

## **DIFFERENT FORM OF YOGA:**

### **I. Karma Yoga:**

Karma yoga is a very dear subject not only to Lord Krishna but to all yogis around the world. Everybody performs karma through the senses, mind, emotions and physical interactions. Life without karma would be non-existent. So, we can say that the karmas in life are two sides of the same coin. If one side of the coin represents life, the other side represents those actions inherent in life.

The word karma is derived from the Sanskrit kri, meaning 'to do'. In its most basic sense karma simply means action, and yoga translates to union. Thus karma yoga literally translates to the path of union through action. However, in Vedantic philosophy the word karma means both action and the effects of such action. Karma yoga is described as a way of acting, thinking and willing by which one orients oneself toward realization by acting in accordance with one's duty (dharma) without consideration of personal self-centred desires, likes or dislikes. One acts without being attached to the fruits of one's deeds.

Krishna explains that work done without selfish expectations purifies one's mind and gradually makes an individual fit to see the value of reason. He states that it is not necessary to remain in external solitude, or remain action-less, in order to practice a Spiritual life, since the state of action or inaction is primarily determined in the mind.

Through karma we are able to understand our own life, improve the quality of life and transcend life. It is for this reason that Lord Krishna has said it is one of the most closely guarded secrets. It is like saying that a fish which lives in water gets thirsty for water. Similarly, a human being living in the realm of Prakriti performs all the actions, all the karmas, yet does not know the meaning, the relevance and the purpose of the karma.

In the Bhagavata Gita, Krishna says:

"tasmad asaktah satatam karyam karma samacara asakto hy acaran karma param apnoti purushah"

which means without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act as a matter of duty, by working without attachment one attains the Supreme.

Since nobody is free from the effect of the karmas and it is the karma which changes the mentality, personality, viewpoints, thoughts, and behaviour of every person, one should make an effort to understand karma from the right perspective. If performed unconsciously and in association with ego and desires, karma becomes the cause of bondage and suffering. But the same karma when it is freed from ego and desire leads one to mukti, liberation. However, in order to reach this point, the beginnings of karma yoga, it is necessary to become immune to the

effects of action and reaction or cause and effect.

### **Cause and Effect.**

How does one become immune? By involving oneself in karma with awareness, with conviction and by being the seer, the observer of the karma. How does this karma affect my attitude? What kind of thoughts does it create in me? What kind of emotions does it create in me? We are not immune from the effects of karma now, but when we become immune it means that we have perfected karma yoga. When we are able to work perfectly without the association of craving, without the association of ego, or desire, without being concerned if it is good or bad, when we try to perform that action with awareness, with perfection, with a sense of duty, then that becomes karma yoga.

It is possibly the most simple yet, at the same time, the most difficult path to follow. We all live in our own little well. When we try to come out of that little world, we encounter situations which are unknown to us, which do not conform with our beliefs, ideas or previous experience. It is something totally new. This makes us feel uncertain and insecure because we don't have control over the situation. We climb back into our own world of ideas and karma yoga fails there.

Although it is an easy path, when the practice of karma yoga begins to transform the human personality and the personality encounters its own limitations, it becomes a very hard process. One can perfect hatha yoga in no time, one can even perfect raja, kriya and kundalini yoga in no time, but karma yoga takes a lifetime to perfect. It is a different dimension, a different aspect of human personality. But once karma yoga is perfected there is nothing else which remains to be known. So, always remember that karma yoga is a process by which we can develop immunity to all the fluctuations of mind, immunity from the effects of ego and find our centre, find our balance.

If you can be where you are and accept things as they are, in that personal adjustment with the environment, with the conditions, states, different forms of behaviour, mentalities, attitudes and actions, you experience a very deep feeling of santosha, contentment, which is the achievement of karma yoga. We spend perhaps 80 percent of the day involved with karma and 20 percent thinking about how to escape from it, to be free from it. By adding the component of awareness and the will to do it with the proper attitude, intention and mentality, karma yoga becomes a process of natural and spontaneous meditation. So, instead of shying away from the karmas, identify with them. That identification will improve our mind, expressive will, level of energy, stamina and prana and lead to the ability to understand situations and discriminate between them, vijnana, as well as contentment.

