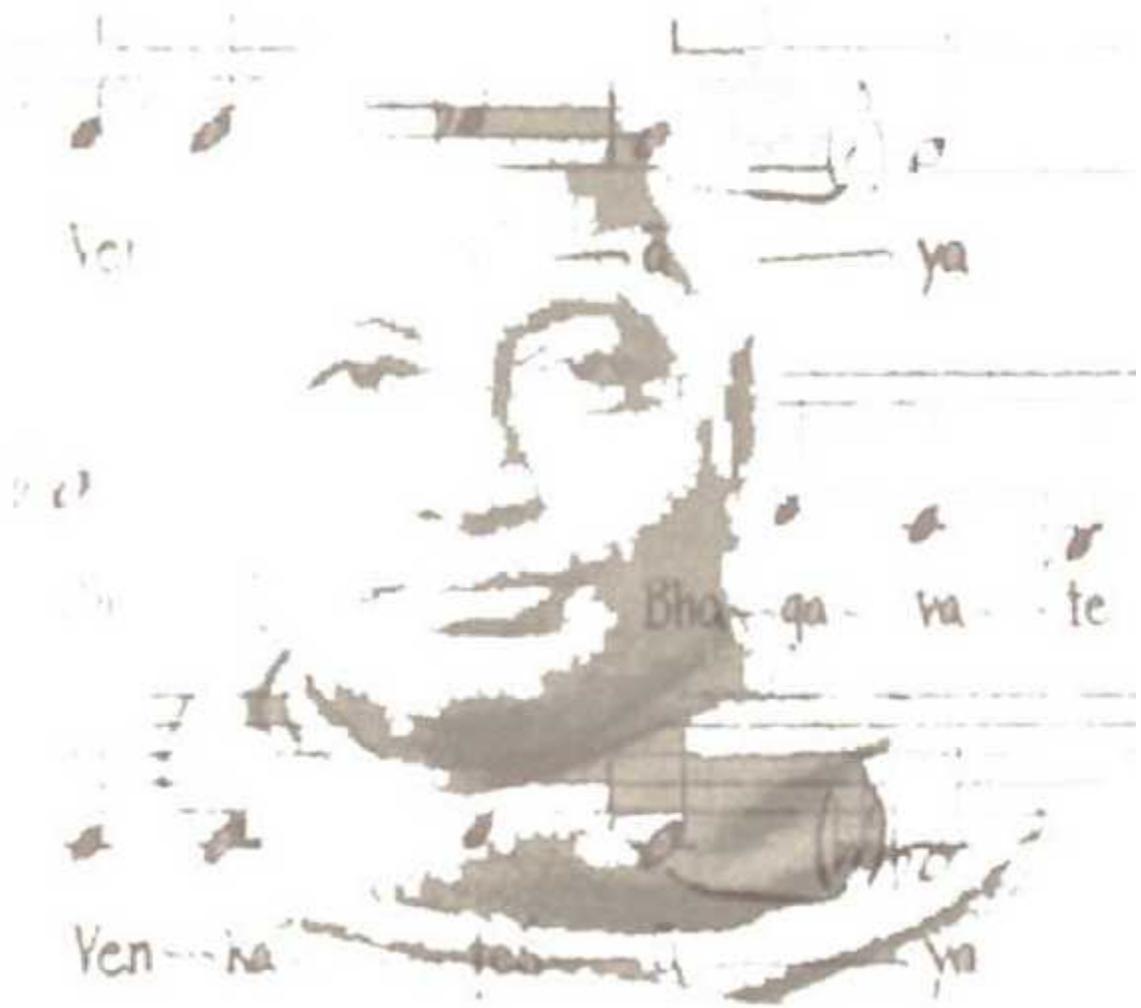




Yasodhara Yoga Talks 1975
Raja Yoga

Swami Venkatesananda



Om Namah Venkatesaya
Om Namah Shivaya

Yasodhara Yoga Talks
RAJA YOGA

Contents

Morning and afternoon sessions

This series of talks was given at Yasodhara Ashram in British Columbia in the Spring of 1975.

Swami Venkatesananda regarded these as Swami Sivananda's Integral Yoga.

