

THE FIVE POINTS OF YOGA

The Yogi sees life as a triangle; the physical body undergoes birth, growth, change, decay and death. The growth period reaches a plateau at about the age of 18-20 years. In the first years of life, the "youthful period", the rate of cell rejuvenation (anabolic) exceeds the rate of cell decay (catabolic). In the average person, the body maintains an equilibrium of these processes from the age of 20 until around 35. Then the decaying, or catabolic process, begins to take precedence, and the body machine starts its decline. This process later results in "old age" with its accompanying ills and despair. However, Yogis say that we were not born merely to be subject to pain and suffering, disease and death. There is a far greater purpose to life. But, the spiritual investigation of life's purposes requires a keen intellect and a strong will; these are the products of a healthy body and mind. For this reason, the ancient sages developed an integral system to ward off or retard the decaying or catabolic process, and to keep the physical and mental faculties strong. This is the system of Yoga, a simple and natural programme involving five main principles:

- 1) Proper Exercise (Asanas)
- 2) Proper Breathing (Pranayama)
- 3) Proper Relaxation (Savasana)
- 4) Proper Diet (Vegetarian)
- 5) Positive Thinking and Meditation (Vedanta and Dhyana)

Yoga is a life of self-discipline based on the tenets of "simple living and high thinking". The body is a temple or vehicle for the soul, and has specific requirements which must be fulfilled for it to function smoothly and supply the optimum mileage. These requirements may be seen metaphorically in relationship to those of another vehicle. An automobile requires five things: a lubricating system; a battery; a cooling system; fuel; and a responsible driver behind the wheel. Now let us look at the human needs.

Proper Exercise: acts as a lubricating routine to the joints, muscles, ligaments, tendons, and other parts of the body by increasing circulation and flexibility.

Proper Breathing: aids the body in connecting to its battery, the solar plexus, where tremendous potential energy is stored. When tapped through specific Yoga breathing techniques (Pranayama), this energy is released for physical and mental rejuvenation

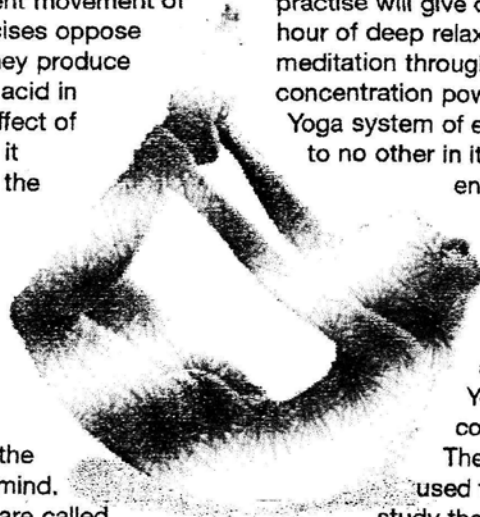
Proper Relaxation: cools down the system, as does the radiator of a car. When the body and mind are continually overworked, their efficiency diminishes. Relaxation is Nature's way of recharging the body

Proper Diet: provides the correct fuel for the body. Optimum utilisation of food, air, water, and sunlight is essential

Positive Thinking and Meditation: puts you in control. The intellect is purified. The lower nature is brought under conscious control through steadiness and concentration of mind.

PROPER EXERCISE - ASANAS

There are numerous modern physical culture systems designed to develop the muscles through mechanical movements and exercises. As Yoga regards the body as a vehicle for the soul in its journey towards perfection, asanas (Yoga physical exercises) are designed to develop not only the body; they also broaden the mental faculties and the spiritual capacities. The fundamental difference between Yoga exercises and ordinary physical exercises is that physical culture emphasises violent movement of the muscles; Yoga exercises oppose violent movements as they produce large quantities of lactic acid in the muscle fibres. The effect of this acid and the fatigue it causes is neutralised by the inhalation of oxygen (deep breathing). Muscle development does not necessarily mean a healthy body, as is commonly assumed. Health is a state wherein all organs function perfectly under the intelligent control of the mind. Yoga physical exercises are called 'Asanas', a term which means steady pose. The Yoga asana is meant to be held for some time. However, this is quite an advanced practice. Initially, our concern is simply to increase body flexibility. Your body is as young as it is flexible. Yoga postures focus first on the health of the spine, its strength and flexibility. The spinal column houses the all-important nervous system, the telegraphic system of the body. By maintaining the spine's flexibility and strength through exercise, circulation is increased and the nerves are ensured their supply of nutrients and oxygen. Asanas work on the internal machinery of the body, the glands and organs, as well as the muscles.