## **II. Jnana Yoga:**

Jnana yoga is the study of knowledge that leads to ultimate union with the Universal energy. The subject of “knowledge” is very vast and covers so many different branches. We can broadly divide the subject into:

a) Knowledge of the Atman and the physical body composed of the mind, intellect and gross physical body and the knowledge of the constituents of the nature with its working mechanism. In brief it is the knowledge of the Purusha (the creator) and Prakriti (created). This is the spiritual science.

b) Knowledge of the material world. The knowledge of the material world has its benefit of bringing success and happiness but only in relation to the material possessions. This, the scholars say is momentary happiness as it leads eventually to the state of no more happiness or even to sorrow.

This is because none of the possessions in one’s life are permanent and we learn the same by the experiences in our own lives or by witnessing the lives of others. Without the knowledge of the spiritual world, the success in the knowledge of the material world leads to development of “Ego” which is the main cause of downfall of the individual or of the society.

### **III. Bhakti Yoga:**

Bhakti yoga implies two things: the path and the experience. A person can be on the path of Bhakti yoga and yet have no positive experience of intense Bhakti. At the same time, a person can experience intense Bhakti and yet not profess to be on the path of Bhakti yoga. Let us illustrate this more clearly by taking two examples:

1. If one is devotionally inclined, then one can follow the path of Bhakti yoga. This involves intense concentration of one's entire being on an object of devotion. This method of Bhakti yoga can eventually lead to a transcendental experience of overwhelming Bhakti. Associated with Bhakti is transcendental knowledge. Bhakti will become stronger and stronger with time and more experience.

2. If one is not devotionally inclined, then the other paths of yoga can be followed instead. These other paths will eventually lead to spiritual experience. This in turn will automatically lead to Bhakti, for you will realise something that you did not know before. Whichever method you adopt, the result is the same. The paths of the devotional and the non-devotional individuals will eventually join.

The purpose of Bhakti is to develop intense concentration towards one object. This occurs spontaneously if there is a feeling of Bhakti towards that object. All of one's energy is focused in one direction. This in turn leads to higher sensitivity and receptivity of the mind-body to higher forces. One becomes a bhakta through experience and not merely through belief.

This method of Bhakti has been used by many religions, notably Christianity and Hinduism. In these religions, the whole purpose is to encourage the expression of Bhakti in the followers. To

do this, specific figures are given as objects of adoration. If this adoration is sufficient, then one can know intense Bhakti, bliss and transcendental experience. The method and purpose of Bhakti is to take you away from identification with the little "I": the body-mind. The aim is to reduce personal whims, conflicts, disharmony, etc., which tend to imprison and severely limit awareness. The aim is to make the mind a perfect reflector, a perfect mirror of experience.

### **Bhakti - Balance for the Intellect**

Bhakti is an excellent method of providing a balance to over-rigid attachment to the intellect. It is great help in removing intellectual constipation and is a means of giving direction and release to emotions and feelings. One of the biggest problems in the modern world is the inability for intellectual people to express their emotions. These emotions become pent-up and suppressed. People forget how to laugh and release their emotions in a positive way and non-destructive manner. Emotions are often expressed in outbursts and violence. The path of Bhakti provides a perfect method of expressing these unruly emotions. Furthermore, the emotions are not only released, they are channelled towards making the mind one-pointed. This is a positive utilisation of emotional forces. The emotions are directed towards the goal of higher awareness and experience.

Karma yoga attains the same end when one ceases to be the doer. Raja yoga reduces the power of the ego by exploring the mind. This leads to an understanding of the vast underlying substratum of each human being and every manifested object. This seemingly invincible ego automatically drops away when one starts to know the nature of the mind.

All the paths merge with each other, for they are like different petals on the same flower. Gyana (revolutionary knowledge) leads to Bhakti and Bhakti leads to Gyana. Karma yoga leads to Bhakti and vice versa. In the beginning the aspirant must tread that path (or paths) that suits his or her temperament.

### **The Importance of No Expectation**

Do not expect anything from your practice of Bhakti yoga. This also applies to any other form of yoga. If you practice asanas, pranayama, meditational practices and so forth, try not to expect anything. Because the more one expects, the less one will receive. This is because expectation implies ego and the greater the ego, the less one will make progress in yoga. This is very important.

