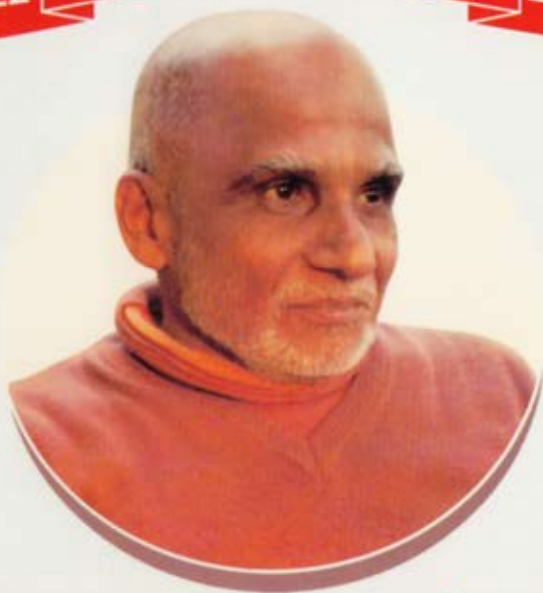




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Peace of Mind and Self-Control

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

PEACE OF MIND AND SELF-CONTROL

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The 25th of April 2022 marks the auspicious occasion of the Birth Centenary of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj. To commemorate this sacred occasion, the Headquarters Ashram has decided to bring out booklets comprising the illuminating discourses of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj for free distribution.

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj arrived at the holy abode of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj in 1944, and remained here until his Mahasamadhi in November 2001. Swamiji Maharaj was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. "Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda," said Sri Gurudev.

Over the years, Swami Maharaj gave many profound and insightful discourses during Sunday night Satsanga, and on holy occasions such as Sri Gurudev's birthday, Sri Krishna Janmasthan, Mahasivaratri, etc., and also during Sadhana Week and Yoga Vedanta Courses conducted by the Yoga

Vedanta Forest Academy of the Ashram. Sri Swami Maharaj always spoke extempore, spontaneously, without any preparation, and every discourse was fresh, unique, and divinely inspired. The audience was bathed in that stupendous unfathomable energy that radiated from Swamiji Maharaj during these discourses.

We are immensely happy to bring out some of Sri Swamiji Maharaj's discourses in booklet form as our worshipful offering at his holy feet on the blessed occasion of his Birth Centenary.

The present booklet, '**Peace of Mind and Self-Control**', consists of one of the lectures delivered by Sri Swamiji Maharaj on the essentials of the Yoga system as propounded by Maharashi Patanjali.

May the abundant blessings of the Almighty Lord, Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj be upon all.

—The Divine Life Society

PEACE OF MIND AND SELF-CONTROL

What are we to do when we are in the midst of these opposing forces? Many methods are prescribed, but the first one mentioned in the yoga texts is what the patient does when he falls ill. He does not start analysing his body, but goes to the doctor. It is better for the student to go to the Guru and take the advice of his superior wisdom. *Ekatattva-abhyasa* is a famous recipe of Patanjali. *Ekatattva* means 'one reality', 'one objective', 'one target'. *Abhyasa* is 'practice'. So, his prescription is repeated resort to one concept, one truth. In practice, the student is to take only one item at a time. This term, *ekattattva-abhyasa*, is a broad one, meaning many things. What is the one reality? Teachers have given many definitions. Patanjali does not offer to define it. Let not the one reality come first. It is better that the Guru comes instead. Concentration on reality comes later, because it is like the taking of the medicine, and the medicine is yet to be prescribed. Let no one define reality for oneself, for the definition may be a wrong one and

one may go to extremes in an emotional enthusiasm. Discretion, they say, is the better part of valour. The 'practice of the one reality', taken in its simplest meaning, from the point of view of the uninitiated novice, may be regarded as a kind of concentration on any given object or one thought. This is, in short, what they call *trataka* in yoga. *Trataka* is the fixing of one's gaze, either externally or internally, on a point of attention. Together with this process, a breathing exercise may have to be practiced to calm disturbances in the mind. Patanjali asks us to expel breath (*prachhardana*) and retain it (*vidharana*). Some think that this is instruction for inhalation and retention. A deep inhalation and retention may be an immediate remedy, but not a final one. It is not a medicine but a first aid treatment provided, tentatively. The needed remedy will be prescribed later on. Expel breath and hold on, and with this, think of one thing alone, is the teaching. *Trataka* is external or internal, the latter being a little more difficult than the former. While external *trataka* may take the help of the vision of the eyes, the internal one has to employ the mind solely. Hence, external *trataka* is advised as the first step. Here, the student may gaze at a point or a dot. It is difficult for most people to stick on to this practice, because they do

not have a long-standing regard for a dot;-they cannot love it. However, the psychological part of *trataka* is to focus the mind on one point, and this is done even by habituation to a dot. But it can be made more interesting by placing a picture of one's *Ishta-Devata* (chosen deity) in the front. Krishna, Rama, Devi, Siva, Vishnu, Buddha, Christ, or any other ideal which is to one's satisfaction may be the object of *trataka*. Gaze at the picture. Look at the divine face and draw inspiration from the mighty source, and offer prayers. This outer gaze or visualization may be practiced for a considerable time. Later, the gaze has to be fixed mentally on an internal picture. This method will be more appealing than looking at a dot or a point, though the latter, too, is effective enough, if one accustoms oneself to it. There are also persons who prefer to concentrate on certain Chakras (psychic centres) in the body, and this may be called a sort of internal *trataka*. A chakra of the body, picture of the *Ishta-Devata*, dot, point, etc., are objects in the lower forms of *ekatattva-abhyasa*. There are finer ones which will lead to meditation proper in a higher sense.

