

How To Get Vairagya

By

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In enjoyment there is fear of disease; in social position, the fear of falling off; in wealth, the fear of (hostile) kings; in honor, the fear of humiliation; in power, the fear of foe men; in beauty, the fear of old age; in scriptural erudition, the fear of opponents; in virtue, the fear of traducers; in body, the fear of death. All the things of this world pertaining to human beings are attended with fear; renunciation alone stands for fearlessness. *Vairagya Sakatam of Bhartrihari.*

Preface

“Happiness is within,” “What is Vairagya?” “Miseries of mundane existence,” “Body,” “Woman,” “World,” and “Essence of Vairagya-Shatakam.”

In “Happiness is within,” I have emphasized that happiness which is the driving motive of all human endeavors is not in the perishable objects of the world, but is within one’s own self and that even the very little momentary pleasure you get from sensual enjoyments is but a reflection of the atmic bliss only. Real and lasting happiness can be had only from God, or the Atman, which shines in the chambers of your heart.

The chapter “What is Vairagya” is for the sake of convenience and ease divided into thirteen headings, all useful and interesting. The need for renunciation of desire as a means to liberation from bondage, varieties of Vairagya, its various stages, how to develop it, the path of renunciation, what Vairagya is and what it is not, these and many other allied topics have been nicely handled.

“Miseries of mundane existence” is the inspiring title of the third chapter. It should be borne in mind that ignorance is the real cause of all misery and hence it should by all means be done away with and Self-Knowledge attained, if these miseries of mundane life are to come to an end. One may easily renounce wife, son and property, but to renounce name and fame is an extraordinary feat of the highest spirituality. To attain knowledge of Self such a degree of renunciation is indispensably necessary. I have condemned building of ashrams and making disciples with a reservation clause because this to me seems to be the prime cause of failure to attain the goal of yoga practice in the case of many a good aspirant nowadays.

Chapter four deals with “Body.” Attachment to body is the cause of misery and bondage and this attachment is of course due to ignorance of the Reality. When attachment for one’s own body comes, then desire for sensual enjoyments, lust, anger, greed, worry, anxiety and innumerable other miseries also come in its train. If this is cut at the root by negating the body and identifying one’s self with the supreme Self, then all miseries and sorrows will come to an end. Hence the condemnation of attachment to the body is purely carnal; it is not pure, unselfish love. Hence condemnation of such love is justified.

“World” is the title of the sixth chapter. Due to ignorance man believes that the world in which he lives is a solid reality and that there is nothing beyond it. He therefore wants to indulge in all sorts of sensual pleasures with a view to get happiness from them. Had he known that the world in which he lives is unreal and that there is something else which is an embodiment of happiness, realizing which one enjoys highest bliss, he would not do so. With a view to get happiness from objects, he undergoes severe pain, tortures and tribulations and yet he does not get the least satisfaction from them. I have tried to convince the reader that this world

of names and forms is unreal, transitory and fleeting, that God, or the Atman alone is real and full of bliss and that he should try to realize the Atman and get the happiness he wants from it.

In the next chapter entitled “Essence of Vairagya-Shatakam” I have given in a nutshell the sum and substance of Bhartrihari’s century of verses which will be found very useful to those who cannot afford to obtain each and every book pertaining to Yoga or Vedanta.

May the students of Yoga and Vedanta in the East and West be all inspired to unstinted action by a perusal of this volume is the earnest prayer of:

SWAMI SIVANANDA
15th September, 1938.

Editor's Preface

How to Get Vairagya was first published in 1938 and went through several editions during and after the lifetime of Swami Sivananda Saraswati, the founder of Sivanandashram in Rishikesh and the Divine Life Society throughout the world.

Swami Chidananda, Sivanandaji's successor, in a talk about Sivananda said that his entire thought, night and day, was how to better serve humanity and remove the ignorance and pain of all. To do this he wrote over three hundred books, most of which he gave away. I well remember being told by those involved in the publishing department of the ashram, that if they did not hide copies of his latest books he would give them all away and there would be none for those who would see their ads in the magazines published by the ashram.

In Sivananda I saw every possible virtue developed to the maximum degree, and that included supreme spiritual wisdom and renunciation based on vairagya. He longed to share his vision with the world, and did so through his living example and his writings. This desire was based on absolute love for humanity—and not in an abstract way. Each person who came into his presence experienced an infinite love from an infinite consciousness. Sivananda was truly a god upon earth, a god that, as the Beloved Disciple wrote, is Love.

Through this book he hoped to awaken readers to the glory and value of vairagya. And he did; and still does.

May it be a blessing and an awakening for you.

Abbot George Burke
(Swami Nirmalananda Giri)

Chapter One: Happiness Is Within

Man wants happiness. He shuns pain. He moves heaven and earth to get the happiness he wants from sensual objects and, lo, gets himself entangled in the inextricable meshes of Maya. Poor man! He does not know that these objects are perishable and evanescent, finite and conditioned in time, space and causation. And what is more, he fails to get the desired happiness from them.

This world is imperfect (apurna) and there is uncertainty of life. A barrister-at-law talks on the telephone, ascends the staircase to take his meals and, alas, while ascending he dies on the staircase. Such instances are not uncommon.

There is not an iota of happiness in objects, because they are insentient (jada). Even the sensual pleasure is a reflection of Atmic Bliss only. Just as a dog that sucks a dry bone in the street imagines foolishly that blood is oozing out of the dry bone, whereas blood is really oozing from its own palate, so also worldly-minded people foolishly imagine that the happiness they enjoy in everyday life comes from objects only.

You can find eternal, infinite, supreme peace and bliss only in your Atma which shines in all its splendor and glory in the chambers of your heart. It is an embodiment of Bliss (Ananda Swarupa).

There is mental uneasiness, dissatisfaction, discontentment and restlessness even in multimillionaires and kings. Some kind of sorrow, misery or pain is invariably present even when they are in the height of enjoyment of worldly pleasures. Show me a man who is perfectly happy! When the marriage of his second son is being celebrated, the remembrance of the death of his first son who passed away only some time ago torments his mind.

Mind is so constituted that the rhythm of pleasure and pain is kept up like the rhythm of systole and diastole of the heart. You entertain the fear that the happiness will pass away soon, when you are in happy surroundings. This adds pain, when you are in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. Even if you remove the pain by some means or other, it again manifests in some form or other such as loss of property, disease, death, hostility and disappointment.

There is no hope of immortality by means of riches. Such indeed is the emphatic and irrefutable declaration of the Upanishads: "Neither by rituals, nor by progeny, nor by riches but by renunciation alone one can attain immortality."

Mere giving up of objects will not constitute real renunciation. Dear friends, remember this point well. True tyaga or renunciation consists in renouncing egoism, "I-ness," "mine-ness," selfishness, desires and cravings of all sorts.

For all beings a human birth is verily difficult to attain. It is said that there are three things which are rare indeed and are due to the grace of God: a human birth, the longing for liberation and the protecting care of a perfected sage. The man who having by some virtuous actions done in previous births obtained a human birth

and a good intellect to boot is foolish enough not to exert for Self-realization verily commits suicide, for he kills himself by clinging to things unreal.

You will now ask me the pertinent question: “Why should I realize the Atman?” I say because Self-realization gives you freedom from the samsaric wheel of births and deaths with its concomitant evils. Hear the emphatic declaration of the Upanishads: “This Atman (Self) which is free from sin, undecaying, undying, free from sorrow, hunger and thirst, with true desires and true resolves—that is what is to be sought after, and which one must wish to understand; one who has sought after his Self and understand it, obtains all worlds and all desires” (Chhandogya Upanishad).

Hear again the forcible utterances of the same Chhandogya Upanishad: “The infinite (the Great) is bliss. There is no bliss in what is small (finite). The Infinite alone is Bliss. But one should wish to understand the Infinite.”

Every man in this world is restless, discontented and dissatisfied. He feels that he is in want of something, the nature of which he does not really understand. He seeks, in the accomplishment of ambitious projects, the rest and peace that he feels he is in need of. But he finds to his great sorrow and disappointment that worldly greatness when secured is a delusion and a snare. He does not find any happiness in it. He gets coveted degrees, diplomas, titles, honors, power, position, name and fame; he marries; he begets beautiful babies; in short, he gets all that he supposes would give him happiness. But yet he finds no real rest and peace.

Pious men, saints, sages, acharyas and prophets are never tired of saying that this restlessness of every man, this state of discontentment, dissatisfaction and uncomfortableness of being ill at ease with himself and his environments is solely due to the loss of the companionship of the partner of his soul, who is ever eternally shining in the chambers of your heart, who is ready to embrace you with outstretched hands, if you really care to see Him and if you are really spiritually thirsty and hungry.

One anna [one sixteenth of a rupee] of pleasure is mixed with fifteen annas of pain. Pleasure that is mixed with pain, fear and worry is no pleasure at all. If you carefully begin to analyze this one anna of pleasure also, it will dwindle into an airy nothing. You will find that it is a mere play of the mind. O man! Wake up. Open your eyes. Develop viveka. You cannot get the real happiness from finite objects.

Nitya, Nirupadhika, Niratisaya Ananda (eternal, infinite Bliss) that is independent of objects can be had only in the Immortal Spirit or Atma or Soul or Brahman, the Indweller of your heart. Therefore shun all external things ruthlessly and run to the feet of the Lord. Develop vairagya. Vairagya is the rock-bottom foundation for the spiritual path.

Why do men run after the sensual pleasures? What is their concept of happiness? Do samskaras force them to repeat the same sensual acts again and again? Is man a mere creature of environment or circumstance? Can he not obliterate his samskaras by effective and suitable means?

On account of ignorance man runs hither and thither to seek happiness in

objects. A little gingerbread and some sweetmeats, a son and a young wife, some position and power and a little money in the bank to boot will fill his heart with joy and calm down his nerves. That is all he wants. Bliss of Atma, supersensuous ananda and peace, spiritual ecstasy and knowledge are unknown to him. He does not want them. Nay, he dislikes them. He hates people who talk about higher and sublime things. Believe me, man can obliterate his samskaras by Purushartha or right exertion. He is not a creature of environment or circumstance. He is the master of his destiny.

Amidst the din and boisterous bustle of worldly activities, there do come moments of tranquillity and peace, when the mind for the time being, however short it may be, soars above the filthy worldly things and reflects on the higher problems of life: the why and wherefore of life and the riddle of the universe. Man begins to enquire: "Who am I?" The sincere enquirer becomes serious and gets absorbed in his reflections. He begins to search and understand the truth. Discrimination dawns on him. He seeks vairagya, concentration, meditation, and purification of the body and mind and eventually attains the highest knowledge of the Self. But the man whose mind is saturated with worldly vasanas and materialistic poison is quite heedless and is irresistibly carried away by the two currents of raga and dwesha and tossed about helplessly hither and thither in the tumultuous samsaric stream of worldly concerns.

Ah! How uncertain is sensual life in this world! If you constantly think of the transitory nature of sensual pleasure and its concomitant evils—miseries, worries, troubles, tribulations, anxieties and premature death—then you will slowly develop vairagya. The vairagya that comes momentarily is due to the loss of either wife, relation, friend, son or property; this will not help you much in the spiritual path. What is really wanted is vairagya born of discrimination or viveka.

In the presence of sensual pleasure, spiritual bliss cannot exist, just as darkness cannot exist in the presence of light. Therefore show extreme contempt for worldly objects. Destroy all desires. Turn the mind away from the sensual objects. You will develop vairagya.

You yourself have made your life complex and intricate. You have entangled yourself in this quagmire of samsara. You have multiplied your wants and desires. Everyday you are forging an additional link to the chain of bondage. Simplicity has vanished. Luxurious habits and ways of living are embraced. No wonder there is unemployment everywhere. People are dying of starvation. There is depression in trade. There is unrest everywhere. There is wholesale devastation by earthquake. Divorce courts are also multiplying. One nation is afraid of another nation. One nation suspects that other nations are preparing for a big war. Life has thus become a matter of uncertainty. It has become a mass of confusion, chaos and bewilderment. It has become stormy and boisterous. It is full of under-currents, cross-currents, subterranean currents and mixed currents. Is there no way of escape from these troubles and difficulties? There is only one way. Lead a life of dispassion, self-control, purity, selfless service, cosmic love. Develop the habit of taking the

right point of view, right thinking, right feeling, right acting, with right mental attitude or bhava. Practice devotion and meditation.

O Mohan! You have no real sustained vairagya. Your present mental state is due to pecuniary embarrassments. This will not help you in the spiritual path. The mind will be waiting to get back the object renounced, when it gets the first opportunity. No doubt you are a man of spiritual samskaras. But your vairagya must be of that type that is born of pure viveka, (Nityanitya-vastu-Viveka), discrimination between the real and the unreal. This is a rare commodity, a rare virtue, though many people feign to be in possession of the same.

Thousands of young graduates and young doctors come to me with earthen pots in their hands and attired in orange colored robes in quest of caves in Uttarakasi and Gangotri for deep meditation and practice of pranayama. And some young research students in science and some Rajkumars go to the Punjab and Kashmir in silk suits with stiff collars and ties in search of girls for marriage. Is there pleasure or pain in this world? If there is pleasure, why do young educated men retire into forests? If there is pain, why do young men run after wealth, women and position? Mysterious is maya! Mysterious is moha!

Try to understand the riddle of life and the riddle of the universe. Acquire viveka. Take recourse to satsang. Enquire into the nature of the Atman. Study the Yoga-Vashishtha and the Upanishads. Then you will have a comprehensive understanding of the innumerable problems of life. There is not an iota of happiness in this world. Seek the happiness within.

Is not a kingdom valuable to be owned? Is not a summer palace in Kashmir or a pleasant garden with sweet-smelling flowers of various colors nice to live in? Is not the company of young Mabaranis with tender waists and lotus-like eyes dear as life itself, very pleasing? Yet wise, dispassionate men like Bhartrihari, Buddha, Gopichand and others retired into forests kicking aside all these things as worthless as straw, to realize the Self which alone can confer infinite bliss, immortality, and eternal peace.

The spirit comes and goes. Therefore you will have to be careful always in nourishing and protecting your spiritual samskaras with burning vairagya, intense and constant sadhana and burning longing for liberation (mumukshutva). You will have to increase your good samskaras. You will have to develop them. You will have to multiply them.

Chapter Two: What Is Vairagya?