This world is a playground. It is a school where you can learn about yourself, where you can recognise and eradicate your imperfections and inner problems. Every person and everything is your teacher. Without interactions with other people and situations you would never be able to know your own hang-ups and limitations.

Non-expectation is a fundamental aspect of Bhakti yoga. This was tersely stated by Chaitanya,

the great Bengali bhakta. He said, "I pray not for wealth; I pray not for honours; I pray not for pleasure, or even the joys of poetry. I only pray that during my whole life I may have love and devotion... That I may have pure love to love Thee".

Bhakti means coming closer to the essence of the Self.

The final aim of bhakti is the merger of consciousness with the Divine Presence. The nine steps of bhakti:

1. **Sravana:** The first form of bhakti is Sravana means hearing of God's virtues, glories, sports and stories connected with His divine Name and Form. Being near a saintly person and having their satsang, instruction and guidance can be one form of bhakti. Another form of the same bhakti can be taken as analysing the Truth and spiritual life; but whatever the state, the main emphasis is being in the company of Truth. Sri Sankaracharya says, "The company of the wise, even for a moment, becomes the boat to cross across the ocean of Samsara". Without Satsanga, Sadhana does not become perfect and strong. The fort of Sadhana should be built on the foundation of Satsanga. Mere austerities are not the end of Sadhana. Satsanga illumines the devotee and removes his impurities. It is only then that subtle truths are grasped well by the devotee.
2. **Kirtana (Singing of Lord's glories):** Kirtana is singing of Lord's glories. The devotee is thrilled with Divine Emotion. He loses himself in the love of God. He gets horripilate in the body due to extreme love for God. He weeps in the middle when thinking of the glory of God. His voice becomes choked, and he flies into a state of divine Bhava. The devotee is ever engaged in Japa of the Lord's Name and describing His glories to one and all. Wherever he goes he begins to sing the praise of God. He requests all to join his Kirtana. He sings and dances in ecstasy. He makes others also dance. Lord's Names and glories and it has no occasion to take interest in things of the world. Day and night the devotee feels the presence of God and thins out his ego. He becomes Sattvic and pure at heart.
3. **Smarana (Remembrance of the Lord at all times):** This is unbroken memory of the Name and Form of the Lord. The mind does not think of any object of the world, but is ever engrossed in thinking of the glorious Lord alone. The mind meditates on what is heard about the glories of God and His virtues, Names, etc., and forgets even the body and contents itself in the remembrance of God, Even Japa is only remembrance of God and comes under this category of Bhakti. Remembrance also includes hearing of stories pertaining to God at all times, talking of God, teaching to others what pertains to God, meditation on the attributes of God, etc. Remembrance has no particular time. Smarana is swimming against the forceful current of the river of Maya. Smarana leads to exclusive meditation on God, as is done in Raja Yoga.
4. **Padasevena (Serving the Lord's feet):** No mortal being has got the fortune to practise

this method of Bhakti for the Lord is not visible to the physical eyes. But it is possible to serve the image of God in idols and better still, taking the whole humanity as God. This is Padasevana. Padasevana is service of the sick. Padasevana is service of the poor. Padasevana is service of the whole humanity at large. The whole universe is only Virat-Svarupa. Service of the world is service of the Lord. Service of the Lord's feet can be done through formal worship to Murtis or idols in temples or to a mental image of God.

5. **Archana (Worship of the Lord):** Worship can be done either through an image or a picture or even a mental form. The image should be one appealing to the mind of the worshipper. Worship can be done either with external materials or merely through an internal Bhava or strong feeling. The latter one is an advanced form of worship which only men of purified intellect can do. Worship should be done according to the rules laid down in the Varnashrama-Dharma or in the case of advanced devotees worship can be done in any manner they like. The purpose of worship is to please the Lord, to purify the heart through surrender of the ego and love of God.

Serving the poor people and worshipping saints is also worship of the Virat-Svarupa of the Lord. The Lord appears in all forms. He is everything. The scriptures declare that the Lord alone appears as the sentient and the insentient beings. The devotee should have Narayana-Bhava or Isvara-Bhava in all beings. He should consider all creatures, down even to the worm as merely God. This is the highest form of Worship.

