

Yoga's Forgotten Foundation

Twenty Timeless Keys to your Divine Destiny

Ancient secrets from the yoga tradition for building good character and self-discipline, the seldom-taught but essential first steps for knowing God within.

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami.

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Foreward

GURUDEVA TRAVELED BY AIR OFTEN, AND FROM TIME TO TIME COMMENTED ON HOW PROFESSIONALLY THE FLIGHT CREW HAD CONDUCTED THEMSELVES. HE WOULD ASK, "How often do you see a professional team of people misbehave on the job? You're on a flight from San Francisco to Singapore. Do the stewardesses bicker in the aisle? Of course not. People at this level of business have control of their minds and emotions. If they didn't, they would soon be replaced. When they are on the job, at least, they follow a code of conduct spelled out in detail by the corporation."

He would go on to say that it's not unlike the moral code of any religion, outlining sound ethics for respect and harmony among humans. Those seeking to be successful in life strive to fulfill a moral code whether "on the job" or off. Does Hinduism and its scriptures on yoga have such a code? Yes: twenty ethical guidelines called yamas and niyamas, "restraints and observances." These "do's" and "don'ts" are a common-sense code recorded in the Upanishads, the final section of the 6,000 to 8,000 year-old Vedas, mankind's oldest body of scripture, and in other holy texts expounding the path of yoga.

The yamas and niyamas have been preserved through the centuries as the foundation, the first and second stages, of the eight-staged practice of yoga. Yet, they are fundamental to all beings, expected aims of everyone in society, and assumed to be fully intact for anyone seeking life's highest aim in the pursuit called yoga. Sage Patanjali (ca 200 bce), raja yoga's foremost propounder, told us, "These yamas are not limited by class, country, time (past, present or future) or situation. Hence they are called the universal great vows." Yogic scholar Swami Brahmananda Saraswati revealed the inner science of yama and niyama.

They are the means, he said, to control the vitarkas, the cruel mental waves or thoughts, that when acted upon result in injury to others, untruthfulness, hoarding, discontent, indolence or selfishness. He stated, "For each vitarka you have, you can create its opposite through yama and niyama, and make your life successful." Today's popular concept of yoga equates it with hatha yoga and the practice of the hatha yoga asanas, or postures. Many who practice yoga do so solely for health benefits. However, others pursue it in hopes of reaping the spiritual benefits it offers. It is to these spiritual seekers who have higher consciousness as the goal of their yoga that this book is directed.

Yoga is also known as ashtaga yoga because it consists of eight stages: yama, restraint; niyama, observance; asana, seat or posture; pranayama, mastering life force; pratyahara, withdrawal; dharana, concentration; dhyana, meditation; and samadhi, God Realization. These two vital stages, yama, the restraints; and niyama, the observances, traditionally precede asana, but they are omitted in most yoga classes today. We can liken these eight limbs to a tall building. The yamas are the first part of the foundation, like the cement, and the niyamas are the second part, like the steel. Together they provide the support a skyscraper needs to stand. Asana, pranayama and pratyahara are like the lower floors, dharana, dhyana, the middle ones, and samadhi is the top floor.

I remember years ago watching the Transamerica Building in San Francisco being erected. First the construction crew dug down quite a depth with huge equipment. The n massive steel pilings were driven, inches at a time, hundreds of feet into the earth. The n thousands of yards of concrete were poured. The long lineup of cement trucks created a traffic jam in the well-trafficked business district. From the concrete, the steel rose upward as a framework for the rest of the structure. This massive foundation was needed to keep this famous modern pyramid from toppling in an earthquake. In spiritual life, without a foundation of good character and discipline, success in yoga will not be lasting. Sooner or later, the earthquakes in our personal life, the times of great stress and difficulty, will bring outbursts of anger or periods of discouragement, causing our higher consciousness to fall back to Earth.

To quote from Gurudeva: "It is true that bliss comes from meditation, and it is true that higher consciousness is the heritage of all mankind. However, the ten restraints and their corresponding practices are necessary to maintain bliss consciousness." We are a soul, a divine being, and it is important to reflect on that Divinity. However, we are living in a physical body, and, therefore, in addition to the soul, we also have an instinctive and intellectual nature. Gurudeva describes this as the three phases of the mind: instinctive, intellectual and superconscious.

Making progress on the spiritual path requires learning to control the instinctive mind. This is where the yamas come into play. They give us a list of tendencies we need to control. The classical depiction of restraint is the charioteer pulling back on the reins of a team of horses to keep them under control. The practice of the niyamas develops a more cultured nature that takes joy in scriptural study, devotional practices and helping others. It focuses on expressing our soul nature in our outer actions. Together the yamas and niyamas provide the foundation to support our yoga practice so that attainments in higher consciousness can be sustained.

How Gurudeva Created this Book

Yoga's Forgotten Foundation was dictated by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniaswami during twenty-five afternoon editing sessions with two of his acharyas at Kauai's Beachboy Hotel between February 14 and March 26, 1990. Gurudeva was determined to capture the essence of these ancient guidelines and bring them forward to the world in answer to the fallacy that "Hinduism has no code of ethics."

For many decades, he had known only of the five yamas and niyamas that are presented by Sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras and brushed over in nearly all yoga texts as the first and second stages of ashtaga yoga. But those ten guidelines were not complete enough to encompass the broad scope of human conduct. In the late sixties, in fact, Gurudeva presented his own unique 36-point code of virtuous, contemplative living, which included planting trees, perfecting an art or craft and leaving beauty where you pass (see Living with Siva chapter 14, "Life the Great Experience").

So, finding that there was indeed an ancient and much more comprehensive set of twenty yamas and niyamas was like unearthing gold. His swamis discovered these in Rishi

Tirumular's Tirumantiram, a 2,200-year-old yogic scripture written in ancient Tamil, which Gurudeva commissioned Dr. B. Natarajan to translate into English in 1978. Now they had only to be elucidated and brought into the Hindu mainstream through cogent commentary. From the outset, Gurudeva envisioned his dissertations being compiled into a book, the very book you now hold in your hands. Sitting with his monastic editing team from 4 to 7pm every day for five weeks, Gurudeva spoke out from the "inner sky" on each virtue and religious practice, responding to specific questions from the two acharyas to draw forth his wisdom. Gurudeva used to say, "I have good writers upstairs."

The answers were typed into the very first laptop computer we ever owned, a Sony TypeCorder, which recorded the text on micro-cassette tapes, which were downloaded to desktop Macintoshes at the monastery the next day. At that time, there were lots of other projects in process for the Ganapati Kulam (the monastery group that produces publications), most importantly Dancing with Siva, so all those hours of dictation were neatly set aside for some future date when they could be compiled, cleaned up (it was horribly difficult to type on that stiff Sony keyboard) and brought back to the table for editing suggestions and for further input from Gurudeva.

As unlikely as it would have seemed then, those precious manuscripts would lie untouched for a full ten years, until the turn of the millennium, when Gurudeva turned his attention to Living with Siva, the third massive tome in his Master Course trilogy. In fact, Gurudeva considered these yamas and niyamas the heart and core of that thousand-page masterpiece on Hinduism's contemporary culture. He worked on Living with Siva at his editing sessions every day for almost two years, beginning in 1999, driven inwardly to complete it. It was only after Gurudeva's passing into the Sivaloka in 2001 that the idea reemerged of a separate small book presenting this ancient and now fully illuminated "code of conduct."

I was inspired to extract and repurpose it to reach a broader audience as a handbook for spiritual life. Like Gurudeva, I was concerned that so many seekers are unaware of these guidelines for good character and self-discipline and therefore are not properly prepared for the practice of yoga, or even to live a wholesome, spiritual life.

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii

Introduction

RELIGION TEACHES US HOW TO BECOME BETTER PEOPLE, HOW TO LIVE AS SPIRITUAL BEINGS ON THIS EARTH. THIS HAPPENS THROUGH LIVING VIRTUOUSLY, following the natural and essential guidelines of dharma. For Hindus, these guidelines are recorded in the yamas and niyamas, ancient scriptural injunctions for all aspects of human thought, attitude and behavior. In Indian spiritual life, these Vedic restraints and observances are built into the character of children from a very early age. For adults who have been subjected to opposite behavioral patterns, these guidelines may seem to be like commandments.

However, even they can, with great dedication and effort, remold their character and create the foundation necessary for a sustained spiritual life. Through following the yamas and niyamas, we cultivate our refined, spiritual being while keeping the instinctive nature in check. We lift ourselves into the consciousness of the higher chakras, of love, compassion, intelligence and bliss, and naturally invoke the blessings of the divine devas and Mahâdevas. Yama means “reining in” or “control.” The yamas include such injunctions as non-injury (ahimsâ), non-stealing (asteya) and moderation in eating (mitâhâra), which harness the base, instinctive nature. Niyama, literally “unleashing,” indicates the expression of refined, soul qualities through such disciplines as charity (dâna), contentment (santosha) and incantation (japa).

It is true that bliss comes from meditation, and it is true that higher consciousness is the heritage of all mankind. However, the ten restraints and their corresponding practices are necessary to maintain bliss consciousness, as well as all of the good feelings toward oneself and others attainable in any incarnation. These restraints and practices build character. Character is the foundation for spiritual unfoldment. The fact is, the higher we go, the lower we can fall. The top chakras spin fast; the lowest one available to us spins even faster.

The platform of character must be built within our lifestyle to maintain the total contentment needed to persevere on the path. These great Rishis saw the frailty of human nature and gave these guidelines, or disciplines, to make it strong. They said, “Strive!” Let’s strive to not hurt others, to be truthful and honor all the rest of the virtues they outlined.

The ten yamas are:

- 1) ahimsâ, “non-injury,” not harming others by thought, word or deed;
- 2) satya, “truthfulness,” refraining from lying and betraying promises;
- 3) asteya, “non-stealing,” neither stealing nor coveting nor entering into debt;
- 4) brahmacharya, “divine conduct,” controlling lust by remaining celibate when single, leading to faithfulness in marriage;
- 5) kshamâ, “patience,” restraining intolerance with people and impatience with circumstances;
- 6) dhriti, “steadfastness,” overcoming non-perseverance, fear, indecision, inconstancy and changeableness;
- 7) dayâ, “compassion,” conquering callous, cruel and insensitive feelings toward all beings;

- 8) ârjava, “honesty, straightforwardness,” renouncing deception and wrongdoing;
- 9) mitâhâra, “moderate appetite,” neither eating too much nor consuming meat, fish, fowl or eggs;
- 10) Saucha, “purity,” avoiding impurity in body, mind and speech.

The ten yamas are:

- 1) hrî, “remorse,” being modest and showing shame for misdeeds;
- 2) santosha, “contentment,” seeking joy and serenity in life;
- 3) dâna, “giving,” tithing and giving generously without thought of reward;
- 4) âstikya, “faith,” believing firmly in God, Gods, guru and the path to enlightenment;
- 5) Isvarapûjana, “worship of the Lord,” the cultivation of devotion through daily worship and meditation;
- 6) siddhânta Sravana, “scriptural listening,” studying the teachings and listening to the wise of one’s lineage;
- 7) mati, “cognition,” developing a spiritual will and intellect with the guru’s guidance;
- 8) vrata, “sacred vows,” fulfilling religious vows, rules and observances faithfully;
- 9) japa, “recitation,” chanting mantras daily;
- 10) tapas, “austerity,” performing sâdhana, penance, tapas and sacrifice.

In comparing the yamas to the niyamas, we find the restraint of non-injury, ahimsâ, makes it possible to practice hrî, remorse. Truthfulness brings on the state of santosha, contentment. And the third yama, asteya, non-stealing, must be perfected before the third niyama, giving without any thought of reward, is even possible. Sexual purity brings faith in God, Gods and guru. Kshamâ, patience, is the foundation for Isvarapûjana, worship, as is dhriti, steadfastness, the foundation for Siddhânta Sravana.

The yama of dayâ, compassion, definitely brings mati, cognition. Ârjava, honesty, renouncing deception and all wrongdoing, is the foundation for vrata, taking sacred vows and faithfully fulfilling them. Mitâhâra, moderate appetite, is where yoga begins, and vegetarianism is essential before the practice of japa, recitation of holy mantras, can reap its true benefit in one’s life. Saucha, purity in body, mind and speech, is the foundation and the protection for all austerities. The twenty restraints and observances are the first two of the eight limbs of ashtânga yoga, constituting Hinduism’s fundamental ethical code. Because it is brief, the entire code can be easily memorized and reviewed daily at the family meetings in each home.

The yamas and niyamas are the essential foundation for all spiritual progress. They are cited in numerous scriptures, including the Sândilya and Varâha Upanishads, the Hatha Yoga Pradîpikâ by Gorakshanatha, the Tirumantiram of Rishi Tirumular and the Yoga Sûtras of Sage Patanjali. All of these ancient texts list ten yamas and ten niyamas, with the exception of Patanjali’s classic work, which lists just five of each. Patanjali lists the yamas as: ahimsâ, satya, asteya, brahmacharya and aparigraha (non-covetousness); and the niyamas as: Saucha, santosha, tapas, svâdhyâya (self-reflection, scriptural study) and Isvarapranidhâna (worship). In the Hindu tradition, it is primarily the mother’s job to build character within the children, and thereby to continually improve society. Mothers can study and teach these guidelines to uplift their children as well as themselves.

Each discipline focuses on a different aspect of human nature, its strengths and weaknesses. Taken as a sum total, they encompass the whole of human experience and spirituality. You

may do well in upholding some of these but not so well in others. That is to be expected. That defines the sâdhana, therefore, to be perfected.

The yamas and niyamas and their function in our life can be likened to a chariot pulled by ten horses. The passenger inside the chariot is your soul. The chariot itself represents your physical, astral and mental bodies. The driver of the chariot is your external ego, your personal will. The wheels are your divine energies. The niyamas, or spiritual practices, represent the spirited horses, named Hrî, Santosha, Dâna, Âstikya, Isvarapûjana, Siddhânta Sravana, Mati, Vrata, Japa, and Tapas.

The yamas, or restraints, are the reins, called Ahimsâ, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Kshamâ, Dhriti, Dayâ, Ârjava, Mitâhâra and Saucha. By holding tight to the reins, the charioteer, your will, guides the strong horses so they can run forward swiftly and gallantly as a dynamic unit. So, as we restrain the lower, instinctive qualities through upholding the yamas, the soul moves forward to its destination in the state of santosha. Santosha, peace, is the eternal satisfaction of the soul. At the deepest level, the soul is always in the state of santosha.

But outwardly, the propensity of the soul is to be clouded by lack of restraint of the instinctive nature, lack of restraint of the intellectual nature, lack of restraint of the emotional nature, lack of restraint of the physical body itself. Therefore, hold tight the reins. The yamas, or restraints, must be well understood and accomplished before the niyamas can be earnestly undertaken. While we are worried about truthfulness, non-stealing, patience, compassion and being honest, how can we practice the niyamas, contentment, charity, worship, recitation of mantras? The answer is, we can't. The niyamas follow the yamas.

Once the yamas are safely tucked away, and our lifestyle, thinking style, speech style, emotional style reflect these ten restraints, then we can move on to the niyamas. Once you feel you have a minimal mastery of the yamas, then go on to the niyamas, the practices, in full vigor. The observances will strengthen the restraints, as the restraints will allow us to fulfill the observances. You must realize that throughout this process you are a self-effulgent soul, perfect in every way, incomprehensibly beautiful, as a shining one, but that the lifestyles, thinking styles, etc., at this time in the Kali Yuga are incomprehensibly complex, often demoralizing, and depression can set in at a moment's notice. But always keep in mind you're here and now perfection, already-done perfection.

You don't have to do a thing about it other than learn how to live with it, and manifest it in your daily life. Deal with it. These restraints and observances can adjust the outside view to the beautiful self-effulgent, shining inner you. It is important to realize that the yamas, restraints, are not out of the reach of the lowliest among us. No matter where we are in the scale of life, we all started from the beginning, at the bottom, didn't we? This is our philosophy. This is our religion. This is the evolution of the soul. We improve, life after life, and these guidelines, yamas and niyamas, restraints and practices, are gifts from our Rishis, from God Siva Himself through them, to allow us to judge ourselves against these pillars of virtue as to how far we have progressed or strayed. In the early births, we are like children. We do not stray from anything. We run here and there and everywhere, disobey every rule, which when told of we cannot remember. We ignore any admonishment.

As adolescents, we force our will on society, want to change it, because we don't like the hold it has on us. Wanting to express themselves in most creative ways, rebellious youths separate

themselves from other people, children and the adults. They do make changes, but not always for the best. As an adult, we see both, the past and the impending future of old age, and, heads down, we are concerned with accumulating enough to see life through to its uncertain end. When the accumulations have become adequate, we will look back at the undisciplined children, the headstrong, unruly adolescents and the self-possessed, concentrated adults and try to motivate all three groups.

In our great religion, the Sanâtana Dharma, known today as Hinduism, twenty precepts, the yamas and niyamas, restraints and observances, are the guidelines we use to motivate these three groups. These are the guidelines they use to motivate themselves, for each group is mystically independent of the others; so it seems.

The Way of Yama-Niyama The Being First, The Meaning-Central of Vedas all, The Light Divine, The Fire within that Light, He who shares Himself Half-and-Half with His Sakti And the Divine Justice thereof, Th em, he in niyama's path knows. Ten Virtues of Yama Purity, compassion, frugal food and patience Forthrightness, truth and steadfastness, These he ardently cherishes. Killing, stealing and lusting he abhors. Thus stands with virtues ten The one who niyama's ways observes. Ten Attributes of Niyama Tapas, meditation, serenity, and holiness Charity, vows in Saiva Way and Siddhânta learning Sacrifice, Siva pûjâ and thoughts pure, With these ten, the one in Niyama perfects his Ways. Tirumantiram, 555-557

The Ten Yamas, Restraints for Proper Conduct from the Vedas 1. Non-injury, ahimsâ: Not harming others by thought, word, or deed. 2. Truthfulness, satya: Refraining from lying and betraying promises. 3. Nonstealing, asteya: Neither stealing, nor coveting nor entering into debt. 4. Divine conduct, brahmacharya: Controlling lust by remaining celibate when single, leading to faithfulness in marriage. 5. Patience, kshamâ: Restraining intolerance with people and impatience with circumstances. 6. Steadfastness, dhriti: Overcoming nonperseverance, fear, indecision and changeableness. 7. Compassion, dayâ: Conquering callous, cruel and insensitive feelings toward all beings. 8. Honesty, straightforwardness, ârjava: Renouncing deception and wrongdoing. 9. Moderate appetite, mitâhâra: Neither eating too much nor consuming meat, fish, fowl or eggs. 10. Purity, Saucha: Avoiding impurity in body, mind and speech.

The Ten Niyamas, Observances For Spiritual Life from the Vedas 1. Remorse, hrî: Being modest and showing shame for misdeeds. 2. Contentment, santosha: Seeking joy and serenity in life. 3. Giving, dâna: Tithing and giving generously without thought of reward. 4. Faith, âstikya: Believing firmly in God, Gods, guru and the path to enlightenment. 5. Worship of the Lord, Isvarapûjana: The cultivation of devotion through daily worship and meditation. 6. Scriptural listening, siddhânta Sravana: Studying the teachings and listening to the wise of one's lineage. 7. Cognition, mati: Developing a spiritual will and intellect with the guru's guidance. 8. Sacred vows, vrata: Fulfilling religious vows, rules and observances faithfully. 9. Recitation, japa: Chanting mantras daily. 10. Austerity, tapas: Performing sâdhana, penance, tapas and sacrifice.

CHAPTER 1: NONINJURY the first restraint

TO PRACTICE Ahimsa, ONE HAS TO PRACTICE SANTOSHA, CONTENTMENT.

THE SADHANA IS TO SEEK JOY AND SERENITY IN LIFE, Remaining content with what one has, knows, is doing and those with whom he associates. Bear your karma cheerfully. Live within your situation contentedly. Himsâ, or injury, and the desire to harm, comes from discontent. The Rishis who revealed the principles of dharma or divine law in Hindu scripture knew full well the potential for human suffering and the path which could avert it. To them a one spiritual power flowed in and through all things in this universe, animate and inanimate, conferring existence by its presence. To them life was a coherent process leading all souls without exception to enlightenment, and no violence could be carried to the higher reaches of that ascent. These Rishis were mystics whose revelation disclosed a cosmos in which all beings exist in interlaced dependence.

The whole is contained in the part, and the part in the whole. Based on this cognition, they taught a philosophy of nondifference of self and other, asserting that in the final analysis we are not separate from the world and its manifest forms, nor from the Divine which shines forth in all things, all beings, all peoples. From this understanding of oneness arose the philosophical basis for the practice of non-injury and Hinduism's ancient commitment to it. We all know that Hindus, who are one-sixth of the human race today, believe in the existence of God everywhere, as an all-pervasive, self-effulgent energy and consciousness.

This basic belief creates the attitude of sublime tolerance and acceptance toward others. Even tolerance is insufficient to describe the compassion and reverence the Hindu holds for the intrinsic sacredness within all things. Therefore, the actions of all Hindus are rendered benign, or ahimsâ. One would not want to hurt something which one revered. On the other hand, when the fundamentalists of any religion teach an unrelenting duality based on good and evil, man and nature or God and Devil, this creates friends and enemies. This belief is a sacrilege to Hindus, because they know that the attitudes which are the by-product are totally dualistic, and for good to triumph over that which is alien or evil, it must kill out that which is considered to be evil.

The Hindu looks at nothing as intrinsically evil. To him the ground is sacred. The sky is sacred. The sun is sacred. His wife is a Goddess. Her husband is a God. Their children are devas. Their home is a shrine. Life is a pilgrimage to mukti, or liberation from rebirth, which once attained is the end to reincarnation in a physical body. When on a holy pilgrimage, one would not want to hurt anyone along the way, knowing full well the experiences on this path are of one's own creation, though maybe acted out through others. Non-injury for Renunciates Ahimsâ is the first and foremost virtue, presiding over truthfulness, non-stealing, sexual purity, patience, steadfastness, compassion, honesty and moderate appetite.

The brahmachârî and sannyâsin must take ahimsâ, non-injury, one step further. He has mutated himself, escalated himself, by stopping the abilities of being able to harm another by thought, word or deed, physically, mentally or emotionally. The one step further is that he must not harm his own self with his own thoughts, his own feelings, his own actions toward his own body, toward his own emotions, toward his own mind. This is very important to remember. And here, at this juncture, ahimsâ has a tie with satya, truthfulness. The sannyâsin must be totally truthful to himself, to his guru, to the Gods and to Lord Siva, who resides within him every

minute of every hour of every day. But for him to truly know this and express it through his life and be a living religious example of the Sanâtana Dharma, all tendencies toward himsa, injuriousness, must always be definitely harnessed in chains of steel.