These practices bring a temporary peace to the disturbed mind—expulsion and retention of breath, and attention on one thing to the exclusion of

others. But Patanjali has certain other psychological exercises to assure peace to the mind. While *ekatattva-abhyasa* is a personal attempt that the student makes from his own side, without concern to society, there comes a call from difficulties of a social nature. Whatever be the student's effort to carry on his practice internally, there are occasional happenings from outside which cause concern and sometimes agitation. Something has to be done with these sources of trouble and methods have to be adopted for dealing with people. The achievement is to be such that there should be no reaction from persons in regard to oneself. To the extent there is reaction, there is also disturbance. Patanjali is of opinion that these reactions are due to one's weaknesses and an incapacity for self-adjustment with others. Here I am reminded of a philosopher's saying, which exhausts the teaching on social conduct for the acquisition of mental peace: 'Give me the will to change what I can, the power to bear what I cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference.' If you can change a thing, there is no anxiety. If you cannot change a thing, there should, again, be no anxiety, for there is no point in worrying about what cannot be done. Anxiety comes in when you try to do a thing which you really cannot do. This is lack of

‘wisdom to know the difference’ between the ‘can be’ and the ‘cannot be.’ There are the ‘good’ people, ‘bad’ people, ‘happy’ people and the ‘unhappy’ people. We have daily to deal with these persons when we come in contact with them. What should be our attitude when we meet a good person? Not one of jealousy, for that will not bring peace to the mind. We have to be happy (*mudita*). There is the story of an ancient philosopher who saw a well-dressed and beautifully ornamented graceful person, and exclaimed, ‘how happy I am!’ When the latter asked him why he should be happy on seeing another’s prosperity, he replied, ‘it does not matter whether you have it or I have it. I am satisfied that it is.’ The limited mind wants to own things for itself. In existence there is really no such thing as ‘belonging’. Things are. ‘To belong’ is not part of the law of the universe. If we see a good person we should be pleased that goodness exists in the world and not be intolerant because it is seen in another person.

There are also the bad and the wicked ones who do harm to others and delight in others’ pain. Though the various laws prescribe different reactions towards these people, Patanjali is mainly concerned with the attitude of a student of yoga in regard to them. He suggests indifference (*upeksha*)

towards undesirable elements. We may ignore the very existence of such a person and by that we get freed from having to deal with evil. It simply does not concern us; our reaction should be such that there will not be any counter-reaction from others, and for this we have to keep a balance of mental attitude. It is not always necessary that we should be judging or passing remarks on people even if we may regard them as a nuisance. Non-interference will obviate many of our troubles in life.

To the happy we should show kindness (*maitri*) and to the grieved we should show pity (*karuna*). This fourfold attitude is meant to avoid mental disturbance due to external causes or the presence of certain persons and things which require of us some sort of relationship with them. Where, however, we have absolutely no relations of any kind, the difficulty does not arise.

Side by side, there is a necessity for the development of dispassion (*vairagya*) and for continued practice (*abhyasa*), which two, when carried to perfection, are the whole process of yoga. The student should not do anything which will excite the senses. *Pratyahara* is not possible without a detached consciousness. Dispassion is not any force exercised by the will, but, rather, an understanding.

The yoga texts say that there are various stages of dispassion and one cannot suddenly jump to its pinnacle. The first stage is called *yatamana-samjna*, or the consciousness of effort necessary towards the attainment of dispassion. 'I am fed up, and I want to be free', is such consciousness, an attempt towards the achievement of success in the chosen direction. The second stage is *vyatireka-samjna* or the consciousness of separating the essentials from non-essentials in the effort. Here, the student sifts the situation of his life, whereby the necessary and the unnecessary are discriminated and the true target of effort properly fixed. What really causes attachment, worry and anxiety has to be clearly known and diligently avoided. It is not that the whole world troubles a person always; only certain things seem to be needing attention. In the beginning, one might think that the whole world is bad, but slowly one realizes that a few situations alone are one's troubles. There comes the third stage where one confronts the actual point of the trouble and a single cause is detected from among the several suspected ones. This is *ekendriya-samjna*, or the consciousness of the 'one sense' which is the sole cause of the difficulty on the way. The student thought once that the tongue was troubling him or

