

# THE I-DEA OF I

TALKS ON

PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRAS

by

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In these talks we will try to catch a glimpse of a little text called 'The Yoga Sutras', ascribed to Patanjali. The Sutras can be considered aphorisms on yoga. They are however neither well planned nor carefully laid out. They could have been notes jotted down by the students, or 'hints' prepared by the Master to help with the teaching of his class.

There is as much guess-work as proven facts about the author. In ancient India, the sages - like those who produced the Torah - were not interested in getting appreciation for the great scriptures they gave to the world. Some of the names of the authors of the Indian holy texts were not actually personal names, but more like titles - e.g. Vyasa was like 'Chief Rabbi' and Vasistha like 'Supreme Patriarch'. It is possible that such an office was occupied by several people who all contributed to the work.

One does not know anything for certain about Patanjali. Some say that he was a grammarian, some consider him a great yogi, and some regard him as an incarnation of God. It is common in India to deify anyone who seems outstanding. "Only God could do that, so he who does that must be God!"

What are sutras? Sutras are ungrammatical expressions with sometimes the subject, sometimes the predicate, or the object missing. At times the meaning is so ambiguous that it could be anything like the Delphic oracle - "The Romans the Greeks shall conquer." Therefore, without a commentary, the uninitiated cannot easily follow.

Personally, however, I prefer to look at these things on my own, as a commentary is always 'polluted' - polluted in the sense that it has passed through someone's brain. If one is a serious student of yoga and wants to understand without being prejudiced by what others have said or written, one should go straight to the text. Picking up the Yoga sutras and a sanskrit english dictionary, one tries fitting together words as in a crossword puzzle, trying all the combinations and permutations. This is very nice, for a research worker or scholar. But if you are not prepared or able to do this, you have to depend on some commentary.

Any commentary is as good or as bad as any other. All of them have been produced by well-meaning people. But people with good intentions sometimes lead you to hell.

Coming back to these terse expressions, notes which are almost totally unintelligible, allowing for any number of interpretations, if you wish to study them, you realize that there is one great teacher - oneself. No one can really teach me, and I cannot teach anybody else. Nobody can really communicate with another. What we are doing could perhaps be called 'conveying' information, thoughts. In a factory line, different items are put on a conveyor belt, and

whoever wants something can pick it up as it passes before him. We are doing this kind of conveying all the time. But to 'communicate' is something quite different. Communication takes place when you and I have become one. Note the words 'takes place'. I cannot communicate with you unless, at the same time, you also communicate with me. 'We' commune, we are 'one'. That is what true communion is. And when you and I have become one, are in communion, communication just takes place, happens! This occurs more often than we are prepared to admit. It happens between lovers, close friends, and mother and child. We are strangers to this communication, because we neglect these occasions, we let them slip through our fingers.

We have all communicated some time or other with someone or other, but we did not take any notice, declaring it accidental, coincidental, or natural. And while we are all familiar with this kind of 'telepathy', and ignore it when it happens, we go hunting after something we call mental telepathy and supernatural phenomena. When a boy sees a girl and smiles at her, there is telepathy, and communication takes place. Similarly, when a mother picks up her baby and looks into its eyes, there is communication. But we have neglected the study of natural phenomena, and take no notice of them. Rather we pigeon-hole, codify, and run after what looks like natural phenomena.

It is said that counterfeit things have a greater value than the genuine article. There is a story of a wandering swami whose disciple contradicted his opinion that people do not value anything genuine. Instead of arguing, the swami decided to teach an object lesson. In a village, they had seen how eager the people were to pay to see and hear a man grunt like a pig. Later, the master put up a notice, inviting the villagers to pay the same fee to hear 'The grunting of a pig: the truth'. The holy man led in a pig, and twisted its tail until it grunted. In annoyance, those who had paid their fee to enter, warned those outside, "Don't bother to enter, it is only a pig!". The truth is not considered worth anything, but an imitation is held in great esteem.

People do not want the truth. Nobody wants to be a yogi - but everyone is eager to see a yogi. Why not 'be' one? Here again it is only a question of being. It cannot be communicated unless we drop our individual personalities and become one. Otherwise we are merely conveying. Conveying knowledge is useless and sometimes harmful. In India, there is a popular saying: "A donkey can carry a big load of sandalwood, but it does not know its fragrance." To put it in your idiom: "A donkey can carry the most wonderful spiritual hooks, and it will stay a donkey".

If we are not both on the same wave-length, I cannot communicate with you; you hear the words, but they have a completely different meaning for you. The original idea, the intention is lost. I am on the same wave-length when my shoe pinches exactly as yours does. Then I will be able to understand truly what you are talking about. When we are on this same wave-length, then communication is possible.

These great masters of old communicated their teachings by waiting for the proper disciple to come in the proper spirit. Only when the right student approached them with the right attitude, and asked the right question in the right way, was the floodgate of knowledge, of wisdom opened - maybe by a mere look, a smile, a word. These were meaningful because communication was taking place. That is perhaps the reason why these terse sutras or aphorisms were meaningful to those first-class students who were ready, searching. They did not want just to learn, but to 'be'. If I want to be a yogi, one can teach me yoga, communicate; but if I just want to know what yoga is all about, one cannot do anything but convey.

In the ancient times, seekers who were keen to be yogis, went to the master, sat at His Feet, and listened. Then they practised, listened some more, and practiced some more to arrive at the same wave-length, the same experience, at the point where communication could happen. They had to live the life of yogis, 'be' yogis all the time. They had to mature, to be ready. Questions cannot be answered, problems cannot be solved in anticipation. A little girl of ten cannot understand - however hard you try to explain - what labour-pains are like. It means nothing to her and may only frighten her. It is the same with explanations about yoga. If we are not yet at the proper stage, we do not understand the meaning of the words given us, and become preoccupied with idle speculation which leads to fear. But in communication it is different. Two become one, they are on the same wave-length. The meaning of whatever is said is transmitted from heart to heart. This is the best way to understand the Yoga Sutras.

The next best way is to study as many commentaries as you can get hold of, but all the time watching and asking yourself - is it true, is it real? is this a fact? does my whole being accept this, approve this, see this as fact? If your whole being does not see the truth that is contained in that sutra, in that commentary, then it is 'not' true to you - at that stage. I can hear it again and again, a hundred times, but I must be honest and admit that this is not real to me now. I can neither accept nor reject it. I would be a hypocrite if I accepted it as true, and I would be a fool if I rejected it as untrue. It is there and I am studying it. I cannot really understand. If it appears not quite clear, not quite real to me, I may need more maturity. Possibly the teacher is saying something which communicates nothing to me yet. I have not risen to that state or I must study more and watch life again a little more carefully. I may have missed some of the lessons that life is teaching me. If what he says does not seem plausible to me, does not appeal to my way of thinking, I keep it there, without agreeing or refusing, until I come to the same wave-length, the same consciousness. Till then it is merely on a conveyor-belt - as it rolls along, I pick up something, but it means nothing to me.

All the yoga we are talking about is really meaningless until the day I come to the same experience that is described, that 'is' the meaning of those words that previously I had not truly understood. This has nothing to do with the dictionary meaning. It is the truth, the reality of the words, the truth that the words contain,

communicate. And then, in an instant, it occurs to me - that is truth. At that moment it is no longer truth that is conveyed to me by Swami Sivananda or Patanjali, it is truth which I have discovered by my own experience, for myself, within myself. It is only to the extent that it contributes towards this, that study of texts like Patanjali's Yoga Sutras may be of some relevance to our lives.

Patanjali's sutras contain a world of wisdom which is unfortunately or fortunately lost. Unfortunately because it is inaccessible to most people, and fortunately because it is thus kept out of the reach of the unqualified student. If military secrets were available to one and all, there would be the danger of a bomb-factory in every kitchen. Here we have a scripture whose message seems to be locked in words and phrases whose meaning has to be experienced, not merely looked up in the dictionary.

The author begins with a sutra which is really a 'phrase': now - the next word is difficult to translate - teaching concerning yoga. He does not say, "This is what I, the authority, am going to teach you." He uses the sanscrit term 'anunasasanam', which means teaching, instruction, but not command. In the case of a commandment, there arises a difficulty. I am not saying that it is had to give orders, nor am I suggesting that the absence of commandments is desirable. I merely want to point out that there is a problem arising with any command of 'Thou shalt,' or 'Thou shalt not.' One may feel unable to keep the command, yet fear the consequences of breaking it. This creates a dangerous inner conflict. The teaching of Patanjali, however, is optional. He presents it - if you want to follow, allright - if not, Hari Om Tat Sat, you can leave it and go home.

At the end of the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says very plainly to Arjuna "I have told you what I think is right. Go away and think it over. Sleep on it, then do what you want. You are free." This is also the lesson of the beginning of Genesis. God gave every human being freedom. Respecting this freedom, even He will not interfere. Often this creates a paradoxical situation - paradoxical in its literal sense of being beyond teaching. Adam and Eve were free to obey or to disobey. And then they were told to eat what they liked, but not to eat the apple. Obedience meant refraining from eating the forbidden fruit. But one can never be sure if such obedience is based on fear, or voluntary submission to the order, because one wants to obey. True freedom of choice can be proved only in disobedience!

Instead of creating the problem arising from commanding 'Thou shalt', or 'Thou shalt not,', Patanjali shows his wares, merely opens his shop to us as it were, asking us to take what we want. For everything there is a price to pay, as will be discovered sooner or later. If I am prepared to pay, I can take this. If I prefer a lower price, I will take something else. The choice is entirely mine. That is what is meant by 'anusasanam'. If this is not clearly understood, the whole scripture is misunderstood. The teacher, Patanjali, merely tells us "Speak the truth. If you speak the truth, you will get this. If you do not speak the truth, you will get that." The whole teaching is laid out before us, and we are left free to choose what we want to do.

What is the subject of the teaching? Yoga. What indeed is yoga? The dictionary gives many definitions, varying from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the sacred to the sensuous. Patanjali, in the next sutra, gives us a three word phrase

about yoga. It is not even a full sentence - we supply the verb. "Yoga (is) chitta vritti nirodha." Nirodha can not adequately be translated. It does not really mean control or restraint, not in the sense of suppression or repression, yet it may include all these and a lot more .

Nirodha is a certain inner control, like the control over a motor car. Many of those practicing yoga, especially yoga meditation, have a funny idea that yoga means stopping thinking, making the mind totally blank and empty. Try - it's impossible. Then how do I know what control means? In the case of a motorcar, it implies knowing at what speed to go, where, when, and how to apply the brakes, the clutch, etc. All this together constitutes control. It involves a deep understanding of what is involved. It does not mean making the mind blank. That is easy - opium does it. The mind is made so blank that nothing can be put in and nothing comes out. Nirodha is the kind of untranslatable word that you can paraphrase, comment on, or try to substitute a number of other words for, but if you have not experienced it, you cannot know what it is. We are caught in this vicious circle.

In the same phrase, two more words were introduced - chitta and vritti. What is chitta? Mindstuff. Good, but what is mindstuff? Chitta. This was the problem of a man who took a diploma in English by correspondence course, and had no one to ask for help. He looked up 'county' in a dictionary and found its meaning was 'shire'. Turning to see what 'shire' was, he found 'county'. This made him no wiser. Similarly, chitta is mindstuff, mindstuff is chitta. This unknown entity chitta throws up countless vrittis - vrittis are explained later. Something has to be done with these chitta-vrittis to produce the condition of yoga. That something is nirodha. How much have you understood? Nothing at all!