6. **Vandana (Prayer and Prostration):** Humble prostration touching the earth with the eight limbs of the body (Sashtanga-Namaskara), with faith and reverence, before a form of God, or prostration to all beings knowing them to be the forms of the One God, and getting absorbed in the Divine Love of the Lord is termed prostration to God. The Bhagavata says: "The sky, air, fire, water, earth, stars, planets, the cardinal points (directions), trees, rivers, seas and all living beings constitute the body of Sri Hari. The devotee should bow before everything in absolute devotion, thinking that he is bowing before God Himself." Lord Krishna says to Uddhava: "Giving no attention to those who laugh in ridicule, forgetting the body and insensible to shame, one should prostrate and bow down to all beings, even to the dog, the ass, the Chandala and the cow. All is Myself, and nothing is but Myself."

The ego or Ahamkara is effaced out completely through devout prayer and prostration to God. The Divine Grace descends upon the devotee and man becomes God.

7. **Dasya (Servant- Sentiment):** Dasya-Bhakti is the love of God through servant-sentiment. To serve God and carry out His wishes, realising His virtues, nature, mystery and glory, considering oneself as a slave of God, the Supreme Master is Dasya-Bhakti.

Serving and worshipping the idols in temples, sweeping the temples, meditating on God, and mentally serving Him like a slave, serving the saints and the sages, serving the devotees of God, serving the poor and the sick people who are forms of God, is also included in Dasya-Bhakti.

8. **Sakhya (Friend-Sentiment):** Sakhya-Bhava is cultivation of friend-sentiment with God. Arjuna cultivated this kind of Bhakti. The Bhagavata says: "Oh, how wonderful is the fortune of the people of Vraja, of cowherd Nanda whose dear friend is the perfect, eternal Brahman of Absolute Bliss!". To be always with the Lord, to treat Him as one's own relative or a friend, belonging to one's own family, to be in His company at all times, to love Him as one's own Self, is Sakhya-Bhava of Bhakti-Marga.

The devotee of Sakhya-Bhava takes up with eagerness any work of the Lord leaving aside even the most important and urgent and pressing work, assuming an attitude of neglect towards personal work, and totally concerning himself with the love of the Lord. How do friends, real friends love in this world? What an amount of love they possess between one another? Such a love is developed towards God instead of towards man. Physical love is turned into spiritual love. There is a transformation of the mundane into the Eternal.

9. **Atma-Nivedana (Self-Surrender):** Atma-Nivedana is self-surrender. The devotee offers everything to God, including his body, mind and soul. He keeps nothing for himself.

#### **IV. Kundalini Yoga:**

The word kundalini literally means 'coil', according to tantra it is derived from the word kunda meaning 'a deeper place', like havan kund. Kundalini is mahashakti, residing in a deeper place, mooladhara. Tantra incorporates many branches within its fold such as hatha yoga, mantra yoga, laya yoga, asanas, pranayama, kriya yoga, yoga nidra, bhakti yoga and above all kundalini yoga. The prime purpose of tantra has always been to awaken this great dormant potential and evolve the human consciousness beyond the frontiers of mind and time and space.

Kundalini energy is the divine feminine creative power or Shakti energy. Ancient history says when the kundalini Shakti is accepted as a Goddess, she will rise through the heart to the head, and unite herself with the Supreme Being, Lord Shiva.

Kundalini Yoga also known as Laya Yoga. It was influenced by the Tantra and Shakta Schools of Hinduism.

Kundalini yoga is a very important subject because it is a part of tantra; it is also a part of kriya yoga. In kundalini yoga the important thing to remember is that by awakening some of the psychic centres in the body, you can transcend the levels of the mind. kundalini yoga is the only means by which you can really expand your consciousness, by which you can alter the states of

your mind, by which you can control the hormones and the reflexes of the nervous system. The practices of kundalini yoga, the mudras and bandhas, have a direct bearing on the endocrinal functions, and nervous balance and imbalance.

kundalini yoga, you have certain centres in the spinal column which you should try to awaken, and if one of these centres wakes up, then the whole mood changes. The mind begins expanding or you might say disintegrating, and you no longer feel your pangs and difficulties. You see that you are at one within only.

## **V. Nada Yoga:**

The word nada is derived from the Sanskrit root "nad", meaning 'to flow'. Hence the etymological meaning of nada should be a process or a flow of consciousness. Ordinarily the word nada means sound. There are four stages of manifestation of sound according to frequency and subtlety or grossness.