The mystical reason is this. Because of the brahmachârî's or sannyâsin's spiritual power, he really has more ability to hurt someone than he or that person may know, and therefore his observance of non-injury is even more vital. Yes, this is true. A brahmachârî or sannyâsin who does not live the highest level of ahimsâ is not a brahmachârî. Words are expressions of thoughts, thoughts created from prâna. Words coupled with thoughts backed up by the transmuted prânas, or the accumulated bank account of energies held back within the brahmachârî and the sannyâsin, become powerful thoughts, and when expressed through words go deep into the mind, creating impressions, samskâras, that last a long time, maybe forever. It is truly unfortunate if a brahmachârî or sannyâsin loses control of himself and betrays ahimsâ by becoming himsa, an injurious person, unfortunate for those involved, but more unfortunate for himself.

When we hurt another, we scar the inside of ourselves; we clone the image. The scar would never leave the sannyâsin until it left the person that he hurt. This is because the prânas, the transmuted energies, give so much force to the thought. Thus the words penetrate to the very core of the being. Therefore, angry people should get married and should not practice brahmacharya. A boy has broken a vase and is denying the mischief. Mother watches, hoping he will learn to tell the truth.

Summary of the First Restraint Practice non-injury, not harming others by thought, word or deed, even in your dreams. Live a kindly life, revering all beings as expressions of the One Divine energy. Let go of fear and insecurity, the sources of abuse. Knowing that harm caused to others unfailingly returns to oneself, live peacefully with God's creation. Never be a source of dread, pain or injury. Follow a vegetarian diet. One man is beating a small boy, while an onlooker rushes forward to intervene and stop the injury.

CHAPTER 2: TRUTHFULNESS The Second Restraint

Satya, TRUTHFULNESS, IS THE SECOND YAMA. IT SEEMS THAT LITTLE CHILDREN ARE NATURALLY TRUTHFUL, OPEN AND HONEST. THEIR LIVES ARE UNCOMPLICATED, AND THEY have no secrets. National studies show that children, even at an early age, learn to lie from their parents. They are taught to keep family secrets, whom to like, whom to dislike, whom to hate and whom to love, right within the home itself. Their minds become complicated and their judgments of what to say and what not to say are often influenced by the possibility of a punishment, perhaps a beating. Therefore, to fully encompass satya and incorporate it in one's life as a teenager or an adult, it is quite necessary to dredge the subconscious mind and in some cases reject much of what mother or father, relatives and elders had placed into it at an early age.

Only by rejecting the apparent opposites, likes and dislikes, hates and loves, can true truthfulness, which is a quality of the soul, burst forth again and be there in full force as it is within an innocent child. A child practices truthfulness without wisdom. Wisdom, which is the timely application of knowledge, guides truthfulness for the adult. To attain wisdom, the adult must be conversant with the soul nature. What is it that keeps us from practicing truthfulness? Fear, mainly. Fear of discovery, fear of punishment or loss of status. This is the most honest untruthfulness. The next layer of untruthfulness would be the mischievous person willing to take a chance of not being caught and deliberately inventing stories about another, deliberately lying when the truth would do just as well. The third and worst layer is calculated deception and breaking of promises.

Satya is a restraint, and as one of the ten restraints it ranks in importance as number two. When we restrain our tendencies to deceive, to lie and break promises, our external life is uncomplicated, as is our subconscious mind. Honesty is the foundation of truth. It is ecologically, psychologically purifying. However, many people are not truthful with themselves, to themselves, let alone to others. And the calculated, subconscious built-in program of these clever, cunning, twofaced individuals keeps them in the inner worlds of darkness. To emerge from those worlds, the practice of truthfulness, satya, is in itself a healing and purifying sâdhana. What is breaking a promise? Breaking a promise is, for example, when someone confides in you, asks you to keep it to yourself and not to tell anyone, and then you tell. You have betrayed your promise.

Confidences must be kept at all costs in the practice of satya. There are certainly times when withholding the truth is permitted. The Tirukural, Weaver's Wisdom, explains that "Even falsehood is of the nature of truth if it renders good results, free from fault" (292). An astrologer, for instance, while reviewing a chart would refrain from telling of a heartbreak that might come to a person at a certain time in his life. This is wisdom. In fact, astrologers are admonished by their gurus to hold back information that might be harmful or deeply discouraging. A doctor might not tell his patient that he will die in three days when he sees the vital signs weakening. Instead, he may encourage positive thinking, give hope, knowing that life is eternal and that to invoke fear might create depression and hopelessness in the mind of the ill person. When pure truthfulness would injure or cause harm, then the first yama, ahimsâ, would come into effect. You would not want to harm that person, even with the truth. But we must not look at this verse from the Tirukural as giving permission for deception. The spirit of the verse is wisdom, good judgment, not the subterfuge of telling someone you are going to

Mumbai when your actual destination is Kalikot. That is not truthful. It would be much better to avoid answering the question at all in some way if one wanted to conceal the destination of his journey. This would be wisdom. You would not complicate your own subconscious mind by telling an untruth, nor be labeled deceptive in the mind of the informed person when he eventually discovers the actual truth. **Honesty with Your Guru** Some people use the excuse of truthfulness to nag their spouse about what they don't like about him or her, or to gossip about other people's flaws. This is not the spirit of satya. We do not want to expose others' faults. Such confrontations could become argumentative and combative. No one knows one's faults better than oneself.

But fear and weakness often prevail, while motivation and a clear plan to correct the situation are absent. Therefore, to give a clear plan, a positive outlook, a new way of thinking, diverts the attention of the individual and allows internal healing to take place. This is wisdom. This is ahimsâ, non-injury. This is satya, truthfulness. The wise devotee is careful to never insult or humiliate others, even under the pretext of telling the truth, which is an excuse that people sometimes use to tell others what they don't like about them. Wise devotees realize that there is good and bad in everyone. There are emotional ups and downs, mental elations and depressions, encouragements and discouragements. Let's focus on the positive. This is ahimsâ and satya working together. The brahmachârî and the sannyâsin must be absolutely truthful with their satguru. They must be absolutely diplomatic, wise and always accentuate the good qualities within the sannyâsin and brahmachârî communities. The guru has the right to discuss, rebuke or discipline the uncomely qualities in raising up the brahmachârî and sannyâsin. Only he has this right, because it was given to him by the brahmachârîs and sannyâsins when they took him as their satguru. This means that brahmachârîs and sannyâsins cannot discipline one another, psychoanalyze and correct in the name of truthfulness, without violation of the number one yama, ahimsâ, non-injury. Mothers and fathers have rights with their own children, as do gurus with their Sishyas. These rights are limited according to wisdom.

They are not all-inclusive and should not inhibit free will and well-rounded growth within an individual. This is why a guru is looked upon as the mother and father by the mother and father and by the disciple who is sent to the guru's âSrama to study and learn. It is the guru's responsibility to mold the aspirant into a solid member of the monastic community, just as it is the mother's and father's duty to mold the youth to be a responsible, looked up to member of the family community. This is how society progresses. The practice, niyama, to strengthen one's satya qualities is tapas, austerity, performing sâdhana, penance, tapas and sacrifice. If you find you have not been truthful, if you have betrayed promises, then put yourself under the tapas sâdhana.

Perform a lengthy penance. Atone, repent, perform austerities. You will soon find that being truthful is much easier than what tapas and austerities will make you go through if you fail to restrain yourself. Truthfulness is the fullness of truth. Truth itself is fullness. May fullness prevail, truth prevail, and the spirit of satya and ahimsâ permeate humanity. Two boys conspire to break the principle of asteya as one distracts a merchant while the other steals a book. **Summary of the Second Restraint** Adhere to truthfulness, refraining from lying and betraying promises. Speak only that which is true, kind, helpful and necessary. Knowing that deception creates distance, don't keep secrets from family or loved ones. Be fair, accurate and frank in

discussions, a stranger to deceit. Admit your failings. Do not engage in slander, gossip or backbiting. Do not bear false witness against another.

CHAPTER 3: NONSTEALING The third Restraint

Asteya is THE THIRD yama, NEITHER STEALING, NOR COVETING NOR ENTERING INTO DEBT. WE ALL KNOW WHAT STEALING is. BUT NOW LET'S DEFINE COVETOUSNESS. IT could well be defined as owning something mentally and emotionally but not actually owning it physically. This is not good. It puts a hidden psychological strain on all parties concerned and brings up the lower emotions from the tala chakras. It must be avoided at all cost. Coveting is desiring things that are not your own. Coveting leads to jealousy, and it leads to stealing. The first impulse toward stealing is coveting, wanting. If you can control the impulse to covet, then you will not steal.

Coveting is mental stealing. Of course, stealing must never ever happen. Even a penny, a peso, a rupee, a lira or a yen should not be misappropriated or stolen. Defaulting on debts is also a form of stealing. But avoiding debt in principle does not mean that one cannot buy things on credit or through other contractual arrangements. It does mean that payments must be made at the expected time, that credit be given in trust and be eliminated when the time has expired, that contracts be honored to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. Running one's affairs on other peoples' money must be restrained. To control this is the sâdhana of asteya. Brahmachârîs and sannyâsins, of course, must scrupulously obey these restraints relating to debt, stealing and covetousness. These are certainly not in their code of living. To perfect asteya, we must practice dâna, charity, the third niyama; we must take the dâsama bhâga vrata, promising to tithe, pay dâsamâmsa, to our favorite religious organization and, on top of that, give creatively, without thought of reward.

Stealing is selfishness. Giving is unselfishness. Any lapse of asteya is corrected by dâna. It is important to realize that one cannot simply obey the yamas without actively practicing the niyamas. To restrain one's current tendencies successfully, each must be replaced by a positive observance. For each of the yamas, there is a positive replacement of doing something else. The niyamas must totally overshadow the qualities controlled by the yamas for the perfect person to emerge. It is also important to remember that doing what should not be done, and not doing what should be done, does have its consequences. These can be many, depending upon the evolution of the soul of each individual; but all such acts bring about the lowering of consciousness into the instinctive nature, and inevitable suffering is the result.

Each Hindu guru has his own ways of mitigating the negative karmas that result as a consequence of not living up to the high ideals of these precepts. But the world is also a guru, in a sense, and its devotees learn by their own mistakes, often repeating the same lessons many, many times. Debt, Gambling and Grief I was asked, "Is borrowing money to finance one's business in accord with the yama of non-stealing? When can you use other peoples' money and when should you not?" When the creditors start calling you for their money back, sending demand notices indicating that they only extended you thirty days', sixty days' or ninety days' credit, then if you fail to pay, or pay only a quarter or half of it just to keep them at arm's length because you still need their money to keep doing what you are doing, this is a violation of this yama. There are several kinds of debt that are disallowed by this yama. One is spending beyond your means and accumulating bills you can't pay.

We are reminded of Tirukural verse 478 which says that the way to avoid poverty is to spend within your means: “A small income is no cause for failure, provided expenditures do not exceed it.” We can see that false wealth, or the mere appearance of wealth, is using other peoples’ money, either against their will or by paying a premium price for it. Many people today are addicted to abusing credit. It’s like being addicted to the drug opium. People addicted to O.P.M., other people’s money, compulsively spend beyond their means. They don’t even think twice about handing over their last credit card to pay for that \$500 sârî after all the other credit cards have been “maxed out.”

When the bill arrives, it gets added to the stack of other bills that can’t possibly be paid. Another kind of debt is contracting resources beyond your ability to pay back the loan. This is depending on a frail, uncertain future. Opportunities may occur to pay the debt, but then again they may not. The desire was so great for the commodity which caused the debt that a chance was taken. Essentially, this is gambling with someone else’s money; and it is no way to run one’s life.

Gambling and speculation are also forms of entering into debt. Speculation could be a proper form of acquiring wealth if one has the wealth to maintain the same standard of living he is accustomed to even if the speculation failed. Much of business is speculation; and high-risk speculations do come along occasionally; but one should never risk more than one can afford to lose. Gambling is different, because the games are fun, a means of entertainment and releasing stress; though even in the casinos one should not gamble more than he could afford to lose. However, unlike speculation, when one is in the excitement of gambling and begins to lose, the greed and desire to win it all back arises, and the flustered gambler may risk his and his family’s wealth and well-being. Stress builds.

The disastrous consequences of gambling were admonished in the oldest scripture, the Rig Veda, in the famous fourteen-verse “Gambler’s Lament” (10.34. ve, p. 501). Verse ten summarizes: “Abandoned, the wife of the gambler grieves. Grieved, too, is his mother, as he wanders vaguely. Afraid and in debt, ever greedy for money, he steals in the night to the home of another.” This is not fun; nor is it entertainment.

These are the grave concerns behind our sūtra in Living with Siva that prohibits gambling for my Sishyas: “Siva’s devotees are forbidden to indulge in gambling or games of chance with payment or risk, even through others or for employment. Gambling erodes society, assuring the loss of many for the gain of a few” (sūtra 76). Everyone really knows that the secret to winning at gambling is to own a casino.

Compulsive gambling and reckless, unfounded speculation are like stealing from your own family, risking the family wealth. More than that, it is stealing from yourself, because the remorse felt when an inevitable loss comes could cause a loss of faith in your abilities and your judgment. And if the loss affects the other members of the family, their estimation and respect and confidence in your good judgment goes way down. Many people justify stealing by saying that life is unfair and therefore it’s OK to take from the rich. They feel it’s OK to steal from a rich corporation, for example: “They will never miss it, and we need it more.” Financial speculation can easily slide into unfair maneuvering, where a person is actually stealing from a small or large company, thereby making it fail.

The credibility of the person will go down, and businesses will beware of this speculative investor who would bring a company to ruin to fatten his own pockets. Entering into debt is a modern convenience and a modern temptation. But this convenience must be honored within the time allotted. If you are paying a higher interest rate because of late or partial payments, you have abused your credit and your creditors.

At the Global Forum for Human Survival in 1990 in Moscow, the participants began worrying about the kids, the next generation. "What are they going to think of us?" they asked. Is it fair to fulfill a need now, spoil the environment and hand the bill over to the next generation? No, it is not. This is another form of stealing. We can't say, "We have to have chlorofluorocarbons now, and the next generation has to face the consequences." The yamas and niyamas are thus not just a personal matter but also a national, communal and global matter. Yes, this takes asteya and all the restraints and observances to another dimension.

Summary of the Third Restraint Uphold the virtue of non-stealing, neither thieving, coveting nor failing to repay debt. Control your desires and live within your means. Do not use borrowed resources for unintended purposes or keep them past due. Do not gamble or defraud others. Do not renege on promises. Do not use others' names, words, resources or rights without permission and acknowledgement.

CHAPTER 4: SEXUAL PURITY 17 The Fourth Restraint

Brahmacharya barcaya* RAHMACHARYA, SEXUAL PURITY, IS A VERY IMPORTANT RESTRAINT AMONG THE ANCIENT SAIVITE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES KNOWN AS YAMAS AND NIYAMAS, BECAUSE IT SETS the pattern for one's entire life. Following this principle, the vital energies are used before marriage in study rather than in sexual fantasy, e-pornography, masturbation, necking, petting or sexual intercourse. After marriage, the vital energies are concentrated on business, livelihood, fulfilling one's duties, serving the community, improving oneself and one's family, and performing sâdhana. For those who do not believe in God, Gods, guru or the path to enlightenment, this is a difficult restraint to fulfill, and such people tend to be promiscuous when single and therefore unfaithful in marriage. The rewards for maintaining this restraint are many. Those who practice brahmacharya before marriage and apply its principles throughout married life are free from encumbrances, mentally, emotionally and physically. They get a good start on life, have long-lasting, mature family relationships, and their children are emotionally sound, mentally firm and physically strong. Those who are promiscuous and unreligious are susceptible to impulses of anger, have undefined fears, experience jealousy and the other instinctive emotions.

The doors of the higher world are open to them, but the doors of the lower world are also open. Even the virgin brahmachârî who believes firmly in God, Gods, guru and the path to enlightenment and has a strict family must be watched and carefully guided to maintain his brahmacharya. Without this careful attention, the virginity may easily be lost. Brahmacharya for the monastic means complete sexual abstinence and is, of course, an understood requirement to maintain this position in life. This applies as well to any single individual who has taken the celibacy vow, known as brahmacharya vrata. If brahmacharya is compromised by the brahmachârî, he must face the consequences and reaffirm his original intent.

Having lost faith in himself because of breaking his vrata, his self-confidence must be rebuilt. It should be perfectly clear that it is totally unacceptable for men or women who have taken up the celibate monastic life to live a double standard and surround themselves with those of the opposite sex, be they fellow âSramites, personal aides, secretaries or close devotees, or with their former family. Nowadays there are pseudo-sannyâsins who are married and call themselves swâmîs, but, if pressed, they might admit that they are simply yoga teachers dressed in orange robes, bearing the title "swâmî" to attract the attention of the uninformed public for commercial reasons.

There is great power in the practice of brahmacharya, literally "Godly conduct." Containing the sacred fluids within the body builds up a bank account through the years that makes the realization of God on the path to enlightenment a reality within the life of the individual who is single. When brahmacharya is broken through sexual intercourse, this power goes away. It just goes away. Brahmacharya in Family Life The observance of brahmacharya is perhaps the most essential aspect of a sound, spiritual culture. This is why in Saivism boys and girls are taught the importance of remaining celibate until they are married. This creates healthy individuals, physically, emotionally and spiritually, generation after generation. There is a mystical reason. In virgin boys and girls, the psychic nâðîs, the astral nerve currents that extend out into and through their aura, have small hooks at the end. When a boy and girl marry, the hooks straighten out and the nâðîs are tied one to another, and they actually grow together. If the first sexual experience is premarital and virginity is broken, the hooks at the end

of the nâðis also straighten out, but there is nothing to grow onto if the partners do not marry. Then, when either partner marries someone else, the relationship is never as close as when a virgin boy and girl marry, because their nâðis don't grow together in the same way. In cases such as this, they feel the need for intellectual stimuli and emotional stimuli to keep the marriage going. Youth ask, "How should we regard members of the opposite sex?"

Do not look at members of the opposite sex with any idea of sex or lust in mind. Do not indulge in admiring those of the opposite sex, or seeing one as more beautiful than another. Boys must foster the inner attitude that all young women are their sisters and all older women are their mother.

Girls must foster the inner attitude that all young men are their brothers and all older men are their father. Do not attend movies that depict the base instincts of humans, nor read books or magazines of this nature. Above all, avoid pornography on the Internet, on TV and in any other media. To be successful in brahmacharya, one naturally wants to avoid arousing the sex instincts. This is done by understanding and avoiding the eight successive phases: fantasy, glorification, flirtation, lustful glances, secret love talk, amorous longing, rendezvous and finally intercourse. Be very careful to mix only with good company, those who think and speak in a cultured way, so that the mind and emotions are not led astray and vital energies needed for study used up. Get plenty of physical exercise.

This is very important, because exercise sublimates your instinctive drives and directs excess energy and the flow of blood into all parts of the body. Brahmacharya means sexual continence, as was observed by Mahatma Gandhi in his later years and by other great souls throughout life. There is another form of sexual purity, though not truly brahmacharya, followed by faithful family people who have a normal sex life while raising a family. They are working toward the stage when they will take their brahma charya vrata after sixty years of age.

Thereafter they would live together as brother and sister, sleeping in separate bedrooms. During their married life, they control the forces of lust and regulate instinctive energies and thus prepare to take that vrata. But if they are unfaithful, flirtatious and loose in their thinking through life, they will not be inclined to take the vrata in later life. Faithfulness in marriage means fidelity and much more. It includes mental faithfulness, non-flirtatiousness and modesty toward the opposite sex. A married man, for instance, should not hire a secretary who is more magnetic or more beautiful than his wife. Metaphysically, in the perfect family relationship, man and wife are, in a sense, creating a one nervous system for their joint spiritual progress, and all of their nâðis are growing together over the years. If they break that faithfulness, they break the psychic, soul connections that are developing for their personal inner achievements.

If one or the other of the partners does have an affair, this creates a psychic tug and pull on the nerve system of both spouses that will continue until the affair ends and long afterwards. Therefore, the principle of the containment of the sexual force and mental and emotional impulses is the spirit of brahmacharya, both for the single and married person.

Rules for Serious People For virtuous individuals who marry, their experiences with their partner are, again, free from lustful fantasies; and emotional involvement is only with their spouse. Yes, a normal sex life should be had between husband and wife, and no one else should be included in either one's mind or emotions.

Never hugging, touching another's spouse or exciting the emotions; always dressing modestly, not in a sexually arousing way; not viewing sexually oriented or pornographic videos; not telling dirty jokes, all of these simple customs are traditional ways of upholding sexual purity. The yama of brahmacharya works in concert with asteya, non-stealing. Stealing or coveting another's spouse, even mentally, creates a force that, once generated, is difficult to stop. In this day and age, when promiscuity is a way of life, there is great strength in married couples' understanding and applying the principles of sexual purity. If they obey these principles and are on the path of enlightenment, they will again become celibate later in life, as they were when they were young.

These principles persist through life, and when their children are raised and the forces naturally become quiet, around age sixty, husband and wife take the brahmacharya vrata, live in separate rooms and prepare themselves for greater spiritual experiences. Married persons uphold sexual purity by observing the eightfold celibacy toward everyone but their spouse. These are ideals for serious, spiritual people. For those who have nothing to do with spirituality, these laws are meaningless. We are assuming a situation of a couple where everything they do and all that happens in their life is oriented toward spiritual life and spiritual goals and, therefore, these principles do apply.

For sexual purity, individuals must believe firmly in the path to enlightenment. They must have faith in higher powers than themselves. Without this, sexual purity is nearly impossible. One of the fastest ways to destroy the stability of families and societies is through promiscuity, mental and/or physical, and the best way to maintain stability is through self-control. The world today has become increasingly unstable because of the mental, physical, emotional license that people have given to themselves. The generation that follows an era of promiscuity has a dearth of examples to follow and are even more unstable than their parents were when they began their promiscuous living.

Stability for human society is based on morality, and morality is based on harnessing and controlling sexuality. The principles of brahmacharya should be learned well before puberty, so that the sexual feelings the young person then begins to experience are free of mental fantasies and emotional involvement. Once established in a young person, this control is expected to be carried out all through life. When a virgin boy and girl marry, they transfer the love they have for their parents to one another. The boy's attachment to his mother is transferred to his wife, and the girl's attachment to her father is transferred to her husband. She now becomes the mother. He now becomes the father. This does not mean they love their parents any less. This is why the parents have to be in good shape, to create the next generation of stable families. This is their dharmic duty. If they don't do it, they create all kinds of uncomely karmas for themselves to be faced at a later time.

Summary of the Fourth Restraint Practice divine conduct, controlling lust by remaining celibate when single and faithful in marriage. Before marriage, use vital energies in study, and after marriage in creating family success. Don't waste the sacred force by promiscuity in thought, word or deed. Be restrained with the opposite sex. Seek holy company. Dress and speak modestly. Shun pornography, sexual humor and violence. A brother guards his sister's purity, brahma charya, from a rogue who has approached her immodestly.

CHAPTER 5: PATIENCE 25 The Fifth Restraint

Kshamâ PATIENCE, THE FIFTH YAMA, IS AS ESSENTIAL TO THE SPIRITUAL PATH AS THE SPIRITUAL PATH IS TO ITSELF. IMPATIENCE IS A SIGN OF DESIROUSNESS TO FULFILL unfulfilled desires, having no time for any interruptions or delays from anything that seems irrelevant to what one really wants to accomplish. We must restrain our desires by regulating our life with daily worship and meditation. Daily worship and meditation are difficult to accomplish without a break in continuity. However, impatience and frustration come automatically in continuity, day after day, often at the same time, being impatient before breakfast because it is not served on time, feeling intolerant and abusive with children because they are not behaving as adults, and on and on.