We want to know what is chitta, what is mind? I guess most of you have your eyes open and see something sitting in front of you and your mind says, "He is a swami." Someone may also think, "He is a nice man," while someone else registers, "He is not nice." There comes the thought, "I like him", or perhaps, "I dislike him." How does all this happen? Watch yourself carefully. If a totally blind man were sitting before me, he would not see a swami. What makes you see this? Your eyes, the optic nerve, and the particular brain centre. But in the optic nerve-brain centre-complex, there is no swami, but merely light waves, vibrations. Light falls on something and is picked up by the eye. Nothing but vibrations enter the brain through the eyes. Where and how are these sensations or vibrations decoded into "He is a swami"?

The first question is, "How do these vibrations become a swami?" But then, because of one's pleasant or unpleasant experiences, something else happens - memory. The memories may even be about another swami, unconnected with the one that is facing you. Some swami has perhaps been good to you, so you also like me and are nice to me. Or some swami may have cheated you, so now you dislike me and hit me. That is strange, but something like this goes on the whole time. A thought is somehow converted into a feeling because of some 'interference'

somewhere. "I like him - I don't like him. He looks nice - he is ugly." This judgment comes after thought formation. But where and how does all this take place?

The material of which the sensations in their essential nature are made, is chitta. What is being said here is nothing but a string of words and more words. Yet chitta still remains chitta, and it will not be grasped by your mind, however brilliant you may be, until this thing that we call chitta jumps in front of you and says "I am chitta." The chitta must be as true, as real to you as the swami, or as the chair you sit on, which you can see and touch. It must be as real as the ant crawling on your back, felt externally, or the head-eche or anger experienced internally. Seeing the chair is a perception of a material object. Being aware of the crawling of the ant is a sensation, and the feeling of anger is an emotion. In one or all of those contexts, the chitta must become visible to you. You must 'experience' it. It must be an existential, immediate reality for you. Not, "I think once I experienced the self - or had direct vision of the chitta." If you had a headache six years ago, you cannot reproduce that feeling now. No mother can relive the labour pains she had at the time of childbirth.

All that we call meditation, chitta, vritti, control etc. is irrelevant now, in terms of the now. These things do not mean anything to you here and now, unless they actually exist in you at present. Just as you cannot experience a headache that is not actually there in you, you cannot meditate unless there 'is' meditation, you cannot know what chitta is unless chitta reveals itself to you. You can do nothing whatsoever about it. Until it happens, until what we are going to discuss under the heading of vritti makes life intolerable, until all my desires, all my cravings begin to hurt me, and the mind naturally turns upon itself, the understanding will not be there. It is not as though I can drop an object of desire. If I claim to do this, I am a hypocrite, as well as a vicious person.

I do not give commandments, but I will give you the same advice I give to friends who tell me that they like smoking. I tell them, "Carry on!" You must not give up what you like. Continue, go on doing what you love, until it starts really to hurt you. Today you want to obey me if I order you to renounce something you are fond of, because you have affection and respect for me. But you also have fondness and high regard for the cigarette! You may drop it due to my influence, but a few days later, when the commandment becomes inconvenient, you may drop me too. That is why I recommend doing what one likes doing until it hurts and one no longer wants it. Then the habit is dropped, it falls away, and you will no longer drop me as the one who made you give up what you were not yet prepared to let go.

One cannot be false unto oneself. Only when it hurts will the mind let fall what we have been calling evil - the cravings, the lust, the greed, the hatred. You do not have to drop them at all. When you have developed sensitivity within yourself, then, without any outside persuasion, the mind is ready to let them drop. Then the chitta is seen, is experienced. That is called meditation. Meditation is coming

face to face with chitta. When this meditation, yoga, takes place, then the chitta has turned upon itself. The sutra says: "The mindstuff - chitta - has become itself, remains in its own purity without any distortion whatsoever." In the beginning, however, this must be taken on faith.

Lord Russell tells us that he started as an agnostic who did not want to believe anything that was not scientifically proved. He took up mathematics and it was all neatly laid out, logical, and scientific. Then he went to a class where axioms were introduced. He was told that an axiom is something one does not question, take it or leave it. Later you may prove it to be true, but to begin with you have to accept it as gospel truth. He saw that it was the same in mathematics as in religion and philosophy.

In yoga too, at the beginning of our practice, it has to be taken for granted that there is a state of consciousness acceptable to all of us - provided we are willing to take the necessary steps - in which there is no contradiction, conflict, distress. A state of bliss, joy, and peace, which is reached through meditation, through yoga, through the understanding of the mind and its modifications - chitta-vritti - is there within us.

Why does the teacher state this fact right at the start? To give us an idea of a door which can be used in case of need. Otherwise we might knock our heads against the wall. One might have saved one's life, had one known the location of the emergency exit instead of crashlanding on the curb from the seventh-floor window of a burning building. We must know that there is this possibility; and when the crisis in our lives arises, we will know which way to turn. Instead of getting frustrated, we will know that we should go deeper into ourselves. If we learn the techniques now, it will stand us in good stead when needed.

Most of us take problems for granted. Life is problems - without problems there is no life. Having come into this problematical existence, I am trying to untie the knots. However, as with a ball of tangled wool or wire, when you think you have undone one knot, you find that you have several more on your hands. You have in fact made it a little worse. This continues until you get fed up and throw it all out. Although we may not notice it, this is what happens to most of us in our lives.

We are not aware that there is a condition of peace of mind, an existence that is unconditioned. We only know our conditioning. We are caught in this trap of 'I am this and I am that', and every time we want to get out of it, we walk into another trap. This is so because we have no idea whatsoever that a state beyond all this exists. That is why the holy author or the Yoga Sutras refers to what looks like the goal of yoga right at the beginning, at the threshold of the discussion.

When you are not in that state of yoga, then the state of your mind, the thought and feelings that prevail in your mind, determine the world around you. Take for example, me, the swami. I do not exist here as a being totally independent of the sum of all your thoughts. What is the 'me' sitting here? The answer depends

entirely upon how you view me. When all these viewpoints, opinions and descriptions are dropped, then what I am, I am.

It is when you become like little children, as Christ enjoined, that you can get an idea of this. Stand in front of a little baby not more than six weeks old, and watch how it looks straight at you with wide open eyes, as if enquiring 'what is this?' When you move, the baby's eyes move too. It is certain that such a baby does not see a swami; it does not even know what a swami is. It sees neither swami nor a Hindu, nor a brahmin, nor even a brown face. If you wish to learn to meditate, the only person to teach you is a baby less than six weeks old. When you look into its eyes, you will know what meditation means, what God-realization means, what yoga means. You will know what everything means. There it is, in all its absolute purity, gazing at you without projecting a single thought of what you are.

It is difficult to talk about the fundamental concepts of yoga, because the vast majority of mankind seems unaware of these spiritual experiences, and thus have no words for them. We do not coin expressions for objects, ideas, and experiences with which we are not familiar. Someone living two hundred years ago on a tropical island, for example, had no need to invent a word for ice - it was not known there.

These philosophical, yogic terms are not to be intellectualized. The word headache is completely different from the real thing. The enunciation of the word means absolutely nothing. I am convinced that it is this 'image' that the Bible condemns - the image formed of empty concepts. The moment God becomes a concept to me, He has become an image, and is then no more than an image. And once the image is there, I begin to worship it, attribute reality to it. That is the danger. I will then no longer seek the reality - the image is already the reality for me.

A great sanskrit pundit could sit for months describing what this chitta means, and how the words chitta, chitti, sat-chit-ananda refer to something marvellous - intelligence, consciousness, bliss - but what is intelligence? We do not know what intelligence is, and so we have vulgarly equated it with cleverness. We call 'intelligent' anyone who cheats successfully. If we wish to experience this intelligence of which we are an embodiment, I would suggest an experiment. Stand on the tip of the toes on the top of a very high building, preferably with a railing, and watch what is happening to your feet. It is a remarkable experience. You know you are not going to fall, but there is an electrical energy working in your feet saying, "Be careful, be careful." That is intelligence. Similarly, if you suddenly see a bus coming at you full speed, note how you run. That is intelligence. When you call it instinct or cleverness, you spoil it. It is in fact your built in intelligence that is at work. It cannot be intellectualized or conceptualized, because the moment you have formed a concept of it, you have destroyed the possibility of finding it, of understanding it.

I have been cutting my hair for the past thirty years at the rate of half an inch every month. That might come to about fifteen feet. But if I had not been cutting it, although it would be longer than it is today, it would never have been allowed to grow to a length of fifteen feet. Even the rate of hair-growth is controlled by the intelligence.

We do not appreciate all the miracles in daily life - we are too busy looking for miracle-makers with extraordinary powers. It would take years of deep meditation to come face to face with this intelligence which stops your hair growing longer than ordained. This same intelligence protects and sustains the body, without fooling itself that the body is immortal. The defence system is so perfect that the intelligence resists all attempts to destroy the body, yet it knows that this body, composed of material substances, cannot be maintained forever.

The same intelligence that looks after what we call life, puts an end to it when the time comes. If I had a hat, I would take it off to this remarkable intelligence. That is what we refer to as chit.

But the mind cannot understand it, and there are dangers in bringing the incomprehensible within a concept. Thus the Jewish prophets warn against pronouncing the Name of God. Vulgarism can result from approaching what is really beyond us. One of India's top scientists who came to our ashram, told us that people complained that we were unable to define or explain intelligibly the nature of the Supreme Being. He added, however, that if he were asked, "What is electricity" he would reply, "Electricity is electricity". How can one define it? How to define anything? Definition is always in terms of something else. How would you define what no man has ever seen? How to describe an elephant to a blind man? Whatever you might compare it to, has no meaning at all to him who has never used his eyes. Misunderstanding arises if we try to conceptualize something which is incomprehensible to us, something which is incomparable. The mind cannot grasp it, because it is itself a small inefficient ray of light, which is chit.

People ask about there being such a thing as the superconscious or the subconscious. All these divisions and distinctions are artificial. They are symbols, images created by man for his edification or education, so he might think; but really they are for his amusement. One studies at university, discusses and professes to be very clever, when really one 'knows' nothing.

In reality this chitta is undivided, indivisible. Not only indivisible in the sense that there is no distinction between subconscious, conscious, and superconscious in what is called the 'me', but also in the sense that consciousness is cosmic all the time. Cosmic consciousness is indivisible. There is no such thing as my chitta as opposed, distinct from your chitta. There is no intelligence restricted to me. What is 'me'? A bag of potatoes! Old potatoes which have been there for a long time.

The Chitta is not restricted to this individual body. It is cosmic, indivisible, indestructible - like space. The human mind cannot really comprehend the mystery of space. We are seated in the space of this hall with its four walls, floor, and roof. The space was there before the hall was constructed, and will still exist when it has crumbled down. Is it correct to say that the walls have taken up space? Putting something in space does not swallow it. Nothing can ever exhaust, lessen, or divide space. It is the same with consciousness.

If you compare chitta to a limitless ocean, each individual is just a ripple, a wave, a droplet of the one ocean. Having continuously identified myself with one ripple, I consider myself as a separate individual. "I am a wave. I am a swami-wave and he is an Alexander-wave." And when the wave collapses into the ocean, it realizes that it has merely been a spoonful of ocean water all the time. This individualization of oneself is what has brought about trouble, and it is the identification with the vritti that has caused the individualization. This leads us into endless difficulty thinking, "I am a man. She is a woman. I am a swami. He is

this. She is that," and so on. There is a ripple in this ocean of consciousness and you are caught up in that ripple, identifying yourself with it. There are countless concepts, thoughts, ideas, and images - vrittis, and as soon as I identify myself - "I am ..." - individualism, egoism, arises.

