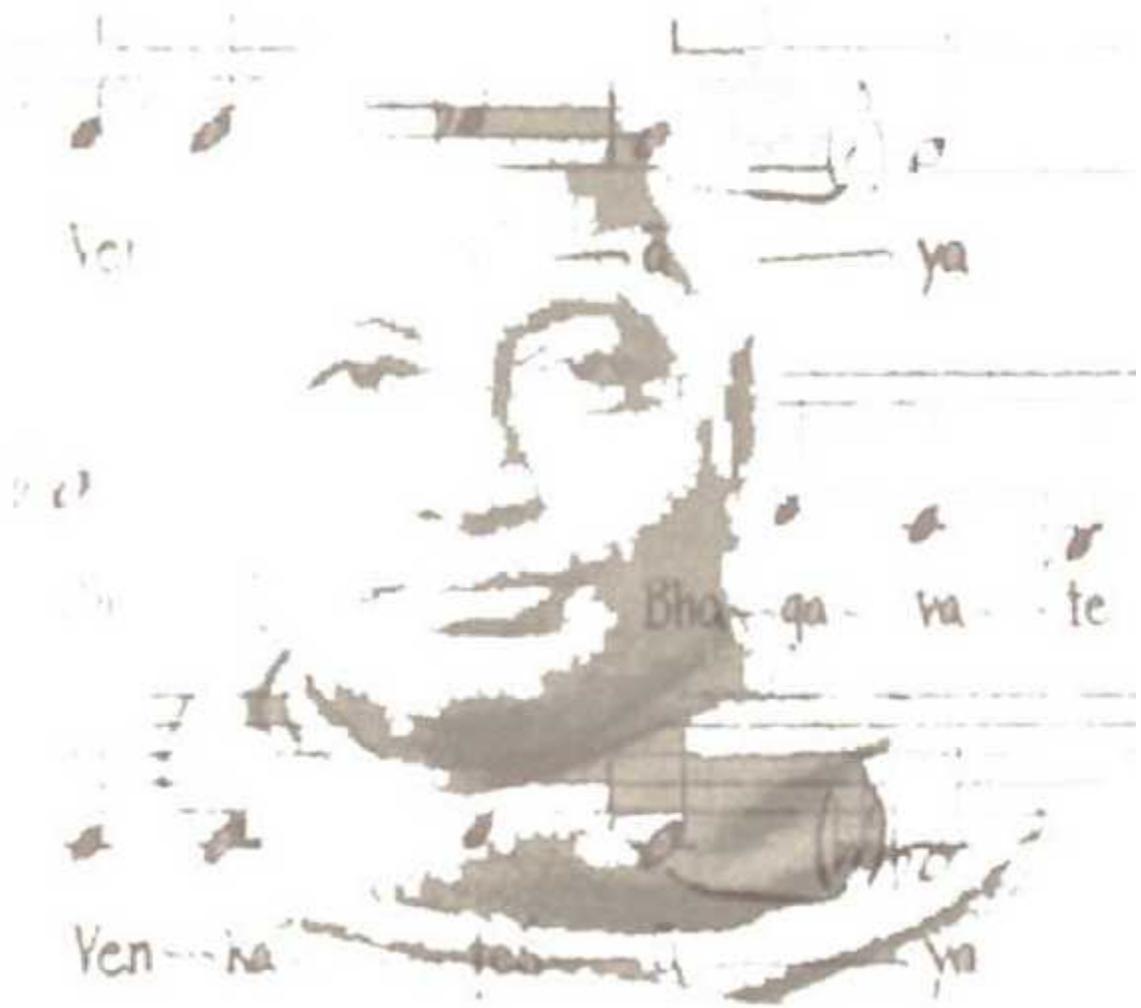


Wake up!
Stay alert!

Swami Venkatesananda



Om Namah Venkatesaya
Om Namah Shivaya

Wake Up! Stay Alert!

Swami Venkatesananda

1976

South Fremantle
Western Australia

Wake Up! Stay Alert!

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First discussion

This morning at Murdoch University, someone mentioned different departments and branches of knowledge. All these are branches of knowledge - but there are no branches without roots. What is the root?

Audience: Truth.

Swami: What is truth?

Audience: What is.

Swami: So, I must get back to what 'is', not merely what appears to be. I must not merely hang on a couple of branches - they may break, as they often break.

How do we find the root? Truth is a word. If you did not study, and if nobody taught you the word 'truth', what would be your experience when confronted with the truth? What is. 'What is' is two words. If those words are knocked out of your brain, what would be the corresponding inner experience? 'Inner experience' again is words. If even those words are knocked away - 'that' is what is. Isn't it? Something that is beyond words. When it comes to expressing it, it becomes funny. You have an experience, and when it is expressed, it is already twisted - and therefore the truth, the root, is hidden. In the case of botany, too the roots are always hidden under the earth. If all the roots are exposed, there is danger of the tree collapsing and killing you.

When we are looking at branches of knowledge, it is better for us to contemplate the whole structure. I do not hang on the branch of knowledge, but go down by the stem and then dig into the root. If I dig to it from the outside, the tree collapses on me. The trunk is me. I am the one who acquires the knowledge, who has created these branches, dividing the one tree and making it look like a trunk with many branches. There is no harm in regarding a branch as a branch, provided I realise that it is not independent of the tree. So, getting onto the branch, I get into the tree and must dig right down to the root. Then I have found the truth.

In Yoga also we have committed the same mistake of creating branches where none exists - it is a tree. People ask, 'What branch of Yoga do you practise?' So, there is a Hatha Yogi, a Karma Yogi, and a Bhakti Yogi, etc. In our bodies we see through the eyes, hear through the ears, feel through the skin - so, it looks as though there are branches even there. But I must realise that, where there is a branch, there is a tree - like, where there is smoke, there is fire.

To find the truth, I may take any branch of knowledge, or Yoga, and I must go down into the trunk, the trunk being me - the 'me' that observes, sees, and is aware of these branches. It is the tree that is aware of the branches, not the branches that are aware of the tree. Having arrived there, I go a little deeper to

see where the 'me' springs from. It springs from the root which is hidden under the earth, and I cannot possibly get at the root from outside. You can dig around the tree to find the root, but that is dangerous, because the tree is again kept as an object. The more I study the object as an object, totally independent of me, I do not see it as truth. I see it as a menace, an object outside. Either I try to exploit it, as we have always done with knowledge - it must give me power to control or dominate something else, and thereby create hostility, antagonism, or, without knowing 'me', I am trying to know you - which is absurd. Without knowing who or what I am, I am trying to know something else. Our Master Swami Sivananda used to use the following example very often. If I am bilious, honey tastes sour. If I am suffering from jaundice, the walls look yellow. So, first I should know what I am, or 'I' is, because that is the trunk that divides all this, creating branches where there is only a tree.

What is that trunk? The trunk of the tree is an extension of the root, above the ground. The tree did not drop and start digging a hole into the earth to stick the roots in. You planted a seed - the roots came first and the trunk came later. So, what is the root of the thing called 'me'? That is underground, not above, and therefore not subject to description. It is something which cannot be seen, which, if seen, becomes a menace, a danger. When what is - or what is truth, is seen as an object, it becomes a danger, because the 'me' is still hidden. So, from whatever branch I choose - Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, I come down into the 'me', and then while looking for the roots, the whole effort becomes meditation. To arrive at this, I can take any branch - yoga, physiology, anatomy, music, study of scriptures - it does not matter what it is called. But whatever it is, it must eventually lead me there - lead me into the 'me'.

There is a division already. I know myself. I want to know myself. I see myself. I know I am so and so - a good man, a bad man, a yogi. What does 'I know I am' mean? I know I am - so the knower is quite distinct from the being. Therefore, getting hold of the branch running through it as its sap, I must get into the 'me' and first make this thing a hole. That whole thing must dive under. When that consciousness, that intelligence, or that harmonised being dives in, since it is going right through the tree, it is not aware when it has entered below the earth's surface. Therefore, there is no division between consciousness, sub-consciousness, and unconsciousness. These are like the roots and the stem of the tree, and this distinction is valid only as long as you are standing outside and looking at an object. If I am getting into the very sap of the tree and going down there, I do not know when I have left the upper section and entered the lower section - there is neither upper nor lower section. It is one tree right down to two hundred feet below ground level. There is unity from the tip of the root, right up to the tip of the tallest branch - it is just one piece. That is called the Tree of Knowledge. Again, when you call it that, you are outside. We have a passion for naming things. God asked Adam to name all these things - that is where the mischief started. Without naming any of these, can I become one with them? I am one with them. That is what is what is truth. Not what we describe and not what the truth appears to be. That is also, perhaps, what is meant by Self-

knowledge.

Unfortunately, again, we have painted lovely images of all this. Self-knowledge means 'I must know the Atma'. It means nothing. 'Atma' is the Sanskrit word for 'Self' and when I translate Self-knowledge into knowledge of the Atma, I have done nothing. How does one go about this? The whole thing is called Yoga. But, the moment I call it so, I have isolated myself from it.

Swami Sivananda always insisted that a wise Yogi should avoid specialisation, that everything should always be done a little - a little of japa, a little meditation, a little study, a little chanting, and some asanas and pranayama. Why a little, why not more? Is there any harm in meditating more than a little? He almost suggested that it was - unless meditation took over. Unless you are helplessly drawn to meditation all the time, do not keep on sitting brooding and think that you are meditating; better do something else - wash the dishes, do some gardening, study, do japa, sing, chant, jump up and down or stand on your head. Why is it so? He said that if you tend more towards specialisation, you would probably run away from Self-knowledge. By specialising, you are feeding the ego rather than thinning it. For instance, if you are not a specialist at all and you can do a few asanas, you know how to do japa and you have trained yourself in some meditation, you have very little to boast about. Perhaps 'I am an Integral yogi?', but it is not so showy and there is nothing you can demonstrate. Do you know who demonstrates? Do you know what demonstrate means? The first five letters of that word: demon. To demonstrate, therefore, is to be on the same strata as the demon. So, that is what happens. If I am a great meditator, I demonstrate meditation. I can sit like this for six hours, looking at the tip of his nose. Who is interested in all that?

If you go to some holy places in India you may see a very holy man sitting in the blazing Indian summer sun, almost naked on the sand, roasting, and in addition to all this he has fires going four sides. He sits completely undisturbed by all this. Then you find that in front of him he has spread a towel. You think, 'Ah, a marvelous holy man', and you drop a coin. You think you are buying your exit out of this world or your entrance into the next one - twenty cents on the towel. It is showmanship. It does not benefit you or me spiritually.

Audiences: Does it benefit him?

