

Prerana Piyush  
(The Nectar of Inspiration)

*By Swami Kripalu*

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*Prerana Piyush* is a compilation of some incomplete writings of Swami Kripalu, written in the period of 1980-81 at the Kripalu ashram in Sumneytown, Pennsylvania. This edition follows the original form of the translated manuscripts, with typos corrected, a few minor edits, and the original, unfinished sectioning of the material left as found.

# 1. Discipline

The key to self-growth is the Grace of God.

Such a grace becomes accessible only to one who has become predisposed to faithful observance of disciplines.

Indeed, such faithful observance must become second nature to a yogi.

In fact, the discipline itself is like a yogi, and a yogi is synonymous with his disciplines. There is no essential difference between the two.

Lack of discipline is in the nature of a *bhogi* (a pleasure-addicted person). Indeed, it is synonymous with a *bhogi* and vice versa.

The spiritual journey which takes one from the base of an undisciplined life to the highest peak of disciplined life is variously called the journey of yoga (*yoga-yatra*), the journey of the conscience (*antar-yatra*), the journey of the soul (*atma-yatra*), the journey of divinity (*deva-yatra*), or the journey of the eternal truth (*brahma-yatra*).

This is not a straightforward journey, but a very intricate and uneven one.

It is virtually an uphill journey all the way.

(In this journey), it takes a long while to establish one's foothold after taking every step. One is never certain at which moment he will lose his footing and slide into a deep ravine, losing his very life.

Discipline turns an absolute coward into a brave and courageous person, just as lack of discipline makes a courageous person into an absolute coward.

Before embracing a particular discipline, it behooves one to ponder carefully its propriety.

A resolve which is not founded in adequate reflection or which arises from faulty reflection can never be practiced consistently for long.

At the onset, it behooves one not to undertake a difficult resolve, but to start with an easily practiced resolve.

Once a resolve has been adopted, however, it should not be forsaken or given up.

At the beginning, it is all right to make a few exceptions now and then. But, gradually, one must decrease the need for exceptions. Ultimately, one must eliminate all avoidable exceptions, keeping only unavoidable ones.

Scrupulous observation of one's resolve reinforces self-confidence and self-reliance. Likewise, frequent lapses from one's resolves debilitate one's self-reliance.

Circumstances also play a very significant part in one's ability to adhere to his chosen disciplines.

In conducive circumstances, obstacles arise but infrequently, and when they do arise, they can also be withstood successfully.

In adverse circumstances, on the other hand, obstacles occur in quick succession and can be overcome only with great difficulty. Success can be ascertained only with a firmly rooted self-determination.

It is an art to make the available circumstances conducive to one's goal. One can become accomplished in this art only with an unwavering devotion.

One who cannot adapt his normal circumstances to make them instrumental for the attainment of his ideal will invariably find his sadhana hampered by obstacles and irregularities.

The spiritual aspirant must forever remain vigilant. No sooner does he slacken off in his vigilance than a blemish creeps into his daily discipline. Eternal vigilance is the price of unblemished sadhana.

It is much more desirable to refrain from committing lapses. However, if for some reason a mistake does occur, then one must assiduously train his mind never to repeat the same mistake again.

It behooves a spiritual aspirant to consciously cultivate reticence of speech lest his mind become diffuse, which in turn could dilute the vigor of his spiritual disciplines.

Regular discipline is, indeed, the expression of implicit faith, and such faith is the sign of God's Grace.

## 2. A Well-Wisher

There are two kinds of well-wishers: those who guide and those who help. Ordinarily, a guide would be more qualified than a helper, but he does not have a strong affinity to the person being guided. His well-intentioned guidance, born out of a rational mind, though quite visible, is as good as blind and, though full of substance, is as good as lame.

In contrast, the good intentions of the helper, coming as they are from a deep affection and trust, are very powerful, even though blind.

Indeed, it is impossible to be a true well-wisher without a good measure of affection.

Anyone can become a well-wisher – whether a child, a young or old person, man or woman. Both the well-wisher and his beneficiary must feel intense empathy and affection for each other. The body and heart of such a well-wisher, albeit separate from those of his beneficiary, are like carefully protected treasures (for the latter). In the hour of adversity, he does not have to be cajoled into helping. With a palpitating heart, he comes running like a fire engine responding to a fire alarm, willing to put his very life on the line in order to alleviate the immediate danger.

### 3. Lamentation

There are two shorelines: the one in the foreground and the one in the background.

The former is the shore of birth, and the latter is the shore of death.

The boundary of the first shore extends up through the first fifty years of life; that of the latter shore, from fifty-one and beyond up to one hundred years.

A newborn baby coming into this world, opening his eyes for the first time and taking his first breath, cries out in lament. Thus does his life begin on a note of lamentation.

And what about his moment of death?

For the very last time does he close his eyes, for the very last time does he take in his breath, and for the very last time does he cry out in lament. Thus his life draws its curtain also on a note of lament.

## 4. Real versus Imaginary Pain and Pleasure

Just as a person (by virtue of his human existence) cannot insulate himself from misery, so also is he equally deserving of happiness.

Miseries come in infinite variety. But they can all be boiled down into two categories: those which are genuine and those which are merely imagined.

In comparison to self-imagined miseries, authentic, tangible miseries are far less frequent. The converse of this is also equally true.

Similarly, life's pleasures also materialize in myriad ways. They can also be categorized as those which are palpable and those which are phantom.

Again, genuine moments of joy are much more rare in life than imagined, illusory ones, and vice versa.

In large measure, real, tangible joys and sorrows have a manifest connection with the external world, while imaginary or fantasized joys and sorrows are the product of our internalized world.

Often, when a particularly pleasurable or painful experience from the past is the cause of present sensation of joy or misery, one deludes oneself into believing it is real. However, it is nothing more than a mere fabrication of mind. Such emotion-laden memories are very much like a swollen or infected wound.



By the same token, even an especially intense fantasy from the past can have the same deluding effect to make one believe in its reality, which is only a phantom reality.

## 5. Surrender

A state of surrender does not burst forth suddenly, out of the blue. It has a preceding state known as helplessness or despondency. Only after the latter has become overwhelming does the state of surrender slowly awaken.

Imagine for a moment a person on the verge of drowning in the midst of a vast ocean. No rescuing ship is within sight, nor does the shore appear all the way to the horizon. There is not even a soul within earshot who can possibly respond to his desperate wails of woe. In such a grim circumstance, the only recourse is for him to continue swimming.

However, there is a physical limit beyond which his arms and legs will refuse to move even an inch further. Then what?

Then comes, in one fell swoop, a sense of utter helplessness – a sense that no further effort is possible and that the shadow of death is looming larger and larger.

In the devotional path, also, true surrender is born only after an experience of disconsolate despondency. The devotee reaches such a hapless and bewildered frame of mind that he loses a sense of direction and purpose. In the context of his heartrending predicament, he feels impelled to ponder deeply the wisdom of the scriptures expounded by his sadguru. Out of such severe churning of his heart, he suddenly discovers the illuminating light of the still, small voice of his conscience. This is how God's Grace reaches him.

Now he unhesitatingly, even blissfully, gives himself up to a state of complete surrender. He ceases all physical and mental efforts against the natural flow of events and allows his life to remain afloat on spontaneously arising waves of circumstances.

But, even the full acceptance of surrender does not automatically signify the end of his tribulations. Surrender itself becomes a new phase of yoga which has to be sustained for years together to assure a gradual and steady progress in its purity.

A truly developed sense of surrender does not make him listless or lethargic. In fact, outwardly he remains quite busy with the usual set of daily activities. However, since inwardly he has dedicated their fruits to the will of God, his actions become spontaneous, selfless offerings to God and thereby do not chain him down to karmic laws.

Until one's surrender evolves into a state of purity and perfection, many flaws do creep in from time to time, manifesting as sensations of intense pain or excitement.

Likewise, the state of surrender is still incomplete and unaccomplished as long as one keeps slipping alternately into feelings of joy and sorrow. It is only when such feelings of duality are banished from one's mind – which thereby becomes anchored in a state of equanimity under every circumstance – that the state of surrender finally reaches its apex and attains its full glory.

## 6. One Meditates Merely on One's Attachments and Aversions

During one's meditation, various thoughts keep parading in the mind quite spontaneously, uninvited and unplanned for. Typically, one thought brings in its train another one which in turn leads to a third one. In their constant ebb and flow, these thoughts change their direction so swiftly, stealthily and unobtrusively that often the meditator is not even aware of it until he has been led wide off the course.

If some particular event had earlier left a deep impression on the mind, now, during meditation, many thoughts pertaining to this event begin to invade and take possession of the mind, thus precluding the entry of any fresh thought in the mental firmament.