You can probably study these vrittis more closely and thoroughly within yourself. But one must never make the mistake of considering the cosmic intelligence to be individual - it is not to be chopped into pieces. It is universal, yet it is easily accessible to each one within himself, within what he has come to regard as himself. The ocean is one, but if you can scoop out one spoonful of water, it is easy to analyse the composition of ocean water from this spoonful. The individuality is not taken as truth, but we realize that there is this conception of individuality. We have, as it were, taken out one spoonful of water from the one ocean; and while it is not the whole ocean, it is useful enough for examining the nature of ocean water.

If you watch your own chitta, there constantly arise ripples, thought-waves, in that part of the chitta where the attention is focussed. In trying to explain these ripples, much of our conversation goes round in circles - "I like this. "Why?" "Because it is pleasant." "Why is it pleasant?" "Because I like it!" Some experiences we reject because they are painful. Why are they painful? Because we reject them. Patanjali says, "Never mind whether you have been conditioned to call something pleasant or unpleasant, both these are vrittis, modifications of the mind." He will eventually teach us how to overcome them; but he starts by describing, classifying and analyzing. He wants to knock down certain prejudices which we are wedded to "This is pleasant, this is not pleasant. This is real, this is not real. I hate this man because he is vicious. I like that person because she is beautiful."

We have not learned to look at ourselves. What is it in me that chooses, and why does it select this and not that? Why does it call this pleasant and that unpleasant? Why does it classify. "This is my friend. That is my enemy." I can easily swallow anything my friend does, but why do I not react in the same way in the case of my neighbour or a stranger? Why do I understand and approve of what one person does, provided it is someone I like, while I become annoyed with someone else for no apparent reason?

That is the problem, and Patanjali goes straight to the root - our mind, the vritti. It is the state of mind of the moment which is responsible for the problem. Nobody outside is to be blamed. That temporary state of mind which is the cause of all troubles is called vritti. We cannot adequately translate the word vritti but there are five categories.

The first is called pranama - knowledge - and includes (1) pratyaksha - direct perception. It is that knowledge for which we have scientific proof. (2) Anumana - deduction - e.g. I have learned that there is no smoke without fire, that fire emits smoke. Later I notice smoke in the distance and think, "Ah, there is a fire!" (3)

Agama - scripture. Whatever a scripture says is supposed to be 'gospel truth'. First I believe in it, then I tell myself, I must believe in it as it is 'holy scripture', and eventually it acquires such sanctity that I refuse not to believe in it. These three are put together as pranama.

The second is called viparyaya - error. This is erroneous perception or understanding, for example, mistaken identity.

The third is called vikalpa - imagination. Imagination can ruin our life. If we could cut out imagination, there would be peace!

The fourth is called smriti - memory. The mind throws up bubbles of memory, memory as associations, all the time.

And the fifth is called nidra - sleep. Patanjali regards even sleep as a state of mind, a modification of the mind. It is peculiar in the sense that during sleep the mind thinks that it does not think. Even that is a vritti. We are caught in these vrittis the whole time. Therefore there is no consciousness of the ocean. The intelligence is obscured by these waves which arise continuously.

Once you see the whole picture, action is spontaneous. The finite thing, 'I', 'you', 'he', does not exist in reality. It is only when I am not really spiritually awake that there is this consciousness. Suddenly the question about reality wakes up in us. The question arises, because the answer is already there in us, even if we cannot verbalize or intellectualize it. The question of falling in love only crops up when a boy and girl are mature. There has to be this natural maturity, it cannot be forced. Once maturing has taken place, the question is unavoidable. And once you have lit this lamp, it stays alight until you discover reality - and it swallows the 'you'. Reality is something beyond the waking and sleeping experience - neither the dream personality nor the waking one is real. There is no multiple nor consecutively changing reality. Reality is reality!

There is one more thought that is part of this yoga philosophy which we will discuss today. As we have said, chitta is indivisible cosmic consciousness or intelligence, and the vrittis are knowledge, wrong understanding, imagination, memory and sleep. These are universal - wherever there is ocean, there are waves - wherever there is chitta, there is Vritti. It seems to be clear, but when you view the ocean as one indivisible entity, there are no waves apart from it. The whole thing, with all the waves, is the ocean.

Air moves only in relation to something else, to something static. It is only when I do not move that I am aware of the movement of an object. There is no motion independent of another object or entity. Fire does not know heat. Fire does not burn itself. We talk of fire burning, but it is really we who burn when we go near the flames. Water does not wet itself. It is I and my dry clothes that get wet if I fall into the water. If someone is dry and I throw a bucket of water on him, he gets wet. A swimming pool will not get wet if the same amount of water is thrown in. It is water. Wetting occurs only in relation to something not wet, and change, motion, ocean waves, ripples, and currents, are noted only in relation to something not part of it. Only when I am standing aside, apart from that motion and looking at it, am I aware of the motion, change or colossal goings on.

To the ocean itself, there is no motion, no change, no waves, ripples, or currents. Similarly, in the physical body, there are millions of cells sparking off, all sorts of rivers flowing from the heart to the parts of the body, and back again; there is tremendous activity, yet because the organism is the activity, and there is no division, it is unaware of it. A body approaching fire is burned; but if you are the burning fire, you will not be burned at all. You are the burner, not the burned. Somehow this fact that 'I am that' has been forgotten.

No one has been able to answer to anyone's satisfaction how it is forgotten. Nobody really knows. Just as it is impossible to understand God creating the world. We know that men and women 'create' children, because there is an emptiness, an empty feeling in them. We get clothes because we want to cover ourselves, feeling naked. We want to eat because there is a feeling that the stomach is empty and needs filling. All our human actions spring from desire, which is born of emptiness. Why and how God created the world, what He desired - if anything - is not possible for us to know. The only honest answer is, "I do not know".

When we discuss cosmic intelligence without bringing in God, we ask, "Why should that cosmic intelligence forget at some stage that it is cosmic, and create a diversity, motion, change, a becoming?". "Why should this great universal ocean of being become anything?" Who is going to answer that question? When asked why Adam and Eve fell from Grace, I reply that it is a historic fact. God Himself told Adam and Eve not to eat from that tree; yet they did the very thing that they had been warned not to do. They remembered the command which had come to

them directly from the Creator, yet they went against it. But where were you at that time? In Adam! The Kabbalists say that all of us were hidden in the old Adam, and when he bursts, the whole creation came into being. So whom should we ask about Adam's disobedience? No one but myself can answer the question why Adam did not obey God. Similarly, no one can answer for us how there is this forgetting in the Supreme Intelligence - in God. One can only be bluntly, frankly honest, and say, "Sorry, I do not know."

Somehow, mysteriously there is what philosophers call maya or avidya, which merely means, "I have no idea," and can be translated as ignorance. But the question still remains as to how there can be ignorance in cosmic intelligence. This question is unanswerable. The same question comes round in countless different ways for us. When this ignorance - avidya - somehow mysteriously manifests, the ignorance is ignorant of the cosmic nature of the intelligence.

The body of everyone is made of the same substance. For all of us, food comes from the same source, the Earth. When we were having a nice dinner last night, we helped ourselves from the same bowl. In a kibbutz, people eat literally the same food from the same pot, from birth on. So, it is correct to say our bodies are made from the same substance. Prana, the life force, is cosmic. We are all breathing the same air. We all think, having the same intelligence within us. It cannot be divided, diminished. It is the same everywhere. Yet, when you call me a fool, I get angry. However, when I say, "My hand is dirty," the hand does not become angry with the tongue for this remark, it does not pull it out and punish it. Yet this is what we do to one another. Somebody insults me, and at once I want to retaliate. We eat the same bananas and Jaffa oranges, but each one wants to destroy the other, because "I feel different from him." Therefore I feel he has insulted me.

How does this happen? We have missed two steps. I have forgotten that he and I are one. At the moment, there is ignorance about this fact that we are both part of the same cosmic substance. And when this is forgotten, there is a peculiar polarization - I and the other. Though, in reality, there is just one, it is through what we call avidya - ignorance - that these distinctions are formed. Neither cosmic intelligence nor cosmic ignorance - avidya is not to be confused with or compared to ignorance in the ordinary sense of the word - creates the concept, the idea of you and me. It is in the shadow of avidya that the I arises, and this I creates the you and the other.

Patanjali explains it in a beautiful way: "We look at somebody, but what is seeing?" The eyes have no power to see. It is the brain centre - which is the body, the food that has been eaten - that is seeing. Then, from where does the idea 'I am seeing her' come? This is one of the most effective questions which can lead us into deep meditation. The eyes, not my eyes, are open. The eye, the brain centre, sees Mr. X. Where and how does the 'I' that thinks, "I see Mr. X" arise. No one knows why, where, or how; but the moment the idea 'I am seeing' comes up, that idea creates 'her', the object. In fact, there is merely seeing, a happening, like a

mirror reflecting into another. We are all like mirrors reflecting into one another. But the mirror does not say, "I see the other mirror," as we do.

There is a combination of cosmic intelligence and cosmic ignorance - avidya - and from the latter comes the idea of individuality. Whether individuality is fact or fiction, there is the idea of individuality. Perhaps the first person pronoun 'I' is nothing but the abbreviation of the full word 'Idea'. The first person pronoun 'I' may itself be nothing more than an idea. However, as soon as this idea arises, it creates you, the other person, the second person, then he, she, and it, the third person. From ignorance comes asmita, which is usually translated as egoism. But we mistake egoism for vanity - we do not really understand what egoism means.

I am enquiring where this idea 'I' arises. Who is enquiring? 'I'! The 'I' has slipped out, and is watching its own idea. When someone says, "I have destroyed my egoism," who remains now? Still 'I'. Who is saying, "Look at me, now that I have got rid of my egoism, and see how humble I have become. I am totally egoless, free from all vanity." 'I' says all this. These statements, unless they come from an enlightened person, are completely meaningless. In the case of the sage, the 'I' is something quite different from the 'I' that we know. For the enlightened person, 'I' refers to the Cosmic Being, and not to a limited personality.

When asmita is used in the Yoga Sutras, it has nothing to do with vanity which has the quality of childishness. When one observes two small girls quarrel, one can see such vanity. We call them childish, and do not realize that we fight in the same way. Only we defend our battles with justification: "I have every reason to fight. After all, I am a Hindu, I must defend my religion, my culture, my country. It is my duty, my dignity, my prestige", and a million other things. Whatever I say, the same childishness is there. Yoga takes no notice of vanity, and Patanjali is not talking about this silly, petty vanity here. He is concerned with the very notion, the very idea of 'I'. From where does it arise? From ignorance of the existence of only one cosmic being.

So we see, first there is ignorance - avidya. Then there comes the idea of the 'I', asmita, ego-sense. Once the idea of 'I' is there, it becomes the centre of the entire universe, even as the people of the Mediterranean being, according to them, in the middle of the earth, thought themselves to be the centre of the whole world. The moment the idea of ego is born, it regards 'I' as the centre of everything, and it looks round and declares, "To the right of me is East, to the left of me is West." California is on the West Coast of America which is to the West of here. But from the Far East you fly further East to reach what is called the Extreme West, California! Who determines what is East and what is West? The deciding factor is where I am standing at the moment. I lay down the law, or we as a nation or as a culture. It depends on where I am standing physically, psychologically, morally, and spiritually. 'We' declare this to be good, and that to be bad. That is pleasant, and this is not pleasant. The centre of creation is always 'I', or collectively 'we'.