Swami: Hm, yes; he gets about two dollars a day. That I can get for cleaning her house for one hour. Why must I do all that for two dollars? That is it. How does it benefit me. When I am demonstrating, is my attention on me or you? Let us be terribly honest.

Audience: But is this holy man necessarily demonstrating?

Swami: Why else must he sit outside in the sun, and why must he spread a towel in front? He could sit in the shade far away from anyone's sight. Swami

Sivananda also did not approve of that kind of austerity or penance, self-mortification. He recommended another one which is also very Christian. He said that life itself brings its own punishment, enough troubles - and if you are able to put up with all that without wincing that is true punishment to the ego. But, it is not all that simple. One can again feed the ego with insults. Swami Sivananda said, 'Bear insult, bear injury. This is the highest Sadhana, the highest form of Yoga'. But, if I am able to bear insult and injury without getting ruffled - like the biblical saying, 'Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you', that also may be egotistically done.

Here is a path which is integrated with life. Life is full of ups and downs. If two people say I am a nice man, ten people are going to say I am a horrible person. This is the reason why we are given two ears: with one I listen to the praises, and with the other I listen to the abuses - and while listening to all that, I am watching. This is the branch, and I get into the trunk of the tree. Am I disturbed by all this? If I am not disturbed, or even if I am disturbed, what is it that remains undisturbed, or what is it that is disturbed? Me.

That I am undisturbed is not an immediate liberation or salvation, as far as I am concerned. I must still see what it is that remains undisturbed, or what it is that is disturbed. In which case, why is it that equanimity is so exalted? Because, only when the mind is undisturbed by these, does it become transparent. Being transparent - it is easier to see the whole thing, the totality, without distraction and distortion. When the glass is fogged, two things happen - it veils and is also capable of distorting the vision. When the glass is transparent, it neither obstructs nor distorts the vision, and in fact it is not even seen. Some people have walked straight through a glass door - to the hospital.

So, when the mind - or whatever is inside me, is totally transparent, it does not obstruct my vision, it does not obstruct nor distort the vision of truth, and even the existence of the mind is not seen. That is when truth is real.

That is penance enough. That is the real penance. Probably even this man - if he was not demonstrating but was honest in treating it as a spiritual exercise, intended to do this in the beginning - sit on the burning sands, the blazing sun above and the heat of fire on four sides, and enquire 'What is it that is hurt by all this?' Me. What is 'me'? We come back to the same thing. But then, the human personality, being so tough, adjusts and adapts to any condition, and after a couple of weeks you get used to that kind of thing and then it does not hurt you anymore. There is practically nothing that we won't get used to. Even though Swami Sivananda said, 'Bear insult, bear injury', people can get used even to that. You become so thick skinned that it does not hurt you anymore. The only thing that is valid, therefore, is the spirit of enquiry. That must somehow be kept up.

There is a lovely story in the Yoga Vasishta. Someone prays to God and does some penance and eventually sees God standing in front of him. God says, 'I am pleased with you. Ask for a boon.' He asks, 'Please give me something which is

unending' - like unending happiness, unending peace. He does not mention that, but only says, 'Give 'me' something unending, infinite?' So, it is not the infinite, but must lead me to the infinite. God says, 'Enquire who you are.' That is the only unending thing. Even if you have peace or happiness, that also becomes boring, sooner or later, and you want something else. So, this business of enquiring who I am, or who 'I' is, is unending. That enquiry can come to an end only when the enquirer has come to an end. Both of you come to an end together, like the famous black widow spider. The male and the female dance the mating dance, and they go on and on, and eventually mate. As soon as the mating is over, the female eats the male, makes a nice meal of it. So, this spider is a widow all the time. As soon as she finds a husband, she becomes a widow.

That is what happens in this enquiry. You go on enquiring, searching, seeking - and the moment you find it, you are finished. The moment this male spider finds a mate, his life comes to an end. The seeker is finished in the seeking - and the seeking is finished in the seeker. That is the only thing that can keep you going endlessly. Because, when the seeking ends, the seeker ends, and when the seeker ends, the seeking ends.

Audience: What happens to the seeker?

Swami: The seeker is absorbed in the seeking all the time, and when he finds what he is seeking, he finds he is seeking the seeker, himself. It is like a doll made of salt diving into the ocean to measure its depth and width and volume. As long as it is there, it is still diving. When it dissolves, it finds the depth of the ocean, the width, everything. It has become one with it.

To get that, one can use any technique. You can use the five fires as long as it is not meant as demonstration. It is also mentioned in the Bible that, when you fast, you should not pull a long face, but be cheerful. When you pray, shut yourself up, be by yourself. They have tried both pleasure and pain as incentives for this self-observation - vichara. We will not call it enquiry, it is not intellectual nor analysis. Any sensation is good enough, because the sensation is a branch. From the branch, go down into the trunk - which is the 'me', the 'I' which experiences the sensation, and then go down to the root. The sensation is the key, the door is the 'I'. As the sensation is itself the key, you can use any sensation, whether you call it pleasure or pain. Life brings all these experiences, sensations.

There were two divergent schools of thought. The famous tantric school used the experience of pleasure - eat, drink and be merry, and through that, while you are enjoying these pleasures, direct the mind to the enjoyment and let that pleasurable sensation take you to the root - which is the mind, which is the truth. But, can you do that? When you are enjoying yourself, are you looking within to see where this pleasurable sensation is experienced, or who it is that is experiencing this sensation? If you can do that, you are a Yogi. Very soon they discovered that you got lost in the pleasure itself, that there was no awareness of anything beyond the objective experience. While experiencing, you are supposed

to be observing yourself, but that is forgotten and you are observing the beloved. So, they said that this is a trap.

It is better to abandon it and go back to the idea of five fires, because, here there is pain and pain keeps you awake. It does not allow you to forget the quest. But then, pain, when it is sought, becomes pleasure - sadistic or masochistic - and you enjoy it.

So, there is no easy solution to this problem at all. Enquiry is to be done - whatever you are doing, whether it is a spectacular demonstration of Yoga or the prosaic routine business of living, can you be constantly watchful? Then the truth is there.

Second discussion

Unless you forget your biography, it is difficult to withdraw yourself completely and focus upon your true identity. As long as we are caught up in the maze of identification, it is hard to find one's identity. Where you are known, you are constantly reminded that you are the son or daughter of so and so, a naughty girl, a good girl, or whatever it is. The environment does not allow you to break off, even when you are keen on doing it - the social pressure is so intense. But there are exceptions. For instance, Ramana Maharshi did not go far from his home, and later his mother and brother and all the old crowd joined him, but yet he could laugh the whole thing off. However, it is not easy. On the other hand, you could go away from your native land to another country, and build up another circle of friends, acquaintances, and attachments there. You can run away from one wife and go and find another. So, it is not difficult to realise that the spirit is more important than the letter.

If one understands the spirit, there is something extremely beautiful in it. Can I live a life that is totally free of identification - not identity, but identification? I identify myself as an Indian, or a Brahmin, or a Swami, or as somebody's brother or sister. Can all that be snapped so that, when I am mature enough inwardly to undertake the quest to find my identity, my identification does not weigh me down. That is one of the basic tenets of the Buddha. Buddha himself more or less returned to his home, but that requires tremendous inner strength. If you come from an affluent family and you suddenly choose to become a Buddhist monk or nun, you must take up the begging bowl and go and stand in front of your own people's houses. It is not very easy, it does not come naturally. It is considered a disgrace by the family and you are aware of their feeling, even though you may be totally free from attachment. You tell yourself, 'It does not worry me or bother me at all, I have transcended all that', but you have not, in as much as there is a thought that this conduct is considered a disgrace by the family amongst whom you were brought up. Since that thought arises in you, there is a dead weight.

There is also another story of a great holy man who lived in South India a few hundred years ago. He was fabulously wealthy, and suddenly something happened. He abandoned his house and wealth and became a mendicant in his own village, begging from his own relations. When he stood in front of his sister and asked for alms, she looked at him and thought, 'Everyone thinks you are mad. They ask me what is happened to you. I think you have lost your head. You are a disgrace upon our whole family. This is a first class opportunity to get rid of you.' So she poisoned the food and gave it to him. That is what happens. They may not poison your food, but they may poison your mind by constantly rebuking you. They weep and cry, 'Oh, my dear, what has happened to you, what have we done to you?' It must have some effect on you, sooner or later. So, he received that food, and because his own heart was pure and untainted by any attachment, he realised that there was poison in it. He recited a very beautiful verse which means: if you commit a crime or sin, only you will be affected by it, not me, and saying, 'You poisoned this, not me, so it will only burn your house'; he threw it on

the house and it caught fire. So, if you 'go' completely away from all this, it is easier.

Audience: So, would you say that when anyone commits a sin, it comes back to the offender and hits them more than the person upon whom they perpetrate the crime?

Swami: But that is unfortunately a self-feeding mechanism. It may be true that the people against whom the crimes are committed today deserve it in some way or other due to their own past karma. But then the people who are administering this punishment now are not aware that it is their victim's karma that is being administered through them. They feel now that they hate them and do this in order to punish them. Not 'your karma is punishing you', but 'I am punishing you'. Because of this egotistic notion, I incur karma again. When someone is at fault and I am tempted to punish, why should I do it? If the law of karma is true, he will receive his punishment in course of time - now or later.

Audience: What is the point of a goal then?

Swami: It is a social tradition. It has nothing to do with spiritual life. It is good to go to prison as a visitor. You ask a prisoner, 'Why are you here. What did you do?' And they tell you, 'I have done that, only I was not clever enough to get caught'. So it is quite possible that they who are in prison are there only because they were caught. The best criminals are usually out.

Audience: A friend and I were discussing aims and goals on the spiritual path. I said that I have certain aims, but he said that there cannot be any goal because, once you reach the goal, what happens after that?

Swami: Both these words are interesting. Goal in Hindi means 'round'. Someone who pursues a goal goes round and round in circles perpetually, never getting anywhere. 'Aim' is a very beautiful word - it means a bulls-eye, or something kept in front at which you aim and shoot - so the aim is always away from you. You never reach it. The french word 'aime' is beautiful also. 'J'aime' means 'I love', so probably 'aim' is only loving. You realise that whatever you aim at is away from you. Self-knowledge cannot be an aim or a goal. It 'is' that. I is the Self. The Self 'is'. In order to reach this Self-knowledge, if I make it a goal, I separate myself from it and imagine it to be outside - which is absurd. So you create goal upon goal, going round and round, without ever reaching it, till you collapse and say, 'There is no goal'. Hey, that is the goal.

Audience: How about 'meaning', or 'purpose'. Is that closer?

