bring permanent happiness. We confuse the calmness of mind that we experience on attaining an object with the possession of the object itself. The challenge, then, is to gain control of the internal world. The mind is constantly conversing with itself – replaying past events, rearranging them into a better drama, planning for the future, discussing the pros and cons of this and that. By methodically slowing down its continuous ramblings, the internal dialogue, and focusing on positive and uplifting objects, it is possible to begin to understand the mechanics of the psyche and bring about a more effective life. In a sense, the mind is like a phonograph record. It contains grooves, or impressions, called ‘samskaras’ in Sanskrit. These samskaras are formed when certain thought waves, or ‘vrittis’, become habitual. Samskaras are not necessarily negative. There can be grooves in the mind that are uplifting and ones that bring us down. The express purpose of meditation is to create new, positive channels in the mind, and to eradicate those that are destructive. It is an absolutely scientific process, but the goal is spiritual. It is not sufficient to eliminate the negative. Simultaneously there must be a striving to develop love, compassion, a sense of service, cheerfulness, kindness, and the many other qualities which not only make one’s own life happy, but which radiate to others. Through meditation, the play of the mind is witnessed. In the early stages nothing more can be done than to gain understanding as the ego is observed constantly asserting itself. But in time its games become familiar, and one begins to prefer the peace. When the ego is subdued, energies can then be utilized constructively for personal growth and the service of others. Through regular meditation, the mind becomes clearer and motives more pure. The subconscious releases hidden knowledge that allows better understanding. The ego is slowly eradicated. Ultimately the intuitive forces are released, leading to a life of wisdom and peace.

Questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word 'samskara'?
2. What are vrittis?
3. Describe the purpose of meditation.
4. What are the four states of consciousness?

JAPA MEDITATION THEORY

“By the constant thinking of mantra, one is protected and released from the round of births and deaths. A mantra is so-called because it is achieved by the mental process. The root ‘man’ in the word mantra comes from the first syllable of that word meaning ‘to think’ and ‘tra’ meaning ‘to protect or free’ from the bondage of the phenomenal world. A mantra generates the creative force and bestows eternal Bliss. A mantra when constantly repeated awakens the consciousness.”

-Swami Sivananda-

MANTRA YOGA-AN EXACT SCIENCE

A mantra is a mystical energy encased in a sound in a sound structure. It is the divine power manifesting in a sound body. Upon concentration and repetition of a given mantra, its energy is elicited and takes form. Japa, or mantra yoga, is that practice by which the power contained within mantras is applied. Each mantra is constructed from a combination of sounds derived from the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. Sanskrit is also known as Devanagari, or language of the gods. The ancient sages, who were attuned to higher levels of consciousness, were well aware of the inherent power contained in sound, and they utilized combinations of sounds to set up specific vibrations.

SOUND AS ENERGY

The sacred syllables used in meditation by spiritual aspirants are usually Sanskrit names of the Absolute. As divine power made manifest in sound, the mantra itself is the subtle body of the deity. The theory of japa meditation holds that by repeating the syllables with accuracy and intense devotion, the form of the mantra’s presiding deity will be evoked. Meditation on OM Namah Sivaya produces the form of Siva, while OM Namo Narayanaya produces that of Vishnu. The vibrations produced by the tones of a mantra are all important, and pronunciation cannot be a haphazard matter. Through attunement with the wavelength of the mantra, one is led from the gross plane of articulate sound back through the obscuring veil of the material

universe to the personalized deity, and ultimately to the personalized deity, and ultimately to the personalized deity, and ultimately to the primal undifferentiated energy of the Supreme Power. Thought and sound manifest in four fundamental states, with audible sound at one end of the spectrum and thought at the other. Japa meditation leads one from the lowest to the highest of these state