the eyes were the trouble, etc. All the senses were held under suspicion and watched, as the police would make an initial arrest of all those whose bona fide is doubted in a case on hand. When the guilty one is found out after examination, the others are released. First, all the senses are rounded up; and then it is discovered that the mind alone is the mischief-maker. Here, in the third stage, the culprit is caught red-handed. The fourth state is *vasikara-samjna* or the consciousness of mastery on account of absence of longing for all things, whether seen or heard. Nothing that is seen in this world, and none of the joys of heaven which are only heard, can now attract the student of yoga. It is not so much a physical isolation of oneself from objects as freedom from craving (*trishna*) for them. The 'will-to-pleasure' is the evil, not the objects which are made its instruments. It is immaterial where one is placed; one cannot run away from the world, for it is everywhere. Desirelessness (*vaitrishnya*) is supreme control (*vasikara*). Distance from objects is not dispassion, for 'while the objects go, the longing does not go', says the Gita. One is not in physical contact with objects in dream, and yet one enjoys them there. Pleasure is excited even when objects are not physically present. Contrariwise, there is no

pleasure even if there be objects in one's proximity, if only the mind is detached from them. Thinking of objects is the first stage of desire. By thought one brings oneself near to them. Complete mastery is that condition in which the senses do not long for and the mind does not think of objects. When these do not function at all in relation to objects, that is said to be the highest dispassion and the zenith of *pratyahara*.

To enable self-control, we can effectively take help from the symbol given in the Kathopanishad, wherein the senses are compared to horses, the body to the vehicle which they drag, the sense-objects to the roads along which the vehicle moves, the intellect to the driver, the mind to the reins controlling the horses and the individual soul to the rider in the vehicle. The driver directs the horses by means of the reins, the leather-strap or rope which he holds in his hands. This body of ours is the vehicle pulled by the horses of senses. The analogy, in a slightly different form, comes also in Plato, who, perhaps, never knew the existence of the Upanishads. The significance of the symbol is how we have to conduct ourselves in order to be successful in life. The entire life of a human being has to be one of *pratyahara* in varying degrees. The driver is always

cautious that the horses do not hurl the chariot into a ditch, and cannot afford to lose hold of the reins at any time. Vigilance is life, and life is yoga. A good life is one of perpetual effort in the control of the senses, the passions of the appetitive self. The restive horses run amock if they are not properly directed, and the vehicle may not reach its destination. They are usually wild and bent upon going their own way. When they tend to go out of direction, hither and thither, the driver tries to bring them back by pulling the reins. Even so has one to bring the senses to the point of control. The Upanishad exhorts that the senses are extrovert in their activity and can never look within. Rare indeed is that person who, in the midst of the ravaging senses, finds time to behold the light inside. The senses live in a world of objects, of samsara or earthly existence, and the need for *pratyahara* therefore is on account of the necessity to rise from the mortal to the immortal. The Upanishad prayer is: 'Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from mortality to immortality.' This is the aim of self-restraint, of *pratyahara* in yoga.

Abhyasa is steadfastness in assiduous practice conducted with patience, unremittingly. The practice is not merely to be regular but also attended with a

deep love (*satkara*) for it. It should be carried on for a protracted period (*dirghakala*) and without break (*nairantarya*). The continuity of practice should be full with devotion, for, when it is merely forced on the mind without its liking, it will not lead to success. Even a baby does not like to be controlled by force; it craves for affection. The mind has to be made to understand where its blessedness lies. Unless there is understanding there cannot be love, and without love there is no effort. One cannot blindly be thrust into something and made to have a liking for it. *Vairagya* and *abhyasa* are both results of a great understanding (*viveka*), a discriminative grasp which is the basis of yoga. The appreciation necessary is not merely an opinion that one holds, but a firm conviction. To fix oneself in a perpetual attitude, and not to have varying moods, constantly changing, is *abhyasa*. There should be a uniformity of conduct on account of perception of a harmony in things. People change their opinions because their judgments are not correct. Sufferings in life are partly due to one's slavishness to moods and hasty judgments which one makes of persons and things. Spiritual practice is effort at fixity of consciousness. *Ekatattva-abhyasa*, mentioned earlier, is such steadfastness in one reality, a concentration of oneself

on a chosen ideal or a given mode of conduct. It is not easy either to cultivate *vairagya* or be steady in *abhyasa*. Hard labour is necessary. To keep oneself balanced in the midst of the tumult of the world is not a simple task. The process of *pratyahara* will reveal that life is a battle, a struggle for existence.

The mind becomes steady by conservation of energy through these efforts at self-control. When the powers of the senses get attuned to the mind, so that they have no existence of their own apart from the mind which is their source, there is *pratyahara*. The prodigal sons now return home. After a life of long dissipation, the senses come back to their resting place. There is now no flickering of mind but only a steady flame of illumination. It is fully concentrated and moves not from the thought of its goal.

There is the story of an ancient philosopher who saw a well-dressed and beautifully ornamented graceful person, and exclaimed, 'how happy I am!' When the latter asked him why he should be happy on seeing another's prosperity, he replied, 'it does not matter whether you have it or I have it. I am satisfied that it is.' The limited mind wants to own things for itself. In existence, there is really no such thing as 'belonging'. Things are. 'To belong' is not part of the law of the universe. If we see a good person, we should be pleased that goodness exists in the world and not be intolerant because it is seen in another person.

—**SWAMI KRISHNANANDA**



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