SITTING BULL
THIS PLANET EARTH IS PRECIOUS

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WHAT WE TAUGHT OUR CHILDREN:

THE EARTH IS OUR MOTHER
THE EARTH DOESN’T BELONG TO MAN, MAN BELONGS TO THE EARTH
EVERY PART OF THIS EARTH IS SACRED BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED LIKE THE
BLOOD WHICH UNITES ONE BODY;
TREES, AIR, WATER, ANIMALS, GRASS, EARTH, ARE LIKE FINE STRANDS THAT WEAVE THE WEB
OF LIFE: MEN ARE MERELY A STRAND OF IT
RESPECT YOUR MOTHER BECAUSE WHATEVER BEFALLS THE EARTH SOON BEFALLS THE SONS
OF THE EARTH

REMAIN CLOSE TO THE GREAT SPIRIT
SHOW RESPECT FOR YOUR FELLOW BEINGS
GIVE ASSISTANCE AND KINDNESS WHERE EVER NEEDED
BE TRUTHFULL AND HONEST AT ALL TIMES
DO WHAT YOU KNOW TO BE RIGHT
LOOK AFTER THE WELL BEING OF THE MIND AND THE BODY
TREAT THE EARTH AND ALL THAT DWELL THERE ON IT WITH RESPECT
TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ACTIONS
DEDICATE A SHARE OF YOUR EFFORTS TO THE GREATER GOOD
WORK TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL MANKIND

ONLY AFTER THE LAST TREE HAS BEEN CUT DOWN
ONLY AFTER THE LAST RIVER HAS BEEN POISONED
ONLY AFTER THE LAST FISH HAS BEEN CAUGHT
ONLY THEN WILL YOU FIND THAT GOLD CANNOT BE EATEN

SIMPlicity, TRUTHfulness, GOODness, PEACE, LOVE, BLISS, LIGHT

OMTAT-SAT

OM NA MAHA SHIVA
Preparation for Choosing a Path

In order to understand and choose a path for enlightenment, one should thoroughly understand the philosophical and psychological foundations on which the various paths are based, for without this basic knowledge it is not possible to understand the different paths in their proper perspective. Before one is actually ready to choose a path for himself, he must understand the internal and external architecture of life, and then alone determine to practice the philosophy that he has chosen. Philosophy is not mere speculation related only to the thinking world, nor is it merely an expression of societal or religious norms. One's philosophy should be built, just like a mansion, and then one should live in it. There are countless books on philosophy, but they do not satisfy the seeker's inner quest, for they do not offer concrete methods of practice.

In building a practical philosophy of life, one should first learn to understand the nature of the external world, the world that is subject to sense perception, the world of matter, forms, and names; that which occupies the human mind and dissipates its energy. External knowledge – the knowledge of the objects of the world – is essential, is a gross aspect of knowledge, therefore is only partial knowledge, and partial knowledge is like a half truth, which is not truth at all. When we start questioning life and its problems, we become introspective and realize that the mind is clouded and cannot see clearly enough to make subtle discrimination and proper decisions at the proper time. The external world does not supply correct data, for everything is swiftly moving and constantly changing. We want to experience and know the ultimate reality, but everything moves rapidly, changing its form and thus its qualities. The mind, too, is influenced by its habit of identifying with the objects of the world, so it is not capable of recording things as they are. In such a case, there is no clarity of mind, and if the mind is not one-pointed, it is dissipated. Such a disordered uncontrolled, and untrained mind is not able to understand the ultimate reality.

The objects of the world have their importance. They have some meaning, but they are not full satisfying because of their constantly changing patterns; they are subject to decay, destruction, and death. Something gratifies the sense today, and so we become happy momentarily, thinking that we are attaining something great. But after some time, that particular thing changes – its quality and form change, and again we are disappointed. Human beings live in a world that goes to decay, yet they become very attached to the continually changing objects of the world. So they always remain insecure and scared. Some people are obsessed by food, some by sleep, some by sex, and some by self-preservation. One finds out that somehow or other he is always obsessed by something and that he is never free from that obsession. But even so-called enjoyments are so marred by fears that fear becomes predominant and controls life.

People are afraid to examine their fears, but one should learn to examine his fears properly to find out how valid they are. Most fears are based on imagination and are rarely examined. One does not have to go back to the past to know his fears; they can easily be analyzed. One should learn to watch his fears carefully, to avoid becoming their victim and to avoid strengthening them by brooding on them. It is not of much use living in the world with fears. How can one enjoy anything if he lives with fear? One thinks that he might lose what he has, or that he won't obtain what he wants to have. Fear actually leads him to pain and misery.

It is important for the aspirant to structure the world around him in such a way that it does not create barriers to self-unfoldment. The external world becomes an obstacle and constantly distracts the mind. It is not possible to live without the objects of the external world, but they have their limitations. Modern man's concept is that it is difficult to be spiritual and at the same time conduct one's duties, but this is not true. It is one's inner attitude that makes all the difference. When Maharshi Ramana was asked for his definition of sin, he said, “Sin is that which affects the inner mind.” If the mind is not affected by a particular thought or action, then it is not a sin. But if one's mind becomes a victim of negativity and passivity and creates a guilt feeling, then it is a sin. If one is not strong within, if one is easily swayed, then he can never be happy. One needs to be strong and coordinated from within first before he performs his actions and speech accurately. Inner strength is very important.

Citizen of Two Worlds

In trying to understand the nature of the world and in forming a solid philosophy of life we must realize that we are the citizens of two worlds: the world within and the world outside. A great disagreement exists between these two worlds; we want something and the outside world obstructs us from obtaining it. There is a particular desire, but our society or our family does not permit us to fulfill that desire. There is often a conflict and competition between our desires and the interests of our families and society. Most of us
create external crutches for the sake of security, but, alas, the external objects of the world, no matter how many we own, are not capable of making us happy. This fact has been examined by the sages since time immemorial. Even so, human society continues to follow the path of materialism without understanding the importance of spirituality. Superficial beliefs of religion and mere promises of the scriptures do not fulfill the needs of modern society.

No individual wants to act the way society wants him to, but one cannot live in society without having consideration for others. In such confusing circumstances as are created by the man-made moral codes, one could isolate himself and devote his time and energy to worshipping his ego and finally become totally egotistical and uncommunicative. But human beings have the capacity and ability to go beyond these confusions by being truthful to themselves. We should live in society, but we should realize two facts about daily life. First, we should not create obstacles for ourselves, and second, we should not disturb others. If our actions are conducted with these two considerations, then we will have the time and ability to do interior research.

We can learn to organize our thoughts and actions in such a way that our desires do not create obstacles for ourselves or others. When one learns to analyze his desires, he comes to understand which desires are helpful for him. Desires can be chosen by understanding how they arise and function and what their consequences are. The faculty of discrimination helps us to judge which desires yield results that are helpful, and which do not. Those desires that create obstacles should be shunned completely, but the desires that are helpful should always be strengthened. Such helpful desires should be brought into action. Control of unhealthy desires is not repression or suppression. Control means that we have realized that a desire is not healthy and that we are gathering together all our energies and directing those energies toward one healthy goal. But in repression and suppression we suffer because of stress and we are still victims of those desires.

Most people remain strangers to themselves, and yet they want to be friends with others, and they claim to love others. But if one does not know himself, how can he know or love others? Therefore, it becomes necessary to understand the nature of the self, the nature of the people with whom one lives, and the nature of the universe. By understanding these, one might be disappointed in some ways, but he will know the Reality. Very few people are conscious of the many dimensions of life within. That is why they have many inner conflicts – which they project outside onto others, so that life outside also becomes gloomy.

The Physical Body – Garment of the Self

What do we mean by self? When we talk about self, we should clearly understand which part of self we are talking about. We only introduce a mere part of ourselves to the world. The first part of our whole self that we strongly remain aware of is the body. The body is a very important instrument for us; it is an essential garment that we are wearing. We are not the body, although we each have a body. Nevertheless, we identify with the body. For example, we say, “I have a headache.” In our modern day-to-day language, we do not accept that we are not the body. But if a human being is the body, then why do we immediately dispose of a dead lifeless body? Because we know that the body is separate from the life force.

According to Eastern philosophy, the body is a compound of five elements, called tattvas: earth, water, fire, air and space. If there is an imbalance in any of these five elements, then we become ill. We are like jars filled with these elements; when the jar is broken, water goes to water, fire goes to fire, air goes to air – each goes to its respective element. Most people do not even really know much about themselves physically. They do not realize how wonderfully their body is constructed. Those who know something about anatomy tell us that if the lungs were removed and spread out, they would cover several miles. We have over ten billion worlds within it that work together beautifully. Another amazing thing is that a cut heals by itself even without any treatment because the blood cells rush to the damaged part to help it, cure it. There is perfect understanding in our internal organization that works for the well-being of the city of life. There are subtle principles that govern our body structure and its coordination on many levels. These subtle principles exist on higher levels and govern the body. When we come in touch with those principles we can heal ourselves in any eventuality. Even a serious disease can be cured by spiritual and mental forces provided we know how to voluntarily utilize and direct the body. How can this coordination exist without our awareness? It is because there is a deeper and more subtle system within that governs both the body and mind.

Besides the five elements, the physical body also consists of the five cognitive senses: smelling, hearing, touching, tasting, and seeing. And we have five active senses also: with our feet we walk, with our hands we work, with our mouth we chew our food and talk, and finally, we have the organs of elimination to cleanse the body. So our bodies are actually a compound made of the five elements, the five cognitive senses, and the five gross senses. The physical body depends on food, which contains pranic energy, though in a
gross form. But the body cannot be sustained by food and its energy alone. A more subtle form of pranic energy is supplied to our bodies through breathing.

The physical body is not our only property. There are many dimensions within us, and we should know them all equally in a systematic way. There are two caretakers of this body, called inhalation and exhalation. They continually guard the city of life without any interruption; they always do their duties faithfully. One is always busy in cleansing, and the other is busy in nourishing. Anyone who is conscious of health should understand these two mechanisms. Even if one is supplying a nutritious diet to his body, he can still create toxins, and if he does not eliminate them properly, he will always be unhealthy. Bad breathing habits can disturb the digestive system by disrupting inhalation and exhalation and other pranic vehicles. Negative thoughts convert the nutrients of food into poison. Thus the body builds up toxins. Inhalation and exhalation are like two caretakers whose duties are regulated by our mental life. By studying their behaviour and regulating them, we can prevent them from creating many physical disorders. That which guides and directs these caretakers should also be understood.

Mind – the Greatest Friend and Foe

We are not only bodies, we are not only breathing beings, we are also thinking beings. Our thinking process is more complex than the mechanism of our bodies and the functioning of our pranic vehicles. Qualitatively, thought is stronger than the physical and pranic strength. The strength of consciousness is much higher than the strength of thoughts and pranas. There are many modifications of our minds that deal with different necessities of life both within and without. The mind functions in the internal world, as well as the external world. It all depends on how the mind is trained and which part of life receives more attention.

Every person thinks in a different way, and the individual ego seems to govern life. If someone tells us, “This is the truth, why do you not accept it?” the ego does not want to accept it, although we know it is the truth. There are very few people in the world who are prepared to hear the truth, even though many people claim to speak the truth. The liquor of the senses is very intoxicating, and people constantly drink the charms and temptations of the world, which blinds their vision. People never think that they can be wrong. Even if they are punished, they are not prepared to accept the idea of being wrong. Discrimination is a great quality of the mind, provided it is allowed to develop properly. The mind is our greatest friend, and it wants to help us. It does not want to create problems for us, but it is in the habit of going according to the way we train it. If we want to steal something, the mind says, “It doesn't matter, nobody is looking. It's not wrong.” The mind will tell us this because the mind is a great helper. This is the job of the mind, to help us whenever we want and however we want. If someone wants to become a murderer, the mind will help him, and if he wants to become a sage, the mind will also help him. So there is nothing wrong with the mind. The mind is our greatest friend and foe both, but we have to train it not to create obstacles for us. Mind is not a problem creator; rather, lack of training is the very basis of disharmony. Proper training of the mind is the essence of all successes.

