

Gurudeva's Toolbox

Foreword by Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami:

Among Gurudeva's many accomplishments was his proficiency in Manipuri dance, one of the six classical dance styles of India. This fact led me to develop an explanation of Hinduism for seminars which compares Hinduism to dancing and also refers to Gurudeva's Manipuri dance skills. I first ask the participants the question "How do you make progress in dancing?" Quite a few will immediately respond by saying, "Practice." I then ask, "How often do you need to practice?" and again many give an immediate answer: "Daily." I then go on to explain that Hinduism is exactly the same. Though reading books is important to intellectually understanding the philosophy, it is our daily practice that causes us to move forward on the spiritual path.

The seminar then moves on to talk about the fact that no other religion contains such a vast wealth of spiritual practices from such elementary concepts as non-injury, truthfulness and honesty to the advanced yoga techniques of breath control and meditation. One of the terms that Gurudeva uses to describe Hindu practices is tools. In fact, on the European Innersearch in 2001 he stated, "I have given you all the tools, and it is up to you whether you use them or not."

What Gurudeva was stressing is that contained within his core teachings, in his trilogy of Dancing, Living and Merging with Siva, we have a great collection of tools, a complete collection of tools, techniques to cause us to progress on the spiritual path. These tools were developed by Gurudeva over his fifty-two years of ministry that began in 1949. He is emphasizing that there is no need for more tools, more techniques—there is simply a need to use the ones we already have. In other words, there is a tendency of human nature to continue to seek after new tools and techniques, rather than use the tools we possess. Worry and unhappiness are two examples of everyday situations which can be solved by using one of Gurudeva's tools.

We know of individuals who have started to worry more about the future because of global terrorism, the Asian tsunami and recent destructive hurricanes in the US. Gurudeva's tool to eliminate worry is to ask ourselves the question, "Am I not all right, right now, right this instant?" And answer, "I'm all right, right now." Keep asking and answering until you strongly feel positive, self assured and fine. For ending unhappiness, the tool is to make others happy, and you will be happy, too. When we focus more on others, and on helping them, our happiness increases automatically. Gurudeva's Toolbox for a Spiritual Life was created by the monks of Kauai Aadheenam as the 2005 maha samadhi souvenir honoring his legacy of teachings. Those seeking his complete insights on any of these topics are encouraged to explore the Master Course trilogy where these excerpts were found.

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1. Facing burdens of the past? (Clearing the mind)

We must live in the now to follow the path to enlightenment. In the lower realms of the mind, where time and space seem very real, we are worried about the past or concerned about the future. These two intermingle and limit conscious awareness. Living in the past or the future obstructs us in this way: the past, by reliving old experiences, mainly the negative ones, for they are vividly remembered, clouds our vision of the future. Living in the future over activates the intellect, the emotion and the desires. The future is little more than another form of mental fantasy. Past and future are equally unreal and a hindrance to spiritual unfoldment.

A person functioning in the now is in control of his own mind. He is naturally happier, more successful. He is performing every task with his fullest attention, and the rewards are to be seen equally in the quality of his work and the radiance of his face. He cannot be bored with anything he does, however simple or mundane. Everything is interesting, challenging, fulfilling.

A person living fully in the now is a content person. If we look at the past and we look at the future as both a series of dreams, and the only thing that we are concerned with is our immediate reactions and what we carry with us now, we see that the past is there to test us and the future is there to challenge us. We cannot change the past, but we can change how we react to what has happened to us in the past. Let us not worry about the past ever again. Do not even think about the past. Face everything that comes up in the light of the present, not in the darkness of the past.

More tools for Dealing with the Past

- Don't dwell on negative past happenings in thought or speech.
- Lovingly seek resolution of past misdeeds.
- Remember that all that happened to you, even the difficult things, is for a divine purpose and was created by you through the laws of karma.
- Write down anything from your past that concerns you and burn the paper, holding the intent that the memory will be neutralized. You will still remember, but without the attending emotions.

2. Worried about the future?

My Satguru, Yogaswami, made the bold statement once, “There is not even one thing in this world that is not perfect!” Some of us look around at the world, and we find plenty of things that are wrong with it. I never have. I have always thought this is a wonderful planet—wouldn’t have missed it for anything. It is a great time to be alive, even though some of us don’t think so, even though the planet is somewhat polluted, and some people have a myriad of complaints. We have to straighten ourselves out in the exterior world first before meditation and inner life can really be successful. Sometimes we worry about our job, our business, our family or even that we are not living as spiritually as we think we should. This is my advice: gain the perspective first that it is a wonderful world, that there is nothing wrong in the world at all. Then ask yourself this question: “Am I not all right, right now, right this instant?” And answer, “I’m all right, right now.” Declare that. Then a minute later in another now ask again, “Am I all right, right now?” Just keep asking this one question for the rest of your life, and you will always feel positive, self-assured and fine. This attitude eliminates fear, worry and doubt. I started doing this at the age of seven, and still today I am convinced that I am all right, right now! By realizing that you are all right this instant, that light of your soul has a chance to shine through the surrounding layers of the mind just a little, enough to calm your future. For your future is made in the present, in the eternal now. The mystic doesn’t go into the future and live emotionally experiences that may or may not happen to him. The mystic remains in the present, right now, using the catalog of the experiences of the past and a planning book for his future. It is one thing to say “I am all right, right now,” and it is another thing to feel it.

Can you feel that you are all right, right now? Can you really believe it? Can you hold that feeling, so that this affirmation becomes permeated through your subconscious mind? Let this feeling permeate so deeply through your subconscious mind that it begins working within you, the same way your involuntary subconscious keeps your heart beating and the other processes of your body going.

Every time you abide in the luxury of worry— and the luxury of worry is one luxury you cannot afford—say to yourself, “I’m all right, right now,” and forget about where you are going, forget about where you have been and just be where you are, where your physical body is, in its immediate surroundings. Be free from the past; abide in the present; detach yourself from the future; and live in the eternal now. It is our past that colors and conditions, actually creates, the future. We purge the past in the present, and we fashion the future in the present.

More tools for alleviating concerns about the future

- Make clear plans for a positive future. Write them down in detail and review them each year.
- Train yourself to live in the now, and when the mind drifts into worries about the future, bring it back to the moment.
- If the mind starts to worry, say to yourself “I’m all right, right now.” Keep affirming this, and worry will dissipate.

3. Having trouble meditating?

Beginning to meditate can be likened to starting a long journey. The destination and the means of travel must be known before setting out. Meditation is an art, a definite art, and well worth working for to become accomplished. Meditation is not easy, and yet it is not difficult. It only takes persistence, working day after day to learn to control and train the outer as well as the subtle, inner forces. When we begin to meditate, we have to transmute the energies of the physical body. By sitting up straight, with the spine erect, the energies of the physical body are transmuted.

The spine erect, the head balanced at the top of the spine, brings one into a positive mood. In a position such as this we cannot become worried, fretful or depressed or sleepy during our meditation. Slump the shoulders forward and short-circuit the spiritual forces that flow through the spine and out through the nerve system. In a position such as this it is easy to become depressed, to have mental arguments with oneself or another, or to experience unhappiness. When we first start trying to meditate, awareness is flowing through many areas of the mind. It's like a little ping-pong ball, bouncing around. We must call upon our willpower and learn to hold awareness at attention, focused upon only one thing.

The experienced meditator seeks out the unwholesome areas within himself, endeavoring to expose and rid himself of each knot of karma. The beginning meditator may be shocked and shrink from even continuing the practice of meditation, as his inner mind plays back unhappy thoughts that impose themselves upon his shanti. Many stop meditating altogether at this point and turn instead to the distractions of modern life for solace. But true meditation happens because of soul evolution. We evolve into meditative practices from bhakti, the yoga of devotion.

The transition is earned through past good karmas, not chosen as an intellectual or recreational pastime. As the transition of external worship to internal worship is made, the devotee has to face all bad karmas cheerfully and honestly in order to resolve them and move forward. We must realize that meditation is the disciplined art of tuning into the deepest and most subtle spiritual energies. It's not a fad. It's not a novelty. It's not something you do because your next-door neighbor does. It is sacred, the most sacred thing you can do on this planet, and it must be approached with great depth and sincerity.

At these moments, we are seeking God, Truth, and actually controlling the forces of life and consciousness as we fulfill the very evolutionary purpose of life, the realization of the Self God. Unless we approach meditation in humility and wonder, we will not reach our goal in this life.

More tools for better meditation

- Sit up straight, stand up straight, never slump or hold your head down.
- Practice simple pranayama, breath control, to harness the mind's forces. • Eat pure and fresh foods, avoiding processed products.
- Feel the power of the spine, which gives you a positive approach to life.
- Bathe before your daily meditation session, which ideally is in the hours before dawn.

4. Angry all the time?

Anger, I have observed, is the most difficult fault for people to overcome, because it comes in so many different forms: pouting, long silences, shouting, yelling, swearing and more. Those who remain prone to anger should not do raja yoga or any form of intensive mantra, japa, or pranayama amplification of the energies into higher chakras—lest that collective energy plummet into the corresponding lower chakras and be vented through fear, anger and jealousy. My satguru instructed, “Do good to all. God is there within you. Don’t kill. Don’t harbor anger.” There are eight rungs of anger on the “violence ladder:” sneaky anger, the cold shoulder, blaming and shaming, swearing, screaming and yelling, demands and threats, chasing and holding, partly controlled violence, and blind rage.