An Internal Mental State

Raja Janaka, though he ruled a kingdom, was a perfectly dispassionate man. So was Raja Bhagiratha, too. Queen Chudala possessed perfect vairagya, though she ruled a dominion, while her saintly husband, Raja Sikhidhvaja, who retired into the forest to practice tapasya and yoga, was intensely attached to his body and kamandalu (waterpot).

You cannot form a correct opinion of any sadhu or sannyasin or even householder as to his mental state of vairagya or mental condition by just having a casual talk with him for a few hours or staying with him for a few days. You will have to live with him for a very long time to study his internal mental state.

Generally most people commit serious blunders in these matters. They are deluded by mere external appearances. They mistake a physically nude sadhu for a great mahatma in the beginning. Later on they feel obliged to change their impression after closer contact. Physical nudity alone will not constitute real vairagya. The mind of the physically nude sadhu may be full of fantastic desires, cravings and appetites. Who knows! What is wanted, therefore, is mental nudity, i. e., complete eradication of vasanas, egoism, etc. Do not be deceived by external appearances. Beware! Beware!! Beware!!!

Defects of Sensual Pleasures

If you do not possess viveka, if you do not try your extreme level best for the attainment of salvation, if you spend your whole lifetime in eating, drinking, sleeping, marrying and propagating the race, you are no better than a horizontal being. You will have to sit at the feet of animals and learn several lessons from them. Even animals possess self-restraint to an astonishing degree. O man, where has your self-restraint gone?

Sensual enjoyment is attended with various defects. It is attended with various sorts of sins, pains, weaknesses, attachments, slave-mentality, weak will, severe exertion and struggle, bad habits, cravings, aggravation of desires and mental restlessness. Therefore shun all sorts of sensual enjoyments and rest in peace.

The Narayana Upanishad says: "In the beginning these two roads were laid—the road, through karma and sannyasa. The latter consists of the renunciation of the threefold desire (son, wealth, and fame). Of these the road through sannyasa is preferable." The Taittiriya Upanishad also says: "Renunciation (tyaga) certainly is to be preferred."

Mere outward giving up of things is nothing. It is not real renunciation. Real tyaga or sannyasa is absolute renunciation of all vasanas and destruction of the heart knot (ignorance), the Chit-jada-Granthi.

The Glory of Vairagya

What should be renounced is that Bhedabuddhi which says: “I am superior to that man. I have done that. I have done this. I am the body” and the Kartritva abhimana which thinks: “I am the doer.” There is no use of renouncing your home, wife and children, if you cannot renounce these also.

He cannot be truly regarded as having renounced the world altogether who has merely withdrawn himself from worldly possessions. But he, who living in actual contact with the world, finds out its faults (doshas), who is free from every passion and whose soul depends on nothing, may well be said to have truly renounced the world. Read the story of Raja Sikhidhvaja in the Yoga-Vashishtha. You will clearly understand this point.

Renounce this world. Renounce the desire for moksha. Renounce renunciation itself. Then you will become That. You will become Itself.

Dear brother! If you have no real sustained vairagya, you will find no improvement or progress in spirituality. Vows, austerities, energy and meditation will leak out like water from a cracked pot. Be careful.

There is verily no sword more powerful than vairagya to cut off all sorts of attachment to this world. Hold this sword in your hand and march along in the spiritual path. You will safely reach the goal.

The shadow of clouds, the friendship with a fool, the beauty of youth, wealth, all these last only for a very short time. They are impermanent. Shun them all ruthlessly.

Only a thirsty man drinks water. Only a hungry man eats food. Even so, a man who is spiritually hungry and thirsty will only drink the nectar of immortality.

The life of Vemanna is worthy to be read. He was a jnani of Andhra Desa. He was leading a voluptuous life, most abominable indeed. The moment vairagya dawned in him, he became an entirely different man. He made no sadhana as he was a yogabhrashta, or one who had fallen from yogic practices in his previous birth, and became a jnani. He was, and is, very much revered by devotees.

This search after God and God-Realization is a question of supply and demand. If you really want God, if there is a real demand from your heart for God, then the supply will come.

He is really a Sannyasin who is free from passion, egoism and who possesses sattvic qualities.

Atma-vichara (enquiry into the nature of the Atman, or Self) and yogic practices done without intense Vairagya become fruitless.

To get vairagya one should seriously ponder over the various entanglements and bondage of married life.

If you get vairagya, rest assured that is a sign of purification of mind (chitta-shuddhi).

The things that used to afford you delight before give you displeasure now. That is a sign of vairagya.

Vairagya that comes momentarily after such accidents as the loss of some dearly

loved relative or wealth is known as Karanavairagya. It will not help you much in your spiritual advancement. The mind will be simply waiting for an opportunity to catch hold of sensual objects when an opportunity arises.

Therefore, vairagya born of discrimination or viveka is the premonitory symptom of spiritual development. That will help the aspirant. That will give him a good spiritual uplift.

Varieties of Vairagya

Vairagya is of two kinds: karanavairagya (on account of some miseries) and viveka-purvaka-vairagya (on account of discrimination between the real and the unreal).

The mind of a man who has got the former type of vairagya is simply waiting for a chance to get back the things that have been given up or lost. As soon as the first opportunity occurs, the man gets a downfall and goes back to his former state. Vishaya (sensual object) does havoc in him with a vengeance and redoubled force from reaction. But the other man who has given up objects on account of deep enquiry and viveka, on account of the illusory nature of objects, will have spiritual advancement. He will not have any downfall.

“That particular state of mind which manifests itself in one who does not hanker after objects seen or heard and in which one is conscious of having controlled or mastered those objects is non-attachment” (Patanjali’s Yoga-Sutras: 1:15).

It is only when the mind is absolutely free from attachment of all sorts that true knowledge begins to dawn and samadhi supervenes. Occult powers, attainment of heaven, states of Videha [out of the body] and Prakritilaya [merged in subtle material manifestations and forces], etc., are all temptations. One should be perfectly free from all sorts of temptations. Samadhi comes by itself when the yogic student is fully established in perfect vairagya. Paravairagya is the means to Asampra-jnata Samadhi.

Stages in Vairagya

There are four stages in Vairagya:

(1) Yatamana: This is an attempt not to allow the mind to run into sensual grooves;

(2) Vyatireka: In this stage some objects are attracting you and you are endeavoring to cut off the attachment and attraction. Slowly vairagya develops for these objects also. Then the vairagya matures. When some objects tempt and delude you, you should ruthlessly avoid them. You will have to develop vairagya for these tempting objects and it must also mature. In this stage you are conscious of your degree of vairagya towards different objects;

(3) Ekendriya: The senses stand still and subdued, but the mind has either raga [attraction] or dwesha [aversion] for objects. Mind is, in other words, the only sense that functions independently;

(4) Vasirara: In this highest stage of vairagya, the objects no longer tempt you.

They cause no attraction. The senses are perfectly quiet. The mind also is free from likes and dislikes (raga and dwesha). Then you get supremacy or independence. Now you are conscious of your supremacy. Without vairagya no spiritual progress is possible.

Vairagya is of three levels: dull (manda), intense (tivra) and very intense (tivratara). Dull Vairagya cannot help you much in the attainment of your goal.

Vairagya is the opposite of raga, or desire. It is dispassion or non-attachment. It is indifference to sensual objects herein and hereafter. Vairagya thins out the fatty sensual mind. It turns the mind inward (antarmukha vritti). This is the most important qualification for an aspirant. It is the one and the only means to enter into nirvikalpa samadhi.

Vairagya that is born of discrimination is lasting and steady. If you seriously think of the various kinds of pain in this samsara such as birth, death, worries, depression, suffering, disease, loss, hostility, disappointment, fear, etc., if you understand intelligently the defects of sensual life (dosha drishti), and the transitory and perishable nature of all objects of the world, vairagya will immediately dawn.

How to Develop Vairagya

Study of Vairagya-Shatakam of Bhartrihari, and the company of dispassionate sadhus and sannyasins will also help one in developing vairagya. The temporary vairagya which one gets when he is attending the funeral of a dead person and the vairagya which a pregnant lady in pangs gets cannot help one to attain spiritual exaltation. The mind will pounce upon sensual objects when it gets opportunities.

Aspirants generally complain to me: “Swamiji Maharaj, we are meditating for the last twelve years. But we do not know the reason why we have not made any substantial spiritual progress.” This is due to lack of intense vairagya only. The mind will be ever thinking of objects even during meditation. Intense vairagya only can help the aspirant in attaining Self-realization.

“Para-vairagya or supreme non-attachment is that state wherein even the attachment to the qualities [sattwa, rajas and tamas] drops, owing to the knowledge of the Purusha” (Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras: 1:16).

The vairagya described earlier is apara-vairagya (the lower vairagya). Now comes supreme vairagya. In the former state, there is preponderance of sattwa. Sattwa is mixed with rajas and tamas. The yogi gets siddhis and becomes a videha or prakritilaya. But the yogi with para-vairagya rejects the siddhis also and gets sakshatkara, or darshan, of the purusha.

In ordinary vairagya there is a trace of vasanas and desires. But in para-vairagya all vasanas, samskaras and desires are fried in toto. In para-vairagya there will be no desire at all. Perfect desirelessness is para-vairagya. In the Bhagavad Gita you will find: “Objects fall away from the abstinent man, leaving the longing behind. But his longing also ceases, who sees the Supreme” (11:59).

Note how Vairagya arises in the mind. The transitory, evanescent and perishable

nature of all things creates a sort of disgust in all minds and in proportion to the depth and subtlety of nature, this reaction from the world works more or less powerfully in the mind of every individual. An irresistible feeling arises in our mind that the finite can never satisfy the infinite within us, that the changing and perishable cannot satisfy the changeless and deathless nature that is ours.

When you are not impressed with rich living, rich style of living cannot attract you. When you are impressed with the idea that meat and wine are not at all pleasurable, meat and wine cannot tempt you. When you are impressed that the human body is nothing but a leather-bag of pus, blood, urine, bones and flesh, sexual attraction cannot tempt you. In that case, if you fail to get meat or wine or sex, or to have a rich living, you will not be agonized at all in your mind.

Why are you attracted towards a young, beautiful member of the opposite sex? Have you ever seriously thought over this life-and-death problem? The answer is: because owing to your ignorance you vainly think you will get pleasure from their contact. If you have vairagya and viveka, it will at once tell you that you will ultimately get immense pain from their contact rather than pleasure. Then your mind will recede or withdraw from that object.

It is only when the mind, being divested of all its desires, is indifferent to pleasure and pain and is not attracted by any object that it will be rendered pure, free from the grip of the great delusion like a bird freed from the cage and roaming about freely in the sky.

As soon as vairagya arises in the mind, it opens the gate of divine wisdom. No true and lasting satisfaction comes from the enjoyment of worldly pleasures. Yet, people rush headlong towards objects, even when they know full well that the objects they are trying to seize are unreal and that the world in which they live is fraught with miseries of all sorts. This is Maya. When the mind rests in the Atma then only will nitya-tripti, eternal satisfaction, come—because the Atman is paripurna (all-full). All desires are gratified by realization of the Atma or Self.

Sometimes the mind gets disgusted with one kind of sadhana. It wants some other kind of sadhana. It rebels against monotony. The aspirant should know how to coax the mind on such occasions and to extract work from it by a little relaxation of mind. The cessation of sadhana is a grave blunder. Spiritual practices should never be given up under any circumstances. Evil thoughts will be waiting to enter the gates of the mental factory. If the student of yoga stops his sadhana, his mind will become the devil's workshop. Do not expect anything. Be sincere and regular in your daily meditation, routine and tapas. Do not deviate from the path you have chosen. The fruit will come by itself. Your efforts will be surely crowned with roaring success. It takes a long time to purify the mind and get one-pointedness. Be cool and patient, my child.

Cut the Knot of Attachment

Attachment is the first child of Maya. The whole lila of the Lord is being kept up by the force of attachment only. A sober man just tastes a small peg of champagne,

then he is caught up in evil company and becomes ultimately an inveterate drunkard through attachment to spirits. A teetotaler just takes a whiff of a Gold-Flake cigarette and becomes in due time a terrible smoker through attachment. There is in the mind a gummy substance which is like a mixture of castor-oil, glue, gum-arabic, mucilage of tragacanth, gluten paste, honey, glycerin, jack-fruit's juice and all other pasty substances of this world. The mind is glued, as it were, to the objects of the world with this mixture. Therefore attachment is very strong.

Therefore O man/woman, never say "My body, my son, my wife/husband, my house, my property, my garden, etc." Attachment is the root cause of the innumerable miseries and troubles of this world. Discipline your mind little by little. The old evil habits will creep in. Destroy them to the very root. Lead a life of perfect non-attachment. This is the master key to open the realms of brahmic bliss.

But work incessantly without attachment, without any identification. Then alone you can feel that you are a different being. Karma Yoga elevates a man to sublime, magnanimous heights, when done in the right spirit, with the right mental attitude or bhava. One should patiently work. That is all. No meditation or samadhi is ever possible without a preliminary training in Nishkamyā [Desireless] Karma-Yoga. To work without attachment is doubtless a difficult task. It is an uphill work. But it becomes a very easy job and pleasant too to a man of patience and determination. You will have to do it at any cost, if you want final beatitude and immortality. Everyone of you will have to do it, though not now, at least after taking five hundred births. There is no other alternative but to do so. But the question is: Why not now? Why not in this very birth itself? Why not cut short the cycle of births and deaths and enjoy the bliss of the Self right now, this very second? Therein lies real wisdom.

Work cannot bring misery, but it is attachment and identification with work that brings in all sorts of unhappiness and bondage. Understand the secret of work, the technique of Karma Yoga and attain God-consciousness. This Jnanagni or fire of wisdom will consume all fruits of actions in toto.

Nivritti-Marga, or the Path of Renunciation

Have a strong determination and a strong will. Never think of returning home after taking up to the Nivritti-Marga. Look before you leap. Have courage, fixity of mind and a definite purpose in life. Be not wavering. Are you ready to give up all possessions, including body and life? Then only take to Nivritti-Marga and embrace sannyasa. Think twice before you come to definite conclusions. This is not a rosy path as you may imagine. It is full of thorns. It is beset with countless difficulties and hardships. Be humble, patient and persevering. Never care for siddhis or quick awakening of the kundalini. Be not troubled. Be not anxious. Be noble-minded. Mere emotional bubbling will not help you much. Some young men have returned to their homes. Difficulties are many in this path. But it can make you a king of kings, an emperor of emperors.