MANTRAS

“The efficiency of the japa is accentuated according to the degree of concentration. The mind should be fixed on the Source. Then only you will realize the maximum benefits of a mantra. Every mantra has got tremendous force. A mantra is a mass of tejas or radiant energy. It transforms the mental substance by producing a particular thought movement. The rhythmical vibrations produced by repeating the mantra, regulate the unsteady vibrations of the five sheaths. It checks the natural tendencies of objective thoughts of the mind. It helps the spiritual power and reinforces it.” Mantras are Sanskrit invocations of the Supreme Being. Reinforced and propelled by japa meditation, they pass from the verbal level through the mental and telepathic states, and on to pure thought energy. Of all languages, Sanskrit most closely approaches telepathic language because of its affinity to the fifty primeval sounds. It is the most direct way to approach the transcendental state. Mantras cannot be concocted or tailor-made for the individual, despite some current claims. They have always existed in a latent state as sound energies. Just as gravity was discovered but not invented by Newton, mantras were revealed to the ancient masters. They have been codified in the scriptures and handed down from guru to disciple. Although it is customary for the guru when giving initiation to accept voluntary offerings of fruit, flowers or money, the selling of mantras is strictly against all spiritual rules. Neither mantra, deity nor guru, once chosen, should be changed. There are many paths up the mountain. Perseverance on one alone will bring the aspirant to the top faster than if he were to spread his energies in exploring all the alternative paths.

INITIATION INTO A MANTRA

If possible, before attempting japa seek out a qualified teacher and receive mantra initiation. Mantra initiation is the spark that ignites the dormant spiritual energy residing in every human heart. Once light, the fire is kept going by daily japa meditation. At the time of initiation, the teacher arouses the mantra's Shakti, or power, and transmits it to the disciple. If the disciple is receptive, he/she receives the radiant mass of energy in his own heart and is immeasurably reinforced and strengthened. He/she then repeats the mantra mentally with faith and devotion every day. This has a purificatory effect, and God-realization will eventually be attained.

Everything in the universe vibrates on specific wavelengths. The various mantras, although equally efficient, vibrate on different wavelengths. At the time of initiation, a mantra is selected, either by the teacher or by the initiate, in accordance with the latter's mental type. The vibrations of the mantra and those of the disciple's mind must be mutually compatible. The mind must also be receptive to the deity whose form it will eventually assume. The process of attuning body and mind to the mantra through japa meditation is prolonged. When attunement finally is achieved, meditation takes place.

In the state of meditation, the flow of inner thought waves, which has been channeled by repetition of the mantra, is greatly intensified. The deeper the meditation, the more marked the effect. The mind's upward concentration sends a rush of force through the top of the head. Response comes in a fine rain of magnetism which bathes the body in a downward flow of soft electricity. Thus the power of japa meditation leads to the divine vibration. One experiences that eternal silence which encompasses all sound.

Questions:

1. What is a mantra?
2. What are the six parts of a mantra?
3. What are the practical aids to make japa more effective?
4. Define a mantra.

OBSTACLES TO MEDITATION

A careful analysis and understanding of the major obstacles to meditation prepares the seeker to confront and overcome them. With diligence and determination one can become a spiritual giant. The path of meditation is strewn with difficulties, but each hindrance serves as a challenge to goad the student on to higher achievements.

PHYSICAL OBSTACLES

➤ AIMLESS WANDERING

Much energy is wasted; many people are unable to remain in one spot for even a week.

➤ CESSATION OF PRACTICE

The student can give the mind a little relaxation and variety by changing the schedule of practice, but it should never be given up completely. Cessation of practice is a grave mistake. The beginner, full of enthusiasm and zeal, often hopes to quickly acquire some psychic powers. When he does not, he becomes discouraged and wants to give up. The practice of meditation must be continued, but without any expectation. Growth comes gradually. Sincerity, regularity and patience ensure eventual advancement.

➤ HEALTH AND DIET

This physical body is the vehicle for attaining Self-realisation, and is best kept strong and healthy. The wise aspirant keeps his body healthy with regular exercise, asanas, pranayama, a moderate diet, rest, and plenty of fresh air. One should avoid drugs and medicines as much as possible and, when necessary, resort to natural cures. At the other extreme, there are some aspirants who refuse to take medicine even though they are seriously ill. They unnecessarily torture the body, allow disease to ruin their health and become physically unfit for sadhana. Better to take medication for a few days, and resume practice quickly. Just as clouds screen the sun, the clouds of

sickness screen one from continued practice and self-discipline. Even if seriously ill, japa and light meditation can still be practiced.