Some people are just angry all the time because they live in the lower nature, constantly engaged in mental criticism and arguments. Anger makes a person cunning in his thinking, and of course the predominant underlying quality of anger is fear. He is always afraid of something. It is generally something that may happen or is going to happen. He is always in conflict with someone. These are the motivating forces of the conscious mind: anger and fear. Most people live in the conscious mind unconsciously. Anger is also, like fear, an instinctive control, and at one time served its purpose. The onrush of anger served to protect man’s private interests in critical situations by injecting adrenaline into his blood and thus preparing him for defense. But as man evolves closer to his real, actinic being, he discovers that actinic love, understanding, compassion and wisdom are higher qualities than anger.

Anger can eventually be controlled by putting a sum of money—five dollars, for example—in a jar each time one becomes angry and then donating that money to an orphanage. It soon gets too expensive to get angry. However, for devotees who are wealthy, that doesn’t work. For them, I’ve found the penance of fasting for the next meal after they get angry works. We all know the refined, uplifting feeling of bhakti. Every religious person in the world has experienced this at one time or another. It is the total surrendering of oneself to God and the Gods. As the soul emerges out of the lower aspects of the instinctive mind, the muladhara chakra begins to unfold because of the bhakti that has been awakened through daily worship and sadhana.

Admission and honest confession then bring up repentant feelings through the sub/superconscious mind quite unbidden. When this happens within the devotee, it is truly a boon, marking progress on the spiritual path. Confession, the voice of the soul, can now be heard. As the intellect clears, the honest truths of experience, formerly hidden to oneself as well as to others, are revealed. The soul, the conscience, emerges in all honesty and remorsefully confesses the burdens it has been carrying. Yes, confession is truly the voice of the soul. Nothing is hidden

More tools for coping with anger

- Put \$5 in a jar each time you get angry, giving it to a charity when full.
- If you say angry words, skip the next meal to impress your subconscious.
- For 31 days in a row, place a flower in front of a photo of someone who hurt or abused you, forgiving them.
- Seek penance from your satguru for deep-seated resentments and sufferings that keep anger alive in your nervous system.

5. No time for spiritual practice?

For spiritual unfoldment, we must perform sadhana. Sadhana is a repetition; time and time and time and time and time again of the same spiritual practice. The spiritual practice should be reasonable, should not take up too much time, and should be done at the same time every day. Often seekers who become associated with Hindu sadhana go to extremes and proceed with great vigor in an effort to attain results immediately. Sitting two or three hours a day, they wear themselves out and then stop.

Here's a formula for beginners: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, twenty minutes to a half an hour of sadhana at the same time every day; Saturday and Sunday, no sadhana. A question came up about meditation. "When is the best time to meditate?" Well, the best time to meditate is before dawn, but there are several other times to meditate too. Just before you go to bed at night, read some scripture. Sit and meditate and lift your energies into the head before sleep. If you wake up during the night, sit and meditate for a few minutes, then go back to sleep in higher consciousness.

Upon awakening in the morning, again sit up in bed and seek higher consciousness and visualize a wonderful day ahead. This is a standard practice of meditation that keeps life's karmas smoothed out in a most wonderful way. Then of course, for longer meditations, before sunrise is the very best time. It is the time when earth is quiet. It is the time when the inner worlds connect with this world in a natural way and you can tune into higher consciousness. Of course, any other time is good too for meditation. It is good any time, 24 hours a day, but these are the best times.

Generally people start meditating and do fairly well in the beginning, for their great desire to unfold spiritually propels them within themselves. But when the subconscious mind begins to upheave its layers—as it naturally must for the unfoldment process to continue beyond an elementary stage—meditators become afraid to look at the subconscious patterns of their seemingly not-so-perfect past. To avoid facing themselves, they stop meditating, and the subconscious subsides. The once-meditating seeker returns more fully to the conscious mind and becomes distracted again in order to forget "all those terrible things." At the time, the remembered past seemed to be terrible because the impressions were strong, magnified by sensitivities awakened through meditation.

For many years thereafter the one-time meditator can be heard to say, "I'd like to meditate, and I do sometimes, but I don't have time, really, to meditate." What he is actually saying is, "Most of my time is used up distracting myself so that I won't have to meditate anymore and won't have to face my bothersome subconscious." On the path to enlightenment, you have to face everything that has gone into the subconscious, not only in this life, but what has been registered in past lives. Until you do, you will never attain Self Realization. Your final obstacle will be that last subconscious area that you were afraid to face, looming up before you in the form of worries, fears and repressions that you will wish to push away, hide from, so that neither you nor anyone else can see them.

more tools to encourage spiritual effort

- Find a time each day that works for you, and faithfully perform your spiritual exercises at that same time. Good daily habits are a powerful force.
- Don't be extreme in your striving. Steady progress is the goal. Expect the process to take years, not months.
- Cultivate friends who support your spiritual goals and share satsang with them regularly.

6. Experiencing uncontrollable fear?

What's the biggest barrier? Fear. Afraid of our secret thoughts, afraid of our secret feelings. What's the biggest escape from fear? Go to the center, where energy exists, the energy that moves the life through the body. The simplest way is move your spine back and forth. Feel the power that moves that spine. Feel the power that moves that spine back and forth. Feel that energy going out through the physical body. Open your eyes and look at the world again, and you will see it bright and shiny. You're two-thirds in and one-third out in awareness. You're balanced. "Be renewed by a change of your mind." Be renewed by releasing awareness from one area of the vast universe of the mind, drawing it back into its source and releasing it again, sending it to another of the vast areas of the mind.

Through experience we mature out of fear into fearlessness, out of anger into love, out of conflict into peace, out of darkness into light and union in God. Don't be afraid of experience, and don't be afraid to go through your karma. Go through it with courage. In Saivism we become strong, we become fearless, through our worship of Siva. Members of the Saiva Samayam, the Saivite religion, do not fear death, for they know about rebirth. Members of the Saiva Samayam do not fear an eternal hell; there is no eternal hell. Members of the Saiva Samayam do not fear their ministers, their priests, swamis or gurus.

Members of the Saiva Samayam do not fear God. The lack of fear, therefore, makes you strong. Those who fear God anger easily. They fear their elders. They fear their government. They fear impending disaster, and they fear disease. God is just one item on the long list of things that they fear. They are not on the path of spiritual unfoldment. Only when someone begins to love God is he on the path of spiritual unfoldment. Only then is he a seeker. Only then does his budding love begin to focus on religious icons. Only then is he able to nurture his love into becoming a bhaktar and at the same time a religious person, a giving person.

More tools for reducing fear

- Flood your aura with love and light whenever fear is present.
- Overcome fear of death by convincing yourself you are an immortal soul.
- Affirm: "I am not my body, mind or emotions. They are but shells of the infinite energy that flows through them all. I am this energy. I am its source."

7. Can't connect with God and the Gods?

We must be reminded of the Gods at any place and at all times. Lord Siva, for instance, is within all things. That is the basis, the fundamental belief within Hinduism. Lord Siva is within everything, within your house, within the trees, all animals, bugs and bees and people. The divine energy of Siva is flowing through everything. If you are psychic and your third eye is open, you can see the God there and have His personal darshana.

Many of our ancient Saivite saints, as well as contemporary devotees, have seen such visions of the Gods. They know from personal experience that God and the Gods do exist. In the beginning stages of worship, a Hindu soul may have to wrestle with disbelief in the Gods. He may wonder whether they really exist, especially if his own intuition is obscured by assimilation of Western, existentialist beliefs and attitudes. Yet, he senses their existence, and this sensing brings him back to the temple. He is looking for proof, immersed in the process of coming to know the Gods for himself. He is heartened and assured by hundreds of saints and rishis who have fathomed and found close and enduring relationships with the Gods, and who then extolled their greatness in pages of scripture and chronicle. If you want to get acquainted with the Gods, first get to know Lord Ganesha.

Take a picture and look at it. Put a picture of Lord Ganesha in your car or in your kitchen. Get acquainted through sight. Then come to know Him through sound by chanting His names and hymns. This is how you get acquainted with your personal Deity. You will get to know Him just as you know your best friend, but in a more intimate way, for Ganesha is within you and there ahead of you to guide your soul's evolution. He will work with you and work out your karma. Your whole life will begin to smooth out. Religion is the connection between the three worlds, and temple worship is how you can get your personal connection with the inner worlds. You never really lose connection with the inner worlds, but if you are not conscious of that connection, then it appears that you have.

More tools for drawing closer to God

- Choose an Ishta Devata, a personal Deity that inspires you most.
- Create a shrine in your home and make simple offerings to God each day.
- Practice seeing God's light and energy all around you, shining out from the eyes of everyone you meet.

8. Wishing your karma was better?

The wise never blame God, for they know misfortune to be the return of man's self-created karmas, difficult but necessary experiences for his spiritual evolution. Whenever we are injured or hurt, we understand that our suffering is but the fulfillment of a karma we once initiated, for which our injurer is but the instrument who, when his karma cycles around, will be the injured. If you take responsibility for all that happens to you, then you will have the power to deal with your karma through the grace of Lord Siva.

He will give you the intelligence to deal with it as you worship Him in the Siva temple, contact Him within as the Life of your life and find Him in meditation. Let's take an example. Say I am holding a plate of rice and curry and I pass it to you. All of a sudden the plate drops on the floor between us. I blame you, and you blame me. I don't want to be responsible for dropping the rice and curry, and you don't want to be responsible either. So, we blame each other. The rice and curry is scattered there on the floor.

No one is going to clean it up until one of us takes responsibility and says, "I'm sorry I dropped the plate of rice and curry," and gets down on hands and knees and cleans it up. In the same way, only by taking responsibility, by recognizing what we have done as our own doing, can we begin cleaning up the results of our actions. Those who do take responsibility for their own karma have all the help in the world.