There are various faculties of the mind, and all the faculties need to be cultivated with a sense for fulfilling the purpose of life. Ego seems to be the strongest one, and it must be trained, purified, and prepared to fathom the deeper lever of our being. Such a higher ego can help make the mind focus inward. Most human beings have a lower ego that closes the doors to learning, and that is why they suffer. They suffer, not because they do not what to understand things, but because they are ignorant. Ignorance means lack of knowledge, just as darkness means lack of light. Neither has any existence of its own. People are very close to the Reality, yet they are not aware of it because their individual thinking prevents them from knowing it. It is like being asleep. In sleep we are not aware of our existence, though we exist. If two people go to see a sage but one of them sleeps and the other remains awake and converses with the sage, then, although both are very close to the sage, only the one who is awake experiences his presence. Every human being is close to the Reality, but they are not aware of it. Only the awakened ones have direct knowledge of it. The scriptures tell us, “Wake up from the sleep of ignorance, and do not slip back to sleep!” That darkness of ignorance is the lack of knowledge of the Reality.

Meeting That Which Functions Within

What is this knowledge that human beings are not aware of? There are two kinds of knowledge: the knowledge that helps one in knowing the external world, and the knowledge that helps one in knowing oneself. After one understands the body, he must then set about to understand how the physical body is linked with the inner body. The inner body, that which functions inside, is called antahkarana; the physical
A few years ago, a Midwestern university sent out thousands of letters asking various scientists for their any such entity because they are influenced by materialistic science. But are we really sure what science is?

The ancients contemplated trained from childhood to observe, examine, and verify the things in the external world, but no one has in contact with subtleties that are puzzling to them, and they do not know what to do next. People have been this point because one needs to prepare oneself to understand that which is beyond. Our instruments are so gross that they can analyse only external things, and they cannot make us aware of why these things are changing. When we use our minds to analyse, we find that the mind itself is also subject to change, that is changing every second. So it is also important to study and understand the mind.

When one starts studying life, he first starts examining it practically and learns about his body, relationships, and the objects of the world. A careful examination of the various levels of the external world – growth of the body, stability of relationships, and changing patterns of the objects of the world – makes him feel that the external world cannot offer all the solutions of life. Then he starts turning within, in search of peace of mind, happiness, bliss, and freedom. Typically, he will try to find someone he can trust as a guide, a teacher, a messiah. So he starts studying the sayings of the great sages. Then he begins to understand something more about life. Every human being wants something to believe in. But there has been no teacher or prophet ever born on the earth who said, “My children, don’t make any efforts. I will do everything for you. Just take my hand and you will be liberated.” No guide has ever said this. All the great teachers have formulated a system of discipline to be followed by their students. All the great teachers have said, “You are capable of enlightening yourself! I can show you the path, but I cannot push you into the state of enlightenment.” A great murderer and bandit named Valmiki, who later became the author of the Ramayana, met a sage who transformed his life by making him aware of the Truth. Valmiki was enlightened and became a great sage and poet. So is the case of the great poet Kalidasa. He was an idiot, rejected by his wife, who later became famous and is today considered the Shakespeare of the East. In every human life a moment comes when one finds an opportunity to improve and unfold oneself, provided that moment is not engulfed with inertia and sloth. Human history is full of such examples. We can have that ability if we rightly choose to follow the path of spirituality. Therefore, disappointment has no place in life. We always have the opportunity, the place, time and means to attain the purpose of life.

In the cycle of evolution a human being has attained a status and intelligence that enables him to survey the whole of life. He has all the potentials and means to grow and develop himself, but not everyone utilizes these means. By following a definite path, the aspirant can attain the purpose of life. Inability in choosing a path, or not practising the discipline of the chosen path, wastes one’s time and energy. Various are the paths, but the goal is only one. Life on this platform is our own choice, and it is also our choice whether or not to follow the inner path and get enlightened in this lifetime.

We choose our own people and environment. Our birth is also our choice. It is our choice the way we want to live. We create relationships in the world and become attached to our creations, with the thought that the relationships and objects of the world are the objects of love and will help us grow. But we do not learn to love unless our consciousness is expanded to its fullest capacity.

When a dear friend or relative dies, we become a sage and philosopher for a few moments. We think, “This person was with us yesterday and he was so nice. Now look what has happened to him. The same thing could happen to us. Life on this earth is an illusion.” Suddenly everyone turns into a pseudo-stage. But when we go back to our homes, everything returns to the way it was before. Even though nature and reality give us the opportunity to realize the Truth, we still remain blind because of our strong attachments.

The Method for Inner Study

Human beings are always disappointed in the external world, yet they have not turned inward to understand anything about the internal world. Those who begin to search the other dimensions of life come in contact with subtleties that are puzzling to them, and they do not know what to do next. People have been trained from childhood to observe, examine, and verify the things in the external world, but no one has taught them how to look within, how to verify within, and how to know within. The ancients contemplated on these issues for a long time, and they developed a method for studying the inner world. Just as modern scientists developed a method for analysing the nature of matter, so there is a positive and exact system that tells us how to analyse and understand inner life.

Many people ask, for example, “Is there anything like a soul within us?” Modern philosophers deny any such entity because they are influenced by materialistic science. But are we really sure what science is? A few years ago, a Midwestern university sent out thousands of letters asking various scientists for their
definition of science. The responses did not establish any clear-cut definition of science, so even the meaning of science is not defined as yet. According to ancient yogis, however, science means vijnanam, the systematized and organized study that leads one to attain all the states of jnana – knowledge. Science is a way of knowing through the intellect; science is an external expression of inner knowledge.

If anyone wants to be a student of the interior world, of the path of light, if he wants to do inner research, he will have to understand this point: one must have a purified, free, and one-pointed mind to know and examine the interior Self. If the mind is not free, if one is prejudiced from the very beginning, influenced by a particular set of dogmas, doctrines, or formulas, then one can neither conduct nor complete any research. For conducting research within, one should be truthful, sincere, and free from prejudices. Research should not be shaded by social and cultural norms or religious fanaticism. It requires a totally independent and unbiased mind. One cannot life to oneself. One should ask, “Am I really true to myself? Am I really a seeker?”

In doing research within, we have to completely forget our prejudices from the past, and we have to remain true to ourselves; otherwise our research will be incomplete. Second, we must start training the mind to be inward. But the mind does not want to be inward; it wants to focus outside, because it has been trained and educated to know the external world only. The mind does not want to go toward the more subtle world within; it does not understand the concept of thinking without an object. We can imagine things, but imagination depends on an image within. We must train the mind to go inside our personal world, which is responsible for all our actions and speech in the external world, so that we can understand those needs, motivations, desires, those strong powers within us that move us to do something in the external world. We want to know their nature. We want to know why we act and feel the way we do.

We let the external world affect us more than it should. Many people remain very unhappy because others have suggested that they are not good people, and they have accepted these negative suggestions from others. Those suggestions have become part of their lives, so they think of themselves as bad people. But when someone condemns himself, excludes himself, creates guilt feelings within himself, or when he thinks that he is good for nothing, he is committing a serious mistake. On the other hand, we also create miseries for ourselves when we remain indifferent to the external world and when, because of our habits, we do whatever we want without understanding the consequences.

If we are in habit of creating miseries for ourselves, can we really blame God or anyone else? The ancient philosophy of the sages says, “O human being, you have the capacity to understand yourself, to understand both klista and aklista – that which is helpful for you, and that which creates obstacles for you.” Most of the miseries we suffer are created by ourselves, but we put the blame on others. Our miseries are not created by Providence, by the sun, moon, and stars, by our environment, nor by people – and never by God. We ourselves have created our miseries, and if we want to understand this truthfully, we will have to turn the mind inward.

The mind must be trained to go inward and examine itself because it is not accustomed to practicing a technique of inwardsness. Just as one needs a specialist to find out what disease he has, one has to be a specialist in understanding himself because the mind is in the habit of playing tricks. The method of knowing mental life is called psychology. It is very easy to find out something about a person by watching his actions – how he moves, how he talks, how he looks at others, how he smiles, how he cries, how he eats, how he sits, and how he makes certain gestures. One can discover a great deal about the inner life by studying body language. So when we start turning within, we do not have to ignore the external world, nor do we have to make any radical change in our external life. Which language we speak and which garments we wear are not of much value as far as Self-realization is concerned. People waste much time and energy in getting attached to brands and labels and forming a sect or cult. Thus the whole purpose is lost, and one is caught by the diversity of rituals and the fanaticism of cultism. We simply have to be ourselves and create a strong desire to know his inner potentials and states.

When we look within, we realize that the mind has two parts. The part that we already know is called the conscious part, and that which is unknown to us is called the unconscious part. The subconscious is a part of the unconscious. It means that which is submerged, that which is not visible. If the conscious part of mind does not function, the creative and dynamic aspect of human life will be crippled. And if it is destroyed, then there will be no coordination between body and mind. When this occurs, death is the result. But even after this separation, the unconscious mind remains intact. Let us now examine the unconscious mind. When we
look at something, the sensation that we receive is carried through the optic nerve to the brain and then to the conscious mind. Then it settles down in the unconscious mind as a sensation that leaves an imprint there. Looking at something with interest will help us to remember it if we ever see it again. But if we look at something casually and don’t pay much attention to it, then even though we are seeing it, we are not registering it. Registering happens because the mind has much interest in seeing something, and memory depends on interest. There is no camera that registers as fast as the brain. The fastest speed is not the speed of the light, but the speed of mind. People can think so fast that no computer can register their thinking. And when we think, everything we are registering is stored in the unconscious mind.

The Four Main States of Consciousness

The unconscious is also a vehicle for the centre of consciousness, from where consciousness flows on all levels. Ordinarily, people remain in body consciousness only; they are conscious of the body, of their relationships, of what they have, and of the objects they do not have. But look at what happens to that level of consciousness when one goes to deep sleep. The wife for whom one lives, the child for whom one would die, the property for which one would fight – one suddenly loses awareness of them. One goes to that state of unconsciousness and totally forgets everything. So we are not only the citizens of two worlds, the external and the internal; we are also the inner dwellers of three states – waking, dreaming, and sleeping. We are awake for many hours, we dream, and then we go to deep sleep. Every individual has his own private world, and this is called the world of dreams and sleep. We also create worlds around us and outside us during our waking state with our relationships, roles, belongings, and possessions.

Even though one has examined all three of these states, still he remains unchanged and untransformed. A fool goes to sleep, and he wakes up as a fool. His personality is not transformed overnight; there is no change. Then what makes a sage? One becomes a sage if he attains the fourth state, called turiya, the state beyond.

The best part of human civilization and culture is not found in any particular era, culture, or country. It is that ageless universal wisdom which has been given by those great people who attained this fourth state. They give new hope to humanity and to those who really want to attain the higher level consciousness. In the first three states – waking, dreaming, and sleeping – one thinks that he is full of sins, pains, problems, and weaknesses. But the great ones say that if he were to attain the fourth state, he would be free from these self-created complexes. And it is possible for everyone to attain that state. It is just like being in a mansion with four stories. If one is on the ground floor, he can see the landscape, but his vision is limited. The horizon that he sees is entirely different from the one he would see if he went to the second floor. And if he went to the third floor, it would look different again. But when one goes to the fourth floor, the whole horizon is quite clear, and he is able to see far and wide. Every human being is fully equipped to attain that state. Then why is everyone not attaining it? Because one does not remain constantly aware of the reality, and one is distracted by the objects of the world. Thus the short but precious span of life is wasted in vain by dwelling in the external world. There are some people who become aware of this fact, but they are not capable of bringing their thinking into action. “The thought which is not brought into action is either treachery or abortion.”