Swami: 'Meaning. Do you know what that means? Me-in-ing. That which is in me is meaning. A purpose is invented when the meaning is forgotten; like when the identity is not known, identification is born. For instance, I do not know who I am, and therefore I think I am an Indian. If I know who I am, or who 'I' is, or that

the 'I' is not, then there is nothing called Indian, nor anything else. So, when there is no knowledge of identity, there is a thought of identification. When the meaning is not known, a purpose is born. You do not want to live an aimless life; so you introduce a thing called purpose. Then a bunch of nice young people sit in a conference room and discuss the pros and cons of purpose 'A' in contrast to purpose 'B,' and decide purpose B is better than purpose A.

What is your purpose in life? I want to live. No-one stops with that. It is not regarded as a complete sentence in itself. 'I want to live happily' or 'I want to live a prosperous life' - there is the mischief. Then you turn round and round and see that it does not seem to make much sense.

This is supposed to be a true story. In a small diplomatic mission in some out of the way place, there were only three members of the staff - the ambassador, an all-purpose assistant, and an a messenger boy. One day during working hours, the ambassador found the assistant sleeping at his desk. Shaking him awake, he asked, 'What are you doing?' The man replied, 'I have finished my work; so I am sleeping.' 'But why don't you do something creative?' 'What for?' 'So that you can become charge d'affair. You can even become ambassador in a few years time.' 'Ah. And then?' 'Well, you will earn a lot of money.' 'Then?' 'After twenty five years, when you retire, you will be able to buy a big house at the seaside.' 'Then?' 'Then you can relax.' 'That is precisely what I am doing now.' Instead of doing all this in the hope of resting after thirty years, he is resting now.

Some day we have got to realise this. If my aim is to be happy, it is there immediately. It is not a goal. So, to live itself is the purpose of life. but people do not want to stop at the expression 'I want to live'.

What is it to live? What is it to be alive? To be alive is to be 'alive' to life itself, in all its aspects. That is enough. I think it is too much. If I am to be alive, awake, alert all the time, instead of taking anything for granted, that is the best job that there can be. It keeps you busy 24 hours of the day, instead of going to sleep over what someone else says is the purpose of my life. Have you heard a bigger joke than that? How do you know what my purpose in life is, or why I have been created at all ? If anyone can know, it is me, and I must discover it myself by being alive and alert to what goes on.

Someone says the purpose of life is to give yourself to the service of the poor, or someone else says that all that is waste of time, that you should sit and meditate. How do I know what is right or wrong? How do I know whom I should or should not trust? Instead of getting into all this trap, can I be one hundred percent alive and awake? If there is a doubt or confusion which I am unable to resolve in myself, I can get it in the right perspective if I am very alert.

Hence the Katho Upanishad gives a beautiful commandment: 'Utishtatha jagratha' - first wake up. That must be done only by yourself. To wake up is not difficult because we are being pinched from all sides. Life wakes us up. It brings

in its train all sorts of unhappy experiences. If I do not wake up in response to them, I am dead. But, I wake up momentarily and then I go to sleep again. I am sure many of you must have passed through this. Suddenly a young man collapses and dies of a brain tumour. You think, 'My God, I have also got a head and there is a brain in it. Hardly a few months before he died he was just like me and you, functioning one hundred percent. Unbeknown to him the tumour was growing. I have also got a head. Is it possible that I might also be carrying a tumour in it? I must be very careful and meditate every morning, so that even if I die in the afternoon, I may die a good death. This sort of thought passes through our head - unfortunately passes through - it does not stay there.

So, I am awakened by life's own vicissitudes, but the awakening does not last. I go to sleep again. So, awake, be alert and alive to the problems of life, to life itself.

It is possible that either you find the meaning of life unaided by external agencies, or you need help. For instance, if some of us walk into this hall when it is dark, I may fumble and not find the switch, and he, for no apparent reason, happens to enter through that door and fumbles and finds the switch. So, it is possible that you belong to the category that without any help or guidance happens to touch the switch and the light comes on. It is also possible that having entered through the other door, for no apparent fault of yours, you go on groping in the dark. Though you are inwardly awake and alert, you still cannot find the switch. Then you may have to approach someone, an enlightened person, and ask him: Utishtatha jagratha prapyavaran nibodhata. He will immediately direct you to the switch. Provided you are awake and alert, when the switch is on, you are enlightened too.

The meaning of yoga

Before we discuss the meaning of Yoga, it is good to look at the word 'meaning'. It is a problem which concerns mainly the art of communication; so, perhaps even before we can discuss the word 'meaning', we should look at the word 'communication'. How does one communicate? If I do not know what communication means, I end up as a conveyor - a conveyor belt, pushing something from point A to point B. Most of what we - teachers, politicians, preachers and religious men - indulge in is conveying, not communicating.

I pick up a few words and throw them at you, hoping that you would be hurt. If you are hurt, you sit up, and if it strikes you fairly softly, you doze off. More often than not you do not respond. That is conveying. When a thing is conveyed, and if it reaches the other end, you pick it up and walk out, without even looking at what you are picking up. That is what happens most of the times. When you pick it up, you give it a different meaning and put it to a quite different use. Tragedy struck this thing called Yoga when somebody started teaching, preaching and talking about it, and it got onto the conveyor belt. Why did he put it there? Either it was his ego trip, or he wanted to make himself popular, or rich. At the other end, you pick it up for your own use, not for what Yoga means. Nobody is even interested in the meaning of Yoga. He walks out quite satisfied that his pocket or ego is full, and you walk out because it has made you slim, or got rid of your tension, or made you more tense.

So, first one should learn the art of communication - not conveying, which is a waste of time, unless your goal is to convey and you have your own motives. Conveying is totally impersonal, cold, indifferent, and a cruel affair; the one party not even touching the other, or making any impression or impact on the other person. In communication - the famous christian communion, you and I become like one, 'comme une', not literally one, but like one. If you and I have literally become one, no words, no language, no gestures are necessary. 'Comme une' - as if you and I are one - the individual personalities are still there, but we behave as if we are one - where both verbal and non-verbal communication become meaningful. In communication, symbols such as words or yoga postures may be used, but these are not to be mistaken for the truths.

Truth cannot be conveyed, it has to be communicated on a non-verbal level. If you are talking on electricity, the word is but a symbol, and that word conveys no meaning whatsoever to a person who has not seen electricity. You cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, go to a bushman and talk to him about electricity. He will only gape at you. You say electricity and laugh, and he thinks, 'Ha, that is electricity'. He associates this laughter with electricity. You have ruined him. Hereafter, he is going to say that anyone who laughs heartily has got electricity.

Can I communicate the meaning using analogies and stories? There is a lovely little story. A very poor man was a very wealthy man's neighbour. This poor man was born blind, and lived in abject poverty. One day he heard weeping and

wailing from the wealthy man's house., so he groped his way over there and asked him, 'Why are you unhappy?' The rich man replied, 'My baby died.' 'Oh, I am so sorry. Why did the baby die?' 'Oh, it was swallowing milk, and it died.' 'Milk? What is milk?' 'That white stuff.' How do you explain milk to a born blind man? 'White? What is white?' Exasperated and wanting to get rid of this poor fellow, he replied, 'You do not know what white means? The colour of the crane.' 'Crane? What is crane?' 'Crane is something like this', holding up his crooked arm, and he caught hold of the poor blind man's hand and passed it over his arm. 'No wonder the child died, swallowing this.' The baby did not swallow that. So, if you use analogies and examples you get stuck somewhere, you still do not communicate. In order to communicate, the two parties concerned must be on the same wavelength, the problems of one must be the problems of the other.

When we come to the word 'meaning', we have a fundamental problem. When someone asks you for the meaning of a word, you pick up a dictionary which gives you a paraphrase, a synonym, or a description. In Sanskrit, that is not what is called meaning. The original word in Sanskrit is called 'artha', and this means the 'thing in itself'. So, what is the meaning, the artha of the word 'spectacle' in Sanskrit? Spectacles - not a description. I am not satisfied with a description of the word 'Yoga', because the moment you use a description, you are conveying or pushing more symbols towards me and I am using those symbols and extracting quite a different meaning to what you have put into it. If that happens, what is wrong? If you are presenting Yoga to me, you describe what a wonderful thing it is, because you cannot possibly describe Yoga itself. One has to say, using the word 'spectacle', that it improves your eyesight, etc. Similarly you are giving me the benefits and the glory of Yoga. In this there is absolutely no Yoga at all. You are saying something and I am watching like a hawk to see if I can pull some benefit out of that for me. That is where the whole thing went wrong, right in the beginning. The teachers had to say that Yoga will bring you enlightenment. What is enlightenment?

If you shrug the shoulders, you are the best student in the world. If only you could say, 'I do not know'. But it hurts my ego to say, 'I do not know', so I say, 'Don't you know what enlightenment means? There is a light bulb, and like that you will see a brilliant light inside.' Haaah ...

In some places, people are very hospitable. The moment I hear the word 'hospitable', I wonder why it is so close to the word 'hospital'. The one leads to the other. When these people see a swami, they push a little more food. 'I do not want it.' 'But it is very light, Swami.' 'Light?' Light is up there. They mean this food is light on your stomach. Then I begin to wonder. The English language is funny. They use the word 'light' to refer to both these two.

Perhaps the word 'enlightenment' is not some kind of a crazy light you see, but that which makes life light. It does not sit heavily on your shoulders. That may be enlightenment. Why not? What is enlightenment? If I have a definite idea or image of enlightenment, I have ruined it. I have picked up one of those pieces of

junk which you conveyed to me. You were conveying the meaning of Yoga to me, and one of the meanings is that you have said that Yoga is enlightenment. I have picked up that junk from the conveyor belt, made my own image of it, and have already figured out how this enlightenment is going to help me. If I am caught up in a bush in the dark and I have no flashlight, I am going to use Yoga.

You use the word enlightenment and convey it to me. When I pick it up, I have my own interpretation. I pick it up hoping that somehow it is going to better my life. And that sentence is full of mischief. I have not bothered to communicate with you and get the meaning - which means the thing in itself - but I have used my own interpretation. I am picking it up and I want to make use of it, but I am a completely and totally different personality to you. So, the use I am going to put Yoga to, may be totally different from what you intended it should be used for. And because I hope that it somehow is going to immediately make me something better, I am asking for frustration. Every hope without any exception whatsoever must be followed by frustration, even if it is the hope for enlightenment, or liberation, or salvation, or emancipation.

How does one capture the meaning of Yoga, unless I capture Yoga itself? In order to capture Yoga itself, I must approach it without any image, without any idea or notion whatsoever as a little baby approaches a new object. The baby picks up that object, touches it, smells it, licks it, drops it, wants to hear, wants to taste, wants to see. If that object is something new, all its attention is fixed on it. That is Yoga already. Can I approach the whole thing called Yoga in that spirit?