Over the course of 10 weeks, Swami Venkatesananda spoke for roughly 20 hours on each of the five major branches of yoga - Hatha, Bhakti, Karma, Raja, and Jnana, devoting 10 hours to formal talks in the morning, and 10 hours to questions and answers during the afternoons on each of these topics.

One discovers in the course of listening to these talks that the five are not separate paths; that each branch of yoga incorporates elements of the so called 'different' paths. While many people often focus on just one branch of yoga, one cannot escape the realization that it would be far better to assimilate them all in some fashion in order to create a balanced approach to sadhana or 'spiritual practice.'

Swami Sivananda taught that the aim of this integration - Integral Yoga or the Yoga of Synthesis - is to avoid becoming lopsided. In so doing, the aspirant nurtures the whole being. As demonstrated in the lives of both Swami Sivananda and his disciple, Swami Venkatesananda, the words 'whole' and 'holy' are completely interchangeable.

Yasodhara 1975 - Raja Yoga

Swami Sivananda was known as 'The Sage of Practical Wisdom' and while it may be regarded by some as an obtuse platitude to point out that nothing could be more practical than wisdom, we seldom regard the day to day practical things as important, as all the intellectual and wordy definitions, searching instead for some missing answer to the puzzles posed by the mind that will somehow unlock the doors to an enlightened life, forgetting all the while that it is enlightened living (the day to day living as enlightened beings that defines enlightenment).

The treasures to be found in grounding the teachings to the practical matters of living a sane and enlightened life was a key element in the teachings of Sivananda, a fact not lost on his major devotees, including, of course, Swami Venkatesananda.

Therefore, what you will find in the Raja Yoga lectures will not only be an examination of the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, of sukham and dukham - happiness and unhappiness, of chittam - mind, and vritti - thoughts or concepts, of nidra - sleep, and the words of sage Ramana Maharshi, of vairagya - uncoloredness, of abhyasa - practice, of vichara - the discrimination between the real and the unreal, though 'without argumentation', of surrender, and host of other 'yogic topics,' but also includes immersion in issues we confront in our daily lives.

This series is not merely an academic exercise, just as yoga is not, as the 21st Century is currently defining it, something that we fit into our busy lives, but rather something our lives (busy or otherwise) must fit into (encompass) - that are our lives are an expression of yoga itself.

May 26 - Introduction

Probably some of you have read some textbooks on Raja Yoga or at least some commentaries on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. So we may take a look at some of the main sutras, and see if we can find a meaning that is relevant to our life. The purpose of the Sutras themselves, or the purpose of the practice of Raja Yoga does not appear to be to acquire some kind of psychic powers. When it comes to that, I think we will read some words from Ramana Maharshi which are very interesting in that regard. The problem that faces us is quite simple; it is not connected with theology - does God exist or not exist, or of something called God exists, what is the description of that God.

That has no relevance to my life, directly, immediately. What has relevance to my life is that when I wake up in the morning I am confronted by two extraordinary phenomenon. And that is my relationship with everyone else in this world: I hurt, and I am hurt. That is all, isn't it? These are the two things that I have to solve. Our experience of pain, and my behavior towards others is such that there is no adjustment.

What you mean by fit - the famous word? Years ago when I used to help a homeopathic doctor dispense medicines, and he used to buy quark and small bottles and bask, I used to pull out a small bottle and a cork that fit it. I can understand what 'fit' meant. Yes? Like a square peg in a round hole, they do not fit! But then suddenly I am told, you must keep fit. Fit into what? But it has a meaning. I am not making fun of it, it has a very relevant meaning, and then he is, wherever you are, you must be able to fit; but you never become a square peg whatever be the hole.

Can my behavior be such that I fit anywhere, in any circumstance, any society and culture? Can I fit without creating any disturbance at all? Can you fit in such a way that nobody notices your existence? That is what my heart teaches me. In a healthy condition, its presence is not noticed at all. So can I live in this world in such a way that I am not a problem to anybody and nobody is a problem to me?

Says Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: yasman no 'dviijate loko lokan no 'dviijate ca yah - harsmarsabhayodevegair mukto yah sa sa ca me priyah (XII-15)

It is an extraordinary and beautiful expression. Who is a yogi, or devotee or sage? One who is not agitated at all by the world and who does not agitate this world one who is not distressed by the world and who does not distress this world. Can I live such a life?