To bring right thought into action means to establish a bridge between the internal and external ways of life. The weak are lost in the external world, but the strong make sincere efforts to create the bridge between inner and external life. This is the way of living a conflict-free life. Unless one finds out whether he is action oriented, selfless-service motivated, intellectually inclined, or desires to be in silence, he or she will remain unfulfilled. These qualities are the symptoms that help one to choose a path.

Often, the conscience within whispers silently and warns the human being that there is something beyond it. The objects of the external world disappoint everyone, and a stage comes when one starts searching other dimensions of life. It is possible for one to live peacefully in the busiest and most crowded cities of the world provided he learns to practice a systematic way of understanding his own internal states. The world around us is very small and can be measured, but the world within us is vast and unmeasurable. To study the inner world one has to learn to sit still and to regulate the breathing system so that the pranic vehicles are not disturbed. Then he will be able to discover something about his internal states.

Becoming an Inner Dweller

To rightly conduct one’s duties in the world, one should learn to be an insider so that one gains strength to cope with the stress and strain of the world. As we regulate our habits for food and sleep, so we should also learn to sit and relax, to breathe, and make our minds one-pointed. This way, we give rest to our
muscles and nervous system, and we regulate our pranic vehicles by establishing harmony in our breathing. When we talk about mind and its one-pointedness, we should not forget that silencing the mind helps to still the body and harmonize the breath. The method of meditation is not related to the mind only. One has to understand one’s own body and regulate the breath behaviour before one tries to practice meditation. Practicing meditation is one of the necessities in modern life, and it is especially helpful for mental health, without which physical health has less importance. When we start working with our mind, the body and breath create distractions, and the mind gets agitated. The more one wants to silence the mind, the more stressed it becomes. That’s why students do not experience the joy of meditation and contemplation. The joy that one experiences during meditation is a peculiar joy and inexplicable, unlike the other joys of the world. A fortunate few experience silence. In the external world it is good for the mind to become active. But in meditation, one is in search of something that cannot be found outside. Those who do not understand the method of meditation think that meditation makes one passive. Actually, the art of meditating helps one to establish orderly control over the mind so that one can become active, and yet remain relaxed and unaffected by external stimuli. The mind is our only instrument for measuring objects in the external world, but we will have to make the mind orderly so that we can know if there is anything beyond it. And there is.

Deciding on a Path

Everyone is seeking something higher. Everyone wants to accomplish something so that he can be fulfilled completely, but completion is not found anywhere in the external world. Finally one tries to look within, and ordinarily such a seeker does not find any definite path to now, study, and attain inner peace and happiness. If the seeking does not die and the desire for seeking continues, then he starts studying the saying of the great sages and spiritual leaders such as Krishna, Buddha, Moses, and Christ. He studies the lives and works of these great men, which inspires him, and the search is intensified. This is the crossroads for such an aspirant, when he gets the opportunity and finds the necessity of following a definite path of enlightenment. If his search persists with full sincerity and devotion, a time comes when he starts realizing that the path of enlightenment is the highest of all. When one becomes aware of the Reality and knows the nature of the transitory world, he wants to find and choose a path for himself. There are various paths to choose from, and all the paths are equally valid. Practising faithfully only one path leads the student beyond the delusion created by the transitory nature of the world. At first the student acquires knowledge of *apara vidya* – the knowledge of the known: of the waking, dreaming, and sleeping states, of the five cognitive senses, the five gross senses, and the five elements of the body. Then he determines to attain *para vidya* – knowledge beyond. Until this point, one is doing intellectual gymnastics, because he is accustomed to living in the world of objects, and the mind is unable to conceptualize it. If the body is still and the breath calm, the mind can be calmed as well, and then one can let that which has been beneath, that which is beyond, come forward.

Enjoying the Objects of the World

Everyone should give that opportunity to himself, but many are afraid to. People are not satisfied with the world as it is, but they are accustomed to living in the world of the know, and they are afraid of the unknown. They are not sure of the path, they are not sure of their means, and they are not sure of their capacity. Here in the world, people are insecure; even when they prepare themselves, they are not sure. And insecurity is one of the causes of misery.

Many people become afraid when they start meditating and contemplating on the unknown. They complain that they might lose consciousness. This arises when the mind wants to cross the boundary beyond the world of objects. People are not accustomed to doing that, and so they become afraid. All those who really have meditated for some time struggle at this point. They have to go through this. But after one has crossed that point, then there comes a period that is free from indecisiveness. The final hurdle is when one crosses the boundary and goes beyond the world of objects into the world that has no objects.

There are people who are always dissatisfied, and there are some people who know how to be satisfied no matter what they have. There are others who are dissatisfied with the known and are afraid of the unknown. Yet there are many whose consciousness never awakens. They remain victims of *tamas* and of attachment toward the objects of sense gratifications. Those who know how to enjoy life without objects are called students of life. When one has convinced himself to be a student of life, with a strong desire to known the mysteries of life, then a point comes when he realizes that the Self, this real Self, is the Self of all. He opens his eyes. When he meets another he thinks, “Oh! This is me! Though you have a body different from my body, you are me also. I don’t like to hurt myself, so how can I hurt others? Why would I want to hurt
myself?” When one encounters this truth, then his consciousness starts expanding. Then he can never hurt, harm, or injure anyone; he will never consciously do that.

People should learn to appreciate and admire themselves and to have more self-confidence, so they can succeed. People constantly identify themselves with that which they are not, with the objects of the world. They forget their true Self, separating themselves from the whole, and turning themselves from the absolute truth. They will have to understand more about themselves, about their relationships with other beings and the cosmos. We are born out of it, we are in it, we return to it, and we are there all the time. We are an inseparable part of eternity. We will have to realize that.

When one develops a strong desire to know oneself, he will discover that there are happy corners in life within. Yet he has been caught by a whirlpool of sadness by coming attached to the things of the external world. Such people do not realize that life is really very brief, just like a bubble. A bubble rises, it bursts, and then it subsides into the ocean again. An individual life is exactly like that. Everyone should learn what it is possible to enjoy life. Many ignorant people think that in trying to known themselves, they will be ignoring their duty, but they are not really engaged in the process of knowing themselves. People do not have to isolate themselves or live in an abnormal way to really know themselves. They just have to be that which they already are. That’s all.

Learning to Know Oneself

The first requirement in this process is that if one does not create problems or obstacles for oneself or for others, then he will not have any conflict outside. Then he will have enough time, and his mind will have enough ability to study his inner life. Those who are seekers do not create conflict for themselves or others. They have a strong desire to search within and know themselves. Some seekers want to now themselves on all spheres. First they want to now directly how their body moves, why they are making certain gestures. This means that the internal states are the cause of these movements. One cannot know the mind without knowing the link between the body and mind, which is called prana, the vital force, and when one becomes aware of his internal states he finds that it is more important to know the mind. The first sheath one learns about is the physical sheath, the body made out of food. Then the second sheath is the pranic sheath, that finer body inside it which is made out of energy. Then comes the thinking process, the mental sheath. People want to now the mind immediately without knowing the pranic body, but this is not possible. The pranic body creates obstacles, and one cannot know the mind until he understands it.

Before one chooses of follows any path, he will have to have the basic knowledge about the body, pranic vehicles, mind and its various functions – and he will have to have a strong desire for knowing the Truth. What is Truth? Truth is that which is not subject to change, that which was never born and will never die, that which if self-existent, eternal, and never changes in the past, present, or future. So we are in search of Truth, and we are applying all our means, anything that we have, to know Truth. We are trying to accomplish something in life, to find Truth. We have examined the nature of the external world and its objects but we did not find Truth. So now we are trying to go inside, to find out if we can discover that Truth which is beyond time, space, and causation, that which is self-existent and eternal, that which fulfils human life.

If I live and I am not comfortable with myself, it means there is something wrong and I should know the reason. So first of all I have to know myself on all dimensions, and then I will find out that I have the capacity to know that absolute Truth which is the prime goal of human life. Many people think that this might take several lifetimes, and many others think it can be done instantly. But the timing depends upon the power of one’s desire to attain Truth. One can do it in five minutes’ time, one can do it in one lifetime, or one can never do it.

When one is committed to himself, when he wants to know himself, then he chooses a path. One doesn’t choose a path first and then commit. First one has to have commitment toward the purpose of life. This means he will have to take responsibility for knowing himself. He will have to learn to choose his path by understanding his own inclinations, thinking process, emotions, and actions. By understanding more about one’s life, environment, mind, action, and speech, one can find out how sincere he is. One will have to learn to judge himself, to determine how far he would like to tread the path, and to know if he is sincere enough to do it or not. People know if they are sincerely treading the path or not. One cannot follow is he is not ready. If one is not ready, he cannot follow anything. So first one should prepare oneself and only then should one choose the way.
The Paths of Yoga

What is the way? Various are the ways; the path of action, *karma yoga*; the path of love, *bhakti yoga*; the path of knowledge, *jnana yoga*; the path of *raja yoga*; the path of *laya yoga*; and the path of *kundalini yoga*, which deals with awakening the dormant power within. Included in the discussion of kundalini yoga are *hatha yoga*, *pranayama*, *nada yoga*, *mantra yoga*, and *Sri Vidya*. All the paths lead to that same height from which one can see here, there, and everywhere. Then everything is clear. A person might disagree with someone's path, but he can never disagree with the goal, for the goal is one and the same.

*Karma* means action, and all actions produce certain fruits. Those fruits again inspire us to do more actions, and consequently many other fruits are reaped. One action leads us to another action, and this creates a whirlpool around us, which we don’t know how to come out of. What is involved in karma or action? The doer is involved in it. Without the wish and consent of the doer, how can one act? It's not possible. If I don’t have any intention to act, any thought that I will do it, then no work will be performed by me. So every action is initially a thought. What is a thought? How do we think? We are thinking with the help of images. There are innumerable images in our minds. We are relating one image to another, and this creates a thought pattern that prompts us to do actions. But emotion is deeper and stronger than our ordinary thinking process. One single emotion can disturb the entire thinking process. One single emotion can also be useful, provided it is directed to the centre of Consciousness. Many sages have used this power to attain the highest state of ecstasy – union with Divinity. In fact, the power of emotion is one of the greatest powers. Emotion is beyond all the faculties of mind. It resides deep in a source that is not in the domain of the thinking process; it is beyond the field of thinking. Emotions have their roots in desires. So if one learns to control and direct his desires, he becomes victorious. The battle will favourably be over. Mahatma Gandhi used to say that if a person can reduce his individual desire to the level of zero, he will be free. And Aurobindo said that if someone directs all his desires towards self-enlightenment, to awakening the latent power within, then it will arise, and grace, the descending power of the Lord, will dawn. When one awakens that dormant human potential within, called kundalini, the he reaches the highest state.

The path of karma yoga is the path in which one does his actions and offers the fruits of those actions of others. Then he is free, he is liberated, he is not caught in the whirlpool of the fruits of his actions. In the path of knowledge, one uses the mind to discriminate the real from the unreal until he realizes the Truth and is one with that. The path of love makes proper use of emotions. The word *emotion* is often used in a negative way, but emotion is also a great positive power and many great people in the world have used it to attain a state of ecstasy. This is the quickest way. Raja yoga is a path that is very systematized and scientific. In the path of kundalini yoga, one understands that there is a great reservoir within, a power within, which lies dormant. By awakening that dormant force within, one can reach the final goal.

Regardless of the path one chooses, the first step in self-transformation is to feel, “I will, I can, and I have to.” So one should learn to face the reality. It will be scary, but it is necessary. And one should also gain strength and not try to escape from life. It never helps. One should face life, and for facing life one needs strength; for strength one needs self-confidence and self-discipline. But one should work systematically and gradually within one's capacity. To abruptly and blindly start to follow the path, any path, is just to regress to childhood and accept retardation. All the teachings lead to independence, and if one has attained an independent mind so that he can choose his internal path, then he is doing justice to his personal thinking process. So before one chooses a path, he should build his own personal status in his own inner world. He must have a philosophy. No matter which path he chooses, no matter which religion, which cultural background he comes from, this is something that he has to develop for his own unfolding. There is nothing like a knowledge that is so vast, or a God that is so far away that one can never attain it in this lifetime. All of us have individual responsibility towards ourselves, and we are fully equipped. We all have the means and opportunities we need to attain a state of freedom.