The next obvious question is: why should I bother to practice Yoga at all? It is something unknown which should be approached without any motivation whatsoever because, even if you have the motivation of gaining peace of mind, you will only gain a 'piece' of mind. You will never gain peace of mind if you run after it. Chasing happiness makes it run away, and the chasing itself is painful. I am unhappy, I want to be happy and the struggle to make myself happy causes more unhappiness - what for? Then I have a preconceived idea of what happiness means. When I eventually get it, I am more unhappy than I was before; so, there is frustration. Therefore it is said that even the desire for emancipation or final liberation or moksha., etc., is useless. It is going to lead you into a greater mess.

The only people who are clever in this are they who point out that if you do that and that, after you die you will go to heaven. It is a very clever idea, because that fellow cannot be disproved. Also, I have another funny idea - if I have been suffering for eighty or ninety years here, and he says, 'Swami, go on patiently enduring this for the sake of God, and when you leave this earth and go to the other world, you will be full of happiness, I might not want it by that time. I might have got so thoroughly used to this suffering, that if you try to make me happy, I will be miserable there. So, if I am approaching yoga, thinking it is going to give me peace of mind, I am asking for frustration.

When I first went to Canada, I ran into an extraordinary phenomenon called

insomnia. I was staying in a Yoga Camp and one small old woman came to see me, eyes wild, and asked, 'Will you help me? I have not slept for six months. I have spent fifteen thousand dollars going round to doctors and psychiatrists. I was completely innocent, a total stranger to insomnia. I can lie and sleep here. But she was not bluffing. She had taken pills and pills. I gave her one of these rosaries, put her in a room, and said, 'Repeat Om Om Om and you will go to sleep'. It was the last straw; so she clutched at it. Half an hour later I saw her. She said, 'I still cannot sleep.' To be honest with you, I really did not know what to do. So I said, 'What is wrong with not sleeping? Sit there and go on saying Om Om Om. You have slept for the past fifty years. Repeat Om Om Om and if you do not sleep, you will go straight to heaven. I do not know where heaven is, but anyhow she had to be told that. Believe it or not, in half an hour she was fast asleep. You know why? There was not even the anxiety to sleep.

Once upon a time I had to face an exam - it was optional. I went to the exam with a few colleagues from the office. I looked at the paper and thought it was useless. But my colleague was keen on taking the exam, so I sat there. I had nothing to do - how long can you chew your thumb? So I answered the questions and was the only one who got through - I did not care - it did not matter if I passed - the time passed, if nothing else. The moment the burden was dropped, there was enlightenment - in my sense of the word. The heart and mind felt light. There was no pressure.

This is the first and foremost condition in Yoga. Can I approach this without any wish or desire whatever? But then, why do I do it? Only because the life that I am leading at present is miserable, undesirable. I do not like it, I do not want it. I have seen whatever there is to be seen there, whether by self experience or by the experience of others. I turn away from that.

Please visualise that we are in a vast desert - on one side is a huge mountain and the other three sides are desert. The mountain is the only side that is open to your investigation. You look around and see what appears to be a tunnel. You enter it, not hoping that you will be rid of the desert or walk into paradise, but only because all else is useless. You are absolutely without choice. Only then is any sort of meaningful discovery possible. Right in the beginning there is a challenge: all this is worthless, but I can see; while in the tunnel, I am unable to see. That is a very difficult situation, and only the man who is courageous, bold, or desperate can withstand the temptation to wander further in this obviously meaningless desert, and choose to investigate the tunnel which is dark.

This is what yogis call yama and niyama, the preliminary disciplines and so on. There is no enforced discipline. I cannot sit down and say, 'I will be non-violent hereafter', that is absurd. I have seen that violence has led me nowhere, has made my life more and more miserable. Here is one field which has not been investigated - I must get into it. In utter desperation - or in a spirit of bold adventure, I walk towards that tunnel, and I enter it. I cannot see. Am I sure I cannot see in the dark? I cannot see in the conventional meaning of the word

'see'. If I cannot see in this darkness, how is it that I am moving forward? In total darkness, how do I know that this is still my right hand? Have you ever asked yourself this question? When that question arises spontaneously, there is enlightenment. Suddenly you realise that, totally independent of the previous meaning of the word 'light', there is another light, which is not luminous, but which is enlightening in a certain way, which has no colour, but which alone is true. Can I discover it? Maybe there is a better world on the other side of the tunnel, or maybe it is worse - it does not matter at all. I suddenly realise that, as long as this light exists, I can walk through any tunnel, any darkness, through hell or heaven - nothing is forbidding.

One step more is easy to take. As you are still walking in the dark tunnel, knowing that in this total darkness there is a light within which says, 'This is forwards and this is backwards', suddenly you realise that this was the light which saw the desert outside. That which sees in darkness where my right foot is, is that which saw the desert outside. When I am awake, it functions as the waking consciousness - when I am asleep, it is that which dreams - when I am fast asleep even, without dreaming, that is still there. You are through.

It is then that you discover Yoga. You discover, and it is your own. It is something which connects all this - the waking state with sleep, today with tomorrow and yesterday, this life with the other life - if there is another life, and links you and me.

Wake Up! Stay Alert!

Wake up and stay alert. Each one has to acquire these two qualifications. If I am not awake inwardly, spiritually, then any instruction that you give me is either not understood - which is a good thing, or misunderstood - which is a bad thing. I may interpret it in my own way - which may not be so bad, but more often than not I misinterpret it, pervert it completely. In India there is a ceremony which is done, even now, on all religious occasions. They kindle the sacred fire, and then pour into it clarified butter, called ghee. Based on this symbolism, there is a proverb. 'If you pour ghee into a blazing fire it is meaningful but when the fire has gone out and only the ashes remain, which fool would pour oblations into the non-existent fire?' You do not warm even a cup of tea on a cold stove. This symbolically represents the efforts of a teacher who attempts to instruct an unawakened person. It does not work.

So, this inner awakening is not brought about by instruction. Only after I am awake can you give me instruction. I suggested yesterday that life brings its own awakeners - experiences of pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness, joy and sorrow, honour and dishonour - experiences that are called success and failure. All these are granted to everyone irrespective of their station in life or religion. They are fruitful only to the extent that they bring about this inner awakening. If this inner awakening does not happen, what then? If one experience does not awaken me, another one comes - life is long enough. If you do not wake up, nature pinches you a little more strongly. To err is human. I add a few more words - to err is once is human, to err a second time is negligence, if you commit the same error a third time you are a fool. If you commit an error once, you say sorry and it is forgotten. If you repeat it again, nature punishes you, and if you go on repeating it again and again, the punishment becomes more severe.

Until I wake up, Mother Nature is not going to let me live in peace. This is one aspect of it. Buddha did not even have to undergo these life's tragedies. It is not necessary that one should die in order to know that one will die. But, when you observe life as it exists outside you, you realise that that which has happened to one person, can happen to you. So, not all experiences need be self undergone. But most of the time we ourselves experience the tragedies of life, and we do not seem to take any notice of them. What happens to those of us who are unshaken by the wisdom that floats down the stream of life? We are so fast asleep that those things do not make any impression upon us.

They say that sometimes, either because you seek it, or by sheer accident - what you call good fortune, you come under the influence of a wise man. Either by design or accident you happen to hear some words of wisdom, and at that psychological moment your heart is just a little open. Those few words of wisdom happen to drop in that heart at that appropriate moment. Then there is inner awakening. To give you a rather crude example - I am sleeping in a room and I want to get up at 4 o'clock. But I do not wake up. I happen to be lying just under a

hole in the roof and at 4 o'clock, when rain begins to fall, I get a shower on my head. I wake up, look at my watch - 4 o'clock. Oh, thank God. The orthodox Indian would say that you must have done something in your previous birth to deserve it. Maybe or maybe not, that is speculation. The important thing is that there are all these aids to induce this inner awakening, though, unless you want to wake up, you will wipe your head and go and sleep somewhere else. So that - there must be that little bit of a spark in your own heart that is ready to burst into flames. Either life can awaken you or the company of wise people might awaken you - Satsanga, or you can be awakened accidentally on account of your good fortune.

Having been awakened, once again it is your responsibility to remain awake and alert. Only if you are alert can you observe life and avoid committing the same error again and again. You discover the meaning of life. In this you may need some help - and some help is possible. The first time you were slapped or insulted, it hurts. It was good to be hurt, because it was that hurt that made you wake up. That is good. Now that you are awake and alert, life does not stop slapping you. Headaches do not cease just because you have started to meditate - maybe it comes more often, because now, your whole outlook on life has changed. With an alert vision, you are watching the next time a headache floats down the stream of life, and you begin to wonder, 'Last time it hurt me, I woke up to the fact that this is life.'

Life is composed of pain and pleasure. It is not only me that is hurt - all life is subject to this. It is not only me that has the monopoly of headaches. That is already an inner awakening. You are alert, no longer bluffed, you no longer collapse under the burden of this headache. 'Why me?' But fundamentally I know that, as long as there is a head, it can hurt.

Now I want to know the meaning of it. First, what was the purpose of the headache? To wake me up, to enable me to realise that this world is full of pain and sorrow. But I am awake. Its purpose having been served, why does the headache come to me again? Now I must know the meaning. What does this simple word 'pain' mean? Why do I consider a certain thing as painful, a certain word as insulting, a certain event in life as sorrowful or failure? We have abandoned the thought 'I do not want this'. Having taken birth here, you have got to take whatever comes: pain or pleasure. Even pleasure has to be taken. Somebody gives you a piece of candy and you put it into your mouth - it is going to be sweet whether you are a liberated soul or a stupid man. Sweetness is sweetness, and tongue is tongue, and when sugar is put on the tongue, there is a natural reaction of the taste buds which cannot be altered. Life brings its own pains and pleasures, to the enlightened man as to the dull idiot.

The first experiences are treated as purposeful, as the incentive to inner awakening. I have had that inner awakening, that painful experience, and now I am awake and alert. When the next headache comes, I look at the same painful experience, not as a sleeping, dull, stupid person, but as an alert person. I am not

enlightened, but I am awake and alert. I am looking at this phenomenon called sorrow, or pain. When we use these two words, please remember that the word 'pain' is being used in the sense of a physical pain, and 'sorrow' is something which is psychological. Pain is to the physical body, what sorrow is to the psychological mechanism. . Why do I regard this as pain and this as sorrow? Sorrow has the same genesis. So, if you understand the phenomenon of pain, you can also understand sorrow.