From this 'I' comes raga - attraction, approval, or liking - and dvesha -

repulsion, rejection, or disliking. Usually raga-dvesha is translated as love-hate, but these are loaded terms. Hate means violence; but I regard only someone else's hitting me as violent. If I hit out, it is merely self-defence. Raga is better regarded as approval, and dvesha as disapproval. If someone gently scratches my back, I approve of him - if he twists my nose, I disapprove of him. This is so because I see myself as the centre of the universe.

My Guru, Swami Sivananda, used to say that the whole of creation is nothing more than an extension of this raga-dvesha, approval-disapproval. Remove these two completely from your mind and heart, and perhaps the whole world will disappear. Perhaps at that very moment, you will have a vision of cosmic intelligence - God.

There is one more category which the wise keenly observant mind of the author of the Yoga Sutras seems to have seen - a mad clinging to one's physical life. Patanjali was perhaps baffled by this, and he says that one does not know why this is so, but that even the wise appear to cling to life. Even the greatest yogi wants to eat when hungry, and if you put a knife to his throat, he will push it away. Does he not know that the body is perishable and the soul immortal? Patanjali has the honesty to say, "We do not know."

This clinging to life that is known to be ephemeral, temporary, which is found even amongst the wisest, absurd though it seems, is a trend away from the centre, away from cosmic intelligence. Even though there is only this one single ocean of cosmic intelligence - which constitutes all the universe, including us - somehow or other there is this feeling 'I am', or rather 'I is', the ripple, the wave, an individual entity.

The wave is not different from the ocean. The ocean is the entire volume of water, including what we call the current, the wave, the vritti. The diversity arises because you and I have created it. There is nothing called the Indian Ocean as distinct from the Pacific Ocean. It is one indivisible mass of water. To the ocean, it is all ocean, it does not know anything about individual waves, parts. But somehow on account of that mysterious power we call maya, avidya - ignorance, the ocean limits itself, and that self-limited ocean is referred to as 'wave.' Why does this self-limitation occur? No answer. No one can answer these questions - Buddha remained serenely silent when asked such questions. He responded merely, "When your house is on fire, would you ask about the chemical composition of the fire or would you go and put it out?"

Even so, questions about God's reason for creating the world are irrelevant to us. One sees that, in spite of one's intuitive perception or understanding, faith, or belief, that there is just the one indivisible cosmic being, and that the one being or ocean limits itself to the status of a wave, the wave immediately becomes as it were the centre of the ocean. From that wave's viewpoint, to the right is East and to the left is West. Otherwise these directions have no meaning whatsoever. The tragedy, the problem of our world, is that the human being, the individual, each 'I', becomes the centre of the universe as soon as the ego-sense arises. Why do two individuals fight. Because each one feels, assumes that he is the centre, and that everything must somehow be related to his pleasure, to his will.

This self-limited cosmic being, which is the individual personality, asmita or egosense, then goes on building relationships, assuming relationships. It is all ignorance! The child and the grandchild of ignorance can only be ignorance, just as all offspring of man can only be human. So, everything which manifests in this cosmic being, cosmic consciousness, is born of ignorance. The self-limited ocean which is called the individual, looks around, feels around, registers, and reacts. Visualize a medium-sized wave in the ocean looking at a big wave with fear, anticipating, "You are going to swallow me." The medium-sized wave then looks at the little one with superiority and contempt, and so it goes on. Fear, contempt, like, dislike, attraction, repulsion, approval, disapproval - all spring from the ignorant self-limitation. That is called the ego.

The waves are there - no one is going to deny their existence; but it is not an existence independent of the cosmic being, the whole. No one can claim that I or you are non-existent. I exist, or rather 'I' exists, if you forgive the faulty grammar. But this 'I' only seems to exist independently of the cosmic whole, because I assume that I am - is - the centre, and everybody and everything is related to me. Those who are nice and scratch my back are my friends, and those who refuse are my enemies. First there is avidya, ignorance, and born of that, self-limitation, and born of that all relationships, which cause unending unhappiness in our lives. If we call some experiences happy, it is only because our lives would be intolerable otherwise. Here is a crude example that may explain what I wish to make clear. If

50 people were to rush at you with drawn pistols, and one person shouted at you in a rough manner, "You fool, come this way. I will show you how to get out," you would not regard his calling you names as an insult - you would gratefully follow him. In relation to all those guns, his abuse seems welcome and you love him as a helper. At other times, if someone calls you a silly idiot, you will be annoyed. But, in that situation, it is like a compliment, a joy, in comparison with the guns, anyway.

Life is full of unhappiness. Yet we regard some of those experiences as happiness, to make life more tolerable. Similarly, I have to label some relations as stable, otherwise life seems to have no sense at all. In reality, there may be no sense, but against my terrible feeling of insecurity, I classify some people as friends, and some experiences as pleasure or bliss. This helps me carry on. Such is life, and so it goes on and on.

Somehow, one does not know why, one tends to cling to this physical, mortal existence. Though calling it mortal, we still want to believe that it is immortal. A saintly man in India said that the greatest wonder in the world is the fact that day in and day out, people die, but those whose time has not yet come believe that they will not have to go. Such is the nature of existence here.

All these identifications, thoughts and feelings, pleasures and pains, likings and dislikings are vrittis. 'I' is the central wave. I see another wave, "It is beautiful, I like it." But another, "It is painful, I do not want it." There after, the whole life is only vritti. We are never aware of anything other than vrittis, mental modifications. The mind goes on modifying itself, playing like a kaleidoscope, which the limited personality claims to enjoy.

How does one get over this? How can one restrain all these innumerable waves with which one identifies oneself, because of one's original identification with one wave? How does one return to the source, as it were? Can I completely cease from all identification in order to know what identification means?

Patanjali says the answer is abhyasa and vairagya.

Abhyasa means 'to be established there.' All effort directed towards remaining established there, in truth, is abhyasa. The sutra concerning vairagya is somewhat complicated. It refers to objects seen and heard, and the longing for them. There is vairagya when the craving is turned upon itself - when there is an intense craving only to know where and what the craving is as soon as it arises. Although I have described abhyasa and vairagya as two separate steps, they really go together. They are not in fact distinct, but are two sides of the same coin. Abhyasa means in one word - practice. Other commentators have later suggested all sorts of practices - asanas, pranayama, worship etc. Some people practice the affirmation of the falsehood of individuality. But nobody can say that egoism is not real. Something else is false. What is untrue, is the notion that the individual wave is distinct, different, separate, and independent from the cosmic ocean. But

one cannot say that the wave is false.

What follows now is tricky, and every word that is employed risks destroying the understanding of truth. There is the belief that yogis say that the world is an illusion, that the body is the product of illusion. So, the question comes, "What must I do?" What must you do with what? The 'I' that does, or thinks it does, 'is' the illusion. That is not recognised. Therefore, some people think one must sit naked on burning sand with the sun shining right on one's head. But the body will be burnt in any case - why such a hurry? Wait a few more years and it will be cremated or eaten by worms. Worms, viruses, are already gnawing it right now.

All this is not what Patanjali meant by practice. A holy man gave a remarkably simple definition of the two words abhyasa and vairagya, which is extremely deep, philosophically. He said that practice means constantly living in the realization that only one homogeneous cosmic being exists, that there is only one ocean, and that ocean is the only truth. This does not mean that we must stretch it to 'therefore the waves are untrue.' The waves are there, but they are also ocean - not part of the ocean. The conception of waves independent of the ocean is the only misconception. It is a forgery - do not even think of it. Ahhyasa is living in the unchanging consciousness of this one homogeneous unity.

Vedanta recognizes this as 'brahma akara vritti'. I hope you noted that here too one talks of 'ritti. This is also a mental modification, a thought, a feeling. But it is better than any other type of thought. Remember that God is all, hold on to this one thought constantly, rather than allow thought like, "You are my friend, he is my enemy, I love you, he dislikes me," to enter the mind. In Austria and Southern Germany, the habitual greeting is "Gruss Gott!" It means "I greet God in you". Then, when you return the greeting, you greet God in me. This is similar to the "Om Namō Narayana" amongst swamis in Rishikesh. Great or small, one greets God in the person one meets. We are not ignoring the existence of the body or the objects in this world, but we recognize that this one God or cosmic being is the reality. The ocean alone is the reality. Abhyasa is to remain established in this consciousness.

Vairagya was described by that holy man as dispassion, in the sense of, "Never let the thought of the universe as a material reality arise in you." Therefore these two are but two sides of the same coin, as we said. The beauty of this yoga philosophy is that it does not restrict you to a set of practices, to the adoption of a particular technique or method, saying that this alone is the way to truth, and everything else is useless nonsense. Whatever enables you to be established in this cosmic consciousness is abhyasa, be it reciting a scripture, fasting, jumping up and down, or meditating, providing you persist in the practice for a considerable length of time. This does not mean merely meditating half an hour in the morning, thinking, "All is God," and immediately afterwards getting angry when you find someone looking at you in a way that you resent. If all is God, why should God not look at me like that? I knew an old man who regarded himself as a great meditator. He told me, "I get up at half-past three and meditate every

morning. I go into higher spheres and communicate with the gods, but when I open my eyes again, I am the same old fool!" That is aptly called morning meditation. As soon as the morning is over, meditation is also finished, and one feels free to do as one pleases.

This is not abhyasa. Abhyasa requires integration of the entire life. This is similar to the Hassidic teaching that one's whole life is offered to God, given Godward direction. If that is not there, then there is no abhyasa, no practice. One is merely taking one step forward and two steps back, with not even the suggestion of progress implied in taking two steps forward and one step back. You can be sleep walking for ever, as when you try to run up a sand dune. After several hours you are still at the bottom, even though you were making some progress.

Any practice that promotes what I call 'frogmentation' is not practice. Note this word 'frogmentation'. It means becoming frog-minded, like the frog who lived in a well, thinking that that was the whole world. When a big frog from the ocean fell into this small well, he enquired where the visitor came from. He then wanted to know what an ocean was. Is it as big as this well? He refused to believe that it was much bigger. We too think that me, my family, my friends, and my life, is all that there is. Any practice that sustains us in this frog-in-the-well mentality is not practice. It keeps us chained to the bondage of limitation.

Abhyasa has to be combined with vairagya. This word is the opposite of raga, liking, approval and attraction. Patanjali says that raga is born of pleasure. But this is again a circular argument. "I love you and therefore I enjoy your company", or "Your company is agreeable to me and therefore I am fond of you." So it goes on, round and round, What comes first? I do not know. Our whole life is such a silly circle.

Vairagya is the opposite of attraction or infatuation. It is not indifference or repulsion. It is sometimes called detachment. But, there is a difficulty here. Detachment implies that there was attachment. Like divorce - I got into a mess - I married, got attached - can I completely detach myself now? There is the lovely cliché "Forgive and forget." Can I forget? When someone has abused me, quarrelled with me, and broken my neck, can I really forget this? I may claim that I am a holy person, that I forgive and forget; but next time that person is before me, I will remember he broke my neck.

The only way is not to register the insult, the hurt, in the first place. Once I feel offended, I cannot forget it. Once I have become attached to you, I cannot forget and detach. I must not get attached to start with. If I am not attached at all, do not hate at all, do not register offence or other feelings, then there is real detachment. That is yoga.