May 26 - Afternoon Discussion and Q/A

The difference between longing and desire and is that longing longs to give and desire longs to possess. If I want to possess something that desire 'goes out', sort of 'creating more space.' In longing, yearning, it seems to dissolve in space. Therefore there is an instant experience of oneness. Whereas desire is always pulling towards oneself. It is the 'I want' that kicks the object of desire out and then goes looking for it. And in this desire to possess, the gap, the space that the self creates surround itself in becomes wider and wider. It is the desire for oneness which keeps the division going. The desire for oneness is the division. When I see it is only a thought, it is gone.

Student: Is not longing a form of reaching out?

Venkatesananda: If it is merely reaching out, it is going to widen this gap, the space. Everything which widens the space is going to make its elimination impossible. Anything that suggests this division this duality ... and oneness is not reached by reaching out. Oneness is only achieved by non-division. And what is it that creates this division? Thought. When I see that it is only a thought that creates this division, it is gone.

May 27 - Morning Talk

Swami Venkatesananda opens with the question: 'How can we avoid contact with pain?', and moves toward an answer by a discussion of experience, experienter,

and experiencing, and by revisiting the Sutra 2 and Sutra 3, and 'chitta,' and, of course, what does and does not happen in sleep. Here is a passage from this discussion:

How to avoid contact (with pain)? The avoidance of this contact with pain the avoidance of division. The avoidance of the avoidance of pain is its abolition (the abolishment of the division). Tricky, isn't it? It is not what we usually say, 'Ah, grin and bear it!' No, no, 'Grin and bear it' is endurance. There is still a division in that - you create a thing called 'endurance.' But here it just is. There is experience of pain because there no division that experiencing. How do you this is possible? Sleep. In sleep this is possible and therefore, in waking it is also possible. When that happens, this is Yoga.

tam vidyad duhkhasamyogaviyogam yogasamjnitam - Bhagavad Gita, 6-23

Yoga is the non-creation of a division in experiencing. The experience being synonymous with consciousness or 'knowledge,' the non-creation of a division in this consciousness is Yoga.

The abolishment of the division is not bringing two things together. It is non-fragmentation . Why must I create a division and then bring about a union? Why must I first suggest that you and I are separate and that we should come together. We are one already. We are two ends of the same thing. That recognition is Yoga. Hence, Patanjali defines it as Yoga citta-vritti nirodhah (Sutra 2).

I think most of you know the official definition: 'Yoga is the suppression of the mental modifications.' That sounds great, marvelous. This small sutra only has four words, of which three words define, one word. 'Yoga' is the word and 'citta-vritti-nirodhah' define it. How does one know what 'Chitta' means?

May 27 - Afternoon Q/A

The afternoon session offers an very interesting Q/A session. Here's a sample:

Student: When you say just let things happen, do you just let them?

Venkatesananda: Not 'let things happen' - that in itself sounds arrogant. You do not let the sun shine. Sun shines. It happens. 'Let it happen' suggests the choice. It happens, and it will happen. If somebody gives me a ballot paper and says check one of those, I will check one. It happens. Who makes it happen? When you look into that, you see whom makes the choice. Is there a choice at all and who makes the choice? And where do you come in in making the choice?

Student: Do I come in at all?

Venkatesananda: Who made the choice? If he runs for Governor British Columbia ... I think he is a nice guy; he will probably let me build a nice ashram,

and exempt me from taxes and so on. So, what makes the choice? The anticipation, the calculation, the intellect which hopes, expect something to happen? Or there is an emotional reaction. I like him or I have no ambitions along, somehow I just like him. So is it the emotion that makes the choice?

I vote without expectations. I vote without emotions. I vote without remembering that he did anything good. I vote without remembering that he did something not so good, or I do not vote, or I am made to do something about it. I am just picking out things which you have all said. And if I am made to do something about it, by whom? By what is called the me. Is the me facing the world and its glamour, or is the me facing the truth? Is me is facing the truth - truth is reflected through to me and it makes things happen. If the me is facing the world and its glamour, that is reflected in the me and the action springs from there. Do I have any choice at all? Yes, only there. Only in that small but vital detail (do) I have a choice. The me can either face the truth or the me can face the unreality. That is all. Only the facing. The action springs from there.