Everything has its timing and its regularity in life. Focusing on living in the eternity of the moment overcomes impatience. It produces the feeling that one has nothing to do, no future to work toward and no past to rely on. This excellent spiritual practice can be performed now and again during the day by anyone. Patience is having the power of acceptance, accepting people, accepting events as they are happening. One of the great spiritual powers that people can have is to accept things as they are. That forestalls impatience and intolerance. Acceptance is developed in a person by understanding the law of karma and in seeing God Siva and His work everywhere, accepting the perfection of the timing of the creation, preservation and absorption of the entire universe.

Acceptance does not mean being resigned to one's situation and avoiding challenges. We know that we ourselves created our own situation, our own challenges, in a former time by sending forth our energies, thoughts, words and deeds. As these energies, on their cycle-back, manifest through people, happenings and circumstances, we must patiently deal with the situation, not fight it or try to avoid it or be discouraged because of it. This is kshamâ in the raw. This is pure kshamâ. Patience cannot be acquired in depth in any other way. This is why meditation upon the truths of the Sanâtana Dharma is so important. It is also extremely important to maintain patience with oneself, especially with oneself.

Many people are masters of the façade of being patient with others but take their frustrations out on themselves. This can be corrected and must be corrected for spiritual unfoldment to continue through an unbroken routine of daily worship and meditation and a yearly routine of attending festivals and of pilgrimage, tîrthayatra. Most people today are intolerant with one another and impatient with their circumstances. This breeds an irreverent attitude. Nothing is sacred to them, nothing holy. But through daily exercising anger, malice and the other lower emotions, they do, without knowing, invoke the demonic forces of the Narakaloka.

Then they must suffer the backlash: have nightmares, confusions, separations and even perform heinous acts. Let all people of the world restrain themselves and be patient through the practice of daily worship and meditation, which retroactively invokes the divine forces from the Devaloka. May a great peace pervade the planet as the well-earned result of these practices. The next time you find yourself becoming impatient, just stop for a moment and remember that you are on the upward path, now facing a rare opportunity to take one more step upward by overcoming these feelings, putting all that you have previously learned into practice. One does not progress on the spiritual path by words, ideas or unused knowledge.

Memorized precepts, Slokas, all the shoulds and should-nots, are good, but unless used they will not propel you one inch further than you already are. It is putting what you have learned into practice in these moments of experiencing impatience and controlling it through command of your spiritual will, that moves you forward. These steps forward can never be retracted. When a test comes, prevail. Sâdhakas and sannyâsins must be perfect in kshamâ, forbearing with people and patient under all circumstances, as they have harnessed their karmas of this life and the lives before, compressed them to be experienced in this one lifetime.

There is no cause for them, if they are to succeed, to harbor intolerance or experience any kind of impatience with people or circumstances. Their instinctive, intellectual nature should be caught up in daily devotion, unreserved worship, meditation and deep self-inquiry. Therefore, the practice, niyama, that mitigates intolerance is devotion, Isvarapûjana, cultivating devotion through daily worship and meditation. The worker on the left works steadily and energetically, exemplifying dhriti, while the other is less productive.

Summary of the Fifth Restraint Exercise patience, restraining intolerance with people and impatience with circumstances. Be agreeable. Let others behave according to their nature, without adjusting to you. Don't argue, dominate conversations or interrupt others. Don't be in a hurry. Be patient with children and the elderly. Minimize stress by keeping worries at bay. Remain poised in good times and bad. Kshamâ is epitomized by a mother's patiently setting aside her urgent duties to tend to her daughter's tears.

CHAPTER 6: STEADFASTNESS The Sixth Restraint Steadfastness Dhriti
STEADFASTNESS, DHRITI, IS THE SIXTH YAMA. TO BE STEADFAST, YOU HAVE TO USE
YOUR WILLPOWER.

WILLPOWER IS DEVELOPED EASILY IN A PERSON WHO HAS AN ADEQUATE memory and good reasoning faculties. To be steadfast as we go through life, we must have a purpose, a plan, persistence and push. Then nothing is impossible within the circumference of our prârabdha karmas. It is impossible to be steadfast if we are not obeying the other restraints that the Rishis of the Himalayas laid down for us as the fruits of their wisdom. All of these restraints build character, and dhriti, steadfastness, rests on the foundation of good character. Character, the ability to “act with care”, is built slowly, over time, with the help of relatives, preceptors and good-hearted friends. Observe those who are steadfast.

You will learn from them. Observe those who are not, and they, too, will teach you. They will teach what you should not do. To be indecisive and changeable is not how we should be on the path to enlightenment, nor to be successful in any other pursuit. Nonperseverance and fear must be overcome, and much effort is required to accomplish this. Daily sâdhana, preferably under a guru’s guidance, is suggested here to develop a spiritual will and intellect. In the Sândilya Upanishad, dhriti has been described as preserving firmness of mind during the period of gain or loss of relatives. This implies that during times of sorrow, difficult karmas, loss and temptation, when in mental pain and anguish, feeling alone and neglected, we can persevere, be decisive and bring forth the dhriti strength within us and thus prevail.

One translator of the Varuha Upanishad used the word courage to translate dhriti. Courageous and fearless people who are just and honest prevail over all karmas, benevolent, terrible and confused. This virtue is much like the monk’s vow of humility, part of which is enduring hardship with equanimity, ease of mind, which means not panicking. The Tirukural reminds us, “It is the nature of asceticism to patiently endure hardship and to not harm living creatures” (261). And we can say that dhriti itself is a “hard ship”, a ship that can endure and persevere on its course even when tossed about on the waves of a turbulent sea. Some might wonder why it is good to passively endure hardship.

To persevere through hardship one must understand, as all Hindus do, that any hardship coming to us we ourselves participated in setting into motion in the past. To endure hardship and rise above it in consciousness is to overcome that karma forever. To resent hardship, to fight it, is to have it return later at a most inconvenient time. An essential part of steadfastness is overcoming changeableness. Changeableness means indecision, not being decisive, changing one’s mind after making a deliberate, positive decision. Changing one’s mind can be a positive thing, but making a firm, well-considered decision and not following it through would gain one the reputation of not being dependable, even of being weak-minded. No one wants a reputation like this. How can we discriminate between this and the strength of a person who changes his or her mind in wisdom because of changes of circumstance?

A person who is changeable is fickle and unsure of himself, changing without purpose or reason. Dhriti, steadfastness, describes the mind that is willing to change for mature reasons based on new information but holds steady to its determinations through thick and thin in the absence of such good reasons. Its decisions are based on wise discrimination.

A person who is patient and truthful, who would not harm others by thought, word or deed and who is compassionate and honest has the strong nature of one who is firm in dhriti, steadfastness. He is the prevailer over obstacles. One firm in dhriti can be leaned upon by others, depended upon. He is charitable, has faith in God, Gods and guru, worships daily and manifests in his life a spiritual will and intellect. In relaxed moments he experiences santosha, contentment, not being preoccupied by feelings of responsibility, duty or things left undone. The spiritual path is a long, enduring process. It does not reach fruition in a year or two years. The spiritual path brings lots of ups and downs, and the greatest challenges will come to the greatest souls. With this in mind, it becomes clear that steadiness and perseverance are absolutely essential on the spiritual path. The man beating his dog has little compassion, dayâ. A friend urges him to cognize the cruelty of his actions.

Summary of the Sixth Restraint Foster steadfastness, overcoming nonperseverance, fear, indecision and changeableness. Achieve your goals with a prayer, purpose, plan, persistence and push. Be fi rm in your decisions. Avoid sloth and procrastination. Develop willpower, courage and industriousness. Overcome obstacles. Never carp or complain. Do not let opposition or fear of failure result in changing strategies.

CHAPTER 7: COMPASSION 3 The Seventh Restraint Dayâ , COMPASSION, Is THE SEVENTH YAMA.

SOMETIMES IT IS KIND TO BE CRUEL, AND AT OTHER TIMES IT IS CRUEL TO BE KIND. THIS STATEMENT HAS COME FORWARD FROM religion to religion, generation to generation. Compassion tempers all decisions, gives clemency, absolution, forgiveness as a boon even for the most heinous misdeeds. This is a quality built on steadfastness. Dayâ comes from deep sâdhana, prolonged santosha, contentment, scriptural study and listening to the wise. It is the outgrowth of the unfolded soul, the maturing of higher consciousness. A compassionate person transcends even forgiveness by caring for the suffering of the person he has forgiven. The compassionate person is like a God. He is the boon-giver. Boons, which are gifts from the Gods, come unexpectedly, unasked-for. And so it is with the grace of a compassionate person.

A devotee asked, "What should we think about those who are cruel toward creatures, who casually kill flies and step on cockroaches?" Compassion is defined as conquering callous, cruel and insensitive feelings toward all beings. A compassionate person would tell a plant verbally if he was going to pick from it, intuiting that the plant has feelings of its own. A compassionate person would seek to keep pests away rather than killing them. A callous person would tear the plant up by its roots. A cruel person would, as a child, pull one wing off a fly and, unless corrected, mature this cruelty on through life until he maimed a fellow human. Compassion is just the opposite to all this.

When we find callous, cruel and insensitive people in our midst, we should not take them into our inner circles, but make them feel they must improve before admittance onto the spiritual path. Compassion is the outgrowth of being forgiving. It is the outgrowth of truthfulness, and of non-injury. It is a product of asteya, of brahmacharya and of kshamâ. It is, in fact, higher consciousness, based in the visuddha chakra of divine love. One can't command compassion. Before compassion comes love.

Compassion is the outgrowth of love. Love is the outgrowth of understanding. Understanding is the outgrowth of reason. One must have sufficient memory to remember the various points of reason and enough willpower to follow them through to be able to psychically look into the core of existence to gain the reverence for all life, all living organisms, animate or inanimate. Compassion is a very advanced spiritual quality. When you see it exhibited in someone, you know he is very advanced spiritually, probably an old soul. It really can't be taught. Dayâ goes with ânanda. Compassion and bliss are a one big package. What is the difference between ahimsâ and dayâ, compassion, one might ask? There is a distinct difference. Not harming others by thought, word or deed is a cardinal law of Hinduism and cannot be avoided, discarded, ignored or replaced by the more subtle concept of compassion. Ahimsâ, among the yamas and niyamas, could be considered the only explicit commandment Hinduism gives. Compassion comes from the heart, comes spontaneously. It is a total flow of spiritual, material, intellectual giving, coming unbidden to the receiver.

Compassion by no means is foolishness or pretense. It is an overflowing of soulfulness. It is an outpouring of spiritual energy that comes through the person despite his thoughts or his personal feelings or his reason or good judgment. The person experiencing compassion is often turned around emotionally and mentally as he is giving this clemency, this boon of

absolution, despite his own instinctive or intellectual inclinations. This is a spiritual outpouring through a person. Rishi Tirumular used the word arul for this yama. Arul means grace in the ancient Tamil language. A devotee once e-mailed me, saying, “Recently I was going through some suffering and had bad thoughts and bad feelings for those who caused that suffering. Now that I’m feeling better, can I erase those bad thoughts and feelings?”

Thoughts and bad feelings you have sent into the future are bound to come back to you. But, yes, you can mitigate and change that karma by being extra-special nice to those who abused you, hurt you or caused you to have bad thoughts and feelings against them. Being extra-special nice means accepting them for who they are. Don’t have critical thoughts or try to change them. Have compassion. They are who they are, and only they can change themselves. Be extra-special nice. Go out of your way to say good words, give a gift and have good feelings toward them. Two students are cheating on a test while a peer admonishes them to follow ârjava, honesty.

Summary of the Seventh Restraint Practice compassion, conquering callous, cruel and insensitive feelings toward all beings. See God everywhere. Be kind to people, animals, plants and the Earth itself. Forgive those who apologize and show true remorse. Foster sympathy for others’ needs and suffering. Honor and assist those who are weak, impoverished, aged or in pain. Oppose family abuse and other cruelties.

CHAPTER 8: HONESTY 37 The Eighth Restraint Honesty Arjava IS THE EIGHTH YAMA.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE OF HONESTY IS TO BE HONEST TO ONESELF, TO BE ABLE TO FACE UP TO OUR PROBLEMS AND ADMIT THAT WE have been the creator of them. To be able to then reason them through, make soulfully honest decisions toward their solutions, is a boon, a gift from the Gods. To be honest with oneself brings peace of mind. Those who are frustrated, discontent, are now and have been dishonest with themselves. They blame others for their own faults and predicaments. They are always looking for a scapegoat, someone to blame something on. To deceive oneself is truly the ultimate of wrongdoing. To deceive oneself is truly ignorance in its truest form.

Honesty begins within one's own heart and soul and works its way out from there into dealing with other people. Polonius wisely said in Shakespeare's Hamlet, "This above all: to your own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, you cannot then be false to any man." The adage, "Say what you mean, and mean what you say" should be heard again and again by the youth, middle aged and elderly alike.

Sir Walter Scott once said, "Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive." Mark Twain observed, "The advantage of telling the truth is that you don't have to remember what you said." Another philosopher, wise in human nature, noted, "You can watch a thief, but you cannot watch a liar." To be deceptive and not straightforward is thieving time from those you are deceiving. They are giving you their heart and mind, and you are twisting their thoughts to your own selfish ends, endeavoring to play them out, to take what they have, in favors or in kind, for your personal gain.

Deception is the cruelest of acts. A deceptive person is an insidious disease to society. Many parents, we are told, teach their children to be deceptive and cunning in order to get on in the world. They are not building good citizens. They are creating potential criminals who will eventually, if they perfect the art, ravage humankind. To be straightforward is the solution, no matter how difficult it is. To show remorse, be modest and show shame for misdeeds is the way to win back the faith, though maybe not the total trust, and a smidgen of respect from those who have discovered and exposed your deception.

Arjava is straightness with neighbors, family and with your government. You pay your taxes. You observe the laws. You don't fudge, bribe, cheat, steal or participate in fraud and other forms of manipulation. Bribery corrupts the giver, the taker and the nation. It would be better not to have, not to do, and to live the simple life, if bribery were the alternative. To participate in bribery is to go into a deceptive, illegal partnership between the briber and the bribed. If and when discovered, embarrassment no end would fall on both parties involved in the crime, and even if not discovered, someone knows, someone is watching, your own conscience is watching. There is no law in any legal code of any government that says bribery is acceptable.

There are those who feel it is sufficient to be honest and straightforward with their friends and family, but feel justified to be dishonest with business associates, corporations, governments and strangers. These are the most despicable people. Obviously they have no knowledge of the laws of karma and no desire to obtain a better, or even a similar, birth. They may experience several abortions before obtaining a new physical body and then be an unwanted child. They may suffer child abuse, neglect, beatings, perhaps even be killed at a young age.

These two-faced persons, honest to immediate friends and relatives, but dishonest and deceptive and involved in wrongdoings with business associates and in public life, deserve the punishment that only the lords of karma are able to deal out. These persons are training their sons and daughters to be like themselves and pull down humanity rather than uplift mankind. Honesty in Monastic Life We can say that sâdhakas, yogîs and swâmîs upholding their vows are the prism of honesty.

The rays of their auras radiate out through all areas of life. They are the protectors, the stabilizers, the uplifters, the consolers, the sympathizers. They have the solution to all human problems and all human ills, or they know where to find those solutions, to whom to go or what scripture to read. To be a sâdhaka, yogî or swâmî, honesty is the primal qualification, yes, primal qualification, honesty, ârjava. No satguru would accept a monastic candidate who persists in patterns of deception, wrongdoing and outright lies and who shows no shame for misdeeds. Human relations, especially the guru-disciple relationship, derive their strength from trust, which each shares and expresses.

The breaking of the yama of ârjava is the severing of that trust, which thereby provokes the destruction or demise of the relationship. When the relationship falls into distrust, suspicion, anger, hate, confusion and retaliation, this gives birth to argument. Countries that have weak leadership and unstable governments that allow wrongdoing to become a way of life, deception to be the way of thinking, are participating in dividing the masses in this very way. People begin to distrust one another. Because they are involved in wrongdoing, they suspect others of being involved in wrongdoings.

People become angry because they are involved in wrongdoing. And finally the country fails and goes into war or succumbs to innumerable internal problems. We see this happening all over the world. A strong democratic country is constantly showing up politicians who take bribes and presidents who are involved in deception and wrongdoing, who set a poor example for the masses as to how things should be. Higher-consciousness governments are able to maintain their economy and feed their people.

Lower-consciousness governments are not. Even large, successful corporate monopolies deem honesty as the first necessary qualification for an employee. When his deception and wrongdoing are discovered, he is irrevocably terminated. There are many religious organizations today that have deceptive, dishonest people within them who connive wrongdoings, and these religious groups are failing and reaping the rewards of failing through loss and confusion. It is up to the heads of those organizations to weed out the deceptive, corruptive, virus-like persons to maintain the spirituality and fulfill the original intent of the founders. Ârjava could well be interpreted as simplicity, as many commentators have done. It is easier to remember the truth than remember lies, white lies, gray lies or black lies. It is easier to be straightforward than conniving and deceptive, dishonest.

A simple life is an honest life. An honest life is a simple life. When our wants which produce our needs are simple, there is no need to be deceptive or participate in wrongdoing. It's as simple as that. Ârjava means not complicating things, not ramifying concerns and anxieties. This is to say, when a situation occurs, handle the situation within the situation itself. Don't use

the emotion involved in the situation to motivate or manipulate for personal gain in another situation. Don't owe people favors, and don't allow people to owe you favors.

Don't promise what you can't deliver, and do deliver what you promise. This is the Sanâtana Dharma way. If the neo-Indian religion is teaching differently, pay no attention. It is all political, and it has no kinship to dharma. At a cafe two men enjoy a rice and curry meal on banana leaves. One follows mitâhâra, while the other overeats.

Summary of the Eighth Restraint Maintain honesty, renouncing deception and wrongdoing. Act honorably even in hard times. Obey the laws of your nation and locale. Pay your taxes. Be straightforward in business. Do an honest day's work. Do not bribe or accept bribes. Do not cheat, deceive or circumvent to achieve an end. Be frank with yourself. Face and accept your faults without blaming them on others.

CHAPTER 9: MODERATE DIET The Ninth Restraint Mitâhara

MODERATE APPETITE, IS THE TENTH YAMA. SIMILARLY, MITAVYAYIN IS LITTLE OR MODERATE SPENDING, BEING ECONOMICAL OR FRUGAL, AND MITASÂYAN IS sleeping little. Gorging oneself has always been a form of decadence in every culture and is considered unacceptable behavior. It is the behavior of people who gain wealth and luxuries from the miseries of others. Decadence, which is a dance of decay, has been the downfall of many governments, empires, kingdoms and principalities. Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, made the famous decadent statement just before the French Revolution: "If the people have no bread, let them eat cake." Nearly everyone who heard that imperious insult, including its authoress, completely lost their heads.

Decadence is a form of decay that the masses have railed against century upon century, millennium after millennium. All this and more shows us that mitâhâra is a restraint that we must all obey and which is one of the most difficult. The body knows no wisdom as to shoulds and should-nots. It would eat and drink itself to death if it had its way, given its own instinctive intelligence. It is the mind that controls the body and emotions and must effect this restraint for its own preservation, health and wellness of being, to avoid the emptiness of "sick-being." According to âyurveda, not eating too much is the greatest thing you can do for health if you want a long life, ease in meditation and a balanced, happy mind.

That is why, for thousands of years, yogîs, sâdhus and meditators have eaten moderately. There is almost nothing, apart from smoking and drugs, that hurts the body more than excessive eating, and excessive eating has to be defined in both the amount of food and the quality of food. If you are regularly eating rich, processed, dead foods, then you are not following mitâhâra, and you will have rich, finely processed, dead, dredged up from the past karmic experiences that will ruin your marriage, wreak havoc on your children and send you early to the funeral pyre. For the twenty-first century, mitâhâra has still another meaning.

Our Rishis may have anticipated that the economy of mitâhâra makes it a global discipline, eating frugally, not squandering your wealth to overindulge yourself, not using the wealth of a nation to pamper the nation's most prosperous, not using the resources of the Earth to satiate excessive appetites. If all are following mitâhâra, we will be able to better feed everyone on the planet; fewer will be hungry. We won't have such extreme inequalities of excessive diet and inadequate diet, the incongruity of gluttony and malnutrition. We will have global moderation.

The Hindu view is that we are part of ecology, an intricate part of the planet. Our physical body is a species here with rights equal to a flea, cockroach, bird, snake, a fish, a small animal or an elephant. Diet and Good Health By following mitâhâra you can be healthier, and you can be wealthier. A lot of money is wasted in the average family on food that could go toward many other things the family needs or wants. If you are healthier, you save on doctor bills, and because this also helps in sâdhana and meditation, you will be healthy, happy and holy. Overeating repels one from spiritual sâdhana, because the body becomes slothful and lazy, having to digest so much food and run it through its system.

Eating is meant to nourish the body with vitamins and minerals to keep it functioning. It is not meant for mere personal, sensual pleasure. A slothful person naturally does not have the inclination to advance himself through education and meditation, and is unable to do anything but a simple, routine job. We recently heard of a Western science lab study that fed two groups

of rats different portions of food. Those who were allowed to have any amount of food they could eat lived a normal rat life span. Those who were given half that much lived twice as long. This so impressed the scientists that they immediately dropped their own calorie input and lost many pounds, realizing that a long, healthy life could be attained by not eating so much.

People on this planet are divided in two groups, as delineated by states of consciousness. The most obvious group is those ruled by lower consciousness, which proliferates deceit and dishonesty and the confusion in life that these bring, along with fear, anger, jealousy and the subsequent remorseful emotions that follow. On the purer side are those in higher consciousness, ruled by the powers of reason and memory, willpower, good judgment, universal love, compassion and more. A vegetarian diet helps to open the inner man to the outer person and brings forth higher consciousness.

Eating meat, fish, fowl and eggs opens the doors to lower consciousness. It's as simple as that. A vegetarian diet creates the right chemistry for spiritual life. Other diets create a different chemistry, which affects your endocrine glands and your entire system all day long. A vegetarian diet helps your system all day long. Food is chemistry, and chemistry affects consciousness; and if our goal is higher consciousness, we have to provide the chemistry that evokes it. Take Charge of Your Body There is a wonderful breathing exercise you can perform to aid the digestion and elimination of food by stimulating the internal fire. Breathe in through your nose a normal breath, and out through your nose very fast while pulling the stomach in. Then relax your stomach and again breathe in naturally and then out quickly by pulling the stomach in to force the air out of the lungs.

Do this for one minute, then rest for one minute, then do it again. Then rest for a minute and do it again. About three repetitions is generally enough to conquer indigestion or constipation. This prânâyâma amplifies the heat of the body and stimulates the fire that digests food and eliminates waste. It is especially good for those who are rather sedentary and do a lot of intellectual work, whose energies are in the intellect and may not be addressing their digestive needs adequately. Take charge of your own body and see that it is working right, is healthy and you are eating right. If you do overindulge, then compensate by fasting occasionally and performing physical disciplines.