What is called vairagya is extremely difficult to define, because all the definitions presuppose the opposite. Detachment implies having been attached.

"I loved someone, and when I discovered him to be unworthy of my love, I pulled myself away, and now I hate him." Vairagya is not that. It is not dislike, nor indifference. It is not aversion, nor the verbal opposite of infatuation, love. It is totally opposite, the absence of it. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna gives us some clue to the development of vairagya. He tells us to look within, and note where approval arises within us, where this raga, this attraction and affection arises. When you put a hand on a burning stove, it will immediately withdraw, because the nerve endings in the finger-tips do not 'like' the heat. In a similar way, if during yoga practice there is a soft towel under you, the back of the neck 'likes' it. If there is a rough yoga mat, the neck does not 'like' it. We are not discussing whether I like it or do not like it. The back of the neck 'approves' of a soft material and 'disapproves' of anything rough. This approval or disapproval belongs not to me, but to my sensations, to my senses, my body. The skin responds positively to a pleasant sea breeze, and negatively to ice cold wind or desert heat. That is understandable, natural.

But when you say "I love him," or "I hate him," that is not natural. It does not exist in nature - what is natural is permanent - but is a perversion of nature. But when you begin to see this, then your heart, mind, or consciousness, does not register the causative factors of raga-dvesha, whatever caused the attraction or aversion. That state in which your consciousness does not register these causes at all is vairagya. There is no more registration of experiences. Let life flow on. The sensations, the body, the life-force, approve of certain things, and disapprove of others. Let your consciousness not be tainted by this. Just as I lift my hand and the finger may intentionally or unintentionally poke my eye - it happens. Let it happen! There is no accusation, because the finger and the eye belong to the same organism. There is no aversion, no hatred against the finger. When the hand drives away a mosquito sitting on my cheek, there is no special love relation between the hand and the cheek as a result. These things go naturally. The inner consciousness is not modified at all by these experiences. There is no judging, no condemnation, and therefore, no need to forgive and forget.

When it comes to this mad clinging to life, to the desire to live, to enjoy, to have what we call pleasurable experiences, how does one overcome this? Krishna expands this idea in the Gita. The first need is to perceive immediately that all life is tainted by old age, sickness, and death. This does not mean that one should not eat, nor marry, and stop doing this or that. But, when this immediate, direct perception is there constantly, then one's consciousness will not be influenced by these experiences called pleasure and pain. It will no longer run after pleasure, because it knows that it is temporary, not real. Neither will it masochistically look for pain. Pain is inherent in life - there is no need to search for some more. When all desires re-enter oneself, return to the source, there is true vairagya, true dispassion - the total opposite of passion and craving.

During the past few nights, we have been studying what has come to be known as raja yoga. There is no 'raja yoga', however. It is either yoga or no yoga. The word yoga means harmony, union, coming together, and meeting. If this yoga is going to be divided up into different types of yoga, divisions have been created in the name of yoga, and none of these subdivisions is in fact yoga. Yoga is really where you and I meet. What does not bring about such harmonious unity is not yoga. Although we talk of raja yoga, the author of the Yoga Sutras himself does not claim this title. He merely talks of yoga, and refers to the yoga-teaching.

This teaching points out that there is this cosmic being, cosmic oneness, cosmic harmony, cosmic consciousness, which has been mysteriously ruptured, fractured by egosense. The ego-sense says "This is 'I', therefore that is 'you'." From this division flows an interminable stream of worry, anxiety, fear and hate.

How does one put an end to this? By realizing that you 'are' the stream. The moment you realize that, the menace has ceased. The 'I-am anxious' duality creates a distinction between 'A' and the anxiety. Like the Cartesian duality: I think, therefore I am. If I am the fire, I no longer feel the heat, as 'I' and "fire' are no longer separate, but one. If I am the iceberg, I do not shiver and freeze any more, as when 'I' feel the 'cold'. Similarly, if I am anxiety, anxiety no longer haunts me. I am it, and there is no more struggle. The anxiety as anxiety falls away.

A very holy man pointed out, "Fear is the first product of duality." The realization of non-duality is yoga. Any attempt to bring duality in again, to split up yoga in the name of yoga, is absurd. Yoga is harmony - harmony that already exists. Any attempt to create harmony is dis-harmony. If you consider yourself a man of God and see two people fighting, you may feel impelled to butt in to stop them. If they ignore your peace-making efforts, you join the quarrel and matters become worse - three are fighting it out now. You can never bring about peace by any kind of violence. Winston Churchill said in the last war, that it was a war to end all wars - and probably it is still continuing! You and I cannot create harmony, bring about unity, or non-duality, because there is no need, no possibility for this. It is already there. But, what you and I can, and must do, is observe how and where this oneness has been disrupted.

I must learn to observe myself and see exactly where you and I come into conflict, how and where this harmony, this oneness, this love, got disrupted. If one sincerely and seriously carries out this observation, then it does not take a split second to realize that the break happens the moment the 'I' thought arises. The moment the feeling 'I am' comes up, that thought, the vritti, mental modification, creates the 'you', and there is conflict. 'I' is immediately afraid of 'you'. That fear generates conflict, violence, and hatred. I am afraid of you - you are afraid of me. You want to hit me, but if I have the power, I give you the first punch.

The observation - immediately and directly - of the arising of the 'I' consciousness, is real meditation. Meditation does not refer to sitting cross-legged and gazing at your nose. This may be very good too. It helps the knees - it might keep rheumatism away. Looking at the tip of your nose for hours may be good for the eyes. You can use a mantra, and thus calm your mind. When the mind is tranquil, the nerves are calm too. One enjoys better health. That is all. One may need less sleep then, and so be able to go to the second show at the cinema and still be able to get up early in the morning, or dance all night, or gamble till the early hours of the morning. All this may be very nice. I am not against it. I certainly do not object to anyone enjoying himself. But all this has nothing to do with yoga, with meditation.

Meditation is the direct observation of the arising of the 'I', the ego, without a mediator. A mediator is merely another distraction. Even words, descriptions of meditation, may be distractions. Meditation is observation, without descriptions of any type that will give you an image of what it 'should be'. What you and I practice while we are seated in a meditation posture is meant as a help. But, even while talking, while eating, while looking at anything, one should watch the arising of the 'I'. Where does this feeling, the thought 'I am talking here, I am seeing him' spring from? This questioning is to be done continuously, not only in the morning and evening. There is the assurance of the great masters - which again can be a danger! - that it is possible for us to extend this consciousness through to our dreams. If we continually observe the arising of the ego-sense during our waking hours, whatever we are doing, then even while dreaming there is the enquiry 'who is dreaming, to whom is the dream occurring?' So, eventually, even while one sleeps, there is this continuing self-consciousness. This continuous awareness which runs through all states of consciousness is called samadhi, the fourth state of consciousness.

But, all these words are useless for us. So, we are given exercises to lead us on to the discovery of the ego. When one is able to see where the 'I' thought comes from, one immediately realizes 'ah, this is the mischief maker, this is the villain that has brought about a division, disrupted the harmony that in fact exists all the time, destroyed love.' I observe where this fracture has occurred, I see that it is the 'I' that creates this disruption of harmony, and as soon as the 'I' consciousness yields its place, and reveals that it was merely a shadow, there is realization of oneness. Oneness which was covered by a mere shadow is remembered, dis-covered. The ego-sense was nothing more than a shadow, like sleep. This shadow, however, while it lasted, was capable of bringing about tremendous harm in our lives. People wonder how a shadow can be responsible for all the trouble in the world caused by vain, egotistic people; yet we know that when we dream about being attacked by a robber, although the robber is a mere figment of a dream - not even imagination - one may scream a genuine scream heard by others, and wake drenched in real perspiration. The unreal robber was able to produce real signs of fear.

It is the shadow of ego that works havoc in our lives. Unless you and I come face to face with this fact, ego will not go. Only when we come face to face with the understanding that this ego-sense is the root of our troubles, shall we know how to get rid of it. Rather, it is gone when we awake to the fact of the oneness of existence.

Yoga can be regarded as the junction of the fracture and the healing agent - the darkness of ignorance, and the light. When these come together, there is healing, making whole. In reality, it was whole already. Consciousness cannot be really fractured. You and I are one forever, and nothing can really break that unity, our harmony, our love. It is like forgetting our identity in sleep, but recalling it on waking, when in fact it had never been lost. As 'I' went to bed as Swami Venkatesananda, so I get up as the same person - not as an elephant for example. The identity continues through sleep, although there was a temporary 'amnesia', forgetfulness.

You and I are one. There is this oneness alone in reality - but there is some mysterious loss of memory. Anything that helps to bring about the remembering of what has been temporarily forgotten, is called yoga sadhana, yoga abhyasa - the practice of yoga. Having heard that, I am sure the question is itching in all of us, "What does one do?" We must be careful here. The danger lies in excessive concern about our doing - and not doing - which may then become a routine performance. As soon as the emphasis is on what I do, it is likely to become a ritual, and I tend to see myself as the 'doer'. We feel that, unless we 'do' something, we cannot get from here, our present position, to there, that state of yoga.

Patanjali, in his Yoga Sutras, gives us quite a number of exercises. He describes astanga yoga. This is the yoga which has eight limbs - not steps. The limbs that together constitute yoga, are yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Samadhi, direct experience of truth, is like dhyana or meditation, also a limb of the body of yoga. I may pretend that whatever I am and do in my life, as long as I sit and meditate for half an hour every morning, I can call myself a yogi. But, this is like my amputated leg telling you, "I am swami Venkatesananda." In fact, it is cut off from the main body, and is nothing but a rotten piece of flesh. One limb does not make a person. Similarly, it is all the eight limbs together that constitute yoga practice. We cannot claim that any part of the body is more important than any other. It would not do to say, "Swami is a nice fellow. To have him with me, I will take the head homem as the head is the most important. The rest can be picked up later." One cannot isolate one limb and call that yoga. I am often amused when I see a sign board announcing "Yoga Classes." You are shown how to stand on your head, on your shoulder, and on your nose. It is marvellous. I am not criticizing all this. But these are only yoga Asanas, postures. This is not yoga.

There are also people who say meditation alone is sufficient. "Meditate and everything will come right." If you can, please do. However, it may not turn out

to be the solution to everything. If you are sincere in your meditation, you will realize that it is not enough. Others say that meditation is dangerous, and advise you to leave it alone. They tell you that you must first be established in yama and niyama, then practice asanas for three years, then pranayama for the next four years. It is one of those unfortunate things that no one can guarantee that life here will last long enough for all this.

Merely shifting emphasis from one limb to the other does not make one more essential than the other. It is the whole thing together that forms yoga. Here is a brief description of these eight limbs. Yama and niyama constitute what one might almost define, over-simplifying, as the lifestyle. They are five so called vrittis and five so called disciplines. The five virtues that make up yama are: ahimsa - non-injury, non-harming, non-violence; satyam - truthfulness; asteyam - non-stealing, or rather, non-hoarding; brahmacharya - purity; aparigraha - greedlessness. Niyama consists of: cleanliness, contentment, leading a simple life, study of scriptures and one's own motivation, surrender to and the worship of God.

If you examine all these, they are all supposed to reflect the life of one in whom the 'fracture' has been healed, in whom there is no conflict. One who does not consider himself as the centre of the universe, does not suffer from self-importance, be it a martyr-complex or vanity. Both of these really belong to the same category - the one who considers that he must sacrifice his life so that others can be happy, and the other who wants to enjoy himself at the expense of others, are both equally vain, egotistic. One is a masochist, whereas the other is searching for pleasure hedonistically. Both however regard themselves as the centre of creation, and want everyone to dance around them. If we examine the ten principles enumerated above, we will realize that they are nothing but the reflection of a person who is waking up to the non-existence of the ego-sense, to its shadowy nature.