May 28 - Morning Talk

Chittam, as the mind of the heart, in the sense of the seat of intelligence, is often translated as 'intellect.' I do not know if we really make a fine distinction between the mind and the intellect. Chittam refers to the intelligence, the intelligence which operates even when what is called the 'mind' or the waking consciousness, is not active. That which thinks, that which recalls memories, that which plans, that which makes choices, all these are more or less mind, even though you might find in yoga literature scholars, not yogis but scholars splitting hairs.

All this can be grouped into the mind itself though they make a distinction there: as the hands and feet are external organs of action, antahkarana, the mind or whatever it is, the psychological apparatus, is the inner instrument. It is the inner instrument of action, just as the hands and feet are for physical instruments. But the hands and feet are not the thing itself. There is something which makes them function. They are made of some other stuff. But his mind made up? What is the intellect made of?

Chitta is that intelligence. It is something that is intangible. Why is it intangible? Because that is the thinker. You cannot possibly visualize it, just as the wave in a lake cannot become aware of the extent of the lake itself. In any knowing where there is a subject-object relationship - I know you - what do I know? How do I know I? Even if we are able to resolve all the confusion we started yesterday, do I know you? Granting that I know you or, using the expression in the common idiom that I know your name and your passport particulars, how can I know myself?

May 28 - Afternoon Q/A

Is there a mind? There is a doctrine in The Yoga Vasistha which says that there

are two forms of destruction of the mind. One where the form of the mind is kept and the other where the form is gone. In order to destroy it, one must know what it is.

May 29 - Experience and Expression

I think it is good to remind ourselves every now and then that yoga, or what is called Raja Yoga is meant to enable us to understand the whole business of life, or, experience and expression. What is an experience and what is an expression? This is important because we are related to this life, to this world, with these two: experience and expression. A clear idea of what the Vritti is, immediately enables us to understand the truth concerning the nature of experience and the nature of expression.

May 29 - Afternoon Discussion Q/A - Misconceptions of the Guru

This discussion mostly focuses on conceptions and misconceptions of the guru.

Concerning the guru, there is the traditional view and there is the view of some of the Masters who have been known to us in recent times, and thirdly there is swami Sivananda's own example.

Swami Sivananda adopted a rather beautiful attitude. That is: the traditional teaching is the traditional teaching; tradition is tradition. Tradition is transmitted. In the traditional teaching itself, or in traditional practice, there are two elements. One is guru as part of a social structure. It has nothing whatsoever to do with your spiritual instruction. It is part of the social religious structure. That is, if you are born a Catholic, you have a priest, who is more or less your guru. If you are born in the Jewish faith, you have a rabbi. He looks after the community. To call it spiritual welfare - I very much doubt it.

They had a system like that in India also, and they were also called gurus. So you could find about 8 to 9 million gurus. Each family, each community, had its own guru. We did call them guru, but I really have never understood the word - sort of when you wanted to perform your daughter's wedding, you went to him and asked him what is an auspicious day - that sort of thing. The word guru also means heavy - so if you want enlightenment, do not go to the guru (laughs).

That is one tradition. That is: it is part of the social structure. A holy man who was suppose to guide the community, he was not terribly interested in your spiritual welfare as such. If you went to him to ask him how to meditate, he might tell you to repeat 'Ram Ram.' They used to officiate, not like the priests; the priests were the Brahmans. But, these people were often swamis, sannyasis, but not gurus in a personal relationship. There were usually swamis or some kind of traditional religious personalities, not merely Brahmin, and they acted as the spiritual shepherd of the community. And the one thing they demanded was that the community should be made of sheep; nobody should think, nobody should do

anything at all, just bray a little, and they would respond - that sort of thing.

In addition to that, one had one's personal guru. That is very different than one has to understand it very clearly. When it came to that, Swami Sivananda kept quiet. He insisted that we, the students, must have the guru and at the same time, in the same breath, not blowing hot and cold alternately, but in the same breath, he said that you should be very cautious that the idea that you are a guru does not get into your head.

If there is no guru, how can I be a disciple? Where do I find the guru? That is up to you. He never got involved in that. In His own living example, we had this remarkable synthesis of contradictions, if one might call it so. It was a beautiful thing to watch. He allowed you to treat Him as your guru, but he never treated Himself as your guru. You bow down to Him. All right, you would bow down to Him. You can do what you like. But He also bowed down. That is not what guru does. The other gurus will not do that. Especially the community gurus would never do that. He sits on his frown or whatever it is, and you come and fall down to him until you get a blister on your nose, and he might eventually bid you stop then. That is sickening.