The sages say, "Bear your karma cheerfully." Each time you blame another person for what has happened to you, or cast blame in any way, tell yourself, "This is my karma which I was born to face. I did not come into a physical body just to blame others for what happens to me. I was not born to live in a state of ignorance created by an inability to face my karma. I came here to spiritually unfold, to accept the karmas of this and all my past lives and to deal with them and handle them in a proper and a wonderful way." Then a sense of strength will come up within you, a sense of independence and peace. Mental arguments will stop. Arrogance will vanish.

More tools for facing karmas

- Accept all your experiences, good and otherwise, as the result of your own karmas in this and past lives.
- Avoid blaming others and instead take responsibility.
- Express gratitude for all that you have in life. Be thankful for the simple blessings that fill each day.

9. Seeking to understand the mind?

When we are in the conscious mind, we are never satisfied, and we are never happy. The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. No matter how much money we have, we want more. No matter how many clothes we have, we need more. No matter how many television programs we watch, there is always a better one coming up. No matter how many sights we have seen, the next one may surpass them all. No matter how much food we eat, there is always the next big wonderful meal to enjoy. No matter how many emotions we experience, the next set of those emotional experiences will be the high point of our entire life, and we are sure of it.

When we are in the conscious mind, we have one predominant and solid quality that we really can be sure of, and that is fear. We are afraid! We're afraid of the future. And many of the things in the past petrify us, for we don't want them to happen to us again. We don't know quite how to avoid them, because with awareness caught in conscious-mind concerns, our superconscious faculties are temporarily cutoff. The conscious mind is the real enemy, the real barrier, the real distractor to someone on the path of enlightenment. It is intriguing. It is the temptress. It leads us on and on and on, life after life after life after life after life after life after life.

It is a wonderful state of mind, however, as long as our superconscious faculties are also available for awareness to flow into once in a while to become refreshed and renewed by a change of perspective and influx of energy. Otherwise, the conscious mind is a difficult and onerous state of mind in which to live, day after day after day. The spiritual path leads us out of the morass of the darkness of the conscious mind into the mind of light, which we call super consciousness. Why must you study the mind?

Because understanding alone is 50% of the control of the mind. This understanding is necessary to impress the subconscious deeply enough to secure awareness so that spiritual strength continues to come from within, from the superconscious through the subconscious.

More tools for cognizing the mind

- Learn to distinguish the conscious mind from the subconscious and the superconscious.
- Practice being aware of being aware.
- Discover ways to bring creativity and intuition into your life, so the higher states of mind inform and guide the lower states.

10. Are you indecisive and insecure?

When the subconscious mind becomes overloaded in recording all that goes into it from the conscious mind, we experience frustration, anxiety, nervousness, insecurity and neuroses. These are some of the subconscious ailments that are so widespread in the world today. There comes a time in man's life when he has to put an end to it all. He sits down. He begins to breathe, to ponder and be aware of only one pleasant thing. As he does this, he becomes dynamic and his will becomes strong.

As his breath becomes more and more regulated, his body becomes quiet and the one great faculty of the soul becomes predominant—observation, the first faculty of the unfoldment of the soul. Everyone has willpower. It is inherent to the makeup of the physical-astral-mental-emotional body. The center of willpower is the manipura chakra, located at the solar plexus. Unlike other energies, the more willpower we use, the more willpower we have to use. Actually, by exerting our willpower, we store up new energy within the manipura chakra. T

his happens when we work a little harder than we think we can, do a little more than we think we can do. By putting forth that extra effort, we build up a great willpower that we will always have with us, even in our next life, the next and the next. Willpower is free for the using, actually. Therefore, the more you use your individual willpower 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.

More tools for overcoming indecision and uncertainty

- Make clear plans for a positive future. Write them down in detail and review them each year.
- Repeat this affirmation aloud for a week: "I will be what I will to be. I will do what I will to do."
- Do each small task you undertake well, better than expected. Do this regularly for a few months or a few years and you will add to your bank account of confidence and decisiveness.

11. Suffering from psychic attacks?

There is one last part of this sadhana that you should learn to make your understanding of the human aura complete, and that is the knowledge of the auric circle. The auric circle is an energy shell around the aura itself. It acts as a shelter or shield against all forms of psychic influences directed consciously or unconsciously against the individual. Unlike charging the aura with pranic energy through breathing, the auric circle is quickly and easily formed by making a mental image of an egg completely surrounding your aura.

The shell should be visualized as a great oval of translucent white light with an opening at the top the size of your head. It is egg-shaped or oval because it fringes the aura as the shell encases an egg. It should be visualized about three to four feet in depth at the widest point, tapering to about two feet at the head and feet. It takes but a little effort of the will to visualize and project this protective, translucent shell around your aura on the astral plane. Though you may not see it, you will feel its protective presence.

Once you have built up the protective shell around your aura, then it needs only to be renewed from time to time. You can easily do so by extending both arms out in front of you, waist high. Then press the palms of your hands together and visualize energy flowing from your solar plexus into your hands. Once the flow of prana is established, slowly part your hands while feeling the prana emanating from your fingertips. This prana remains in the outer shell of your aura. Move your arms out to the side and then completely around to the back of your body until the fingers and palms touch again. All the time you are doing this, keep sending the prana out into the shell of your aura from your fingertips. Strengthening the protective circle around your aura in this way from time to time will be quite helpful to you in manifesting a fuller and more joyous life, because it will definitely ward off all forms of psychic attack or evil influence, no matter what the source.

The auric circle surrounding a vibrant aura charged with the proper colors, fortified by sending the vital pranas from the pranic body, affords protection against the draining of physical strength by astral entities in extreme cases of astral attacks. In short, this protective, translucent white shell is a spiritual shield which filters out those influences which would be harmful or upsetting to you. Before beginning your prayers or meditations, you should always strengthen this protective shield. We need this astral protection. We need this psychic protection. The group helps the individual and the individual helps the group. Make friends with those who are on the path. Be with fine, positive people. Don't be with negative, complaining people who have no relationship to what you are doing on the inside, or who are criticizing you for what you are doing.

More tools for psychic protection

- Keep your home and clothing fresh and clean.
- Avoid lower astral places, entertainments and games.
- Chant "Aum" softly or silently when you feel yourself vulnerable to astral influences or entities.
- Listening to the mystical inner sound, AUM, will strengthen your psychic protection.

12. Do you often ask, “Why me?”

Do you often ask: “Why should this happen to me?” “What did I do to deserve this?” The experience was created and born of your own strength. Any lesser experience would have meant little better than nothing to you because no lesson would have been derived from it. When we go to kindergarten, we are taught gently. When we go to the university, we are taught in the language of the university. The teachings only come to us from life in a way in which we can best understand them, in a way in which we can best call forth our inner strength. As soon as we start on the path to enlightenment, we begin to wonder about our own personal life, and that becomes very important to us, even to the point where sometimes it could make an aspirant rather selfish, because he becomes more interested in himself, his own personal life, than people around him.

This is one of the things on the path that really should be avoided. Each experience that we have is a good experience, because it molds us. It shapes us, just like an artist would mold a piece of clay. From an ugly hunk of clay can emerge a divine being, molded by the artist. In that same way, the experiences of life, even those that boomerang back on us and those we think are terrible, mold us. But they only mold us quickly and benefit us tremendously if we hold our perspective as the inner man, the timeless man, the immortal being. Only in this way can this happen. That’s the attitude, the thoughts we must have, as we go along on the path of enlightenment. There is a divine purpose even in the existence of suffering in the world. Suffering cannot be totally avoided. It is a natural part of human life and the impetus for much spiritual growth for the soul.

Knowing this, the wise accept suffering from any source, be it hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, famine, wars, disease or inexplicable tragedies. Just as the intense fire of the furnace purifies gold, so does suffering purify the soul to resplendence. So also does suffering offer us the important realization that true happiness and freedom cannot be found in the world, for earthly joy is inextricably bound to sorrow, and worldly freedom to bondage. Having learned this, devotees seek a satguru who teaches them to understand suffering, and brings them into the intentional hardships of sadhana and tapas leading to liberation from the cycles of experience in the realm of duality. “Why is this happening to me? What did I do to attract that? What did I do to cause that? Do I really deserve this? It doesn’t seem fair!”...Attachment, desire, craving, fear of loss—these are the self-created ropes that hold man in bondage to his lower states of mind.

More tools for seeing a higher meaning

- Trust what the illumined sages say, that every experience has a useful purpose and will enhance your life in the course of time.
- You may not be able to control what happens to you, but you can control your reactions.
- When bad things happen, turn them around by responding with positive intelligence and creativity.
- Work to strengthen your powers of acceptance.

13. Can't concentrate your mind to get things done?

Abandon your personal fears and desires by bringing your mind under the dominion of concentration in everything you do, and you, the real you, will become freed, released from the bonds of your own mind. Concentrate your mind when you are feeling confused, and you will bring peace to its disturbed states. Pick any object which is pleasant to you and concentrate on it. A rock, an orange, apple or lemon, a piece of wood, a flower; these are all good objects of concentration. Spend five minutes picking an object, then spend the rest of your time concentrating on it.

Once you have decided upon the object do not switch to another. This is one of the many tricks of the mind. It does not want to be concentrated, for once it is you will know that you are something more than your mind and it will lose the power it gains by your identifying yourself with it. So don't be surprised when it suggests you take something else instead, nor when it tries to make you miss your concentration period. Attempt to concentrate for the same period of time every day.