Those who want to take to seclusion and Nivritti-Marga should observe mauna,

non-mixing and disciplining the indriyas, mind and body while living in the world. They should train themselves to a laborious hard life, coarse food, sleeping on the ground or a hard mattress without pillows, walking barefooted without umbrellas. Then alone they can bear the rigorous austerities of an ascetic's life. They should give up timidity and shyness in getting alms.

Aspirants who take to the Nivritti-Marga generally become lazy after some time, as they do not know how to utilize their mental energy, as they do not keep any daily routine, as they do not follow the instructions of their seniors. They get vairagya in the beginning, but they have no experience in the spiritual line. They do not make any progress in the end. Intense and constant meditation is necessary for entering into samadhi.

Have you fully determined with an iron will to stick to this line at any cost? Are you really prepared to sacrifice this body and life in the cause of truth? Have you understood the glory of sannyasa and the importance of seclusion? If your daughter, son, brother, sister, father or mother comes and weeps, have you got the requisite strength to resist moha?

Sleepless vigilance is necessary, if you wish to have rapid spiritual advancement. Never rest content with a little achievement or success in the path, a little serenity of mind, a little one-pointedness of mind, some visions of angels, or siddhis, a little faculty of thought-reading, etc. There are still higher summits to ascend, higher regions to climb up.

The attraction for objects and ties of various sorts make a man bound to this world. Renunciation of all attractions and breaking up of all ties constitute real renunciation. That sannyasin or yogi who is free from attraction and ties enjoys infinite bliss and supreme joy and peace. Fluctuation and imagination are the two seeds of the mind. Fluctuation is the fuel. Imagination is the fire. The unceasing fire of imagination is kept up by the fuel of fluctuation. If the fuel of fluctuation is with drawn, the fire of imagination gets extinguished by itself. The mind becomes tranquil. It is withdrawn into its source, the Atma.

You came into this world alone. You came naked. You came weeping. You will go from this world alone. You will go naked. You will go weeping. Why then are you proud of your titles, false wealth and false knowledge? Become humble and meek. You will conquer the whole world through humility. Become pure in thought, word and deed. This is the secret of spiritual life. The Upanishads and the Gita harp again and again upon this one note.

To a passionate man and woman there is much pleasure in this world. They run after money and sex. Their minds are intoxicated, perverted and clouded. Poor people, they do not know what they are really doing. But to a yogi or a man of discrimination this world is a ball of fire. It is a huge furnace in which all beings are roasted. The three kinds of heat: Adhyatmika (internal), Adhidaivika (heavenly) and Adhibhautika (external) are burning him.

Friend! Is there any limit to the number of fathers and mothers and wives and husbands you had in the crores [ten millions] and crores of previous incarnations?

Yet this clinging and false relationship have not gone. Discrimination has not dawned.

Are you not ashamed to repeat the same old process of eating, drinking and sleeping day in and day out? You are proud of your titles and knowledge. Have you improved your life even a bit? What have you learnt from the recent Bihar and Quito earthquakes? Are you attempting to reach that imperishable seat, wherein all desires and trishnas [thirstings] are completely eradicated? Are you endeavoring, in however small a measure it may be, to attain the highest goal of life, Atmic realization, which gives immortality, bliss and peace? You are not crawling now. You have learnt to stand up and walk. You can think, reason out, judge, infer and ratiocinate. Will you not utilize this precious life and all your various faculties in meditation and Self-realization? Can you give me a definite word of promise to the effect? Speak to me the truth now. Climb up the ladder of yoga. Drink the nectar of immortality.

Vairagya born of Viveka is enduring and everlasting. It will not fail the aspirant at any time unlike the vairagya that comes temporarily to a lady who gives birth to a child or to a man attending a funeral in the crematorium. The view that everything in the world is unreal causes vairagya or indifference to the enjoyments of this world and the other heaven worlds also. One has to come down to this mrityu-loka [world of death] from heaven when the fruits of good works are exhausted.

The same five kinds of enjoyment of sensual pleasures prevail in the heaven worlds also. But they are more intense and subtle. This cannot give real and lasting happiness to a viveki. He shuns all enjoyments of the heaven world also. He kicks them away mercilessly. He is keenly aware of the pleasures of the three worlds and is convinced that they are only a mere drop in the ocean of Brahmnic bliss.

Remember the sayings of the Gita

Meditation on the following slokas of the Bhagavad-Gita will induce true vairagya:

“When senses touch objects the pleasures therefrom are like wombs that bear sorrow. They begin, they are ended: they bring no delight to the wise” (5:22).

“Master of ego, standing apart from the things of the senses, free from self; aware of the weakness in mortal nature, its bondage to birth, age, suffering, dying” (13:8).

“Senses have joy in their marriage with things of the senses, sweet at first but at last how bitter: that pleasure is poison” (18:38).

“You find yourself in this transient, joyless world. Turn from it, and take your delight in Me” (9:33).

What Vairagya is

Vairagya is mental detachment from all connections with the world. That is all. Wherever a man may go, he carries with him his fickle, restless mind, his vasanas and samskaras. Even if he lives in solitude, still he is the same worldly man, if he is

engaged in building castles in the air, and thinking of the objects of the world. In such case even the cave becomes a big city to him.

A dispassionate man has a different mind altogether. He has a different experience altogether. He is a past master in the art or science of separating himself from the impermanent, perishable objects of the world. He has absolutely no attraction for them. He constantly dwells on the Eternal or the Absolute. He identifies himself every moment of his life with the witnessing consciousness that is present in pleasure and in pain, in joy and in sorrow, in censure and in praise, in honor and in dishonor, in all states of life. He stands adamant as a peak amid a turbulent storm, as a spectator of this wonderful world show. He is not a bit affected by these pleasant and painful experiences. He learns several valuable lessons from them. He has, in other words, no attraction for pleasant objects and repulsion for painful ones. Nor is he afraid of pain. He knows quite well that pain helps a lot in his spiritual progress and evolution, in his long journey towards the Goal. He stands convinced that pain is the best teacher in the world.

Let me sound a note of warning here. Dear aspirants! Vairagya also may come and go, if you are careless and mix promiscuously with all sorts of worldly-minded people. You should develop vairagya, therefore, to a maximum degree. The mind will be waiting for golden opportunities to get back the things once renounced. Whenever and wherever the mind hisses or raises its hood (for the mind is verily like a serpent), you should take refuge in viveka and in the imperishable fortress of wise, dispassionate mahatmas. There are different degrees in vairagya. Supreme dispassion comes when one gets himself established in Brahman. Now the vairagya becomes perfectly habitual.

A man can develop inner mental detachment from pleasure and pain while living in the world. He should see that he is not carried away by the pleasant experiences of the world. He should not cling to them. He should simply remain as a silent spectator. If he thus practices for some years, every experience will be a positive step in his ascent of the spiritual ladder. Eventually he will be crowned with sanguine success. He will then have an unruffled mind. He will have a poised mind also. A dispassionate man is the happiest and the richest man in all the three worlds. He is also the most powerful man. How can Maya tempt him now?

Best Training School

Doctors have a wide field for developing vairagya. Every day they come across patients with incurable diseases. Everyday they see dead bodies in the mortuary. Thus they have innumerable chances of seeing Maya in all her naked state. They can be convinced beyond a ray of doubt of the impermanence of life here in this world of man.

The superintendent of a jail and all the officers there also have wonderful chances of developing vairagya, if they are lovers of Truth and Emancipation. The sight of hanging a condemned prisoner will open their eyes.

Hey Saumya! Your mental state is laudable indeed. The life of a sannyasin is the

best kind of life in the world. A true sannyasin is the monarch of the three worlds. Even an aspirant is an emperor of the whole world. Lord Krishna also says: “The man who has once asked the way to Brahman goes further than any mere fulfiller of rituals” (Bhagavad Gita 6:44).

I am extremely glad to note that you have got exceptionally good spiritual samskaras which want to burst out in this birth. They need protection and tender nurturing for your further growth and evolution. Do not be carried away by the temptations of the world. Be careful. Be wise. The beginner in the spiritual path should not remain in the company of worldly-minded people. He should resort to satsang. The company of worldly-minded people is a deadly poison. You will not become a prey to lust if you shun their company. Remain in seclusion under the direct guidance of a teacher who is fully established in Brahman till you get perfect vairagya and till you are established in the path of sannyasa.

A Note of Warning

Many aspirants come to me with great vairagya and enthusiasm in the beginning. But they do not keep up the same spirit for a long time or till the end of their sadhana. When they begin to encounter some difficulties, they retrace their steps. It is indeed a great pity. Look before you leap. Have a firm determination. Stick to the path of sannyasa till you reach the goal and realize the fruits of sadhana.

If you lack any of these qualifications, wait for a while. Meanwhile do spiritual sadhana, concentration and meditation at home. Plunge deep into silent meditation. Plunge yourself in selfless service also. This is very necessary for purification of mind. Keep up your brahmacharya. Destroy all evil habits, if you have any of these, such as smoking, tea, coffee, etc. Develop all virtuous qualities. Mark the change in your mental attitude. Then come prepared to lead a hard, active life.

Some aspirants come in a hurry. Due to lack of vairagya they go back. This is not good. Hence the warning.

Many aspirants want to do some nice work such as writing, collection of flowers for puja, arranging books in the library, some kind of supervision and management. They dislike works such as drawing of water, cleansing utensils, washing clothes of sick persons, sweeping, nursing, cooking, cleansing bedpans, etc. They consider these works as menial. They have not understood the real spirit of Nishkama Karma Yoga. They are yet Babus [worldly men with worldly egos].

Dear Prabhu! There is a dull spiritual awakening in you and a dull type of vairagya. You will have to develop both. Dull vairagya and mere bubbling emotions will not help you much to stick to the path of renunciation. For some time leave the house and remain in a secluded place for a week or two. Enquire. Cogitate. Investigate. Do self-analysis and find out if you have any moha, attachment to your family members. Find out if your mind runs after sensual pleasures. Be sure whether you will be able to leave the sensual objects, relatives and all sorts of comforts and conveniences. If you can completely disconnect yourself from the world, then only come to an ashram. There are many who have advanced in the

spiritual path considerably in course of one or two years. You can also do that. Implicit obedience and faithful carrying out of instructions of the spiritual preceptor to the very letter is what is expected of you; that is the secret of success in the spiritual path.

Chapter Three:

Miseries Of Mundane Existence

Ignorance is the Cause of Misery

Things seen yesterday are again present today. Ornaments worn with exultation yesterday are again donned by you. And yet, even intelligent persons do not get disgusted with them and are not ashamed of enjoying them again and again.

Like ignorant children that taste again and again sweetmeats which impart sweetness for the time being, you are also afflicted, ignorant of the true path. Days, nights, weeks, fortnights, months, years and yugas cycle again and again, and nothing new crops up. Wealth which only makes a host of thoughts whirl in the brain will not confer bliss on you. This wealth which the mind so much covets and which is so very ephemeral in its nature is utterly worthless like a flower-bud in a creeper growing in a well encircled by a serpent.

Nobody Comes and Goes

The Prana! Life which is like a drop of rain water dripping from the end of a leaf turned overhead flits out of the body at unseasonable times. This life is ephemeral like the autumnal clouds or an wickless lamp or ocean waves. Life and death are but two acts in the drama. Really nobody comes and goes.

The lives of those who have freed themselves from rebirth are the noblest. There is nothing so baneful as the life which is perishable in its nature and fleeting in the bestowal of pleasure.

Fire of Desires

The fire of desires has quite scalded you. In the present state even a full bath in a pool of ambrosia will not cool you down. It is these ever-waxing desires that bring on pains of rebirths, the heaviest and the most excruciating of all pains. This body which is composed of muscles, intestines, urine and fecal matter and is subject to various changes, being at one time fat and at another time lean, enters into this mundane existence simply to undergo pains. What beauty is then to be enjoyed in this body which is composed of flesh, bone and blood, which has the tendency to rot, which is of the same nature in the rich and in the poor, and which is subject to growth and decay?

Three Fevers

There are scorpion stings on one side. Serpents are on the other side. Flies, fleas, bugs, mosquitoes, thorns and other insects trouble you from one corner. The sun scorches you in summer. Cold stings you in winter. Influenza, plague, appendicitis, pyorrhea, smallpox are all ready to devour you. Then there are the

three fevers, Adhyatmika, Adhidaivika and Adhibhautika. Fear, delusion, grief, sorrow and misery kill you every moment.

Desire, anger, hatred, jealousy, worry, anxieties and cares torment you every second. Deaths of persons whom you loved so dearly give you severe shocks. Yet you will never renounce the momentary pleasures of the senses of this unreal mundane existence. Such is the depth of sensual enjoyments. You will speak through egoism, “O, I am a powerful man. I am very intelligent. I can do any thing. There is no God.” You will twist your waxed mustache and when the scorpion stings you sharply, you will cry out bitterly: “O Narayana, Narayana, Narayana, help me. Relieve me of this horrible pain.”

If the hair becomes gray, you invent various dyes to blacken it. You invent monkey gland grafting for rejuvenation. If the teeth are fallen out, you put on a new artificial dental set. You will never leave the “will-to-live-and-enjoy.” Miserable wreck that you are! Hopeless specimen!

Think deeply. Cogitate. Reflect. Have constant satsang. Do selfless service of country and humanity. Develop the four means of salvation. Study the Bhagavad Gita, Yoga-Vashishtha and Viveka-Chudamani of Sri Sankara. Clear your doubts by approaching learned sannyasins. Have recourse to sravana, manana and nididhyasana. Remove the veil of ignorance and rest in your own swarupa—the Satchitananda state. “The Self must be seen, heard, thought upon and deeply pondered” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: 4:5).

Shun honor, respect, degrees, name, fame, power, position and titles. They are absolutely worthless. They will not give you eternal satisfaction. They will only intensify your vanity. They are all intoxicants of the mind. They will bring misery and mental disturbance. That is the reason why Raja Bhartrihari, Raja Gopichand and Lord Buddha deserted their kingdoms, riches, honor, etc. They treated them as trifles.

Uncertainty of Life

Only your actions, good and bad, will follow you after death. And God will judge you according to your deeds.

The attraction for external objects ceases, but there yet remains the internal craving or sense-hankering or thirsting which is called trishna. That is why the Gita says: “The abstinent run away from what they desire but carry their desires with them: when a man enters Reality, he leaves his desires behind him” (Bhagavad Gita 2:59).