Everyone has individuality, with certain special qualities, and by knowing them one can have inner courage for treading the paths of light and liberation. The purpose of these paths is to help people in expanding their individual consciousness. The gist of my experience and the experience of other sages with whom I have lived is that we have to enlighten ourselves. One day I told my master, “If you are enlightened, then why do you not give me enlightenment too? It’s too much for me. You tell me to do this, you tell me to do that – and I have been doing it, and still I don’t find any remarkable change in my personality.” All students think in this same foolish way; it is natural. My master said, “I am going to set you right. I am going to show you that this is not my mistake, but your mistake.” I asked, “Where am I committing a mistake?” Then he told one of the swamis to blindfold me, and he gave me a bowl with a hole in it. He told me to hold the bowl. Then he started pouring milk in it, but all the milk that he poured in, drained out. He said, “Am I...
giving you milk?” I said, “Yes.” “Why are you not retaining it?” Then he took off the blindfold, and I found that there was a hole in the bowl. He said, “There is also a hole in your head; whatever I give, it drains. You will have to patch that hole.”

If someone thinks a teacher will pat his head and give him nectar and enlighten him, he is wrong. No one does that. Christ touched many students, so why were people still ignorant during that time? During the time of Buddha, why were people still suffering and ignorant? It was not the mistake of Christ, Moses, or Buddha. Krishna was enlightened. Then why could he not stop the battle between the Kuravas and the Pandavas? Great people lead those who are prepared. If they are not prepared, then they cannot help. Each person has to light his own lamp. If a student has oil, wick, and the lamp, the teacher will light it. But if he doesn’t have these, what shall the teacher light? The teacher can guide the student, but the student should learn to accept a program for himself, for his infoldment, for his health, for his growth. That is called a self-training program. If the student finds any obstacles, then the teacher helps him. He also makes the student aware of where he is committing mistakes. But self-improvement depends on one’s sincerity, capacity, and ability.

The gist of all my advice is that one should learn to discipline oneself. Discipline means guiding one’s energy properly in three directions: mind, action, and speech. Discipline does not mean arresting oneself, repressing oneself, suppressing oneself, or torturing oneself. It means learning to guide the energies that one has and learning to be positive in life. Negativity does not help. It is like slow poison. But positive thinking is like nectar, and it definitely helps.

It is important for all seekers and aspirants to choose a definite path and practice it. Without practice nothing can be attained. Blessed are those who are on the path. One day they will reach their goal and attain freedom from all the pains and miseries.
Prayer

O Divine Sea of Cosmic Life-Energy! Teach us how our five enchanting senses, our heart and digestive system are working continuously? Which energy is responsible for their continuous functioning? How can I be able to control my sense organs at my sweet will through Thy energy and will power? Teach me, why my body becomes tired during my awakening state, even if I do not work at all and take plenty of food to supply the physical energy to my body? And how my body is recharged again and becomes fresh during my sleep when I do not supply any physical energy to it through food?

O Sustainer of Life! Millions of complex chemical actions and reactions are always going on inside my body, even without my knowledge. No body is worried and responsible for all these actions & reactions, except Thee, not even my ownself. I bow to Thee.

What are Asanas?

Asanas: The Asanas are the different yogic postures, which helps in transmitting the life-energy, forcefully & wilfully to different organs and nadis in the body. Through the special asanas yogis tries to stretch the particular organs of their body. By stretching the body the life-energy current flows vigorously in the stretched organ for a while. Then the whole body is relaxed to make the flow of life-energy normal.
Out of so many asanas, some of the asanas are more useful for curing the diseases, maintaining health and to awaken the Kundalini. An aspirant should preferably practice those asanas regularly. An aspirant may also practice some light exercises regularly along with the yog-asanas. These asanas and exercises promote and facilitate the flow of life energy in different parts of the body and make the breathing better. Asanas keeps our body free from diseases, keeps our health fit to meditate for a long time. Only a healthy body and healthy mind free from all kind of diseases can go to a state of deep meditation. A sick body and disturbed mind is unable to co-operate with the strain and stress of long meditation.

The cause of sickness and malfunctioning of some of the body organs is due to the lack of life force flowing in those body organs. The distribution of life force in the body is disturbed due to many habitual wrong postures and idleness. But by the pranayama, asanas, mudras and light exercises e try to send the life force, forcefully in every part of the body. The harmful bacterias, viruses and allergies are not able to affect a human body full of life force. Many advanced yogis have confirmed this fact scientifically, and remained unaffected by the bacterias and viruses.

There is a great misconception about yoga-asanas among most of the beginners, who think that only the asana-practice is complete yoga. It is true that asanas are very important, to keep our body and mind healthy, and free from diseases. But the practice alone of some of the postures or asanas has nothing to do with the communion with God, which is the ultimate aim of Yoga. The asanas are enough to most of the persons in the world, who are only concerned to keep their physical body healthy and sound. But asanas alone are not enough for the seekers of God and Kundalini awakening. Many persons practice and teach some of the asanas, and claim themselves as a great yogi. They create a misconception about yoga. Asanas are only the third aphorism in the eightfold path of Patanjali Yog-Sutras.

**Sitting Posture or Asanas For Meditation**

There are four common asanas for Japa and Meditation. These are Padmasana (Lotus posture-crossed interlocked legs), Siddhasana, Svastikasana and Sukhasana (Easy posture-crossed legs). First put a soft cushion or a woollen blanket on a clean, secluded and lonely place on a floor or hard bed in your house. Your body should be well-insulated from earth. Some electric and life-energy current are generated during meditation. Your efforts will be wasted if these currents are earthed and are not insulated. While sitting in asana your spine, head and neck should erect upward. One should practice any one of above asana to sit at a stretch for hours. Padmasana is said to best, since your body cannot fall, even if you lost your body consciousness during meditation, but the Sukhasana is more comfortable and the easiest, if you do not lose body conscious while meditating.

Stick to any one of the sitting asana you like. First watch your whole body and check internally. If there is any tension or a problem in any part of the body, relax that part to remove the tension. Then feel that you are sitting comfortably firm like a rock. You will soon get mastery on your asana for long meditation. The asanas gives strength and the mudras give a steadiness to the body.
Selected Asanas More Useful for Awakening the Kundalini

There are thousands of asanas and postures in all. Among these only a few asanas are most useful, which will be described here. Some of the asanas can be practised in sitting, some in lying, some in standing and some in head downward-leg upward positions. Women should avoid the asana during their pregnancy.

These days many books are available especially on numerous asanas with illustrative pictures. But it is better to limit only to those asanas which are more useful for deep meditation and awakening of the Kundalini.

1. Sarvang-asana & Hal-Asana

Both these asanas can be done simultaneously in one stretch. Spread a thick blanket on a clean floor. Lie down flat on your back. Slowly raise your legs vertically upward along with your trunk and hips. Support your back with your hands on either side. Rest your elbows on the ground. Press your chin against your chest, which is **Jalandhara Bandha**. Keep the legs straight & upward. Retain the breath as long as you can and slowly exhale through nose. When you are tired, either slowly bring down your legs to the ground or bend more your legs further like hal-asana. Remain in this posture for as much time as you can comfortably. Then bring back your legs and body to lie down flat on the floor. There should not be any jerk while bringing up or down the legs. Then relax your whole body for a while with deep breath.

In Sarvangasana your shoulders and elbows support the whole weight of the body. Do it only in the morning and the evening empty stomach. Along this asana **Hal-asana** can be done.

**Benefits:**

- **Sarvangasana** has all the benefits of **Sirshasana**. It is easier to do and has none of the risks of Sirshasana.
- Since in these postures the head is at the lowest level of gravity, it supplies maximum amount of blood and prana to the brain to flow for a while. Consequently it relaxes & vitalizes the brain and removes many diseases connected with the brain. It promotes the functions of the brain faculties. It increases memory, mental power and intelligence etc. It removes mental fatigue.
- You can hear the **Anahat** sounds clearly during this asana.
- It helps in maintaining celibacy and controls over the nightfall during dreams. So it is the preserver of youth.
- It eradicates diseases of intestine and stomach.
- In the old age the vertebrae of the spine become hard and brittle known as ossification. It prevents the spine from early ossification (hardening).
- The lazy man becomes energetic to do all kind of works efficiently.
2. Matsyasana (Fish Posture)

This asana should be practised just after the Sarvangasana. It makes a man's body so light that he can float on water easily. This asana improves deep breathing.

Spread a woollen blanket on floor. Sit in Padmasana or Sukhasana with cross-legged. Lie down flat on the back. Hold the head up thus making the neck like an arch with the help of two elbows. Remain in this position for a comfortable duration of time. Then slowly release head with the help of hands and get up. Then unlock your legs. Take precaution of no jerk in spine, when you get up or lie down.

Benefits:

- Cures many diseases.
- It cures constipation and helps to ease out the faeces in the rectum.
- Useful in constipation, chronic bronchitis and asthma.

3. Paschimottan-Asana

Sit on the blanket on the floor. Stretch both the legs flat like a stick. Bend the trunk forward slowly to catch your toes with the fingers and thumb. Try to touch your head with the knees. While bending exhale and retain the breath out for comfortable time. The spine of some may be hard and he may not be able to touch his head with the knees. He should not forcibly try to touch his head with the knees. It may take some time to get the success in this asana. Lift up the trunk and inhale a deep breath. Relax for a while. You should also repeat this asana with the stretching of only one leg and then reverse with the other leg.

Benefits:

- It activates the flow of prana in the *Brahma Nadi Sushumana* and stimulates in awakening the Kundalini.
- It increases the gastric fire.
- It reduces obesity and the enlarged spleen & liver.
- It stimulates the functioning of abdominal viscera, kidney, liver, dyspepsia and gastritis.
- It cures lumbago and myalgia, piles, prostate, lumber nerves epigastria plexus, bladder and diabetes etc.
4. Ardha-Matsyendra Asana

In some of the asanas the trunk is bended forward and in some the trunk is bended backward. The trunk should also be twisted like a rope both clockwise and anticlockwise. Only then the perfect elasticity in the trunk can be achieved.

Sit on your asana keep erect spine and place your right heel near the anus and below the scrotum. Let the heel touch the perennial space and fix it. Bend the knee, place the left ankle at the foot of the right thigh and rest the left foot on the ground close to the right hip joint. Place the armpit or right axilla over the top of bent left knee. Push your knee a little to the back so that it touches the back part of the axilla. Try to catch the right palm with right foot. Apply a pressure at the right shoulder and slowly twist the spine to extreme left. Turn your face toward left. Try to retain this posture for a comfortable time.

Similarly you should reverse all the steps and twist your spine to the right side instead of left.

**Benefits:**

- This an excellent and most useful asana, which helps in awakening of the Kundalini. It forces the flow of life-energy in the Ida & Pingla Nadis.
- It makes the spine elastic. All sorts of diseases like muscular rheumatism of the back, lumber spondylolysis and cervical etc. are cured.
- The spinal nerves and the sympathetic nervous system are toned up.

5. Vajra-Asana

This is a sitting pose asana, in which the trunk, spine and head are kept vertical. This is the only asana which should be done just after taking the food. This asana stimulates the digestion of the food & you can sit in this asana for quite a long time. The legs are placed under the thigh. The soles are placed under the buttocks. The thighs must touch the calves. The whole weight of the body is put on the knees and the ankles. Keep hands gently on the knees. The knees are kept close to each other. Sit for as much time as you can in this asana.

**Benefits:**

- Sciatica pain is cured.
- Flatulence is removed.
- The food is digested easily.
- The Myalgia in the knees, thighs, toes and legs is cured.
- It influences the Kanda from which all the Nadis spring and it is the most vital part of the body.
6. Bhujang-Asana (Snake-Asana)

The shape of this asana is just like a snake that is why it is called Bhujang-Asana.