When and where does pain arise? You are walking near the waterfall with bare feet and the foot happens to tread on a small piece of glass. The glass being sharp and the foot being soft, something very natural happens - the glass piece enters the foot. If instead of the foot a banana had fallen on the glass piece, the glass would still have entered the banana - but the banana would not howl. You sit down, 'Aha. Now I understand one thing. The banana did not howl because it did not have a mouth and a vocal cord. Since this body has a mouth and a vocal cords, it howls'. That is dismissed, and then you look at that foot which has now acquired a piece of glass - an income, not an expenditure. But your whole mind, your whole body says, 'It is painful, it hurts.' You are educated, you know physiology and anatomy. You look at it. That foot does not jump into your ear and say, 'Hey. It hurts.' Something else happens. There is a nerve which travels up the leg into the spine. Does it go on repeating, 'It hurts, it hurts'? No. Your knowledge of physiology tells you that that it is nothing more than a neurological impulse. When and where is this pure and simple neurological impulse decoded into an experience of pain? Who is it that reads this impulse and makes it sound 'pain'? Not the glass piece, not that punctured part of the foot. What is it that gives it this interpretation? When you ask this question, you are looking into the meaning of pain. You are no longer looking into the purpose. You can see the purpose here if you want to be misled, or waylaid, or if you want to lose the spirit of the enquiry. But now we are engaged in the enquiry into the meaning of pain. What is this, where does this idea of pain arise? The sensation is still there, do not lose it.

All Yoga texts extol certain qualities or qualifications in the spiritual aspirant - that he is not easily swayed, he has control over his senses and his mind - this is what they mean. Saying, 'I will not look', is not control over the senses or the mind - that is repression. Control is to be able to enquire into this, to be able to get into the meaning of it. Why do I call this pain? When it is nothing but 'a neurological phenomenon, where does it become pain? When I enquire into that, the painfulness of the pain has become greatly lessened. It does not go away completely. The intelligence in the foot will still function. I can see one thing - that there is a throbbing, a movement. There is action, activity, prana. I can also see that, if this piece of glass had pricked a banana or a dead body, what is happening now to this foot would not happen. So, first of all, there is the activity of prana, the life force. Good. When it is merely a question of neurological impulse being transmitted to the brain, why is it felt as pain, and not as pleasure? Why, and by whom is it interpreted as pain and not pleasure.

Here no amount of theorising or intellectualism is of any use. Your brain may give you an answer. For instance, you may have read in the Yoga Vasishtha that pain is only an idea. You have read in Swami Sivananda's teachings that 'pain is a blessing in disguise'. Again repression. Why? Because it is not true to you. It was true to Swami Sivananda, not to you. It was His realisation, not yours. So, the pain is still there. Your brain is still saying it is painful. You are trying to figure out why this is pain, and where it arises.

It is possible that you are able to solve this by yourself. In one of his conversations, Ramana Maharshi rather dramatically declares that he was greatly helped in his quest for self-knowledge by illiteracy. He says, 'I did not read anything at all. I did not know any scripture nor philosophical text, and so the quest was easy. Now, in your case, you are in the soup called knowledge, so there is no sense in quoting that. You have got all kinds of academic and scientific knowledge - you know all about the body, all about pain, all about the nerves and how they function, and so on, and you all have a whole lot of metaphysical knowledge, so there is an extension everywhere on all sides, like the tentacles of an octopus. We are caught in all this. How does one jump out of it. You sit down and enquire into the nature of the pain. For every question you ask, the brain supplies an immediate answer. Why do I feel pain? Because it is the nature of the living organism. Why do I regard it as pain? Because your mind is already pre-conditioned to regard this as pain. Why do I regard this as pain? Pain is a blessing in disguise - welcome it. Whatever you do, like a movie within you, frame after frame of the knowledge that is already stored in you, it brings you the answers, which are not yours at all. They came from outside, they belong to outside, to somebody else, somewhere else. They will go.

So, at some stage, you may need the aid of an enlightened person, to whom, if you are awake, alert, bold, courageous, sincere, earnest, serious, you confide your own impotence. You must be able to go to this person and say, 'I have tried my best to look at this phenomenon called pain and it is still painful. I have learned to think about it, and every thought produces a counter thought. Every question, which is a thought, is answered by thought with another thought. The question still remains unanswered fundamentally. I am impotent here. Please can you help me.'

'Keneshitam patati preshitam manah' is the opening mantra in the Kena Upanishad. I think it is pain and therefore it becomes painful. It is the mind that thinks it is pain and, because it thinks it is pain, it experiences pain. That seems to be clear up to that point. What is unclear is who can answer that question. What is mind? When this question is asked, who asks the question and who is going to provide the answer? Mind. Mind provides an answer to the question asked by itself concerning itself? It seems almost like water drinking water. An obviously futile waste of time. Realising this, and realising one's own impotence in solving this riddle, one goes to the master.

'Utthishtatha jaagratha praapyavaraan nibodhatha' - it does not even say a great

master. Anyone whom you regard as more intelligent than you are. Ask. We have all kinds of super-wonderful notions of the masters and their qualifications. We never bother about our qualifications. We are more keen on going and asking him, 'Are you enlightened?' If he is enlightened, he may be the right teacher for me, but I might not be the right pupil for him. Do you know the story of the girl who wanted to marry the perfect man? She waited and waited and eventually found the most perfect man but could not marry him, because he was looking for the perfect woman. Therefore, before I go to the master and ask him, 'Are you enlightened and therefore can you teach me?', I must also ask, 'Am I a proper student seeking enlightenment?' If I am a proper student seeking enlightenment, probably anything will enlighten me.

Understand, realise your inability to resolve this riddle. It is possible that by merely vocalising this problem, engaging in a dialogue with someone else, that the truth may emerge. I am not giving this to you as a sort of dogma. If I do not know if someone is enlightened or not, I just go and ask him, 'Sir, why does the mind interpret this as pain?' He may do nothing, he might just smile, he might laugh, shrug his shoulders or say, 'You are a fool.' If I am sincere and earnest, this confrontation may be like striking a match. The spark begins to blaze. The scripture says, 'Seek a superior person and become enlightened.' Praapyavaraan nibodhatha, so that, until I find the answer, I go on seeking. I have a question, a problem, a confusion within me. He who is able to resolve that confusion, to dispel that doubt, is a superior person. I do not even call him a master. Till I find that person, I keep looking. It is not my business to judge him - maybe he is able to bring enlightenment to somebody else, that is not my concern at all. I am so terribly possessed by this quest that I ask him, I ask anybody. If I do not do that, it is only because I am not serious, I am not in love with this truth. If you are in love with truth or self-knowledge, you go and ask anyone. Until I find this enlightenment, I go on.

It is possible that at some stage the meaning of experiencing as such becomes clear with the help of a teacher or without. It is inevitable that, even with the help of a teacher, I have to work upon myself. The teacher cannot plant enlightenment in my head. He may guide me, help me, and if I forget the pain, he may even slap me to create this pain again.

Then at one stage it becomes clear that the experience is experience. It is so something within me that classifies some experiences as pleasure and some others as pain. I have been brought up to regard a certain experience as pleasure and another as painful. Having been brought up in that manner, I seek pleasurable experiences. Because I seek those experiences, when I get them, they are interpreted by my mind as pleasure - the other experience, because I reject it, becomes painful. When I get what I do not want, the mind interprets it as pain. That becomes vaguely clear. But still there is something more.

What is the meaning, in the sense of what exactly 'is' it. For instance, this is a tape recorder - what is experience? When you learn to look at the experience without

thinking about it, then you suddenly become aware of pure experiencing - the pure experiencing that the banana had when it fell on the glass piece. It did not call it good or evil, pleasant or unpleasant - there was pure experiencing. That pure experiencing is none other than simple consciousness - pure consciousness. In that pure consciousness, a little bit of motion, of movement takes place. That does not mean that once you have had that enlightenment you are not going to howl when you have stepped on a piece of glass, saying that the banana does not howl, so I also will not howl. The banana does not have vocal cords; you have vocal cords. Let the vocal cords howl, there is no problem. But the experience as pain has gone, and the experience as pleasure has gone. There is pure experiencing. That pure experiencing is pure consciousness.

The guru or teacher may lead you in a million ways - giving you various types of disciplines and aids, till this enlightenment happens.

Yoga Day discussion

Swami Sangitananda: Swami, you have traveled for years now in the western world, and have experienced the reactions of the Westerner to the eastern philosophy, etc. Do you not think the time has come that instead of sanskrit mantras - which for many Westerners do not mean anything - we should replace them by words of power from our Christian bible? Words like 'Kyrie Eleison, Christie Eleison', 'I am the truth', 'The pure in heart will see God', etc. If mantras are there to adore the divinity, to raise the heart and mind toward a higher level of consciousness, they should mean something to those who sing it or speak it, not just parrot like repetition which we have artificially filled with something which neither the heart nor the mind understands.

Swami Venkatesananda: Thank you. There are three considerations involved in that question. A distinction between east and west, another which concerns mantra and the language in which it is in, and the third which concerns the meaning. And please remember what Swami said about artificially introducing a meaning into the words.

I have been going around the world at least four times, and I am getting more and more confused when I hear the words East a West. I think that even if they had meaning in Kipling's time, they are meaningless now. If by an Easterner we refer to people who are mystically or spiritually inclined, there are as many Easterners in Australia, America and Canada as there are in India and China. And if by Westerner we mean people who have unbending knees and personalities, who are lovers of luxury, there are as many in India as there are elsewhere. If you are still thinking in terms of skin colour, there are as many people who are white skinned in India and Kashmir as there are here. So my difficulty is that I cannot distinguish what is called East and what is called West.

Now, what is mantra, and does it have a great deal to do with the language used? It is possible. When that word possible is used, please remember that what follows is flexible, not rigid. It is possible to say that some mantras, at least, are in the sanskrit language. There again there is a flexibility and an error. For, instance, the word 'Om' is not a sanskrit mantra at all, nor is it a letter of the sanskrit alphabet. Om is a sound, a symbol. It is perhaps more related to a South Indian language called Tamil. Though it is not sanskrit, it is used in sanskrit - just as it is used in any other language, for example amen, omega, omnipresent. In one of the Upanishads and also in Ceylon it is used as a synonym for 'yes'. I believe that is also so in the case of amen - it means basically 'be it so'.

Once we had a Harley Street psychologist at our ashram in Rishikesh., It was his theory that people suffer from physical and mental illness because somewhere within they are constantly saying no. He said that when you say no, you are blocking the flow of energy, and that is when you get sick. You learn to say yes, keep yourself open, respond to anything, and then you will be free from illness. It is quite possible that Om became a great mantra on account of that. Saying Om

opens your whole being to the cosmic consciousness.