Friend! Is there any limit to the number of fathers, mothers, wives, sons, daughters, uncles and aunts you had in the countless incarnations in the past? And yet the clinging and false relationship has not gone. Discrimination has not dawned. What a great pity it is!

Are you not ashamed to repeat the same acts of eating, drinking and sleeping day by day? You are proud of your titles and honors. Have you improved your life even a bit? What lessons have you learnt from the recent Bihar and Quito

earthquakes? Are you attempting to reach the Imperishable Seat wherein all desires and trishnas will be utterly annihilated? Are you endeavoring to attain the highest end of life, divine realization which confers immortality, bliss and peace?

In the recent Bihar earthquake [this was written years ago, when the earthquake took place there] a rich banker had to beg for nine rupees just to protect himself and his family from death by starvation. A pundit earned slowly twenty-five thousand rupees by selling his books. But he had to spend that money in a short time in the treatment of his chronic chest complaint. He tried all sorts of medicines, but all in vain. He had to leave the house to lead a life of a hermit.

Life is quite uncertain here. Diseases of various sorts attack the body. Yet man clings blindly to this ephemeral life! He forgets the truth. O man, seek everlasting peace and bliss in the Atma or Soul within you by purifying your mind and practicing intense meditation. This is the right royal road to extricate yourself from the pains of samsara. Be quick in taking to spiritual practices. Hairs are becoming gray. Teeth are failing. Indriyas are getting cold. Practice meditation and japa while you are young. You can do nothing in old age, when you retire from service [employment].

It is extremely difficult to have a pure and calm mind. But you must have such a mind, if you want to have progress in meditation and yoga.

Lord Buddha had viveka from his very boyhood. He was one who had been profoundly impressed from his early youth by the transient and impermanent nature of all conditions of worldly existence and by the sufferings and wretchedness in which he saw all beings immersed. Will you not become another Lord Buddha?

You have spent eight hours in sleep, and the rest of the day in idle gossiping, telling lies, deceiving others, in selfish activities, in amassing wealth. How can you expect spiritual good, how can you expect immortality and peace, if you do not spend even half an hour in the service of the Lord, in singing His Names and in divine contemplation?

On the Whole, Life is Sorrow

Lord Buddha says: "On the whole, life is sorrow." You will find an echo of this statement in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras "All, indeed, is pain to a person of discrimination." This is not the philosophy of the pessimists. This is wonderful optimism, as it induces deep vairagya, weans the mind from sensual pleasures and directs it towards God, the Atman, to realize eternal and infinite bliss.

"Just as a fish in its desire to eat flesh does not see the hook that lies beneath, so also man in his passionate desire to get sensual pleasure does not see the noose of death."

How to Eradicate Sense-hankering

Trishna means an intense craving or sense-hankering. Through constant repetition of enjoyment of an object, the longing for the object becomes very keen and acute. This is trishna.

It is all easy to become a big research scholar in Oxford or Cambridge University and to get an M.A., Ph.D., degree. But it is extremely difficult to eradicate these trishnas. That is the reason why Sri Vashishtha says to Sri Rama: “You can even uproot the Himalayas. You can even drink the waters of the whole ocean. You can even swallow balls of fire. But it is difficult to destroy the trishnas. Cravings cause incessant trouble in many different ways. These cravings are the seeds of this Samsara” (Yoga-Vashishtha).

A worldly man is always drowned in sorrow. He is ever struggling to get something, some money, some power, some position and so on. He is always anxious as to whether or not he will get it. Even when he is in actual possession of the things he so passionately longed for, he is very anxious lest he should lose them. There is pain in earning money. There is more pain in taking care of it. There is still more pain if the money gets decreased. And when it is lost, just imagine for a moment the magnitude of the climax and the intensity of pain it gives a man! Therefore renounce money and rest in peace in the blissful Self.

In the presence of light, you cannot have darkness. In the presence of sensual pleasures, atmic bliss cannot exist. Worldlings want both sensual pleasures and atma ananda in one and the same cup and one and the same time. This is an absolute impossibility. They do not want to renounce sensual pleasures. They do not want to develop real vairagya in their hearts of hearts. They simply talk a lot.

Though a man knows he might die at any moment, still he thinks he will live for ever. To get oneself entangled in the meshes of Maya till death is simply foolish. He who is attached to wife, husband wealth and children will not derive even an iota of benefit in the spiritual path.

A bachelor who is full of passion from head to foot imagines that he is miserable because he has no wife! A householder who is tired and exhausted of worldly life thinks wife and children are a mighty hindrance in his spiritual endeavors.

Desire for Name and Fame

One can renounce wife, husband, son, property and all else, but it is very difficult and rare to renounce name and fame. Pratishta is established name and fame. This is a great obstacle in God-Realization. This brings downfall in the end. This does not allow the aspirant to march forward in the spiritual path. He becomes a slave of respect and honor. As soon as he gets some purity and ethical progress, ignorant people flock to him and begin to pay homage and salutation. He gets puffed up with pride.

He thinks he is a great mahatma. He becomes eventually a slave of his admirers. He cannot notice his slow downfall. The moment he mixes up freely with householders, he loses what little he had gained during the eight or ten years of his intense sadhana. He cannot influence the public now. His admirers also leave him because they do not find any real solace or spiritual influence in his company.

People imagine that the mahatma has got siddhis and that they can get children through his grace, plenty of wealth and Himalayan herbs for the rooting out of

diseases and the building up of radiant and healthy bodies. They always approach a sadhu with some selfish, ulterior motive or other. The aspirant through bad association loses his vairagya and viveka. Attachment and desire crop up in his mind. Therefore you should hide yourself always. Nobody should know what sort of sadhana you are doing. You should never attempt to exhibit your psychic powers or siddhis. You should be very humble. You should pass for quite an ordinary man. You should not accept rich presents from householders. You will be affected by the bad thoughts of those who offer presents. You should never think that you are superior to this man or that man. You should not treat others with contempt. You should always treat others with great respect and profound consideration. Then only respect will come by itself. You should treat respect, honor, name and fame as dung and poison and wear disrespect and dishonor as a gold necklace. Then only will you reach the goal in safety.

Why this Trouble?

Building of ashrams and making disciples bring about the downfall of aspirants. They are all stumbling blocks in the path of God-realization. The aspirant becomes another sort of householder. He develops institutional egoism. He gets attached to his ashram and disciples. He has now the same cares, worries and anxieties for running the ashram and the monthly magazine and feeding his disciples. He develops slave-mentality. Thoughts of the ashram revolve in his mind even when he is dying.

Some ashrams are nicely managed by the spiritual heads of the respective institutions while they are alive. When they pass away, the disciples who are petty-minded fight amongst themselves in open courts. You can see so many cases going on. The ashram becomes a fighting center. Ashram owners have to flatter the donors and appeal for funds very often. How can thoughts of God remain in his mind, when one has his mind fixed on accumulation of wealth and development of his ashram? Those who have started ashrams already may now say: "We are doing good to the people in various ways. We are having religious classes daily. We feed poor people. We are training religious students."

It is quite true that an ashram run by a selfless dynamic yogi or a realized soul or a jivanmukta is a dynamic center of spirituality. It spiritually uplifts so many thousands of people. Such centers are needed in all parts of the world. Such ashrams can do immense spiritual good to the country. But such ideal ashrams with ideal spiritual heads to run them are very, very rare nowadays. Money is collected in a variety of ways. Some portion is spent for useful purposes. The rest goes to the comforts and conveniences of the founders of the ashram and their favorite disciples.

The founders of the ashram in course of time become unconsciously slaves of worship and puja. Maya works in a variety of ways. They are quite eager that people should drink their charanamrita. How can a man who has the opinion that he should be worshipped as an avatara serve the public? Hired workers in the ashram

are petty-minded. They fight amongst themselves even for trifling things and disturb the peaceful atmosphere of the ashram. Where then is peace in the ashram? How can outsiders who visit the ashram to get shanti, enjoy shanti there?

The founders of the Ashram should live on daily bhiksha from outside. They should lead an ideal life of absolute self-sacrifice, a life of ideal simplicity like the late Baba Kalikambliwala of Rishikesh, who carried a water-pot on his head for the ashram and himself lived on bhiksha from outside. Such people alone can do real good to the people. Founders of ashrams should never appeal for funds. It brings great discredit to the order of sannyasa itself. It is another way of respectable begging. The habit of begging destroys the subtle, sensitive nature of the intellect and those who appeal for funds frequently do not know what they are doing.

It is very difficult to get good workers for the ashram. Then why do you bother about building ashrams when you have neither money nor workers nor dynamic spiritual force? Keep quiet. Do meditation and evolve yourself quietly. Mind your own business. Reform yourself first. How can you help others when you are yourself groping in darkness, when you are yourself blind? How can a blind man lead a blind man? Both will fall into a deep abyss and break their legs.

Generally an aspirant is very enthusiastic about his sadhana in the beginning. He is full of zeal. He takes a great deal of interest. He expects to get some good results soon. When he does not get these results within the expected time he gets discouraged. He loses his interest and slackens his efforts. He gives up his sadhana entirely. He loses faith in the efficacy of sadhana itself.

Worry and Anxiety

Man always thirsts for possession of objects, wife, husband and cattle. This surely makes him selfish. Selfishness causes attachment. Wherever there is attachment, there are "I-ness" and "My-ness." The whole misery starts here. The whole wheel of Maya begins to revolve from now. Man becomes a slave now. Strong iron chains are fastened to his hands, legs and knees. He is entangled like the spider or the silk-worm. This is his own self-created web for his own destruction.

Sit for a moment alone in a quiet room. Enquire. Cogitate. Investigate. Happiness is a mental state. It does not depend upon money or possessions. You actually see very rich people that are very miserable, while a poor clerk is very happy, and a sadhu with only a loin-cloth dancing in divine ecstasy.

Enjoyment cannot bring satisfaction of desire. On the contrary, it aggravates and intensifies desires and makes the mind more restless through sense hankering or trishna just as the pouring of ghee or oil aggravates fire. The fewer the wants, the greater the happiness. Milk gives pleasure to some and pain to some others. The fourth cup of milk brings retching or nausea. It does not give pleasure during fever. Therefore pleasure is not in the objects but it is in the imagination or inclination of the mind.

Mango is not sweet but the imagination is sweet. Woman or man is not beautiful or handsome but the imagination is beautiful or handsome. An ugly

woman appears very beautiful to her husband because his imagination is beautiful. An ugly man appears very handsome to his wife because her imagination is beautiful. There is a grain of pleasure in objects, but the pain that mixed with it is of the size of a mountain.

Sensual pleasure is tantalizing. There is enchantment so long as man does not possess the objects. He exerts hard. His mind is filled with anxieties. He is under despondency because he doubts if he would get the desired object. The moment he is in possession of the object, the charm vanishes. He finds that he is in entanglement. The bachelor thinks of his marriage day and night. He thinks he is in imprisonment after the marriage is over. He is not able to satisfy the extravagant wants of his wife. He wants to run away from the house to forests. The same is true of unmarried women. The rich but the childless man thinks he will be more happy by getting a son: he worries himself day and night to get a son, goes on pilgrimage to Rameshwaram and Kashi and performs various religious ceremonies.

But when he gets a child, he feels miserable. The child suffers from epileptic fits and his money is given away to doctors. Even then there is no cure. This is Mayic jugglery. The whole world is fraught with temptation.

When you cannot get the objects, you feel miserable. The man who is addicted to drinking tea, who is in the habit of having fruit and milk after meals, feels very miserable when he cannot get tea or fruit and milk. He scolds his wife and servants without rhyme or reason out of sheer irritability. When the wife dies, the husband is drowned in sorrow, not because of the loss of his loving partner in life, but because he cannot get sexual pleasure now. The cause of pain is pleasure. The cause of death is love for sensual life. Give up all sensual pleasures, if you do not want pain. Give up sensual life, if you do not want death.

To wear spectacles at the age of ten, to wear ring-watch, to buy a car by borrowing money, to wear fashionable dinner-uniform and Ellwood hat, health boots, to have a French crop or bobbed hair, to smoke Three-Castles cigarettes or Navy-cut or Manila cigars, to constrict the neck with stiff collars, to walk along the beach with their wives in clasped hands, to have newspaper in their pocket, to have a trimmed or Kaiser-mustache at the middle of the upper lip, to eat meat and drink brandy, to play bridge, to gamble, to dance in ballrooms, to borrow money to go to talkies and, in short, to lead a life of dissipation—this is modern civilization! Fashion and style have made you a beggar of beggars!

Raga and Dwesha

The two currents of the mind, raga and dwesha (attraction and repulsion), really constitute the world of samsara. The mind gets intensely attached to pleasant objects through attraction because it derives pleasure. Wherever there is sensation of pleasure, the mind gets glued, as it were, to the object that gives pleasure. This is what is called attachment. This only brings bondage and pain. When either the object is withdrawn or perishes, the mind gets unspeakable pain. Attraction is the root cause of human sufferings. The mind runs from those objects which give pain.

Aversion arises in the mind. For instance, nobody likes a cobra, a tiger or even a scorpion. Attraction and pleasure, repulsion and pain coexist. A worldly man or woman is a slave of these two mighty and devastating currents. They are tossed about hither and thither like a piece of straw. They smile when they get pleasures, they weeps when they gets pain. They cling to pleasant objects, they run away from objects that cause pain.

The desire for sensual enjoyment is deep rooted or ingrained in the minds of all. The rajasic mind is so framed that it cannot remain even for a single moment without thoughts of enjoyment of some kind or another. People invent various sorts of subtle enjoyments. Modern science has made marvelous contributions towards bringing forth refined ways of enjoyment. Modern civilization is only another name for sensual enjoyment. Hotels, cinemas, airplanes, radio and television intensify sensual enjoyments. Man invents new dishes, new syrups, new drinks, to satisfy his palate. Fashion in dress is making vast strides year by year. So is the case with hair-dressing. Even the man treading the path of truth wishes to find out lasting and intense sensual enjoyment by means of his yogic practices. He wants to move about in the heavenly worlds in celestial vehicles. He wants to taste the nectar of immortality underneath the kalpataru [wish-fulfilling tree] side by side with Indra and other gods. He wants to hear celestial nymphs and gandharvas singing and dancing. These are all subtle temptations. The sincere aspirant will resolutely turn his back on all these sorts of refined, subtle, intense enjoyment herein and hereafter. He will treat them all as vomited matter, as offal or as the urine of a donkey or as poison.