If, perchance, any other thought has already gained a forcible entry, it is summarily driven out by the power of the old, compulsive thought. Thoughts of worry, fear, jealousy, and other negative emotions generate pain, while those of joy, love, success, et cetera, generate a lot of bliss.

In natural, unregulated meditation, it is only possible to meditate either on one's intense attachments or on one's deeply held aversions.

Only after a complete elimination of one's attachments and aversions is it possible for one to manifest the qualities of poise, indifference and even-mindedness. This leads to self-reflection and meditation of the highest quality. What follows after this is the beginning of a more profound phase of Samadhi, called *Nirbija Samadhi*.

## 7. Love is a Great Bondage

It is claimed by all the lovers of the world that love is a great emancipating force. Love has no need to follow any rules or to be loyal to anyone's dictates.

The motivation behind this observation is indeed a hundred percent valid.

Even so, there is also another aspect to it.

Love is not dependent on everybody around us. But it is dependent on one person or source. For this reason, while it does not accept servitude to everybody, it cannot avoid accepting servitude to its one source.

One can even say that it is impossible for love to find its culminating glory without a complete identification with its object of love.

Indeed, love longs for the experience of unity in the presence of duality. It spurns the unity which obliterates all signs of duality. Non-duality, unification, confluence, integration – all these words are as indicative of the existence of two separate entities as they are of the bondage between them.

There is no law in the world, nor can there be one, which specifies that duality is necessarily accompanied by bondage.

All the various types of bondages existing in the world can be broken loose rather effortlessly. For this reason, they can be regarded as ordinary forms of bondage. Love is the only bondage which can never be unshackled.

Hence, love may be regarded as a grand bondage.

## 8. Sadguru

- a. The word “sadguru” is very delicious. Its meaning is equally delicious.

Sadguru is the sun that dispels the darkness of ignorance. In the form of ignorance, however, very few disciples can even come close to savoring the celestial sweetness of this word.

There is only one sun in the firmament, as also only a single moon. Each of these is adequate by itself. In the same way, it is not necessary to have a thousand, or even a hundred sadgurus, or for a sadguru to have several hundred ideal disciples. It is quite enough to have but a single sadguru and but a single ideal disciple.

To come under the beneficent influence of a sadguru requires one to remain staunch in his disciplines for many thousands of years.

Attainment of sadguru’s grace is nothing less than attainment of God’s grace which, in turn, is the culmination of all one’s well-intentioned efforts.

Beyond this point, nothing more is left to be achieved through one’s sadhana, or spiritual practices.

- b. Wherever true knowledge exists, we can also find the existence of a sadguru. As a matter of fact, this whole world is also like a guru, albeit only an ordinary guru.

An ordinary guru is like a drop of knowledge, whereas a sadguru is like an ocean of knowledge.

Where even a drop of knowledge exists, one also unmistakably finds the presence of selfless love, surrender and service.

It is wrong to believe that love is without constraints, dependencies or rules.

Even though love precludes independence, its peculiarity is that it is also free from helplessness, as the lover considers every desire of his beloved as his own.

Those who believe love is an unrestrained, undisciplined force celebrating personal liberty and license are not active lovers; rather they are merely passive spectators. Their belief about the true nature of love is nothing but a delusion.

Those, on the other hand, who are truly immersed in love are not the least mindful of its consequent constraints, regulations, rigidities, and so forth. They are utterly absorbed in the role of being lovers.

c. Just as many rivers from various directions merge into the ocean, so also the various facets of love found in the world harmonize in the sadguru. Hence we find in him a reflection of the love experienced with our parents, our brothers and sisters, our friends, and even with God.

When a disciple reaches the stage where, at the mere sight of his sadguru, every cell of his body begins to dance with joy, many deliciously sweet melodies suffused with love spontaneously emanate from his heartstrings, and the usually closed gates to his very soul suddenly burst open, then he becomes a truly worthy disciple.

Until one develops an insatiable thirst for knowledge in the very core of his being, he is not ready to accord an esteemed place to the worship of guru in his life.

Devotion to guru implies complete self-effacement as well as self-surrender.

Indeed, self-surrender is the only proper medium through which to invite a sadguru into one's life.

d, Without the help of a sadguru, it is impossible for one to find the key to true knowledge. In the absence of his guidance, a person is compelled to drift hither and thither, thus squandering away precious time from his life.

Even in trivial but unfamiliar daily activities, one finds help and guidance from experienced people to be invaluable and even inevitable.

Whether a guru is ordinary or exceptionally perceptive, he always has a heart comparable to that of a loving mother for her child. Whereas a mother sustains and nurtures the body by feeding her child milk from her breasts, the guru nurtures the very life by letting his disciples drink from the fountain of his knowledge.

Whatever ordinary or stupendous knowledge one possesses, it is entirely due to the grace of a guru.

The journey of life, untouched by guru's grace, is very deceptive and elusive. Both the body and mind get extremely weary plodding through it. There seems to be no end to the string of smaller and larger miseries with which one must contend.

The gift of wealth obtained as charity from some magnanimous donor gets exhausted in due course. But the gift of knowledge and wisdom obtained from an enlightened person remains inexhaustible for many lifetimes.



- d. Every individual can be a guru as well as a disciple.

An experience in truth is what makes one worthy of sitting on the lofty pedestal of a guru, and experience in untruth or pseudo-truth is what deposes him from that pedestal.

Knowledge can only be given away gratis; it cannot be made into a commercial exchange or transaction. One who offers his knowledge in exchange for money or wealth can only be called a knowledge merchant, not a man of learning. Whatever knowledge he has gathered is not used for his own true benefit, because such knowledge is merely the creation of his intellect, not of his faith and devotion.

- e. A sadguru is a living example of wisdom as well as of compassionate love.

Love attains at the beginning of a spiritual journey, and wisdom attains at the end. The disciple who cannot spontaneously love and adore his sadguru as a father, as a guru, as a well-wisher, and as a venerable object of worship would find it impossible to feel or manifest the pure rapture of devotion.

What brings one close to the bliss of the lotus feet of his sadguru is the hunger for true devotion, the thirst for true knowledge, and the deep yearning for true Yoga, i.e., merging with the Supreme Consciousness.

## 9. The Subtle Meaning

The literal meaning and the subtle meaning both have their own significance. The literal meaning leads one to pragmatic knowledge, whereas the subtle meaning leads one to esoteric, eternal truths.

Scholars of science and philosophy look for the literal meaning because the scope of their search is intellectual acuity.

Yogic seers, on the other hand, go after the subtle meaning because the scope of their efforts is inculcation of right conduct. They have transcended the limits of mere intellectual truth.

Let us take the example of the word “Ananya,” which literally means “not other.”

Some of its ordinary meanings are “one who has taken refuge in a single source,” “not separate,” “one without a second,” “one-pointed,” and “undivided.”

All the above meanings contain partly the literal sense of the word and partly the subtle sense. Actually speaking, the two senses of the meaning here are completely harmonious. However, because of the necessity of making a distinction between the doer and the deed, sometimes there is a perception of difference between the two senses of the meaning.

The word “Ananyata” – meaning non-duality – reflects at once both the acceptance of duality and possibility of merging into unity. It brings to mind the peculiar predicament wherein one can neither deny duality, nor can he accept the existence of absolute or exclusive unity.

The real complexity is not in the meaning of words; rather it lies in our conjectures and suppositions steeped in ignorance. Whenever we are faced with two alternative possibilities of truth, we instinctively want to annihilate one of them entirely in order to establish the absolute validity of the remaining one.

Here we fail to comprehend one error. What is this error?

In truth, the characterization we are contemplating at the moment is not about the uniqueness of an exclusive fact, but rather about a harmonious blending of alternative states of truth. This misidentification is precisely where we have erred in our judgment.

Where there is *Samyoga* – a harmonious blending – there is bound to exist duality.

Water and minerals therein are distinct from each other; likewise, milk and its sweetness are also distinct from each other.

A harmonious blending implies manifest presence of the primary object, or characteristic and unmanifest presence of the secondary one.

When both the primary and the secondary objects become equally manifest, the only result is painful separation, or at least a certain lack of graciousness. A harmonious blending can result only from visible presence of one and complete effacement of the other. In such a merging, the one remains anchored at its natural place while the other moves in the direction of attaining unity with the “one.” Thus, a harmonious blending is characterized by purposeful motion.

In non-dual existence, there is no motion at all, as there is no scope for a merging.

## 10. The Meaning of Ananyata (Non-duality)

The scriptures proclaim that bhakti, or devotion, is nothing but the state of feeling complete oneness with God as one's beloved.

But here is where one can easily fall astray. When you have never experienced somebody's presence, how can you imagine him vividly? Even imagination, to be picturesque, requires prior experience.

The real meaning of *Ananyata*, then, is single-minded devotion.