They effect the deeper and more subtle parts of the body. The internal organs receive massage and stimulation through the various movements of the asanas, and are toned into more efficient functioning. The endocrine system (glands and hormones) is rejuvenated, helping to balance the emotions and improve the mental outlook on life.

Hand in hand with the practise of Yoga postures, we practise deep breathing and concentration of the mind. One hour of practise will give one hour of exercise, one hour of deep relaxation and one hour of meditation through developing the concentration powers within the pose. The Yoga system of exercise can be compared to no other in its complete overhaul of the

entire being. Performed slowly and consciously, the asanas go far beyond mere physical benefits, becoming mental exercises in concentration and meditation.

Yogis pay great attention to control of their own minds.

The resultant mental power is used to delve into and directly study the hidden mysteries of life.

They know that the mind is by nature unsteady and, at every moment, it is being affected and stimulated by sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. Therefore, efforts are made to detach the mind from the objects of the senses and draw it inward, freed from all distractions, and kept under control. By practising the yoga postures, not as mere calisthenics, but with awareness - aware of the muscles used, aware of the breathing, aware of the relaxation - the mind is detached from the senses little-by-little. Hatha Yoga, of which asanas are one limb, is the practical approach to Raja Yoga.

PROPER BREATHING – PRANAYAMA

Most people use only a fraction of their potential lung capacity when breathing. They breathe shallowly, barely expanding the rib cage. Their shoulders are hunched; they have painful tension in the upper part of the back and neck, and they suffer from lack of oxygen. These people become tired easily and don't know why. Usually these people are not using their diaphragms properly, breathing with only the top or middle of the lungs.

There are three basic types of breathing. Clavicular breathing is the most shallow and worst possible type. The shoulders and collarbone are raised while the abdomen is contracted during inhalation. Maximum effort is made, but a minimum amount of air is obtained. Intercostal breathing is done with the rib muscles expanding the rib cage, and is the second type of incomplete breathing. Deep abdominal breathing is the best, for it brings air into the lowest and largest part of the lungs. Breathing is slow and deep, and proper use is made of the diaphragm.

Actually, none of these types are complete. A Full Yogic Breath combines all three, beginning with a deep breath and continuing the inhalation through the intercostal and clavicular areas. To get the feel of proper diaphragmatic breathing, wear loose clothing and lie on the back. Place the hand on the upper abdomen, where the diaphragm is located. Breathe in and out slowly. The abdomen should expand outward as you inhale and contract as you exhale. Try to get the feeling of this motion.

To experience a 'Full Yogic Breath', sit up and place one hand on the abdomen and the other on the rib cage. Breathe in slowly, expand the abdomen, then the rib cage, and finally the upper portion of the lungs. Then, breathe out in the same manner, letting the abdomen cave in as you exhale, then the rib cage. This is the best type of breath.

PRANAYAMA

Control of the prana, or subtle energy, leads to control of the mind. Yogic breathing exercises are called Pranayama, which means to control the prana.

The grossest manifestation of prana in the human body is the motion of the lungs. This motion acts like the flywheel that sets the other forces of the body in motion.

Pranayama begins by controlling the motion of the lungs, by which the prana is controlled. When the subtle prana is controlled, all gross manifestations of prana in the physical body will slowly come under control. When we are able to do this, the whole body will be under our control. All diseases of the body can be destroyed at the root by controlling and regulating the prana; this is the secret knowledge of healing. In ordinary breathing we extract only very little prana. But when we concentrate and consciously regulate the breathing, we are able to store a greater amount. The person who has abundant pranic energy radiates vitality and strength; this can be felt by all who come into contact with him or her.



PROPER RELAXATION – SAVASANA

When the body and the mind are constantly overworked, their natural efficiency diminishes. Modern social life, food, work and even entertainment make it difficult for people to relax. Many have even forgotten that rest and relaxation are Nature's way of recharging. Even while trying to rest, the average person expends a lot of physical and mental energy through tension. Much of the body's energy is wasted uselessly. More of our energy is spent in keeping the muscles in continual readiness for work than in the actual useful work done. In order to regulate and balance the work of the body and mind, it is best to learn to economise the energy produced by our body. This may be done by learning to relax.