This world is full of difficulties and troubles. No one save a yogi or a bhakta or a Jnani is free from these worldly miseries and anxieties. Go wherever you like. It is all the same.

Kamala and Krishna had no children. They were building castles in the air one night when they were sleeping on a raised bedstead. Kamala asked Krishna: "How will you manage for the sleeping place of our son, if I get a child?" Krishna replied: "I will make room in this very wooden cot itself." So saying he moved some inches away from his wife. She again asked: "What will you do, if I beget a second son?" Krishna answered: "I will again make room in this very cot itself." So saying he actually moved a few inches further to the edge of the cot. Kamala again asked: "My dear husband, what will you do if I beget a third son?" The husband said: "I will give him room in this very cot." While moving to the extreme end of the cot, he tumbled down and fractured his left leg. Krishna's neighbor came and asked him: "What is the matter with your legs?" Krishna said: "I broke my leg on account of my false sons." Such is the case with the people of the world also. They suffer on account of mithyaabhimana (false egoism) and mithyasambandha (false relationship).

Chapter Four: Body

The following three paragraphs also apply to Man! Just think “man” instead of “woman.” Sri Ramakrishna warned his male disciples against “Woman and Gold.” But when he spoke to women he warned them against “Man and Gold.”

Woman is the source of constant vexation and greatest bondage. The figure or form of woman is nothing but a network of bones coated with fat and flesh.

Woman is the source of all misery. She is an embodiment of passion. She sucks your vitality. You do many vicious actions just to please her. You have to reap the fruits of these actions and suffer. What happiness is there to be derived from the string-tossed puppets of female bodies? Where is the beauty in a female? Do vichara and analyze. Will any viveki think of this illusory figure? The beauty you see in the form of a woman is the emanation from the atman within. Look at the condition of the eyes, face and body of a woman after an attack of seven days' illness! Where has the beauty gone? Look at the wrinkled face of an old woman! Analyze the parts of a woman, realize their illusory nature and abandon these totally. If you begin to analyze this body into flesh, blood, bone, sweat, etc., the attraction towards woman will perish in a short time. Love and attachment to a woman destroy buddhi, mukti and virtuous deeds and cause contraction of heart.

If lust for woman which is the source of all enjoyments ceases, then all worldly bondage which has its root or substratum in the mind will automatically cease. Even the most virulent poison is no poison at all when compared to sensual objects. The former defiles one body only whereas the latter adulterates many bodies in successive births.

This body is certainly not meant for the satisfaction of petty ends. It is for rigorous tapasya here and infinite happiness hereafter. It is an instrument for achieving the goal of human life: the attainment of Brahmajnana. It serves the purpose of a boat to cross this ocean of Samsara to the other side.

This body is the source of infinite miseries. It is full of impurities. It brings disrespect, censure, pain, etc. It passes away without a moment's notice. It is subject to disease, decay and old age. Therefore think of the atma which is eternal, pure and all-pervading.

The physical body appears only in the present. A thing that has neither past nor future must be considered as non-existent in the present also. If you think over this matter more deeply with shuddha-buddhi (purified intellect), you will realize the atyantabhava (complete nonexistence) of the world.

This body which is full of impurities, urine, fecal matter, pus, etc., is perishable. It is like froth or a bubble or a mirage. It is despised by your enemies. It remains like a useless log of wood on the ground when the prana departs from the body. It is the cause of the pain and suffering. It is your real enemy. You should treat this body

with extreme contempt as dung. Why should you cling to it (abhinivesha) and worship it with scents, powders, and flowers? Do not be foolish and silly in adorning it with fine silks and ornaments. It is dire ajnana (ignorance) only.

Nothing on this earth belongs to me. This body even is not mine. This is true wisdom. "He is my son. She is my daughter. She is my wife. He is my husband. That house is mine. I am rich. I am a kshatriya. I am a brahmin. I am lean. I am fat." This is foolishness of a superior order. This physical body is the rightful property of fishes, jackals and vultures. How can you consider this as yours?

Application of soap to the body, oil to the hair, powder to the face, looking into the mirror thousand and one times a day, wearing rings on the fingers, these and many like these will intensify your attachment to the body. Therefore give up all these things ruthlessly.

A big boil is washed with lotion. Then boric ointment is applied. Then a bandage is put on. Even so this nasty body is a very big boil. It is washed daily. Food is thrust into it. This is the ointment. Clothing is worn. This is the bandage. Sadhus treat this body as a very big boil or wound with an oozing discharge. But the body is worshipped by worldly-minded persons on account of delusion and infatuation.

Wearing clothes is not for enhancing the beauty of the body. This body is a dirty leather-bag filled with various sorts of impurities. Clothing is meant to cover up this impure body. Wear simple clothing. Have sublime thinking. Virtuous life in God or Atman can give you real beauty.

The "beauty" of this body is only superficial. The beauty of the skin is also superficial. You can have undecaying, infinite beauty in God alone.

O man! O woman! Are you not ashamed to call this filthy body "I" and to say: "this is mine," "he is my son," when everything is perishable? Even jackals, vultures and fishes say: "These bodies of human beings are ours." This world or samsara is asara or virasa (essenceless). Give up identification with this feeble, perishable and impure body of five elements whereof the bones are the pillars, which is strung by the nerves, coated over with flesh and blood, covered up by the skin, is of bad odor, full of urine and feces, is ever haunted by dotage and miseries and is the seat of all ills. This identification with the body is the seat of Raurava hell. What is the difference between the worms and the men and women that rejoice in this ill-smelling body?

Maya, the great juggler, prepares a skeleton, covers it with flesh, and hides the various impurities with a shining skin. O deluded man and woman! How long are you going to call this body yours? How long are you going to cling to this perishable body? Give up this identification with the body and identify yourself with your real nature, the Satchitananda Swarupa.

When this body is free from disease and decrepitude, when old age is still far off, when the powers of the senses are not affected and life is not decaying, should not the man and woman of discrimination exert themselves for God-realization? It is useless to dig a well when the house is on fire.

Chapter Five: Woman

Because lust for and exploitation of women by men is virtually the basis of modern “civilization” and society, in Indian texts there is emphasis, sometimes exclusively, on the folly of attachment and addiction to women.

But wherever in this book woman is represented from the view-point of man, with a view to induce vairagya in him, the reader will do well to remember that a similar representation of man from the view-point of woman is implied therein.

Marriage is a curse and a life-long imprisonment. It is the greatest bondage. A bachelor, who is full of passion, imagines that he is miserable because he has no wife. The bachelor who was once free is now tied to the yoke of family and his hands and feet are chained. This is the experience of all married people. They weep after marriage. More beggars are brought forth into this world through lust. He who has understood the magnitude of human suffering will not dare to bring forth a child.

Woman is the source of constant vexation and sorrow and is the greatest bondage. One cannot sacrifice a noble and sublime ideal, Self-realization, for the sake of pleasing a bewitching woman.

Wife is only a luxury—not an absolute necessity. Every householder weeps after marriage. He says: “My son is ailing from typhoid. My second daughter is to be married. I have debts to clear. My wife is worrying me to purchase for her a gold necklace. My eldest son-in-law died recently.” Indeed such miseries are not uncommon to all.

Wife is a sharp knife to cut the life of the husband, *and vice versa*. Anasuya and Savitri are very, very rare. If the gold necklace and Benares silk saris are not supplied at the proper time, the wife frowns at the husband. The husband cannot get his food at the proper time. The wife lies down in the bed under pretext of acute abdominal colic. You can see for yourself this piteous spectacle in your own house or in the house of your friend and in daily experience. Indeed I need not tell you much. Therefore be wedded to Shanti and have Vairagya, the worthy son and Viveka the magnanimous daughter. Eat the delicious fruit of Atma Jnana which can make you immortal.

When your wife is young and beautiful, you admire her curly hair, rosy cheeks, fine nose, shining skin and pearly teeth. When she loses her beauty on account of some chronic incurable malady, you have no attraction for her. You marry a second wife. Had you loved your first wife with atma bhav, had you a comprehensive understanding that the Self in you and in your wife is the same, your love for her would have been pure, unselfish, lasting, undecaying and unchanging. Just as you love old sugar candy or old rice the more, so also you would love your wife more and more, even when she becomes old, as you have atma-bhav through jnana. Jnana

will only intensify prema (love) and make it lasting.

He who is attached to his wife, children and wealth., will not derive even an iota of benefit in the spiritual path. By indiscriminate clinging to wife, children, house, wealth and objects, you have forgotten your essential divine nature. When you die only your actions, good and bad, will follow you. And God will judge you according to your motives and deeds.

A passionate bachelor is ever thinking “When can I live with my young wife?” A dispassionate householder in whom viveka has dawned is ever thinking: “When can I disentangle myself from the clutches of my wife and retire into the ashram for contemplation on the Atma?” The mind alone is the cause of bondage and freedom. Kill this mind and rest in the Atman.

You have become the sporting lap-dog of the caprice of woman. You have become a slave of countless desires, emotions and passions. When are you going to rise up from this miserable state? In the Yoga Vashishtha you will find: “Those persons who, in spite of the knowledge of the non-existence of happiness both in the past and the present in the baneful objects of the world, do yet entangle themselves in them with their thoughts clinging to them, deserve the appellation of an ass, if not a worse one.”

Human love is all hollow. It is mere animal attraction. It is passion only. It is carnal love. It is selfish love. It is ever-changing. It is all hypocrisy and sheer show. The wife does not care for her husband if he happens to be on the roll of unemployment. The husband dislikes his wife when she loses her beauty on account of some chronic disease. Dear man, you can find real, lasting love in God and God alone. His love knows no change.

Remembrance of the image of a woman disturbs the mind. Lust is very powerful. It carries a flowery bow equipped with five soft arrows: mohana, stambhana, unmadana, soshana and tapana (fascination, stupefaction, maddening, emaciation and inflaming). Viveka, vichara, devotion and contemplation will eradicate this dire malady. If lust is conquered, anger, greed, etc., which are all auxiliary weapons, will become ineffective. Love’s principal weapon is woman. If this is destroyed, its followers or retinue can be quite easily conquered. If the commander is killed, then it becomes easy to conquer the soldiers. Conquer passion first. It will then be easy to subdue anger, who is only one of his followers.

When a tiger has once tasted human blood, it always runs after human beings. It becomes a man-eater. Even so, when the mind has once tasted the sexual pleasure, it always runs after that pleasure. It is through constant vichara and Brahmabhavana that the mind has to be weaned out from lustful thoughts and tendencies. Make the mind understand by repeated auto-suggestions and hammering that sexual pleasure is false, worthless, illusory and full of pains. Place before the mind the advantages of a life in the Atman-bliss, power, and knowledge. Make it understand fully that the exalted, eternal life is in the immortal Atma, not certainly in sensual pleasures. When it hears constantly these suggestions, it will slowly leave off its old habits.

In the Bhagavad Gita you will find: “Therefore I tell you: be humble, be harmless, have no pretension, be upright, forbearing, serve your teacher in true obedience, keeping the mind and the body in cleanness, tranquil, steadfast, master of ego, standing apart from the things of the senses, free from self; aware of the weakness in mortal nature, its bondage to birth, age, suffering, dying; to nothing be slave, nor desire possession of man-child or wife, of home or of household; calmly encounter the painful, the pleasant; adore me only with heart undistracted; turn all your thought toward solitude, spurning the noise of the crowd, its fruitless commotion; strive without ceasing to know the Atman, seek this knowledge and comprehend clearly why you should seek it: such, it is said, are the roots of true wisdom: ignorance, merely, is all that denies them” (Bhagavad Gita 13:7-11).

“Men of demonic nature know neither what they ought to do, nor what they should refrain from doing. There is no truth in them, or purity, or right conduct. They maintain that the scriptures are a lie, and that the universe is not based upon a moral law, but godless, conceived in lust and created by copulation, without any other cause. Because they believe this in the darkness of their little minds, these degraded creatures do horrible deeds, attempting to destroy the world. They are enemies of mankind. Their lust can never be appeased. They are arrogant, and vain, and drunk with pride. They run blindly after what is evil. The ends they work for are unclean. They are sure that life has only one purpose: gratification of the senses. And so they are plagued by innumerable cares, from which death alone can release them. Anxiety binds them with a hundred chains, delivering them over to lust and wrath. They are ceaselessly busy, piling up dishonest gains to satisfy their cravings” (Bhagavad Gita 16:7-12).

In the Vishnu Purana, it is said: “If the deluded fool loves the body, a mere collection of flesh, blood, pus, feces, urine, muscles, fat and bones, he will verily love hell itself! To him who is not disgusted with the nasty smell from his own body, what other argument need be adduced for detachment?”

Lust is a potent force, very difficult to get rid of. Really, women should be adored, as Mother-Shakti. She is the creatress, generatrix and nourisher of the universe. She must be revered. In India, religion is being preserved and maintained only through the devotional element of women. Devotion is a fundamental characteristic of Hindu ladies. Hate lust, but not women.

“Where women are honored, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honored, no sacred rite is fruitful” (Manu Smriti).

Chapter Six: World

This is a strange world indeed. This is a very big museum or a wonderful show. The flowers and the Himalayan landscape, the Niagara waterfalls and the blue seas, the sky and the Taj Mahal are all very beautiful and charming. But the earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, lightnings, cyclones and epidemics of influenza and plague are frightfully awful and threatening.

A beautiful wife is very charming. She is very sweet, when she is young, when she smiles, when she puts on beautiful dress, when she sings and plays on the piano or violin, when she dances in the ballroom. But she is horrible to look at when she loses her temper, when she quarrels with her husband for not getting silk saris and gold necklaces, when she is suffering from acute abdominal colic or some such disease and when she becomes old.

The spring is very lovely. The trees are adorned with flowers and fruits. The cool gentle breeze is really exhilarating but the summer is scorching. The winter is bitingly cold.

Man laughs when he gets a son, when he gets married, when he gets some sudden fortune or increase in salary, but he weeps when his wife dies, when he loses his money, when he is thrown out of employment, or when he suffers from some acute disease.

Now, tell me, friend! what do you really find in this illusory world—happiness or pain, joy or sorrow? Have you now understood the illusory nature of Mayic creation? This world is a mere appearance. Mind and the senses are deceiving you every moment. You have mistaken pain for pleasure. There is not even an iota of happiness in this sense universe. Abandon these selfish struggles and schemes for amassing wealth. March directly to that wire-puller who is moving these toys of fleshy human bodies, who is keeping up this big show, who is behind this show. In Him only you will find lasting happiness and perennial joy. Merge in Him by practicing daily meditation and Japa.