The word 'mantra' is perhaps a sanskrit word. There is a theory that the sanskrit language originally came from the Arctic Circle, and the people who migrated from the Arctic Circle were called Aryans. The language they used was perhaps something like sanskrit. It could well have been your own ancestral language which disappeared along with your own ancestral religion. So, even here I do not think we can be dogmatic. Mantra has a number of meanings, two of which are relevant to our discussion. One is a mystic formula and the other is any piece of wholesome advice. Because they are such life transforming statements, all the state merits in the Upanishads are also called mantras, whereas in the Bhagavad Gita we call them slokas or verses.

By definition the word mantra is: 'Manana trayate iti mantrah'. When the whole mind is saturated with it, it protects. It does not say it protects me - it is important not to lose sight of this. Mantra in this sense is a mystic formula, and when my whole mind is saturated with this mystic formula, it protects, it redeems. If you must complete the sentence in the conventional way, it is: it redeems me from myself, from the false ideal have of myself - I am the body, I am a personality, 'I am I a Westerner', 'I am an Easterner', and all that.' How does it do that? By leaving no room for a concept to arise. For instance, if that in you which says, 'I am a girl', is also filled with this mantra, then the concept 'I am a girl' is gone, and you do not go looking for a boy. That is instant redemption. I am not redeemed from you, or from the so-called devil, but from the idea that I have of myself. How does that happen? When the whole mind is saturated with this mystic formula, then it becomes a mantra. Does it have to have a meaning? The sanskrit word for 'meaning' is 'artha'.

This word in this context occurs in the famous Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. 'Tasya vaachakah pranavah' - 'God or Isvara or the Self is alluded to as 'Om'. When one says, 'Om', one is talking about God. It is an indirect meaning. What do I do with Om? Patanjali says: 'Tajjapastadartha bhaavanam' - 'Repeat the mantra'. Can I take the mala and go on repeating Om Om Om? I think you know that if I go on repeating it mechanically like a tape-recorder - in accordance with the statement found in the Bhagavad Gita that you become in your next birth that which your mind is absorbed in at the time of your leaving the body - if I collapse and die with a heart attack, I become a tape recorder in the next birth.

'Tajjapastadartha bhaavanam' - please listen to this very carefully. I am supposed to repeat the mantra whatever it be, but that is only half. The other half is artha bhaavanam - to saturate my whole inner consciousness with the meaning. 'Artha' means the thing in itself. When I repeat this word Om mentally, with the whole mind I should cling to the object which is indicated by the word om. My mind must be saturated by it. If you are a yogi and have learned concentration, when you think of the word 'apple', you cannot think of it without the apple jumping into your consciousness. If you have learned to concentrate all your attention on that one object of your meditation, the apple, then your whole mind is saturated

with it. Now can I, while repeating this word Om, totally fill the consciousness with what is indicated by it? Not the dictionary meaning, but what it indicates. For this, the verbal description or definition of it may be of secondary help, but it is not necessary at all, and therefore there are two completely and totally divergent schools of thought. One which says that you must know the meaning - e.g. Om Namah Shivaya means 'salutations to Siva', and as you go on repeating this, your mind must go on saying, 'Salutations to Siva'. You do not know what salutations means or what Siva means. The other says you do not have to know the meaning, you should surrender your whole consciousness to the mystique of the mantra - then you get enlightenment. Incidentally. I think you may have heard of Alan Watts, the writer. We shared a platform in New York. One morning, he took the service and he said that he does not like the service to be said in English but in Latin, in a language which your heart associates with mysticism, because the spiritual search is not an intellectual adventure. A mantra has nothing to do with the intellect. Do not let the mind put it into words or you are ruined. Devotion must spring from your heart. Let that feeling pour love into your heart, your head - and then your whole being loves.

Perhaps some of you have had the darshan of Swami Muktananda and know what I mean when I say shaktipat, that is direct transmission of spiritual energy. When Ramana Maharshi talks of shaktipat, he says that when you learn to listen, not with your mind but with your heart, shaktipat happens. If you listen to your master with your mind, you are dissecting him. A master is not a frog. When the mind is quiet and the heart is open, and from this heart springs devotion, love fills your whole mind. That is it. So, used in this context, the word-meaning of the mantra is not important at all. A great Vedic scholar said that mantras do not depend for their efficacy upon your intellectual comprehension of the description of the word-meaning, but your responsiveness to them. 'Christ have mercy' may mean a lot to you, but I would rather hear the words 'Kyrie, Eleison.' It depends upon one's temperament. If you do prefer 'Lord have mercy' instead of repeating it parrot-like, you must understand it. So, before you say 'Lord', you must know what 'Lord' means. Here is a japa mala. Can you see the meaning of that word 'Lord' as clearly as you see this mala here? If not, do not do it. Have mercy. Do we understand what is meant by 'mercy' or are we merely using these words? So, again we run into the same trouble. By merely changing the language from one to the other, we have not solved the fundamental basic problem of understanding. We can understand only if we get drowned in it - that is: it is there above you, around you, everywhere. If you can enter into it, surrender yourself to the mantra, then you can repeat anything.

Audience: What is the nature of the mind?

Swami: What is the nature of the mind and what is the mind of nature? Is there a difference? What is mind? Because, only if I know what mind is can I know what its nature can be. Or, is it possible only to know what the mind is by becoming aware of what I think is the nature of the mind? You cannot say, 'I become aware of the mind by becoming aware of what I think is the nature of the mind.' So, can

you trace a thought down to its source? How do you do that, without merely thinking you have got to the source? They are two different things. One is 'I think' and the other is 'I think I think, - the difference is quite simple. I am holding the mala in my hand. It dangles. The fingers also dangle. I know that I am holding this mala because I can drop it. I know I am not holding the fingers because I cannot drop them. It is a crude analogy but I think it makes you understand what I am going to say. Therefore, if I am thinking, I must be able to drop it, but if I am merely thinking I am thinking, I am unable to drop it.

Audience: Is thinking the mind, or does the mind have other assets?

Swami: If we have not solved one problem, how to go on to another problem? What is thinking? You probably think it is some king of England who was fairly thin. Except for that, do you know what thinking means? How to discover that? Not by thinking about it. Is there something else which can look at that thought just as I am looking at that girl?

(Swami asks a girl to stand up and pinches her)

Swami: Do you think I pinched you?

Girl: You pinched me.

Swami: You do not think I pinched you.

Girl: That came later.

Swami: Good. That came later. So, direct awareness takes place - thinking may come later. When I pinched her, immediately the whole body reacted, immediately there is direct awareness - my back is being pinched. What is it that looks, observes, is aware of that phenomenon? That is not thought. Thought comes later as she says, the thought 'I am being pinched'. By the time the feeling comes, she has already worked out that this fellow is not serious, he is only pinching her to show something, so she is able to laugh. If somebody else had done it, she would probably have turned around and slapped him.

First comes pure experiencing, that is followed by thought, and that in turn is followed by feeling. But what is this pure experiencing? If thought is associated with the mind, what is pure experiencing associated with? Does it also happen in the mind? If you can observe thought from that level of pure experiencing, then you see a thought as you are seeing me. If you do not want to look at me, then close your eyes, and if you do not want to think that thought, it flies away much faster than your bush flies here. The only test is - if you and I can evolve a test - 'Am I aware of this thought as a thought and can I drop it?', if you can do that, then you are becoming aware of that thought. When those thoughts have gone - this is only words, unless you are already enlightened, there is pure consciousness, pure experiencing. In that pure experiencing, the division 'I' and

'you' does not exist. They are words.

Audience: How do we let go?

Swami: Are we holding anything at all? It is a real problem. I am going to extend the same question to you. Let us say that you are attached to me and you are asking, 'How do I let go?' I am going to ask you, 'Are you really attached?' What is attachment?

Audience: There is a feeling of attachment.

Swami: The father of that feeling is a thought and the father of that thought is pure experiencing. How do I know whether I am really and truly attached to you, or I only think I am attached to you? That question can be answered only after I know what that thought is. I drop that thought away, and then look at you again. I no longer entertain the thought that I am attached to you. That thought I have dropped - or might I suggest that you never had it to drop. Perhaps it is still not clear?

First you think you are attached to me, and by persistently thinking that, you develop a feeling that you are attached to me. Once it has descended to the level of feeling, the thinking is so heavily overpowered that it is nearly impossible for that thought to be dropped, to be examined. Then you get out of that, and examine the phenomenon of thought itself. What is this thought that thinks I am attached to him? Is it based on fact, or is it merely an imagination? If it is real, that feeling or thought must be there all the time, throughout the 24 hours of the day. But then you wake up in the morning and realise that for at least 6 hours you did not know where he was. What is attachment? Now that I wake up, I think I am attached to him again. It is a play of thought. I become aware of that thought, and suddenly realise that it is just a thought. When that thought is dropped, or does not arise, you exist and I exist - without any attachment whatsoever.

Audience: Why is it that so very few people are engaged in this adventure of self-knowledge, knowing one's self?

Swami: For the very simple reason that their level of feeling seems to be more attractive. We have started right from a very early age. The baby is educated - which means made to think, discriminate, and then it is rewarded every time it obeys, and spanked every time it disobeys, so that at that point the purity of consciousness is lost. Thinking has taken over, abetted by feeling, and from there on it is caught in this trap. I dare not disobey you because, if I disobeyed, my parents spanked me. I love to obey you because, whenever I obeyed, my parents gave me chocolates. I obey you in the hope that all of you will like me and say what a nice fellow I am. And I know that if I irritate, annoy, or insult you, I will be punished. Then someone else says that even if I do not get punished now, I will be punished in hell, if I am not rewarded here, I will be rewarded in heaven. So, feeling takes over, and I am caught up in this feeling - I like this, I do not like

that; this is nice, that is not nice. Pleasure - pain, happiness - unhappiness. So, I try to avoid unhappiness, making myself more unhappy, and I try to run after happiness, making myself unhappy again. It is like trying to untangle a tangled ball of wool - you never get to the end of it. I am so terribly overburdened by this problem that I have no time to turn my attention to the basic problem of how on earth I ever got into this mess.

It needs a certain intelligence and understanding of the whole structure of life in order to be able to drop this whole thing, just as if I am dead. It is possible for me to die now. Strangely enough, the word 'yama' in sanskrit is applied in two contexts - the deity governing death, and self restraint. What is self restraint? Bringing death into my life now. Only if I have that moral courage is it possible for me to face the whole structure of experiencing, thought, and feeling, and get back to this.

What is the Self

What are the qualifications of the disciple and what are the qualifications of a master? What is tremendously intriguing here is that the qualifications of the disciples are always discussed by the so-called gurus or teachers, and the qualifications or characteristics of the guru are invariably discussed by the students. In other words, no one wants to know what must I be, and what must I do. The student is more interested in the way the guru behaves and not in the way he himself should.