Most people have certain cravings and desires which they permit themselves to indulge in, whether it be sweets or rich, exotic foods or overly spiced foods. Discovering and moderating such personal preferences and desires is part of the spiritual path. If you find you overindulge in jelly beans, cashew nuts, licorice, chocolate, varieties of soft drinks or exotic imported coffee, moderate those appetites. Then you are controlling the entire desire nature of the instinctive mind in the process. That is a central process of spiritual unfoldment, to control and moderate such desires. The Rishis of yore taught us to restrain desire. They used the words restrain and moderate rather than suppress or eliminate. We must remember that to restrain and moderate desire allows the energy which is restrained and moderated to enliven higher chakras, giving rise to creativity and intuition that will actually better mankind, one's own household and the surrounding community.

The Rishis have given us great knowledge to help us know what to do. Study your body and your diet and find out what works for you.

Find out what foods give you indigestion and stop eating those things. But remember that eating right, in itself, is not spiritual life. In the early stages seekers often become obsessed with finding the perfect diet. That is a stage they have to go through in learning. They have to find out what is right for them. But it should balance out to a simple routine of eating to live, not living to eat. Reasons for Vegetarianism Vegetarianism has for thousands of years been a principle of health and environmental ethics throughout India.

Though Muslim and Christian colonization radically undermined and eroded this ideal, it remains to this day a cardinal ethic of Hindu thought and practice. A subtle sense of guilt persists among Hindus who eat meat, and there exists an ongoing controversy on this issue.

The Sanskrit for vegetarianism is Sâkâhâra, and one following a vegetarian diet is a Sâkâhârî. The term for meat-eating is mânsâhâra, and the meat-eater is called mânsâhârî. Âhâra means "food" or "diet," Sâka means "vegetable," and mânsa means "meat" or "fish." Amazingly, I have heard people define vegetarian as a diet which excludes the meat of animals but does permit fish and eggs. But what really is vegetarianism? It is living only on foods produced by plants, with the addition of dairy products. Vegetarian foods include grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, milk, yogurt, cheese and butter.

The strictest vegetarians, known as vegans, exclude all dairy products. Natural, fresh foods, locally grown without insecticides or chemical fertilizers are preferred. A vegetarian diet does not include meat, fish, shellfish, fowl or eggs. For good health, even certain vegetarian foods are minimized: frozen and canned foods, highly processed foods, such as white rice, white sugar and white flour; and "junk" foods and beverages, those with abundant chemical additives, such as artificial sweeteners, colorings, flavors and preservatives.

In the past fifty years millions of meat-eaters have made the decision to stop eating the flesh of other creatures. There are five major motivations for such a decision.

- 1) Many become vegetarian purely to uphold dharma, as the first duty to God and God's creation as defined by Vedic scripture.
- 2) Some abjure meat-eating because of the karmic consequences, knowing that by involving oneself, even indirectly, in the cycle of inflicting injury, pain and death by eating other creatures, one must in the future experience in equal measure the suffering caused.
- 3) Spiritual consciousness is another reason. Food is the source of the body's chemistry, and what we ingest affects our consciousness, emotions and experiential patterns. If one wants to live in higher consciousness, in peace and happiness and love for all creatures, then he cannot eat meat, fish, shellfish, fowl or eggs. By ingesting the grosser chemistries of animal foods, one introduces into the body and mind anger, jealousy, fear, anxiety, suspicion and a terrible fear of death, all of which are locked into the flesh of butchered creatures.
- 4) Medical studies prove that a vegetarian diet is easier to digest, provides a wider range of nutrients and imposes fewer burdens and impurities on the body. Vegetarians are less susceptible to all the major diseases that afflict contemporary humanity, and thus live longer, healthier, more productive lives. They have fewer physical complaints, less frequent visits to the doctor, fewer dental problems and smaller medical bills. Their immune system is stronger, their bodies purer and more refined, and their skin clearer, more supple and smooth. 5) Finally, there is the ecological reason.

Planet Earth is suffering. In large measure, the escalating loss of species, destruction of ancient rainforests to create pasture lands for livestock, loss of topsoil and the consequent increase of water impurities and air pollution have all been traced to the single fact of meat in the human diet. No single decision that we can make as individuals or as a race can have such a dramatic effect on the improvement of our planetary ecology as the decision to not eat meat. Many conscious of the need to save the planet for future generations have made this decision for this reason and this reason alone. A man finds his friend outside an X-rated theater and urges him not to sink into a low-minded sensual life.

Summary of the Ninth Restraint Be moderate in appetite, neither eating too much nor consuming meat, fish, shellfish, fowl or eggs. Enjoy fresh, wholesome vegetarian foods that vitalize the body. Avoid junk food. Drink in moderation. Eat at regular times, only when hungry, at a moderate pace, never between meals, in a disturbed atmosphere or when upset. Follow a simple diet, avoiding rich or fancy fare.

CHAPTER 10: PURITY 51 The Tenth Restraint Purity, NUMBER TEN OF THE YA MAS,
Is THE OUTCOME OF RESTRAINING OURSELVES IN ALL THE OTHER NINE.

PURITY Is THE NATURAL HERITAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN, disciplined in mind and body, who think before they speak, speaking only that which is true, kind, helpful and necessary. People whose thoughts are pure, and this means being in line with the yamas and niyamas, and whose bodies are free from incompatible alien obstructions, are naturally happy, content and ready to perform japa. Japa yoga lift s the spiritual energies and annihilates pride and arrogance by awakening within the superconscious areas of the mind an extraterrestrial intelligence, far surpassing the ordinary intellect one would encounter in the schools and universities of the present day. To be pure in mind means to have a bright, luminous aura filled with the pastel hues of the primary and secondary colors under every circumstance and life situation.

Those who practice this restraint have realized that thoughts create and manifest into situations, actual physical happenings. Therefore, they are careful what they think and to whom they direct their thoughts. A clean personal environment, wearing clean clothes, bathing oft en, keeping the room spotless where you meditate, breathing clean air, letting fresh air pass through your house, is all very important in the fulfillment of purity. Saucha also includes partaking of clean food, which ideally is freshly picked food, cooked within minutes of the picking. There are creative forces, preservation forces and forces of dissolution.

The preservation force is in the continued growing of a fruit or a leafy vegetable. It reaches its normal size and if not picked remains on the plant and is preserved by the life of that plant. As soon as it is picked, the force of dissolution, mumia, sets in. Therefore, the food should be cooked and eaten as soon after picking as possible, before the mumia force gets strong. Mumia, as it causes the breakdown of the cells, is an impure force. When we constantly eat food that is on the breakdown, the body is sluggish, the mind is sluggish and the tongue is loose, and we say things we don't mean.

Many unhappy, depressed situations result from people eating a predominance of frozen foods, processed foods, canned foods, convenience foods, which are all in the process of mumia. Clean clothing is very important. One feels invigorated and happy wearing clean clothing. Even hanging clothing out in the sunlight for five minutes a day cleanses and refreshes it. An incredible amount of body waste is eliminated through the skin and absorbed by the clothing we wear. It is commonly thought that clothing does not need to be cleaned unless it has been dirtied or soiled with mud, dirt or stains. Very little concern is given to the body odors and wastes that are exuded through the pores, then caught and held by the fabric. Small wonder it's so refreshing to put on clean clothing.

The sun and fresh air can eliminate much of the body waste and freshen up any garment. Keeping Pure Surroundings Cleaning the house is an act of purifying one's immediate environment. Each piece of furniture, as well as the doorways and the walls, catches and holds the emanations of the human aura of each individual in the home, as well as each of its visitors. This residue must be wiped away through dusting and cleaning. This regular attentiveness keeps each room sparkling clean and actinic.

Unless this is done, the rooms of the home become overpowering to the consciousness of the individuals who live within them as their auras pick up the old accumulated feelings of days gone by. Small wonder that a dirty room can depress you, and one freshly cleaned can invigorate. In these years, when both mother and father work in the outside world, the house is often simply where they sleep and eat. But if a home receives all of the daily attentions of cleaning it sparkly bright, both astrally and physically, it becomes a welcoming place and not an empty shell.

The devas can live within a home that is clean and well regulated, where the routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner is upheld, where early morning devotionals are performed and respected, a home which the family lives together within, eats together within, talks together within, worships together within. Such a home is the abode of the devas. Other kinds of homes are the abodes of asuric forces and disincarnate entities bound to Earth by lower desires. It is very important that the samskâras are performed properly within a Saucha abode, particularly the antyeshti, or funeral, ceremonies so as to restore purity in the home after a death. Birth and death require the family to observe a moratorium of at least thirty-one days during which they do not enter the temple or the shrine room.

Such obligatory ritual customs are important to follow for those wishing to restrain their desires and perfect Saucha in body, mind and speech, keeping good company, keeping the mind pure and avoiding impure thoughts. Purity and impurity can be discerned in the human aura. We see purity in the brilliancy of the aura of one who is restraining and disciplining the lower instinctive nature, as outlined in these yamas and niyamas. His aura is bright with white rays from his soul lightening up the various hues and colors of his moods and emotions. Impure people have black shading in the colors of their aura as they go through their moods and emotions. Black in the aura is from the lower worlds, the worlds of darkness, of the tala chakras below the mûlâdhâra.

Wholesome Company It is unfortunate that at this time in the Kali Yuga there are more people on the Earth in important positions who have risen into physical birth from the Narakaloka, the world of darkness, than have descended from the Devaloka, the world of light. Therefore, they are strong as they band together in anger, corruption, deceit and contempt for the Devaloka people, who live in the chakras above the mûlâdhâra. It is important for the Devaloka people to ferret out who is good company and who is not. They should not presume that they can effect any sustainable changes in the Narakaloka people.

And they need to know that the asuric people, bound in anger, greed, jealousy, contempt, covetousness and lust, can make and sustain a difference within the devonic people, bringing them down into their world, torturing and tormenting them with their callous, cruel and insensitive feelings. To sustain Saucha, it is important to surround oneself with good, devonic company, to have the discrimination to know one type of person from another. Too many foolish, sensitive souls, thinking their spirituality could lift a soul from the world of darkness, have walked in where even the Mahâdevas do not tread and the devas fear to tread, only to find themselves caught in that very world, through the deceit and conniving of the cleverly cunning. Let's not be foolish. Let's discriminate between higher consciousness and lower consciousness. Higher-consciousness people should surround themselves with higher-consciousness people to fulfill Saucha.

Changing to a purer life can be so simple. You don't have to give up anything. Just learn to like things that are better. That is the spirit of purity. When you give up something because you think you should give it up, that creates strain. Instead, search for a better life; search for Saucha. From tamasic eating we go to rajasic eating, and because sattvic food tastes better and makes us feel better, we also leave much of the rajasic food behind. Are not all persons on this planet driven by desire? Yes, indeed. Then let's redirect desire and let our desires perfect us. Let us learn to desire the more tasty, sattvic foods, the more sublime sounds, the most perfect things we can see, more than the gross, exciting and reprehensible, the desires for which will fade away when we attach ourselves to something better. Let our desires perfect us.

The ultra-democratic dream of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness we can use as a New-Age goal and pursue the happiness of something better than what we are doing now that is bad for us. Let's go forward with the spirit of moving onward. A devotee told me, "I gave up coffee because coffee is a stimulant and a depressant. I stopped eating meat because meat is a cholesterol-creating killer and forest decimator." Another approach would be to give up coffee because you have found a beverage that is better. Test all beverages.

Some have found that coffee gives you indigestion and green tea helps you digest your food, especially oily foods and foods that remain in your stomach undigested through the night. It also tastes good. Others have found that freshly picked, nutritious vegetables, especially when cooked within minutes of the picking, give more life and energy than eating dead meat that has been refrigerated or preserved. Still others have found that if you kill an animal and eat it fresh, it has more nutritive value than killing it, refrigerating it, preserving it, then cooking it to death again! Be mature about it when you give something up.

The immature spiritual person will want everyone else to give it up, too. The spiritually mature person quietly surrenders it because it is simply his personal choice and then goes on with his life. The spiritually immature person will make a big issue of giving anything up and want everyone to know about it. The boy's tears show his remorse, hrî, at having accidentally broken a neighbor's window.

Summary of the Tenth Restraint Uphold the ethic of purity, avoiding impurity in mind, body and speech. Maintain a clean, healthy body. Keep a pure, uncluttered home and workplace. Act virtuously. Keep good company, never mixing with adulterers, thieves or other impure people. Keep away from pornography and violence. Never use harsh, angered or indecent language. Worship devoutly. Meditate daily.

CHAPTER 11: REMORSE AND MODESTY The First Observance Remorse & Modesty Hrî ïl RI, THE FIRST OF THE TEN NIYAMAS, OR PRACTICES,

Is REMORSE: BEING MODEST AND SHOWING SHAME FOR MISDEEDS, SEEKING THE GURU'S GRACE TO BE RELEASED FROM sorrows through the understanding that he gives, based on the ancient sampradâya, doctrinal lineage, he preaches. Remorse could be the most misunderstood and difficult to practice of all of the niyamas, because we don't have very many role models today for modesty or remorse. In fact, the role for imitation in today's world is just the opposite. This is reflected in television, on film, in novels, magazines, newspapers and all other kinds of media. In today's world, brash, presumptuous, prideful, that's how one must be. That's the role model we see everywhere.

In today's world, arrogant, that's how one must be. That's the role model we see everywhere. Therefore, to be remorseful or even to show modesty would be a sign of weakness to one's peers, family and friends. Modesty is portrayed in the media as a trait of people that are gauche, inhibited, undeveloped emotionally or not well educated. And remorse is portrayed in the world media as a characteristic of one who "doesn't have his act together," is unable to rationalize away wrongdoings, or who is not clever enough to find a scapegoat to pin the blame on. Though modesty and remorse are the natural qualities of the soul, when the soul does exhibit these qualities, there is a natural tendency to suppress them. But let's look on the brighter side. There is an old saying, "Some people teach us what to do, and other people teach us what not to do." The modern media, at least most of it, is teaching us what not to do. Its behavior is based on other kinds of philosophy, secular humanism, materialism, existentialism, crime and punishment, terrorism, in its effort to report and record the stories of the day.

Sometimes we can learn quite a lot by seeing the opposite of what we want to learn. The proud and arrogant people portrayed on TV nearly always have their fall. This is always portrayed extremely well and is very entertaining. In their heart of hearts, people really do not admire the prideful person or his display of arrogance, so they take joy in seeing him get his just due. People, in their heart of hearts, do admire the modest person, the truthful person, the patient person, the steadfast person, the compassionate person who shows contentment and the fullness of well-being on his face and in his behavioral patterns.

We Hindus who understand these things know that hrî, remorse, is to be practiced at every opportunity. One of the most acceptable ways to practice hrî, even in today's society, is to say in a heartfelt way, "I'm sorry." Everyone will accept this. Even the most despicable, prideful, arrogant, self-centered person will melt just a little under the two magic words "I'm sorry." When apologizing, explain to the person you hurt or wronged how you have realized that there was a better way and ask for his forgiveness. If the person is too proud or arrogant to forgive, you have done your part and can go your way.

The burden of the quandary you have put him into now lies solely with him. He will think about it, justify how and why and what he should not forgive until the offense melts from his mind and his heart softens. It takes as much time for a hardened heart to soften as it does for a piece of ice to melt in a refrigerator. Even when it does, his pride may never let him give you the satisfaction of knowing he has forgiven you. But you can tell. Watch for softening in the eyes when you meet, a less rigid mouth and the tendency to suppress a wholesome smile. Body

Language and Conscience There is another way to show remorse for misdeeds. That is by performing seva, religious service, for persons you have wronged.

Give them gifts, cook them food. Some people are unreachable by words, too remote for an apology, which might even lead to an argument, and then the wrong would perpetuate itself. Be extra polite to such people. Hold the door open as they walk through. Never miss an opportunity to be kind and serve. Say kind words about them behind their back. The praise must be true and timely. Mere flattery would be unacceptable. This kind of silent behavior shows repentance, shows remorse, shows that you have reconsidered your actions and found that they need improvement, and the improvement is shown by your actions now and into the future. Often people think that showing shame and modesty and remorse for misdeeds is simply hanging your head.

Well, really, anyone can do this, but it's not genuine if the head is not pulled down by the tightening of the strings of the heart, if shame is not felt so deeply that one cannot look another in the eye. When the hanging of the head is genuine, everyone will know it and seek to lift you up out of the predicament. But just to hang your head for a while and think you're going to get away with it in today's world, no. In today's world, people are a little too perceptive, and will not admire you, as they will suspect pretense. There is an analogy in the Saivite tradition that compares the unfolding soul to wheat. When young and growing, the stalks of wheat stand tall and proud, but when mature their heads bend low under the weight of the grains they yield.

Similarly, man is self-assertive, arrogant and vain only in the early stages of his spiritual growth. As he matures and yields the harvest of divine knowledge, he too bends his head. Body language has to truly be the language of the body. It's a dead giveaway. Body language is the language of the mind being expressed through the body. Let there be no doubt about this. To cry, expressing remorse, the crying should not be forced. Many people can cry on cue. We must not think that the soul of the observer is not perceptive enough to know the difference between real tears and a glandular disturbance causing watering of the eyes. Hrî is regret that one has done things against the dhar ma, or against conscience.

There are three kinds of conscience, one built on right knowledge, one built on semi-right knowledge and one built on wrong knowledge. The soul has to work through these three grid works within the subconscious mind to give its message. Those who have been raised with the idea that an injustice should be settled by giving back another injustice might actually feel a little guilty when they fail to do this. Those who are in a quandary of what to do, what is right and what is wrong, remain in confusion because they have only semi-right knowledge in their subconscious mind. We cannot confuse guilt and its messages with the message that comes from the soul. Guilt is the message of the instinctive mind, the chakras below the mûlâdhâra. Many people who live in the lower worlds of darkness feel guilty and satisfy that guilt through retaliation.

This is the eye for an eye-for-an-eye, tooth-for-a-tooth approach. This is not right conscience; it is not the soul speaking. This is not higher consciousness, and it is certainly not the inner being of light looking out of the windows of the chakras above the mûlâdhâra. Why, even domesticated animals feel guilty. It is a quality of the instinctive mind. True conscience is of the soul, an impulse rushing through a mind that has been impregnated with right knowledge,

Vedic, Āgamic knowledge, or the knowledge that is found in these yamas and niyamas, restraints and practices.

When the true knowledge of karma is understood, reincarnation, samsāra and Vedic dharma, then true remorse is felt, which is a corrective mechanism of the soul. This remorse immediately imprints upon the lower mind the right knowledge of the dharma, how, where and why the person has strayed and the methodology of getting quickly and happily back to the path and proceeding onward. There is no guilt felt here, but there is a sense of spiritual responsibility, and a driving urge to bring dharma, the sense of spiritual duty, more fully into one's life, thus filling up the slack that the misdeeds manifested through adhering to these twenty restraints and practices and the Vedic path of dharma, which is already known within the bedrock of right knowledge, firmly planted within the inner mind of the individual.

Compensating for Misdeeds

The soul's response to wrong action comes of its own force, unbidden, when the person is a free soul, not bound by many materialistic duties, even while doing selfless service, which can temporarily veil and hold back the spontaneous actions of the soul if done for the expectant praise that may follow. The held-back, spontaneous action of the soul would, therefore, burst forth during personal times of sādhana, meditation or temple worship. The bursting forth would be totally unbidden, and resolutions would follow in the wake.

For those immersed in heavy prārabdha karmas, going through a period of their life cycle when difficult karmic patterns are manifesting, it will be found that the soul's spontaneity is triple-veiled even though the subconscious mind is impregnated with right knowledge. To gain absolution and release, to gain peace of mind, one should perform pilgrimage, spiritual retreat, the practice of mauna, recitation of mantras through japa, deep meditation and, best of all, the vāsanā daha tantra. These practices will temporarily pierce the veils of mâyā and let the light shine in, bringing understanding, solutions and direction for future behavior.

Having hurt another through wrongdoing, one has to pay back in proportion to the injury, not a rupee less and not a rupee more. The moment the healing is complete, the scar will mysteriously vanish. This is the law. It is a mystical law. And while there are any remaining scars, which are memories impregnated with emotion, much work has to be done. Each one must find a way to be nice if he has been not nice, say kind words if previous words have been unkind, issue forth good feelings if the feelings previously exuded were nasty, inharmonious and unacceptable.

Just as a responsible doctor or nurse must bring the healing to culmination, so the wrongdoer must deal with his wrongdoing, his crime against dharma, his crime against right knowledge, Vedic-Āgamic precepts, his crime against the yamas and niyamas, restraints and practices, which are in themselves right knowledge, a digest of the Vedas, we might say. He must deal with his wrongdoings, his errors, within himself until rightness, santosha, returns. There are no magic formulas. Each one must find his own way to heal himself and others until the troublesome situation disappears from his own memory. This is why the practice called vāsanā daha tantra, writing down memories and burning them in a fire to release the emotion from the deep subconscious, has proven to be a solution uncomparable to any other.

Only in this way will he know that, by whatever method he has applied, he has healed the one he wronged. True forgiveness is the greatest eraser, the greatest harmonizer. It is this process

of misdeeds against dharma, followed by shame and remorse, as people interrelate with one another, that moves them forward in their evolution toward their ultimate goal of mukti.

The Japanese, unlike most of the rest of the world, have a great sense of loss of face, and a Japanese businessman will resign if he has shamed his family or his country. This is hrî and is very much ingrained in the Japanese society, which is based on Buddhist precepts. Buddhism itself is the outgrowth into the family community from a vast monastic order; whereas Hinduism is a conglomerate of many smaller religions, some of which are not outgrowths of a monastic community. Therefore, hrî is an integral part of the culture of Japan. They have maintained this and other cultural precepts, as the Buddhist monastic orders are still influential throughout Asia. A materialist who loses face smiles and simply puts on another mask and continues as if nothing had ever happened.

The saying goes, "Change your image and get on with life." No shame, repentance or reconciliation is shown by such people, as is so often portrayed on American television, and much worse, as it actually happens all the time in public life. Humility, Shame and Shyness The Hindu monastic has special disciplines in regard to remorse. If he doesn't, he is an impostor. If he is seen struggling to observe it and unable to accomplish it all the time, he is still a good monastic. If he shows no remorse, modesty or shame for misdeeds for long periods of time, even though he continues apparently in the performance of no misdeeds, the abbot of the monastery would know that he is suppressing many things, living a personal life, avoiding confrontation and obscuring that which is obvious to himself with a smile and the words, "Yes, everything is all right with me.

The meditations are going fine. I get along beautifully with all of my brothers." You would know that this is a "mission impossible," and that it is time to effect certain tests to break up the nest of the enjoyable routine and of keeping out of everybody's way, of not participating creatively in the entire community, but just doing one's job and keeping out of trouble. The test would bring him out in the open, into counseling sessions, so that he himself would see that his clever pride had led him to a spiritual standstill. A monastery is no place to settle down and live. It is a place to be on one's toes and advance. One must always live as if on the eve of one's departure. Another side of hrî is being bashful, shy, unpretentious.