In Swami Sivananda's case, you were free to treat yourselves as disciples, but He never acknowledged that he was your guru. Why is it so? Because it is an entirely inward, an inner experience that the disciple has, and not merely inner feeling. It might start with an inner feeling. But it is really an inner experience that the disciple has. And the guru, or whoever it is, might not even know that I had the experience, and that I regard him as the guru.

Therefore, in essence, the experience is the guru. He happened to be there as one of the causes for this to happen, but it is the inner experience that is the guru. He made it possible, so I bow down to him. And it is an experience which is in me, in my heart. It is possible that he knows it; it is even possible that he is unaware of it.

May 30 - Day 5 - Morning Talk

The individuality or the personality is itself a vritti, is itself wave, is itself a ripple, is itself a movement of energy in this consciousness. In cosmic consciousness, this energy is moving from everywhere to everywhere all the time, and one such rate, one such spark, which means every spark all over the place all the time, assumes I am status. Just as we feel I am, there are billions of bugs here, just as there are millions of fish laying their eggs, there is life everywhere in every speck of space. The stone is only a stone in relation to us, to me. Consciousness-energy here thinks it is a human being; there it thinks it is a stone. There is no essential difference at all. This I am vritti somehow assumes an individuality and having assumed and individuality, it reinterprets all the current of energy moving all the time and apparently through this individuality also, as both experience and expression. Experience and expression have nothing whatsoever to do with the

individual, but the interpretation is the individual's.

Is that right? Wind blows, but that it is hot or cold is your interpretation. We can see that amongst ourselves. Some people like it hot; so they do not mind a bit of warm air, and a shiver when it gets a little cold. Some people like it cold, so what is warm to you is not warm to me. What is cold to me is not cold to you. The movement itself does not belong to the individual personality, but the interpretation is entirely the personality's. It is not there in the movement. That is the fun. If this fun is grasped, then the whole thing becomes easy. The cold wind does not come near your eyes and say: 'I am cold! Cover yourself.' It is you who interprets that wind to be cold. The hot wind does not blow on you and say: 'I am hot! Peel yourself.' But you interpret that to be hot and take your clothes off.

In the same way, the personality interprets what we call 'actions' which may be looked upon as the energy passing through and leaving the personality. The energy that is received by the personality is the experience; the energy that leaves the personality is the action, is the expression. And the same energy when it leaves the personality, it leaves the personality as it wills. What is the expression? The wind keeps blowing. But again, the personality, the individual, interprets it as right action, wrong action, right knowledge, wrong knowledge, imagination, neutral action, loving action, hateful action. The flow of energy itself is not affected by any of these, nor is the consciousness which is everywhere all the time.

May 30 - Day 5 - Afternoon Q/A

Student: What is the meaning of Sannyasin? Is that the renunciation of the ego or do you have to renounce all sorts of attachments?

Venkatesananda: Yes, what is renunciation? What is it to give up attachments? What do I give up? How do I give up attachment? Are you attached anything at all? Anybody?

Student: I have an attachment. For one thing - a canary.

Venkatesananda: I do not see it here at all; you are not attached to it at all. It is not here.

Student: It is in my mind.

Venkatesananda: What is the mind, and what is in the mind? Thought is in the mind. Is the canary in your mind now?

Student: No.

Venkatesananda: Then, therefore, as you are concerned, the canary is nowhere. When there is a thought of a canary, that thought says, 'I am attached to the canary.' That is, again, a thought, isn't it? What does it have to do with you? Is it real? Can you produce it?

Student: Sometimes it has an emotional ...

Venkatesananda: Sometimes means not at all times. Say an 8 ounce glass which has 4 ounces of milk in it - why must I say half empty, why not half full? So when the thought of canary rises in the mind only sometimes, why look at that and say I am attached to it?

June - Day 6 - Morning Talk - Abhyasa and Vairagya - The 'me'

We were discussing the two concepts of abhyasa and vairagya the other day. Abhyasa and vairagya are based on the assumption that individuality is there, meaning when we become aware, when we wake up, in the simple ordinary sense of that word, when we begin to think and mind begins to function, the 'I' is already there. If the individuality were not there, then there would be no problem; you are free.