Unless I am a proper student, no instruction is going to be any use to me, and unless the teacher is enlightened, he is unlikely to appreciate my problem. The student also must be qualified, otherwise, if he asks a question, it is more to show off than to elicit knowledge. For instance: someone went to the great Ramana Maharishi and asked a silly question, 'What is beyond Yoga?' Ramana Maharishi looked at him and turned away. The fellow went away saying, 'I asked this holy man a question and he could not give an answer'. He was not questioning the master in order to learn, but in order to teach him a lesson. If you are burning with eagerness to know, then you have no time for this kind of teasing one another and showing off. You may go and ask anybody, 'Please can you tell me what the mind is, what I am, why am I so restless'? You are not interested in the qualifications of the other person, you ask him, and if he is not able to answer that question to your satisfaction, you move on to the next one. If you are told to repeat 'Rama Rama' or do some pranayama or stand on your head for half an hour, you do not question that. If, after a few days you feel that it does not work, even then the really earnest student does not question the qualification of the teacher. The problem has not been solved, so you move on to the next one.

To illustrate this there is a beautiful story which occurs in one of the Upanishads. A renowned teacher called Prajapati was teaching a group of people. Half the audience were called devas or angels, the other half were called demons. This old man was expounding self knowledge. He said, 'One should possess self knowledge because then you go beyond hunger, thirst, and sorrow - it is as good as becoming emperor of the whole universe'. To be lord of the whole universe is tempting, isn't it? As soon as the discourse was over, he got up and went to the change-room.

The chief of the demons approached the master, 'Sir, you have told me about self knowledge. What is that? What is the Self?' He answered, 'It is quite simple. Look into that mirror. What do you see?' 'I see myself.' 'That's it'. The chief of the demons thought, 'It did not occur to me at all, it is so simple. This body is the self. So, eat, drink and be merry and make yourself as strong as possible. Then it is easy to become ruler of the world.' So he went away quite satisfied. It did not raise one little problem as far as he was concerned. They say it is the philosophy of the demons: eat, drink, and be merry, and make yourself as strong, wealthy, and powerful as possible, the rest will take care of itself.

Indra, chief of the angels or gods also came into the old man who did the same thing with him. Indra went away chewing it. He thought 'It is true, I see myself ... but he also said that you will not get hunger, thirst and sorrow and so on, and the body is subject to all this. I have not understood the teaching. Let me go back and ask him.' When he went in to ask him, the master was busy. He said, 'Join the household, wash my clothes, look after the house for 32 years and then come and ask another question, not until then.'

This is considered another imperative. Here it is not a question of words. When I go to the master, I am not talking to him - the words are all in the books. Why do I go to a living master? Because in his presence, heart to heart communication takes place. That does not take place unless the two hearts are synchronised, not because they talk the same language. When we can merely look at each other and understand each other, that is heart to heart communication. That communication is established, not by joining a class, but by living with the master, serving him, and becoming one with him. After those 32 years, Indra said, 'Sir, what happens to you when you lie down and sleep? Soon after I lose consciousness of this external world I begin to dream. 'Who is it that dreams?' 'That is the self.'

'Indra thought, 'If I am hungry or thirsty now and if I lie down and sleep, all of that is forgotten. If I was unhappy before I slept, all of that is forgotten. That is correct. Very good.' Once again, he went away, sat down there and thought, 'The dreamer is the self. But sometimes I dream that I am hurt. Maybe I do not weep and wail after I wake up, but somebody who is having a nightmares weeps and wails then. 'It is possible' that he is hungry now and when he goes to sleep and dreams, he is no longer hungry. But it is possible for him, even though he has just had his dinner, to fall asleep and dream that he is hungry. No good. I have not understood it'.

So he went back to the guru. An another question? Another period of service. That is, in other words, you and I are not a hundred percent on the same wavelength. There is still something missing. Quietly he serves for another 32 years and comes back. The guru said, 'After the dreams have ceased, what happens to you?' 'I sleep soundly, no world outside, no world even inside.' 'That is it. That which sleeps, the sound sleep - that is the Self.' Indra thought, 'That makes sense. I do not even dream in deep sleep. There is no consciousness, no awareness at all of sorrow or hunger or thirst or pain. Nothing. That is good.' As soon as he leaves the guru's house, doubt creeps in. If you have lived with a master like Swami Sivananda, you would appreciate it. In his presence, enlightenment looks so easy, so simple. You leave His presence and go ten yards away from the compound, and there is something missing. So, Indra thought, 'It is true that there is no sorrow, no pain, no suffering, no hunger, no thirst - but there is no knowledge also.' Right back to the teacher. 'Sir, I do not even know when I am asleep.' 'Is that your problem. Back into the kitchen.' This time we are told that it was a very short stay, just a few years. Then he comes back. 'What is it that is awake when you are asleep? You existed in your sleep, you did not die and

if, while you were fast asleep, I tickled your foot, the foot is withdrawn - by what? When you are fast asleep, you are still breathing. What makes you breathe.

It is a very interesting experiment and experience to walk in the dark and suddenly ask yourself how on earth do I know this is my right foot, that I am walking forward and not backward? If a few of you are sitting around me and I merely put my hand on someone's head, I do not know who it is. And yet, when all the lights are out, and I have closed my eyes, I still know that this is my left arm.

That which enables you to know this, is the Self. That which is awake when you were asleep, and awake, when you were dreaming - it was 'that', that was dreaming. 'As a matter of fact', says the master, 'Even now if you think you are seeing, hearing and thinking, all that is essentially based on the Self. Do not try to make it an object.'

This is what we do and therefore we do not understand it. You look only at the object, and you do not know what the subject is. Then at one stage, when you think you have understood, then you are making an object of the subject, making an image of the self. You would not do that only if you are really burning with this quest, burning with this question. 'I think I know, I think I am hungry, I think I am miserable, I think I am unhappy.' So, that unhappiness, sorrow, pleasure, hunger - are all objects.

What is the subject? I know myself. That myself is also an object. It is an image that I have formed, not of myself, but of the words that I hear from you. 'I know myself' is the stupidest and most absurd expression that has ever escaped human lips. How did I get that 'myself' as an object? I have put together all the descriptions that you have given me, all the descriptions that psychologists have put into their books, and these descriptions have created an image of the Self. 'Ah, that is it - now I see the self'. That is not the self, that is a rotten image which the brain or the mind has put together with the help of all the descriptions that I have read. It is useless. Even there, that which becomes aware of that image is the Self. Therefore, we are confused and doubts haunt us at every step, and therefore there is hypocrisy.

Great masters like Swami Sivananda or Ramana Maharishi were puke and simple human beings, absolutely pure. They did not show off, nor did they pretend to be what they were not. You look at them and think, 'He is just like me.' Of course he is just like me, except that at no time does he pretend to be what he is not. Pure, absolutely pure to the extent that this holy man could laugh with you, play with the children, weep with you. Someone who did not want to be other than what he is, that 'is' being the Self. He did not even think that he was different from that he was.

The Self never ceases to be, it is there constantly. That is self-knowledge? The self-knowledge is the absence of objective knowledge concerning oneself, of an

image of oneself, a thought form of oneself. The thought form of oneself is called Vritti. 'I am a swami', is a vritti, a thought form, an image. I 'think' I am a swami - I may not be a swami. When that is dropped, well at least. I am a man. That is another image, be careful. When a man is asleep, does he know that he is a man? No. Another image. Drop that. 'I am alive.' Does a sleeping person know that 'I am alive?' If all these images that thought creates of yourself are dropped away, what remains is the Self. We are not going to suppress those thoughts - what for? That is another image. I have an image of yogi, and that image demands that the mind should be blank, all thoughts suppressed. That is an image, drop it.

But then, 'Don't the Scriptures say that a yogi must be different, must concentrate his attention upon the self, must be devoted to God, must repeat mantra? What is all that?' They were meant as training. I repeat a mantra so that I cannot mentally be scolding you, thinking ill of you. So I am using that mantra as a kind of a broom to push out all the other thoughts that I think unnecessarily. Be very careful here, or once again you will create an image. If you are not using the mantra, your mind is indulging in thoughts which are totally irrelevant to the present moment. In order to avoid the distracting thoughts, you introduce the mantra and the mind goes on repeating it. Right? That is all. Then slowly an image arises in your own mind, you are 'making' that image of yourself constantly. 'I have got to go home'. 'I am Mr. so-and-so'. 'I am a great yogi and look straight unwinkingly.' That is an image. Drop it. When all the images have been dropped away, what you are is the Self. It does not mean at all that you do not live thereafter.

You live. Who lives? Life lives. Hunger and thirst may manifest themselves; hunger will continue to eat food, thirst will continue to drink - not me. The me is not there. Life will live. Just as the heart functions, breathing happens, blood circulates, likewise, the entire life will go on. Such a person does not even know he is enlightened, because 'I am enlightened' is another image projected by the ego for its own glorification.

'Nashto mohah smritir labdhaa' - My doubts have gone, my delusion has gone. That is all that will go. Thoughts may come, thoughts may go. There is an external stimulus. When the stimulus acts upon the eyes, vision happens. There is an external stimulus, sound enters the ears and there is hearing. The eyes, the sense of hearing, stimulate certain parts of the brain and they throw up thoughts. It does not need any egotistical notion at all. Even the words 'I' or 'my' may be used, but they do not have the same meaning then as they have now. The only thing that goes is the delusion and misunderstanding. An ignorant knowledge of oneself has gone. If that is contradiction in terms it was meant.

What is ignorant knowledge? An ignorant knowledge of oneself that one had before. That is all. It can only be described negatively, if it can be described at all. Not this, not this, not this. Life goes on without any doubt, without any image, either of oneself or of others, because life is cosmic - it is neither yours nor mine. Intelligence is cosmic - it is neither yours nor mine. Life or prana, moving in this

intelligence, brings about all this - it does not belong to either you or to me. For instance, the hair does not belong to you or to me; if it does, why do you not drop it or grow it little bit longer? You cannot do it.

That there is a thing called 'me', and that something belongs to that 'me', is a delusion. That delusion goes away. Life is, was, has been, and will be what it was, it is, and will be, without doubt, without delusion. 'Nashto mohah' - only that mohah goes.

What is Truth

Truth is not some which is beyond comprehension - if it is, then it cannot be true. By its very definition, truth must be true to all beings, at all times. Truth cannot be circumscribed, limited, pigeon holed. What is that truth which is true at all times and to all beings? This truth should be self-evident. Is there such a truth, which is self-evident, and in order to realise, to understand, which we do not have to go to a university or even to an ashram?