How can one accustomed to diverse attractions suddenly cultivate single-minded devotion?

The meaning rendered by the scholars to the word Ananyata is only an ordinary meaning consistent with the rules of grammar. Even though it is a very interesting and beautiful meaning, it does not lead one onto the path of truth.

The scholars state Ananyata means unity, lack of distinction, continuity, a complete absence of the gulf between "I" and "you."

All these do not include the subtle meaning.

Where there is anticipation of continuity in the devotion, it is natural to find simultaneous existence of both "I" and "you." Where such a distinction between "I" and "you" is lacking altogether, how can the feeling of non-duality emerge?

No doubt the word Ananyata is singular, but it always underlies duality. The numerical word “one,” by its very nature, implies the existence of more than one. In any kind of enumeration, one must necessarily contend with a minimum of two objects in order to begin the count with “one.”

When sugar gets completely dissolved in milk, the observer can only witness the milk and not the sugar. However, when he begins to drink the milk, he can also experience the sweetness of the sugar dissolved in it.

Here the desired object for the eyes is milk, whereas the desired object for the tongue is sugar. The eyes are completely unaware of the existence of sugar, but the tongue is aware of the existence of both milk and sugar.

Thus, while both milk and sugar do exist, milk is in manifest form, while sugar is in quiescent form.

In rendering the meaning of the word Ananyata, the scholar is content merely with establishing the existence of milk because he has not experienced the sugar absorbed in it. The devotee, on the other hand, experiences both the milk and the sugar.

## 11. Disinterestedness

As a sadhak's love for God becomes more and more abundant, resulting from his steadfast spiritual practices, he begins to reaffirm and consolidate his one-pointed devotion. In this state, sensual attractions, which are digressive to his devotion, make but a dim impression on his mind.

These sensual indulgences, which held a special fascination for his mind prior to his sadhana on the Path of Devotion, now have no pull over his mind and may even seem abhorrent. Thus the very attractions, which earlier had such a compulsive hold on his mind, now become objects of aversion or repulsion. This is the result of a complete transformation in his outlook.

When one closely examines this state, he is at once convinced about the transformation that has taken place in his mind. But such an extreme transformation is also not desirable, because any kind of repulsion is a distortion and, consequently, a regression of the mind. Such a mental regression can only be a hindrance to his spiritual progress.

One can fail to see the truth of the above observation only due to inadequate examination of his mental processes.

Extreme attachment to sensual pleasures was the preceding mental state of the sadhak, and extreme abhorrence is the next stage to which he has now graduated. This latter state is superior.

It is true that the word "aversion" connotes a mental distortion. However, looking at it from another angle makes it clear that it is not, after all, a distortion.

This feeling of strong aversion has arisen in the mind of the devotee as a result of his spiritual practice; hence, it cannot possibly be a degenerative feeling. It can more properly be described as an “exceptional happening.” Indeed, this aversion is indicative of intensified devotion to God.

According to Yoga-shastra – the scripture on yoga – one’s feeling of “letting go” or renunciation is reinforced by regular study of yoga. This in turn makes the mind even more absorbed in spiritual practices.

A nagging disturbance in the mind of the sadhak is a preliminary stage for his blossoming renunciation. The many compulsive attachments to which his mind was heretofore subject have not disappeared. In his present state of awareness, he has become fully convinced that these sensual distractions are the real obstructions to his sadhana. For this reason, he has developed an intense dislike for them. This is the intermediate stage of evolution in his Yoga sadhana. It is called *nirodh*, or retrenchment of senses.

Nirodha is the spur to restraint. It is a form of yoga in that it is a counterforce to indulgence. There is no restraint found in indulgence – only in yoga. Indeed, restraint is a synonym for nirodha.

When the devotee is firmly established at the pinnacle of his devotion, the sense objects do not have the same power over his mind as they did in the past for generating cravings or aversions; this state of mind is called equanimity or disinterestedness.

A craving implies a strong attraction, an aversion implies a strong revulsion, and disinterestedness implies the absence of both.

In attraction, the mind becomes restless and is not composed. Revulsion is the other side of the same coin. Here, also, the mind becomes displaced and loses its composure.

When neither attachment nor aversion predominates mental perception, then, and only then, can the mind remain centered, anchored in the core of one's inner self. This state of mental serenity is what is called disinterestedness. It is a consequence of the ultimate Grace of God.



## 12. Nirodha (Self-restraint)

In the *Narada-Bhakti Sutras* (devotional aphorisms composed by Sage Narada), it is stated that true devotion is not tainted by desire, as it manifests the quality of nirodha, or self-restraint.

Many a commentator has interpreted the word “nirodha” to be synonymous with renouncing. As devotion is supposed to be freedom from desire, a devotee is automatically lumped together with a renunciate. In this line of thinking, one is entitled to be called a devotee only after he has renounced everything of mundane value and has centered all his affection on the Lord.

Craving is a characteristic of the indulgent, while renouncing, born of nirodha, is a characteristic of the devotee.

Some people claim that a true devotee never renounced anything with his conscious will. Renouncing happens spontaneously within him.

Of course, behind everyone’s conscious action, there is some kind of impelling sentiment or purpose. However, when this purpose is subtle, it is not expressed or perceived very clearly. The essential meaning of the original (bhakti) aphorism is as follows: Even though expressing devotion on a form and shape appears sensual, as a matter of fact it is not, because such devotion is not aimed at self-aggrandizement. It is inspired by selflessness, and selflessness is nirodha.

Outwardly, the form-inspired energy, being always absorbed in this or that activity, appears to be action oriented. However, from a closer examination, it becomes clear that, behind the external veneer of feverish activity, the essential sentiment is that of letting go, of renouncing. Such a feeling of inward resignation is nirodha.

Terms such as proclivity for indulgence, craving, desire, activity, action, busy-ness, lack of restraint or control, et cetera, are synonyms for the word “kama,” or sensual desire. On the other hand, terms such as propensity for yoga, preference for celibacy and absorption in Brahma, absence of desire, lack of action or activity, inclination for quiet repose, for self-restraint, or self-control and such are antonyms of the word kama.

Critics and scholars have held that the word kama implies accumulation. Hence, in their minds, the opposite of kama is “tyaga,” or an act of forsaking, although the sentiment behind this interpretation is the feeling that a state of surrender can blossom only from a desire to renounce or to let go. Renunciation is thus an act of nirodha.

The indulgent person is always preoccupied with his indulgence. He never entertains any thought or desire for restraint. What is more, he considers lack of self-control as only natural and, by a perverse logic, believes self-control to be unnatural. He completely fails to understand the necessity for nirodha. Hence, he has never let his imagination linger on the mental picture of nirodha in the form of a lotus. The devotee, on the other hand, has grown extremely weary of all his exertions hankering, as he did in his remote past, after pleasures. After many a thoughtful reflection, he has come to realize that sensual indulgences do not lead to inner happiness. With this realization, he never volitionally approaches an indulgence. If, perchance, an opportunity for indulgence sneaks by him, even then, due to his cultivated insight, he instinctively recoils from it – far from welcoming it with joy.

It is even possible to contend that the sprouting of devotion is impossible until a strong antipathy toward any form of sensual gratification has first taken hold. As the devotion gradually expands and intensifies, this antipathy becomes softer, less rigid.

True devotion prompts the sadhak to turn inwards.

As long as one's extrovert inclinations remain alive and vibrant, he cannot reap the full benefits of his budding introversion.

Extroversion given to indulgence denotes lack of restraint, whereas self-restraint, coupled with devotion, is synonymous with nirodha.

## 13. Impediments

The impediments faced on the path of sensual indulgence are quite different from those faced on the path of yoga.

The indulgent can recognize only the impediments to their craved indulgences. They cannot recognize at all the impediments of yoga. Hence they consider spiritual aspirants to be an extremely intolerant breed. But in fact, the truth is just the opposite.

For a sadhak, whatever causes a disturbance in the mind becomes an impediment to his sadhana, which thereby becomes unruly and chaotic.

Whenever he is confronted with a temptation which is potentially detrimental to his sadhana, he cannot avoid being mentally agitated.

Cultivating uncompromising disinterest toward all detrimental distractions is not accomplished in a single lifetime. It requires undiminished perseverance over several lifetimes.

“His mind has become established in one-pointed devotion.” Such a claim can be tested and vindicated only in the face of these mental distractions. But one must not forget that growth can only be gradual.

The seed that is sown today does not sprout into a tree the very next day. It does so only in the course of time, at its own pace, and by its own order.

A novice sadhak gets fretfully frightened upon coming face to face with a frivolous temptation. This feeling is due to a genuine fear, but, at the same time, it also arises from an awakening awareness.