This world is as unreal as a shadow, bubble or froth. Why then do you run after the toys of name and fame?

How uncertain is sensual life in this world! How transitory and fleeting is sensual pleasure! Mark how many thousands of people were carried away in the recent Bihar and Quito earthquakes! [This refers to incidents occurred long ago before this book was written.] How many big palatial mansions were destroyed! This is Adhidaivika Tapa. Yet people want to build houses in Simla and Mussoorie and attain immortality there! How foolish these people are! Poor self-deluded souls! Pitiably is their lot! They are earth-worms only as they revel in filth. I pray for them. May God bestow on them viveka, vairagya and bhakti!

Go wherever you may, to Gulmarg or Pahalgam in Kashmir, to Darjeeling or Simla, to Vienna or the Alps. It is all the same. You will not find any real rest. The

charming scenery may soothe the retina for a second. Raga, dwesha, jealousy, passion and greed are everywhere. You will find the same earth, the same sky, the same air, and the same water. And you carry with you the same mind. Imagination and change of places have deceived not a few. O man! O woman! Be contented. Live where you may. But discipline the mind and the senses. Meditate on the inner Self (Antaratma) ceaselessly. Here you will find everlasting peace. The mind will stop deceiving you now.

To me the whole world appears as a ball of fire. To me the whole world appears as a huge furnace wherein all living creatures are being roasted.

Will your son or daughter or friend or relative help you, when you are about to die? Have you got one sincere, unselfish friend in all this world? All are selfish. There is no pure love. But that Lord, your real Friend of friends, Father of fathers, who dwells in your heart, will never forsake you, though you may forget Him. Adore Him in silence, that God of gods, that Divinity of divinities, Highest of the highest. May He bless you with His love, wisdom, power and peace.

As everything is unreal in this world, treat love and respect as poison. Be indifferent. Be reserved and reticent. Give up mixing with others. Live alone and enjoy the Atmic bliss in your heart. You do not want any company, when you can live in the soul.

You must show extreme contempt towards worldly objects. Treat all earthly possessions and sensuous enjoyments as dung, poison, dust, and straw. Turn the mind away from them. Then only you will get jnana.

Give up clinging to this illusory life. Be fearless. Take refuge in vairagya. All fears will melt away. Cling to the feet of the Lord. Cling to the indivisible, unseen, unknown, unknowable Atman or Brahman of the Upanishads.

By indiscriminate clinging to wife, children, house, wealth, and objects, you have forgotten all about your essential divine nature. You have become an atheist. Wife, husband, children and money have become your gods, whereas in reality they are your enemies.

If you develop keen vairagya, if you subdue your senses, and shun all enjoyments and pleasures of this worthless world, mixed as they are with pain, sin, fear, craving, miseries, disease, old age and death then nothing can really tempt you in this world. You will become proof against all temptations. You will have eternal peace, and infinite joy. You will have no attraction for women, men and other worldly objects. Lust cannot possess you then.

If you really want God and God alone, kick this world aside mercilessly. Enough, enough of your tea and coffee, enough of soda and lemonade, enough of father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister and relations. You have had countless fathers and mothers, wives and children in the past. You came alone. You will go alone. None will follow you save your own actions. Realize God. All miseries will come to an end.

He who indiscriminately clings to wife, son and daughter and the objects of the world has no other alternative but to forget all about his divine nature.

The company of worldly-minded people is as dangerous, if not more, as the company of a woman or man to a male or female aspirant.

Worldly men think they are quite happy because they get a few ginger biscuits, some money and a woman. O, if they would just taste the nectar of immortality, what should be the intensity of happiness they should feel!

Dear friend! The past now appears to you as a dream. Then why do you not believe that the present also will appear as a dream in the near future?

All worldly pleasures appear as nectar in the beginning, but become virulent poison in the end. This world is a mela (a kind of fair) as a diversion or sport for two days, and this body is a mere appearance for two seconds. Even if you become the sole monarch of the whole world, you can hardly be in the enjoyment of real bliss and peace.

Life of man on earth is nothing but a life of temptations and tribulations. Those who have real and intense vairagya and strong viveka can hardly be tempted by worldly objects, by Mara and Satan.

Being much hemmed in on all sides and whirling in, different conditions in this ever fluctuating world, you are ever whirling with delusion and afflicted with pains. Now, reflecting upon time which is eternal in its true nature, you cannot but term as a moment a hundred years of life. So how is it that you estimate your life so greatly and fall into all sorts of despondencies through insatiable desires? Who is there so debased in life as you who are spoiled through the gross mind? Fie on your uneven life, which cannot be considered as of any moment.

Comparing this life to the countless universes, you cannot but consider it as an atom—less than that. It is really surprising that you should rate so high this universe full of pains.

Even the greatest of persons will in course of time become the lowest of the low. All enjoyments, great men, and their kindred have appeared in former times. Where then is the certitude of existence of all objects now? The innumerable earths with their countless rulers and wealth have all perished like specks of dust; the devalokas (celestial realms) with their Indras and wealth have all disappeared: no limit can be imposed upon the number of universes, Brahmas and jivas that have come and gone. Where then are all the objects that have vanished out of sight? Where then is the permanency of earthly life? It is only by bestowing your desires on the illusion of the long dream of bodily delusion in the sable night of the unreal Maya that you have debased yourself to this ignorant state.

Enough, enough with all the deaths you have had in previous times. Not one beneficent object exists on this earth either in the beginning, middle or end. Are not all created objects coated over with the varnish of destruction? You enact in your daily life with your body dire sinful acts, painful deeds and illimitable vices.

In youth you are enveloped in ignorance, in adult age you are entangled in the meshes of women or men; in old age you groan under the burden of samsara and debility. You eventually die. Being thus always occupied, when will you find time to devote yourself to the commission of virtuous deeds? How came this Maya to play

and dance in this world? This ghost of your mind dances in the theatre of this universe to the music of the organs. If in the opening and closing of the eyelids many Brahmas are created and destroyed, what are you, a puny person, before them?

You cannot please the world, your wife, husband and children. Remember the story of the old man, his son and the donkey. In the shastras it is said “The pure man is looked upon as a devil, the clever man as presumptuous, the man of forbearance as weak, the strong man as cruel, the absent-minded man as a thief, and the handsome man as lewd. Who can then please the world? There is no means within knowledge wherewith one can satisfy all people. One’s own good should, by all possible means, be looked to. What can the myriad-tongued world do?”

The Blessed Lord says: “A man is said to have transcended the gunas when he does not hate the light of sattwa, or the activity of rajas, or even the delusion of tamas, while these prevail; and yet does not long for them after they have ceased. He is like one who sits unconcerned, and is not disturbed by the gunas. He knows that they are the doers of all action, and never loses this power of discrimination. He rests in the inner calm of the Atman, regarding happiness and suffering as one. Gold, mud and stone are of equal value to him. The pleasant and the unpleasant are alike. He has true discernment. He pays no attention to praise or to blame. His behavior is the same when he is honored and when he is insulted. When men go to war, he does not regard either side as his enemies or his partisans. He feels no lack of anything; therefore he never initiates any action. He who worships me with unfaltering love transcends these gunas. He becomes fit to reach union with Brahman” (Bhagavad Gita 14:26).

To attain to this exalted state of spirituality, you should, in the first instance, fully realize the glory of life in the spirit, or the soul. Then only you will have the requisite strength to kick and spurn this world mercilessly and take to a life of meditation on the Atman and the path of renunciation. Constant remembrance, and meditation on the following verses of the Bhagavad-Gita will help you not a little in the attainment of your goal.

“His mind is dead to the touch of the external: it is alive to the bliss of the Atman. Because his heart knows Brahman his happiness is for ever” (5:21).

“He knows that infinite happiness which can be realized by the purified heart but is beyond the grasp of the senses. He stands firm in this realization. Because of it, he can never again wander from the inmost truth of his being. Now that he holds it he knows this treasure above all others: faith so certain shall never be shaken by heaviest sorrow. (6:21, 22).

“Released from evil his mind is constant in contemplation: the way is easy, Brahman has touched him, that bliss is boundless” (6:28).

“Now I shall describe That which has to be known, in order that its knower may gain immortality. That Brahman is beginningless, transcendent, eternal. He is said to be equally beyond what is, and what is not” (13:12).

“When the dweller in the body has overcome the gunas that cause this body,

then he is made free from birth and death, from pain and decay: he becomes immortal” (14:20).

Dear friends! Do not relax your efforts. Keep the Divine Flame burning steadily. You are nearing the goal now. Thy Light has come. There is Brahmik aura in your face. You have crossed many peaks and insurmountable summits in the spiritual path by dint of untiring and patient sadhana. It is highly creditable indeed. You have indeed made remarkable progress. I am highly pleased with you, O Yogindra! But you will have still to ascend one more peak and go through one more narrow pass. This demands still more patient efforts and strength. You will have to melt your sattwic egoism also. The Brahmakaravritti also should die. Then only will you attain the Bhuma, the highest goal of life. You can do this. I am quite confident.

Chapter Seven:

Essence Of Vairagya-Shatakam

The Vairagya-Shatakam, or the Hundred Verses on Renunciation, of Bhartrihari, are generally grouped into ten divisions: condemnation of desire, futile attempts to abandon sense-objects, condemnation of poverty of a supplicant attitude, delineation of the evanescence of enjoyments, description of the working of Time, comparison of a king to an ascetic, control of mind by stimulating wisdom in it, discrimination of the immutable reality from the mutable, worship of Lord Shiva and the ways of a Self-realized ascetic.

Even though you may roam about heaven and earth with a view to obtain riches at the sacrifice of dignity of birth, rank in life and self-respect, your efforts will not be attended with success; and even if perchance you do succeed, your desires will never be satiated. O ignoble man! What horrible sins and crimes have you not committed just to fill the cavity of your stomach and cover this body with a piece of cloth?

Hope is a flowing river. Desires are its water. Longings are its waves. Attachments for objects are the animals of prey living therein. One cannot cross this river because of the countless whirlpools of ignorance in the waters and the precipitous nature of the river banks. Only yogis of pure mind can cross this river and enjoy the highest Bliss.

When you know fully well that all objects of enjoyments in this world are perishable and would leave you some day, why should you not voluntarily renounce them right now and enjoy eternal Bliss?

There is no miracle more wonderful to accomplish than that of a man of discrimination arising from knowledge of Brahman to wholly discard the wealth which has been giving him enjoyment!

The lives of ascetics living in mountain caves and meditating upon the Supreme Light are indeed blessed, not of those who live in mansions and indulge in sensual pleasures and vain imagination. The lives of ascetics living on alms, sleeping on the bare ground, self-reliant, and having but a worn-out blanket made up of a hundred patches is indeed the most exalted and blessed, not of those eating rich dishes, sleeping on royal beds and wearing excellent costly attire.

While the insects jump into the blazing fire and the fish seizes the bait attached to the hook through sheer ignorance, man who is supposed to have discrimination, and a knowledge of right and wrong does not abandon sensual pleasures that are attended with various defects! How inscrutable is the power of delusion!

Ignorant are those that think that possessing tall buildings, learned sons, tons of gold, a young beautiful lady as wife, and vigorous health constitute real blessedness, for they are deluded to run into the prison house of worldliness, whereas the truly

blessed are those that renounce the world with all its joys and pleasures on account of its transitoriness.

Is it that those Himalayan valleys and the celestial Ganga banks are all engulfed in ruin that shameless men hanker after wealth, women and wine? Is it that roots and herbs are no more available in those mountain-caves or that fruit-bearing trees are all destroyed that these men always want to revel in filth of worldliness?

Arise, O ignorant man, come with me. Let us go to solitary caves where even the name of that ignoble rich man is not heard. Let us live on roots and herbs and forest fruits; drink the cool, refreshing water of the holy Ganga and lie on soft beds of tender twigs and creepers. Let us repose on stone-beds in mountain-caves, meditate deeply day and night upon the All-merciful Shiva, and lead a contented and peaceful life. Let us be happy, let the greedy and the avaricious be miserable. Even if gold equal to Mount Meru in weight were conferred upon me, I will not accept it.

Worldly life is always attended with fear, whereas renunciation alone makes man absolutely fearless.

Birth is eaten by death, blooming youth by old age, contentment by greed, happiness of self-control by the dangerous wiles of young women, virtues by jealous men, kings by the wicked ministers and power itself by transitoriness. Tell me what on earth is not eaten away by something else?

Health of men is subjected to various physical and mental ailments, wealth to peril of robbers, and whatever is born is carried away by death again and again. Enjoyments are fleeting, life is short and youthful happiness too little to quench one's thirst. Oh, this world is unreal. God alone is real. Renounce desires for worldly enjoyments and attain knowledge of the Self.

How dare you say there is happiness in this world, when you have come forth from within an impure womb, when in youth you are polluted by sensual pleasures and mental distraction, and in old age you become the laughingstock of lustful women?

How wonderful that man goes on doing sinful and vicious acts as usual regardless of everything when he knows that old age is waiting like a vulture to devour him, when diseases afflict his body and mind in various ways, and when days are wasted in useless pursuits!

O little man of little faith! Believe me, this world with all its enjoyments and sensual pleasures, is evanescent and fleeting. Why do you vainly search for happiness in these worldly objects and break your legs? If you really want happiness, do as I tell you. Concentrate. Meditate. Realize. Then you will enjoy the highest happiness.

Where are those lovely cities, powerful kings, their feudatory kings or vassals, their cabinet of shrewd ministers, those beautiful women with moon-like faces, those princes and lords of illimitable wealth and fame, those minstrels and their songs of praise and flattery that once flourished?

How strange again that man wants to enjoy the same pleasures of the senses, eat

the same delicious foods, drink the same wine, enjoy the same women, pass the same day and night again, and that disgust for these have not yet arisen!

The span of man's life is very short-only a hundred years. Half of it is spent in sleep, and out of the rest, half is passed away in childhood and old age. Then there are periods of illnesses, bereavements and troubles, and serving others. What happiness can there be for a man in this world?