It may be remembered that in the course of one day, our body usually produces all the substances and energy necessary for the next day. But it often happens that all these substances and energy may be consumed within a few minutes by bad moods, anger, injury or intense irritation. The process of eruption and repression of violent emotions often grows into a regular habit. The result is disastrous, not only for the body, but also for the mind. During complete relaxation, there is little or no energy, or "Prana", being consumed. A little is kept in circulation to maintain the body in normal condition, while the remaining portion is stored and conserved.

In order to achieve perfect relaxation, three methods are used by Yogis: "physical", "mental", and "spiritual" relaxation. Relaxation is not complete until the person reaches that stage of spiritual relaxation, which only advanced spiritual aspirants know.

PHYSICAL RELAXATION

We know that every action is the result of thought. Thoughts take form in action, the body reacting to the thought. Just as the mind may send a message to the muscles ordering them to contract, the mind may also send another message to bring relaxation to the tired muscles. Physical relaxation first begins with the toes and then moves upward. The auto-suggestion passes through the muscles and reaches the eyes and ears at the top. Then, slowly, messages are sent to the kidneys, liver and the other internal organs. This relaxation position is known as Savasana, or the 'Corpse Pose'.

MENTAL RELAXATION

When experiencing mental tension, it is advisable to breathe slowly and rhythmically for a few minutes. Soon the mind will become calm. You may experience a kind of floating sensation.

SPIRITUAL RELAXATION

However much one may try to relax the mind, all tensions and worries cannot be completely removed until one reaches spiritual relaxation. As long as a person identifies with the body and mind, there will be worries, sorrows, anxieties, fear and anger. These emotions, in turn, bring tension. Yogis know that unless a person can withdraw from the body/mind idea and separate him/herself from the ego-consciousness, there is no way of obtaining complete relaxation.

The yogi identifies him/herself with the all-pervading, all-powerful, all-peaceful and joyful Self, or pure Consciousness within. This ability comes with the knowledge that the source of all power, peace and strength is in the Self, not in the body. We tune to this by asserting the real nature, that is "I am that pure Consciousness or Self." This identification with the Self completes the process of relaxation.

PROPER DIET - VEGETARIAN

The Yogic diet is a lacto-vegetarian one, consisting of pure, simple, natural foods which are easily digested and promote health. Simple meals aid the digestion and assimilation of food. Nutritional requirements fall under five categories: protein, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals, fats, and fibre. One should have a certain knowledge of dietetics in order to balance the diet. Eating foods first-hand from nature, grown in fertile soil (preferably organic, free from chemicals and pesticides, and not genetically modified) will help ensure a better supply of these nutritional needs. Processing, refining and over-cooking destroy much food value.

There is a cycle in Nature known as the "food cycle" or "food chain". The sun is the source of energy for all life on our planet; it nourishes the plants (the top of the food chain) which are eaten by animals (herbivores or vegetarian) which are then eaten by other animals (carnivores).

The food at the top of the food chain, being directly nourished by the sun, has the greatest life-promoting properties. The food value of animal flesh is termed a "second-hand" source of nutrition, and is inferior in nature. All natural foods (fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts and grains) have, in varying quantities, different proportions of these essential nutrients. As a source of protein, these are easily assimilated by the body. However, second-hand sources are often more difficult to digest and are of less value to the body's metabolism.

Many people worry about whether they are getting enough protein, but neglect other factors. The quality of the proteins is more important than the quantity alone. Dairy products, legumes, nuts and seeds provide the vegetarian with an adequate supply of protein. The high protein requirement still being used by many government agencies is based on antiquated data and has been scientifically disproved many times in the laboratory. A health motto is "Eat to live, not live to eat." It is best if we understand that the purpose of eating is to supply our being with the life-force, or Prana, the vital life energy. So the greatest nutritional plan for the Yoga student is the simple diet of natural fresh foods.

However, the Yogic diet is actually even more selective than this. Concerned with the subtle effect that food has on the mind and astral body, the yogi avoids foods which are overly stimulating. Those which render the mind calm and the intellect sharp are preferred. One who seriously takes to the path of Yoga would avoid ingesting meats, fish, eggs, onions, garlic, coffee, tea (except herbal), alcohol and drugs.

Any change in diet should be made gradually. Start by substituting larger portions of vegetables, grains, seeds and nuts until finally all flesh products have been completely eliminated from the diet.

The Yogic diet will help you to attain a high standard of health, keen intellect and serenity of mind.