With accumulating experience, he becomes fully convinced of his own weakness. For this reason he wishes to stay away from any temptation of the mind and is afraid to observe it firsthand.

There is an element of disinterestedness in this, albeit only in a seed form.

From one point of view, his fear is not fear, but more an anxiety for self-protection. This is the first step on the ladder of self-awakening. It is not to be despised, only to be welcomed.

When the aspirant learns to boldly challenge the power of his mental disturbance without any fear, he has advanced to an intermediate stage in his personal growth.

Ultimately, having fully assimilated the quality of disinterestedness, he has put his mind in such a state of tranquility that disturbing distractions exert no influence over him. This is, indeed, the culmination of disinterestedness.

## 14. The Path of Action

In following the Path of Action, the focus should be on progressively establishing restraint over dissipation of pranic energy by keeping the mind unattached. It is not uncommon that whenever the mind becomes perturbed by some acute sensation of grief or joy, the outburst of prana energy becomes wild and irrepressible. At such moments, it is most desirable for the spiritual aspirant to remain alert to wasteful dissipation of energy by judiciously controlling and channeling its flow. Normally it is very helpful to reflect upon particularly painful experiences of the past in order to curb an excess of pleasurable excitement, and vice versa. The sharper the focus in the choice of contrary experiences for reflection, the greater and swifter will be the success in restraining runaway exertions of the mind. One ought to be ever vigilant to ensure that mental energy remains channeled in ennobling endeavors only. Even a slight slackening of purpose would be sufficient for unrestrained pranic energy to establish its dominance and, with its reinforced momentum, to lead the mind astray.

It is very important to engage constantly in efforts which promote balance and harmony of the mind because dispassionate mind and a balanced prana energy have mutually sustaining effects on each other. The triggering force behind many negative emotions such as despondency, impatience, apprehension, anger, infatuation, et cetera, is invariably the untamed excitability of prana energy. By yielding oneself to such debased distortions of the mind, one can only encourage it to become even more feeble, fickle and fitful. The first order of priority for one on the spiritual path is to dilute the persistent force of mental perversions which can then be gradually eliminated altogether.

Sustained awareness of even the subtlest thought waves of the mind is the only means to make it a powerful, purposeful and determined instrument. When such awareness slackens off, the mind invariably loses its capacity for resolute action. Whenever a distortion arises in the mind, one should become fully cognizant of the why and wherefore of such a distortion and then should remain forever alert to shield the mind against a repetition of similar cause and circumstances.

In the process of purification of mind, a resolute will is of primary significance. The power of will is synonymous with the power of the Self, the power of indomitable faith, or the power of unflinching determination. Self-possessed will has such a rocklike sustaining power that it can boldly fend off the intrusion of any detrimental elements. By the same token, it can also imperceptibly pave the way for creation of conducive circumstances and for marshalling together other reinforcing qualities of the mind. Thus, in essence, resolute willpower is the foundation upon which one's whole personality flourishes and gets refined and embellished. In this evolving process of the mind, it behooves one to concentrate first on relatively minor decisions of daily living. Only after accomplishing unqualified success in these does one acquire the strength and confidence necessary to tackle the more arduous and intractable decisions.

A decision made precipitately in an impulsive frame of mind is rarely a prudent decision conducive to one's true welfare. The latter is invariably a revelation of underlying reality. It emanates from deep recesses of the soul and becomes a torchbearer on one's journey toward Truth. Those predilections which arise at the surface level of the mind have very little potency. If one has a habit of acting from such vacuous predilections, often vacillating in the midst of their execution or abandoning them altogether, then one's mind becomes increasingly dull and inept. Consequently, it becomes gradually drained of the power of perseverance and of firm

resolution. Indeed, any resolution which thus has to be relinquished midway through its execution because of lack of tenacity of the mind is more accurately called an irresolution or, at best, a dubious resolution.

A person with an elevated mind does not harbor a plethora of little resolutions. Rather, a single, monumental resolve inspires, binds together and governs all his myriad decisions for action. Such all-encompassing resolve defines and characterizes his vision of life. For such an exalted soul, every aspect of his manifest personality gravitates around his unifying resolve. As a result, his life exemplifies his vision as much as his vision shapes and defines his life.

For consolidation and harnessing of the power of mental resolution, it is necessary to avail oneself of both adverse and auspicious circumstances. However, in reality, it is only the calamitous circumstances which give a special impetus to the cultivation of a strong and resolute mind. But, in the absence of even an occasional boost of beneficent circumstances, a perpetual string of disastrous experiences can actually snuff out the faltering flame of resolution. A persistent assault of dismal events can deflate the willpower of many an even sturdy and inspired soul. Nonetheless, a steady flow of inner inspiration spurs them on to continued action and prevents them from falling prey to lassitude. This phenomenon of innate inspiration is indeed the gift of Divine Grace. It becomes manifest as undaunted faith, tenacity, self-reliance, and decisiveness of purpose. When one can remain assiduously firm in one's avowed purpose, even in the face of dire circumstance, such steadfastness alone will lead one to the pinnacle of success.

Ambitious people possess, in abundance, the power of focused perseverance. Such people can be divided into three categories: those dedicated to noble and lofty goals, those to ordinary or mediocre goals, and those to sinister goals.



People who personify an enormous power of purposeful determination are necessarily wedded to such upright virtues as celibacy, wholesome and moderate eating, regular exercise, contemplative study of lives of great souls, punctuality, enthusiasm, and self-reflection.

Two types of powerful energies predominate in the human body: energy of the mind and energy of prana. The latter is of a more gross nature than the former, and conversely. Both these energies are, however, interlinked. Hence, the more subtle mental energy has a tremendous impact over the prana energy. When the mind becomes disturbed and agitated, it throws the otherwise normal flow of prana or breathing into complete disarray. In such a frenzied state, there is only one recourse to restore oneself to composure, and that is to gradually regulate the flow of prana. This can be achieved by practicing Kumbhaka, or holding of the breath, according to one's capacity. Another way to come out of the hyperventilating state of prana is to meditate by establishing one's focus at the tip of the nose or to do concentrated repetition of a suitable mantra. Some other ways for relaxing the flurried pace of prana are to engross oneself in an enchanting activity, to bring about a refreshing change of environment, and even to take a cold shower or drink cool water.

## 15. The Path of Renunciation

Over the last two years, I have been experiencing an increasingly ominous state of restlessness in my prana energy. Consequently, day by day, I find a gradual erosion of my ability to hold the mind composed and equanimous. Even in this debilitating state, I can observe my mind constantly engaged in a battle with the rampant prana energy. However, in the end, the mind is destined to be overpowered and vanquished. If we examine the bright side of the mind, it is possible to contend that it is not entirely powerless. Nay, it is indeed much more powerful than prana. It can subjugate prana whenever it wishes, especially as it possesses a very powerful weapon which, if implemented, would guarantee a gradual restraining of prana's frenzy. But, alas! the mind has forever forsworn the use of this weapon, and it is not about to break its own resolve.

What is this resolve, anyway? It is simply that I will not give up my daily spiritual practices even under extremely dire conditions, and even at the risk of death. I know that the only effective way for me to get rid of my debilitating malady is to forsake my austere practices. However, for me, this is tantamount to reneging on my very spirit of surrender. And how can one become or feel revitalized by cutting off one's sacred bonds with the Divine energy? Such a state of existence is neither death nor immortality, but a certain precursor of death. As I have accepted the state of self-surrender with unqualified devotion and loving volition, my mind does not want to desist from its natural duty. It does, from time to time, become extremely restless and vulnerable from having to encounter obnoxious obstacles. But having come so within sight of death, it does not now wish to break its own sacred promise.

It is true that the mind and the prana are perpetually engaged in mutual battle as if they were two avowed enemies. But the fact is that they are also close comrades and kindred spirits. Despite this, the prana does not recoil from being ruthless with the mind, which, for its part, displays great courage and forbearance in putting up with the former's devilishness. This is classic fratricidal warfare, an eternal battle of Mahabharata. The predominant guide in this battle also, as in the epic battle, is the omnipotent Lord Krishna. Can anyone imagine that yoga can also mean a battle? Yoga does mean, in essence, a merging. But, in this case, the merging will manifest in the form of the ultimate outcome of this battle – either a victory or, in some way, a resolution of the battle. Only then eternal joy or permanent peace or ethereal bliss will be within my grasp.