The third limb is asana. According to yoga philosophy, this is any position or posture in which one is able to sit firmly and comfortably. If I am seated in a comfortable way, then it is possible for me directly to observe the arising of the ego-sense, and suddenly become aware that it is a shadow. Then the shadow is gone, and there is realization of oneness. When light meets a shadow, the shadow vanishes, leaving the truth unaffected. Even these postures are given us to awaken in us the truth of this harmony, this oneness of existence, the harmony that is built into every body, because it is omnipresent, cosmic. Therefore, the body too functions on the principle of this harmony. Without harmony, life is not possible. If I understand this, I understand the yoga asanas - their beauty, their limitation, the body, the body language - and the fear of old age, sickness and death disappears.

The moment you stand on your head for a few seconds, everything seems to fall apart. Then the intelligence that is in the body starts functioning, and makes the appropriate adjustments to the challenge. There is harmony. What do you call ill-

health? It is really the harmonizing effort of the intelligence in the body that is sometimes misinterpreted as illness. You have a headache. It followed two late nights with too many drinks. Enough for two days! So you rest a day. Harmony is restored. When you have four beers instead of one or two, you get a hangover when you wake up, so that you will not take any more alcohol for that day. It balances out. You eat something that you should not have taken, or you overeat, and the intelligence, the life-force within you springs into activity. It creates a bad taste or ulcers in your mouth that stop you from eating for the present. It is like the road sign warning, 'Road closed, men at work' telling you, "Wait a while - repair work in progress." It is yet another attempt of the vital force in you to re-establish this balance, this harmony.

If you want to derive maximum benefit from the practice of the yoga postures, you must have this approach. Instead of doing them mechanically, rapidly, as if they were a nuisance to be finished with as quickly as possible, maintain each posture and watch how this beautiful adjustment takes place in your body. You will be surprised about the intelligence built into each cell of your body. Only in this broader concept do yoga asanas become part of yoga. Otherwise they are merely gymnastics.

The fourth limb is pranayama, and is extremely difficult to define. It is coming face to face with the life-force. Here Patanjali has rather a shocking sutra: "Exhale and retain." This does not mean, "Exhale, inhale, and hold the breath." He is telling you that if you breathe out and then refuse to inhale again, you will very soon see what life-force is. Please try if you have the courage. You will come face to face with prana, the life-force. It springs into activity when you are forced to take in another breath. What makes you take the next breath after holding as long as you can, is prana. No definition can ever show you prana as clearly as one moment's experience.

The fifth limb is pratyahara. This is the state in which the attention does not externalize itself. At present, and usually as you sit looking at something, listening to some sound, smelling or touching something, your attention is drawn out of yourself. In pratyahara, the attention is directed inwards.

The sixth limb is dharana. This is one-pointed concentration, a continuous flow of consciousness inwards. "Where does this 'I', this ego-sense arise?"

The seventh is dhyana - a close, intense, immediate observation of the arising of the ego-sense.

When these seven take place together, there is a sudden burst of inner illumination. That is called samadhi, the eighth limb.

All these have to be practiced from day to day, from moment to moment. Sitting in a meditation seat to 'practice meditation' is only the beginning, not the end of it. The whole life must be meditation, one continuous self-observation. One who

does that, is a yogi. One who does that, is free from the painful, baneful effect of ego-sense. He may still use the word 'I'. There is nothing wrong with that. He will still eat, work, and live, but without ego-sense. Yoga is that state in which there is no conflict, no anxiety, no fear, no false 'I' - 'you' relationship, no approval, no disapproval. That supreme state of bliss and peace, while yet living in active life, is what is meant by yoga - is yoga!

One can go on talking for ages about these eight limbs of yoga. But one has to be certain about one's intentions in practicing yoga. What is important for me to know is not so much my goal, as my attitude. My approach to whatever I do in life is dependent entirely on what we might call my philosophy of life. If there is sincerity, then the whole practice of yoga is easy.

I believe that, while we do pranayama, we can come to know the state of our nerves and mind. If they are excited, the breathing is disturbed, jerky. If they are calm, then the respiration too is quiet, easy. If we practice these breathing exercises with an inner awareness of what is happening, then they may be more meaningful. One can do all sorts of deep breathing, one can jump up and down as soldiers do, taking deep breaths, one may run up a flight of stairs and develop one's lung capacity, all this may be useful - but it is not yoga.

Perhaps the yogis who invented this system, and somehow introduced what appears to be a simple physical exercise, meant even this to be more a psychological trick - for want of a better term. If you watch the breath as it goes in and out, you know the state of your mind. There seems to be a close interconnection between the steadiness of the mind, the attention, the smoothness or jerkiness of the respiration, and the eye movement. When the mind is calm, the breathing is smooth, and the gaze of the eyes is steady. Whether the breathing is deep or shallow does not seem to matter at all. If you seriously practice concentration and meditation, you may be shocked or surprised to see that the breathing becomes shallow. If you take a deep breath and stop the respiration at the solar plexus, the respiratory apparatus is more or less kept open. You do not breathe in and out in the normal way - breathing as a process is suspended, air not being kept out nor taken in. It is considered perfection in pranayama when you do not breathe at all! So, what is all this great commotion about yogic deep breathing, shoulder breathing, rib breathing, stomach breathing, and abdominal breathing?

Probably what is known as pranayama is meant not so much to cleanse your lungs and to help purify your blood, but to steady what the yogis call the nadis. These are nadis as nerves, others have called them arteries and veins. But if you look at the root of the word 'nadi', it means something like river - that which flows. It is like a light ray, something that flows onwards, which cannot be said to apply to a nerve. Nadis can be vaguely compared to the sound waves picked up by the radio. Something like that happens within you and that is the nadi. The pranayama exercises are supposed to purify the nadis. When you are doing yoga postures, you are in fact being spiritually awakened. That your body is also benefitted is a side effect, an incidental fringe benefit, not the real one. In the same way, when you do pranayama exercises, the nadis are purified, and the mind and nerves are calmed; but these too are merely fringe benefits.

The pranayama exercises have a tremendous meaning in spiritual life. The fruit

of pranayama is described by patanjali thus: "When you practice pranayama, the veil that covers the inner light is removed." If you consider pranayama as mere breathing exercises, you will find the condition of your lungs is helped - nothing more. Yet the holy man who wrote these sutras emphasized that the veil covering the inner reality is taken off, merely by practicing this pranayama. So, it seems that there is a need to change our entire approach to it, otherwise there will be no real spiritual benefit.

There have been great spiritual masters in India who have roundly criticized, if not exactly condemned, yoga postures - laughed at them as a silly waste of time - but even they approved of and practiced pranayama. Ramana Maharshi was one of them. He did not bother about asanas, he did not even insist on the need for a straight back while meditating. He recommended sitting in any way that was comfortable. But he did accept pranayama as spiritually valuable.

So, we conclude that pranayama has a spiritual value beyond the mere physical and physiological. one. The mind is enabled by the practice of pranayama to go on to the practice of concentration and meditation. If practicing pranayama does not help me to achieve this concentration and meditation, there is something wrong somewhere. Concentration, or dharana, is a focussing of the attention in such a way that the mind does not wander in all directions. It is as if it were bound to the object of attention. We may use a mantra to focus attention. I tell myself that all I want to do is to repeat the mantra. I give the mind the instruction, "Hold onto this." There is a beautiful saying attributed to St. Augustine: "The mind commands the body and the body obeys;" - if the wish is to lift the hand, the hand will go up - "but the mind commanding itself, does not obey." It is much easier to lift the hand than for the mind to think only of a mantra. For those of you attending meditation classes, it would be interesting to watch how few seconds the attention can remain focussed without wandering. After twenty or thirty seconds, the attention is gone - no one knows how. So, one tries to limit it to a particular focal point. That is dharana.

When the attention is absorbed there, it is dhyana or meditation. For example, when I keep on looking at you, it is concentration. When I am completely absorbed in looking at you, it is meditation. And when I go deeper and these three - I-looking-you - become one, so that it is as though you alone are the reality and 'I' is non-existent, that is samadhi. These are again all words - which I hope do not mean much to you.

When these three - concentration, meditation and samadhi - are practiced simultaneously, there is intense inner awareness, illumination or enlightenment. This practice can be directed to anything you like, and such practice combined will inevitably produce results. Here lies a danger - the danger lies in result hunting. The author of the Sutras - perhaps to be scientific and truthful - goes on to describe these results. Since your attention is focussed in one direction, towards a particular object in this practice of concentration-meditation-samadhi, since your whole consciousness is filled with this object to such an extent that you

do not exist and that object alone exists fully and truly, you will 'know' that object intimately, immediately, in its full essence. If you meditate, as people say, upon a rose, you will meditate yourself into a rose.

There is a story, a fantasy, with a message, that demonstrates this idea. A youth was inspired by the peace radiating from a holy man, and asked to learn meditation from him. He found that he could meditate only when he was allowed to think of what was closest to his mind and heart. Instead of the deity originally suggested as the object of concentration, he chose a buffalo that he knew and loved with his entire being. In a split second, he entered into samadhi. When the father came to fetch him, and the master called him out of his deep trance, the boy said that he could not get out of the room as the door was too narrow for his large horns. He had as it were lost his individuality, and become one with the buffalo. It is not a real loss of one's nature, but it is as if one's personality has been completely taken over by the object of meditation. For the time being, the boy really thought that he was the buffalo he had concentrated on. Therefore, it is suggested that one meditate upon something uplifting or idealistic, so as to grow into that image.

Here we can dispose of one more question that people ask. "Is yoga especially the aspect of meditation, like hypnosis?" The yogi replies, "No." In this ocean of one cosmic being, the wave has already hypnotized itself into an independent entity. You really are the cosmic being, but you have hypnotized yourself into a self-limited personality. Therefore the yoga of meditation is not self-hypnotization, but self-dehypnotization.

But there is a danger in being promised any reward for the serious practice of meditation in that we may be caught in this hunt for results. This is due to a basic insincerity. If the fundamental sincerity is not there, then one's life on the path of yoga is full of difficulties from day to day. Patanjali mentions quite a few of these, and also tells us how to overcome them.

First there is physical and mental disease. This includes confusion, anxiety, psychological repression, doubt, and wandering of attention, or an inability to meditate and to sustain meditation. All these are obstacles on the path. As far as physical illness is concerned, what you and I consider pain, old age, etc. is not disease. The ageing body may behave in strange ways. But for an elderly man, to have grey hair is not anything abnormal, but a natural progression, not a sign of ill health, but merely change in the structure of the body. If a small baby growing into a charming young woman is considered desirable growth, then for her eventually to become a senile lady is also similar growth, not to be resisted, feared, nothing to be ashamed of, to be colour-washed or cosmetic-washed.

All this is not disease. Disease means loss of ease, of harmony. When harmony is restored, it does not mean that there will be no more upsets, pains, and aches. There are a number of cults that claim that, when you meditate, your headaches will disappear, and all indigestion will go. Impossible. And what for? When I

swallow some poison, will it become harmless just because I sit and meditate? When I fall and sprain an ankle, will thinking of God fix the ankle? If I try to think that the trouble does not exist, it may work for a short while, but as soon as I come out of my auto-suggestion or self-hypnosis, it will hurt all the more. The pain in the ankle only tells me that I twisted it, and should lie down and give it some rest so that the repair work can go on. It is merely a signal that something has gone wrong. It is not at all an undesirable feature, but the body communicating with you. There is no need to get frightened or embarrassed about it. It may not even be necessary to run to the doctor. If there is a pain somewhere, give the aching part a rest. If the stomach hurts, it asks, "Please keep off food for a while. Everything will come alright if I have some rest."