One of the statements made by Dale Carnegie in 'How To Win Friends and Influence People' is that everybody is fond of 'I'. If you listen in to telephone conversations, the word that is most often used is 'I'. And, if you learn to tap your own throat, you discover that from morning until night you are using 'I am' almost constantly. It is the only truth - all the rest is conjecture, speculation. 'I am' is the truths. Can we come face to face with this truth? Let us start from this 'I am' without either ratiocinating it, pretending to have understood what it means, or, most important of all, without philosophising it. When does one indulge in philosophy? Very often a young man will come and tell me, 'Swami, I am trying hard to give up smoking'. The first incontrovertible truth in that statement is 'I am smoking' - otherwise he does not have to give it up. You can never try to drop something. For instance this handkerchief - either you drop it or hold it.

So, in order to give up smoking, you do not pick up the next cigarettes. His statement shows that he is not even trying to give up smoking. That is all right - but why does he say it? This is the mischief. The truth which is hidden in the statement is 'I am smoking, I do not intend to stop smoking, but I want you to believe that I want to stop smoking'. When you put these three together, there is a lovely expression formed: 'Swami, I am trying hard to stop smoking'.

In the same way, when do you philosophise this simple word 'I'? When you do not know what it is, you do not even care to know what it is, but you want everybody to feel that you are of course a great seeker. Being unable to see what I is, is not bad - ignorance is not a crime at all - but unwilling even to look for it, you philosophise 'I am not this physical body, I am immortal, eternal, omniscient, a spark of divinity which is hidden in the hearts of all'. You do not know what It is, but you want us to believe that you are enlightened. Not only that, but you can switch others' lights on. This is a ridiculous state of affairs - the blind leading the blind.

On the basis of this ignorance we have erected fantastic mansions, and called them shrines of knowledge. They constitute our educational institutions, scientific research institutions, religious institutions. All these are built on the sands of self-ignorance. This is not said in criticism of these institutions - they are all marvelous, wonderful, provided that 'I' that enters into these institutions, shrines of knowledge or worship, first realises 'I do not know what I am'. Because I do not know what I am, I construct an image of what I think I am, and call that

knowledge, and that image is what I have been considering as 'I'. I have never looked at it nor for it, but in my ignorance, unable, unwilling, and ashamed to face the ignorance, I have put up an image 'this is I'. I am an Indian, a man, a swami. Here people say, 'I am an Indian'; when I go to India, 'I am a Madrasi'. In Madras I am called a Brahmin. If I go to a community of Brahmins, they say, 'I am Swami Sivananda's disciple'. Image, image, image. We are constantly being treated as lovely little onions, everybody peeling something off. What is there left, right at the core? Maybe nothing.

This image has been put together by ignorance, but as it has been clothed with the mantle of reality, considered real from morning till night, every day of the year, it somehow becomes the reality. Unless I am courageous, willing and eager I will not investigate. Only when I come face to face with the truth of sorrow and unhappiness that I experience in my daily life, does even the inclination arise in me to investigate the truth concerning the image. The image hurts and is hurt. I hurt you and I am hurt by you. Every day from morning till night, in a small, medium or big way, we hurt one another. One of the ways in which we insult one another, for instance, is to talk very nicely to each other. 'Thank you for coming', said with excessive sweetness, means 'When are you going'.

Physical pain and psychological pain are the best incentives we have to roll us along this investigation into the nature of the Self. What is it that is hurt and what is it that retaliates and wants to hurt others? I hurt and I am hurt. What is that 'I' that hurts? When will you undertake this investigation? Let us say, that someone calls me a fool and I am hurt. I will begin this investigation only when I do not retaliate.

You are told that the first limb of Raja Yoga is Yama, and the first limb of Yama is ahimsa, which is variously translated as non-violence, non-aggressiveness, love, cosmic love. When you type the word 'cosmic', please be careful, because if you leave out one letter you type it 'comic'. All our so-called cosmic love is very often little more than comic love - it is a caricature.

What is ahimsa? It is not something which I can learn and practise, say, 'Ah, you are all my brothers and sisters', or 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. These are just words. I do not know myself, so how do I know my neighbour? Only when I know myself can I love you as myself. I am not discouraging these beautiful slogans and teachings and commandments, but I am merely praying, pleading that you look into these things a little more deeply. For instance, 'Love your enemy' - you and I understand the spirit of this commandment which is beautiful and inspiring. But if he is my enemy, how could I love him, and if I love him, how is he my enemy? If I approach him, feeling that he is my enemy, and tell him I love him, it is hypocrisy - 99 percent of me looks at him and is boiling with rage. He is my enemy - otherwise, why do I use the word at all? Why would the thought arise in my mind that he is my enemy and I must love him? If the thought is there, I do not love him, and if I love him, that thought is completely eliminated - he is no longer my enemy but myself.

All these are applications of a commandment. I have a new definition for them - cosmetic morality. Cosmetics are applied on the face - they are not even skin deep. If you are heavily made up and you go into the rain, it washes off. That is what happens in life. We have this cosmetic morality which we have applied. For instance, I hear a mosquito buzzing. Shall I kill it or not? But that man is watching - he knows I am a yogi, and if I tap that mosquito, he is going to say, 'What kind of a yogi is that?' This is applied non-violence - it is another form of vanity, another image, and not the truth. I am not saying, 'Kill the mosquito.' - that is up to you. One had to live with a great master like Swami Sivananda to see how to live without creating an image of yourself. Ahimsa cannot be learned from a book and applied cosmetically. It has to grow out of you, like the rosiness in this girl's cheeks. She has not applied anything on top of the skin. In the same way - can ahimsa blossom from you - not as an external application?

When someone calls me a fool, I am hurt. Now here is an opportunity to investigate what it is that gets hurt. I do not have to use the formula 'Love the other man as my own self', but as soon as he says, 'You are an idiot', I do not retaliate, but try to see what it is that is being talked about, what it is that is hurt. Then there is total non-retaliation, a total non-resistance to evil. It is when you resist that the evil becomes an evil force. The evil has no power except to the extent that you generate by your resistance. What is of tremendous importance to me is that, when I resist that evil, I have lost a precious opportunity of investigating the nature of this image. These opportunities are granted to us I suppose by God - even it probably hurts some religious sensibilities to say that the man who called me an idiot is God. We are tempted to think that he is a villain. But this opportunity is not granted to me by the devil, but by God.

Look within, see where you are hurt. Here we are turning within, to reach enlightenment - perhaps eventually to discover that what you and I have been regarding as 'I', has never been. What is it that is hurt? For instance, I think that, as I am a swami, he has no business to insult me. But, what is a swami, what is a holy man? All this is a mere image put together by your own mind - and that is called the ego. Perhaps the ego does not exist, but I do not know yet, I am still investigating. I am investigating the self, making use of this hurt. What is the self that is hurt? As you investigate, you will discover a few wonderful secondary lessons or truths. If a person whom I do not know at all insults me, I do not care, but the closer I feel to him, any insult he directs towards me hurts. The closer I feel to him, the more vulnerable I become. Thousands of people walk past me and do not smile at me, it does not worry me at all, but if 'my' friend, student or teacher does not smile at me, I am hurt. I have invented a relationship, and that relationship hurts me. Look at this tragedy. Not knowing who 'I' is, this 'I' has already put out tentacles, linking itself with others; and, based on that relationship, the 'I' expects the other to behave in a certain way. If you are a total stranger, an air hostess, and serenely you pass round some towel or orange juice, I look at you and say, 'Thank you'. You become my friend, you expect a thank you from me; you become a great friend, you expect something more; you become my

wife - you own me then. You have not changed, you are still the same girl.

The 'I' that does not know what it is, causes such a lot of havoc. 'I' may or may not be the truth, but the tyranny and the sorrow brought on by this 'I' is the truth. All the unhappiness and sorrow in our lives spring from this 'I'. It is ignorant of itself, and the consequent images that it forms of itself and others, and the relationships that it invents between its own image of itself and its own image of the other are the groundwork of sorrow. This we call life.

Is there a way out of this? What does your mind say now? 'Yes of course, Buddha said that there is a way out of this misery. What Buddha said is true to him, not to you - till it becomes your own truth, . I have got something here, and what it is, is known only to me, its taste is experienced only by me. You may guess, but the truth is known only to that person to whom it is true.

Once again, I am looking at my own life. The fact of hurt is true. I do not have to study any books in order to discover that I am hurt. Can I discover in my own daily life an indication that it is possible to overcome this problem? In the Yoga Sutras there is a beautiful hint: 'Svapna nidraa jnaanaa 'lambanam vaa' - Remember your own sleep.

When you are fast asleep, you are not hurt at all. It does not mean that I go to sleep for ever, but the fact that when I am asleep, I am neither hurt nor do I experience sorrow suggests that, while living, it is possible to overcome this problem. I am hurt while awake, and when I go to sleep, I am not hurt. These are two facts I have concerning my life, and these are all I need. Can I get hold of these and enter into this investigation? How you do that? Perhaps this is what is called meditation. There are hundreds and thousands of different techniques for meditation, and this may be one of them. Perhaps it is another reason why most yogis insist that you must meditate as soon as you get up from bed, because then it is possible to challenge the mind thus: 'Five minutes ago I was fast asleep, there was no sorrow. I was not miserable, unhappy, restless, tense, worried or afraid. Nothing has happened, I am still the same, except that my eyes are open. Just because my eyes are open must all my fears and anxieties, my loves and hates all come back? When I was asleep there wasn't the consciousness of 'I', but now that have opened my eyes, the consciousness 'I am' seems to wake up.'

Sit down then and there, and ask yourself what is the difference between sleep and waking? This is an intriguing question. What exactly does it feel like when I am at the threshold? In a few moments each one of you will have to go through the door to go home. I was asleep, I am awake. What was the door that passed through? Here you look around and see the walls and ceiling and when you go outside you see the sky and the street. In the same way, while I was asleep, I was sunk in darkness, and now that I am coming out of that sleep, I see all this. What does it feel like to be on the threshold, neither inside nor outside? You can do it here - turn and look at the walls, turn and look at the road. The truth concerning the self is there, between sleep and waking.

This is meditation. At that point the reality which was the sleep state and the reality of what is called waking state, are brought, together - united, harmonised, linked. That is called Yoga. Yoga is not union in the sense of getting two images married- an image called the self and an image called God, the individual soul and the supreme soul. There is one image here and another big image there - make them collide - No. No. Can the consciousness of the waking state and the consciousness of the sleep state come together, blend, harmonise. Then immediately I discover one remarkable secret, that it is possible to live an active life without ever - not even for a single moment - losing the peace, the harmony, the joy and the sorrowlessness of sleep.

If all of us fall asleep now, the individuality is merged in the cosmic oneness. In that there is no division, in that we do not even use the expression 'You and I are one' - there is no need to express it. In the cosmic oneness, there is no expression at all. It 'is'. And it includes all expression. That is the self and that is the truth. When this truth is realised, then sorrow is transcended and there is instant realisation. That is love.