Five minutes daily, if you are really doing your best to concentrate, is much better than ten minutes Monday, no time Tuesday, and thirty minutes Wednesday. Take a flower and place it in front of you. Breathe deeply as you sit before it. Simply look at it. Don't stare at it and strain your eyes. But simply become aware of it.

Each time awareness moves to some other area of the mind, with your willpower move awareness back and become aware of the flower again. Keep doing this until you are simply aware of the flower and not aware of your body or your breath. Then begin to concentrate on the flower. That is the second step. Think about the flower. Move into the area of the mind where all flowers exist in all phases of manifestation, and concentrate on the flower. Move from one area to another—to where all stems exist, to the stem of that particular flower, to the root that that particular flower came from, and to the seed. Concentrate, concentrate, concentrate on the flower. Constant practice will unfold new knowledge from within you, knowledge that you never knew existed and did not learn from the outside. When that happens, concentration is strong and meditation is not far away. You should be able to have twenty, thirty or even fifty thoughts in sequence without awareness being distracted into areas of the external mind. It will help if you learn to breathe diaphragmatically during these exercises. Breathe deeply but naturally, without strain or effort.

As we control the pranas of the breath, we simultaneously control awareness so that it remains steady and does not move here and there. You also have to teach the body to sit still, to remain poised and not restless. All of this will come in time, not immediately. Be patient. Never become upset with yourself when distractions arise, for that is a greater distraction still. Simply accept each departure from your concentration as an opportunity to become stronger and more one-pointed, and then quietly and firmly bring awareness back to its subject. The subtle realms within the devotee are revealed layer by layer as he methodically perfects attention, concentration, meditation and contemplation.

More tools for improving concentration

- Teach yourself to complete each task you begin, no matter how simple.
- Practice this internal concentration exercise for a week. At the end of each day, just before sleep, close your eyes and go through all the events of the day, one by one.
- While sitting still locate all the parts of your body through feeling. Feel all of your muscles. Feel each bone. Locate them with your mind's eye. Feel every organ, your heart, your liver, etc. Feel your blood flowing, lungs working.

14. Looking for a guru to guide your life?

To transcend the mind and reach the ultimate goal, seekers need the guidance of a satguru, an enlightened master who has followed the path to its natural end and can lead them to the Divine within themselves. Satgurus are the masterful guides and mystical awakeners who bring us into the fullness of spiritual life. They are initiated swamis of recognized spiritual lineages. Sages and satgurus are the most honored among holy men, beings of the highest attainment.

The guru helps the devotee to hold his mind in focus, to become pointedly conscious of thought, word and deed, and to cognize the lessons of each experience. Without the guidance and grace of the guru, the devotee's mind will be divided between instinctive and intellectual forces, making it very difficult to resolve karma. And only when karma is wisely harnessed can the mind become still enough to experience its own superconscious depths. Every Hindu needs a satguru, a preceptor.

The satguru is as much a part of Hinduism as are the temples, as are the Vedas and our other great scriptures, because not everyone can see for themselves. They need someone to see ahead a little bit for them and to keep them on the right track and in the right mood. The guru guides and also shares a bit of the heavier burdens, if one is fortunate enough to be dedicated enough to have a guru who will lend his powers in this way. But each aspect of the karma, the outgrowth of the dharma, must be passed through by the disciple, creating as little as possible of a similar karma on this tenuous path of the repetition of the cycles of life. The guru may take unto himself, into his nerve system, some of the heavier areas of your karma in the same way your parents performed this function for you perhaps unknowingly.

The guru helps the devotee to hold his mind in focus, to become pointedly conscious of thought, word and deed, and to cognize the lessons of each experience. There are many gurus in the world today who speak English, teach and preach and bring forth the Sanatana Dharma. What you need to have is a guru that your soul is akin to. The best way to choose a guru is to observe those that surround the guru and question them as to their spiritual advancement. Have they gotten more from their guru than just learning how to sing and eat? In today's world, we observe people putting in more time and energy and study to buy just the right computer and the correct screen to go with it and just the right automobile. But they rush into ashrams, accept gurus into their lives, accept a spouse into their life, without any kind of research at all which would precede it.

We find people today trying to qualify themselves, find just the right university to enter which they're there for a few years and then they're out. They don't qualify themselves even at all, or even think about it to enter an ashram or to study with a guru or to take on a spouse for a lifetime. So, meet as many gurus as you possibly can, and then when you do find one, give your entire heart, loyalty and dedication and be co-operatively intelligent in performing the sadhanas.

More tools for seeking a preceptor

- Prepare yourself on the inside. Just as a flower opens its petals and draws the honeybee, so the mature disciple's sweet soul will attract a spiritual guide.
- Study the teachings of the living satgurus, to determine which among them teaches the philosophy of your heart.
- Speak with a guru's followers. You will know him by knowing them. the goal. Expect the process to take years, not months.

15. Feeling sick? Working to be healthy?

Many wonder about physical pain, how to keep reminded that we are a spiritual being, when we have a period of our life going through physical pain, illness and unhappiness. Well, we must remember one basic thing. We are not our physical body, not our emotions, not our minds nor our intellect. We are the beautiful soul that is shrouded by external mind, or covered up by emotions. We live in a physical body, live in an astral body. The real you is living inside, whatever your physical body is going through, whatever the emotions you are going through or whatever your intellect is dealing with. Siva's devotees know wellness is balance. If the imbalance called illness occurs, they apply self-healing, then resort as needed to such arts as ayurveda, acupuncture, chiropractic, allopathy, pranic healing or massage.

Siva's devotees do not indulge in inordinate concerns about food, undue physical worries or extensive personal health studies other than ayurveda. They avoid extreme diets, except under medical supervision. According to ayurveda, 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, yogis, sadhus 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 mitahara, which is moderateness in appetites, 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. 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."

More tools for physical well-being

- Don't dwell on physical ailments overmuch. Most resolve themselves, given time.
- Follow an ayurvedic diet and lifestyle.
- Learn ways of self-healing and apply them promptly, not letting illnesses become chronic

16 Alone and feeling depressed?

Depressed? Go over your life, reliving it year by year. Write it all down from year one to the present, ten pages per year. You may run into happy emotion, discouraging emotion, encouraging emotion. It's good to get rid of it all. Reliving the depression and the unhappy feelings as you write about the experiences in detail and burn the paper unwinds and releases the pranic emotional energy from each memory. You especially want to deal with the traumatic areas of the inner mind and release the discouragement, the regret, the depression, the loss of faith in humanity, the loss of faith in yourself and all those negative emotions that you've been carrying for so many years.

They will go away like paper dragons. 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 strength within us and thus prevail. Courageous and fearless people who are just and honest prevail over all karmas—benevolent, terrible and confused. The spiritual path is a long, enduring process. It does not reach fruition in a year or two years. Gratitude and appreciation are the key virtues for a better life. They are the spell that is cast to dissolve hatred, hurt and sadness, the medicine which heals subjective states of mind, restoring self-respect, confidence and security. Shall we review them one at a time and consider a practice, a sadhana, for each?

First, gratitude. It is a feeling within the heart that we cannot suppress for long when overcome with abundant memories of all the good that has come into our lives. The sadhana here is to take out paper and pen and list all the good that has come into your life during the past five years. The list will grow as memory is stimulated. Loving appreciation is a life-changing force just waiting to be used. Express appreciation to community leaders, business associates, spiritual mentors, family members and friends as often as you can. Loving appreciation is a magic formula that works both ways. When we commend another, we are automatically uplifted.

More tools for overcoming loneliness

- Express appreciation for others, be specific, tell them why you value them.
- Learn to distinguish between aloneness and loneliness. Aloneness is your spiritual friend.
- Actively seek the company of friends when you are sad or feel alienated.

17 Struggling with desires for sex, money, food and clothes?

Sex plays an almost unduly time-consuming part in our lives today. It has been advertised, boasted about, displayed and enjoyed throughout the world. The transmutation of the creative forces given here is the key to youth, happiness and creative living. Sex has been a problem to many, though a natural function in life. It plays a most important part in the unfoldment of one's inner nature to the realization of your real Self.

Transmutation must be attained and maintained to build up a so-called bank account in the subconscious of the conscious mind, so that the desires, feelings and tendencies of the subconscious can be automatically handled in the purification process. The meaning of transmutation as used in this treatise is to transform, to change from a so-called gross form to a subtle form. This force that you possess is of the greatest value, and in its qualified, conscious control, without suppression, you can build a great reserve of power within your subconscious mind and the subtle forces of the body, so that when you begin the deeper studies of your consciousness, consciously cognizing your mind, this reserve force will lend itself in giving you stability, concentration and power to break through the thin veil that leads us to identify ourselves with that which we have created.

To sublimate the sexual energies, regular habit patterns, physical exercise, intellectual development and the deliberate control over the lower emotions must happen before true transmutation, which is changing the form of gross energies into refined energies, or lifting the gross pranas from the lower chakras into the higher chakras. The sublimation of the vital forces is called sadhana in the Hindu vernacular. People try to fill their emptiness with things. They work so hard for their money, thinking, "Oh, when I can buy this object for my home I will feel fulfilled." They buy it with their hard-earned money.

A day or two later, after ownership has taken effect, the initial fulfillment of ownership wanes, and unfulfillment, which has always been there, takes over, with the accompanying desire for the next fulfillment, object, or in the case of the intellectual, the next idea, group of ideas or new sphere of knowledge. There is no fulfillment in the instinctive-intellectual mind. This is the way it is. This is the way it has always been, and always will be, too. 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.

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. Overeating repels one from spiritual sadhana, 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.