Spread a woollen blanket on the floor or hard bed. Lie down on your stomach on it. Keep the legs straight joined together. Keep both hands at the level of your chest keeping the palms on the floor. With the help of the arms, lift up the upper torso as much as you can do in an arc shape, along with an inhale breath. Hold your breath and retain this posture as much as you can. Lower the chest, neck and head slowly on the ground along with the exhale breath. Relax the whole body with deep breathing.

Benefits:

• It has all the benefits of Paschitmottan-Asana as your spine bends in the opposite direction.

7. Dhanur-Asana (Bow-Asana)

The shape of this asana is just like a bow (Dhanush). Lie down on your stomach on a woollen blanket on floor. Keep the legs straight and joined together. Bend your feet upward. Catch both the feet firmly with your both hands. Apply the force of stretching the arms & feet. Lift up your upper torso and the feet as much as you can in the arc shape along with an inhale breath. Hold the breath & retain the posture as much as you can. Slowly lower the chest; neck, head and your feet on the ground along with exhale breath. Relax the whole body with deep breathing.

Benefits:

• It has all the benefits of Bhujang-Asana and many more.

8. Marudand-Asana/Exercises (for Spine)

This asana especially effects Spine, Ida, Pingla, and Sushumana. It is very useful to reduce the bulging stomach.

Stand straight. Lift your hands up along with breathing in. Bow down forward while breathing out, contract stomach inside and try to touch your feet. After a while stand straight up while breathing in. Then bend your spine backward as much as you can. Then bend forward backward. Repeat the same bowing backward, right side and left side. This is one cycle. Repeat as many cycles as you can. Then rotate your spine clockwise and anticlockwise, along with your hands keeping horizontally suspended.

Benefits:

• It has all the benefits of Bhujang-Asana and Dhanur-Asana.
9. Shav-Asana / Corpse-Asana

Shav-Asana is the most energizing and a useful Asana for the aspirants. It may be done in both the awakened and sleeping states and for as much time as you like. It is the most simple also. This asana can be done at any time during the day even before your sleep.

Shav-Asana

Lie down flat on your back just as a corpse. Relax your whole body. Watch the tension if any, in each and every part of your body, starting from your feet. Relax the body part if you feel any tension there. While watching and starting from your feet lastly come to the Aggyia chakra. Watch your breathing. It should be deep and slow. Concentrate and meditate at the Aggyia chakta. You may keep you awake in this state or may sleep, as you like.

In this asana the reception of life force is increased and the expense of life energy is minimized. Your body will become fresh and recharged in less time. A Shav-Asasa for few minutes is equivalent to the sleep for many hours in the relaxation and energizing of the tired body, brain and mind. Your work efficiency in office will be better.

Some Useful Exercises

There is not much difference is slow exercises and the asanas. In the modern society most of us have to sit continuously on our chair or before a computer terminal in the office. Our neck and eyes remain in a fixed state, eyes looking and reading too much at a particular fixed position for most of the day. Most of us are straining our eyes and brain too much. If so, the following exercises should also be done.

1. Neck Rotation Exercise

Sit on your asana or stand vertical. Slowly rotate your neck clockwise and anticlockwise as many times as you like. Slowly move your neck upward and downward. Then slowly rotate the neck sideways, left and right. You may also do this exercise in your office whenever you get a chance to do. It will cure and protect you from cervical.

2. Hammering and Massage of the Scalp

Sit on your asana or stand vertical. Hammer your whole scalp slowly for a minute with your fists. Then massage the back of your neck at Medulla Oblongata with both the hands for some time. This will remove all the tiredness and tension due to excessive mental work. It will increase your memory and revitalize the brain cells.

3. Eyes Rotation Exercises

Sit on your asana or stand vertical. Open your eyes and fix your neck. Rotate your eyes without the movement of your neck, clockwise and anticlockwise. Move your eyes upward, downward, sideways, and left & right as many times as you can. Your neck should not rotate or move while doing these exercises.

Stretch horizontal your right or left hand. Fix your eyes on the tip of your vertical thumb. Move your thumb horizontally closer and away to your eyes. These will certainly improve your eyesight and reduce the number of your specs.
General Useful Instructions for Asanas & Pranayama

- Be regular in practice.
- Take care of inhaling, exhaling and retaining your breath at the right moment during each asana.
- Initially one should learn the asanas from someone, who has already practised.
- If japa is also done along with pranayama & asanas it will be better.
- The regular practice, patience and perseverance will give perfection in asanas & pranayama.
- Do not jerk and strain your body and spine more than your capacity. Perfection will come slowly.
- Keep remembering that the ultimate aim of asanas & pranayama is Self-Realization and awakening of the Kundalini and not simply to become healthy and cure diseases.
Karma Yoga

The Path of Action and Selfless Service

Karma is the expression of the rule of perfect justice within us. It is the law of the cosmos reflected in the microcosm. There is nothing arbitrary or punitive about it. It is universal law and is inevitable fact. No success can be attained without understanding the law of karma, and most of the human beings in this world follow the path of karma yoga consciously or unconsciously. Those who know that the path of karma is like worship of the Lord perform their actions skilfully, selflessly, and lovingly.

Many people are confused about the definition of karma. When something adverse happens, they say, “It's my karma.” Actually, karma cannot be classified as good or bad. The word karma comes from the Sanskrit root kri, meaning “to do.” Any movement one makes is called action or karma. One has done, one has been doing, one is doing, one will do, or one wants to do; all the actions done in the past, present, and future are called karmas. No one disputes the law of karma: “As you sow, so shall you reap.” No religion in the world disputes this; neither do atheists. The law of action and reaction is accepted universally. Cause and effect, the twin laws of life, are inseparable, just like the two sides of a coin. One cannot escape from this inevitable law. No matter what happens, one has to follow it. There is no one who was ever born on this earth, no living creature, who has not followed this law. Karma is the universal law that cannot be avoided by anyone.

These karmas of past, present, and future can be described by the symbol of a bowman. The arrows a bowman has already sent toward the target are called past karmas, those arrows that he is holding in his hand to send are called present karmas, and those in the quiver on his back are called future karmas. One cannot do anything with past karmas unless he is fully enlightened. With knowledge of the Divine, the enlightened ones create the fire of knowledge that burns all the bondages created by past karmas. That is possible, but unless one has that ability, he has to reap the consequences of his past karmas. We cannot escape from that, but the present and future are in our hands.

Those who become aware of the law of karma do not miss this opportunity. They try to discipline themselves and direct their actions to the Divine only. The present shapes the future. They lead life from moment to moment, making it a beautiful poem and a joyous song. They enjoy life and create a new magnificent future for themselves by understanding the present life, rather than pondering over their past actions and brooding upon the deeds they have already performed. The force of the past definitely affects the present, but why should one waste the present in brooding on the past? Those who understand that what has happened in the past has happened, and decide to discipline themselves in the present, make the present glorious and create a better future. The past is past, and the greatest of all filters in life is called time. Casting your eyes toward past actions while living in the present is a misuse of time and energy. The past can never be recalled, though the memories of the past remain stored in the unconscious. We are still here and we can make our future. Everyone can make good use of the present and the future regardless of what has happened in the past.

Karma yoga focuses on those pages of the manuscript of life that one is holding in his hands, and that is the present. How does one study it? One can study it by knowing the law of karma. This is a very important thing to do. Awareness of one’s karma, of one’s actions in daily life, is essential. Two chapters of the manuscript of life are misplaced and lost, but the wise, by studying the present, easily establish a link to the missing pages of this manuscript. “Who am I? From where have I come? Why have I come? And where will I go?” These four questions compose a topic for research for all the students who are on the path, or who are inclined to choose a path for fulfilling the purpose of life. Every human being consciously or unconsciously is working toward perfection. All the paths lead to the same goal of perfection with the desire for liberation and happiness. These questions can be resolved by understanding the nature of the samskaras that motivate one to perform certain actions. Whatever we express through our mind, action, and speech has its roots in our unconscious mind. It is a particular technique to study the unconscious and conscious mind and its interrelations. By studying the present actions, we can find out our past deeds and can also imagine our future.

Just as there are two aspects of life – life within and life outside – there are also two aspects of karma – karma performed mentally, and karma performed in the external world. The law is that if an individual acts, he will have to reap the fruits of his actions, so the kind of actions he does determines the result. If one sows the seed of an apple, he doesn't reap any other fruit; he can only reap an apple. Before one does any action outside, long before that, he has done some action within. The seed has been sown long before it becomes a tree that gives flowers and fruits. All things have their roots in the unknown, in the subtle world.
The same law is applied to human beings. Anything that a human being does or wants to do, first he does within and then expresses it through action and speech. The seeds of all of one's actions, the motivations that move one to act, are the desires within him. Many hidden seeds of creative intelligence and seeds of disruptive motivations reside within us. Creative imagination and useless imagination, fancies, fantasies, symbols, and ideas all rise from the ocean of desire within. Desire motivates the thinking process, and one starts acting the way he desires. Then the fruits that he reaps from those deeds motivate him to do more and more deeds. One performs one's actions inside in a subtle way through his internal states long before they are expressed outside. Moving from one place to another does not change a person, because wherever he goes, he carries his internal states with him. And whatever is going on with him now will go on with him in the future if he does not control that which moves him – and that is the mind. If one does not think rightly, he cannot speak rightly; if one does not think rightly, he cannot act rightly. And if one does not do rightly, he can never reap the fruits of his desire from the tree of life. So one has to learn to think rightly, to keep one's internal states as tranquil as possible. Karma means that one has expressed a thought through his action or speech. But one should learn that one's speech and actions are virtually his thoughts.

A leaf being tossed by the wind and creating many patterns in the sky – is that leaf creating karma? And who is reaping the fruits of that karma? Is a human life controlled exactly like that wind-tossed leaf? No. A human being is alive and is far superior to that dead, lifeless leaf. Whenever one moves he is creating karma. But when one acts as if he is lifeless, then his environment creates the same situation for him – it controls his life. And when one acts like a human being, understanding his potentials, then he can act according to what he wants to accomplish. A human being does not act the way an animal acts. There is a difference, although the appetites equally influence both animals and human beings. As far as the appetites are concerned, a human being behaves exactly like an animal, but an animal is not considered to be like a human being. Human beings do the same things that animals do, but animals' activities are controlled by nature, while human beings' activities are not. Human beings are considered to be superior because they have free will to do what they want to do.

That is why all the great paths in the world talk about disciplining oneself. Self-discipline means guiding one's own mind, actions, and speech according to the desired goal: learning to understand what is not to be spoken and what is to be spoken, learning to understand what is not to be done and what is to be done. Otherwise one is a helpless slave of his inner whims. One has to learn to discipline himself so that his senses do not dissipate his energy and his mind. Once one has learned that, once he has control, his energies are at his disposal, and he can direct them according to his wish. Yet, even though people have intellect and free will, still they are captive, travelling in a narrow lane of action.

People cannot live without doing something; they have to do some actions. Someone might say he is not doing anything, but he is actually thinking, even if he is not aware of what he is thinking. People cannot live without doing some action, not even for a moment. And all of one's actions, whatever he performs from morning until evening – his useless actions, every word, every gesture have some meaning. Why does one make certain gestures? Because of his inner thinking. All actions depend on the thinking process. The way one acts – that he is. So one can learn much about himself by studying his actions. One should ask oneself, “Why am I acting like this? I don't want to act this way, yet I am still doing it. Why?”

A vast portion of our thinking process is never materialized, for all that we think cannot be brought into actions because the instruments through which we perform our actions have limited capacity. A human being many times finds difficulty in expressing himself explicitly because of these limitations. Another helplessness is that he cannot remain without doing actions. And a further helplessness is that he has to reap the fruits of his actions, whether he wants to or not. The duties that he has chosen for himself bind him, and he does not know how to be free from them. There is great confusion regarding the performance of duties, even in the minds of great people who are considered to be the leaders of our society. This confusion exists because of a clash of interests. As is the case with two persons living together, so is the case with society. Our duties and commitments should be based on the interest of mutuality and not individuality, yet every individual does his duty for himself and not for the sake of others.