Just as the physical body is formed of the food eaten, so the mind is formed from the more subtle portions. If the food is impure, the mind also becomes impure. Meals should be simple, light and nutritious. The processed, adulterated preparations found on many supermarket shelves have no place in a yogic diet. Many people eat far more than is necessary, out of habit or for sense gratification. An immoderate diet is the cause of the majority of diseases encountered in modern society. If one is suffering from stomach ache or sleepiness, caused by overloading the stomach, meditation is impossible. It is important not to eat for two hours before practicing meditation. If meditation is practiced in the early morning hours, the evening meal should be light.

➤ LAZINESS AND SLEEP

For most people sleep is a psychological need and may be reduced gradually through regular practice of meditation. Lethargy and depression often afflict beginners in meditation. A serious student forms a daily programme of meditation, exercise and study. If lethargy becomes an obstacle, some brisk work or charitable activity can rectify the situation. Physical activity provides the necessary balance for the practice of meditation. Often during meditation one may wonder if the mind has slipped into its old habit of sleeping, or if meditation is actually occurring. This can be easily determined. During meditation the body feels light and the mind is cheerful, during sleep the body and eyelids are heavy and the mind is dull. If sleep becomes a problem during meditation, splashing cold water on the face, doing breathing exercises, or standing on the head for five minutes will return the mind to the alert state.

➤ COMPLICATIONS OF DAILY LIFE

Undesirable company is highly disastrous; it fills the mind with useless ideas. The meditator should protect himself carefully from distracting influences. People who lie, steal, are greedy, or indulge in gossip have no place in the life of a spiritual person. Undesirable company includes anything that gives rise to negative thoughts: raucous surroundings, books and songs that create discontent, movies and television

programs centering on violence and sensuality. These distractions draw the mind outward rather than focusing it inward.

➤ USELESS CONVERSATION

Spiritual power is lost by excessive talking. Diarrhea of the tongue wastes energy, it makes a person restless and unfit for meditation. The wise speak few words and those only when necessary. By their very economy they will carry the most force. To help calm and discipline the mind, try to observe mouna for two hours daily. People of an intellectual nature are prone to unnecessary discussions. Intellectual reasoning, used for metaphysical inquiry, can lead the student to the threshold of intuition. Past this point, transcendental matters are beyond the reach of reason. Fault-finding increases the negative attitude of the mind and does not help self-purification. No one can be introspective when the mind is engaged in activity of this sort. Forget the shortcomings of other people and work to improve yourself first.

➤ SELF-JUSTIFICATION

Self-justification is another detriment to developing concentration, along with its associated characteristics self-assertion, obstinacy, dissimulation and lying. Once these weaknesses become established in the personality, it is very difficult to eliminate them, as the ego never admits its own faults.

➤ LACK OF SPIRITUAL PRECEPTOR

The spiritual path is thorny and precipitous, fraught with difficulties virtually every step of the way. The guidance of a teacher who has already trodden the path is imperative.

MENTAL OBSTACLES TO MEDITATION

➤ ANGER

All of its manifestations, including shyness, resentment, indignation, fury, wrath, and irritation, are great enemies of peace. Anger is a modification of lust; when one's desires are not gratified, one becomes angry. The mind becomes confused, memory and understanding are lost. Things are said and done without awareness or control.

Anger does great damage to one's own physical and psychic bodies, as well as those of others. The whole nervous system is shattered by a fit of anger. Occasionally a spiritual teacher expresses anger outwardly in order to correct a student, this should not be confused with an emotional outburst. Though he may appear hot and indignant, the true master remains cool within, for his motive is the growth of his disciples. One should watch the mind carefully for any signs of irritability. Frequent irritation over trifling matters is a sign of mental weakness. This can be overcome by developing its positive counter-force: patience. Anger gains strength with repetition, by checking anger one gradually strengthens the will. The practice of meditation itself helps to eliminate the causes of anger, for it slowly changes values and perspectives. By learning to remain silent even in the face of insult and abuse, it becomes easier to check the impulses and emotions before they take form.