The four stages are:

1. Para,
2. Pashyanti,
3. Madhyama
4. Vaikhari.

These four stages of sound should be understood scientifically.

### **Para nada**

Para means 'transcendental, 'beyond' or 'the other side'. It is beyond the reach of the indriyas, or sense organs, and the mind and other means of cognition. Hence para nada is the transcendental sound. It is indicative of a truth that there is a sphere of super-consciousness where the sound is heard in different dimensions.

Students of classical music are aware of the fact that every note is made up of different numbers of vibrations per second. They vary in length, speed and pitch. In Indian music these vibrations are called andolana. In one second a sound may make many thousands of vibrations. Above a certain level of high frequency, sound becomes inaudible and can only be perceived subjectively. The ears cannot receive such sounds that are vibrating at a very high rate. Therefore, we are not aware of all the sounds that are present in the cosmos. Sounds having a very high frequency are transformed into silence. Beyond a certain limit, the ears do not have the capacity. No one can hear or understand a sound like that even if it is present.

Para or transcendental sound has the highest vibration frequency. This intense vibration faculty makes para inaudible. Various texts mention that para sound has no vibration. It is a sound that

has no movement and therefore no frequency. It is a still sound, but we cannot conceive of a sound that has no vibration, no movements, no motion. When a sound goes to its maximum pitch, it attains a sudden stillness, and that is para nada.

In the Upanishads, the sound of Om is said to be the manifestation of para. The audible chant of Om which we produce is not para because it is physical, subject to our hearing, understanding and logic. Therefore, the audible Om cannot be called the transcendental Om. Para is a cosmic and transcendental sound devoid of all movement. It is both still and infinite. It has shape and light too. Its nature is jyoti (light). It is different from all sounds usually heard or conceived. The Upanishads clearly state, "That is Om, that sound is Om."

### **Pashyanti**

The second stage of sound, which has less frequency and is more gross than para, is pashyanti. It is a sound which cannot be heard, but it can be seen. Pashyanti in Sanskrit means 'that which can be seen or visualized'. The ancient scriptures maintain that sound can also be perceived. How does one see a sound? Well, have you ever heard a piece of music in a dream? This particular dimension of sound, as it is in dream, is called pashyanti. It may be called a mental sound, which is neither a conscious sound nor a semi conscious sound. It is a subconscious sound pertaining to a quality of mind and not belonging to the quality of the sense organs, like the tongue or ears.

When I say out loud "Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama," it will be called vaikhari, but when I close my eyes and mouth and go in and repeat mentally the sound of Rama, visualizing its colour and form with the inner eye, it is known as pashyanti. When the word or the sound is heard in a sphere where one is not aware of the outer surroundings, it is called pashyanti. When every outer sound is extinct and you hear a new sound altogether unlike the nature of audible sounds, know it as a special sound or the nada of pashyanti.

### **Madhyama**

A form of sound having lower frequencies than para and pashyanti, but still subtler than the audible vaikhari form of sound, is known as madhyama. It is a sound produced in whispering. No audible effect is produced in it. Madhyama produces very minute vibrations in the act of a whisper. In an ordinary sound, two objects strike against each other in order to produce sound. But in madhyama no two things strike violently so as to produce audible sound. For example, when a sound is produced like 'thuck, thuck, thuck', it is called a gross sound. The word madhyama means 'in between' or 'middle', so madhyama means a middle sound, a whispering sound or the sound of a whisper.

## **Vaikhari**

The fourth and gross stage of nada is called vaikhari. Vaikhari sound is audible and producible. The spoken sound is vaikhari. It is produced by friction or by striking two things against each other. Its frequencies of vibration are conducted within a certain limited range.

To sum up, vaikhari is the gross quality of the vocal organs, madhyama is the subtler quality of the same physical organs, pashyanti is the quality of the subconscious or unconscious, and para is the quality of the soul.

blood to the brain is undesirable. Food which causes hypertension or high blood pressure should be avoided. The normal nutritional supply required to maintain normal functioning of the body should be provided.

Continues to agitate the mind, the nada yoga sadhana should be given up. It is sure and certain that by correct practice of nada yoga, inner sounds are developed by stages. They are not heard at any other time during the waking period.