One's duties are very important; one cannot live without them. If those duties are not performed properly, one is unfulfilled and makes others unhappy. Duty is a commitment that we choose for ourselves, and action is a law of life and nature. Karma seems to be deeply mingled with both of these: action plus duty make karma. But even if one has learned how to do his duty, still he does not feel complete. He is fulfilling his commitment, but he is not trying to understand something deeper: one reaps the fruits of his actions, and they inspire him to do more actions. A couple buys a house – and immediately they need furniture, carpeting, and so on. They quickly find that one action immediately engages them in another action, and it becomes a chain reaction. They do not know how to deal with it, how to be free from this chain. They become so
involved in it that they do not have time to think. There are many mysteries that are not unfolded because people get so involved in their so-called relationships in the world. One should learn to discharge his duties according to his or her ability and capacity, but should not let this keep one from the purpose of life. It is very interesting to study one’s own self, but these days no one seems to have time because the objects of the world and so-called relationships have made people too busy.

When two people decide to get married, instead of learning to love each other and making sincere effort to attain the purpose of life, they keep each other busy for the fulfilment of their biological and psychological needs. They forget the purpose of married life and they create bondage for each other. When two people are involved with one another in this way, that is considered to be a great love in life. If a woman can keep a man busy for twenty-five years, he says, “My wife is wonderful!” But what did she do? She did not allow him to think for twenty-five years. And the husband did not allow her to think, either. When one has a child, he thinks the child is his primary concern, but he does not know what his real relationship with the child is. How did he choose this particular child, and how did the child choose his or her parents? There are many such questions to be answered, but one does not even attend fully to understanding the middle portion of the manuscript of life, because one is kept too busy by the actions and duties he has created for himself. People should not prevent their loved ones from contemplating on the vital questions of life. When two people meet and decide to join together, they can be helpful to each other. They should help each other in attaining the purpose of life, not postponing it. That could be a very fruitful relationship. One has to learn to understand oneself independently, and getting caught by the charms, temptations, and attractions of the world is not the way to do that.

Doing One’s Duty with Love

People are caught in a state of confusion concerning the performance of their duty. Many times they don’t want to do something, and yet they feel forced to do it. Whenever one does something in conflict it definitely gives a strain to the unconscious mind. Any action that one performs should not be done under pressure. Otherwise one might start developing and superimposing another nature on one's personality, and a time might come when the personality is completely changed. One should be spontaneous and honest when one relates to others.

Many people are doing their duty, yet they are unhappy, and the people for whom they are doing the duty are not satisfied either. These people are committing a serious mistake somewhere, because duty makes them slaves. One feels he is forced to do his duties even though he does not want to do them. If he doesn’t do them, he suffers, and those who live around him also suffer. One cannot live without doing his duty, so one is helpless. He has to do his duty, and when he does his duty he becomes a slave. But the inborn desire for enlightenment again and again reminds him to accomplish the purpose of life. Changing one’s situation – such as divorcing to attain a fake independence, or renouncing one's home and duties – will not solve this dilemma. One has to solve the main problem of how to have freedom from within and yet to do one's duty. Because of this basic problem, one does not know how to enjoy life and live happily. People do their duty selfishly because of the pleasure they will receive. Even if one is doing something for his wife, his child, his brother, he is really doing it for himself, for what the others will do for him in return. Everyone is committing a mistake; no one knows how to do his duty with love.

What do we mean by love? Everyone says he loves his children and wife, but if he did, there would be no conflict. Conflict is a clear sign and symptom of a clouded mind that does not allow one to be in peace, and the mind which is not at peace does not help one to be happy. So that is not love. If one loves his duty, then he will enjoy doing it. But if one is unhappy, it is because he does not love selflessly; he has some expectation that is not being fulfilled. Love means being selfless. We have to live in a world where everybody forces things on us. This world is full of suggestions that blast us all the time - “Do this, do that.” There is only one way to react, and that is to do one's duty lovingly. One should train oneself. “Why don't I like to do it?” A child does not like to read a book that has many difficult words. If his teacher forces a hard subject on him, the child will say, “That is useless information. I don't care if I don't find out.” He does not like to know what he has not known; he wants to limit himself. He is afraid of facing the unknown and the difficult. We have formed that habit from our childhood. Every human being is afraid of the unknown and at the same time is not satisfied with the known. Being dissatisfied in the world and being afraid of the unknown makes one miserable. Both dissatisfaction and fear are the greatest enemies of mankind. Fear limits us. But there is no fear, no limitation in love. So one should learn to grease his duty with love. “I have to do it, and I like to do it.” Then there will be no problem. One should learn to love his duty because one cannot live without doing it. It should be done for its own sake, because it is a must. That's very important.
All these conflicts in modern society that have given birth to so many psychological problems and so much sickness are a result of one great conflict: “I have to do it, but I don't want to do it, and I am forced to do it.” Then people feel resentful and guilty, and they condemn themselves. They relate to only one thing: what is right and what is not right. So they become victims; they become sick. “I have not done anything right, but I have done many wrongs; I am a bad person.” All the time they think of negative things. Negativity has become a part of their lives. It is not easy to come out of this. Every human being has weaknesses, but if one is constantly recognizing his weaknesses and not doing anything about them, he will become the victim of an incurable disease. No psychologist, no psychiatrist, no doctor, no yogi, no swami, no priest can help him. People are suffering more from self-created problems, miseries, and diseases than from the diseases that affect them arising from the external world. Why are people disturbed internally when no one has disturbed them? Why are they so depressed and gloomy? Because of their own thinking. Such negative thinking is selfish, fruitless, and injurious. It is better for one to think properly and to learn to love his duty; then there will be no problem. Creating love for one's duty will give freedom from stress. Actually, modern man goes through stress and strain not because of the actions he performs but because of his attitude toward his whole life. Most people do not want to do their duties yet they continue doing them. This brings a serious conflict between thinking and acting. This constant fight creates a battle within, which actually is the very cause of stress. In today's world, everyone seems to do things in reaction without thinking of the consequences of one's deeds and actions.

Duties Toward Oneself and Toward Others

There are two sets of duties that human beings perform in daily life: personal duties and duties toward others. By doing one's own ablutions, one is not obliging anyone; he is doing duty toward himself. Nature pushes one to perform one's personal duties – he must do them. When one goes to the bathroom, he is not obliging his neighbours – but if he doesn't, he will be disturbing his neighbours, because he'll become sick and consume the time of the people who have to attend to him. If one is not doing his individual duty, then he is disturbing those who live with him. But even if one is doing his duty, he is taking care of himself only and is not serving others.

There is another set of duties that people perform; these are the duties that they perform in relation to others every day. A person may feel, “I am not strong enough, but it is my duty to do this for him.” Where does that sense come from? Not from the Lord; not from Jesus, or Moses, or Buddha, or Krishna. Our sense of duty has come from one thing: the natural law of karma. Why are we being active? Why are our legs and hands active? For the mouth. We do actions to learn something so we can eat. And why is the mouth active? For the liver. Why is the liver active? For the other parts of the body. Why are the other parts of the body active? For the whole being. Now if the mouth says, “OK, I want to be selfish, I don't want to give to the liver,” what will happen to that person? His whole being will cease to exist. So is the case in a family, in society, and in a nation. This is a cosmic law. The natural law is that we are working for something higher than ourselves. The hands and feet are working for the mouth, the mouth is working for the liver, the liver is working for the other parts, and all the other parts are working for the whole being.

Karma yoga is the path of the person who is active in the world, the person with a family, with a job. He had to know how to communicate and how to relate well with others. In the external world, every action is related to somebody. Life in the external world means relationship. So first one has to learn to deal with this part of life that is called relationship; one has to learn how to relate with others. It is a great art. No psychology has yet perfected it because every human being is different, his thinking is different, his motivations are different. One has to interact, but some people develop a tendency of withdrawing. They become observers and constantly watch and evaluate what others are doing. They can become very good referees and judges in this way, but when we watch such people's own actions, we will find that their actions are worse that those of others. They neither observe themselves nor interact and get the reactions of others, so they cannot improve. Other people act, but without observing themselves. They also lose the effect of observation.

If he wants to relate to others properly, one should first understand the word karma. What does karma mean? In this context, it means more than just any action that someone performs. It means that action which does not create obstacles for others. Here karma is applied toward one's duties, one's own creations. Life is a relationship, and, in a relationship, purposeful communication is one's duty. So one should learn to observe and listen to others and to observe and express oneself. Thus, one pleasantly performs his duty to communicate with others and to function better in the world.
The Things of the World Belong to No One

But there is another problem that one does not know how to deal with even if he has learned to do his duty lovingly. Every action brings a reaction, and one reaps the fruits of his actions. How can he get rid of those fruits and attain freedom from this endless cycle? What is that formula that one can practice in daily life? The great people of the world have tried to understand this law of karma, and there is one formula that they found, not through books, not through imagination, not through mere thinking, but through their own direct experience. That great idea is, “O man, all the things of the world are meant for you to use, but they are not yours. You can use them, but you have no right to claim proprietorship over them.” This way all the objects of the world that obstruct human beings in attaining their goal become means. We do not train our children to understand this formula, and we were not trained in that direction either. That education is not imparted in childhood, so we develop a bad habit from the very beginning. We tell our children, “This is yours, this is yours.” We don’t teach them, “This is meant for you to use; enjoy it.” So the children become victims of that false pride and think, “All things are mine” - but they are not. The things of the world belong to no one; everything here is constantly changing. Getting attached to the things of the world is very foolish. We should learn to understand this formula: “All the things of the world are meant for us. We should enjoy them and use them as means, but we cannot own them; we should not own them; they are not ours.” This is very important. If one lives by this philosophy, one will be free. But, for this freedom, one needs to have inner strength. Constant awareness of the continuously changing patterns of the external world helps one to establish an attitude of non-attachment toward the temporal, and remembering the centre of Consciousness that is eternal gives enormous strength in life. In the path of karma yoga, it is important to have this dual role to live happily and to go through this procession of life without any disturbance. Strength within always comes from constant awareness of the centre of love or consciousness. The seeds of education should be sown in the hearts and minds of humans in early childhood; a tender bamboo shoot can be bent easily, but a mature plant cannot. It becomes very difficult – and in many cases, impossible – for one to change his thinking process in old age. That is why old age is considered to be full of follies.

The upbringing of a child seems to be the basic educational ground, for childhood habits are deep-rooted. Unfortunately, in modern times physicians, psychologists, and educators provide excuses to parents to be egotistical and to isolate the child. So the child is left alone, and he does not receive the care he should. If we don't impart right knowledge to the child, how can we expect the child to do better in life than the poor parents did? When a child does not see his parent being selfless, how can he become selfless? Later on, he comes to yoga seminars, and we teach him, “Be selfless, be selfless,” but all his samskaras and training are full of, “Be selfish, be selfish.” How can he understand our teaching? The child is father to the man, and so the same basic problem that is created in the child will occur in society. We must learn how to be selfless in our actions and then teach that to our children if our society is to be changed. Parents should learn to sacrifice a few of their joys for their children; then we would have a better society. But social data shows that the most ignored class of our society is our children. Children are neglected – and yet every parent wants his children to be prosperous and grow as better human beings.

The Wise Surrender the Fruits

Doing all of one’s actions for others – that is the way to liberation. The great people of the world have tried to go with the law of karma by doing their actions skilfully, selflessly, and lovingly, and by surrendering the fruits of their actions to others so that the fruits would not create bondage for them. But ordinary people do not do that. They get attached to the fruits and create a whirlpool for themselves.