Who is great—a king or an ascetic? If you are a king of wealth and lands, I too am the king of the highest wisdom. If you are a king of great repute, my reputation resounds in all the four quarters of the globe and is envied greatly by all learned men. If you are cold and indifferent towards me, I too am perfectly indifferent towards you and your riches. If you exercise your kingly powers over riches I do the same over words. If you are a great warrior in the battlefield, I have the skill and the faculty to humble down the proudest of disputants.

O king, if you are rich in royal garment, I am perfectly contented with the bark of trees. He is verily poor whose desires are boundless, while he is truly rich who is contented with his lot.

O let us eat begged food, let the sky be our clothing, let the earth be our bed. We have absolutely nothing to do with the riches.

What a great fool you are to set thyself to winning good graces, so difficult to secure? O mind, wander not hither and thither. Rest in peace. Let things happen, if happen they must. Brood not over the past, nor plan about your future.

O mind, be calm and never desire for sensual enjoyments. Expel delusion and cultivate devotion unto Lord Shiva, the Lord of lords, the God of gods, the Yogi of Yogis. Choose to live on the banks of the Ganga, the celestial river.

O mind, never again think of the frail Goddess of Fortune. Plunge thyself into deep and profound meditation on the Atma.

When there is devotion to Lord Shiva, and fear of birth and death, when there is not the least attachment for family and excitement for sexual passions, when there is the solitude of the forests where the air breathed by worldly men does not exist, what better life is to be wished for?

Meditate on the supreme, infinite, ageless, effulgent Brahman, bereft of all imperfections and attain supreme knowledge and bliss.

When this body is free from disease and old age, when the senses are yet unaffected and life is still young, wise people should leave no stone unturned for the sake of their own supreme good, for it is of little avail to dig a well when the house is already on fire.

In our quest through the nook and corner of the three worlds ever since the beginning of creation, none has come within sight or hearing of a means to control the elephant of his mind, when maddened by the mysterious, deep-rooted infatuation for the female elephant of sense-objects.

If there is a loin-cloth worn out and shredded a hundred times, if one is free from all disquieting thoughts, if there is food, obtained from begging, and sleep on the cremation ground or in the forest, if one is at perfect liberty to wander about

alone without any hindrance, and if one is steadfast in the festive joy of Yoga, what then is worth the rulership of the three worlds?

Lord Buddha's Advice

Lord Buddha describes the amount of suffering which men endure. "The transmigration (samsara) of beings, O mendicants," he says "has its beginning in eternity. The opening cannot be found from which, having come forth, being led astray through ignorance, bound by the thirst for existence, we stray and wander. What do you think, O mendicants, which of the two is more, the water which is in the great oceans, or the tears which have poured from you and have been shed for you while you wandered and went astray in this long transmigration, and sorrowed and wept, because that which you hated was your portion, and that which you loved was not your portion? A mother's death, a father's death, a brother's death, a sister's death, a son's death, a daughter's death, the loss of relations, the loss of property, all this you have experienced through long ages. And while you experienced this through long ages, more tears have poured from you and have been shed by you, while you strayed and wandered on this long pilgrimage, and sorrowed and wept because that which you hated was your portion and that which you loved was not your portion, than all the water which is in the great oceans."

"A wise man should avoid unchastity as if it were a burning pit of live coals; one who is not able to live in a state of celibacy should not commit adultery."

"Never associate with loved or with unloved objects."

"Not to see the loved and to see the unloved is pain."

"Therefore hold nothing dear, for the loss of the loved is evil."

"No bonds have they to whom nothing is loved or unloved."

"From what is loved is born grief, from the loved is born fear."

"To the man freed from loving anything there is no grief, much less fear."

"From affection is born grief, from affection is born fear."

"To the man freed from affection there is no grief, much less fear."

"From pleasure is born grief; from pleasure is born fear."

"To the man freed from pleasure there is no grief, much less fear."

"From desire is born grief; from desire is born fear."

"To the man freed from desire there is no grief, much less fear."

"What laughter, what joy is there, since there is always the burning from desire and from its fulfillment?"

"Enveloped in darkness, seek ye not a lamp?"

"This form (body) is decrepit, a nest of diseases, decaying."

"The putrid body is breaking up, for life ends in death."

"These grayish bones, which are cast away gourds in autumn—having seen them, what pleasure remains?"

"The preoccupied man while in the act of gathering flowers is seized by death and carried off, as a great flood the sleeping village."

"The preoccupied man while in the act of gathering flowers does the God of

Death get into his power, when unsated with lusts.”
(Dhammapada)

Selections From the Viveka Chudamani of Sri Sankaracharya

1. The man who, having with difficulties acquired a human birth and knowledge of the scriptures, through delusion does not exert himself for liberation commits suicide, for he destroys himself by clinging to unreal objects.

2. What greater fool is there than the man who, having obtained a rare human birth, neglects to attain the goal of his life?

3. Vairagya is the desire to abandon all the transitory enjoyments from the physical body up to Brahma, the creator, having already known their defects and shortcomings from observation, hearing, etc.

4. Those fools who are tied to these sense objects by the thick cord of attachment, so very difficult to be broken, are forcibly carried along by their own karma, to heaven, earth and hell.

5. The deer, elephant, moth, fish and black bee—these five meet with their death, being bound to one or other of the five senses, sound, etc., through attachment. What then of man who is bound by all the senses jointly?

6. In point of virulence sense-objects are even more fatal than the poison of a cobra. Poison kills one who drinks it, but sensuous objects can kill one who even looks at them through the eye.

7. He who is free from the terrible bondage of the hankering for the sense objects so very difficult to get rid of, is alone fit for liberation; none else is, even though he is well versed in the six systems of philosophy.

8. Those seekers after liberation who are endowed with only an apparent dispassion (vairagya) and are endeavoring to cross the ocean of samsara or conditioned existence are seized by the shark of hankering; being caught by the neck and forcibly dragged down and drowned.

9. He who has slain the shark of desire with the sword of supreme or mature dispassion, crosses the ocean of samsara without obstacles.

10. Know that death rapidly overtakes that stupid man who treads along the dreadful path of sensual pleasure; but whoever treads the right path under the instruction of a teacher who looks after his spiritual welfare and also his own reasoning attains his end—know this to be true.

11. If you really have a yearning for liberation, abandon sense-objects from a good distance as if they were poison and always develop carefully the amrita-like virtues of contentment, compassion, forgiveness, sincerity, tranquillity and self-control.

12. Whoever passionately attends to the feeding of his own body which is an object for jackals, fishes and vultures to enjoy, and ignores what should always be attempted: liberation from the bondage of ignorance without beginning, commits

suicide thereby.

13. Whoever tries to realize the Self by nourishing his body is like one who crosses a river by catching hold of a crocodile, thinking it to be a log of wood.

14. For one desirous of liberation the infatuation over things like the body is dire death. He who is free from such infatuation is alone fit for liberation.

15. Conquer the infatuation over the objects like the body, wife, children, and so on. Having conquered it the sages attain the supreme state.

16. This gross body is to be contemned for it is made up of skin, flesh, blood, arteries, veins, fat, marrow and bones and is filled with filth.

17. The physical body has got various restrictions regarding caste and order of life. It is subject to various diseases. It is worshipped and honored sometimes. It is censured and insulted at other times.

Four Spiritual Gems

1. Remember the pains of Samsara
2. Remember Death
3. Remember the Saints
4. Remember God

1 and 2 will produce Vairagya. 3 will bring inspiration. 4 will cause attainment of God-Consciousness.

How To Get Vairagya

(Remember These Seven Vital Points)

1. Sensual pleasure is momentary, deceptive, illusory and imaginary.
2. A mustard seed of pleasure is mixed with a mountain of pain.
3. Enjoyment cannot bring about satisfaction of a desire. On the contrary it makes the mind more restless after enjoyment through intense craving.
4. Sensual pleasure is an enemy of Brahma-Jnana
5. Sensual pleasure is the cause for birth and death.
6. This body is nothing but a mass of flesh, bone, and all sorts of filth.
7. Place before the mind the fruits of Self-realization or life in the soul or Brahman or the Eternal, such as Immortality, Eternal bliss, Supreme peace and Infinite knowledge.

If you remember these seven points always, the mind will be weaned from the cravings for sensual pleasures. Vairagya (dispassion), Viveka (discrimination between the real and the unreal) and Mumukshutva (keen longing for liberation from birth and death) will dawn. You should seriously look into the defects of sensual life and into the unreal nature of worldly life.

Read this once daily as soon as you get up from the bed.

Glossary

Abhimana: Egoism; conceit; attachment; I-sense; pride; the function of the ego; the delusion of “me” and “mine;” identification with the body.

Abhinivesha: Clinging to earthly life; will to live; strong desire; false identification of the Self with the body or mind; an instinctive clinging to life and a dread of death.

Acharya: Preceptor; teacher; spiritual teacher/ guide; guru.

Adhibhautika: Elemental.

Adhidaivika: Pertaining, to the heaven or the celestial beings.

Adhyatmika: Adhyatmic; pertaining to the Self (Atma), individual and Supreme.

Ajnana: Ignorance; nescience.

Amrita: That which makes one immortal. The nectar of immortality that emerged from the ocean of milk when the gods churned it.

Ananda: Bliss; happiness; joy. A fundamental attribute of Brahman, which is Satchidananda: Existence, Consciousness, Bliss.

Antaratma(n): Inner Self; conscience.

Apara: Lower; lower knowledge; other; relative; inferior.

Asamprajñata samadhi: Highest superconscious state where the mind and the ego-sense are completely annihilated. Superconscious union; a stage in samadhi wherein one is not conscious of any object and in the mind ceases to function.

Asara: Without essence; dry; barren; worthless.

Ashram(a): A place for spiritual discipline and study, usually a monastic residence.

Atma(n): The individual spirit or Self that is one with Brahman. The true nature or identity.

Atmavichara: Enquiry into the Self.

Atmic: Having to do with the atma–spirit or self.

Atyantabhava: Complete non-existence; extreme unreality, like the horn of a rabbit or a lotus in the sky or the son of a barren woman.

Avatar(a): A fully liberated spirit (jiva) who is born into a world below Satya Loka to help others attain liberation. Though commonly referred to as a divine incarnation, an avatar actually is totally one with God, and therefore an incarnation of God-Consciousness.

Bhakta: Devotee; votary; a follower of the path of bhakti, divine love; a worshipper of the Personal God.

Bhakti: Devotion; dedication; love (of God).

Bhava: Subjective state of being (existence); attitude of mind; mental attitude or feeling; state of realization in the heart or mind.

Bhedabuddhi: The intellect that creates differences: the vyavaharika buddhi that diversifies everything as opposed to the paramartika buddhi that unifies everything.

Bhiksha: Almsfood; food obtained by begging or that is offered to a monk.

Bhuma: The unconditioned Infinite; Brahman.

Brahma: The Creator (Prajapati) of the three worlds of men, angels, and archangels (Bhur, Bhuwah, and Swah); the first of the created beings; Hiranyagarbha or cosmic intelligence.

Brahmabhava(na): Feeling of identity with Brahman, as well as of everything as Brahman.

Brahmacharya: Continence; self-restraint on all levels; discipline; dwelling in Brahman.

Brahmajnana: Direct, transcendental knowledge of Brahman; Self-realization.

Brahmakaravritti: The sole ultimate thought of Brahman alone to the exclusion of all other thoughts that is arrived at through intense Vedantic meditation.

Brahman: The Absolute Reality; the Truth proclaimed in the Upanishads; the Supreme Reality that is one and indivisible, infinite, and eternal; all-pervading, changeless Existence; Existence-knowledge-bliss Absolute (Satchidananda); Absolute Consciousness; it is not only all-powerful but all-power itself; not only all-knowing and blissful but all-knowledge and all-bliss itself.

Buddhi: Intellect; intelligence; understanding; reason; the thinking mind; the higher mind, which is the seat of wisdom; the discriminating faculty.

Chakra: Wheel. Plexus; center of psychic energy in the human system, particularly in the spine or head.

Charanamrita: Water sanctified by bathing the feet of a deity or of a holy man with it.

Chitta-shuddhi: Purity or clarity of the chitta; purification or clarification of the chitta.

Crore: Ten million.

Darshan: Literally “sight” or “seeing;” vision, literal and metaphysical; a system of philosophy (see Sad-darshanas). Darshan is the seeing of a holy being as well as the blessing received by seeing such a one.

Deva: “A shining one,” a god-greater or lesser in the evolutionary hierarchy; a semi-divine or celestial being with great powers, and therefore a “god.” Sometimes called a demi-god. Devas are the demigods presiding over various powers of material and psychic nature. In many instances “devas” refer to the powers of the senses or the sense organs themselves.

Devata: Godhead; god; divinity; celestial being. See Deva.

Dosha: Defect; imperfection; blemish; fault; shortcoming. In Yoga philosophy there are five doshas: lust (kama), anger (krodha), greed (lobha), delusion (moha), and envy (matsarya).

Dosha drishti: Seeing the defects in samsara and samsaric life.

Dwesh: Aversion/avoidance for something, implying a dislike for it. This can be emotional (instinctual) or intellectual. It may range from simple non-preference to intense repulsion, antipathy and even hatred. See Raga.

Ghee: Clarified butter.

Guna: Quality, attribute, or characteristic arising from nature (Prakriti) itself; a mode of energy behavior. As a rule, when “guna” is used it is in reference to the three qualities of Prakriti, the three modes of energy behavior that are the basic qualities of nature, and which determine the inherent characteristics of all created things. They are: 1) sattwa–purity, light, harmony; 2) rajas–activity, passion; and 3) tamas–dullness, inertia, and ignorance.

Indra: King of the lesser “gods” (demigods); the ruler of heaven; the rain-god.

Indriya: Organ. The five organs of perception (jnanendriyas) are the ear, skin, eye, tongue, and nose. The five organs of action (karmendriyas) are the voice, hand, foot, organ of excretion, and the organ of generation.

Jada: Inert; insentient; unconscious; matter.

Janaka: The royal sage (raja rishi) who was the king of Mithila and a liberated yogi, a highly sought-after teacher of philosophy in ancient India. Sita, the wife of Rama, was his adopted daughter.

Japa: Repetition of a mantra.

Jiva: Individual spirit.

Jivanmukta: One who is liberated here and now in this present life.

Jnana: Knowledge; knowledge of Reality–of Brahman, the Absolute; also denotes the process of reasoning by which the Ultimate Truth is attained. The word is generally used to denote the knowledge by which one is aware of one's identity with Brahman.

Jnanagni: Fire of spiritual knowledge or wisdom.