The nada yogi is capable of hearing a voice in the waking state if he is at a very advanced stage. It appears as if someone is whispering into his ears. This is a kind of Siddhi; a power to hear a sound from an unknown.

Awareness of the distant ocean or the sound of a thunderbolt. Or it might even be the vision of a starry night devoid of any sound. These internal sounds are to be discovered by the aspirant.

The ultimate nada that manifests in the highest sphere of consciousness is indescribable. It is a sound coming from the sphere beyond the anandamaya kosha. A nada yogi believes that the actual point where the individual consciousness fuses with the cosmic consciousness is in the highest state of nada. The aspirant or sadhaka realizes his higher consciousness in nada and sees the whole universe in the form of sound.

## **VI. Mantra - Yoga:**

The science of mantra is not a branch of hatha yoga; it is a part of tantra. In tantra it is said that mantras can influence the totality of human consciousness and destiny. Therefore, when we set out to practise mantra, we should forget one point, control of mind.

Mantra can be practised at any part of the body, not only the nose tip. You can practise mantra awareness at the navel, the centre of the heart, the eyebrow centre, or even sahasrara chakra - the crown lotus on top of the head.

There are four ways in which mantra can be practised:

1. baikhari - aloud, with the mouth

2. upanshu - whispering, with movement of the lips
3. manasik - silently in the mind, with no movement of the lips or tongue, no stir in the throat
4. ajapa japa - spontaneously with the breath.

The sounds which you receive and the sounds you make, create resonant waves in the depths and surface of the mind. These sound waves have various forms known as mandalas which go deep and hit the depths of the mind. If you take a pebble and throw it into a pool- circles, waves or ripples are generated. Deep freeze the whole pool immediately and then look at it- follow the ripples and find the point where the pebble hit the water.

## **VII. Hatha Yoga:**

There are few reliable texts on hatha yoga. One is by yogi Gorakhnath which is known as the Gorakhsha Samhita. Another text is Gheranda Samhita by the great sage Gheranda. Besides these two, there is another very well known text on hatha yoga which is Hatha Yoga Pradipika by Yogi Swatmarama. There is a fourth text on hatha yoga known as Hatha Yoga Ratnavali. All of these texts were supposed to have been written from 6th - 9th century A.D.

There are also minor references to hatha yoga in the ancient Upanishads. The Upanishads date back further than the Buddhist period, which was around the 6th century B.C. The references to hatha yoga made in the Upanishads prove that the science was known much before this period. There is another very important text known as Srimat Bhagavatam, the story of Sri Krishna. In that voluminous book, there are several chapters containing references to hatha yoga.

In order to make the subject clear, it was termed as ha-tha yoga. Hatha is a combination of two letters ha and tha. Ha represents the moon and tha the sun. Sun and moon should not be understood as the external sun and moon. It has been explained in hatha yoga that sun represents prana, the life force, and moon represents the mind, the mental energy. So, hatha yoga means the union of pranic and mental forces. When union between the pranic and mental forces takes place, then a great event occurs in man. This is the awakening of higher consciousness.

An important point, which has been left out by the commentators, is that hatha yoga is not only the union of prana and mind. In fact, it means the union of prana and mind with the Self. Now, let us make this a little more clear. In the spine, there are three nadis known as ida, pingala and sushumna. Nadi here does not mean nerve; it is not a physical channel. Nadi means flow, like the flow of electricity within a cable. One wire carries the negative force, and another carries the positive force of electricity. So, in hatha yoga, ida nadi represents the negative force, the flow of consciousness; pingala nadi represents the positive force, the flow of vital energy, and sushumna nadi represents the neutral force, the flow of spiritual energy.

The union, the connection between these three flows, occurs in ajna chakra. Therefore, let us revise the literal meaning of hatha yoga. Commentators have said union between ida and pingala is hatha yoga. But I am obliged to say that union of ida and pingala with sushumna is hatha yoga. When this union takes place there is an automatic awakening in mooladhara chakra at the base of the spine. This is the seat of primal energy or kundalini shakti. The awakening of kundalini is the subject matter of hatha yoga. Through the practices that are taught in hatha yoga, union is brought about. As a result of that union, the awakening of kundalini takes place. When

awakening occurs, then kundalini ascends to the higher realms of consciousness, and finally it is established in sahasrara chakra.