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. As you examine a menu closely, you will find that you may allow your inner guidance to tell you what is most appropriate to eat. The desire body of the conscious mind may want one type of food, but the inner body of the sub/superconscious may realize another is better for you. It is up to you to make the decision

that will allow a creative balance in your diet. This awakens the inner willpower, that strength from within that gives the capacity for discrimination. To know yourself is why you are on Earth. You were born to realize the Self. You are not here to make money, to clothe yourself or to entertain yourself. These are incidentals. You are here on this planet to realize the Self God, and the only way to experience Self Realization is to awaken within you a dynamic, indomitable, actinic will. nandinatha SUTRA 335: OVERCOMING THE FOUR OBSTACLES Siva's monastics regard sex, money, food and clothes as the prime challenge to their spiritual quest, harboring the potential to reinvolve them in the world. Th us, they restrain themselves accordingly. Aum Namah Sivaya.

more tools for dealing with desire

- Instead of trying to totally eliminate desire, exchange a baser one for a higher one. Cultivate a desire to realize God within. You will make desire your ally on the path.
- Perfect purity in body, mind and speech, associating with good company, keeping the mind pure and avoiding impure thoughts.
- Expand your habits of giving to others. Give freely and often.

18 Having trouble with bad habit patterns?

As we begin to feel that urgency to get back within, the old patterns of thought and emotion, cause and effect, naturally repeat themselves. For a while, the contents of the subconscious may conflict with our concepts of what it is like to fully live spiritually. Our habits will be undisciplined, our willpower ineffective. Quite often the subconscious seems almost like another person, because it is always doing something unanticipated. In these early stages, we must mold the areas that are different into a new lifestyle so that there will be nothing in the subconscious that opposes what is in the conscious or superconscious mind.

We have to reprogram the subconscious to change it, and not worry over the old impressions. We have to make this change in a very dynamic way by always remaining positive. You have heard many people say, "It can't be done," and then go right ahead and prove it by failing.

Never use the word can't, as it becomes very restrictive to the subconscious. If often used, it becomes almost an incantation. This is not good. As soon as we say, "I can't," all positive doors subconsciously close for us. The flow of pure life force is diminished, the subconscious is confused and we know we are going to fail, so we don't even try. The solution to subconscious confusion is to set a goal for ourselves in the external world and to have a positive plan incorporating meditation daily as a lifestyle within that goal. Through this positive initiative and daily effort in meditation, awareness is centered within. We learn how to disentangle and unexternalize awareness. To permanently alter these patterns, we have to work gently to develop a new lifestyle for the totality of our being—physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. This we do a little at a time. Wisdom tells us that it cannot be done all at once. We have to be patient with ourselves.

more tools for overcoming bad habits

- Take vows, called vratas. 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.
- Set goals and have a positive plan that incorporates daily meditation.
- Consciously establish new, positive patterns in your life.

19 Trying to work with impossible people?

Things that you cannot face in yourself you will hate when you see them in someone else. To counteract this, your universal love, the platform for Self Realization, must be awakened into the emotions of the instinctive mind and filter out into the conscious mind. So, as you are meditating and the various aspects of your subconscious come up, face them positively, reprogram them beautifully, and they will settle back into simply a memory pattern, resolved and incapable of disturbing you again. If you see something in someone else you do not like and it is affecting you emotionally, sit down and face it within your own subconscious mind.

The sore spot is located there. If you feel someone is doing something that you do not think he should be doing, and this really gets on your nerves, just know that under the right circumstances you may do the same thing, because the tendency to react to it is there in your subconscious. Get into yourself and reprogram that area of your subconscious with good, positive affirmations. Firm up your lifestyle, be more strict with yourself, use your willpower and think positively. Do not allow a weak link in a chain of habit patterns to bar your spiritual unfoldment even for a moment. Sometimes we detect the weak link in our own chain by looking into the lives of other people. If your parents are living the type of life that grates on your nerves, begin to realize now that perhaps when you become their age you may live a similar life.

The grating effect that you feel indicates that the seeds of that kind of life are just coming up, and you are trying to suppress them by criticizing your parents; whereas what you should be doing is strengthening yourself through having compassion toward them. One of the biggest barriers on the spiritual path is to dislike our own subconscious as we become familiar with it. We must watch this pitfall very closely. The subconscious mind is not an enemy. It is just a well-used piece of equipment that we are renewing. If we make an enemy out of the subconscious mind and walk around hanging our head wondering why this happened and why that happened, and "If it were not for the subconscious

I would be farther along the path," we are simply programming the subconscious to become an even more formidable barrier. Instead, we have to bless the subconscious mind and look at it as a vital tool to help us in our spiritual evolution. Take a mountaintop attitude. If you are having a difficult day, tell yourself, "I'm working with my subconscious mind. Admittedly, things are not working out very well for me today, but I think I will have it all adjusted by evening." Run to the store, buy a lot of paper, do a lot of writing and burning and clear up various subconscious areas and release awareness to soar within again. This is called the *vasana daha tantra*.

more tools for working with people

- Strive to understand each experience instead of reacting to it.
- Look at your own faults and work to improve them rather than focusing on the others' faults.
- Cultivate patience, accepting people for who they are.

20 Are you reacting to everything all the time?

When you die, you are freed from your senses. While you are living, you are caught up in your senses and reacting to memories of things you wish you had or had not done. Many people live in a constant state of overlapping reactions. They try to find peace of mind on the outside, externally. Reactions are caused by what we have placed in the subconscious mind that we have not fully understood. Reactions are packed away in the subconscious mind, influencing our everyday life, attracting our successes and failures to us. If you do not understand your reaction to something, wait until it subsides emotionally, so you will not be upset, then try to understand it by writing about it in a quiet moment. Then burn the paper in an inauspicious fire, such as in a garbage can.

This vasana daha tantric process releases or detaches the emotion from the memory. This means that the memory of the experience no longer harbors the emotion that was previously attached to it and vibrating twenty-four hours a day. You will still have the memory, but without a reaction or emotional charge attached to it. Be on your guard. Control your circumstances and your life. Guard your weak points with understanding, and don't allow yourself to be put into a position where you will react. Then you can become fully conscious of what is within you and within your fellow man. Life must become positive. In reactions, man is not his best friend. He is seeking outside for something to quiet his nature. He is carrying his reactions with him, keeping old habit patterns going.

For a person to renovate his subconscious mind, he must be willing to move out for awhile, redesign, rebuild, redecorate, then move back in. This is a form of spiritual discipline. Overcoming reaction is easy. You can wipe it out of your life and realize the benefit of having done so. Sit down and think. Look at your life. Look at the tendencies within your nature which created your habit patterns and which formed your subconscious mind and gave it the foundation for many more of the same old situations. The tendencies will be greater in each succeeding situation unless you apply the brakes of understanding. If you sit down and realize the law of cause and effect and live according to the basic laws of life, you will overcome the reactions within you. You will be able to overcome old reactions by understanding them. More realization will burst forth from within you, and you will live a more spiritual life. You can either walk through a city full of fog, or climb above it.

If you simply remember this without practicing it, you will not be helping yourself or anyone else. But if you take the law and put it into practice, you will be doing something for yourself and your fellow man, because you will realize a greater spiritual power, a greater humility, and be the person you should be. Then don't react again. Discriminate as to each move you make, each word you say, and decide whether there will be a reaction. If you can see ahead that you will not react, proceed. Dictate to yourself, face yourself, face your mistakes and don't make them again. Breaking spiritual laws creates reactions in the subconscious, and man loses spiritual power. We can find actual peace of mind in a certain place, right here and now, within ourselves, when we overcome reactions.

more tools for overcoming reaction

- Watch the mind think. In this way you will learn the ability to control your reactions.
- Control the breath, for awareness rides on the breath.

21 Are you in the final days of your life on Earth?

Everyone is prepared to die, and whether it happens suddenly or slowly, intuitively each individual knows exactly what he is experiencing and about to experience. Death, like birth, has been repeated so many times that it is no mystery to the soul. The only problem comes with conflicting beliefs, which produce fear and anxiety about death. This temporary ignorance soon subsides when the failing forces of the physical body reach a certain level. At this point, the superconscious intelligence, the soul itself, is there. We can compare this to restless sleep and deep sleep. When one knows he is going to depart the physical body, he should first let everybody know that he knows and give relatives security by explaining to them that soon they won't be seeing him in a physical body anymore.

He should consciously go over his wealth, his properties, be the executor of his own will. From the Hindu point of view, the knowledge of one's imminent departure begins the sannyasa ashrama for the individual. In this ashrama, the devotee traditionally divests himself of all material belongings, effecting a conscious death before the actual death. He is the executor of his own will, taking care of everybody and not leaving these things to others to deal with after his passing. After everything is settled, all personal possessions disposed of, then he begins meditation and awaits the fruitful hour, trying to exit through the highest chakra of the attainment of this life.

Each chakra is a door through which we can depart. The dying will reincarnate in the place that he is thinking about prior to death. So, choose your desires wisely. The last thoughts just before death are the most powerful thoughts in creating the next life. One must also realize that if he and others are aware that he will soon depart, others in the inner worlds also realize he will soon be making his transition and are busy making adjustments and preparations for his arrival. In preparation for death, one can soften the karmas of future births by making amends with others, settling scores, doing everything to tie up loose ends, seeking the forgiveness of those harmed, to get the mental-emotional matters of this life all worked out. In some cases, this process may prolong life, for with the release of old tensions and conflicts there comes a new freedom which may reflect even in the health of the body.