➤ DEPRESSION

Depression arises in neophytes as a result of many things, including previous tendencies, the influence of astral entities, bad company, cloudy days, etc. It can be counteracted by taking a brisk walk, running in the open air, singing divine songs or chanting OM loudly.

➤ DOUBT

When faith weakens, the student is in danger of slackening his efforts and giving up his practice altogether. When doubts arise, the student should at once seek the company of spiritually elevating people. Satsang with people of firm and clear faith clears all doubts. When a student's expectations are unrealistic, doubt is bound to raise its head. The beginner thinks that the kundalini will be awakened quickly, and he will blossom with psychic powers. Doubt can be removed by study of religious books, right inquiry and reasoning.

➤ MEMORY, OR RECALLING PAST EVENTS

Looking back invigorates memory-pictures, and pulls the mind away from sadhana. This applies also to daydreams. A sage never looks back, but concentrates on identification with the Absolute.

➤ FEAR

This manifests in many forms: fear of death, fear of disease, fear of solitude, fear of company. Taking hold of the mind, imagination works havoc and makes one prey to all sorts of fears. Fear of public criticism especially stands in the way of a student's meditative progress. Fear is an imaginary non-entity. It can be overcome by self-inquiry, devotion to a higher cause, and the cultivation of courage.

➤ GREED

It is insatiable, agitates the mind and assumes various subtle forms. A person who thirsts for fame and power will be deterred in spiritual progress. Wanting to found great ashrams and have thousands of devotees is a form of greed. One must constantly scrutinize motives. Infatuation, attachment and greed are destroyed by vigorous self-inquiry and regular meditation.

➤ HATRED

Hatred may temporarily subside, but can burst out again with redoubled force. Contempt, prejudice and ridicule are all various modes of hatred. It may take the form of animosity against another religion, or a different ethnic sect or nation; it runs rampant in this Kali Yuga (Iron Age). Constant selfless service combined with meditation serves as an antidote.

➤ LOSS OF VITAL ENERGY

For serious spiritual progress, brahmacharya is essential. This refers to the total control of all the senses. Celibacy as a concept is foreign to the Western mind, yet it is an ancient and timeless aspect of all religious traditions of the world. It has been said that ninety-nine per cent of the spiritual goal is attained when one has control over sensual experiences. This is difficult because of the gratification derived from the senses. It is the inherent nature of all living things to procreate, the most powerful impulse in nature, after breathing. In the sexual experience, energy is dissipated and lost. Through brahmacharya, this energy is converted into the most powerful force of all: kundalini shakti.

HIGHER OBSTACLES TO MEDITATION

These come after transcending the previously mentioned obstacles.

➤ AMBITION AND DESIRE

Enjoyment produces pain, everything is perishable. Cultivate dispassion or indifference to sensual pleasures. Do not be attached to desire.

➤ MORAL AND SPIRITUAL PRIDE

Spiritual aspirants may become proud of their practice of certain austerities or meditation experiences. If one is aware of being a small drop in the Brahmic ocean, it is difficult to maintain pride and ego.

➤ RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

The aspirant sometimes becomes puffed up with moral and spiritual pride after acquiring a few experiences or powers. He may separate himself from others and treat them with contempt. This kind of arrogance poses a serious obstacle to Self-realization and must be completely removed. As there is pride and boasting, it is impossible to relinquish the ego and realize divinity. The path is long, the greatest virtue is humility.