Jnani: A follower of the path of knowledge (jnana); one who has realized—who knows—the Truth (Brahman).

Kalpataru: “The wish-fulfilling tree.” The celestial tree of Hindu mythology, which grants all that a person standing or sitting under it desires.

Kamandalu: A water vessel carried by a traveling sannyasi; usually made of a gourd or coconut shell, it may also be earthenware. The kamandalu and staff (danda) are considered the insignia of the sannyasi along with gerua clothing.

Karanavairagya: Dispassion caused through some misery, disappointment or failure in life.

Karma: Karma, derived from the Sanskrit root *kri*, which means to act, do, or make, means any kind of action, including thought and feeling. It also means the effects of action. Karma is both action and reaction, the metaphysical equivalent of the principle: “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). It is karma operating through the law of cause and effect that binds the jiva or the individual soul to the wheel of birth and death. There are three forms of karma: sanchita, agami, and prarabdha. Sanchita karma is the vast store of accumulated actions done in the past, the fruits of which have not yet been reaped. Agami karma is the action that will be done by the individual in the future. Prarabdha karma is the action that has begun to fructify, the fruit of which is being reaped in this life.

Karma Yoga: The Yoga of selfless (unattached) action; performance of one's

own duty; service of humanity.

Kartritva: Doership; agency of action.

Kundalini: The primordial cosmic energy located in the individual; it is usually thought of as lying coiled up like a serpent at the base of the spine.

Lila: Play; sport; divine play; the cosmic play. The concept that creation is a play of the divine, existing for no other reason than for the mere joy of it. The life of an avatar is often spoken of as lila.

Mahatma: Literally: “a great soul [atma].” Usually a designation for a sannyasi, sage or saint.

Manana: Thinking, pondering, reflecting, considering.

Mara: The embodiment of the power of cosmic evil, illusion, and delusion; Satan.

Mauna(m): Silence—not speaking.

Maya: The illusive power of Brahman; the veiling and the projecting power of the universe, the power of Cosmic Illusion. “The Measurer”—a reference to the two delusive “measures,” Time and Space.

Mayic: Having to do with Maya.

Meru: The mountain, of supreme height, on which the gods dwell, or the mountain on which Shiva is ever seated in meditation, said to be the center of the world, supporting heaven itself—obviously a yogic symbol of the spinal column or merudanda. The name of the central bead on a japa mala (rosary).

Mithyabhimana: False egoism.

Mithyasambandha: False relationship.

Moha: Delusion—in relation to something, usually producing delusive attachment or infatuation based on a completely false perception and evaluation of the object.

Mohana: Fascination.

Moksha: Release; liberation; the term is particularly applied to the liberation from the bondage of karma and the wheel of birth and death; Absolute Experience.

Mrityu(h): Death; of death; a title of Yama, the Lord of Death.

Mukti: Moksha; liberation.

Mumukshutwa: Intense desire or yearning for liberation (moksha).

Nididhyasana: Meditation; contemplation; profound and continuous meditation. It is a continuous, unbroken stream of ideas of the same kind as those of the Absolute. It removes the contrariwise tendencies of the mind.

Niratisaya: Unsurpassed.

Niratisaya Ananda: Eternal, infinite bliss; the highest bliss above which bliss there is none other.

Nirupadhika: Unconditioned; without any limiting adjunct.

Nirvikalpa samadhi: Samadhi in which there is no objective experience or experience of “qualities” whatsoever, and in which the triad of knower, knowledge and known does not exist; purely subjective experience of the formless and qualitless and unconditioned Absolute. The highest state of samadhi, beyond all

thought, attribute, and description.

Nishkama: Without desire.

Nishkama karma: Desireless action; disinterested action; action dedicated to God without personal desire for the fruits of the action; selfless action.

Nitya: Eternal; permanent; unchanging; the ultimate Reality; the eternal Absolute. Secondly: daily or obligatory (nitya karma—that which must be done every day).

Nivritti: Negation; the path of turning away from worldly activity; withdrawal. Literally, “to turn back.” The path of renunciation.

Nivritti Marga: The path of renunciation or sannyasa, of withdrawal from the world.

Padmasana: Lotus posture; considered the best posture for meditation.

Paramarthika (paramarthic): The Absolute; the absolutely real; in an absolute sense, as opposed to vyavaharika or relative.

Paravairagya: Highest type of dispassion; the mind turns away completely from worldly objects and cannot be brought back to them under any circumstances.

Paripurna: All-full; self-contained.

Prakriti: Causal matter; the fundamental power (shakti) of God from which the entire cosmos is formed; the root base of all elements; undifferentiated matter; the material cause of the world. Also known as Pradhana. Prakriti can also mean the entire range of vibratory existence (energy).

Prakritilaya: Absorbed or submerged in Prakriti; the state of yogis who have so identified with the cosmic energy that they are trapped in it as though in a net and cannot separate themselves from it and evolve onwards until the cosmic dissolution (pralaya) occurs in which the lower worlds of men, angels, and archangels (bhur, bhuvah and swar lokas) are dissolved.

Prana: Life; vital energy; life-breath; life-force; inhalation. In the human body the prana is divided into five forms: 1) Prana, the prana that moves upward; 2) Apana: The prana that moves downward, producing the excretory functions in general. 3) Vyana: The prana that holds prana and apana together and produces circulation in the body. 4) Samana: The prana that carries the grosser material of food to the apana and brings the subtler material to each limb; the general force of digestion. 5) Udana: The prana which brings up or carries down what has been drunk or eaten; the general force of assimilation.

Pranayama: Control of the subtle life forces, often by means of special modes of breathing. Therefore breath control or breathing exercises are usually mistaken for pranayama. It also means the refining (making subtle) of the breath, and its lengthening through spontaneous slowing down of the respiratory rate.

Pratishta: Establishment; installation (see Pranapratishtha); firm resting; reputation; fame. Gross matter; earth (from prati: “down upon” and stha: “to stand.”)

Prema: Love; divine love (for God).

Puja: Worship; ceremonial (ritual) worship; adoration; honor. Usually involving

the image of a deity.

Pundit: Scholar; pandita; learned individual.

Purusha: “Person” in the sense of a conscious spirit. Both God and the individual spirits are purushas, but God is the Adi (Original, Archetypal) Purusha, Parama (Highest) Purusha, and the Purushottama (Highest or Best of the Purushas).

Purushartha: The four goals of human life: wealth (artha), desire (kama), righteousness (dharma), and liberation (moksha). The first is the economic value, the second is the psychological value, the third is the moral value, and the fourth is the spiritual value. Human effort; individual exertion; right exertion.

Raga: Blind love; attraction; attachment that binds the soul to the universe. Attachment/affinity for something, implying a desire for it. This can be emotional (instinctual) or intellectual. It may range from simple liking or preference to intense desire and attraction. Greed; passion. See Dwesha.

Raja: King.

Rajas: Activity, passion, desire for an object or goal.

Rajasic: Possessed of the qualities of the raja guna (rajas). Passionate; active; restless.

Rajkumar: Crown prince.

Rajoguna: Activity, passion, desire for an object or goal.

Sadhana: Spiritual practice.

Sadhu: Seeker for truth (sat); a person who is practicing spiritual disciplines. Usually this term is applied only to monastics.

Sakshatakara: Self-realization; direct experience; experience of Absoluteness; Brahmajnana.

Samadhi: The state of superconsciousness where Absoluteness is experienced attended with all-knowledge and joy; Oneness; here the mind becomes identified with the object of meditation; the meditator and the meditated, thinker and thought become one in perfect absorption of the mind.

Samsara: Life through repeated births and deaths; the wheel of birth and death; the process of earthly life.

Samsaric: Having to do with samsara; involved with samsara; partaking of the traits or qualities of samsara.

Samskara: Impression in the mind, either conscious or subconscious, produced by action or experience in this or previous lives; propensities of the mental residue of impressions; subliminal activators; prenatal tendency. See Vasana.

Sannyas(a): Renunciation; monastic life. Sannyasa literally means “total [san] throwing away [as],” absolute rejection.

Sannyasi(n): A renunciate; a monk.

Satchidananda: Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute; Brahman.

Satsang(a): Literally: “company with Truth.” Association with godly-minded persons. The company of saints and devotees.

Sattwa: Light; purity; harmony, goodness, reality.

Sattwa Guna: Quality of light, purity, harmony, and goodness.

Sattwic: Partaking of the quality of Sattwa.

Satya Loka: “True World,” “World of the True [Sat]”, or “World of Truth [Satya].” This highest realm of relative existence where liberated beings live who have not entered back into the Transcendent Absolute where there are no “worlds” (lokas). From that world they can descend and return to other worlds for the spiritual welfare of others, as can those that have chosen to return to the Transcendent.

Shankara: Shankaracharya; Adi (the first) Shankaracharya: The great reformer and re-establisher of Vedic Religion in India around 500 B.C. He is the unparalleled exponent of Advaita (Non-Dual) Vedanta. He also reformed the mode of monastic life and founded (or regenerated) the ancient Swami Order.

Shanti: Peace; calm; tranquility; contentment.

Shastra: Scripture; spiritual treatise.

Shravana: Hearing; study; listening to reading of the scriptures or instruction in spiritual life.

Shuddha: Pure; clear; clean; untainted.

Siddhi: Spiritual perfection; psychic power; power; modes of success; attainment; accomplishment; achievement; mastery; supernatural power attained through mantra, meditation, or other yogic practices. From the verb root sidh–to attain.

Sloka: A Sanskrit verse. Usually it consists of two lines of sixteen syllables each, or four lines of eight syllables each.

Soshana: Emaciation; drying.

Stambhana: Arresting; stopping; stupefaction.

Swarupa: “Form of the Self.” Natural–true–form; actual or essential nature; essence. A revelatory appearance that makes clear the true nature of some thing.

Tamas: Dullness, darkness, inertia, folly, and ignorance.

Tapana: Inflaming; burning.

Tapas: See tapasya.

Tapasya: Austerity; practical (i.e., result-producing) spiritual discipline; spiritual force. Literally it means the generation of heat or energy, but is always used in a symbolic manner, referring to spiritual practice and its effect, especially the roasting of karmic seeds, the burning up of karma.

Tapaswi(n): Ascetic; one who is practicing Tapas.

Trishna: Thirst; craving; desire.

Tyaga: Literally: “abandonment.” Renunciation–in the Gita, the relinquishment of the fruit of action.

Unmadana: Intoxication; maddening.

Upanishads: Books (of varying lengths) of the philosophical teachings of the ancient sages of India on the knowledge of Absolute Reality. The upanishads contain two major themes: (1) the individual self (atman) and the Supreme Self (Paramatman) are one in essence, and (2) the goal of life is the realization/

manifestation of this unity, the realization of God (Brahman). There are eleven principal upanishads: Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya, Brihadaranyaka, and Shvetashvatara, all of which were commented on by Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhavacharya, thus setting the seal of authenticity on them.

Vairagi: A renunciate.

Vairagya: Non-attachment; detachment; dispassion; absence of desire; disinterest; or indifference. Indifference towards and disgust for all worldly things and enjoyments.

Vasana: Subtle desire; a tendency created in a person by the doing of an action or by experience; it induces the person to repeat the action or to seek a repetition of the experience; the subtle impression in the mind capable of developing itself into action; it is the cause of birth and experience in general; the impression of actions that remains unconsciously in the mind.

Vasana(s): A bundle or aggregate of such samskaras.

Vedanta: Literally, “the end of the Vedas;” the Upanishads; the school of Hindu thought, based primarily on the Upanishads, upholding the doctrine of either pure non-dualism or conditional non-dualism. The original text of this school is Vedanta-darshana, the Brahma Sutras compiled by the sage Vyasa.

Vichara: Subtle thought; reflection; enquiry; introspection; investigation; enquiry/investigation into the nature of the Self, Brahman or Truth; ever-present reflection on the why and wherefore of things; enquiry into the real meaning of the Mahavakya Tat-tvam-asi: Thou art That; discrimination between the Real and the unreal; enquiry of Self.

Videha: Bodiless.

Virasa: Without essence.

Vishaya: Object; object of perception (sensory experience) or enjoyment; subject matter; content; areas; range; field-object domain; sphere; realm, scope; matters of enjoyment or experience.

Viveka: Discrimination between the Real and the unreal, between the Self and the non-Self, between the permanent and the impermanent; right intuitive discrimination.

Viveka-purvaka-vairagya: Vairagya arising from discrimination (viveka) between the real and the unreal.

Viveki: One who possesses discrimination (viveka).

Vyavahara: Worldly activity; relative activity as opposed to Absolute Being; phenomenal world; worldly relation; worldly life which is the basis of all one’s practical movements.

Vyavaharika: Practical; phenomenal; empirical; relative.

Yama: Yamaraja; the Lord of Death, controller of who dies and what happens to them after death.

Yogabhrashta: One who has fallen from the high state of Yoga.

Yoga Vashishtha: A classical treatise on Yoga, containing the instructions of the

Rishi Vashishta to Lord Rama on meditation and spiritual life.

Yuga: Age or cycle; aeon; world era. Hindus believe that there are four yugas: the Golden Age (Satya or Krita Yuga), the Silver age (Treta Yuga), The Bronze Age (Dwapara Yuga), and the Iron Age (Kali Yuga). Satya Yuga is four times as long as the Kali Yuga; Treta Yuga is three times as long; and Dwapara Yuga is twice as long. In the Satya Yuga the majority of humans use the total potential—four-fourths—of their minds; in the Treta Yuga, three-fourths; in the Dwapara Yuga, one half; and in the Kali Yuga, one fourth. (In each Yuga there are those who are using either more or less of their minds than the general populace.) The Yugas move in a perpetual circle: Ascending Kali Yuga, ascending Dwapara Yuga, ascending Treta Yuga, ascending Satya Yuga, descending Satya Yuga, descending, Treta Yuga, descending Dwapara Yuga, and descending Kali Yuga—over and over. Furthermore, there are yuga cycles within yuga cycles. For example, there are yuga cycles that affect the entire cosmos, and smaller yuga cycles within those greater cycles that affect a solar system. The cosmic yuga cycle takes 8,640,000,000 years, whereas the solar yuga cycle only takes 24,000 years. At the present time our solar system is in the ascending Dwapara Yuga, but the cosmos is in the descending Kali Yuga. Consequently, the more the general mind of humanity develops, the more folly and evil it becomes able to accomplish.