Until this fundamental issue of the strife between pranic energy and mental energy is objectively examined and analyzed, the spiritual aspirant cannot become steadfast, despite his Herculean efforts toward the ultimate goal of salvation. As it is, the mind is inherently a capricious creature. To make matters worse, the prana often instigates it during the course of yoga practices and makes it even more excitable and capricious. Indeed, it often drives the mind to the brink of perversity. As a result of such repeated confrontations, the mind progressively becomes hardened and develops the fortitude to withstand such intrusions from the prana. In the end, the mind starts to display such amazing powers of forbearance that it remains impervious to even the most intolerable intrusions. Only then it begins to evince the first glimpses of an equanimous state. Children owe their innocence to a complete domination of pranic energy within them. They are not given to suppression of spontaneously arising thoughts or impulses for action. They do not possess, as yet, a sophistry of intellectual prowess. But, as they grow older, they become progressively more permeated with considerations of practicality and

pragmatism. This tendency toward pragmatism is largely responsible for the alteration of their minds. The householder wedded to the path of worldly actions relies primarily upon the instrument of his mind in cruising through his life's journey. Consequently, he is habitually conscious of the propriety and practicality of all his actions. It is for this reason that his mind becomes, over a period of time, a vast storehouse of many little hideous secrets. This is the essence of the pollution of his mind. He remains forever mired in such a mess of mind that, far from extricating himself into a state of lucidity, he sinks ever deeper into a state of discomfiture. As a result, he can rarely attain a wholesome integration among his thoughts, words and deeds.

A major aspect of the purification of mind is its restraint, or its firm self-discipline.

In contrast to the typical householder, one who has adopted the path of renunciation relies on his well-integrated prana energy for daily exertions. One, therefore, has no need to conform to the mores of the mundane world around him. This facilitates a gradual reduction and elimination of the baggage of secrecies accumulated from his past. One's old mental defilements spontaneously come to the surface and get expunged, and new ones have a difficult time getting into the gates of his mind.

As the yogic aspirant approaches the pinnacle of his powers, he develops a spontaneous synchronism among his faculties of thoughts, speech and action, with the result that there is no accumulation of hideous secrets in his mind.

In the process of regulation of prana, the component of primary significance is a state of surrender or of unfettering of the mind. In the semantic language of yoga, it is called a state of relaxation or a "letting go" of the mind.

## Section 2

### Part I

#### 1. Meditation Begins with Purification of the Mind

As the spiritual aspirant enters the prayer room to start his daily meditation, his mind is still greatly susceptible to distractions and extraneous influences. If he begins his meditation without first getting rid of this susceptibility, then in all likelihood the assault of restless thoughts on his mind will continue unabated. The extroverted mind habitually remains engaged in thought patterns colored by passion, rage or fear. When such incessant thought patterns are intercepted by a different kind of contemplative thinking, then the more dominant and aggressive of the two thought processes ultimately prevails and captures the mind. In such a state, if the mind is not peremptorily predisposed to one-pointed contemplation and is lacking in a resolute determination to stay clear of distractive and scattered thinking caused by extraneous events, then possibly more harm than good can result from a meditative session.

There is but one reason for entering into the meditation room – to practice unity with the Divine through meditation. Such practice can only be done in silence and isolation. This type of meditation is very different in nature from the habitual mental preoccupations. Hence it is essential first to make the mind free from all perturbations. When it has thus become steady and one-pointed, only then is it desirable to enter into serious meditation. The spiritual aspirant must meticulously acquaint himself with the most effective methods of silencing the mind at will.

Without a conscious and skillful use of such methods, it would be virtually impossible to unshackle the mind from its distracting preoccupations. Under daily exposure to external activities, the mind is swayed by a steady stream of thoughts and impulses arising from passions, anger or fear. This is because, as a rule, the mundane world is full of distracting influences. One does not need to invite a distraction into his mental horizon. They arrive uninvited, without any warning. If one meditates on such distracting thoughts in the comfort of solitude, then his inbred attachments and aversions become even more energized due to the concentrated focus available in solitude. Hence one should scrupulously avoid such emotion-laden contemplation in the comfort of solitude.

The agitated mind attains tranquility only from one-pointed meditation on the Divine. At the outset, such one-pointed meditation typically eludes one. It begins only when the mind becomes self-contained and established in serenity. It is indeed a heinous, soiled place where contemplation on base, passionate thoughts is routinely practiced. In contrast, it becomes a place of virtue, sanctity and pilgrimage where pious, one-pointed meditation is practiced.

Pious meditation is, indeed, the highest form of austerity, and its practitioner a great ascetic.

## 2. The Command of the Sadguru is Indisputable

It is said in the Scriptures that there can be no arguments or opinions about the command of the Sadguru.

Perhaps it is perplexing to think why it is so. After all, it is only prudent to ponder over anybody's command!

My friends, take this as a rare exception. If the command comes from anybody but a sadguru, it should by all means be carefully evaluated. Only a sadguru's command merits blind obedience because he is unswervingly a well-wisher and protector of the true interests of his disciple. His command never stems from any ego-aggrandizing habit nor from any desire to control. Normally he resorts merely to a gentle, loving exhortation. Only in a rare situation, when he feels helpless to serve his disciple by any other means than a direct command, does he resort to one.

When does he feel so helpless?

When it becomes clear to him that the disciple would be unable to grasp the subtle motive behind his gentle exhortation, despite a serious effort to comprehend it, only then does the sadguru issue a direct command which thus reflects both the incapacity of the student for correct understanding and selfless compassion of the sadguru.

Interestingly, this is also a sterling test of the depth of the disciple's faith in his sadguru.

The sadguru's motive is always devoid of any selfish interest or desire for self-aggrandizement. He does not have any concern for a personal loss if his command goes unheeded. It is merely a loss of the disobeying disciple!

As a rule, the sadguru instructs through a command only in the case of an especially worthy and deserving disciple. Of course, its benefits are also available to the lesser disciples. But more often than not, they fall short of obeying the command. The true disciple who carries out the command of his sadguru with complete loyalty and devotion is the most fortunate one.



### 3. The Followers of the Path of Wisdom and the Path of Selfless Action Are Also Worthy Devotees

It is an illusion to believe that only those who worship God with ritualistic devotion are true devotees. Devotion can also be manifested through the path of wisdom as well as through the practice of selfless action. While these three types of devotions vary significantly in their approaches, nonetheless at heart they are all identical. Indeed it is impossible for anyone to reach the pinnacle of Truth unless he is suffused with devotion.

It is not the object of devotion that matters. Love is all that matters.

The ultimate aim of supreme love can only be Truth of God, even when it manifests through the instruments of either knowledge or selfless service.

## 4. Joy and Sorrow

How is it possible for a saint to be suffering? And how can one remove the suffering of others if he himself feels miserable?

Suffering arises from two causes: either from malevolent actions or from benevolent actions. The former turn a man into a beast while the latter make him a divine being.

There is no categorical law which guarantees that every righteous action will necessarily lead to pleasure. Indeed, it can possibly result in some pain. But then such pain will undoubtedly pave the way for a more blessed joy.

Likewise no such law exists which assures that every malicious action will lead to misery. It is possible to elicit pleasure from it. However, such pleasure will ultimately turn into even a darker misery.

The mother giving birth to a child undergoes excruciating pain which, however, transforms into ecstatic joy at the first sounds of the newborn child. She welcomes the pain of childbirth as the fruition of her past pious actions. This is a vivid example from worldly experience.

The saintly souls undertake painstaking penances, often bearing severe hardships. Yet they do not look upon them with grief, but only with joy.

Everybody is subject to one or the other form of pain. None can escape its clutches.

The material world is indeed an abode of misery. Hence it is that even the saints living therein have to face pain and misery. Indeed even human incarnations of God cannot avoid pain during their mortal life.

When a man gets weary trying to cope with his manifold mundane miseries, he desperately cries out that his life should be free from afflictions. But he forgets the simple fact that the fruits of pleasure grow only on the tree of pain.

Heaven is the abode of unremitting pleasures. The godly souls residing there enjoy an abundance of pleasure and become wistful for experiencing a little bit of pain.

The truth is that unmitigated pleasure, devoid of any pain, only tastes stale.

When one gets tired of sitting, one loves to be asked to stand. Likewise, after a long session of uninterrupted standing, one greatly relishes a chance to sit down. Indeed, pain is the sweetness experienced in pleasure.

Sorrow is nothing but unripened joy, and joy is the ripening fruit of sorrow.

There is complete non-duality between joy and sorrow. Where duality is perceived, it is only due to the difference in time-states between prologue and epilogue, or between a preceding state and its succeeding state.

Both joy and sorrow are the inevitable fruits of past actions. One can find deliverance from either of them only after exhausting it fully.

Those who wish to find virtual relief from pain must also be prepared to become virtually destitute of pleasure because pain will always remain in the shadow of every sensation of pleasure.

The great yogic souls are constantly absorbed in divine bliss. They are not attached to any sufferings of their own. Still, they empathize and suffer along with afflictions of others.

It is through such selfless suffering that their compassionate love for humanity shines forth. For them, all suffering is a form of penance, and penance is the stepping stone to spiritual growth.