The undeveloped person and the fully developed, wise person may develop the same qualities of being bashful, shy, unpretentious, cautious. In the former, these qualities are the products of ignorance produced by underexposure, and in the latter, they are the products of the wisdom or cleverness produced by overexposure. Genuine modesty and unpretentiousness are not what actors on the stage would portray, they are qualities that one cannot act out, qualities of the soul. Shyness used to be thought of as a feminine quality, but not anymore, since the equality of men and women has been announced as the way that men and women should be. Both genders should be aggressive, forceful, to meet and deal with situations on equal terms.

This is seen today in the West, in the East, in the North and the South. This is a façade which covers the soul, producing stress in both men and women. A basically shy man or woman, feeling he or she has to be aggressive, works his or her way into a stressful condition. I long ago found that stress in itself is a byproduct of not being secure in what one is doing. But this is the world today, at this time in the Kali Yuga. If everything that is happening were reasonable and could be easily understood, it certainly wouldn't be the Kali Yuga. If people are

taught and believe that their spiritual pursuits are foremost, then, yes, they should be actively aggressive, but as actively passive and modest as well, because of their spiritual pursuits.

Obviously, if they are performing sâdhanas, they will intuitively know the proper timing for each action. Remorse, or modesty, certainly does not mean one must divorce oneself from the ability to move the forces of the external world, or be a wimpy kind of impotent person. It does mean that there is a way of being remorseful, showing shame, being humble, of resolving situations when they do go wrong so that you can truly “get on with life” and not be bound by emotionally saturated memories of the past. Those who are bound by the past constantly remember the past and relive the emotions connected with it. Those who are free from the past remember the future and move the forces of all three worlds for a better life for themselves and for all mankind.

This is the potent Vedic hrî. This is true remorse, humility and modesty. This is hrî, which is not a weakness but a spiritual strength. And all this is made practical and permanent by subconscious journaling, vâsanâ daha tantra, which releases creative energy and does not inhibit it. Three generations living at home, enjoying one another, happy, fulfilled and content in their simple life.

Summary of the First Observance Allow yourself the expression of remorse, being modest and showing shame for misdeeds. Recognize your errors, confess and make amends. Sincerely apologize to those hurt by your words or deeds. Resolve all contention before sleep. Seek out and correct your faults and bad habits. Welcome correction as a means to bettering yourself. Do not boast. Shun pride and pretension.

CHAPTER 12: CONTENTMENT - The Second Observance Santosha IS THE SECOND NIYAMA.

HOW DO WE PRACTICE CONTENTMENT? SIMPLY DO NOT HARM OTHERS BY THOUGHT, WORD OR DEED. AS A PRACTITIONER of ahimsâ, non-injury, you can sleep contentedly at night and experience santosha then and through the day. Contentment is a quality that everyone wants, and buys things to obtain, "Oh, if I only had my house redecorated, I would be content." "A new wardrobe would content me, give me joy and serenity." "To be content, I must have a vacation and get away from it all. There I can live the serene life and have joyous experiences." The dharmic way is to look within and bring out the latent contentment that is already there by doing nothing to inhibit its natural expression, as santosha, the mood of the soul, permeates out through every cell of the physical body.

Contentment is one of the most difficult qualities to obtain, and is well summed up within our food blessing mantra, from the Sukla Yajur Veda, Isa Upanishad invocation, "That is fullness. Creation is fullness. From that fullness flows this world's fullness. This fullness issues from that fullness, yet that fullness remains full." This joy we seek is the joy of fullness, lacking nothing. Life is meant to be lived joyously. There is in much of the world the belief that life is a burden, a feeling of penitence, that it is good to suffer, good for the soul. In fact, spiritual life is not that way at all.

The existentialist would have you believe that depression, rage, fear and anguish are the foremost qualities of the human temper and expression. The communists used to have us believe that joy and serenity as the outgrowth of religion are just an opiate of the people, a narcotic of unreality. The Semitic religions of the Near East would have us believe that suffering is good for the soul, and there is not much you can do about it. The Shaivite Hindu perspective is that contentment is a reflection of centeredness, and discontentment is a reflection of externalized consciousness and ramified desire. Maintaining joy and serenity in life means being content with your surroundings, be they meager or lavish.

Be content with your money, be it a small amount or a large amount. Be content with your health. Bear up under ailments and be thankful that they are not worse than they are. Protect your health if it is good. It is a valuable treasure. Be content with your friends. Be loyal to those who are your long-time, trusted companions. Basically, contentment, santosha, is freedom from desire gained by redirecting the forces of desire and making a beautiful life within what one already has in life. The rich seeking more riches are not content. The famous seeking more fame are not content. The learned seeking more knowledge are not content. Being content with what you have does not mean you cannot discriminate and seek to progress in life. It doesn't mean you should not use your willpower and fulfill your plans. It does mean you should not become upset while you are striving toward your goals, frustrated or unhappy if you do not get what you want.

The best striving is to keep pushing along the natural unfoldment of positive trends and events in your life, your family life and your business. Contentment is working within your means with what is available to you, living within your income, being grateful for what you have, and not unhappy over what you lack. There are many frustrated souls on the path who torment themselves no end and walk around with long faces because they estimate they are not unfolding spiritually fast enough.

They have set goals of Self Realization for themselves far beyond their abilities to immediately obtain. If people say, "I am not going to do anything that will not make me peaceful or that will threaten my peace of mind," how will they get anywhere? That is not the idea of santosha. True santosha is seeing all-pervasiveness of the one divine power everywhere. The light within the eyes of each person is that divine power. With this in mind, you can go anywhere and do anything. Contentment is there, inside you, and needs to be brought out. It is a spiritual power. So, yes, do what makes you content. But know that contentment really transcends worrying about the challenges that face you. Santosha is being peaceful in any situation. The stronger you are in santosha, the greater the challenges you can face and still remain quiet on the inside, peaceful and content, poised like a hummingbird hovering over a flower.

Keeping Peace in the Home Santosha is the goal; dharma, good conduct, remains the director of how you should act and respond to fulfill your karma. This goal is attainable by following the ten Vedic restraints: not harming others by thought, word or deed, refraining from lying, not entering into debt, being tolerant with people and circumstance, overcoming changeableness and indecision, not being callous, cruel or insensitive to other people's feelings. Above all, never practice deception. Don't eat too much. Maintain a vegetarian diet for purity and clarity of mind. Watch carefully what you think and how you express it through words.

All of these restraints must be captured and practiced within the lifestyle before the natural contentment, the santosha, the pure, serene nature, of the soul can shine forth. Therefore, the practice to attain santosha is to fulfill the yamas. Proceed with confidence; failure is an impossibility. I was asked by a cyberspace cadet among our Internet congregation, "Where do we let off steam? Mom works, dad works, the kids are in school, and when everyone comes home, everyone lets off a little steam, and everyone understands." My answer is don't let off steam in the home.

The home is a sanctuary of the entire family. It should have an even higher standard of propriety than the office, the factory or the corporate workplace. When we start being too casual at home and letting off steam, we say things that perhaps we shouldn't. We may think the rest of the family understands, but they don't. Feelings get hurt. We break up the vibration of the home. Young people also let off steam in school, thus inhibiting their own education. They behave in a way in the classroom that they would not in a corporate office, and who is hurt but themselves? It's amazing how quickly people shape up their behavior when they sign a contract, when they get a job in a corporate office.

They read the manual, they obey it and they are nice to everyone. This is the way it should be within the home. The home should be maintained at a higher standard than the corporate office. The wonderful thing about Hinduism is that we don't let off steam at home; we let our emotions pour out within the Hindu temple. The Hindu temple is the place where we can relate to the Gods and the Goddesses and express ourselves within ourselves. It's just between ourselves and the Deity. In a Hindu temple there may be, all at the same time, a woman worshiper crying in a corner, not far away a young couple laughing among themselves with their children, and nearby someone else arguing with the Gods.

The Hindu temple allows the individual to let off steam but it is a controlled situation, controlled by the pûjâs, the ceremony, the priesthood. So as to not make more karma in this life by saying things we don't mean, having inflections in our voice that are hurtful to others, we must control the home, control ourselves in the workplace, keep the home at a higher vibration of culture and protocol than the workplace, and include the temple in our lives as a place to release our emotions and regain our composure. It is making a lot of really bad karma that will come back in its stronger reaction later on in life for someone, the husband or wife or teenager, to upset the vibration of the home because of stress at school or in the workplace. It is counterproductive to work all day in a nice office, control the emotions and be productive, and then go home and upset the vibration within the home.

After all, why is someone working? It's to create the home. Why is someone going to school? It's to eventually create a home. It is counterproductive to destroy that which one works all day to create. That's why I advise the professional mother, the professional father, the professional son and the professional daughter to use in the home the same good manners that are learned in the workplace, and build the vibration of the home even stronger than the vibration of the workplace, so that there is something inviting to come home to. We have seen so many times, professionals, men and women, behave exquisitely in the workplace, but not so exquisitely at home, upset the home vibration, eventually destroying the home, breaking up the home. And we have seen, through the years, a very unhappy person in retirement, a very bitter person in retirement. No one wants him around, no one wants to have him in their home. Therefore, he winds up in some nursing home, and he dies forgotten.

The Sanâtana Dharma and Saiva Sama yam must be alive in the home, must be alive in the office, must be alive in the temple, for us to have a full life. Where, then, do we vent our emotions, where do we let off steam, if not in our own home? The answer is, within the temple. A well-to-do woman takes joy in giving food and clothing to needy neighbors in a selfless act of dâna.

Summary of the Second Observance Nurture contentment, seeking joy and serenity in life. Be happy, smile and uplift others. Live in constant gratitude for your health, your friends and your belongings. Don't complain about what you don't possess. Identify with the eternal You, rather than mind, body or emotions. Keep the mountaintop view that life is an opportunity for spiritual progress. Live in the eternal now.

CHAPTER 13: GIVING The Third Observance Giving Dâna IVING, DÂNA, IS THE THIRD GREAT RELIGIOUS PRACTICE, OR NIYAMA.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT GIVING FREELY OF ONE'S GOODS IN FULFILLING NEEDS, MAKING SOMEONE happy or putting a smile on his face, mitigates selfishness, greed, avarice and hoarding. But the most important factor is "without thought of reward." The reward of joy and the fullness you feel is immediate as the gift passes from your two hands into the outstretched hands of the receiver. Dâna is often translated as "charity." But charity in modern context is a special kind of giving by those who have to those who have not. This is not the true spirit of dâna. The word fulfillment might describe dâna better.

The fulfillment of giving that wells up within the giver as the gift is being prepared and as the gift is being presented and released, the fulfillment of the expectancy of the receiver or the surprise of the receiver, and the fullness that exists afterwards are all a part of dâna. Dasamâmsa, tithing, too, is a worthy form of dâna, giving God's money to a religious institution to fulfill with it God's work. One who is really fulfilling dâna gives dasamâmsa, never goes to visit a friend or relative with empty hands, gives freely to relatives, children, friends, neighbors and business associates, all without thought of reward. The devotee who practices dâna knows fully that "you cannot give anything away." The law of karma will return it to you full measure at an appropriate and most needed time. The freer the gift is given, the faster it will return. What is the proportionate giving after dasamâmsa, ten percent, has been deducted. It would be another two to five percent of one's gross income, which would be equally divided between cash and kind if someone wanted to discipline his dâna to that extent.

That would be fifteen percent, approximately one sixth, which is the makimai established in South India by the Chettiar community around the Palani Temple and now practiced by the Malaka Chettiers of Malaysia. If one were to take a hard look at the true spirit of dâna in today's society, the rich giving to religious institutions for a tax deduction are certainly giving with a thought of reward. Therefore, giving after the tax deductions are received and with no material benefits or rewards of any kind other than the fulfillment of giving is considered by the wise to be a true expression of dâna.

Making something with one's own hands, giving in kind, is also a true expression of dâna. Giving a gift begrudgingly in return for another gift is, of course, mere barter. Many families barter their way through life in this way, thinking they are giving. But such gifts are cold, the fulfillment is empty, and the law of karma pays discounted returns. Hospitality and Fullness Hospitality is a vital part of fulfilling dâna. When guests come, they must be given hospitality, at least a mat to sit on and a glass of water to drink. These are obligatory gifts. You must never leave your guest standing, and you must never leave your guest thirsty. If a guest were to smell even one whiff from the kitchen of the scented curries of a meal being prepared, he must be asked four times to stay for the meal. He will politely refuse three times and accept on the fourth invitation.

This is also an obligatory giving, for the guest is treated as God. God Siva's veiling grace hides Siva as He dresses in many costumes. He is a dancer, you know, and dancers wear many costumes. He will come as a guest to your home, unrecognizable. You might think it is your dear friend from a far-off place. That, too, is Siva in another costume, and you must treat that guest as Siva. Giving to Siva Siva's own creation in your mind brings the highest rewards

through the law of karma. Even if you think you are giving creatively, generously, looking for no rewards, but you are giving for a purpose, that karma will still pay you back with full interest and dividends. This is a positive use of the law of karma. It pays higher interest than any bank. This is not a selfish form of giving. It is the giving of the wise, because you know the law of karma, because you know the Sanâtana Dharma, the divine, eternal laws. If you see a need that you can fill and have the impulse to give but recoil from giving, later, when you are in need, there will be someone who has the impulse to give to you but will recoil from giving.

The wheels of karma grind slowly but exceedingly well the grains of actions, be they in thought, emotion or those of a physical nature. So, one can be quite selfish and greedy about wanting to practice dâna to accumulate the punya for the balance of this life, the life in-between lives, in the astral world, and for a good birth in the next incarnation. The practice of dâna is an investment in a better life, an investment that pays great dividends. We are not limited by our poverty or wealth in practicing giving. No matter how poor you are, you can still practice it. You can give according to your means, your inspiration, your ability. When the fullness has reached its peak within you while preparing the gift, be it arranging a bouquet of freshly picked flowers, a tray of fruit, counting out coins, sorting a pile of bills or putting zeros on a check that you're writing, then you know that the gift is within your means. Gifts within your means and from your heart are the proper gifts.

The Selfish and Miserly The virtue of dâna deals with the pragmatic physical transference of cash or kind. It is the foundation and the life blood of any other form of religious giving, such as giving of one's time. Many people rationalize, "I'll give my time to the temple. I'll wash the pots, scrub the floor and tidy up. But I can't afford to give of my limited wealth proportionate to what would be total fulfillment of giving." Basically, they have nothing better to do with their time, and to ease their own conscience, they volunteer a little work. There is no merit, no punya, in this, only demerit, pâpa. No, it's just the other way around. One who has perfected dâna in cash and in kind and is satisfied within this practice, this niyama, will then be able and willing to give of his time, to tithe ten percent of his time, and then give time over and above that to religious and other worthy causes.

Shall we say that the perfection of dâna precedes seva, service? What can be said of someone who is all wrapped up in his personal self: concealing his personal ego with a pleasant smile, gentle deeds, soft words, but who just takes care of "number one"? For instance, if living with ten people, he will cook for himself and not cook for the others. He gets situations confused, entertains mental arguments within himself and is always worried about the progress in his religious life. We would say he is still trying to work on the restraints, compassion, patience, sexual purity, moderate appetite, and has not yet arrived at number three on the chart of the practices called niyamas.

Modern psychology would categorize him as self-centered, selfish, egotistical. To overcome this selfishness, assuming he gets the restraints in order, doing things for others would be the practice, seeing that everyone is fed first before he eats, helping out in every way he can, performing anonymous acts of kindness at every opportunity. In an orthodox Hindu home, the traditional wife will follow the practice of arising in the morning before her husband, preparing his hot meal, serving him and eating only after he is finished; preparing his lunch, serving him and eating after he is finished; preparing his dinner, serving him and eating after he is finished, even if he returns home late. Giving to her husband is her fulfillment, three times a day. This is

built into Hindu society, into Saivite culture. Wives should be allowed by their husbands to perform giving outside the home, too, but many are not. All too often, they are held down, embarrassed and treated almost like domestic slaves, given no money, given no things to give, disallowed to practice dâna, to tithe and give creatively without thought of reward. Such domineering, miserly and ignorant males will get their just due in the courts of karma at the moment of death and shortly after. The divine law is that the wife's Sakti power, once released, makes her husband magnetic and successful in his worldly affairs, and their wealth accumulates. He knows from tradition that to release this Sakti he must always fulfill all of the needs of his beloved wife and give her generously everything she wants.

There are so many ways of giving. Arising before the Sun comes up, greeting and giving namaskâra to the Sun is a part of Saivite culture. Dâna is built into all aspects of Hindu life, giving to the holy man, giving to the astrologer, giving to the teacher, giving dakshinâ to a swâmî or a satguru for his support, over and above all giving to his institution, over and above daSamâmSa, over and above giving to the temple. If the satguru has satisfied you with the fullness of his presence, you must satisfy yourself in equal fullness in giving back.

You can be happily fat as these two fullnesses merge within you. By giving to the satguru, you give him the satisfaction of giving to another, for he has no needs except the need to practice dâna. Great souls have always taught that, among all the forms of giving, imparting the spiritual teachings is the highest. You can give money or food and provide for the physical aspects of the being, but if you can find a way to give the dharma, the illumined wisdom of the traditions of the Sanâtana Dharma, then you are giving to the spirit of the person, to the soul. Many Hindus buy religious literature to give away, because jñâna dâna, giving wisdom, is the highest giving.

Several groups in Malaysia and Mauritius gave away over 70,000 pieces of literature in a twenty-month period. Another group in the United States gave away 300,000 pieces of literature in the same period. Many pieces of that literature changed the lives of individuals and brought them into a great fullness of soul satisfaction. An electric-shock blessing would go out from them at the peak of their fulfillment and fill the hearts of all the givers. Giving through education is a glorious fulfillment for the giver, as well as for the receiver. Wealthy men in India will feed twenty thousand people in the hopes that one enlightened soul who was truly hungry at that time might partake of this dâna and the Sakti that arises within him at the peak of his satisfaction will prepare for the giver a better birth in his next life.

This is the great spirit of anna yajñâ, feeding the masses. Along with the gift comes a portion of the karma of the giver. There was an astrologer who when given more than his due for a jyotisha consultation would always give the excess to a nearby temple, as he did not want to assume any additional karma by receiving more than the worth of his predictions. Another wise person said, "I don't do the antyeshti samskâra, funeral rites, because I can't receive the dâna coming from that source of sadness. It would affect my family." Giving is also a way of balancing karma, of expressing gratitude for blessings received. A devotee explained, "I cannot leave the temple without giving to the hundî, offering box, according to the fullness I have received as fullness from the temple."

A gourmet once said, "I cannot leave the restaurant until I give gratuity to the waiter equaling the satisfaction I felt from the service he gave." This is dâna, this is giving, in a different form. Children should be taught giving at a very young age. They don't yet have the ten restraints, the yamas, to worry about. They have not been corrupted by the impact of their own prârabdha karmas. Little children, even babies, can be taught dâna, giving to the temple, to holy ones, to one another, to their parents. They can be taught worship, recitation and, of course, contentment, told how beautiful they are when they are quiet and experiencing the joy of serenity. Institutions should also give, according to their means, to other institutions.

How do Monks Fulfill Dâna? It is very important for sâdhus, sannyâsins, swâmîs, sâdhakas, any mendicant under vows, to perform dâna. True, they are giving all of their time, but that is fulfillment of their vrata. True, they are not giving daSamâmSa, because they are not employed and have no income. For them, dâna is giving the unexpected in unexpected ways, serving tea for seven days to the tyrannical sâdhu that assisted them by causing an attack of ânava, of personal ego, within them, in thanks to him for being the channel of their prârabdha karmas and helping them in the next step of their spiritual unfoldment. Dâna is making an unexpected wreath of sacred leaves and flowers for one's guru and giving it at an unexpected time. Dâna is cooking for the entire group and not just for a few or for oneself alone.

When one has reached an advanced stage on the spiritual path, in order to go further, the law requires giving back what one has been given. Hearing oneself speak the divine teachings and being uplifted and fulfilled by filling up and uplifting others allows the budding adept to go through the next portal. Those who have no desire to counsel others, teach or pass on what they have learned are still in the learning stages themselves, traumatically dealing with one or more of the restraints and practices. The passing on of jñâna, wisdom, through counseling, consoling, teaching Sanâtana Dharma and the only one final conclusion, monistic Saiva Siddhânta, Advaita Isvaravâda, is a fulfillment and completion of the cycle of learning for every monastic.

This does not mean that he mouths indiscriminately what he has been told and memorized, but rather that he uses his philosophical knowledge in a timely way according to the immediate needs of the listener, for wisdom is the timely application of knowledge. The dâna sâdhana, of course, for sâdhakas, sâdhus, yogîs and swâmîs, as they have no cash, is to practice dâna in kind, physical doing, until they are finally able to release the Sanâtana Dharma from their own lips, as a natural outgrowth of their spirituality, spirit, Sakti, bolt-of-lightening outpouring, because they are so filled up.

Those who are filled up with the divine truths, in whom when that fullness is pressed down, compacted, locked in, it still oozes out and runs over, are those who pass on the Sanâtana Dharma. They are the catalysts not only of this adult generation, but the one before it still living, and of children and the generations yet to come. A man's car stalls as a train approaches. He holds to his faith, and Siva, nearby, helps him escape to safety.

Summary of the Third Observance Be generous to a fault, giving liberally without thought of reward. Tithe, offering one-tenth of your gross income (daSa mâmSa) as God's money, to temples, ashrams and spiritual organizations. Approach the temple with offerings. Visit gurus with gifts in hand. Donate religious literature. Feed and give to those in need. Bestow your time and talents without seeking praise. Treat guests as God.

CHAPTER 14: FAITH 83 The Fourth Observance Faith ĀSTIKYA, Is THE FOURTH NIYAMA.

FAITH IS A SUBSTANCE, A COLLECTION OF MOLECULES, MIND MOLECULES, EMOTION MOLECULES AND SOME ARE EVEN PHYSICAL, collected together, charged with the energies of the Divine and the anxieties of the undivine, made into an astral form of shape, color and sound. Being a creation built up over time, faith can just as readily be destroyed, as the following phrases indicate: crisis of faith, loss of faith, dark night of the soul, and just plain confused disappointment leading to depression. Because of faith, groups of people are drawn together, cling together, remain together, intermarry and give birth, raising their children together in the substance of faith that their collective group is subconsciously committed to uphold.

Anyone can strengthen another's faith through encouragement, personal example, good natured humoring, praise, flattery, adulation, or take it away by the opposite methods. Many people with more faith than intellect are pawns in the hands of those who hold great faith, or of those who have little faith, or of those who have no faith at all. Therefore, we can see that a clear intellectual understanding of the philosophy is the bedrock to sustaining faith. Faith is on many levels and of many facets. We have faith in a person, a family, a system of government, science, astronomy, astrology. Faith in philosophy, religion, is the most tenuous and delicate kind and, we must say, the most rewarding of all faiths, because once it is sustained in unbroken continuity, the pure soul of the individual begins to shine forth. Faith has eyes. It has three eyes.