When kundalini is established in sahasrara chakra, that is called yoga, not hatha yoga. This is the difference between yoga and hatha yoga. By yoga I mean the union between Shakti and Shiva. Shakti is kundalini energy; Shiva is the supreme consciousness seated in sahasrara chakra. When awakening takes place in mooladhara chakra, then kundalini starts ascending.

She ascends through sushumna, not through ida and pingala. Sushumna is the highway for kundalini. It passes through various chakras, sometimes all of a sudden and sometimes very slowly. When it unites with ida and pingala in ajna chakra, that is called hatha yoga. Then, after this first union, it forges ahead to sahasrara chakra. There it unites with supreme consciousness, Shiva. That is called yoga, which means ultimate union. Therefore, the ultimate object of hatha yoga is to experience yoga.

1. Asana (Posture)
2. Pranayama (Control Of Prana)
3. Mudra (gesture) & Bandha (Energy lock)
4. Shatkarma (Six action)
5. Samadhi (Transdental state)

#### Emphasis on shatkarma

Now, coming to the practical side. In the raja yoga of Patanjali, you have eight steps: yama and niyama are the first two, asana and pranayama make it four, pratyahara and dharana six and dhyana and samadhi make it eight. The contention of Patanjali is that you have to perfect yama and niyama first. Without the perfection of yama and niyama, asana and pranayama etc. will not give the desired results. What is yama and niyama? Yama means self-control, rules and observances: truth, non-violence, celibacy, non-stealing, non-aggrandisement External and internal purity, contentment, etc. are niyama.

Patanjali was a contemporary to Buddha and therefore, I think, his system of yoga was influenced by the Buddhist philosophy of yama and niyama. But the authors of hatha yoga are very clear about it. They do not say that yama and niyama form the basis of this system. The order here is different - first comes shatkarma. Neti, dhauti, basti, kapalbhathi, trataka and nauli constitute shatkarma, and with these, hatha yoga begins. But shatkarma alone does not constitute the whole of hatha yoga. After shatkarma comes asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha. Then comes pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

The authors of the hatha yoga texts were very much aware of the practical difficulties of every man in relation to yama and niyama. Moreover, yama and niyama have more to do with religion than with man's spiritual life.

That is the reason why the texts on hatha yoga do not lay emphasis on yama and niyama. They straight away begin with shatkarma, and say that you should first purify the whole body- the stomach, intestines, nervous system and other systems. Then you should start asana and pranayama. After this, you should go on to practise kriyas like vajroli, sahajoli, khechari and shambhavi. Then you should practise mudras like vipareeta karani, yoga mudra and others. In

this way, it will be possible to get into deep meditation.

### Controlling the mind by controlling the prana

There is another difference between Patanjali's system of raja yoga and the traditional system of hatha yoga. The authors of the hatha yoga texts were very much aware of the difficulty of controlling the fluctuations of the mind. In fact, it is not possible to control the fluctuations of the mind. You may do it for some time, but still you will not be able to succeed all of the time.

So they designed another method. The hatha yoga texts say very clearly that by controlling the pranas, the mind is automatically controlled. It seems that prana and mind exert an influence on each other. When the pranas are restless, they affect the mind and vice versa. Some people do find it easier to control the mind than to control the prana. But I have given a lot of thought to this. Perhaps a few people may succeed, but most people cannot control the mind by the mind. The more they try, the more the split grows.

There is another important point to be noted. Sometimes you are inspired; you feel very well, very one-pointed. But every day it does not happen. Therefore, the authors of hatha yoga struck another theme. 'Don't worry about the mind, ignore it. Practise pranayama.'

By practising pranayama correctly, the mind is automatically conquered. But the effects of pranayama are not that simple to manage. It creates extra heat in the body, it awakens some of the centres in the brain, it can stop the production of sperm and testosterone. It may also bring down the temperature of the inner body. It may even bring down the rate of the respiration. It may change the waves of the brain. When these changes take place, you may not be able to handle it. Therefore, hatha yoga says that shatkarma must be practised first.