The individuality, the personality, seems to exist from a certain point of view, or plane of understanding. It is that personality which interprets the movement of energy and consciousness as experience at one point and as expression at another. When that thing energy passes through, it becomes action on the other side.

Your expression is my experience. My expression is your experience. So, if it is an expression here, it is an experience there. And if it is an experience here, it is an expression there. From me, it is expression, and in you it is an experience.

But all this, the characterization of experience, and the characterization of expression are entirely dependent upon this me. And as long as the me is there, the division will continue to be, the distinctions will continue to be, and the struggle continues to be. Sorrow continues to be; happiness continues to be; unhappiness continues to be, pleasure, pain, all these continue to be. Right, wrong, good, evil, God, Satan, devil, all these come into being as soon as that funny thing has come into being - the me.

How does one overcome this vritti called 'me'? Me is the vritti. So, how does one overcome this vritti? By abhyasa and vairagya. They are two sides of the same coin. Abhyasa is related to the expression and vairagya is related to the experience. The experience colors the me and thereby perpetuates the divided experience as pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness. Can I switch that off? That is called vairagya, uncoloredness.

Vairagya is unfortunately translated into dispassion. One can say so, provided that we understand what we are talking about. Vairagya also means uncoloredness. Can the movement of energy, the experience, be made not to leave a trace in this consciousness as it comes and goes? Can all experiences come and go without leaving a trace?

This again has been very beautifully described in The Yoga Vasistha by 'the flight of birds.' As birds fly, unlike fish swimming or boats plowing through water, birds leave no mark at all. A bird flying in the air does not leave a mark like the boat moving on the surface of the lake. Can all experiences behave in this way? That is, can this I, can this me, be so transparent that it does not hold anything, so that it does not receive an impression? Because, when it receives an impression, it

requires a predisposition or habit, a vasana, a samskara. Then like your photographic filters, the samskara acts like a filter. It goes looking for those experiences - some experiences are welcome, other experiences are unwelcome. If that experience had been allowed to pass through the transparent me, than no impression gets formed, no samskara is formed, no groove is formed, and there is no filter, and all light continues to flow through this without being obstructed. When the groove is formed, when the samskara is formed, when the filter is formed, it invites or welcomes only certain experiences and rejects certain other experiences. Pleasure and pain have come into being. Therefore, as long as the me is there, pleasure and pain cannot be avoided.

On the other side, the same thing is abhyasa. It is the energy that goes out which acts, not me. It is the same cosmic energy that is in constant motion that is functioning there. When that is seen, that is abhyasa. Abhyasa is the practice of the awareness of the non-existence of me, constantly.

June - Day 6 - Afternoon Q/A

Student: Please talk more about uncoloredness and passion.

Venkatesananda: They are two completely different things, totally different. Passion is needed; passion is there, passion in the sense of whole-souled action, total action. Total action is passionate action, very passionate, intensely passionate action. As a matter of fact, what is called 'raga' which is coloring or infatuation, may bring about suppression of this passion.

That is, to give you an example, I like something, and because I like it, I suppress all the other, surging energy. I have been told that this is bad and so, in order not to be bad, I suppress myself. The passion is lost. Whereas here, it is mere uncolored action, but intensely passionate, full of energy, full of passion, full of zeal.

Student: How was it uncolored?

Venkatesananda: It is uncolored in the sense that it does not flow along a groove. It is pure, and therefore uncolored. It is not prejudiced. The experience comes along as the movement of energy and that movement of energy, as it passes through this, is full of energy, full of zeal, this moment. Then it is gone; it goes. So un-colored means without it's leaving any impression behind. If that movement of energy leaves an impression behind, that impression looks for similar experience again. It happens especially in what people call meditation.

One day I was sitting in meditation like this and I had that. I nearly jumped up. All right. That is something that happened. Very good or very bad, I do not know. That happened. But unfortunately the mind registers that experience as a memory, as a color, that color sticks there, and looks for it again, craves for it.

All desires spring from this mental coloredness. When you use filters in the camera, the filter selects one color and rejects other colors. In exactly the same

way, when the mind is colored, it accepts certain experiences and rejects other experiences. Therefore when further flow of energy continues, there is distress. There is passionate action when the right color appears and rejection when something different appears. When the mind itself is not colored, all experiences pass through it without distraction and in totality; every experience is total.