POSITIVE THINKING AND MEDITATION

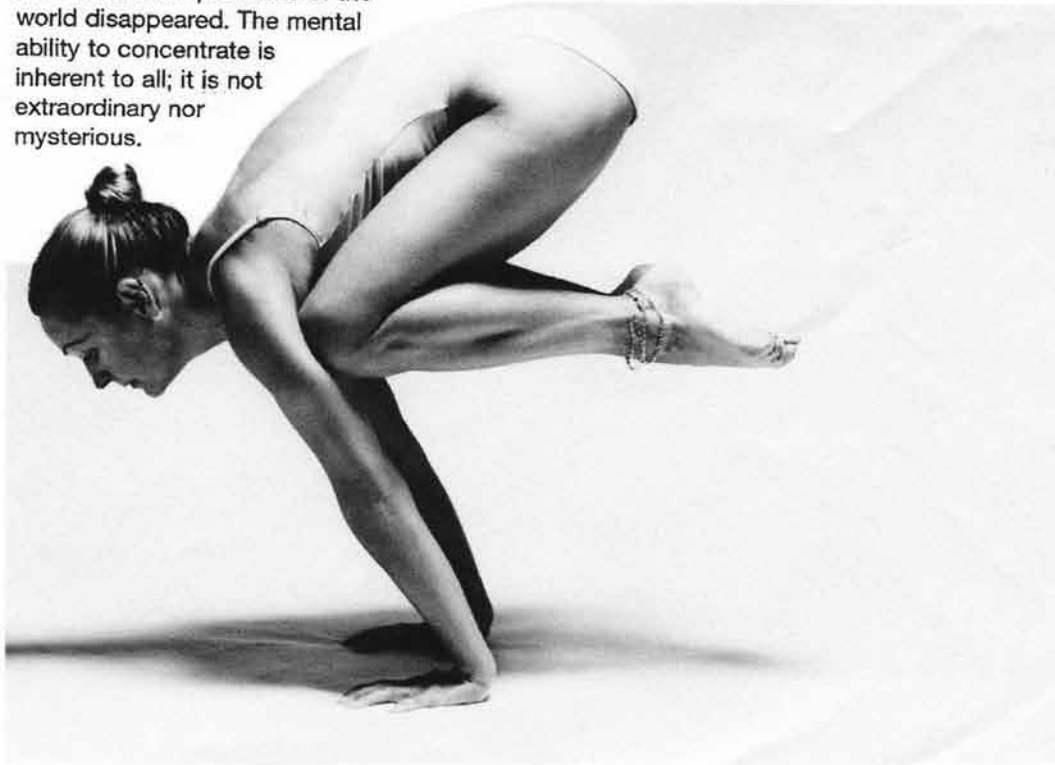
VEDANTA AND DHYANA

When the surface of a lake is still, one can see to the bottom very clearly. This is impossible when the surface is agitated by waves. In the same way, when the mind is still, with no thoughts or desires, you can see the 'Self. This is called 'Yoga'.

We can control the mental agitation by concentrating the mind either internally or externally. Internally, we focus on the 'Self' or the consciousness of 'I am'. Externally, we use other points of focus.

When we take up some recreation such as golf, through concentration on putting the ball into the hole, the other thoughts are slowed down or stilled. We feel we have played a good game when we have achieved perfect concentration. The happiness we experience comes, not because of the ball being put into the hole eighteen times, but because the mind has been concentrated eighteen times. At that time, all the worries and problems of the world disappeared. The mental ability to concentrate is inherent to all; it is not extraordinary nor mysterious.

Meditation is not something that a yogi has to teach you; you already have the ability to shut out thoughts. The only difference between this and meditation (the positive way), is that generally we have learned to focus the mind externally on objects. When the mind is fully concentrated, time passes unnoticed, as if it did not exist. When the mind is focused, there is no time! Time is nothing but a modification of the mind. Time, space, and causation and all external experiences are mental creations. All happiness achieved through the mind is temporary and fleeting; it is limited by nature. To achieve that state of lasting happiness and absolute peace, we must first know how to calm the mind, to concentrate and go beyond the mind. By turning the mind's concentration inward, upon the Self, we can deepen that experience of perfect concentration. This is the state of Meditation.