The seer who is looking at the world from the perspective of monistic Saiva Siddhânta and sees clearly the final conclusions for all mankind has faith in his perception, because what he sees and has seen becomes stronger in his mind as the years go by. We have the faith of those who have two eyes upraised. They look at the seer as Dakshinâmûrti, God Himself, and gain strength from His every word. There is also the faith of those who have two eyes lowered. They are reading the scriptures, the teachings of all the seers, and building the aura of faith within their inner psyche. Then there are those who have faith with their eyes closed, blind faith. They know not, read not and are not thinking, but are entranced by the spiritual leader in whom they have faith as a personality.

They are nodding their head up and down on his every word and when questioned are not able to adequately explain even one or two of his profound thoughts. And then we have the others, who make up much of the world population today. They are also with eyes closed, but with heads down, shaking left and right, left and right. They see mostly the darker side of life. They are those who have no faith at all or suffer a semi-permanent loss of faith, who are disappointed in people, governments, systems, philosophies, religions. Their leaders they condemn. This is a sorry lot. Their home is the halls of depression, discouragement and confusion. Their upliftment is jealousy and anger. Faith Is on Many Levels Faith extends to another level, too, of pleasure for the sake of pleasure. Here we have the jet-set, the hedonists, the sensualists, the pornographers and their customers. All these groups have developed their own individual mindset and mix and interrelate among themselves, as the astral molecules of this amorphous substance of thought, emotion and belief that we call faith creates their attitudes toward the world, other people and their possessions.

The Hindu, therefore, is admonished by the sapta Rishis themselves to believe firmly in God, Gods, guru and the path to enlightenment, lest he stray from the path of dharma, for faith is a powerful force. It can be given; it can be taken away. It is a national force, a community force, a group force, a family force. And it is more than that, as far as the Sanâtana Dharma is concerned, which can be translated as the “eternal faith,” the most strengthening and illuminating of all, for it gives courage to all to apply these twenty yamas and niyamas, which represent the final conclusions of the deepest deliverers of eternal wisdom who ever resided on this planet.

Some people have faith only when things are going right and lose faith when things go wrong. These are the ones who are looking up at their leaders, whom they really do not know, who are looking up at the scriptures, which they really do not understand. Because their eyes are closed, they are seeking to be sustained and constantly uplift ed by others. “Do my sâdhana for me” is their plea. And when some inconsistency arises or some expectation, unbeknownst to their leader and maybe never even recorded in the scriptures, does not manifest, a crisis of faith occurs. Then, more than oft en, they are off to another leader, another philosophy, to inevitably repeat the same experience. Devotees of this kind, who are called “groupies” in rock and roll, go from group to group, teacher to teacher, philosophy to philosophy. Fortunately for them, the rent is not expensive, the bhajanas are long and the food is good.

The only embarrassing situation, which has to be manipulated, is the tactic of leaving one group without totally closing the door, and manipulatively opening the door of another group. When that uplift ed face with eyes closed has the spiritual experience of the eyes opening, the third eye flashing, he or she would have then found at last his or her sampradâya, traditional lineage of verbal teaching, and now be on the unshakable path. The molecules of faith have been converted and secured. They shall never turn back, because they have seen through the third eye the beginning and ending of the path, the traditional lineage ordained to carry them forth generation after generation. These souls become the articulate ones, masters of the philosophy. Their faith is so strong, they can share their molecules with others and mold others’ faith molecules into traditional standards of the whys and wherefores that we all need on this planet, of how we should believe and think, where we go when we die, and all the eternal truths of the ultimate attainments of mankind.

Stages of Evolution Faith is the intellect of the soul at its various stages of unfoldment. The soul comes forth from Lord Siva as an embryo and progresses through three stages (avasthâ) of existence: kevala avasthâ, sakala avasthâ and Suddha avasthâ. During kevala avasthâ, the soul is likened to a seed hidden in the ground or a spark of the Divine hidden in a cloud of unknowing called ânava, the primal fetter of individuality, the first aspect of Lord Siva’s concealing grace, tirodhâna Sakti. Sakala avasthâ, the next stage in the soul’s journey, is the period of bodily existence, the cyclic evolution through transmigration from body to body, under the additional powers of mâyâ and karma, the second and third aspects of the Lord’s concealing grace. The journey through sakala avasthâ is also in three stages. The first is called irul pâda, “stage of darkness,” where the soul’s impetus is toward pâSa-jñânânam, knowledge and experience of the world.

The next period is marul pâda, “stage of confusion,” where the soul begins to take account of its situation and finds itself caught between the world and God, not knowing which way to turn. This is called paSu-jñânânam, the soul seeking to know its true nature. The last period is arul

pâda, “stage of grace,” when the soul yearns for the grace of God. Now it has begun its true religious evolution with the constant aid of the Lord. For the soul in darkness, irul, faith is primitive, illogical. In its childlike endeavors it clings to this faith.

There is no intellect present in this young soul, only primitive faith and instinctive mind and body. But it is this faith in the unseen, the unknown, the words of the elders and its ability to adjust to community without ruffling everyone’s feathers that matures the soul to the next pâda, marul, wherein faith becomes faith in oneself, close friends and associates, faith in one’s intellectual remembrance of the opinions of others, even if they are wrong. It is not very quickly that the soul gets out of this syndrome, because it is here that the karmas are made that bind the soul, surround the soul, the karmas of ignorance which must be gone through for the wisdom to emerge. Someone who is wise got that way by facing up to all the increments of ignorance.

The marul pâda is very binding and tenacious, tenaciously binding. But as the external shell of ânava is being built, the soul exercises itself in its own endeavor to break through. Its “still small voice” falls on deaf ears. Yoga brings the soul into its next experiential pattern. The soul comes to find that if he performs good and virtuous deeds, life always seems to take a positive turn. Whereas in negative, unvirtuous acts he slowly becomes lost in a foreboding abyss of confusion. Thus, in faith, he turns toward the good and holy. A balance emerges in his life, called iruvinaiooppu. Whether he is conscious of it or not, he is bringing the three malas, ânava, karma and mâyâ, under control.

Mâyâ is less and less an enchanting temptress. Karma no longer controls his state of mind, tormenting him through battering experiences. And ânava, his self-centered nature, is easing its hold, allowing him to feel a more universal compassion in life. This grows into a state called malaparipakam, the ripening of the malas. This will allow, at the right moment in his life, arul to set in. This is known as the descent of grace, Saktinipâta. The internal descent is recognized as a tremendous yearning for Siva. More and more, he wants to devote himself to all that is spiritual and holy. The outer descent of grace is the appearance of a satguru.

There is no question as to who he is, for he sheds the same clear, spiritual vibration as that unknown something the soul feels emanating from his deepest self. It is when the soul has reached malaparipakam that the Lord’s tirodhâna function, His concealing grace, has accomplished its work and gives way to anugraha, revealing grace, and the descent of grace, Saktinipâta, occurs. At this stage, knowledge comes unbidden. Insights into human affairs are mere readings of past experiences, for those experiences that are being explained to others were actually lived through by the person himself. This is no mystery. It is the threshold of Suddha avasthâ.

Lord Siva is at the top, Lord Ganesa is at the bottom, and Lord Murugan is in the heart of it, in the center. Faith in Tradition The intellect in its capacity to contain truth is a very limited tool, while faith is a very broad, accommodating and embracing faculty. The mystery of life and beyond life, of Siva, is really better understood through faith than through intellectual reasoning. The intellect is a memory/reason conglomerate from the lower nâdî/chakra complex. Its refined ability to juggle information around is uncanny in some instances. Nevertheless, the intellect is built upon what we hear and remember, what we experience and remember, what we explain to others who are refined or gross in reasoning faculties. What we

remember of it all and the portions that have been forgotten may be greatly beneficial to those listening, or it may be confusing, but it is certainly not Truth with a capital "T." There are two kinds of faith. The first kind is faith in those masters, adepts, yogîs and Rishis who have had similar experiences and have spoken about them in similar ways, unedited by the ignorant. We, therefore, can have faith that some Truth was revealed from within themselves, from some deep, inner or higher source.

The second aspect of faith is in one's own spiritual, unsought-for, unbidden flashes of intuition, revelations or visions, which one remembers even stronger as the months go by, more vividly than something read from a book, seen on television or heard from a friend or a philosopher. These personal revelations create a new, superconscious intellect when verified by what yogîs and Rishis and the sâdhus have seen and heard and whose explanations centuries have preserved. These are the old souls of the Suddha avasthâ, being educated from within out, building a new intellect from superconscious insights. Their faith is unshakable, undaunted, for it is themselves. It is just who they are at this stage of the evolution, the maturation, of their soul in the Suddha avasthâ. One of the aspects of faith is the acceptance of tradition rather than the questioning or doubting of traditions.

Another is trust in the process of spiritual unfoldment, so that when one is going through an experience, one always believes that the process is happening, instead of thinking that today's negative experience is outside the process. However, it is not possible for souls in the irul pâda, stage of darkness, to trust in the process of anything except their need for food, a few bodily comforts and their gaining the abilities to adjust transparently into a community without committing too many crimes for which they would be severely punished. They gain their lessons through the action-and-painful-reaction ways. It is difficult and nearly impossible for those in the marul pâda, stage of confusion, to have faith in the process of spiritual unfoldment and trust in tradition, because they are developing their personal ego, manufacturing karmas, good, bad and mixed, to sustain their physical existence for hundreds of lives. They will listen to sermons with a deaf ear and, after they are over, enjoy the food and the idle chatter the most.

They will read books on philosophy and rationalize their teachings as relevant only to the past. The great knowledge of the past tradition, even the wisdom their grandparents might hold, is an encroachment on their proud sovereignty. It is only when the soul reaches the maturity to enter the arul pâda, the stage of grace, that the ability will come from within to lean on the past and on tradition, perform the present sâdhanas, live within dharma and carve a future for themselves and others by bringing the best of the past, which is tradition, forward into the future. This transition is a happy one. Truth now has a capital "T" and is always told. The restraints, the yamas, truly have been perfected and are a vital part of the DNA system of individual living beings. Now, as he enters the arul pâda, the niyamas, spiritual practices, stand out strongly in his mind. The Sanskrit word âstikya means "that which is," or "that which exists." Thus, for Hindus faith means believing in what is. Âstikya refers to one who believes in what is, one who is pious and faithful. We can see that these two words, faith and âstikya, are similar in nature. Faith is the spiritual-intellectual mind, developed through many superconscious insights blended together through cognition, not through reason. The insights do not have to be remembered, because they are firmly impressed as samskâras within the inner mind. There is an old saying favored by practical, experiential intellectuals, "Seeing is believing." A more profound adage is "Believing is seeing."

The scientists and the educators of today live in the marul pāda. They see with their two eyes and pass judgments based on what they currently believe. The Rishis of the past and the Rishis of the now and those yet to come in the future also are seers.

There is a thin thread through the history of China, Japan, India, England and all of Europe, Africa, the Americas, Polynesia and all the countries of the world connecting seers and what they have seen. This seeing is not with the two eyes. It is with the third eye, the eye of the soul. One cannot erase through argument or coercion that which has been seen. The seer relates his seeing to the soul of the one who hears. This is sampradāya. This is guru-Sishya transference. This is Truth. This is Suddha. This is the end of this upadeSa. Hands raised in adoration during a pūjā, a devotee venerates Ganesa in an act of Isvarapūjana, worship.

Summary of the Fourth Observance Cultivate an unshakable faith. Believe firmly in God, Gods, guru and your path to enlightenment. Trust in the words of the masters, the scriptures and traditions. Practice devotion and sādhana to inspire experiences that build advanced faith. Be loyal to your lineage, one with your satguru. Shun those who try to break your faith by argument and accusation. Avoid doubt and despair.

CHAPTER 15: WORSHIP 93 The Fifth Observance - Isvarapûjana ISTHE FIFTH NIYAMA.

LET US DECLARE, IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, THAT HUMAN LIFE IS EITHER WORSHIP OR WARSHIP, HIGHER NATURE OR LOWER NATURE.

We need say no more. But we will. The brief explanation for Isvarapûjana is to cultivate devotion through daily worship and meditation. The soul's evolution from its conception is based solely on Isvarapûjana, the return to the source. In the irul pâda, the stage of darkness, its return to the source is more imminent than actual. The burning desire is there, driven by the instinctive feelings and emotions of living within the seven chakras below the mûlâdhâra. There is a natural seeking on the way up. People here will worship almost anything to get out of this predicament. Bound in blind faith, with the absence of a coherent intellect guided by reason, and the absence of a matured intellect developed by superconscious experience, they struggle out of their shell of ignorance, through worship, to a better life.

The small thread of intuition keeps assuring them it is there, within their reach if they but strive. They call God, they fear God, seek to be close to Him and see Him as oh-so-far away. When they are matured and stepping into adolescence in the marul pâda, where confusion prevails, worship and the trappings and traditions that go with it seem to be primitive, unreasonable and can all well be dispensed with. It is here that a young lady looks into the mirror and says, "What a fine person! I am more beautiful than all the other girls I know."

A young man may likewise be conceited about his looks or physique. Worship still exists, but is tied closely to narcissism. It is only in the stage of grace, arul, and on its doorstep that true worship arises, which is invoking and opening up to the great beings, God, Gods and devas, in order to commune with them. Faith, âstikya, creates the attitudes for the action of worship. We can see that from the soul's conception to its fullness of maturity into the final merger with God Siva Himself, worship, communication, looking up, blending with, is truly monistic Saiva Siddhânta, the final conclusions for all mankind.

We can conclude that in Sanâtana Dharma faith is in What Is, and in the Abrahamic religions faith is in What Is Yet to Be. Worship could be defined as communication on a very high level: a truly sophisticated form of "channeling," as New-Age people might say; clairvoyant or clairaudient experience, as mystics would describe it; or heart-felt love interchanged between Deity and devotee, as the ordinary person would describe it. Worship for the Hindu is on many levels and of many kinds. In the home, children worship their father and mother as God and Goddess because they love them.

The husband worships his wife as a Goddess. The wife worships her husband as a God. In the shrine room, the entire family together worships images of Gods, Goddesses and saints, beseeching them as their dear friends. The family goes to the temple daily, or at least once a week, attends seasonal festivals and takes a far-off pilgrimage once a year. Worship is the binding force that keeps the Hindu family together. On a deeper level, external worship is internalized, worshiping God within through meditation and contemplation. This form of worship leads into yoga and profound mystical experiences. Rites of Worship Many people are afraid to do pûjâ, specific, traditional rites of worship, because they feel they don't have enough training or don't understand the mystical principles behind it well enough.

To this concern I would say that the priesthood in Hinduism is sincere, devout and dedicated. Most Hindus depend on the priests to perform the pûjâs and sacraments for them, or to train them to perform home pûjâ and give them permission to do so through initiation, called dîkshâ. However, simple pûjâs may be performed by anyone wishing to invoke grace from God, Mahâdevas and devas. Love and dedication and the outpouring from the highest chakras of spiritual energies of the lay devotee are often greater than any professional priest could summon within himself.

Devotees of this caliber have come up in Hindu society throughout the ages with natural powers to invoke the Gods and manifest in the lives of temple devotees many wondrous miracles. There is also an informal order of priests called panðara, which is essentially the self-appointed priest who is accepted by the community to perform pûjâs at a sacred tree, a simple shrine or an abandoned temple. He may start with the mantra Aum and learn a few more mantras as he goes along. His efficaciousness can equal that of the most advanced Sanskrit Sâstrî, performing in the grandest temple.

Mothers, daughters, aunts, fathers, sons, uncles, all may perform pûjâ within their own home, and do, as the Hindu home is considered to be nothing less than an extension of the nearby temple. In the Hindu religion, unlike the Western religions, there is no one who stands between man and God. Years ago, in the late 1950s, I taught beginning seekers how to offer the minimal, simplest form of pûjâ at a simple altar with fresh water, flowers, a small candle, incense, a bell and a stone. This brings together the four elements, earth, air, fire and water, and your own mind is âkâSa, the fifth element. The liturgy is simply chanting "Aum." This is the generic pûjâ which anyone can do before proper initiation comes from the right sources. People of any religion can perform Hindu pûjâ in this way.

All Hindus have guardian devas who live on the astral plane and guide, guard and protect their lives. The great Mahâdevas in the temple that the devotees frequent send their deva ambassadors into the homes to live with the devotees. A room is set aside for these permanent unseen guests, a room that the whole family can enter and sit in and commune inwardly with these refined beings who are dedicated to protecting the family generation after generation. Some of them are their own ancestors. A token shrine in a bedroom or a closet or a niche in a kitchen is not enough to attract these Divinities.

One would not host an honored guest in one's closet or have him or her sleep in the kitchen and expect the guest to feel welcome, appreciated, loved. All Hindus are taught from childhood that the guest is God, and they treat any guest royally who comes to visit. Hindus also treat God as God and devas as Gods when they come to live permanently in the home. But liberal sects of Hinduism teach that God and devas are only figments of one's imagination. These sects are responsible for producing a more materialistic and superficial group of followers. Not so the deep, mystical Hindu, who dedicates his home to God and sets a room aside for God.

To him and the family, they are moving into God's house and living with God. Materialistic, superficial Hindus feel that God might be living, sometimes, maybe, in their house. Their homes are fraught with confusion, deceptive dealings, back-biting, anger, even rage, and their marriages nowadays often end in divorce.

They and all those who live in the lower nature are restricted from performing pûjâ, because when and if they do pûjâ, the invocation calls up the demons rather than calling down the devas.

The asuric beings invoked into the home by angry people, and into the temple by angry priests, or by contentious, argumentative, sometimes rageful boards of directors, take great satisfaction in creating more confusion and escalating simple misunderstandings into arguments leading to angry words, hurt feelings and more. With this in mind, once anger is experienced, thirty-one days should pass to close the door on the chakras below the mûlâdhâra before pûjâ may again be performed by that individual. Simple waving of incense before the icons is permissible, but not the passing of flames, ringing of bells or the chanting of any mantra, other than the simple recitation of Aum.

Living in God's Home The ideal of Isvarapûjana, worship, is to always be living with God, living with Siva, in God's house, which is also your house, and regularly going to God's temple. This lays the foundation for finding God within. How can someone find God within if he doesn't live in God's house as a companion to God in his daily life? The answer is obvious. It would only be a theoretical pretense, based mainly on egoism. If one really believes that God is in his house, what kinds of attitudes does this create?

First of all, since family life is based around food, the family would feed God in His own room at least three times a day, place the food lovingly before His picture, leave, close the door and let God and His devas eat in peace. God and the devas do enjoy the food, but they do so by absorbing the prânas, the energies, of the food. When the meal is over, and after the family has eaten, God's plates are picked up, too. What is left on God's plate is eaten as prasâda, as a blessing. God should be served as much as the hungriest member of the family, not just a token amount. Of course, God, Gods and the devas do not always remain in the shrine room.

They wander freely throughout the house, listening to and observing the entire family, guests and friends. Since the family is living in God's house, and God is not living in their house, the voice of God is easily heard as their conscience. When we are living in God's house, it is easy to see God as pure energy and life within every living form, the trees, the flowers, the plants, the fire, the Earth, humans, animals and all creatures. When we see this life, which is manifest most in living beings, we are seeing God Siva. Many families are too selfish to set aside a room for God.

Though they have their personal libraries, rumpus rooms, two living rooms, multiple bedrooms, their superficial religion borders on a new Indian religion. Their shrine is a closet, or pictures of God and Goddesses on the vanity mirror of their dressing table. The results of such worship are nil, and their life reflects the chaos that we see in the world today. The psychology and the decision and the religion is, "Do we live with God, or does God occasionally visit us?" Who is the authority in the home, an unreligious, ignorant, domineering elder? Or is it God Siva Himself, or Lord Murugan or Lord Ganesa, whom the entire family, including elders, bow down to because they have resigned themselves to the fact that they are living in the âSrama of Mahâdevas? This is religion.

This is Isvarapûjana. It is often said that worship is not only a performance at a certain time of day in a certain place, but a state of being in which every act, morning to night, is done in Siva consciousness, in which life becomes an offering to God. Then we can begin to see Siva in

everyone we meet. When we try, just try, and we don't have to be successful all the time, to separate the life of the individual from his personality, immediately we are in higher consciousness and can reflect contentment and faith, compassion, steadfastness and all the higher qualities, which is sometimes not possible to do if we are only looking at the external person.

This practice, of Isvarapûjana sâdhana, can be performed all through the day and even in one's dreams at night. Meditation, too, in the Hindu way is based on worship. It is true that Hindus do teach meditation techniques to those who have Western backgrounds as a mind-manipulative experience. However, a Hindu adept, Rishi or jñânî, even an experienced elder, knows that meditation is a natural outgrowth of the charyâ, kriyâ and yoga paths. It is based on a religious foundation, as trigonometry is based on geometry, algebra and arithmetic.

If you are worshipping properly, if you take worship to its pinnacle, you are in perfect meditation. We have seen many devotees going through the form of worship with no communication with the God they are worshipping or even the stone that the God uses as a temporary body. They don't even have a smile on their face. They are going through the motions because they have been taught that meditation is the ultimate, and worship can be dispensed with after a certain time. Small wonder that when they are in meditation, their minds are confused and subconscious overloads harass them.

Breathing is irregular, and if made regular has to be forced. Their materialistic outlook on life, of seeing God everywhere, yet not in those places they rationalize God can never possibly be, contradicts their professed dedication to the Hindu way of life. Yes, truly, worship unreservedly. Perfect this. Then, after initiation, internalize that worship through yoga practices given by a satguru. Through that same internal worship, unreservedly, you will eventually attain the highest goal. These are the Saiva Siddhânta conclusions of the seven Rishis who live within the sahasrâra chakra of all souls. A teacher passes along the gift of scriptural learning to four boys through recitation of holy scriptural texts.

Summary of the Fifth Observance Cultivate devotion through daily worship and meditation. Set aside one room of your home as God's shrine. Offer fruit, flowers or food daily. Learn a simple pûjâ and the chants. Meditate after each pûjâ. Visit your shrine before and after leaving the house. Worship in heartfelt devotion, clearing the inner channels to God, Gods and guru so their grace flows toward you and loved ones.

CHAPTER 16: SCRIPTURAL STUDY - The Sixth Observance Scriptural Study Siddhânta Sravana,

THE SIXTH NIYAMA IS THE END OF THE SEARCH. PRIOR TO THIS END, PRIOR TO FINDING THE SATGURU, WE ARE FREE TO STUDY ALL THE scriptures of the world, of all religions, relate and interrelate them in our mind, manipulate their meanings and justify their final conclusions. We are free to study all of the sects and sampradâyas, all denominations, lineages and teachings, everything under the banner of Hinduism, the Saivites, the Vaishnavites, the Smârtas, Ganapatis, Ay yappans, Sâktas and Murugans and their branches.

Scriptures within Hinduism are voluminous. The methods of teaching are awesome in their multiplicity. As for teachers, there is one on every corner in India. Ask a simple question of an elder, and he is duty-bound to give a lengthy response from the window he is looking out of, opened by the sampradâya he or his family has subscribed to, maybe centuries ago, of one or another sect within this great pantheon we call Hinduism.