The whirlpool of karma, which is created by our own ignorance, wants to annihilate our inborn desire for freedom, and many in this world are swept away by the glittering of nature of the objects of the world. The Upanishads say, “Tene tyaktena bhunjitha” - “Therefore enjoy the objects of the world with renunciation.” That is the difference between the ordinary person and the great person. Great is he who does deeds selflessly for others. Petty are ignorant is he who does deeds for himself and gets attached and creates a whirlpool of misery for himself. When one applies the formula: “All the things of the world are for me, and I should learn to enjoy them and to use them, but they do not belong to me,” then doing one's duty will not become an obstacle in the path of liberation. In such a case, the objects of the world do not create obstacles; they become means.

Here one has to understand the difference between what is pleasant and what is good. Today, someone sees some very pleasant things and runs toward it, but tomorrow he finds that it is not pleasant anymore. What is pleasant now can be harmful the next moment. All the mistakes in the world are
committed by people because of this: people know that something is pleasant but not good, and yet they do it. Nobody is ignorant. There are very few sins committed in innocence and ignorance. Crimes are committed knowingly because one is under the drip of the charms and temptations of the world, and so forms the habit. When the habit becomes deep-rooted, one becomes helpless, and performs harmful actions even though he knows that they are not proper. If one makes experiments, he'll find that good is different from pleasant. If he analyses further he will find something more precious: the good alone is truly pleasant, because it leads one toward the desired goal. It is very difficult to come to that understanding. That is an advanced lesson. To realize it, one needs practice.

Practice means making constant sincere efforts. When a child is learning to walk, sometimes it stands, and sometimes it stumbles and falls. Many times the child falls, but that does not mean that the child should give up. In spiritual practice, people feel they are making progress one day, and the next day they feel they are going backward. But practice itself gives hope and strength. So one should practice understanding what is pleasant and what is good without focusing on his past mistakes.

**Realizing Inner Strength and Perfection**

It does not help to involve sin and God in all this. “Oh, I have committed mistakes; I am a sinner. There is no way for me; God alone can deliver me. God should do it.” It is the result of one's own actions that he must reap, and only one's own actions in the present can free him. So one should be strong from within. Inner strength is the most helpful. External strength inspires one, but inner strength is the key point.

One can get rid of the bondage that he has been creating; he can get freedom from that whirlpool by skilfully, selflessly, and lovingly doing his actions and then surrendering the fruits of those actions to others. One does not have to abandon his actions and duties; he has to surrender the fruits of his actions. Every human being wants to improve, to unfold; he wants to attain freedom, to be eternally happy. This is every individual's desire, and to attain it, one must learn to do his actions skilfully. Next, one has to be selfless. If one is not selfless, he cannot go further. If one is selfish, then he says, “Everything is for me.” If one is swimming in the ocean, and he tries to swim by drawing the water toward him, he will see the effect of such an attitude – he will discover that this is not the way to swim; this is the way to drown. It is not the way of going to the other shore. All the selfish people in the world are continually drowning themselves and creating miseries for others because they do not know any better. But if they are taught properly, if they are made aware that selfishness is not healthy but injurious, then they will understand and learn how to cross the ocean of delusion.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that we are perfect like our Father but that we need growth. All people have the potential for perfection, but because of inertia, irresponsibility, selfishness, and lack of training, they remain incomplete. The Bhagavad Gita also repeats, “Aksaram brahma paraman... - the highest imperishable principle is Brahman. Its existence as the embodied soul is called Adhyatma.” If a human being does not understand that centre within which is limitless, then he is caught with thinking that he is limited; he is in bondage, he is suffering. But when he examines all the levels of life, he will come to understand that limitation is self-imposed by his own thinking and that misery and pain can be transcended. One thing is very important in helping to realize one's perfection: to be non-attached. One should do his best in a skilful and selfless way, and he should not claim ownership over the fruits of his actions or the objects of the world. This is a very simple formula to be practised.

Marriage should also be based on these principles. When people expect too much from marriage, then they are bound to become disappointed. One enters into a marriage relationship because he feels insecure, and he thinks he will be safe. But insecurity comes out of fear and ignorance, and it continues; marriage does not solve this problem. People remain insecure, fearing that their husband or wife will stop loving them or that they might desert them. Older people become insecure because they know that one day their spouse will die, and nobody will be their companion or take care of them. One should be bold enough to be prepared for all the eventualities of life. Two people create a relationship, but through it they find pain and misery for themselves by being insecure and attached – and then they pray to God for peace and happiness. How is God going to help them when they are constantly creating problems for themselves? Such a prayer is not fruitful at all. Suppose one prays, “O Lord, I don't want to chew my food. Will you please help me to digest it?” It's never going to happen. One should learn to understand where prayer should be applied and where not. Each person has a level of awareness on which he understands his responsibility, where he knows that he is competent to find out, to seek for himself and to attain. One should learn the right way to seek that wisdom that gives freedom from pain, misery, and ignorance.

People think that marriage is a solution to all of life's questions, but that is not true. Marriage
provides a companionship in which two people understand each other; it is a partnership in which they help each other to try to attain the ultimate goal. Many people also think that if a person loves somebody, he should be able to fight with the one he loves. Wives often say that fighting is very healthy and that it is actually a part of modern therapy. What a bankruptcy of the modern mind and culture, that fighting is a therapy! One should be proud of one's spouse, one should be proud of one's children, and one should have self-pride. One should learn to appreciate one's family and to appreciate oneself. But there is no couple who have not thought at times that they have been caught by marriage. Socially and personally, they have been paying attention and doing all their duties nicely, but all the time they feel they are caught. How does one get rid of such a feeling? One feels like a slave because he does not know the proper way to do his duties. It's a matter of attitude. If one learns to do his duty lovingly, it will not be a burden, it will not create a problem for him.

**Love Means Giving**

Before one learns to love someone, one should learn to understand and accept that person as he or she is. This acceptance does not mean forgiving the other for his or her mistakes. Unconditional acceptance is the main prerequisite and primary step for learning to love someone. Many people say that love dies. I do not believe that love ever dies; if something dies or changes, it was never love. Actually, learning to love is real learning, and all other branches of learning are meant to support this. When we say love is divine, this is a phrase we use without understanding it. Love is an understanding that continues to learn and move upward, and finally reaches the ultimate heights, the love of Love. Karma is an expression of that love which we learn through understanding all our duties. If all our duties are performed with love, this will create heaven on earth. Heaven is another idea created by selfish people, and hell is an idea created by weak people. These two ideas were used for exploitation by certain clever people. What chaos! When a human being learns to love his duty, faithfully and sincerely as much as he understands, he is in love and such a love leads him to happiness. Love and duty are a creation of the human mind and heart. All other things of the world are created by Providence and manifested by the ultimate Reality. No human being can create anything; a person can only join one thing to another. He can unite two things together, and this unity is his urge to love. So love and karma, if properly learned and performed, can establish a living heaven on earth.

One's actions can be the expression of his love. What is that love with which one should perform his duties? Love means giving. Giving is the highest of all actions in the world, and giving alone can bestow freedom. If one does not learn to give, he can never attain freedom. Even if one is doing the best of actions, the greatest and most wonderful karmas, if he is reaping the fruits for his own self, then those fruits are motivating him, and his attachment will create more and more bondage for him. That is not freedom. We cannot stop doing karma, but we can stop being in the bondage of karma because it is not karma that binds us, but the fruits received therefrom. So if we offer the fruits of our actions to others, we will be free from the bondage created by our karma. If all human beings would keep only as much as they need – not as much as they want – our whole society would be happy.

A rich person learns to give to others not because he wants to give, but because he finds that giving is a necessity of life. If someone has everything, he does not know what to do with his wealth; it becomes a great burden. Everyone wants to become rich – but any rich person will say, “You don't know what a burden I have.” The burden is not in having money; it is in having a sense of ownership. So a rich person learns to give because he wants to get rid of that burden. People do charity for three reasons: some for name and fame, others thing that it is a good deed and that they will receive in abundance in the next life, and a few give selflessly. The third act seems to be more rational and philosophical. When one gets attached to his possessions, then nature one day whispers the secret of giving just to release him from his false and egotistical possessiveness. To be released from this bondage is one of the virtues we should learn in our daily life. The best of charity relieves us from the bondage of attachment we have created for our wealth, home, and other possessions. The renunciates renounce them and go away. If they still remember them and feel attachment to the possessions, their renunciation becomes fake. Such a renunciation creates agony in the human mind. But one can live in the world doing his duty and offering the fruits of his actions for others. The path of renunciation and the path of selfless action each rewards in the same way. The renunciate it not superior to the person who lives in the world and serves others selflessly. After analysing the fleeting nature of the objects of the world and the way self-created misery is imposed on oneself, the wise man learns to do his actions and give away the fruits to others. This is a constant prayer and a real worship, according to the path of karma yoga.
The Cycle of Reincarnation

Every person has come to this plane to attain perfection and be free from the burden of confusion that he has created for himself in the past. But because of deep-rooted habits, he creates problems for himself instead. Has he come to create even more problems for himself? No. Then why is he doing it? The answer is that he has bad habits. People become victims of their habits, and yet they are the creators of those habits. They create their own circumstances. The circumstances do not create the people, and yet the people blame their circumstances, their relationships, their associates. This happens because they are in deep ignorance. They do not understand that their unhappiness is not created by others but by their own actions and thinking.

It is a serious mistake to think that individuals live only once. It is also a mistake to say that God, the Almighty or the Creator of this universe, has created the individuals as they are. The law of equality, love, and justice cannot possibly be unjust and cruel to one and make others happy. Actually, the individual soul is incarnated many times, according to one's own karma. But the philosophy of reincarnation is a strange concept to Western religions and traditions, and is seldom discussed. Nonetheless several Western philosophers – among them, Plato, Schopenhauer, and Hegel – have believed in reincarnation. Plato believed that knowledge was built up in this life on the foundation of learning and experiences gained in previous lives. The philosophy of karma leads to the conclusion that nothing happens by accident. The philosophy of karma does not, however, believe in fatalistic ideas. Whatever happens is the result of previous choices, actions, and samskaras. What happens to us now is the fulfilment of what we have done in the past, and what is to be in the future will likewise be the result of present actions.

In the eternal cycle of human evolution, one gets status and power to choose, determine, and decide what he want to do. The advantage of reincarnation is to provide a human being with enough opportunities so that he can fulfill the purpose of life. Is it possible for one to attain perfection in one lifetime? Why have human beings been created, and who created them? Is the Creator just, having created such a miserable world? When such questions arise in his mind, the religionist cannot furnish logical answers. But the philosophy of karma explains that it is one's karma, one's actions, one's deeds that are responsible for his present condition. A human being has free will to create his own destiny; he can attain the purpose of his life and overcome the bondage created by his past karmas. The moment one comes to this realization, he starts practising, and changes his habits. A selfish person can learn to give if he knows that giving, serving, and offering the fruits of his actions will bring liberation to him.

Unity in Diversity

At first people give, not because they love others, but because giving gives them freedom. This is the first step of love, when one becomes aware that is not healthy for him to hold, but that he should give. Why does anyone want to do something for others? Where does this motivation come from? When someone sits down at the dinner table, no matter how great a friend he has sitting beside him, he won't put his food into his friend's mouth. Automatically, his hand goes to his own mouth. So were does this loving tendency in human beings come from? That love comes when one has become aware of the unity in diversity and realizes that we are all essentially one.

When does one test his love for others, when does he examine it? Suppose a house is in flames and there is a child inside. The family and neighbours are cowards and do nothing, but suddenly a stranger comes and jumps in that flaming house to rescue the child. He has no association with the child, but he identifies with the child's life. He protects that child because he feels no boundary between his essence and the child's essence. Most people think that if someone loves his spouse and children, that at the same time he must exclude others who are not close to him. But this is not right; this is not called love. True love is universal; it is not limited to a select few but is extended to all.