KARMA YOGA

This path involves the dedication of all work as an offering to God, with no thought of personal reward. A karma yogi attempts to see the Lord dwelling in all living beings. By renouncing the fruits of one's action, the action becomes unselfish. By not thinking of our own personal needs and desires, and by trying to help everybody around us, including human beings, animals, the planet and the whole world, the heart is expanded, egoism destroyed, and One-ness realised.

Karma yoga can be practised at all times, under all conditions, anywhere there is a desire to do selfless service (home, office, construction site, or ashram).

RAJA YOGA

This is the scientific, step-by-step approach to yoga. Systematically the mind is analysed. Techniques are applied to bring it under control and to achieve higher states of consciousness. In the two sub-paths of raja yoga are hatha yoga and kundalini yoga the prana (life force) is mastered first, and the dormant Kundalini energy is awakened. Then the mind comes under control automatically.

Questions:

1. Describe the four paths of yoga.
2. Which one is the most direct, and which the easiest one?
3. Should one choose one path, or can one do several of the four yogas simultaneously?

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PRANAYAMA OR YOGIC BREATHING

The sage Patanjali defines Yoga as "Chitta Vritti Nirodha" (*Raja Yoga Sutras*, 1.2) meaning, "Yoga is the suspension of the modifications of the mind". Controlling the mind is not possible without controlling the prana, as the two are intimately connected. We can easily see this connection if we observe the breath of a person engaged in deep thinking or meditation. The breathing will be slow or, in some cases, suspended altogether. Alternatively, when the mind is affected by negative emotions, it will be seen that the breathing becomes irregular and unsteady. These observations strongly indicate the interdependence and interaction of prana and mind.

PRANAYAMA OR YOGIC BREATHING

Hatha Yoga gives first attention to the physical body, which it sees as the vehicle of the soul's existence and activity. Purity of mind is not possible without purity of the body in which it functions, and by which it is affected. By the practice of asanas and pranayama, the mind becomes one-pointed and one can progress quickly in concentration and meditation.

The nature of the mind is to be unsteady; it is affected every waking moment by things it sees, hears and experiences through the senses. In order to get control over the mind Hatha Yoga prescribes various pranayama, or breathing techniques.

MAGIC IN BREATHING

Singing encourages people to breathe out, to release air from the lungs in a moderate and orderly manner. You can't sing without exhaling gradually. When you exhale, you expel impurities and empty the lungs for a fresh and involuntary intake of air.

Real breath control means controlling the way we exhale, not the way we inhale. Energy is best renewed by the orderly release of breath, not by strenuously pumping the lungs full of air. Thus, in sustained physical exertion your power is enhanced when you concentrate on the slow expulsion of air from the lungs.

Speakers, singers, swimmers, and runners know this. The rest of us can verify it by a simple test. When you step into a cold shower, the tendency is to gasp and tense the muscles. This only increases the torture. Instead, if you try breathing out in a steady purring breath, you will be amazed at how slightly the temperature of the water affects you. Exhaling helps the body accommodate itself to change.

The next time you have something heavy to lift, try to take a full, deep breath just before you lift. Much of the weight oddly disappears.

Those who have played the game of levitation have found that a person or a table can be hoisted by the mere finger action of a group, if all present breathe deeply and simultaneously. This illustrates the mysterious aid that comes from conscious and calculated use of breathing. Careful breath control, with the emphasis on exhaling, aids relaxation. Most of us are only half-breathers. We breathe in because we can't help it, but we fail to breathe out completely. The result is that we sigh a lot, a sign of our need to exhale. The sigh is nature's way of deflating the lungs when we have neglected the breathing apparatus long enough.

Normally, we breathe without apparent effort - about 18 times a minutes, 1,080 times an hour, 25,290 times a day. The more air exhaled, the more we can breathe in. The amount we take in, measured by a watch-size instrument called a spirometer, is known as vital capacity.

The increase of vital capacity is the object of all breath discipline. Consciousness of breathing is a helpful habit to cultivate. Breathe out before you begin any task. Once you grasp the idea of correct breathing, you will find many rewards in terms of health and vitality.

Even in this day of escalators and elevators, there are still stairs to climb, usually by puffing and panting. But try this. As you climb the first two steps, keeping the shoulder blades in position, breathe in. On the next two steps, breathe out. With a rhythm of two in, two out, you can glide up flights of stairs, and arrive at the top without gasping for breath. By quickening the breath rhythmically as we climb, we expel a greater amount of carbon dioxide and take in a greater supply of oxygen.