Before we come to the fullness of siddhânta Sravana, we are also free to investigate psychologies, psychiatries, pseudo-sciences, ways of behavior of the human species, existentialism, humanism, secular humanism, materialism and the many other modern “-isms,” which are so multitudinous and still multiplying. Their spokesmen are many. Libraries are full of them. All the “-isms” and “-ologies” are there, and they beckon, hands outstretched to receive, to seduce, sometimes even seize, the seeker. The seeker on the path of Siddhânta Sravana who is at least relatively successful at the ten restraints must make a choice. He knows he has to. He knows he must.

He has just entered the consciousness of the mûlâdhâra chakra and is becoming steadfast on the upward climb. Have full faith that when your guru does appear, after you have made yourself ready through the ten restraints and the first five practices, you will know in every nerve current of your being that this is your guide on the path through the next five practices: 1) siddhânta Sravana, scriptural study, following one verbal lineage and not pursuing any others; 2) mati, cognition, developing a spiritual will and intellect with a guru's guidance; 3) vrata, sacred vows, fulfilling religious vows, rules, and observances faithfully; 4) japa, recitation of holy mantras, here we seek initiation from the guru to perform this practice; and 5) tapas, performing austerity, sâdhana, penance and sacrifice, also under the guru's guidance. Siddhânta Sravana is a discipline, an ancient traditional practice in satguru lineages, to carry the devotee from one chakra in consciousness to another.

Each sampradâya defends its own teachings and principles against other sampradâyas to maintain its pristine purity and admonishes followers from investigating any of them. Such exploration of other texts should all be done before seeking to fulfill siddhânta Sravana. Once under the direction of and having been accepted by a guru, any further delving into extraneous doctrines would be disapproved and disallowed. Siddhânta Sravana is more than just focusing on a single doctrine. It is developing through scriptural study an entirely new mind fabric, subconsciously and consciously, which will entertain an explanation for all future prârabdha karmas and karmas created in this life to be experienced for the duration of the physical life of the disciple. Siddhânta Sravana is even more. It lays the foundation for initiation within the fabric of the nerve system of the disciple. Even more, it portrays any differences in his thinking, the guru's thought, the sampradâya's principles, philosophy and underlying practices.

Transmitting Tradition Siddhânta Sravana literally means “scriptural listening.” It is one thing to read the Vedas, Upanishads and Yoga Sûtras, but it is quite another to hear their teachings from one who knows, because it is through hearing that the transmission of subtle knowledge occurs, from knower to seeker. And that is why listening is preferred over intellectual study. Because sound is the first creation, knowledge is transferred through sound of all kinds. It is important that one listen to the highest truths of a sampradâya from one who has realized them. The words, of course, will be familiar. They have been read by the devotee literally hundreds of times, but to hear them from the mouth of the enlightened Rishi is to absorb his unspoken realization, as he re-realizes his realization while he reads them and speaks them out. This is Saiva Siddhânta. This is true sampradâya, thought, meaning and knowledge conveyed through words spoken by one who has realized the Ultimate.

The words will be heard, the meaning the satguru understands as meaning will be absorbed by the subconscious mind of the devotee, and the superconscious, intuitive knowledge will impress the subsuperconscious mind of the devotees who absorb it, who milk it out of the satguru himself. This and only this changes the life pattern of the devotee. There is no other way. This is why one must come to the guru open, like a child, ready and willing to absorb, and to go through many tests. And this is why one must choose one’s guru wisely and be ready for such an event in one’s life. Sampradâya actually means an orally transmitted tradition, unwritten and unrecorded in any other way. True, satgurus of sampradâyas do write books nowadays, make tape recordings, videos and correspond. This is mini-sampradâya, the bud of a flower before opening, the shell of an egg before the bird hatches and flies off, the cocoon before the butterfly emerges.

This is mini-sampradâya, just a taste, but it does lay a foundation within the Sishya’s mind of who the guru is, what he thinks, what he represents, the beginning and ending of his path, the sampradâya he represents, carries forth and is bound to carry forth to the next generation, the next and the next. But really potent sampradâya is listening, actually listening to the guru’s words, his explanations. It stimulates thought. Once-remembered words take on new meanings. Old knowledge is burnt out and replaced with new. This is sampradâya.

Are you ready for a satguru? Perhaps not. When you are ready, and he comes into your life through a dream, a vision or a personal meeting, the process begins. The devotee takes one step toward the guru, a simple meeting, a simple dream. The guru is bound to take nine steps toward the devotee, not ten, not eleven or twelve, only nine, and then wait for the devotee to take one more step. Then another nine ensue. This is the dance. This is sampradâya. When a spiritual experience comes, a real awakening of light, a flash of realization, a knowing that has never been seen in print, or if it had been is long-since forgotten, it gives great courage to the devotee to find that it had already been experienced and written about by others within his chosen sampradâya. If all the temples were destroyed, the gurus would come forth and rebuild them. If all the scriptures were destroyed, the Rishis would reincarnate and rewrite them. If all the gurus, swâmîs, Rishis, sâdhus, saints and sages were systematically destroyed, they would take births here and there around the globe and continue as if nothing had ever happened. So secure is the Eternal Truth on the planet, so unshakable, that it forges ahead undaunted through the mouths of many.

It forges ahead undaunted through the temples’ open doors. It forges ahead undaunted in scriptures now lodged in nearly every library in the world. It forges ahead undaunted,

mystically hidden from the unworthy, revealed only to the worthy, who restrain themselves by observing some or all of the yamas and who practice a few niyamas. Coming under a satguru of one lineage, all scripture, temple and home tradition may be taken away from the eyes of the experience of the newly accepted devotee. In another tradition, scripture may be taken away and temple worship allowed to remain, so that only the words of the guru are heard. In still another tradition, the temple, the scripture and the voice of the guru are always there, but traditionally only the scripture which has the approval of the satguru and is totally in accord with his principles, practices and the underlying philosophy of the sampradâya. Living One Path Perfectly Life is long; there are apparently many years ahead. But time is short. One never knows when he is going to die.

The purpose of sampradâya is to restrict and narrow down, to reach out to an attainable goal. We must not consider our life and expected longevity as giving us the time and permission to do investigative comparisons of one sampradâya to another. This may be done before making up one's mind to follow a traditional verbal lineage. After that, pursuing other paths, even in passing, would be totally unacceptable. But it is also totally unacceptable to assume the attitude of denigration of other paths, or to assume the attitude that "our way is the only way." There are fourteen currents in the sushumnâ. Each one is a valid way to escalate consciousness into the chakra at the top of the skull and beyond. And at every point in time, there is a living guru, possessing a physical body, ordained to control one or more of these nâdîs, currents, within the sushumnâ.

All are valid paths. One should not present itself as superseding another. Let here be no mistake about this. The yamas and niyamas are the core of Hindu disciplines and restraints for individuals, groups, communities and nations. In fact, they outline various stages of the path in the development of the soul, leading out of the marul pâda into the arul pâda, from confusion into grace, leading to the feet of the satguru, as the last five practices indicate, siddhânta Sravana, mati, vrata, japa and tapas. Since the sampradâyas are all based on Hinduism, which is based on the Vedas, any teacher of Indian spirituality who rejects the Vedas is therefore not a Hindu and should not be considered as such. Anybody in his right mind will be able to accept the last section of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and see the truth therein. One at least has to accept that as the basis of siddhânta Sravana.

If even that is rejected, we must consider the teacher a promulgator of a new Indian religion, neo-American religion, neo-European religion, neo-New- Age religion, nonreligion, neo-sannyâsî religion, or some other "neo-ism" or "neo-ology." This is not sampradâya. This is not siddhânta Sravana. This is what we speak against. These are not the eternal paths. Why? Because they have not been tried and tested. They are not based on traditional lineages; nor have they survived the ravages of time, changing societies, wars, famine and the infiltration of ignorance. For sâdhakas, yogîs, swâmîs and mendicants who have freed themselves from the world, permanently or for a period of time according to their vows, these yamas and niyamas are not only restraints and practices, but mandatory controls. They are not only practices, but obligatory disciplines, and once performed with this belief and attitude, they will surely lead the mendicant to his chosen goal, which can only be the height that his prârabdha karmas in this life permit, unless those karmas are burned out under extreme tapas under the guidance of a satguru. Some might still wonder, why limit oneself to listening to scripture of one particular lineage, especially if it has been practically memorized?

The answer is that what has been learned must be experienced personally, and experience comes in many depths. This is the purpose of disregarding or rejecting all other sampradâyas, -ism's, -ologies and sects, or denominations, and of limiting scriptural listening to just one sampradâya, so that each subtle increment of the divine truths amplified within it is realized through personal experience. This and only this, experience, realization, illumination, can be carried on to the next birth. What one has merely memorized is not transforming and is forgotten perhaps shortly after death. Let there be no mistake that Siddhânta Sravana, scriptural listening, is the only way; and when the seeker is ready, the guru will appear and enter his life. A sage blesses a young boy, bestowing upon him mati, insightful cognition and spiritual understanding.

Summary of the Sixth Observance Eagerly hear the scriptures, study the teachings and listen to the wise of your lineage. Choose a guru, follow his path and don't waste time exploring other ways. Read, study and, above all, listen to readings and dissertations by which wisdom flows from knower to seeker. Avoid secondary texts that preach violence. Revere and study the revealed scriptures, the Vedas and Āgamas.

CHAPTER 17: COGNITION - The Seventh Observance Mati

MATI IS THE SEVENTH NIYAMA. COGNITION MEANS UNDERSTANDING; BUT DEEPER THAN UNDERSTANDING, IT IS SEEING THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE results that a thought, a word or an action would have in the future, before the thought, word or action has culminated.

Mati is the development of a spiritual will and intellect through the grace of a satguru, an enlightened master. Mati can only come this way. It is a transference of divine energies from the satguru to the Sishya, building a purified intellect honed down by the guru for the Sishya, and a spiritual will developed by the Sishya by following the religious sâdhanas the guru has laid down until the desired results are attained to the guru's satisfaction. Sâdhana is always done under a guru's direction. This is the worthy sâdhana that bears fruit. Mati, cognition, on a higher level is the awakening of the third eye, looking out through the heart chakra, seeing through the mâyâ, the interacting creation, preservation and dissolution of the molecules of matter. Mati is all this and more, for within each one who is guided by the guru's presence lies the ability to see not only with the two eyes but with all three simultaneously.

The spiritual intellect described herein is none other than wisdom, or a "wise dome," if you will. Wisdom is the timely application of knowledge, not merely the opinions of others, but knowledge gained through deep observation. The guru's guidance is supreme in the life of the dedicated devotee who is open for training. The verbal lineages of the many sampradâyas have withstood the tests of time, turmoil, decay and ravage of external hostility. The sampradâyas that have sustained man and lift ed him above the substratum of ignorance are actually great nerve currents within the sushumnâ of the awakened satguru himself. To go further on the path of yoga, one will encounter within his own sushumnâ current, within one of the fourteen nâðis within it, a satguru, a guru who preaches Truth.

He will meet this guru in a dream or in his physical body, and through the guru's grace and guidance will be allowed to continue the upward climb. These fourteen currents, at every point in time on the surface of the Earth, have a satguru attached to them, ready and waiting to open the portals of the beyond into the higher chakras, the throat, the third eye and the cranium. To say, "I have awakened my throat chakra," "I now live in my third eye" or "I am developing my sahasrâra chakra," without being able to admit to being under a guru, a satguru who knows and is personally directing the devotee, is foolishness, a matter of imagination. It is in the heart chakra, the chakra of cognition, that seekers see through the veils of ignorance, illusion, mâyâ's interacting preservation, creation and destruction, and gain a unity with and love for the universe, all those within it, creatures, peoples and all the various forms, feeling themselves a part of it. Here, on this threshold of the anâhata chakra, there are two choices.

One is following the sampradâya of a satguru for the next upward climb into the viSuddha, âjñâ and sahasrâra. The other is remaining guru-less, becoming one's own guru, and possibly delving into various forms of psychism, astrology, some forms of modern science, psychic crimedetection, tarot cards, pendulums, crystal gazing, psychic healing, past-life reading or fortunetelling. These psychic abilities, when developed, can be an impediment, a deterrent, a barrier, a Berlin Wall to future spiritual development. They develop the ânava, the ego, and are the first renunciations the satguru would ask a devotee to make prior to being accepted.

Coming under a satguru, one performs according to the guru's direction with full faith and confidence. This is why scriptures say a guru must be carefully chosen, and when one is found, to follow him with all your heart, to obey and fulfill his every instruction better than he would have expected you to, and most importantly, even better than you would have expected of yourself. Psychic abilities are not in themselves deterrents on the path. They are permitted to develop later, after ParaSiva, nirvikalpa samâdhi, has been attained and fully established within the individual. But this, too, would be under the guru's grace and guidance, for these abilities are looked at as tools to fulfill certain works assigned by the guru to the devotee to fulfill until the end of the life of the physical body. It is the personal ego, the ânava, that is developed through the practice of palmistry, astrology, tarot cards, fortunetelling, past-life reading, crystal gazing, crystal healing, prâna transference, etc., etc., etc.

This personal ego enhancement is a gift from those who are healed, who are helped, who are encouraged and who are in awe of the psychic power awakened in the heart chakra of this most perfect person of the higher consciousness who doesn't anger, display fear or exhibit any lower qualities. Untying the Bonds The three malas that bind us are: mâyâ, the ever-perpetuating dance of creation, preservation and dissolution; karma (our prârabdha karma, brought with us to face in this life, along with the karma we are creating now and will create in the future); and ânava, the ego, ignorance or sense of separateness.

Mâyâ can be understood, seen through and adjusted to through the heart-chakra powers of cognition, contentment and compassion. Karmas can be harnessed through regular forms of disciplinary practices of body, mind and emotions, and the understanding of the law of karma itself as a force that is sent out through thought, feeling and action and most often returns to us through other peoples' thought, feeling and action. But it is the ânava mala, the mala of personal ego, that is the binding chain which cannot be so easily dealt with. It is the last to go. It is only at the point of death, before the greatest mahâsamâdhi of the greatest Rishi, that the ânava mala chain is finally broken. If we compare this ânava mala, personal ego, to an actual mâlâ, a string of rudrâksha beads, the purpose on the path at this stage, of mati, is to begin eliminating the beads, making the chain shorter and shorter.

The mâlâ should be getting shorter and shorter rather than our adding beads to it so that it gets longer and longer. A warning: if the ânava mala, symbolically a garland of rudrâksha beads, has thirty-six beads and it steadily grows to 1,008 because of practices and the adulation connected with them within the psychic realms of the pseudoscience of parapsychology, such as bending spoons, telepathy, channeling and ectoplasmic manifestations, this 1,008 strand of rudrâksha beads could become so heavy, so dangerous to the wearer, that eventually he would trip and fall on his nose. The wise say, "Pride goes before a fall." And the still wiser know that "spiritual pride is the most difficult pride to deal with, to eliminate, to rise above in a lifetime." The spiritually proud never open themselves to a satguru. The mystically humble do. Mati has also been interpreted as "good intellect, acute intelligence, a mind directed toward right knowledge, or Vedic knowledge." Good intellect, in the context of a Hindu seer, would be right knowledge based on Siddhânta Sravana, scriptural study. Acute intelligence, of course, means "see through" or panoramic intelligence which cognizes the entire picture rather than only being aware of one of its parts. "A mind directed toward right knowledge or Vedic knowledge" refers to the intellect developed through Siddhânta Sravana.

The study of the Vedas and other scriptures purifies the intellect, as belief creates attitude, and attitude creates action. An intellect based on truths of the Sanâtana Dharma is intelligent to the divine laws of the universe and harnessed into fulfilling them as a part of it. To this end, all the prârabdha karmas of this life and the action-reaction conglomerates formed in this life are directed. The intellect, like the emotions, is a force, disciplined or undisciplined, propelled by right knowledge or wrong knowledge. It, of itself, processes, logically or illogically, both kinds of knowledge or their mix.

What harnesses the intellect is siddhânta Sravana, study of the teachings and listening to the wise of an established, traditional lineage that has stood the test of time, ravage and all attempts at conversion. The intellect is a neutral tool which can be used for bad or for good purposes. But unlike the emotions, which are warm, and also neutral, the intellect is cold. It is the fire of the kunðalinî force, impregnating the intellect, purifying it, burning out the ignorance of wrong concepts, thought forms, beliefs, connected attitudes, causing an aversion to certain actions, that forges the purified intellect and spiritual will of cognition, known as mati. Mati, in summary, is the harnessing of the intellect by the soul to live a spiritual life. Purifying the Intellect

There are many things which have their claim on people's minds. For many it is the physical body. The hypochondriac thinks about it all the time. Then there is the employer who has bought the intellect of the employee. The emotions consume the intellect with hurt feelings and the rhetorical questions that ensue, elated feelings and the continued praise that is expected. And then there is television, the modern viSvaguru that guides the intellect into confusion. As a dream leads only to waking up, television leads only to turning it off . Yes, there are many things that claim the intellect, many more than we have spoken about already. The intellect is guided by the physical; the intellect is guided by the emotions, by other people, and by mechanical devices.

And the intellect is guided by the intellect itself, like a computer processing and reprocessing knowledge without really understanding any of it. It is at the stage when anger has subsided, jealousy is unacceptable behavior and fear is a distant feeling, when memory is intact, the processes of reason are working well, the willpower is strong and the integrity is stable, when one is looking out from the anâhata chakra window of consciousness, when instinctive-intellectual thought meets the superconscious of the purusha, the soul, that the inner person lays claim on the outer person. There is a struggle, to be sure, as the "I Am" struggles to take over the "was then." It's simple.

The last mala, the ânava "mâlâ," has to start losing its beads. The personal ego must go for universal cosmic identity, Satchidânanda, to be maintained. Th is, then, is the platform of the throat chakra, the viSuddha chakra, of a true, all-pervasive, never-relenting spiritual identity. Here guru and Sishya live in oneness in divine communication. Even if never a word is spoken, the understanding in the devotee begins to grow and grow and grow. Some people think of the intellect as informing the superconscious or soul nature, instructing or educating it. Some people even think that they can command the Gods to do their bidding. These are the people that also think that their wife is a slave, that children are their servants, and who cleverly deceive their employers and governments through learned arts of deception.

These are the prototypes of the well-developed ignorant person, even though he might feign humility and proclaim religiousness. It is the religion that he professes, if he keeps doing so, that will pull him out of this darkness. When the first beam of light comes through the mûlâdhâra chakra, he will start instructing his own soul as to what it should do for him, yet he still habitually dominates his wife, inhibiting her own feelings as a woman, and his children, inhibiting their feelings in experiencing themselves being young. But the soul responds in a curious way, unlike the wife and children, or the employer and government who have been deceived through his wrong dealings.

The soul responds by creating a pin which pricks his conscience, and this gnawing, antagonistic force within him he seeks to get rid of. He hides himself in jealousy, in the sutala chakra, until this becomes unacceptable. The confusion of the talâtala chakra is no longer his pleasure. He can't hide there. So, he hides himself in anger and resentment, a cozy place within the vitala chakra, until this becomes unbearable. Then he hides himself in fear, in the atala chakra, fear of his own purusha, his own soul, his own psyche, his own seeing, until this becomes intolerable. Then he hides himself in memory and reason, and the being puts down its roots. The change in this individual can only be seen by the mellowness within his eyes and a new-born wisdom that is slowly developing in his conversations among those who knew him before.

Transmuting Willpower Willpower is a prânic force which exudes out of the manipûra chakra. This energy, when directed downward, can be used up through excessive reason, excessive memorization, fear and amplification of fears, anger, the perpetuation of resentment without resolution, amplified by instinctive jealousies, all of which eventually dissipate the semi-divine energy of willpower and eventually close the manipûra chakra. But when this same energy of willpower is upwardly directed, it pulls memory into a purified memory, making it forget what has to be forgotten, namely wrong knowledge, and remember what has to be remembered, siddhânta, the final conclusions of the Rishis who live within the sahasrâra chakra, the siddhas who are contacted through great tapas. There is no reason to believe that developing and unfolding the ten petals of the manipûra chakra comes easily.

To develop an indomitable will capable of the accomplishments needed as a prerequisite to make the upward climb to the anâhata, viSuddha, âjñâ and sahasrâra chakras, and to sustain the benign attitudes of humility, is certainly not an easy task. But it comes naturally to one who has attained such in prior lifetimes, an older soul, I would say. Fulfilling each task one has begun, putting the cap back on the toothpaste tube after squeezing the toothpaste on the brush, the little things, and perfecting the yamas and the niyamas, especially contentment, austerity, giving, faith and regular worship, builds this indomitable will. These are mini-sâdhanas one can perform on his own without the guidance of a guru. Yes, it is the little things that build the indomitable will that dominates the external intellect, its memory and reason abilities, and the instinctive impulses of fear, anger and jealousy. Doing this is just becoming a good person. Willpower is the muscle of the mind. We lift weights, exercise, run a mile, all to develop the muscles of the physical body.

The more we perform these practices, the more muscular we become. The process of strain reshapes the cellular properties and the structure of the muscles. Intermittent rest allows them to build up double. Strong muscles appear on the body as a result.

The manipûra chakra is the sun center of the physical body and of the astral body, the place where all nerve currents of these two bodies meet and merge. It emanates the power of life. It is the seat of fire, the agni homa. It is the bridge between the ultimate illumination and a prolonged, ongoing, intellectual processing of ideas, coupled with instinctive willfulness. Let there be no mistake, we must get beyond that by transmuting this tool, willpower, into mati, cognition, where its energies are usable yet benign.

Therefore, the more you use your personal, individual will power in your religious service, in your business life, your personal life, your home life, your temple life, in fulfilling all the yamas and niyamas, the more willpower you have. It is an accumulative, ever-growing bank account. Of course, you can lose some of it through lapses into fear, anger and jealousy, just as in an economic depression one loses money. But you can also court an inflation by seeking higher consciousness in the viSuddha chakra of divine love through the anâhata chakra of direct cognition, through understanding the oneness of a well-ordered, just universe, both inner and outer. A couple voice their wedding vows, vrata, promising lifelong fidelity in one of our most sacred rites of passage.

Summary of the Seventh Observance Develop a spiritual will and intellect with your satguru's guidance. Strive for knowledge of God, to awaken the light within. Discover the hidden lesson in each experience to develop a profound understanding of life and yourself. Through meditation, cultivate intuition by listening to the still, small voice within, by understanding the subtle sciences, inner worlds and mystical texts.

CHAPTER 18: SACRED VOWS - The Eighth Observance Sacred Vows VRATA,

TAKING SACRED VOWS, IS THE EIGHTH NIYAMA AND SOMETHING EVERY HINDU MUST DO AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER DURING HIS LIFETIME.