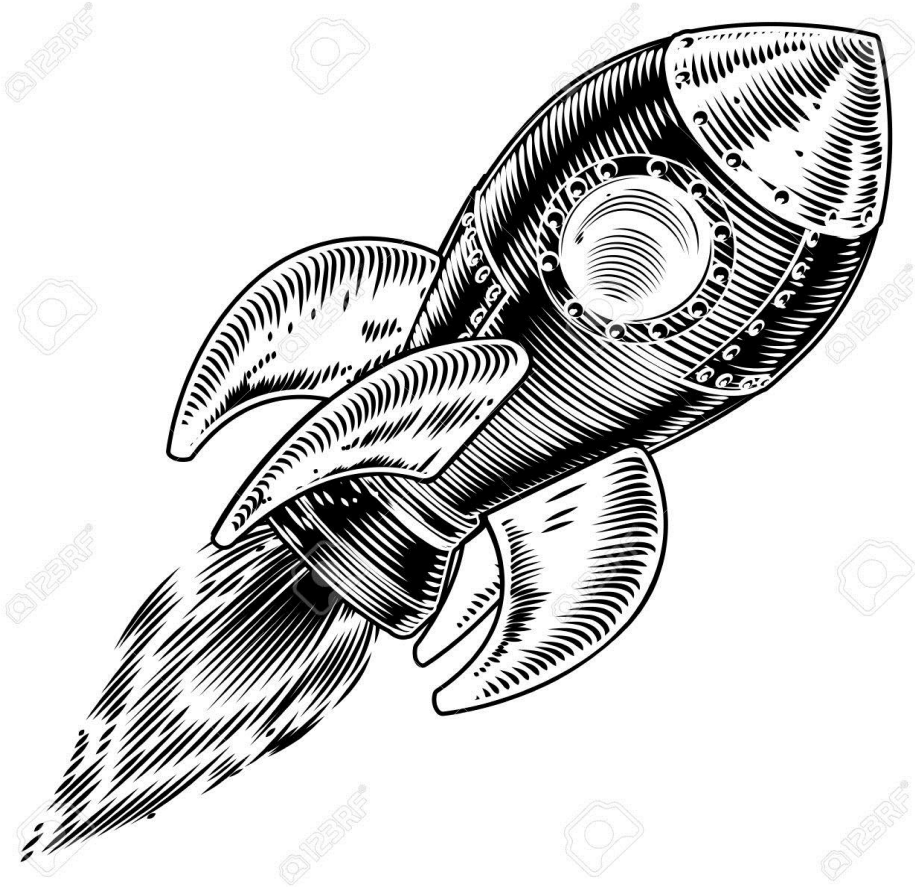
➤ NAME AND FAME

The desire for name and fame is a manifestation of ego, an aspirant should cultivate humility by constant awareness that all beings are equally expressions of the Divine.

Questions:

1. Why is talking too much an obstacle to meditation?
2. Why is it important to be with spiritual people as often possible?
3. Which emotions are obstacles to meditation, how can they be transformed?
4. How can you overcome all obstacles?

KARMA AND REINCARNATION



A ROCKETSHIP DEMONSTRATES THE LAW OF ACTION AND REACTION. THE AMOUNT OF ENERGY THRUST IN ONE DIRECTION.PROPELS THE ROCKET IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.

“Man can be compared to a plant. He grows and flourishes like a plant and in the end dies, but not completely. The plant grows and flourishes and dies, leaving behind it the seed, which produces a new plant. At death man leaves behind his Karma-the good and bad actions of his life. The body may die and disintegrate but the impressions of actions do not die. He has to take birth again to enjoy the fruits of these actions.”

-Swami Sivananda

KARMA

The word Karma, comes from the sanskrit root 'Kri', signifies action or deed, whether physical or mental(including thought). Karma is the sum total of our actions, both in the present life and in preceding ones.

With each thought, deed or feeling, we produce Karma.

Karma is based on the universal law of cause and effect, the cause can be the thought or feeling or the deed. The effect is the result of the previous, for example if we plant a mango tree, we are going to have mango fruits.

Jesus said: "whatever you sow that is what you reap", referring to the law of Karma.

Karma is not punishment as lots of people think. Karma is balancing out our acts.

Karma is the system of justice that exists in the universe.

If we do an action it has to be balanced out, according to the law of compensation or the law of retribution, which are laws related to Karma. These laws, balance and create harmony and peace in the entire universe.