Here one's guru and community elders would advise the appropriate course of action, discerning whether dharma will be best fulfilled by returning to worldly responsibilities or, as a mendicant, distributing all worldly possessions and leaving the community, going off to Varanasi or some other holy place and awaiting the fruitful moment. For one with no family ties, it would be creating an unnecessary karma to return, taking everything back that one gave away and then continue on as before. If people he knew visit him at this time, he should not know them. He is like a sannyasin, free to give of his wisdom. His eyes see them; his mind does not. This traditional practice is for the attainment of moksha, or an exceptional birth of one's own choosing as a herald of dharma.

more tools for preparing for death

- Tell loved ones that you will soon be leaving your physical body; make amends and seek forgiveness.
- Be the executor of your own will; divest yourself of all material belongings, wealth and property.
- If in a hospital, return home to make your transition in a peaceful place among loved ones.
- Meditate, perform japa and sing religious songs.
- At the point of death, concentrate on the chakra at the top of the head.

22 Facing an arranged or assisted marriage?

While not all marriages must be arranged, there is wisdom in arranged marriages, which have always been an important part of Hindu culture. Their success lies in the families' judgment to base the union on pragmatic matters which will outlast the sweetest infatuation and endure through the years. Compatibility of culture and education is also taken into consideration. A spouse is generally sought from within the same religious community. The man and woman should at least be of the same religious sect for long life and a happy marriage. This may not seem important if both are not religiously active, but conditions will tend to change in future years, especially after children are born, and the disparity can lead to separation and divorce. Most families begin early in finding the proper mate for their children among families they know and esteem for the kinship bonds the marriage would bring.

Those involved ponder whether the two families can blend into a one family harmoniously with benefits to both. In arranging a marriage, the families consult astrologers regularly until a match is found. Sometimes the boy and girl are allowed to get to know each other long before they are aware that a marriage is being arranged for them. Of course, if they do not get along well, the matter is dropped and the search is on again. If one match is not agreeable, another is sought. The inner-world devas also help to arrange the best matches. Astrological compatibility is also sought for and acquired between the girl and her prospective mother-in-law. The results are taken especially seriously if they will be living in the same home, because in this case the bride will be under the guidance of the mother-in-law and may spend more time with her than with her own husband.

In marrying the son, she becomes the daughter of his mother. Once a potential spouse is selected, discreet, informal inquiries are made by a relative or friend. If the response is encouraging, the girl's father meets with and presents a proposal to the boy's father. In some communities it is the boy's father who presents the proposal. In these modern times, with the worldwide diaspora of Hindus from India and other countries, the fathers must take an aggressive role in helping their sons and daughters become well settled in life. If fathers do not fulfill this obligation, it becomes the duty of the mothers.

This pattern differs from the tradition of well-settled village communities where only the father of the girl makes the overtures. In today's widely dispersed global Hindu village, it becomes everyone's duty to help in the task of matchmaking for the next generation. Once the union has been tentatively agreed upon, the families gather at the girl's home to get further acquainted and allow them to meet and discuss their potential life together. Of course, mutual attraction and full consent of the couple are crucial. After all the input from the community is in place, it is the couple themselves who must make the final decision whether to spend their life together, based on their own personal sensibilities and judgments.

They do have the right to say no. The first and the last important factor for a good match is that the boy and girl must be happy and comfortable in each other's company. From the time of inquiry into a match, several months should be allowed for the jyotisha acharyas and shastris to assess compatibility. The whole process of arranging a proper match for a son or daughter often takes two or more years. There should never be a sense of urgency for this or any other lifetime commitment. As Jnanaguru Siva Yogaswami so wisely said, "No hurry. No worry. No sorry." Nor should the arrangements ever be forced on the boy or girl.

They remain free to cancel the process at any time if the match does not seem suitable to them. Once a marriage has occurred, both families are relied upon to hold it together through the years. It is the duty especially of the husband's parents to support and make the marriage

work and to offer a home to their new daughter. But it is unacceptable in modern Hindu society, and especially in our fellowship, to follow the oppressive tradition in which the girl becomes the total charge of the boy's family and is seldom allowed to see her family of birth. It is the duty of the bride's parents to monitor her protection and observe the couple's abilities to dwell in unity and concord, while allowing them freedom to work things out together in their new home.

more tools for facing arranged marriage

- Bride and groom should each write out a covenant by hand, pledging loyalty to one another and formalizing their promises, ideals, expectations and love.
- A young prospective couple can gradually get to know each other before committing to marriage through correspondence by e-mail over several months.

23 Not getting along with your spouse?

Within each family, the man is predominantly in the pingala force. The woman is predominantly in the ida force. Should the woman become aggressively intellectual and the man become passively physical, then forces in the home are disturbed. The two bicker and argue. Couples never get married with the intent of breaking up. Never. The pranic forces do it. You put two magnets together one way and they attract one another.

Turn one around, and they repel each other. The same force that brought the people together, when it is not handled right, makes them pull apart and hate each other. They can't see eye to eye. Then to make up, they go out to dinner to talk it over—in another frustrating, asuric situation, as far out in the world as they can get—to try to make up. When that doesn't help, they come home still frustrated. If they went to the nearby temple and worshiped the family Deity together, that would help.

They would return home in a different state of mind and discover that their vibration had changed. Why does it help to go to the temple? Because the God is in the temple, the Deity is there to adjust the forces of the inner nerve system, to actually change the forces of mind and emotion. When families who are trying to meditate and unfold spiritually go through times of internal or external violence they should not practice raja yoga or other forms of meditation. This will only aggravate and worsen the situation.

Yoga practices are not for them. What they should do is Sivathondu, or karma yoga, bhakti yoga and simple japa yoga. That is all. If a disharmonious situation comes up between husband and wife, they must resolve it before they go to bed, even if they must stay up all night into the light of day. Sleep puts the problem to rest over a period of two or three nights, and it will eventually fade into the memory patterns of forgetfulness over a longer period of time. Having sex does not solve the problem. It puts the problem into seed, into the memory patterns of current forgetfulness, and these will definitely materialize at another time. Sex and sleep are not solutions to marital disputes.

more tools for marital harmony

- Allow each other to have his or her natural ups and downs without being criticized for them.
- Meditate and stabilize the forces within yourself to nurture harmony.

24 Is your wife unhappy?

In the home, the mother is likened to the Shakti Deity. She is the power, the very soul of the home. None other. So she has to be there. She has to be treated sensitively and kindly, and with respect. She has to be given all the things she needs and everything she wants so she will release her shakti power to support her husband, so that he is successful in all his manly endeavors. When she is hurt, depressed, frustrated or disappointed, she automatically withdraws that power, compromising his success in the outside world along with it. People will draw away from him. His job, business or creative abilities will suffer.

This is her great siddhi, her inborn power, which Hindu women know so well. It is the man's duty, his purusha dharma, to provide for her and for the children. The husband should provide her with all the fine things, with a good house which she then makes into a home, with adornments, gold and jewels and clothes, gold hanging down until her ears hurt, more bracelets, more things to keep her in the home so she is feeling secure and happy. In return she provides a refuge, a serene corner of the world where he can escape from the pressures of daily life, where he can regain his inner perspective, perform his religious sadhana and meditations, then enjoy his family. Thus, she brings happiness and peace of mind to her family, to the community and to the world.

more tools for keeping your wife happy

- Spend time together daily and have Monday evening at home as a family.
- Devote one night monthly to her alone in an activity of her choice

25 Don't know what to do next in life?

When the body reaches middle age, a change of pace occurs. One feels like sitting rather than walking, sleeping more than one did before, and it is more difficult to make long-term plans, ten, twenty, thirty years ahead. At middle age, the question "What am I going to do with my life?" has long been answered but still should be asked, because at middle age, around forty, there is still a long life ahead. It should be planned out as carefully as the life span that has already been lived, based on the experiences gained from it. Many people plan out their lives at eighteen or twenty, and others don't.

Nevertheless, when the change of life at middle age comes, both for men and women, it is only wise to regroup one's thoughts, analyze one's desires, motivations and educational skills, physical, mental and emotional abilities. It is time to plan another forty years ahead with as much enthusiasm and dynamism as can be mustered up. After all, they say life begins at forty. Forty years of age is well known as a change of life. Seventy years of age is the prime of life. Eighty is the fulfillment of that prime. As one nears eighty years of age, this is again time to revamp one's life, motivations, desires, and to plan for the next forty years, which recognizes a natural life span of 120 years. Mystics say that eighty years of age is a difficult time to get through psychologically, physically and emotionally, because it is definite that you are old when you are eighty.

Therefore, a new plan for motivation for the future should be made well in advance, at least at age seventy-two, so that when eighty rolls around it is well impressed in the subconscious mind that, this might be time to start slowing down and preparing for life after the life of the physical body. It is at this juncture that one should give one's wisdom to the younger generation, be dedicated to and interested in children and their welfare, manage orphanages, set up endowments and scholarships for educating the young, see into the lives of promising people and encourage them to greater heights. This is the time also to perform sadhana and intense tapas.

more tools for life planning

- Agedness is a state of consciousness. Don't give in passively to old age. Stay flexible with hatha yoga. Keep learning alive.
- No matter what your age, make plans, set goals and prepare for a joyous life ahead.
- Don't fear life's natural transitions. Embrace the changes.

26 Can't control the kids?

There is an old saying: "If you can't beat them, join them," and this is wise in certain respects. We are thinking of the young adults who will not follow the traditional family patterns of their well raised Hindu parents. Admittedly, they can be made to fear their parents and be forced to obey for a time. The problem with such an approach is that it usually ends up with the sons or daughters losing respect for them and leaving home as soon as they are able. Often parents take the authoritarian approach, not realizing there are alternatives, well-proven techniques of a more positive discipline. In actual practice, it is more useful to work with children little by little as they grow and mature.