Those endowed with wisdom and piety welcome the predestined fruits of their past sins, and at the same time they completely surrender the fruits of their past good actions to the Lord.

All their efforts are without expectations for personal benefit. They progressively detach themselves from bondage to both pleasure and pain resulting from ulterior motives.

It is, however, true that some great saints never grieve about anything. It is just that people around them conjecture that they must be unhappy about this or that situation. Thus their suffering resides merely in the false conjecture of onlookers.

The discerning aspirant who periodically cleanses his body and mind through fasting is perceived as a wretched, suffering soul by those who are incapable of either understanding the significance of fasting or of observing a fast. He, in the meanwhile, is completely serene and equanimous about his fast and not the least bit agonized over it.

It is quite conceivable for one suffering person to give strength and succor to another afflicted person.

A disease-ridden lawyer can give useful guidance on the intricacies of public law to his doctor, while a doctor who has been seriously injured in a car accident can nevertheless help cure the disease of his lawyer.

The most noble among the saints remain like a vast ocean of experience about the many intricacies of life. Just as a swift-flowing river quenches the thirst of someone, so do the saintly souls quench the thirst for knowledge of a large mass of people.

Even while carrying a completely human body, the heart of an exalted saint remains forever the province of Almighty God.

Those who have unfaltering faith in the divine influence of the saint can certainly get relief from their miseries to various degrees.

A great saint is indeed a divine manifestation of God Himself.

## 5. Imaginary Pain: Worry

Pain or sorrow falls into two categories: real and imagined. The latter is born out of a sense of hopelessness created by an unbearable adversity. There is no substance in the pain experienced in such a situation. It is largely a projection and a fabrication of the mind which endlessly agonizes over its assumed validity. One of the symptoms of this phantom pain is worry, which can express itself as anxiety, agitation, depression, or mental agony. While the calamity is yet nowhere within sight, the worrywart fantasizes in picturesque detail how the approaching calamity will wreak havoc in his life. In this way he allows himself to turn into a bundle of anxiety and agitation. He perceives a greater power of destruction in his imagined calamity – even though, as a matter of fact, it is completely powerless – than that of which even a real calamity would be capable. A lion painted on a canvas may look extremely fearsome, but it is without the strength to kill anybody. If anybody expresses fear of such a nonviolent lion, we would only laugh him off. But the fact is that when one is overwhelmed with worry, one loses the capacity of a discerning mind. He feels stuck in the complex web of emotions dominated by fear, agitation, helplessness and despondency. There is very little difference between the agony caused by worry and that experienced in a bad dream. In fact, the former is even more painful than the latter, because while the agony in the dream vanishes as soon as we are awake, agony set off by worry turns into a long nightmare.

What is a good remedy for getting rid of this worry?

Worry is nothing more than a collection of pessimistic thoughts. Its natural antidote is a string of optimistic thinking. A sense of despair is such a debilitating weakness that it does not

allow one to make any progress in the direction of hope. One who is overpowered by worry is wistfully aware that he can begin to come out of its suffocating spell with but a single ray of hopeful thought. But the many painful experiences of the past hold his mind captive and drained of any hope or strength. He is unable to exercise any control over such an enfeebled mind.

In such a state of despondency, he can resort to another remedy: he can temporarily absorb himself in his most favorite pastime. This device will not necessarily bring forth a stream of optimistic thinking, but it will enable him to refrain from anxiety for the duration of his absorption. Such a freedom from anxiety will have a calming effect on his mind. This is thus a psychosomatic remedy. Its outcome can only be a healthy one.

In this effort, one also needs to strive for one other goal. One should progressively extend the duration of absorption in one's favorite activity by putting increasingly greater interest in it. The mind, thus having been relaxed and rested for a long stretch of time, shakes out of its infirmity and ultimately becomes reinvigorated by a fresh ray of hope.

Any one thought stems only from another thought. Abandoning one line of thinking (pessimistic) altogether, and adopting a new line of thinking (optimistic) is an unassailable antidote. It is everyone's common experience that a person assaulted with anxieties becomes free from them only when he resorts to this remedy. Until he forsakes melancholy thinking and starts taking an interest in more pleasant activities, he cannot shake loose his anxiety.

## Section 2

### Part II

#### 6. Service

The word *seva* is a very popular and familiar one. Even then, the layman is completely ignorant of its real meaning.

Everyone believes that looking after one's beloved, or nursing a sick person, or taking care of someone else's need is *seva*. However, as a matter of fact, *seva* has no give and take with external actions which, after all, merely symbolize bodily motions. Not much significance can be attached to that because it is nothing more than a fleeting, momentary impulse on the outermost surface of the mind to be helpful. It is by no means a natural outcome stemming from the permanent state of the mind.

The impetus for *seva* arises not so much from the heart as from the purity of love, from the depth of the soul.

Love in its quintessential form cannot be bestowed on many people or on many objects. It can be reserved for but a single individual. Besides, love has no cognition at all for objects which, being inanimate, are absolutely beyond the pale of love.

The affinity born in the deeper layers of mind for a significant number of people and for material objects is the basis of attachment. It is not love. It is merely a shadow of love, or even a lack of love.



Love is the seed, surrender the bud, and service the fruit.

Where love itself is lacking, there cannot be any true surrender or service.

Affinity is the first step in the direction of love, and love is the culminating step on the ladder starting with affinity.

One's own family is the birthplace of affinity. Within one's family, one learns in a natural way about affinity, self-sacrifice and service.

The true meaning of seva is worship (*puja*) or propitiation (*aradhana*). Seva can also be called "sitting near" (*upavasa*) or "sitting together for learning" (*upanishad*).

To remain in constant company of virtuous and saintly people is the real meaning of upavasa or upanishad. That in itself is worship and propitiation. Seva means making an honest effort to adopt into one's own life the purity of conduct exemplified by the saints.

A true disciple can offer to his sadguru only the purity of his love. There is nothing else he has which is worth offering. This is a very ancient tradition for seeking true knowledge.

The disciple offers with implicit faith his body and mind entirely for the service of his sadguru. Without such unqualified offering, he can never aspire to gain true knowledge. The sadguru accepts his spontaneous offering after carefully examining his worthiness and, just as a washerman returns dirty clothes after making them lily-white, the sadguru returns the body and mind of the disciple back to him after making them pure as a lotus.

Doing seva is indeed a very arduous task. One who does not possess at all the faculty for discerning the value of true virtue can never rise up to the challenge of doing seva. A healthy

appreciation for the value of being virtuous is a primary qualification for being serviceable, and a strong, implicit faith is its primary characteristic.

Only one amply endowed with virtuous qualities is worthy of being called a sadguru.

One who aspires for liberation displays the intensity of his urge only after his allure for worldly temptations fades away completely. Only in such a detached frame of mind can he love and adore his sadguru with a single-minded devotion.

Such a great soul will also be well deserving of God's Grace and, consequently, is worthy of one's undiluted faith and love. It is nothing short of God's grace to be inspired with faith at the feet of such a saint.

The sadguru is like a goldmine of tapas (penance). A life suffused with tapas is his supreme ideal. He never begs for anything. Rather, he is always eager to give. Such a staunch sadguru, imbued with the luster of tapas, and such a disciple, who is strongly desirous of liberation and is eager to serve his guru, are indeed very rare.

But ordinary people in society can never sustain such an arduous seva. For them it is essential to adhere to simple forms of seva.

Seva is the duty universally applicable to everybody, and therefore it is a form of humanistic religion. As its devoted practice can unfold a person's divinity, it is also a form of divine religion.

To offer some food, medicine, solace, or other similar help in the form of charity, assistance, empathy, benevolence, self-sacrifice, or a combination of all these noble sentiments is what is known as seva.

Seva is a staircase by which one can reach up to the kingdom of God. God has such a soft spot for selfless seva that he is at once propitiated by it.

Seva is a very peculiar form of selfishness. Even though innately selfless, it is such an effective instrument for attaining one's personal growth that it excels over any other instrument which may be employed. We can even say that in comparison with the benefit derived by the recipient, the doer of the seva derives a thousand times greater benefit. In the whole world, there is no other more profitable business transaction than seva.

Whenever a benevolent impulse is born in any person's mind, whatever its catalytic cause, what is certain is that God is making His presence felt through him. As a consequence, he is transformed into the quintessence of purity. In this frame of mind, whatever a person undertakes has a touch of divinity in it. This is simply the attainment of the divine state.

In a like manner, whenever a malevolent impulse is born in any person's mind, whatever its instigating cause, it is equally certain that an evil force, like that of the ten-headed Ravana, has overpowered him. As a result, his mind becomes shrouded in impurity. In such a frame of mind, whatever a person undertakes is tinged with base or subhuman motives. This is simply the degeneration to deviltry.