Each human being is three fold in nature, consisting of ichha, jnana and kriya.

Ichha is desire or feeling, jnana is the knowledge, kriya is the willpower. Behind each act there is desire or thought. For example, we desire to acquire an object, we think of it ,we do things and acts to acquire it, this process fashions Karma.

There are several kinds of Karma:

Personal Karma, collective Karma, the Karma of a family or a country.

Karma can be described as a tree which is produced by planting a seed(our actions)when the tree grows up it produces fruits, not all fruits ripen all together, that is why some times we experience unpleasant situations at the same time or in intervals.

Karma is of two kinds, positive and negative, when we act according to fairness we create good karma, when we cheat to acquire something we produce bad karma.

In Vedantic literature, there is a beautiful analogy how karma is developed:

An archer carries a quiver with arrows on his back(sanchita karma, stored karma).The archer has just shot an arrow which symbolizes the karma of this life(prarabdha karma, action done)the archer prepares to shoot another arrow (agami or vartamana karma, actions of the future).

The stored/sanchita karma and future/agami/vartamana karma can be balanced out, according to the law of compassion and mercy. These laws supersedes the law of karma. The prarabdha karma must be paid out.

Karma is described like a boomerang, what we throw comes back to us, good deeds bring good rewards and bad deeds bad rewards.

We can clear our karmic blockages by identifying what is karmic in our life. We can work on that by observing life patterns that appear repeatedly in our life. Perhaps unfortunate relationships or illnesses or bad career choices.

We resolve the karmic blockages by forgiving people that have hurt us, ourselves as well. Produce positive karma, this can be done as long as we act based on sincerity, justice, compassion, patience and integrity.

We must be mindful at all times, when we observe whatever we say, think, and do. We live in the moment, we realize slowly how our mind works and we can predict mistakes that can cost. This is called selfobservation and it can change the quality of our life.

We produce good karma by forgiving others including ourselves. By tithing.

By doing karma yoga, like service for the family, weak people, to institutions that serve good cause, by cultivating a positive attitude in life.

Life challenging experiences give us the opportunity to break old patterns, adopt a positive way of thinking, make us strong and wise.

Karma must not be confused with fate, fatalism means that there is no chance to change our life. On the other hand karma can be balanced as we think in a positive way, act with good will and the will to do good, have positive attitude in life. Feeling grateful for every life changing experience, means that we recognize this experience as a chance of spiritual development for us.

Questions:

1. What are the three types of karma?
2. Describe the doctrine of reincarnation.
3. What is the difference between the doctrine of karma and fatalism?

REINCARNATION

BODY-A VEHICLE FOR THE SOUL

The union of the soul with a particular body is known as birth, and its separation therefore is called death. When the soul leaves its physical sheath, it transmigrates into another body – human, animal, or even vegetable - according to its merits. The process of transmigration continues-we cannot say through how many lives- until the soul, being burdened of all its impurities and having acquired a true and full knowledge of the imperishable nature of the soul, attains moksha, or final emancipation, and enjoys eternal bliss.

PROOFS FOR REBIRTH

Love at first sight is a feeling from a previous life. These souls loved before. They remember it, and feel as though they have met each other before. Such loves are not simply a matter of sexual attraction and are seldom broken off. Buddha told his wife of her kindness to him in a previous birth and also gave details of the previous lives of other people. A human being can be compared to a plant in that each grows, flourishes and dies, but not completely. The plant leaves behind it the seed, which produces a new plant. Each person leaves his or her karma behind-the good and bad actions of one's life. The physical body may die and disintegrate, but the subtle impressions do not die. Each one of us must take birth again to enjoy (or suffer) the fruits of these actions and pay our debts. Every child is born with certain tendencies or predilections generated by past conscious actions. Child prodigies are people who have made deep grooves in their minds by learning something, such as music or mathematics, in one birth, and carry these impressions to the next birth. Heredity, or genetics, cannot explain all these inequalities and diversities. The family of geniuses are quite often ordinary people. A person develops tendencies and aptitudes in several births, and becomes a genius in one birth. Buddha gained experience in many births, and became a Buddha (enlightened one) only in his last birth. All virtues cannot be developed in one birth. They must be cultivated by gradual evolution. The existence of saints and adepts indicates that there is rebirth.