THE BRAHMACHARYA VRATA is the first, pledging to maintain virginity until marriage. The vivâha vrata, marriage vows, would generally be the next. Taking a vow is a sacred trust between yourself, your outer self, your inner self, your loved ones and closest friends. Even though they may not know of the vow you may have taken, it would be difficult to look them straight in the eye if you yourself know you have let yourself down. A vow is a sacred trust between you and your guardian devas, the devas that surround the temple you most frequent and the Mahâdevas, who live within the Third World, which you live in, too, in your deep, innermost mind, in the radiant, self-luminous body of your soul. Many people make little promises and break them.

This is not a vrata, a sacred trust. A vrata is a sacred trust with God, Gods and guru made at a most auspicious time in one's life. Vrata is a binding force, binding the external mind to the soul and the soul to the Divine, though vrata is sometimes defined generally as following religious virtues or observances, following the principles of the Vedas, of the Hindu Dharma. There are vratas of many kinds, on many different levels, from the simple promise we make to ourself and our religious community and guru to perform the basic spiritual obligations, to the most specific religious vows. Vratas give the strength to withstand the temptations of the instinctive forces that naturally come up as one goes on through life, not to suppress them but to rechannel them into a lifestyle fully in accord with the yamas and niyamas.

The yamas should be at least two-thirds perfected and the niyamas two-thirds in effect before vratas are taken. We must remember that the yamas are restraints, ten clues as to what forces to restrain and how to restrain them. Some people are better than others at accomplishing this, depending on their prâabdha karmas, but the effort in trying is the important thing. The practices, niyamas, on the other hand, are progressive, according to the perfection of the restraints. Commitment to the first yama, non-injury, ahimsâ, for example, makes the first niyama, remorse, or hrî, a possibility in one's life. And satya, truthfulness, brings santosha, contentment, joy and serenity in life.

The first five practices, niyamas, are tools to keep working with yourself, to keep trying within the five major areas they outline. If one wants to progress further, he does not have to take on a guru, to study scriptures or develop a spiritual will or intellect, that would come naturally, nor to take simple vratas, to chant Aum as japa and to perform certain sâdhanas and penance. These are all available. But a guru naturally comes into one's life when the last five yamas, steadfastness, compassion, honesty, a moderate appetite, and purity, give rise to the last five niyamas, siddhânta Sravana (choice of lineage), mati (cognition and developing a spiritual will with the guru's guidance), vrata (sacred vows before a guru), japa (recitation after initiation from guru) and tapas (austerities performed under the careful guidance of a guru). We can see that the last five practices are taken on two levels: guru involvement, and community and personal involvement.

Types of Vows Many people get together with modern-day gurus and want to rush ahead, and with feigned humility seek to "get on with it" and "be their own person," but feel they need an initiation to do so. The gurus and swâmîs from India following a traditional path put initiation

before them. Most gurus and swâmîs are dumbfounded by the devotion they see in these souls, perhaps not realizing they are stimulated by drugs and the desire to get something without earning it. The gurus presume they are already performing the yamas and niyamas and have dropped out of some higher inner world into Earth bodies.

So, the initiations are given and vows are taken, but then when the reaction to the action comes within the mind of the devotee, and the swâmî begins to teach on a different level to this chosen group, because after initiation a new form of teaching and dissemination of inner knowledge occurs, and since it was only the initiation that was sought for (and he or she does not believe in God and the Gods and is not even part of the Hindu religion), once the devotee feels the pressure of responsibility, he or she responds by leaving, and even defaming the guru.

Many people think that initiation is like a graduation, the end of study. This is not true. Initiation is the beginning of study, the beginning of sâdhana, the beginning of learning. Therefore, think well before you become initiated, because your loyalty is expected, and you are expected to adhere to the teachings of the sampradâya, of the lineage, into which you are initiated. This does not mean you can't attend temples or other religious activities of other sampradâyas occasionally, such as festivals, or listen to music or chants of other traditions occasionally, but this should be minimized so that your focus and concentration is upon what you were initiated into, because you are expected to advance on the path of that particular lineage.

There are certain simple vows in Hinduism which are easy to take and often are taken, such as, "If I'm successful in this business dealing, I will give twenty percent of the profits to my temple." Or, "If my spouse comes back to me, I shall always obey the strî dharma principles (or purusha dharma), be dedicated and devoted always." "If my dear mother, who is so devoted to my children, lives through her cancer operation (and Lord Ganesa, the doctors have said the chances are not good), you will see me at the temple every Friday without fail. This is my vrata, Lord Ganesa, and I say no more." We take vows to change our ways, vows to meditate daily, vows to desist from lying, vows to not eat meat, vows to remain celibate, vows to obey the guru and his tradition, vows to follow these yamas and niyamas.

Perhaps the most obvious and important vow, which can be taken most readily and renewed once a year on a day which you consider your most sacred day, such as Sivarâtri, Ganesa Chatûrthi, Skanda Shashthî or Dîpâvalî, is the yama and niyama vrata. These twenty restraints and practices are easy to memorize. Commit them to memory. The vrata should go like this: "O Lord Ganesa, open the portals of my wisdom that I might take this vrata with open heart and clear mind. O Lord Murugan, give me the will, fortitude and renewed strength every step of the way to fulfill the vrata that I am taking. O Lord Siva, forgive me if I fail, for these twenty restraints and practices are truly beyond my ability to perfectly uphold.

So, this first year, Lord Siva, I vow to fulfill these lofty ideals, to the best of my ability, at least fifty percent. I know I am weak. You know I am weak. I know you will make me strong. I know that you are drawing me ever patiently toward your holy feet. But, Lord Siva, next year I will faithfully renew this vrata, this sacred vow, to these rules, these observances. And if I have succeeded in fulfilling my meager fifty percent according to my conscience, that shall increase my dedication and devotion to you, Lord Siva, and I shall determine to fulfill the yamas and niyamas in my life and soul seventy-five percent or more."

Success and Failure Many people feel that when they don't fulfill their vrata they have failed. One practical example to the contrary is Mahatma Gandhi, who took a vow to be celibate but broke it many times, yet continued the effort and ultimately conquered his instinctive nature. In taking a vrata, at the moment it is heard by priests, elders and all community members, when one hears oneself taking it, and all three worlds rejoice, a balanced scale has been created. Success is on one side, failure on the other. One or the other will win out.

This is where the unreserved worship of Lord Murugan will help overbalance the scale on the success side. But if the scale teeters and wavers, the blessings and knowledge of the elders of the community should be sought: the mothers and fathers, the old aunties and uncles, the priests, the pandits and sages, the Rishis and gurus. This and this alone will steady the balance. But if actual failure occurs, Lord Ganesa Himself will catch the fall in His four arms and trunk. He will hold the devotee from going into the abyss of remorse of the darkness of the lower worlds.

He will speak softly into the right ear and encourage that the vrata be immediately renewed, lest time elapse and the asura of depression take over mind, body and emotion. Yes, the only failure is that experienced by the one who quits, gives up, turns his back on the path and walks the other way, into the realms of darkness, beyond even the reach of the Gods. As Tiruvalluvar said, it is better to strive to fulfill great aspirations, even if you fail, than to achieve minor goals in life. Yes, this is very true. On the everyday level there are vratas or contracts made with people of the outside world whom you don't even know. Buy a piece of property, and once you sign the contract you are bound to fulfill it.

But a religious vrata is a contract between yourself, the religious community, the devas and the Gods and your guru, if you have one, all of whom know that human failure is a part of life; but striving is the fulfillment of life, and practice is the strengthening effect that the exercise of the human and spiritual will have over the baser elements. Vows before the community, such as those of marriage and celibacy and other vows where community support is needed, are very important. Other, more personal vows are taken before the community, a temple priest, pandit, elder, swâmî, guru, or satguru if help is needed to strengthen the individual's ability to fulfill them.

For a certain type of person, a vow before Lord Ganesa, Lord Murugan, Lord Siva or all three is enough for him to gain strength and fulfill it. A vow is never only to oneself. This is important to remember. A vow is always to God, Gods and guru, community and respected elders. One cannot make one's vow privately, to one's own individual ânava, external personal ego, thinking that no one is listening. This would be more of a promise to oneself, like a New Year's resolution, a change in attitude based on a new belief, all of which has nothing to do with the yamas and niyamas or religion. In speaking about the yama and niyama vrata, there is no difference in how the family person upholds it and the celibate monastic upholds it.

The families are in their home, the monks are in their matha, monastery. In regards to the vrata of sexual purity, for example, the family man vows to be faithful to his wife and to treat all other women as either a mother or sister and to have no sexual thoughts, feelings or fantasies toward them. Sadhâkas, yogîs and swâmîs vow to look at all women as their mothers or sisters, and God Siva and their guru as their mother and father. There is no difference.

A Hindu woman chants her mantra on a mālâ of holy beads, performing japa during her morning sâdhana.

Summary of the Eighth Observance Embrace religious vows, rules and observances and never waver in fulfilling them. Honor vows as spiritual contracts with your soul, your community, with God, Gods and guru. Take vows to harness the instinctive nature. Fast periodically. Pilgrimage yearly. Uphold your vows strictly, be they chastity, marriage, monasticism, non-addiction, tithing, loyalty to a lineage, vegetarianism or nonsmoking.

CHAPTER 19: RECITATION - The Ninth Observance Recitation JAPA

NOW WE SHALL FOCUS ON JAPA, RECITATION OF HOLY MANTRAS, THE NINTH NIYAMA. HERE AGAIN, A GURU IS ESSENTIAL, UNLESS ONLY THE SIMPLEST OF MANTRAS ARE RECITED. The simplest of mantras is Aum, pronounced “AA, OO, MMM.” The AA balances the physical forces when pronounced separately from the OO and the MMM, as the OO balances the astral and mental bodies. The MMM brings the spiritual body into the foreground. And when pronounced all together, AA-OO-MMM, all three bodies are harmonized. Aum is a safe mantra which may be performed without a guru’s guidance by anyone of any religious background living on this planet, as it is the primal sound of the universe itself. All sounds blended together make the sound “Aum.”

The overtone of the sounds of an entire city would be “Aum.” In short, it harmonizes, purifies and uplifts the devotee. One might ask why a guru is important to perform such a simple task as japa. It is the Sakti of the guru, of the Gods and the devas that give power to the mantra. Two people, a civilian and a policeman, could say to a third person, “Stop in the name of the law.” The third person would only obey one of them. The one who had no authority would not be listened to. In this example, the policeman had been initiated and had full authority.

Therefore, his mantra, “Stop in the name of the law,” seven words, had the desired effect. The person who had not been initiated said the same words, but nobody paid any attention to him. Now, this does not mean one can choose a guru, study with the guru, become accepted by the guru, feign humility, do all the right things and say all the right words, become initiated, receive the mantra and then be off into some kind of other activities or opt for a more liberal path. The guru’s disdain would diminish if not cancel the benefits of the initiation, which obviously had been deceptively achieved.

This is why Siddhânta Sravana (choosing your path carefully) and mati (choosing your guru carefully, being loyal to the sampradâya, to your guru and his successor or successors and training your children to be loyal to the sampradâya) are the foundation of character that the first fifteen restraints and practices are supposed to produce. Mantra initiation is guru dīkshâ. Traditionally, the family guru would give mantra dīkshâ to the mother and the father and then to the young people, making the guru part of the family itself. There is no way that mantras can be sold and be effective. There is no way that the dīkshâ of mantra initiation, which permits japa, could be effective for someone who was not striving to fulfill the first seventeen of the yamas and niyamas. Any wise guru would test the devotee on these before granting initiation. There is no way a mantra can be learned from a book and be effective.

Therefore, approach the guru cautiously and with a full heart. When asked if you are restraining yourself according to the ten yamas, know that perfection is not expected, but effort is. And if you are practicing the first seven niyamas, know that perfection is not expected here either, but regular attentiveness to them is. You, the guru, your family and your friends will all know when you are on the threshold of mantra dīkshâ, which when performed by an established guru is called guru dīkshâ. Religious austerity, tapas, ranges from simple self-denial to rigorous yogic ordeals and physical challenges.

Summary of the Ninth Observance Chant your holy mantra daily, reciting the sacred sound, word or phrase given by your guru. Bathe first, quiet the mind and concentrate fully to let japa harmonize, purify and uplift you. Heed your instructions and chant the prescribed repetitions without fail. Live free of anger so that japa strengthens your higher nature. Let japa quell emotions and quiet the rivers of thought.

CHAPTER 20: AUSTERITY AND SACRIFICE

The Tenth Observance - Austerity & Sacrifice TAPAS

THE TENTH AND FINAL NIYAMA IS AUSTERITY, PERFORMING SÂDHANA, PENANCE, TAPAS AND SACRIFICE. ALL RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD HAVE THEIR FORMS OF AUSTERITY, conditions which one has to live up to, or which individuals are unable to live up to who are too lazy or too dull minded to understand; and Hinduism is no exception. Our austerities start within the home in the form of daily sâdhana. This is obligatory and includes pûjâ, scriptural reading and chanting of holy mantras. This personal vigil takes about half an hour or more. Other sâdhanas include pilgrimage to a far-off sacred place once a year, visiting a temple once a week, preferably on Friday or Monday, attending festivals and fulfilling samskâras, rites of passage, for the children especially, but all the family members as well.

To atone for misdeeds, penance is obligatory. We must quickly mitigate future effects of the causes we have set into action. This is done through such acts as performing 108 prostrations before the God in the temple. Tapas is even more austere. It may come early in a lifetime or later in life, unbidden or provoked by râja yoga practices. It is the fire that straightens the twisted life and mind of an individual, bringing him into pure being, giving a new start in life, awakening higher consciousness and a cosmic relationship with God and the Gods, friends, relatives and casual acquaintances.

Tapas in Hinduism is sought for, feared, suffered through and loved. Its pain is greater than the pains of parturition, but in the aftermath is quickly forgotten, as the soul, in childlike purity, shines forth in the joys of rebirth that follow in the new life. Tapas is walking through fire, being scorched, burnt to a crisp, crawling out the other side unburnt, without scars, with no pain. Tapas is walking through the rain, completely drenched, and when the storm stops, not being wet. Tapas is living in a hurricane, tossed about on a churning ocean in a small boat, and when the storm subsides, being landed on a peaceful beach unharmed but purified. Tapas is a mind in turmoil, insane unto its very self. A psychic surgery is being performed by the Gods themselves. When the operation is over, the patient has been cut loose of the dross of all past lives.

Tapas is a landslide of mud, a psychic earthquake, coming upon the head and consuming the body of its victim, smothering him in the dross of his misdeeds, beneath which he is unable to breathe, see, speak or hear. He awakens from this hideous dream resting on a mat in a garden hut, smelling sweet jasmine, seeing pictures of Gods and devas adorning the mud walls and hearing the sound of a fl ute coming from a distant source. Truly, tapas in its fullest form is sought for only by the renunciate under the guidance of a satguru, but this madness often comes unbidden to anyone on this planet whose dross of misdeeds spills over. The only difference for the Hindu is that he knows what is happening and how it is to be handled; or at least the gurus know, the swâmîs know, the elders know, the astrologers know. This knowledge is built into the Hindu mind flow as grout is built into a stone wall.

A Lesson in Sacrifice

Sacrifice may be the least-practiced austerity, and the most important. It is the act of giving up to a greater power a cherished possession (be it money, time, intelligence or a physical object) to manifest a greater good. There are many ways to teach sacrifice.

My satguru taught sacrifice by cooking a great feast for several hundred people, which took all day to prepare. Their mouths were watering. They had not eaten all day, so as to prepare their bodies to receive this prasâda from the satguru. The meal was scheduled to be served at high noon. But Satguru Yogaswami kept delaying, saying, "We have not yet reached the auspicious moment. Let us sing some more bhajanas and Natchintanai. Be patient." At about 3pm, he said, "Before we can partake of our prasâda, I shall ask eleven strong men here to dig a deep, square hole in the ground." They stepped forward and he indicated the spot where they should dig. Shovels were obtained from homes nearby, and the digging commenced.

All waited patiently for his will to be fulfilled, the stomachs growling, the mouths watering at the luscious fragrances of the hot curries, the rasam and the freshly-boiled rice, five sweetsmelling curries, mango chutneys, dal, yogurt and delicious sweet payasam. It was a real feast. Finally, just before dusk, the pit was completed, and the great saint indicated that it was time to serve the food. "Come, children, surround this pit," he said. Two or three hundred people stepped forward and surrounded the tenby ten-foot hole. Women and children were sitting in the front and the men standing in the back, all wondering what he was going to say and hoping he would not delay any longer with the feast.

He said, "Now we shall serve our prasâda." He called forward two of the huskiest of the eleven men, the strongest and biggest, and commanded, "Serve the rice. Bring the entire pot." It was a huge brass pot containing nearly 400 pounds of rice. By this time, many had left, as they had been cooking all morning and singing all afternoon. Only the most devout had remained to see the outcome. When the day began, 1,000 had come. The preparations were for a very big crowd. Now he said, "Pour the rice in the middle of the pit." Banana leaves had been laid carefully at the bottom of the pit to form a giant serving plate.

The crowd was aghast. "Pour it into the pit?" "Don't hesitate," he commanded. Though stunned, the men obeyed Yogaswami without question, dropping the huge mass of steaming rice onto the middle of the banana leaves. He told one man, "Bring the eggplant curry!" To another he said, "Go get the potato curry! We must make this a full and auspicious offering." As all the curries were neatly placed around the rice, everyone was wondering, "Are we to all eat together out of the pit? Is this what the guru has in mind?" Then the kulambu sauce was poured over the middle of the rice. Five pounds of salt was added on the side. Sweet mango and ginger chutneys were placed in the proper way.

One by one, each of the luscious preparations was placed in the pit, much to the dismay of those gathered. Giving Back to Mother Earth After all the food had been served, the satguru stood up and declared, "People, all of you, participate. Come forward." They immediately thought, finishing his sentence in their minds, "to eat together this luscious meal you have been waiting for all day as a family of Sishyas." But he had something else in mind, and directed, "Pick up the eleven shovels, shovel some dirt over this delicious meal and then pass your shovel on to the next person.

We have fed our Mother Earth, who has given so generously of her abundance all these many years to this large Saivite community. Now we are sacrificing our prasâda as a precious, heartfelt gift. Mother Earth is hungry. She gets little back; we take all. Let this be a symbol to the world and to each of us that we must sacrifice what we want most." In this way, our satguru, Siva Yogaswami, began the first Earth worship ceremony in northern Sri Lanka.

He taught a lesson of tapas and sacrifice, of fasting and giving, and giving and fasting. By now the hour was late, very late. After touching his feet and receiving the mark of Siva from him in the form of vibhûti, holy ash, on their forehead, the devotees returned to their homes. It was too late to cook a hot meal, lest the neighbors smell the smoke and know that mischief was afoot. We are sure that a few, if not many, satisfied themselves with a few ripe bananas, while pondering the singular lesson the satguru had taught. Let's worship the Earth. It is a being, intelligent and always giving. Our physical bodies are sustained by her abundance. When her abundance is withdrawn, our physical bodies are no more.

The ecology of this planet is an intricate intelligence. Through sacrifice, which results in tapas and sâdhana, we nurture Mother Earth's goodwill, friendliness and sustenance. Instill in yourself appreciation, recognition. We should not take advantage of all of this generosity, as a predator does of those he preys upon. Yes, austerities are a vital part of all sects of Hinduism. They are a call of the soul to bring the outer person into the perfection that the soul is now, has always been and will always be. Austerities should be assigned by a guru, a swâmî or a qualified elder of the community.

One should submit to wise guidance, because these sâdhanas, penances, tapas and sacrifices lift our consciousness so that we can deal with, learn to live with, the perfection of the self-luminous, radiant, eternal being of the soul within. Austerity is the powerful bath of fire and bright rays of showering light that washes the soul clean of the dross of its many past lives, and of the current life, which have held it in the bondage of ignorance, misgiving, unforgivingness and the self-perpetuating ignorance of the truths of the Sanâtana Dharma. "As the intense fire of the furnace refines gold to brilliance, so does the burning suffering of austerity purify the soul to resplendence" (Weaver's Wisdom/Tirukural, 267).

Summary of the Tenth Observance Practice austerity, serious disciplines, penance and sacrifice. Be ardent in worship, meditation and pilgrimage. Atonement for misdeeds through penance (prâyaSchitta), such as 108 prostrations or fasting. Perform self-denial, giving up cherished possessions, money or time. Fulfill severe austerities at special times, under a satguru's guidance, to ignite the inner fires of self-transformation.

CONCLUSION Samâpanam

WE HAVE EXPLORED TOGETHER GURUDEVA'S ELUCIDATION OF THE TWENTY ANCIENT VEDIC TOOLS FOR SELF-TRANSFORMATION, PRACTICED THROUGH THE MILLENNIA BY tens of millions of seekers.

Their challenges back then are no different than ours in modern times. It is always challenging to undertake the work of changing our habits, changing our thoughts, changing our attitudes, reactions and modes of action. Challenging, yet enormously rewarding when our efforts bear fruit. Success in fulfilling the yamas and niyamas provides the stability in our life that sustained success in meditation requires. Without this stability, the ups and downs of life are paramount, and significant advancement in our spiritual life does not manifest. A tall building needs a solid foundation to sustain an earthquake without toppling. So, too, higher states of consciousness need the positive habits of the yamas and niyamas to be sustained through the challenges that inevitably come to us in life.

The modern exponent of hatha yoga B.K.S. Iyengar cautioned, "Practice of âsanas without the backing of yama and niyama is mere acrobatics. Yama and niyama control the yogî's passions and emotions and keep him in harmony with his fellow man." Sri Sri Anandamurthi taught, "In ancient times an aspirant had to practice yamas and niyamas for twelve years before he was even initiated. Without them, sâdhana is an impossibility." Yogacharya Kripalvanand called yama and niyama the "impenetrable fort of yoga," and he warned, "If they are neglected, many hurdles crop up during sâdhana, and it takes a very long time to uproot those evils."

One of the misconceptions you may have intuited as you studied these lessons is that we can take refuge in the higher practices of the niyamas and avoid the more difficult work of the yamas. This is a misconception widely held, and perfectly flawed. We must stay focused on the difficult work of the yamas at the outset, make commitments to harness our instinctive nature, our desires, our lazy patterns of life. Only then can the life energies flow freely into the niyamas, bringing the positive spiritual practices into their maturity.

Gurudeva has given us a great map of the mind in his interpretations of the yamas and niyamas. Nowhere else will you find his pairing of the one with the other, of each yama with a specific niyama. He knew, from the deepest part of human knowing, that the positive and the negative are intertwined, that the resolution of the lower nature allows for the natural expression of the higher, just as a balloon suddenly soars skyward when it drops off its sandbags.

So, as you carry on in the work ahead, on the path ahead, as you work with the yamas and niyamas in your life, don't settle for the easy path of worshiping unless you have dealt with the harder path of mastering patience; don't be content with your progress in contentment until you are truly truthful in all your dealings with others; don't be satisfied with your charitableness until even the thought of stealing has been eliminated from your heart; don't practice japa in earnest unless you have become a vegetarian; don't pursue serious austerities without a good foundation in purity.

As Gurudeva wrote in *Dancing with Siva*, "Good conduct is a combination of avoiding unethical behavior and performing virtuous, spiritualizing acts." Now you have the pattern, in Hinduism's code of conduct. Proceed with confidence.