My advice to parents has always been to stay close to their children, but at the same time give them some space to grow and mature in today's world. Today's world is not all that bad. But children must be taught how to live in it—what to be wary of, whom to trust, whom to befriend and marry, how to proceed in business, social life, education, career upscaling, religious life and on into the raising of their own family. So, keep the communication lines open. True, today's world has its challenges, its temptations and definite drawbacks, but it is today's world and the world of tomorrow.

We can't ignore that fact. So, be wise and pass your deeply profound Hindu culture and wisdom along to the children so they can make proper decisions for themselves. This is what they will do anyway, make their own decisions, so they might as well be trained early on how to do it right. Who better to teach them this than their own parents?

more positive tools for raising children

- Communicate your wisdom to them just before bedtime, when they are open and less defensive.
- Gently speak loving advice and corrections in the right ear while serving them their favorite foods.
- Teach them about prana and the chakras and how to lift and channel their creative energies into the higher chakras.
- Never govern youth through fear. Never spank or hit them, use harsh or angry words, neglect or abuse them.
- Be firm but kind. Children respond well to correction, discipline, talking and explaining, and being treated like the intelligent beings that they are.

27 Having trouble with mother-in-law?

When devotees speak with me of their experiences with family togetherness, the mother-in-law is a common concern. It is important to be aware that all mothers-in-law of the world—and every daughter may eventually be one—have their own insecurities in giving sons and daughters over to a spouse they don't know deeply. Every society has evolved solutions to the in-law issue, mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, but in today's world it's even more difficult. Young people need to be aware of their needs, their feelings, their insecurities, and have compassion when behavioral patterns that are the by-products of insecurity show themselves, such as being overly dominant, proud, extremely critical and unrelenting.

First of all, I suggest that the myth that mothers-in-law are unable to adjust or learn anything new should be thrown out. Second, I hold the husband, the mother-in-law's son, totally responsible for bringing about harmony in the home so that his wife is happy and not at odds with his mother, and that his mother does not make his wife miserable. As in all family conflicts, each incident must be resolved before sleep. Issues or problems can be put on an agenda, as described in our system of positive discipline, and brought up in a calm manner at the daily family meeting, just as is done nowadays by children in many school classrooms. Many families are not patient and persistent enough to bring about harmony in the home. Oft they resort to splitting apart.

When the mother-in-law living with her son and daughter-in-law is not kindly, loving or understanding, one common solution that works when the going gets tough for the bride is for the son to get an apartment for himself and his wife next door to his mother and father's home, or at least not too far away. After the first baby is born, mom-in-law may soften. Another solution is a condominium with members of the extended family living in separate apartments in the same building. This happens in many parts of the world where ancestral compounds provide closeness, but also separateness.

Within this independence enjoyed by each nuclear family, there is yet a valuable dependence on the extended family as a support in marriage, crises, births and deaths. Here, without too strict a rein, the elderly mother may reign supreme. Still, we must admit that to move across town to avoid the mother-in-law is to cause new karmas to be worked out in a future birth. To conquer the home situation in love and trust leads us to deepen our religious commitments through sadhana, to quell the flames of fight within us. When this is done, a better person emerges. The family dharma is a very important part of Hinduism today. We must reaffirm that we are born into a family to merge our prarabdha karmas with those of others and endeavor to work them out with all family members.

more tools for extended family harmony

- Consider what it would be like to be in your mother-in-law's place and look for ways to win her love and trust.
- Accept the fact that she is your senior. Take the attitude that you are in school, she is your teacher and that she has a lot of knowledge and wisdom to share.
- Work out issues directly with one another as they arise.
- Have a daily family meeting to keep harmony strong.

28 Parents divorced? Feeling neglected?

When the institution of marriage breaks down, everyone suffers. We see this happening all around us. Couples who did not listen to my advice to not end their marriage ten years ago still speak to me today of their separation as though it all happened a week ago. They admit that divorce was no solution, only a postponement of problems that still linger, which could have been solved and still have to be. Those who have gone through the experience know that divorce and remarriage is just trading one set of problems for another. No one, however clever they may be, can run away from their birth karmas.

No, divorce is no solution. It's not easy experiencing the separation and divorce of one's mom and dad, at any age—six, sixteen or thirty-one. There is a feeling of emptiness; something is lost, never to be regained. The feelings and thoughts of blame grow, they do not diminish, as the years go by. But look at it this way. Any marriage, yours maybe, needs a loving, strong support group that wants to help the young couple, or the older couple, work out their problems rather than avoid them through separation and finally divorce. An extended family that loves one another and looks out for the good of all, a religious group of loving souls who pride themselves on low percentage of divorce in their community or congregation—these and more are all the people who can or should see the tension growing between husband and wife and who have the ability to diff use it at the early stages.

Don't blame your mother and father. If blame is to be cast, blame all those people that surrounded your family who were not alert enough, good souls that they may be, to help diff use the tension between your parents. Obviously, the support group has failed their marriage. You must admit that failure, lest it drag you down to its own depth. Be part of the solution. Don't perpetuate the problem. Don't make them feel guilty. For your own peace of mind, transfer the blame, the hurt feelings, the pain and resentment over to the relatives, the community and national value system. Become an agent of goodwill. Have kind words to say about dad to mom and kind words to say about mom to dad. Resist the impulse to criticize one to the other and cause an even greater separation within the family.

They are not to blame. Society is. If you take sides, you are creating bad karma, kukarma, for yourself, to be faced later. So treat each one the same. Don't make deals, don't deceive them or keep secrets from them, lest you psychically alienate yourself from the home. Maybe, just maybe, you can help them to understand and reconcile their differences if you follow this advice. Maybe, just maybe, time and the forces of nature will all come to your aid, and your parents will remarry and you will all become a family again. Don't perpetuate the problem. Be part of the solution. Work with it. You, their child, may be their very best hope.

more tools for dealing with divorce

- Love your mother and your father. Keep them as one in your mind. Don't separate them in your mind.
- Know that you, their child, are the greatest marriage counselor. It is only you who at this juncture can become a binding force for the family.
- Rise above the accepted standards of the nonculture of today, which advise divorce to solve the problem. Remember, don't take sides.

29 Suffering under money problems?

I was asked, "Is borrowing money to finance one's business in accord with the yama of nonstealing? 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." Entering into debt is a modern convenience and a modern temptation. But this convenience must be honored within the time allotted. If you need some material possession, and if it will do only good for yourself, your family and your friends, use the power of affirmation and see how quickly your need is manifested through one external channel or another. Distinguish carefully a material need from a desire.

Desires are dangerous, because it is easy to manifest material desires, but it is not as easy to assume responsibility for what the fulfillment of the desire might entail. An example of a material need is having sufficient money for necessities. Generate the feeling and the picture that you now have sufficient sums of money to meet every human need, but not necessarily every human desire; just the needs. Then practice this affirmation: "I will always have sufficient money to meet all my needs." Repeat it once. Now stop affirming. Remain quiet, know, visualize and then feel how it is to be open to a sufficient flow of money to meet your every need. Get that feeling! It is a secure feeling, not a flamboyant, reckless feeling, not a feeling that now you can go out and have a good time. No, this is a quiet, secure feeling, born of being in a judicious state of mind. Now resolve to hold yourself open to ways and means by which you will have money to meet your every need for yourself and for your family.

Be open to ways in which you can better budget the money you now have. Live by the ethic, "Waste not, want not." Soon you will find that you begin to become secure within yourself as the vibrations of your verbal, visual feeling of this affirmation ring through you entirely. Today you will begin handling the funds you have more judiciously, and soon you will begin attracting abundance from unexpected creative sources. Be open to new ideas, new people, new opportunities, expectant and ready to handle the wealth you have proclaimed as yours. nandinatha SUTRA 158 RESPONSIBLE MONEY MANAGEMENT Siva's devotees keep a monthly budget and regulate expenses according to their revenues. They never abuse credit or indulge in extravagant buying, for they know that spending in excess of income invites misery. Aum.

Tools for dealing with money issues

- Treat all your money as God's money and be a wise steward of it. In doing this, you acknowledge that everything, all of life's bounty and abundance, comes from God.
- Take the dashama bhaga vrata, the vow to share ten percent of your gross income with a Hindu temple or organization, for your own spiritual upliftment and economic welfare, and for the support and perpetuation of our Hindu religion.

30 Is someone thinking about suicide?

Another very serious issue faced today in every society is suicide. The percentages are too high to ignore the problem that exists in far too many Hindu communities. Well, we can advise, as many elders do: “Don’t kill yourself.” After all, they became elders by avoiding such extreme solutions. But do those who are all wrought up with emotion and confusion listen to such advice? No. Many die needlessly at their own hand. How selfish. How sad. But it is happening every day. Suicide does not solve problems.

It only magnifies future problems in the Antarloka—the subtle, nonphysical astral world we live in before we incarnate—and in the next life. Suicide only accelerates the intensity of karma, bringing a series of immediate lesser births and requiring several lives for the soul to return to the evolutionary point that existed at the moment of suicide, at which time the still existing karmic entanglement that brought on the death must again be faced and resolved. Thus turns the slow wheel of samsara. To gain a fine birth, one must live according to the natural laws of dharma and live out the karma in this life positively and fully. Here is a letter a discouraged Malaysian Hindu girl wrote to her parents just before she attempted to end her life at age eighteen. It was published in the Malaysia edition of Hinduism

Today. “Dear Mom and Dad: You’ll never understand why I did this. Never. In your opinion, you always did what was best for me. You always knew what was best for me. You always believed I was your naive, irresponsible little girl who always needed your hand to hold on to. You thought it was necessary to use the sharp edge of your tongue to keep me on the right track. But that was the biggest problem—you were the ones who chose that track for me. I never had any say in my own life. Did you realize that that right track became a psychological prison for me? That your leading hand became a set of chains for me? That the sharp side of your tongue got to be a barbed wire that was continuously lashing out at me? No, you never did. “You have said many things to me when you were angry, and you always excused yourself by saying that you weren’t in your senses when you said them. But did you realize how much those things could have hurt me? No. You never even thought about it. How about if I called you a b . . . when I was angry?