The principle can be confirmed further as you walk up a steep hill. Breathe in as you take three paces and breathe out with the next three - three in, three out, keeping the shoulder blades in position. A hill that otherwise would leave you gasping for breath, can be easily accomplished by this simple change in breathing tempo.

If some strenuous exertion without the right alteration in your breathing leaves you 'out of breath', there is a simple way to get your breath back. Breathe faster, panting like a dog for a few seconds. Then take a couple of full easy breaths. Again, pant and follow with a few full breaths. This will quieten your breathing more rapidly than the forced effort to breathe naturally.

When a runner gets his 'second wind', it means that, at a certain point, he has unconsciously assessed his needs and countered the faster accumulation of carbon dioxide by a deeper and steadier intake of oxygen.

What the majority of us need, is a breathing programme that can help us at our desks. Tension, and even depression, may be overcome by the following exercise: place the shoulder blades together as much as you can without strain, then breathe out gently and fully. Pause, then inhale with a deep, slow gentle breath, until the lungs are comfortably filled. Breathe out slowly through the nose with a long sigh, without altering the position of the shoulder blades. Do this a dozen times and your tension should disappear. You have stimulated your brain, and eased the nerves with a full supply of life-giving oxygen.

In 'stage-fright', the person suffers from a mild form of suffocation. Actors and experienced public speakers know the benefits of breath control. All of us can profit from the actor's practice of stopping in the wings, and taking several full breaths before entering a scene. Another effective way to practise controlled breathing is counting. Sit comfortably in an upright position, breathe in gently and steadily to the count of 4. Pause a second and then breathe out to the count of 8. Next time, breathe in to the count of 5 and out to the count of 10. Continue this practice until you see notable progress. By the time you are able to breathe out to the count of 20, you will find that humming helps to limit the amount of air you release. This is called Brahmari Pranayama.

Of the many benefits of proper breathing, one of the greatest is increased bodily awareness.

Conscious breathing brings with it consciousness of posture; you realise that you cannot sit hunched up and breathe well.

The average person goes around with his shoulder blades apart. By drawing the blades close together, you free the abdominal region of unnecessary pressure while permitting the proper movement of the diaphragm. You are immediately relieved of much of the burden of breathing. Ordinarily we use part of our breath intake to lift the weight off our ribs and chest. Pulling the shoulder blades close together gives a feeling of lightness in the abdominal region and helps us breathe deeply.

In the strained circumstances of modern life, automatic breathing is not sufficient for our needs. Sedentary or monotonous work habits call for new and consciously controlled rhythms. It will benefit you to test daily some of the suggestions offered here. Experience will demonstrate the constructive use of this great power which we now overlook.

Questions:

1. How does Patanjali define Yoga?
2. What is Prana?
3. Explain the relationship between prana, breath and mind.
4. How will Pranayama help in the control of the mind?

BRAHMAN, BRAHMA AND THE THREE GUNAS

BRAHMAN

Brahman is the Infinite, Uncaused, Eternal, Supreme Reality of the Vedanta philosophy. It is said to be beyond all qualities or attributes; beyond subject and object; to be the source of Being, Intelligence, and Bliss (Sat, Chit, Ananda). Brahman is the screen onto which the cosmic drama (Maya) is projected. It is the upholder of the drama (creation), but it remains unaffected by it.

Brahman cannot be defined or known by any process of the intellect. To define is to confine; as Brahman is the Absolute, what could there be to confine it?

The great non-dualistic philosopher Sankaracharya stated categorically that, "Brahman is real, The universe is unreal, Brahman and Atman (Spirit, Soul, Pure Consciousness) Are One." With his masterful statement, "Only That is Real That Does Not Change Nor Cease to Exist," he points out the complete unreality of the Universe and all things within it

ATMAN, UPADHI, JIVA

Atman is the Absolute Consciousness in the individual: It is one with Brahman, and unchanging, without limitations. It is identical with Brahman. Though Brahman and Atman are identical terms, Brahman refers to the Absolute when seen in the whole universe, while Atman refers to the Absolute when seen in the individual.

Jiva is the individual soul. It is Atman that identifies with the Upadhis (limiting adjuncts).

The Upadhis, or limiting adjuncts, are that which veil the consciousness. The Upadhis are the body and mind. Maya manifests in the individual in the form of Avidya (ignorance), Avidya makes us forget that we are the Self (Atman), and we identify with the Upadhis. The self identifying with the Upadhis is called Jiva. Jiva believes itself to be bound and limited by the Upadhis, and consequently suffers. Jiva will have to be born and reborn again until realising his true nature (Atman) again.