Three Universal Qualities

If people would learn to understand and to practice three principles, they could learn how to love others. Everyone can learn how to love others; love is a very practical, down-to-earth philosophy that anyone can practice. For learning how to love in one's family life and in the world, the first principle one should understand is not to snatch anyone else's rights. Everyone has his own rights. So, first of all, one should not rob the rights of the people with whom he lives. Next, one should learn to give up his own rights for others. The best way to live in a society, in a community, in a family is this: give up your own rights for others and don't deprive others of their rights. With this principle, anyone can learn to love. The third principle is
honesty and sincerity in one's relationships. How can someone really love another person and at the same
time cheat that person, be dishonest, or be insincere with the person whom he says he loves? It's not possible.
To love and to be dishonest are two different expressions.

If any individual really wants to be free, he will have to improve himself in three dimensions: giving
freely, loving freely, and being selfless. One can very easily live happily in life provided he understands
these three things: learn to give, learn to learn, learn to be selfless. These are universal qualities, and by
learning these, an individual can unfold himself so that he becomes universal. That is called progress. One
can watch his progress by observing to what extent he has developed these qualities. If one does not find
these qualities in himself, if one is being petty, if he is not expanding his consciousness, then he is not
progressing.

People are born, and they are sure to die. One doesn't know how long he will stay on this platform.
He has come as a guest on a voyage, on a training program, but here he establishes his ownership. He makes
many, many arrangements; he tries his best to soothe his senses, to stimulate his mind, and to be comfortable.
But the ageing process troubles him and death opposes him, and then he cries. Finally nature gives him a
harsh shock and says, “You are no longer fit for my theatre. Get out of this park!” A time comes when
everyone wonders what will happen to him when he dies. Almost everyone is afraid to leave this platform,
and yet nobody is satisfied in this world, no one is happy. People continue to fight to remain here, when they
know that no one has ever attained happiness here. People do not want to leave this platform because they
have developed many, many attachments, and they have not developed self-awareness or awareness for the
truth. They know that the body is subject to change, death, and decay, but they ignore this fact, and everyone
fights against leaving this platform. Even medical science today helps people in fighting during that time
when actually one needs peace of mind. Religious ministers and priests often describe how great and
glorious the next world is – but they don't find delight in dying, with anticipation of enjoying the next world's
pleasures.

Those who are not liberated here cannot be liberated in the next world; that they can be is just a
myth. I am not liberated in this room, but I think that by going to another room I will be liberated. Who is
going to liberate me there? I am in bondage now, because I have put myself into this situation. I created this
bondage for myself, but I expect God to release me from that bondage in the next room. God is not
responsible for my bondage, and so he is not responsible for my release either. Each person creates his own
bondage, and he has to release himself. People have to learn to be happy here. But instead they create many,
many desires for themselves, and when they cannot fulfil those desires, they get frustrated. What an
impossible way to create happiness for oneself! One should look within and try to examine the deeper levels
of his being, where all his desires and motivations reside.

Training Oneself to be Happy in Mind, Action, and Speech

Freedom is possible if one learns to discipline himself on three levels: mind, action, speech. First,
one should train the mind in a positive way and not be negative. People waste so much time in negative
thoughts, expressions, actions, and talk. That is not at all productive. One should learn to develop a sense of
humour. If one doesn't have that, then he is really missing something. One can have all the amenities of life
and very refined tastes and aesthetic sense, but if he has not developed a sense of humour within himself, he
is depriving himself. Such a man remains lonely. Even during trying circumstance, humour can be
maintained. Humour is a great friend indeed.

There is a story about the humour of Socrates, who is considered to be the father of Western
philosophy. One day he was philosophizing and his wife wanted to talk to him. She was a very nagging
woman, and I don't blame her, because she was married to a philosopher who wouldn't cater to her whims.
She wanted attention, and Socrates was busy philosophizing, so she brought a bucketful of water and poured
it over him. Socrates just looked at his students and said, “I always heard that thundering clouds do not rain,
but that's not true!” He did not lose his temper; he did not react to the negative side of his wife. That's how
they could live together. But what happens with most people? If someone becomes emotional, the other
person completely loses his cheerfulness and becomes even more emotional. This is one of the problems that
creates bad relationships in the world. People react negatively to the negativity of others, and it never stops.
Modern man does not know how to smile. He has to slap his cheeks and then smile, and then force a laugh
because real laughter does not come from within him. Negative thinking destroys humour; but positive
thinking cultivates positive reactions and creates humour and joy. One should learn to be positive all the
time.

What is the sign of positivity? Action. A thought loses its value unless it is allowed to be expressed
through action or speech. All action is initially a thought. Before one allows a thought to come into action, one should examine it. One should ask himself, “Am I doing right? Is it beneficial for others?” The highest thought is that which is completely beneficial for others, where one is not personally involved. Positivity means that a positive thought wants to materialize itself into action, and one decides, “I will do it; I can do it; I am going to do it.” When one gradually builds this determination and acts accordingly, then he gets the strength of self-determination. If one is positive in self-determination, then one has attained a great deal.

The gist of all the bibles in the world is to have right thought, right action, and right speech – to have control of mind, action, and speech. Fundamentally, the spiritual truths behind all the religions of the world are one and the same. There is no basic difference, although they vary according to the times, the culture, the location, and the climate. Custom, ritual, and system change according to the environment of a country, and in all religions these become dominant, so that the ultimate truth is obscured. One has certain duties toward his family, his society, his country, and, finally, to the whole of humanity. At the same time, one has a duty of enlightening oneself. Everyone should learn to adjust, fulfilling all of these duties by living in the world and remaining above.

One should understand not to disturb others and not to disturb oneself. If one is disturbed and says, “So what if I am depressed; so what if I am sick? I am not disturbing anyone. Why are people worried?” then he is wrong. When one is disturbed, he gives “bad vibes” to others. If a jar of cold water is placed next to a jar of hot water, the cold water will start getting warm. That's called the law of association, and we all are affected by that law. If I find someone in great agony, I will feel sad. People don't cry only because they are in pain; often they cry because others are crying. The law of association and identification affects people and makes them forget their essential nature. But one can learn to remain unaffected by the negativity of others. One should learn the art of living so his equilibrium remains undisturbed and, thus, he can remain unaffected by adverse circumstances. Then, by doing those positive actions that are helpful to oneself and not harmful for others, one will have self-confidence and inner strength, and one needs inner strength to enlighten himself and remain happy in the world. Almost all actions are enveloped by the appetites of food, sex, sleep, and self-preservation, but any action that is free from these is a selfless action, and that is very helpful. One should learn to use the law of action to perform those actions that are not unhealthy for oneself and for others.

The duties that one performs in daily life are very important, for without doing one's duty, one cannot survive. But even when one does this duty with his full ability, he will find that the duty has made him a slave unless he does it with non-attachment. The path of karma claims to be able to give freedom, and it says that one can attain that liberation here, whether one believes in God or not. People are doing their actions because they cannot live without doing actions. One has to do something, and when one does something, he reaps something, and that something motivates him to do something more. That's how one creates the whirlpool. But there is an escape from that chain, there is a proper way of doing things. If one goes on doing his duties but gives the fruits of his actions to others willingly, then he is free. That which binds one is the fruit of his actions, but one who does his karma for the sake of others becomes a great one – like the sun, for example. Has everyone ever seen the sun shouting, “O creatures, I am giving you light and life! Will you adore me and praise me?” The sun has never done that. The greatest of all examples is the sun – it shines selflessly for all. There is no darkness under the sun. Yet the sun remains above and far away. One has to learn to live in the world exactly like the sun, who shines for all and shines for himself and yet remains above. That is called living in the world yet remaining above.

In the path of karma, one should aspire to live for at least a hundred years, but only to perform his actions, his duties. One who aspires to live for a long time just to enjoy pleasures without doing his duties creates the bondage of attachment. Even the wise often get confused and cannot decide what is right and what is not. But if someone practices by performing his duties selflessly, skilfully, and lovingly, and he commits a mistake, he soon rectifies his mistake by the quest of truth. In the philosophy of karma yoga, actions are not renounced, but the fruits of the actions are renounced for the sake of others. Therefore, one should go on doing his duties for the sake of others until the last breath of his life.

Karma without love is bondage. Karma with love is freedom. Liberation from the bondage of karma is attained the way it has been explained in the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita: “O Arjuna, renounce all thy duties and take refuge in me alone. I will liberate you from all the sins.” When one learns to do his duties for his family members and then learns to do his duty for his neighbours, then for his nation, and in the end, for humanity, he no longer creates bondage for himself.
The Case Against Animal Slaughter

From the standpoints of health, economics and ethics, animal slaughter and meat-eating are detrimental to human society.

HEALTH

Although meat is certainly a source of concentrated protein it is a very poor source of other food elements like minerals, vitamins and carbohydrates. In addition, eating flesh from the cow or any other animal is detrimental to the health of human beings for many reasons. For example, if a human, who has a much longer colon than the carnivorous animals, eats flesh, the following problems will ensue:

1. Intestinal bacteria in the long bowel will change from fermentative to putrefactive, thus causing poisons to be absorbed into the bloodstream. These poisons need to be eliminated, so energy is diverted from other essential bodily functions, including thinking.
2. The natural synthesis of vitamin B$_{12}$ will be inhibited, possibly leading to anemia.
3. Animal toxins will tend to disrupt the proper metabolism of carbohydrates. This can cause diabetes.
4. Nonnutritive substances resulting from the digestion of animal flesh tend to be carcinogenic (cancer-inducing) irritants.

The minimum daily requirement of protein, which nutritional experts calculate to be between seventy and ninety grams, is easily achieved with dairy products and foods from the vegetable kingdom. Protein is found in ample quantity in milk, cheese, yoghurt, whole wheat, corn, many varieties of nuts and beans, and some vegetables. Thus vegetables, fruits, grains and dairy products provide a perfectly balanced diet. Consuming animal flesh, on the other hand, results in excess protein, which produces liver ailments, high blood pressure, and hardening of the arteries.

In addition, dead animal flesh contains many toxic elements, such as:

1. Wastes from the dead animal's bloodstream, germs, and drugs injected to offset animal disease.
2. Fear poisons released into the bloodstream at the time of slaughter.
3. Bacteria from putrefactive decomposition, which commences as soon as the animal dies. Because flesh is an excellent insulator, not all of these bacteria are killed by cooking.

Due to forced feeding, penning, and other unnatural practices, animals raised for slaughter suffer from dozens of diseases, such as foot-and-mouth disease, fevers, catarrhal conditions, cancer, tuberculosis, and mastitis. In addition, poultry are often impregnated with oestrogens, which can cause cancer. Many studies in cancer research reveal that areas in which meat-eating is highest tend to have the highest cancer rate, while vegetarian areas generally have a far lower rate.

Immediately after an animal is slaughtered, rigor mortis sets in, and then the process of decay takes over. Thus meat-eating always involves consumption of decayed flesh together with its incumbent dangers to health.

ECONOMICS

The implementation of cow protection at the international level would be a massive step forward in solving the world food crisis. Some economic advantages of cow protection are as follows:

1. Flesh foods are more than fifty percent water and therefore extremely costly to buy as a source of protein.
2. Land that will produce one ton of beef will produce ten to twenty tons of highly nutritive vegetable food.
3. For every hundred pounds of dry substances eaten by cattle, only four to sixteen pounds comes back as flesh foods.
SOME ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Slaughtering animals causes extreme suffering. Animals are sentient creatures with feelings like humans. Cows especially can sense that they are going to be slaughtered, and they live in constant fear.

2. We have no right to artificially end the life of any creature, especially that of a cow, who nurses her own offspring and the whole human society with her milk.

3. Killing animals breeds insensitivity toward all beings, sadism and general irreverence. Pythagoras taught, “Those who kill animals for food will be more prone than vegetarians to torture and kill their fellow men.”

The strict law of karma deals measure for measure with anyone who violates the laws of nature. As long as the people of the world continue to murder and eat their two most benign friends, the cow and bull, they will perpetually suffer the sinful reactions of criminal violence and catastrophic wars.

References:

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