June - Day 7 - Morning Talk

The approach we have been discussing needs an inner mental discipline by which you must be able to ruthlessly cut down all thoughts with counter thoughts. We are not discriminating here about whether the thoughts are good or bad. All thoughts are cut down by counter thoughts. This approach may not suit some. Especially when it comes to the stage of vichara, where there is no argumentation but straight movement, tremendous psychological discipline is needed to keep the mind from straying, or we end up in a vicious circle: if one cannot control the mind, one cannot do vichara, and if one cannot do vichara, one cannot control the mind.

In other words, if you are emotional, if your heart rules your head, yesterday's approach may be very difficult. If they are perfectly balanced, it is all right. If they are not perfectly balanced, as in the case of most of us, either the head rules, or the heart rules. One has to look within and see.

I am sure you are seeing is a problem here again. I have to look within and see, gauge for myself whether I should adapt yesterday's method or today's method - the heart approach, or a third which we will discuss in a couple of days, that which is called Ashtanga Yoga. How are you going to know?

June - Day 7 - Afternoon Q/A

Venkatesananda: Ramana Maharshi and The Yoga Vasistha have said something very interesting. Enlightenment being like awakening any state that is close to it no matter how close to it, is like the husband and wife sleeping together and remain completely different dreams. But they are close to each other makes no difference at all. It is only on waking up that they realize that they are together. That's it!

Student: What is awakening then?

Venkatesananda: Awakening is awakening to the truth, awakening to what is the reality.

Student: How does it differ from Enlightenment?

Venkatesananda: Same thing! They do make a slight academic difference between the two. If we are neither asleep or enlightened; we are dangling like a pendulum. Sometimes we go to sleep, and sometimes we feel we are close to enlightenment. On the one hand, we are most of the time asleep, but sometimes we think we are enlightened, and that is the state of awakening. The

enlightenment experience seems to be very close, which means that it is (still) not there. It is like congratulating oneself that I am not so bad as I thought I was.

June - Day 8 - Morning Talk

Repeating the mantra 'Om' in the prescribed manner, includes and involves contemplation of the substance or the reality indicated by it. This is a game you can play with yourself as often as you like: 'Name an object'. You see that the name is connected to the object, and the meaning of the name is given by pointing to the object. So, pointing to the book: 'This is 'book.' You do not say: 'A collection of printed papers bound in a certain fashion.' And, pointing to a cap: 'This is cap,' not, 'A woven piece of material which fits on someone's head. You go on like that: this is tree, that is a poster, this is a blackboard, that is a man, and without defining or getting into more words, you go on playing around this way - until you ask: What is happiness? Stuck!

Venkatesananda: Abhyasa means practice. Patanjali has given a few of them, but he says you should do what you like. By doing that, the technique is denoted from being an end in itself. It is merely a method. If you do not like the method, you can try something else. But once you have chosen one method, stick to that.

Student: Why?

Venkatesananda: Why? Because you could spend a few lifetimes trying all the methods, one by one.

Student: Can't one use more than one message?

Venkatesananda: You can. As long as you use one method that I am rooted in, you can branch out. otherwise, just as you are about to make a breakthrough, as it were you going, you he might switch, and do something else. One never knows what that point is. Why should I go on with a method that I have adopted? Truth is they are come everywhere so that it is not necessary for me to go from one to the other. It is not necessary for me to go from here to there.

Student: How do you know what method is good for you?

Venkatesananda: It is not a matter of what is good, or what comes naturally.

Student: But if it is what comes naturally, we seem to be more inclined towards what is comfortable.

Venkatesananda: Yes. Go along towards what is comfortable, and push a little further. When it starts hurting, do not run away. Keep pushing a little more. I am not interested in the message just being comfortable, but if, right from the beginning, it is uncomfortable, then I am going to turn away. It must be related to me somehow and then I enter, I start going on the path with that technique. Then I find it is no longer comfortable. It is leading me to some funny place. I ask myself questions which are frightening.

Even meditation is frightening to some because, the moment everything becomes

quiet, I am faced with myself and I am scared. Then, if I say that meditation is not the right thing, I will drop that and do something else. But ... I am going to reach the same place sooner or later.