Even though the field of seva is the same in both cases, the fruits of seva are very dissimilar due to the difference in motive impulses.

People from the rich and middle classes do engage in social service activities, as do many social and religious organizations. However, their way of doing seva often is as a business transaction. They strive to secure in return many times more than what they give. Even though,

on the face of it, the offering is made in the name of a religious motive, it really stems from a very selfish motive.

This is also a kind of self-deception as well as deception of society at large. One can even perceive betrayal of God in it. There is no sin greater than such a deception and such a betrayal.

The organizations which inspire society to practice righteousness and restraint in life which enhance the knowledge to discriminate between right and wrong and which awaken the latent humanity in a person are called religious organizations. Such a service is indeed the genuine promotion of religion.

One's every action can become either righteous or unrighteous, depending upon the level of mentality from which it arises.

In social organizations, because of their profit orientation, there is always a preoccupation with addition and multiplication. Hence differences of opinion and arguments are aplenty and, in fact, remain entrenched.

In religious organizations, on the other hand, because of the focus on everyone's welfare, there is only subtraction and division. A warmth born of affection establishes itself there as a constant companion.

Social organizations are predisposed to ever more acquisition, while religious organizations are predisposed to sharing and self-sacrifice.

It is not an absolute necessity for the leaders of social organizations to be of impeccable conduct and character. On the other hand, those at the helm of religious organizations must necessarily be of immaculate character and conduct.

Selfless service has the power to endow both the giver and the receiver with a healthy sense of satisfaction and serenity.

In contrast, self-centered service brings about in the server the blemishes of authoritarianism, egocentrism, etc., while in the recipient it evokes the lowly feelings of helplessness, inferiority, etc. Thus, on both sides, there is the unhealthy experience of dissatisfaction and dis-ease.

Whenever selfless service is carried out inconspicuously, it is automatically noted down in God's logbook, while those services which are rendered with some self-serving motive and are carried out in a conspicuous manner are registered in society's logbook.

Whenever possible, any benevolent act ought to be done in an unpretentious, inconspicuous manner. This allows underlying humanity to spring forth.

The real service to religion is done only through pure, self-effacing love, never through manipulation of any kind. In this love there is no feeling of sacrificing, only of surrendering. In sacrifice, an object has the primacy. But in surrender, love has the primacy.

If an understanding of the real meaning of seva is desired, then a person ought to examine closely the intricate mechanism of his own body.

The human body is like a supremely beautiful scripture composed by God. It contains five organs of perception, five organs of action, and innumerable internal organs. Its entire

construction stands out as an exemplary model of superb organization. In its organization, there is unity in the midst of infinite diversity. Such unity is the essence of religion (*dharma*).

Despite the fact that the roles and functional interests of internal organs, of the organs of actions, and of the organs of perception are very distinct from one another, there is no disharmony among them. Each organ is supremely dedicated to its own function without feeling the allure of or distraction from someone else's function. For each one, dedication to its allotted service is the highest goal. The temple priest considers every symbol of God as if it were God himself and showers all his faith and devotion in serving him. In the same manner, from birth until death, the organs of elimination indefatigably keep up the functions of elimination from the body. What a stupendous sense of loyalty to service is displayed by them!

## 7. Degeneration

In ancient India (Bharat), both religion and culture had flourished to a very high degree because of the prevailing political environment which attached a great importance to both these elements. Hence both the king and his subjects always tried to follow the guidance given by the great sages and seers. Their sanctuaries (called ashrams) thus became the mainspring of everybody's wellbeing and hence were centers of great popular interest. Everyone had a stake in their growth and flourishing. All the ashrams during the ancient period were sovereign unto themselves. Their maintenance and administration were handled by senior inmates who were of impeccable character. Many a surrounding village came willingly under their influence. No lack or dearth of any kind was allowed to be felt by any ashram. The king and his subjects were ever vigilant to fill any approaching need. An ashram was like a constantly glowing flame of righteousness and cultural excellence. Everyone was eternally alert to ensure that this flame would not dim or become extinguished.

And what about today?

Today it has become a Herculean task to protect even the ragged remnants of the spirit of religion and culture. In this day and age, those politicians who are steeped in unholy and unscrupulous activities are the very ones at the helm of religious and political authority. Others are compelled to reshape the norms and guidelines of religion and culture as ordained by them. This is the greatest cause of the prevailing degeneration and vulgarity in religion and culture. It is because of this degeneration that the spirit of religion and culture remains stifled without proper nourishment. It can even be said that the prevailing politics has solemnly vowed to thoroughly annihilate the spirit of religion. Religion and culture are the major obstacles of

politics as practiced today. It may even be true that those who absolutely fail to understand the significance of culture and religion (in social life) can never be capable of their protection.



## 8. The Jewel among the People (i.e. the Greatest Fool)

Whenever I look back on my bygone life, I am extremely astonished. I can see very clearly that I have in my preceding life acted foolishly, not just once, but innumerable times. Why I would not have recognized these stupidities as such at the time of acting them out is completely beyond me. With the same faith with which a person of sharp and discriminating intellect undertakes a new project, I have launched many a foolish action. Indeed, at the time of launching them, I have not entertained even a shred of doubt about the stupidity inherent in them. What label other than the “jewel among fools” can be deserved by such a fool?

I have heard that the penetrating intellect of a sagacious person is capable of transcending a would-be action to clearly perceive its consequent outcome. In comparison with this, a nitwit must necessarily be considered a blind person. Yes, one may believe that my foolish actions must have been propelled by some overpowering attachment, as attachment is always blind. It is absolutely devoid of discrimination.

Some people even maintain that those whose minds have become free from impurities can perceive their own faults very clearly. Given this belief, some of my well-wishers may wish to console me thus: “Revered Bapuji, your mind has become completely pure with the help of your tapas. Hence any mistakes committed by you in your preceding years appear to you as not just mistakes, but sheer stupidities.” You see, whenever a virtue is exaggerated, then the partial eyes of a well-wisher invariably do injustice to the reality of blemishes. But, in the ideal test, there is not room for partisanship. The true ally of truth is impartiality. Some of my other admirers even contend that because I have been scrupulously observing silence and solitude for the last twenty-odd years, my faculty for self-examination has flourished to its perfection. But

the mind of a self-reflective person is like the lens of a microscope. It can distinctly observe even the minutest shortcoming. At that time, the self-reflecting person forgets the fact that his perceptive vision enables him to magnify the minutest blemish to the point where it is visible to the naked eye. This is why he can personally experience his own blemishes. But another person, oblivious to this multiplying effect, is deluded into thinking that the original dimension of the shortcoming is what is alluded to by the self-reflective person. In a microscope, an ant appears as big as a cockroach. However, its original form is not of the size of a cockroach but of a far smaller size.

I fully respect this point of view and offer, in this context, another factual observation. It is not true that, having done acts of foolishness in the past, I have stopped doing them in the present. Even now I go on committing acts of stupidity, just as before. I have heard many stories about very intelligent people turning themselves into fools. But about the opposite phenomenon – that of fools suddenly becoming smart – I have heard very little. Whether in my actions of the previous years or of the recent years, nowhere can I find any evidence of my brilliance, although it is true that I have made no conscious attempt for such a discovery. How can I? The memory of my brilliance would become refreshed provided only that I let go of my innumerable stupidities. But such a state has not yet arisen. I can even go to the extent of saying that the very action which I claim to be full of foresight and brilliance turns out in the end to be a foolhardy one.

Against this litany of my arguments, one may put forth a counter-argument of how can a person who recognizes his own follies so conspicuously be called a fool? Because a real fool is completely oblivious to his own foolishness. To be aware of one's own foolishness is in itself a sign of sagacity.

Indeed, as a line of convincing arguments, this is a brilliant one, even an unimpeachable one. But still my mind is not completely reconciled. It is good that I can clearly see my follies. But this alone does not make me a wise and brilliant person. If that were true, my acts would have to reflect my brilliance.

In this context, another thought also occurs to my mind. The stage that I have reached today cannot be attained even by the most brilliant person striving hard for it. To this, a voice from my heart responds, saying that only with the Grace of God has this stage been attained by me. This only seems to be the ultimate truth to me. If this is really so, then it may be said that only this grace is leading me on to a predestined field of activities. Only that mysterious force enables me to perform whatever actions spring forth from me. What outcome I have proposed in my mind at the outset of these actions never fructifies in the end. Only a completely different outcome emanates. It is for this reason that I call my actions foolhardy. An astute archer is one who can penetrate his aim right in the center. I am unable to penetrate through the eye of my aim, and for this reason I do not call myself a proficient archer. This is what I call my stupidity.