Disease is something different. It means there is tension within. What does tension mean? When you hold a piece of rubber, you can note that there is tension as the two ends are pulled in opposite directions. This happens to me when I sit here, practicing meditation. I go up and enter the transcendental realms - lovely - but really my whole heart is rooted in earthiness, in pleasures of the senses. Naturally there is tension - the body pulls me down, and the head pulls me up. There is a tearing in the process. This is what can be called disease. It is not really physical illness, though the body may manifest the inner diseased condition of a tense torn mind, of confusion and doubt.

One may tend to worry: "Practicing yoga, I have become vegetarian. Think how many fish I could have enjoyed in that time, and how many chickens I could have swallowed. When I am old, I may no longer be able to make up for it. Now is the time for all these pleasures which I am losing because of yoga. It would be alright if, as the swami promises, I become all joy and bliss, but it may not be true, he may be bluffing me. In that case I will have missed all these opportunities for enjoyment. I will have lost the best part of my life." When this doubt haunts the mind, the mind is not steady. The mind is unsteady, not because some devil is tempting it, but because of doubt haunting it.

Therefore, one has to come to the end of one's own tether. One must come to the understanding, the insight, that enough fish has been eaten, enough chicken has been swallowed. Leave them free to swim in the ocean or to run around in the courtyard. Enough alcohol has been tasted, and enough cigarettes have been smoked. The same thing has been repeated again and again - it has become boring. Let us forget it and try something else. Here is yoga, here is meditation. Even if it leads nowhere else, at least it does not cause the destruction of all those living things and the intoxication of the body.

We want to have pleasures - be it chocolate, food, or sexual enjoyments. But why is it that this pleasure compels me to indulge in it? Who is boss? Just keep that bar of chocolate there and ask, "Who is the master?" The chocolate says, "Me." One holy man of India said, "Pleasures have not been enjoyed, but they have enjoyed us." Pleasures, not we, are the real enjoyers, and at our expense. Natural appetites are not cravings. They do not make us mad. There is a very big

difference between what is a natural appetite and a craving. We have to eat in order to live. The natural progression of starvation is towards death. But a craving is a perversity. It makes the whole mind restless, and anything that makes the mind restless is harmful.

Disease, doubt, and restlessness of the mind are all obstacles. They manifest in us because of lack of one-pointed devotion. Remember the biblical commandment: "Love the Lord with all thy heart, all thy mind, all thy might and being." We must apply that whole-heartedness not only to devotion to God, but to everything we do. That is yoga.

The whole life is yoga when real integration exists in us, and we are able to apply a totally integrated personality to whatever we do. The entire message of yoga is contained in the single commandment to love with all one's might, with one's entire being. Patanjali echoes this when he says, 'In order to remove the obstacles on the path of yoga, an integral approach is necessary.'

The one-pointed devotion which the author of the Sutras prescribes for removal of obstacles like disease, doubt and restlessness of mind, cannot be replaced by anything else. Sincerity can only be substituted with more sincerity. It is not a quality which can be traded for something else. Whatever sadhana, abhyasa I may practice, if I am not sincere in the sense of wholesouled dedication and an integrated approach, yoga is not possible. Yoga is integration, wholeness. Sincerity here means that I do not only accept it intellectually, but also emotionally, with my whole being. If there is insincerity, then only part of me accepts. For instance, I may feel that it is nice to practice yoga, but when it comes to rational understanding, it seems to be so crazy. I carry on doing it because I like it, but there is division here.

More commonly still, one is able to assent to yoga philosophy rationally, with one's intellect, but one lacks the passion of emotional assent to practice it. It sounds very good, it is logical and I understand the value of doing it, I have a mind to do it - but no heart. As a swami once said in the ashram, "My mind agrees to whatever the Guru proposes, but I have no heart to do it, the heart is not in it." That happens in the case of most of us. The mind understands, the intellect accents yoga, but something within says, "No" - or the opposite seems so tantalizing, so delightful, that it appears to be a great pity to spend one's life standing on one's head, holding one's nose, and meditating. It does not appear to appeal to the emotions.

Yet it is the emotional assent that moves the energy for whatever we do. We can for example sit and watch an emotionally moving film till past midnight. When the emotions are stirred, they provide an almost constantly increasing supply of energy. When it comes to intellectual comprehension and dry discussion, the head becomes heavy, the mind gets dull. There is no energy. It is the emotion that is needed to supply the energy. Therefore, if there is not the wedding of intellect and emotion, then there is no energy available for the yoga that you and I practice.

We look for some kind of inspiration. But what is inspiration? Breathing in! There is no greater inspiration in the world than breathing in. In order to inspire well, to inhale, I must first exhale, expire. Expiring means dying. Unless 'I' dies, there is no inspiration possible. We are back to square one. We look for inspiration, for some kind of magic, because within ourselves there is this division between intellect and emotion. What the intellect assents to, almost condescends to accept, the emotion refuses even to look at. Therefore, the

insincere, the divided person is so tame, so lifeless. Whatever he undertakes is dull.

Intellectual - emotional integration is yoga already. We had an example today in the asana class. People were saying that they could not do the headstand. Then, with the help of a little pat on the back, some encouragement, the emotions accepted it, and they managed it. The intellect may see that it is alright, that others can do it, but there is fear, an emotional block. As soon as the emotional block is removed, there is great enthusiasm, and therefore great energy.

If this enthusiasm - and therefore energy - is not there, there is no yoga. Patanjali, insisting on ahhyasa of a 'single principle', might mean both dedication with one's whole being, whole-souled devotion to yoga, as well as regarding the whole of life, not only meditation, as yoga. Yoga cannot be isolated, split up, practiced morning and evening. It has to be the entire life. The ego has to be watched constantly, not only during what we call meditation. If the watchfulness is continuous during the waking state, throughout daily life, it is also continuous during the dream and sleep state. This has to be experienced, it cannot be intellectually explained, analysed, or understood.

One cannot answer the question, "Now can one be awake and sleep?" At some time in our life we may have had an experience, while dreaming, of knowing that it is a dream. Because it was unpleasant, one abruptly terminated the dream and woke un. Being awake in sleep may not be such a common experience, but we can see that during sleep, respiration, blood circulation and other functions continue. If anyone pricks your foot while you are asleep, you are awake enough to withdraw it. The yogi is more awake than you - that is all! If that is rationally comprehensible, that is fair enough.

"The mind can be controlled, the vrittis understood, subdued and overcome by total devotion to God," is what we have been told. But, what is this God? The God of yoga philosophy is not a puppet, nicely wrapped with a ribbon, like a Christmas parcel, and guaranteed for genuineness. The God of yoga philosophy is a special being who enjoys the distinction of not being subject to the illusion to which you and I are subject. The 'I' is a creature of avidya, ignorance. God is not subject to ignorance. But God is not a total stranger to you - God is very much like you. In order to find out what God is, you must first of all know what sort of person you are, who you are - not the body, not the living being, the flesh and bones, but the inner spiritual entity. God is not so different from this inner spiritual entity. But, whereas your spiritual or psychological personality is subject to ignorance and therefore egoism, God is not.

If you enter into the spirit of this without any prejudice, it seems to be a beautiful way of looking for help in transcending oneself. I see that I am trapped in my own ignorance, egoism. I practice yoga, I meditate, I enquire into the nature of the self - but it is always 'I' who is doing all these things. How can I understand 'I'? How can the ego know itself? The ego understanding itself may be

nothing more than a projection of itself. This is what I call psychological cannibalism. One creates one's own image of what God is, what ego is, what life is, what the soul or the spirit is. As soon as this image is created - the image being nothing but my own progeny, my own creation - one swallows this and is quite satisfied. "I have realized myself." But this second 'myself' is nothing more than my own projection. This is nothing better than cannibalism. After giving birth to this image, I swallow it, and pretend that everything is fine - that I am illuminated and enlightened.

Here one is caught: what does self-realization mean? "I have realized myself" - but the 'I' is still there and laughing at me. This self-realization is merely my own image, projected by my own mind, my own psychological apparatus. It is a vicious circle. How does one get out of it?

We are given a definition of God. It is not really a definition, but a kind of description of God as one essentially not different from me and you, but not subject to the limitations that we are subject to - ignorance, egoism, and all else that follows from this. There is a suggestion here that once you have come to the dead end, the end of your tether, and you stand baffled, not knowing at all what to do, you can look up to that God, and hold up your hand to Him in utter submission.

If you accept this view of God, it is possible that you are accepting something rationally, which you cannot immediately experience, and which therefore is not yet truth to you. It means nothing to you as yet. However, if you reject it, you are rejecting the only open door out of the prison house of the ego. But you are not compelled to accept it at all. If you are a hero and say, "I do not want any of this," you can still practice yoga. This God is not a necessity nor a luxury. He is not a totally dispensable luxury, not a vital necessity, but perhaps something in between. Many use Him like an occasional mattress. If you do not want to, it is your business. But if you 'use Him', you will find your spiritual life more comfortable.

If I do accept this view, how to go about it? What is His name? What shall I call Him? How shall I look up to Him. The sutra does not say that OM is the name of God, although it has been interpreted to mean that. It is more like a verbal indicator, a signpost with something written on it to show the way. OM is such an indicator and if you catch hold of this, you might reach the destination. How to do it? By Japa.

Japa means repetition of a Mantra. Repeating 'Om' is japa. That is easy. 'Om Om Om'. It is so tranquil, so beautiful. But it can also be mind dulling, deadening. The mechanical repetition of a mantra may not produce much of an effect. If one goes on for half an hour or more, saying 'Om Om Om', even if you are on the verge of madness, or greatly disturbed, I predict that you will fall asleep. It does not matter whether you believe in its use as a verbal indicator, as the name of God. If you sit or lie and keep on repeating 'Om', you will inevitably drop off to

sleep. So, it has some effect - to produce sleep and to run the manufacturers of tranquilizers out of business. I am not criticizing those who do japa mechanically, but I am pointing out that the mechanical saying of 'Om' has no spiritual value. The spiritual meaning is different.

The Sanskrit for the English word "meaning" is artha. Artha is not meaning in the sense of a dictionary meaning. It is the substance whose name it is. If 'Om' is the label, what is the substance which that label denotes? There is a word 'watch'. The artha, meaning, of the word 'watch' is not chronometer, it is not the meaning in the sense of paraphrase. But artha means watch. Now, what is the artha of 'Om'? What does the label 'Om' signify? What is the substance it denotes? It is for each one to find out.

The word 'mantra' can be interpreted in many different ways. 'Om Namah Shivaya' can be said as a mantra, and some people believe that the very structure of these words has a distinct mystic significance, so that the repetition of the mantra builds up a psychic deity within you. Possible. The Jewish 'Adonai Elohaina Adonai Echad' can also be used as a mantra. A Mantra may be merely a powerful spiritual instruction. It is not only a mystic formula, but it may also be a sincere piece of advice, a counsel or teaching which can rouse the whole being. If the mantra is repeated as a verbal indicator of God, while looking for the substance it represents, the mind will become calm, one-pointed, awake, and alert. Added to this, there will be the passion of inquiry, if one is sincerely and seriously searching for the substance.