If I have understood the total picture, understood what I am trying to get at, I understand I am trying to get at me. And how do I get at that me? It is everywhere; it is there in everything I am doing. That is what is doing ... now! It is there everywhere, in all my experiences, and all that I do, in all that I experience.

The me does not want to be challenged. I invent some thing where the me is not challenged at all.

June - Day 9 - Morning Talk

Raja Yoga also includes something called Kriya Yoga. Kriya means action; it involves doing. So it (Raja Yoga) sounds like Karma Yoga. And, Karma Yoga (like Raja Yoga) also involves something like Isvarapranindhana (vital to the Kriya Yoga), which is like Bhakti Yoga. So I hope we will stop dividing this yoga into bits and pieces, stop dividing yoga into departments and compartments.

Kriya Yoga has three vital practices, the Isvarapranindhana (bhakti or devotion), and Tapas and Swadhyaya.

Tapas literally means a burning light, and may include anything that creates a burning within the inner being.

Swadhyaya may mean study, (which sort of hands you a flashlight), and also japa. It also means constant study into one's nature - Sva - oneself, and dhyaya - study. It may be interpreted to mean both studying oneself or studying by oneself.

After introducing the components of the Raja Yoga practices referred to as Kriya Yoga, Swami Venkatesananda explores the aims behind the practices: the wearing down of the five klesas - psychic distress or inner sorrow.

June - Day 9 - Afternoon Q/A

Someone had asked how Gurudev Sivananda's Integral Yoga was written. One day a very talented young man had come to the Ashram, in Rishikesh, in order to write Gurudev's biography.

Writer: I would like to write your biography.

Gurudev: Good. Very good.

Writer: And I want some information, pointing in my direction ...

Gurudev: Ask this swami here, and he will tell you.

And so from that day forward, both of us would work on this. I would give him information, and he would put it in his own style, using his own talent. So

whatever I knew I told him, the Master's boyhood, the Master's life in Malaya as a doctor, how He renounced and came to India, how we wandered around, all that information that I knew, I gave him. I also said that he went to Swarg Ashram, practiced meditation and attained enlightenment.

Writer: What is meditation? What is his technique? And, what is enlightenment? What is self-realization? What was his experiences?

I looked at him, and thought, 'I do not know if I can explain all this to you.'

Writer: Ah, you are no good! I will ask Swami Sivananda.

Marvelous! I did not dare to ask these questions. If somebody else is bold enough to do that why should I stop him?

June - Day 10 - Final Session

Out of all the discussions that we so far had, a slight insight into what the yogis called truth and falsehood emerges.

Cosmic indivisible intelligence is true. It is cosmic karma indivisible, and it is consciousness, intelligence. That is true. The lake with all its ripples, with all its currents, and with all its waves, that is all true, but the wave does not come and say, 'I am this way'; the reptile does not come and say 'I am this ripple.' It is only because we are outside it that we name them, that we distinguish them, the one from the other.

The totality is truth. That does not mean that the totality has to be free of the waves and the ripples. So also, it does not mean that we have to cease to exist or commit suicide before self-knowledge can be attained. Deep within this reptile there is the same lake. Why do I say 'within this ripple'? Because something needs to be said.

And when I said that the self is in the heart, they did not mean the heart that is his flesh. In the definition given by the Yoga Vasistha, the heart is the consciousness in that body. And where is the consciousness in that body? There is nothing but consciousness in the body! You see it as gross flesh because you are looking with 'fleshy' eyes. And the mind that is thought can see it as only a thought? Is that right? The mind sees it as a concept, as a notion, as a personality.

It is not that I see consciousness. On the plane of consciousness, consciousness becomes conscious of consciousness. Naturally the I sees the differences, because the flesh sees only flesh and the mind sees only thought, concepts: man, woman, blond hair, red hair, a beautiful girl or a strong man. While all these are all the time true, the truth is not conceptual, and not divisible. All these are true on their own planes, yet all these exist without any division whatsoever. Lake is true, waves are true, ripples are true, but that the waves and the ripples are independently true ... is false.

This examination (above) of truth and falsehood, is the introduction to the final talk in this Raja Yoga series, and posts such vital questions, as 'Who is the Seer?', bringing us on step closer to Patanjali's vision of oneness.