MANTRAS

MAHA MRITYUNJAYA MANTRA

(Healing Mantra)

Om triyambakam yajamahai (Blessed is Shiva, the 3-eyed one)
Sugandhim pushtivardhanam (Master of all senses and)
Urvarukamiva bandhanan (Sustainer of growth)
Mrityor mokshiya mamritat (May he bestow grace upon us)

Om sarvesham svastir bhavatu (May auspiciousness be unto all)
Sarvesham shantir bhavatu (May peace be unto all)
Sarvesham purnam bhavatu (May fullness be unto all)
Sarvesham mangalam bhavatu (May prosperity be unto all)

Sarve bhavantu sukhinah (May all be happy)
Sarve santu niramaya (May all be free from disease)
Sarve bhadrani pasyantu (May all look to the good of others)
Ma kaschid dukha bhag bhavet (May none suffer from sorrow)

Asato ma sat gamaya (Lead me from the unreal to the real)
Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya (Lead me from darkness unto light)
Mrityor ma amritam gamaya (From death to immortality)

SHANTI MANTRA

Om Sahana vavatu, saha nau bhunaktu
Saha viryam karvava hai Tejesvina vadhita mastu
Ma vid vishava hai
Om shanti, shanti, shanti

May all divine protect both teacher and student.
May the divine nourish us and lead us to liberation.
May we unite our strength for the good of humanity.
May our learning be luminous and purposeful.
May we live in harmony with one another.
Om – peace, peace, peace!

UNQUALIFIED KIIRTAN

Yogam sharnam gachami
Budham sharnam gachami
Krishnam sharnam gachami
(We move towards union)
(We move towards enlightenment)
(We move towards love and brightness)

Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realize

Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate

Adapt, adjust, accommodate

Bear insult, bear injury, highest Sadhana Bear insult,

bear injury, highest yoga Enquire "Who am I?"

Know thyself and be free

You will soon attain immortality

Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat, Om Tat Sat Om

Om shanti, Om peace, Om shalom Om

(Written by Swami Sivananda)

Door of my heart, open wide I keep for you Yogananda

Will you come, will you come, just for once unto me

Will my days fly away without seeing you my Lord

Night and day, night and day, I look for you night and day

Door of my heart, open wide I keep for you

(Written by Paramahansa)

SHIVA KIIRTAN

Om namah Shivaya (Supreme, we give our respects to Shiva)

Shiva, Shiva, Shiva Shambho (4 times) (Shiva – Great God Shiva)

Mahadeva Shambho, Mahadeva Shambho.

Nataraj, Nataraja, Shambho Shankara, Nataraja

Shivaraj, Shovaraja, Shambho, Shankara, Shivaraja

KRISHNA KIIRTAN

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna Krishna, Krishna, Hare, Hare, Hare Rama,
Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare, Hare.

(Divine Krishna – Divine Rama)

GATE GATE MANTRA

Gate gate paragate – parasamgate – bodhi Svaha

Going, going, going on beyond, always going on beyond, always
becoming Buddha.

JAY SHRI MA MANTRA
(Salute to the Divine mother)

Jay shri ma

Jay Saraswati jay jay Ma

Prabhu ap jago | paramatma jago

Mere sarve jago save vatre jago

Oh Lord awaken in me, God awaken everywhere

SURRENDERING THE SELF TO THE DEVINE POWER
MANTRA

Harri sharanam , Harri Sharanam, Harri Sharanam

Shri Hari hari sharanam

Shiva sharanam, Shiva sharanam, Shiva sharanam, Shiva
sharanam

Om Shiva Sharanam Guru sharanam sadh Guru sharanam

This Philosophy book is a collection from:

- Patanjali Hatha Yoga pradipika
- Yoga Vasistha
- Gheranda Samhita
- Samkhya Karika
- Material from Swami Sarvapryananda's lectures