The purpose of emphasising shatkarma is then to prepare a base for the higher practices of pranayama. Shatkarma purifies the whole system and removes blockages on the paths of ida and pingala. When there are no blockages on these paths, the breath in both the nostrils flows systematically. When the left nostril flows, it means ida is active. When the right nostril flows, it means pingala is active. Again, when the left nostril flows, it means the mind is dominant. When the right nostril flows, it means the pranas are dominant. The flow of breath in the alternate nostrils indicates the position of the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous systems. Now, if ida is flowing and you are practising meditation, you will go to sleep and your brain will produce delta waves. If the right nostril is flowing and you are trying to meditate, your brain will produce beta waves and you will be thinking so many thoughts at the same time. When both nostrils flow equally, that means sushumna is flowing. When sushumna flows, you can meditate without any difficulty. Awakening sushumna, making sushumna nadi flow, is the most important thing in yoga.

### The basis of pranayama

Pranayama is a very difficult practice. There are many varieties of pranayama, such as nadi shodhana, brahmari, kapalbhata, bhastrika, ujjayi, etc. These are not actually pranayama, they are varieties of the practice. In the hatha yoga texts, it is clearly indicated that retention of the breath is pranayama. The gap between inhalation and exhalation is pranayama. When you inhale and

exhale, in between there is a gap. That gap may be for one second, ten seconds or one minute. This is called breath retention - kumbhaka. That is pranayama.

When I use the word pranayama I do not mean nadi shodhana, bhastrika, brahmari. I am talking about just the retention. In the practice of pranayama, you should be able to retain the breath, but it is not that easy. Therefore, unless you have prepared the base, yama and niyama are not that important. Of course, people are religious, so they believe they must follow the dogma. Every religion has its own moral code, but you know how difficult it is to put this into practice. We have to be honest with ourselves, don't we?

So, in order to practise pranayama with a proper base, you must be able to perform the bandhas. Pranayama without bandha has no meaning. First, you should know what the bandhas are. Pranayama should be practised with bandhas, in the proper sitting posture and in the appropriate mudra. Either shambhavi mudra (focusing the gaze on the eyebrow centre), or nasikagra mudra (focusing on the nose tip) should be used.

The combination of mudra, bandha, pranayama and asana will help you to conquer the mind. He who can conquer the prana, can conquer the mind. And according to hatha yoga, it is easier to conquer the prana first and then the mind.

### Unity behind the diversity

So, this is how hatha yoga is introduced. The guru instructs his disciple on hatha yoga, and he tells him about the universal shakti, of which the individual shakti is an aspect. At a certain moment of experience, one breaks the barriers of the limited mind. When the barriers are broken, then the individual shakti merges with the universal shakti.

The lower mind, which is not truth, becomes one with the cosmic mind. After all, the shakti is one. On account of our ignorance, we have perceived ourselves as different, and that erroneous perception has to be broken. I am not I, and you are not you. We are one. Even our bodies are not different. It is all one, but we are trying to realise this from a limited standpoint. That experience must dawn whereby we realise that the diversity is not true, only the unity is real.

### The real purpose of hatha yoga

In the last forty to fifty years, hatha yoga has been accepted as a therapeutic science all over the world and many scientific studies have been conducted in this field. Today, we teach hatha yoga to the people because it is very necessary. Man has become sick, and medical science is not able to meet the challenge. Hatha yoga, however, has been helping everybody. So, we do not want to discourage this aspect, but at the same time we should not forget what hatha yoga really stands for.

Behind every sick man, there is a spiritual man. Behind a diabetic, there is a yogi. Behind a man suffering from depression, there is an aspirant. When a patient comes for help, teach him yoga and make him better. Treat his sickness, but please, do not stop there. Take him further into the spiritual domain of life.

This is the mistake that most yoga teachers have been making, particularly in the west. They just

take a patient for arthritis, rheumatism or insomnia, teach him a few exercises and that is it. Hatha yoga has not been used to treat the total personality. This is why the teachers are not able to raise the level of their pupils. Just to improve the physical health is not enough. The mental health must also improve. Nature must change. Personality must change. The psychological and the psychic framework also has to change., You should not merely feel freedom from disease, but freedom from bondage, and from the vagaries of the mind. Now, the time has come that the teachers in every part of the world must understand and transmit the true spirit of hatha yoga.