Would you excuse that with the same reasoning? I think not. “Didn’t you ever stop to think that maybe I should have some say in what I wanted to do with my life? You decided which college would be the right one for me to attend and what academic field I should go into. The college, of course, had to be the most prestigious and elite one, so you could brag to your friends about it. You never thought that maybe I wanted something more than school and books, but that was never important to you. You only wanted me to achieve academically so your friends would be duly impressed. That was the same reason that you wanted me to become a doctor. I didn’t want anything to do with it. “You never realized that maybe I had wanted a social life, to make real friends for once in my life. When I told you that, you scoffed at me and told me that we Indians were so much superior that we didn’t need to deal with them.

There was never anything in my life that you let me have any control over. When I finally met someone who meant something to me, you two couldn’t handle the fact that maybe someday I would learn to control my own life and rid myself of your manipulations. So, then you decided who it was that I was going to see and who it was that I didn’t. You forced me to break the first real relationship that I ever had in my life. I was constantly harassed by you about him. You told me that I was disgracing the family name. ‘...what would everyone say?’

You destroyed everything for me. This ‘relationship’ between us is nothing but a farce. And there is no reason to continue it. I have searched for some way to escape you, but I have

come up empty handed. And now, unable to do anything else, I want you to understand the meaning of 'empty handed.' Always remember that you can only control someone for so long. Now you must live with this guilt. I hope you will never be able to forgive yourself." Isn't that sad?

Yes, very sad. Fortunately, the young woman lived through this ordeal. In contacting the editors, knowing her letter would strike a chord in many youth, she cautioned that she now knows suicide is not the way out. She firmly believes that all things, no matter how bad they seem at the time, can be lived through. She allowed the publication of this very personal letter in the hope that her battle with suicide would help others.

more tools for preventing suicide

- Remember that suicide has traditionally been prohibited in Hindu scripture because, being an abrupt escape from life, it creates unseemly karma to be faced in the future.
- Don't neglect to express love and appreciation. Sometimes that can make the difference when someone feels unwanted, not cared for.

31 Is someone you know dying?

If a person knows he is terminally ill, that knowledge is a blessing, for he can prepare. He should not hesitate to tell his relatives he is going to die, and that is a wonderful blessing for them, as they can prepare for his great departure. Now all know he has finally arrived at the end of his prarabdha karmas and is going to fly. In turn, family and friends should release him, be happy—he is going to be happy with no physical body—for they know they will be as close to him in his astral and soul body as they were in his physical body. They will visit him every night when they sleep, in the inner worlds, and learn many things from him as to how to prepare for their own great departure, be it sudden or prolonged.

Don't cry; you will make him unhappy. You should be happy for him, because he is going to be happy. It is not a sad occasion. For Hindus, death is a most exalted state, an incredible moment that you spend your whole life preparing for. Birth is the unhappy occasion. Death should be a big party. He has just gone through his day of Brahma. The sadness at death comes from Western attitudes. Western thought has to be reversed. Here a child comes into birth. It is sad, because he was all right before he was born. Now his prarabdha karmas are going to start to explode. He has to deal with his past, which he did not have to deal with in the Devaloka. He has a chance to make new karmas. The time of birth is the grave time. When he dies, that means that section of the jyotisha is finished and he can go and have a great rest and be with intelligent people.

It is great inside there and difficult out here. When people tell me they or a loved one have cancer, AIDS or some other incurable disease, my counsel is this. Everyone dies, but it is a blessing to know when you are going to die, because then you can prepare for it, make a decision whether you are going to be reborn, do intense sadhanas, make preparations. Eastern men don't fight terminal cancer or AIDS. They go to an astrologer or palmist, ascertain their time of death, then prepare themselves. It's really a blessing. It's best not to fight it or "cure it," since you are interrupting your timing. Just let it happen. Heed the wisdom of the Vedas, "When a person comes to weakness, be it through old age or disease, he frees himself from these limbs just as a mango, a fig or a berry releases itself from its stalk." People wonder whether death is a painful process, such as in the case of cancer victims. Cancer, which produces a lot of pain, is a process of life which results in death, but death itself is not painful. Death itself is blissful. You don't need any counseling. You intuitively know what's going to happen. Death is like a meditation, a samadhi. That's why it's called maha (great) samadhi. A Hindu is prepared from childhood for that mahasamadhi.

Remember, pain is not part of the process of death. That is the process of life, which results in death. People always lament when someone dies quickly, saying, "His life was cut short so suddenly." But with such a death there is no pain, as the soul knows it's coming. It's really so much better than a slow, lingering death. The problem comes when doctors bring the dying back. Then a lot of pain is experienced. The doctors should let them die. To make heroic medical attempts that interfere with the process of the patient's departure is a grave responsibility, similar to not letting a traveler board a plane flight he has a reservation for, to keep him stranded in the airport with a profusion of tears and useless conversation.

Prolonging the life of the individual body must be done by the individual himself. He needs no helping hands. Medical assistance, yes, is needed to cauterize wounds, give an injection of penicillin and provide the numerous helpful things that are available. But to prolong life in the debilitated physical body past the point that the natural will of the person has sustained is to

incarcerate, to jail, to place that person in prison. The prison is the hospital. Prison is the sanitarium. The guards are the life-support machines and the tranquilizing drugs. Cellmates are others who have been imprisoned by well-meaning professionals who make their living from prolonging the flickering life in the physical body. The misery of the friends, relatives, business associates and the soul itself accumulates and is shared by all connected to this bitter experience to be re-experienced in another time, perhaps another lifetime, by those who have taken on the grave responsibility of delaying a person's natural time of departure. In summary, we can see that the experience of dying and death is as natural as birth and life. There is little mystery there to be understood.

more tools for coping with dying

- Be open and prepared to talk and make amends, forgive old tensions and conflicts, tie up loose ends, thus helping the person feel complete and release this world joyfully.
- Spend time with the dying person, singing religious songs and reading from scripture. Be a loving witness to their passage.
- When someone dies, take an attitude of joy based on your knowledge of the law of karma and samsara.

32 About Gurudeva [Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami [1927-2001]

Gurudeva was a spiritual giant who knew no challenge too great to meet, no obstacle too imposing to overcome, no problem too difficult to solve, no adversary too obstinate to win over, no hurt too deep to assuage, no detail too insignificant to address. The problems and solutions he speaks of in this booklet are all real, drawn from his personal encounters with tens of thousands of seekers.

Through his 52 years of ministry, Gurudeva inspired people of all walks of life to change their habits and routines, to become more spiritual, more deeply religious, to follow a path of inner unfoldment and character building based on and infused with a devotion for and worship of great beings, known as the Hindu Gods or Mahadevas, who, through temples such as Iraivan, the granite gem he founded at his 458 acre monastery on Kauai, can commune with humankind, send blessings, guide, uplift and protect. Gurudeva's Hinduism is a religion of personal experience of the Gods, the devas, the seeing of auras, the realization of the profound truths spoken of in the Upanishads of the Vedas.

He steeped himself in these depths throughout his life, and gave forth a plethora of teaching—distilling, reiterating and reviving the “greatest religion in the world” in contemporary, succinct, eloquent, compelling style—a wealth of wisdom captured for all time in his 3,000-page Master Course trilogy, from which this toolbox was excerpted. His unfailing compulsion to uplift, educate and transform radiated out in ever-widening circles, to his dear monastics, to close family members, to sincere students, to readers of his remarkable Hinduism Today magazine, to Hindu leaders, and to well-wishers and friends around the world. To each and every one, he was the lion of dharma, the defender of the faith, the reviver of Hindu pride, the herald of a modern Hindu renaissance—but moreover a compassionate friend, an eternal source of courage, wisdom and inspiration, helping those who came to him to get through their karmas, resolve their problems and keep strong on the spiritual path.

He set examples of the way Hinduism can be practiced in this era—relying not on dogma or rote ritual, but on faith born of experience, on love born of trust in those who traversed the path before us. Gurudeva was intimately involved in the lives of his followers, ever available to them. He instilled that closeness in his monastic order and ordained Bodhinatha to carry on this great tradition of spiritual leadership in its fullness. Gurudeva, a highly adept mystic, embraced his transition from this Earth plane as positively as he lived his life, consoling his followers at the end: “Don't be sad. Everything that is happening is good. Everything that is happening is meant to be. I'm not going anywhere. I will be here, helping you 24 hours a day from the inner worlds.”

34 Gurudeva's Internet Resources

Many rich and informative resources, along with more spiritual tools, are available on our websites:

- Our daily monastery chronicle: www.gurudeva.org/taka/
- Gurudeva's full biography: www.gurudeva.org/satgurus/gurudeva/
- Gurudeva's inspired talks audio library: www.gurudeva.org/audio/
- Gurudeva's books on Hinduism for all ages: www.gurudeva.org/resources/
- The basics of Hinduism: www.gurudeva.org/basics/
- About Kauai's Hindu Monastery: www.gurudeva.org/hawaii/