## A Brief Sketch of Kayavarohana

The village of Kayavarohana, which today is popularly known as “Karvan,” located in the Baroda district, has been a great and famous place of pilgrimage in all the four eras. It is also a very ancient place. This pilgrimage place was known as Icchhapuri in Satya Yuga (Golden Era), as Mayapuri in the Treta Age, as Medhavati in the Dvapara Age, and as Kayavarohana in the Kali Age.

During the age of Lord Rama’s incarnation, the great sage Vishvamitra had resolved to elevate this place to a status parallel to that of Kashi, which traditionally has the reputation as a place for attaining liberation. But a vociferous opposition from the devas prevented this from being accomplished. Even so, Kayavarohana of that day and age was second only to Kashi in its reputation as a sacred place. It was at the time a famous place of pilgrimage and went by the name of Medhavati. Sage Vishvamitra was a sagacious seer of Gayatri Mantra, which is propitiated for the purpose of purifying one’s intellect. One of the synonyms for intellect (*Buddhi*) is *Medha*. Thus it is that the sage called his own spiritual sanctuary by the name Medhavati. *It was right from here that canonization (sanctification) of the Gayatri Mantra first started and spread outwards. This great place of pilgrimage is thus an important relic of the culminating glory of Brahmanic culture.* In the waning years of the Dvapara Age, during the incarnation of Lord Krishna, Lord Lakulisha first manifested here. Since that time, this place came to be known as Kayavarohana, implying thereby that Lord Shiva himself descended into a human body (*kaya*). Besides, this sacred place was also known for the penances undertaken here by the great sages Bhrigu and Atri.

*Thus Kayavarohana has been a place well established for its spiritual accomplishments as well as spiritual energy. For the attainment of Gayatri Mantra, Rama Mantra, as well as the five-syllabled Mantra (which is Om Namah Shivaya), this sacred place is reckoned as extremely propitious. All the pilgrimage places are invariably also great centers of religious practice. This sacred place (Kayavarohana) has become renowned as a great religious center in all the historical eras. It has ceaselessly sanctified the soil of Bharat with the celestial flow of Sanatana Dharma and Sanatana (eternal) civilization.*

With respect to places of pilgrimage, what sanctifies and enhances the reputation of a particular place is its holy association with such venerable spirits as Lord Sri Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Buddha, Lord Lakulisha, Sage Shankaracharya, etc. The sacredness of the place can be constantly evinced in their own playgrounds. By very definition, an exalted pilgrimage place is one which reverberates with sounds of sacred learning potent enough to release one from the shackles of worldly ignorance, which is imbued with the powerful energy of tapas (penance), of sacred knowledge, or of righteous conduct, which is a thriving center of cultural activities or which is a lively playground for the activities of a saintly person.

A branch of the narrow gauge railway line connects the town Miyagam Karjan with the city of Dabhoi. The station of Kayavarohana falls along this line. For an alternate route, a village by the name of Por is along the highway between Bharuch and Baroda. Kayavarohana sits about six miles from Por on a fairly paved road. Also one can come to Kayavarohana on the ST (State Transport) bus route from Baroda to Sinor.

## A Brief Sketch of the Life of Lord Lakulisha

In the ancient land of Bharat (India), Vedic thought was the prevailing philosophy everywhere. Then, in the Sixth Century B.C. both Jainism and Buddhism were born. At that time, there was not a single worthy teacher in the tradition of Saivism. As a result, large masses of people became attracted to these new philosophies. Many decades after this, Lord Lakulisha manifested himself in the city of Medhavati. He rejuvenated the Saiva (Pashupata) tradition and popularized devotion to Shiva all over the country. Since the time of his manifestation, this city has become known as Kayavarohana. Some scholars are of the opinion that he must have appeared in the Second Century AD. (However, according to others, we are currently in the year 5090 since the birth of Lord Krishna. If that theory is accepted, we will also have to accept the contention that Lord Lakulisha must also have manifested as many years ago, as he was presumably a contemporary of Lord Krishna.) In the Bharat of those times, devotion to Lord Shiva was the most popular and prevalent one. There was only a small segment of the populace which worshipped Lord Vishnu or Goddess Shakti (Durga). As Lord Lakulisha believed only in the worship of a single god, he was easily able to absorb even Vaishnavas (devotee of Vishnu) and Shaktas (devotees of Shakti) among his followers.

Among the innumerable saints who have taken birth in the greater Gujarat state over the last three thousand years, Lord Lakulisha of Kayavarohana is the most preeminent. His status among all the illustrious, godly personages produced by the great soil of Bharat is just as exalted as that of Lord Buddha and Lord Shankaracharya. *Lord Lakulisha is a spiritual teacher in the tradition of Lord Shiva and is considered to be the 28<sup>th</sup> incarnation of Shiva, as acknowledged even in many Puranas.* His disciples used to handle all the practical affairs connected with the

maintenance of the twelve Jyotirlingas. This practice lasted not just for ten or twenty years, but for about fifteen hundred years. For the most part, the principal teachers in this tradition lived in Kayavarohana only. They trained the most intellectually astute disciples in the various intricacies of the scriptures and the grammar, whereupon they later would be endowed with the title of Acharya (an accomplished teacher) and then entrusted with administrative duties for maintaining the pilgrimage places corresponding to the twelve Jyotirlingas. These acharyas, in turn, spread the message of devotion to Shiva within their own territorial boundaries. Worship to a single god was one of their fundamental tenets. They encouraged respect for various gods and goddesses such as Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesha, Shakti, etc., within the context of a single Omniscient God. Because of this, their followers felt comfortable in worshipping gods or goddesses of their own choice suitable to their dispositions. *The history of this Pashupata tradition is thus replete with many glorious stories depicting the greatness of Gujarat and representing the cultural and religious renaissance period of the soil of Bharat.*

One can easily imagine how profound must have been the influence of the Pashupata tradition on the entire country by noticing the incomparable affluence of the famous Temple of Somnath. It is an extraordinary historical fact that a powerful monarch of the stature of Mahommed Gazni even was tempted to invade Somnath for plain robbery after having heard of its incredible wealth.

Among the very famous eight names given to Lord Shiva is that of “Pashupati” (Lord of the animate world). In Linga Purana, it has been explained that it is the individual *jiva* (soul) enslaved by manifold desires who is like an animal (*pashu*), and it is the Lord Shiva, who can deliver from the bondage of desires, who thereby becomes the Pashupati (the master of the animal nature).

The philosophy expounded by Lord Lakulisha is a direct descendant of the philosophy of Vedanta. The philosophy of Yoga expounded in the Vedas and later cryptically encoded by Sage Patanjali in his famous Yoga-Sutras (Yoga aphorisms) is also the basis of the Pashupata-Sutras (Pashupata aphorisms) composed by Lord Lakulisha.

Among the major disciples of Lord Lakulisha who were well-versed in all the four Vedas were Kushika, Gargya, Mitra, and Kaurupya. Each of them established a major center for learning of Pashupata philosophy in a different region of Bharat (India): Kushik in Mathura, Gargya in Kashipura, Mitra in South India, and Kaurupya in Central India. Through these regional centers they spread and enhanced the devotion to Lord Shiva far and wide throughout the country.

Finally, Lord Lakulisha, having fully accomplished his mission on this incarnation, merged himself fully embodied into the Jyotirlinga of Lord Braheshvara, which was made famous by the great sage Vishvamitra. Even though today the word “Pashupata” is not much heard of, devotion to Lord Shiva, which is an intrinsic ingredient of Pashupata philosophy, has by no means faded away. Innumerable Shiva temples (Shivalayas), standing alive in small and large villages and towns all over the country, bear ample testimony to this fact.



# A Brief Sketch of the Jyotirlinga Ascribed to Lord

## Brahmeshvara

*A Jyotirlinga is a linga (an idol made of rock) carved out of a broken piece of star or meteoric stone. The dazzling beauty of the Jyotirlinga of Lord Brahmeshvara is embellished by a lustrous meteoric stone. Its installation was done at the hands of the great sage Vishvamitra during the time of Lord Rama. He had aspired to turn the city of Medhavati into another Kashi, with its symbolic glory as a city of ultimate liberation. Hence, how can there be any doubt about his most renowned linga (or the linga installed with his own blessings) being a Jyotirlinga? Not only that, but the sage Vishvamitra, standing in the River Rangav flowing by the town of Kayavarohana, had personally invoked the blessings of the Divine Mother Ganges, imploring her to bestow upon his place of tapas (penances) her own presence. The Divine Mother Ganges had bestowed her grace with great joy. Later on, the end of the Dvapara Age saw the manifestation of Lord Lakulisha. He made his birthplace also a place of his life's mission, and ultimately, upon completion of this mission, he immersed himself, fully embodied, into the form of Lord Brahmeshvara's Jyotirlinga. Since then, his form is manifest on the face of this Jyotirlinga.*