It is traditionally forbidden to reveal one's mantra, as also any spiritual practice. Through discussion with others, there is a danger that someone might interfere with one's inner feelings. The person you tell about your mantra might put you off. "Your Mantra, your meditation is no good. Mine is better." You thus might lose your enthusiasm and energy for what you were doing, and since you cannot copy the other person, you fall between two stools. This has led to the advice not to talk about your sadhana. The wholehearted acceptance and emotional participation in what you are doing is tremendously important. Let us take the mantra 'Om'. The effort I put into finding its substance leads me on to the ultimate transcendence of the ego. If you carefully follow what I am saying step by step, you might get a glimpse of it.

Patanjali gives us a few steps. People have interpreted it in a different way - each has been considered to be a type of samadhi. But I will give you the literal meaning. Vitarka means using logic, the rational approach. I am mentally repeating the mantra 'Om', and I hear the sound 'Om'. I ask, "Where does the sound come from? Where does it happen?" Here your emotions must be deeply roused, you must be terribly enthusiastic, like the Hassidim who dance and sing for love of God in joy. One takes it as a delightful pastime. The right spirit is a feeling of "I love it!" Go on, be cheerful, be happy, smile. But be deadly earnest, sincere, and serious. This combination of sincere earnestness with great joviality and cheerfulness is also yoga. I am very serious about searching for and

discovering the substance, yet I am quite relaxed, not at all worried or anxious.

So, I am mentally repeating 'Om' with each inhalation and exhalation. What do I mean by mentally repeating? What exactly does it mean? If I am mentally repeating 'Om', I can hear the sound within myself. That is strange. We know that sound is produced on clapping two hands together, when one object strikes another or when wind passes down a tube or air through the voice-box. But how is it that I hear 'Om' when I am saying it mentally? Where and how does this happen? What are the elements involved? Is there vibration somewhere in my voice-box, or is there another vocal cord somewhere in my brain? I am arguing, considering, trying to analyse logically. This is vitarka, the analytical approach to enquiry into japa.

As this goes on, after a while, the analysis becomes a search, a research. You go deep within and try to locate the sound. Analytically you cannot possibly solve the riddle, answer the question as to how the sound is produced. Then, abandoning the logical, rational approach, one engages oneself in enquiry, vichara - which is the next stage of meditation. "Where is the sound arising? Where is it heard?" In this search, the direction is inward, the mind is one-pointed, all distraction is ignored. A boy and girl who are in love walk along, looking only at each other, and not noticing anyone else. They are oblivious to the whole world. Why can I not be thus absorbed in meditation?

With that intensity of concentration, no distraction of attention is possible, all obstacles fall away. The mind is quiet and peaceful in that complete mental tranquility. There is an experience of great bliss and joy. This happiness is comparable to what happens in sleep, but it is a condition in which one is very much awake. One's consciousness is fully alert. It is the Sa-ananda state.

As one passes along this, one realizes one thing only - 'I am.' Even the 'Om' gets merged with 'I am.' This is Sa-asmitta. The 'Om' sound has merged in you, and just the feeling 'I am' is there. This is not very difficult to experience.

So, I start by repeating 'Om' mentally. I am hearing 'Om'. "Heavens! Am I one or two? Am I repeating 'Om' or am I hearing 'Om'? Who is this? What is this?" When one asks this seriously, one drops both and pursues the 'I'. From there, enquiry is born. "Who is this 'I'?" Then even the mantra is forgotten. The mantra becomes one with you, part of you, and the enquiry into the self is pursued. Hence, passing through the bliss state, one comes to the consciousness 'I am'. Up to this point you can nearly reach by your own effort, but beyond that it is tricky.

Who is 'I'? There is the feeling 'I am'. It is the only feeling, the only thought, vritti left. What is 'I'? 'I'? What is it that is saying 'I am'? What is experiencing the 'I am-ness'? Here the individual has no help at all. Through a burst of enlightenment - called satori in zen terms or nirvikalpa in sanskrit - the 'I' explodes, and the ripple, the wave subsides into the ocean. Or you may consider that God's Grace lifts you out of all this, and drops you into the ocean of oneness.

And that is the end of the quest!

One often gets the impression that a yogi or someone supposed to embody in himself all the teachings of yoga, is a severe, other-worldly person, who has nothing to do with life as we live it, one who goes about dreamily, 'looking at the tip of his nose', and not even recognizing who you are. I have met a few of these - fortunately I regard it as a valuable experience, as one learns as much from people who exemplify what one should not be like, as from those who represent one's ideals. The villain in a play teaches you as much as the hero. One shows you what not to do, while the other sets you a good example.

This dreamy, 'in the clouds' type, is not a yogi. On this concluding night, it is wise to remind ourselves that yoga regards even sleep as a vritti - leave alone dullness. If I project an image of a person who is withdrawn, out of touch with the realities of daily life, and lives up to it, I am a cannibal as we discussed yesterday. This image is my own projection, born of me. I reach out for it, swallow it and chew it up, and then feel quite satisfied. "Ah! I am a yogi now!". First, I myself set this standard of the dreamy person with no interest in living, then I try to do what I imagine he would do. I fast and go in for some monstrous practices, then I am pleased that I have lived up to my own expectations.

There is also the image of the person with a 'holy' reputation. I can understand the value of these cakes in front of me, and when you join me in eating them later, you will also appreciate them. But I have never been able to understand the value of honour or fame. I have seen many yogis who have projected an image of what a holy man or yogi should be like, and then tried to conform to it. But yoga philosophy seems to suggest the contrary of world denial. It tells us not that life is a shadow, but that the ego is a shadow. Not that the world is unreal, but that worldliness is. This tape-recorder is a tape-recorder. Nobody can say that it is non-existent. I cannot claim that the wall here is an illusion and walk through it. The yogi is not a dreamy wool-gatherer. What yoga philosophy demands is, 'Look within. See, observe your ego. It does not even say, "Abolish the ego." Why should I abolish it? What must I abolish? The thing to be eliminated must be real. I cannot destroy a non-existent entity. I cannot fight with a shadow.

Therefore, yoga philosophy, yoga practice, teaches me merely how to look at this 'me', how to observe this 'me'. There are no words for what we are going to discuss now. People have used various expressions; they have talked of eradication of the ego, annihilation of the ego, or dispelling the darkness of the ego. Perhaps all these are valid. What yoga philosophy seems to suggest, if one studies it without preconceived notions and prejudice, is this. When you observe the ego, it is possible that you discover that the ego is not an entity like a table or a tape-recorder. The ego is more like an assembly, in the sense that Buddha used that word. What you call consciousness, the self, is nothing but an assembly of past impressions and experiences. We do not find this idea in the Sutras, but we can borrow it from Buddha. Buddha did not deny the existence of the world and its objects. You cannot say that the person facing you, or you yourself, are non-

existent.

Buddha used the example of the bullock-cart. He asked a disciple, "What do you see there?", as a cart drawn by bullocks passed. "A bullock-cart." "What are those two circular things?" "Wheels." "Burn them." Now, what is sticking out there?" "The axle." "Throw it away." Then the body was discarded, then the yoke. "Where is the cart now?" Did you burn the cart?" "No." Buddha replied, "Good, I did not ask you to burn the cart. You merely disposed of the wheels, the axle, the body, and the yoke. Where is the cart then?" If all the different parts have their own name and individuality, and all have been dismantled, where and what exactly is the cart? If you put all these separate parts into a scrapheap, they would not make a cart. The cart is an idea. Even before the assembly of the parts, the idea of the cart was there and it persists.

The ego, the 'I', is nothing but an idea, a vritti. As an idea 'I' exists, but not as an independent entity, capable of producing its own ideas. That may be nonsense. So, one must observe. As I observe the thoughts, where they arise, as I watch the phenomenon of, for instance, seeing, I note that seeing takes place. In the asana class, you noticed without my telling you that when one wants to do a headstand, the legs go up the moment that the thought occurs. The intelligence that is built into the abdomen starts working. Those whose abdominal muscles are weak, are unable to do it as easily as those whose muscles are strong. Who pulls up the legs - you or the muscles? Who sees? The eyes see. While seeing or standing on one's head happens, from somewhere, for no apparent reason, the idea arises, 'I am standing on my head. I see.' Nonsense!

Patanjali gives it, in a very beautiful sutra, which has unfortunately been glossed over by most commentators. In there is a description of what is the ultimate in yoga. Translating literally, "The seer rests in himself." When I am not in a state of yoga, I identify myself with a million thought waves or modifications of the mind. But, in the state of yoga, 'the seer rests in himself.' What does the seer signify? Later we get an inspiring statement, "What one calls the seer, one who sees, is only seeing." Why must I invent a thing - 'I', who sees. When the eyes are open, they see. You have a beautiful expression here, 'sight-seeing tours'. Who undertakes these tours? The sight is what sees! Who sees the scenery? Sight sees, sight-seeing.

What you call the seer is nothing but the action, the event of seeing. All our yoga practices are supposed to lead us to this realization that seeing is not the doing of 'I', but a happening. What lifts the legs are the abdominal muscles, not the 'I'. The 'I' is only a mischiefmaker. Most of those who try difficult postures know that the 'I', with its own projections, is merely a nuisance, an obstacle. One person does asanas beautifully, while somebody else finds it somewhat difficult. When the projection of one's own self-image creeps into this, one becomes nervous, excited, and anxious. One wants to excel the other, and gets into trouble. The alternative is letting the energy and intelligence in each part of the body do what they want to. Then the posture is perfect. It is the best you can do at that moment.

In exactly the same way, all of life can be lived. Sight sees, action takes place, everything in this world happens. Somehow, somewhere, we have been brain-tainted. We have undergone brain-colouring. We have been conditioned by the idea that, without this vanity, this egoism, without a goal, an objective to reach - and reaching out leads to holding on - we will not get anywhere, we will be failures in life. There is no such thing as failure really. There is only failure to do, not failure to achieve. Success is always there. So long as one does anything, success follows. To succeed is 'to come after'. Successive means one thing coming after the other. If I do something, such as taking an examination, whatever the result, it is success. It followed on from the test. If I start a business, it may prosper. This comes after my initial effort. Then it might flop. That too is success, succeeding from the starting point. The outcome follows the earlier action. It is when you do not start at all, when nothing is done, that there is failure.

It is this fear of what is called failure - which is again a projection of one's own mind, of one's own viciousness - that makes one feel ambition is necessary, that without the driving force of the urge for achievement, we would all be cabbages. This might be much better. Cabbages may be more valuable - certainly more peaceful than many human beings. Unfortunately we are caught in this trap of the idea that one must be egoistic. We have also been taught that civilization has evolved, and that we have acquired a great amount of knowledge without which our life would be unbearable. I doubt this.

Looking at the achievements of the most humanitarian of the scientists, the medical scientists - leaving alone the pollution creators: engineers, automobile designers, and manufacturers - they are right now busy studying one cell through the microscope. They want to know how it multiplies, what a virus is, what causes cancer, and how a cell is attacked and responds to invasion. They want to know what genes are, and how heredity is transmitted, how the brain functions, and many other things. Medical science is still probing into the nature of that intelligence that you are full of. It is not going to create any more of it. The simple action of lifting an arm, which you and I do effortlessly, unthinkingly, is studied by many mighty scientists. They are eager to discover what exactly makes the arm flex, and they get Nobel prizes for such investigations. And the arm simply bends, life flows on, 'is' - in its totality. That is yoga.