ISHWARA

Brahman associated with Maya is called Ishwara, or Saguna Brahman. This corresponds to the personal God of the various religions. According to non-dualistic Vedanta, Ishwara is one step below Brahman. His is, however, the highest symbol or manifestation of Brahman in the relative world.

"Ishwara represents the highest concept a human mind can hold and the human heart can love," said Swami Vivekananda. Ishwara is endowed with such qualities as omniscience, omnipresence, universal lordship, and unlimited power.

Brahman cannot be described by any specific attribute. It is, therefore, Ishwara and not the pure Brahman, who, in his different aspects is called Creator (Brahma), Preserver (Vishnu), and Destroyer (Siva) of the Universe. From the standpoint of pure Brahman, there is no creation; hence, none of the attributes ascribed to Ishwara apply to Brahman. Just as gold without dross cannot be used for ornaments, so pure Brahman, without the dross of Maya, cannot create the Universe. Ishwara is, as it were, a corruption or deterioration of Brahman.

Within the teachings of Christianity, we find references to the Brahman and Ishwara. "There is God (Ishwara) and above this is the Godhead (Brahman)," states Eckhart, "God acts, Godhead does not." The Bhagavad Gita describes Ishwara as "Standing equally in all beings." Ishwara, then, is the personal God, the God to whom we all pray. Brahman is above and outside all mental concepts. It cannot be objectified.

BRAHMA

'Brahma' is the creative aspect of the Hindu Trinity (the others, as mentioned previously, being Vishnu, the Preserver, and Siva, the Destroyer). These three aspects considered together are called Ishwara. Other names employed for Brahma are Mahat (The Great), Hiranyagarbha, Prajapati, Cosmic Mind, Sutratma.

THE THREE GUNAS

Maya, or Prakriti, is said to consist of the three gunas (qualities): Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. The three gunas have been compared to three strands which constitute the rope of Maya, which binds us to this illusory world. Maya has no existence independent of the gunas. They are present in varying degrees in all objects gross or subtle, including the mind, intellect, and ego. The gunas can be seen as operating at the physical, mental, and emotional levels. Everything within this universe of Maya is composed of the three gunas.

At the end of a cycle, when the universe is drawn back into a state of non-manifestation (Night of Brahma), the gunas are in a state of equilibrium. At this time, Maya, in association with Brahma, exists as cause alone, without any of its manifestations. Then, due to karmic factors, the equilibrium of the gunas is disturbed and they begin to assert their individual characteristics. Different objects, subtle and gross, come into existence. The tangible universe begins to manifest. This projection of the manifested universe is known as 'The Day of Brahma'.

Sattva manifests as purity and knowledge.
Rajas manifests as activity and motion.
Tamas manifests as inertia and laziness.
These three 'qualities of nature' always exist together. There cannot be pure Sattva without Rajas and Tamas, nor pure Rajas without Sattva and Tamas, nor pure Tamas without Sattva and Rajas. The difference between

one being and another lies in the various preponderances of the gunas. As long as a person is attached to any of the gunas, he remains in bondage. Even the gods and angels are under the influence of them; the gods encompassing a preponderance of Sattva, humans of Rajas, and sub-human beings of Tamas. Sattva binds a person with attachment to happiness. Rajas binds with attachment to activity, and Tamas with attachment to delusion. Brahma alone stands above the three gunas, and is untouched by Maya.

Yoga represents the scientific approach to the attainment of truth by going beyond nature and the gunas. The following story is often given to illustrate the three gunas.

The gunas may be compared to three robbers who waylay a man in a forest. Tamas, one of the robbers, wants to destroy him. But, at the persuasion of Rajas, the second robber, he is bound hand and foot to a tree and relieved of all his treasures. After some time, Sattva, the third robber, returns, frees the man from his bondage, takes him gently out of the forest, and sets him on the highway leading to home. Then Sattva takes leave of him because he too, being a robber, does not dare accompany the man out of the forest, for fear of the police. Tamas wants to destroy a man. Rajas binds him to the world, and robs him of his spiritual treasures. Sattva, too, must be given up if the aspirant seeks total freedom. Truth lies beyond the three gunas.

Questions:

1. What is Brahma?
2. Define Vedanta according to the three statements of Sankaracharya.
3. What is the difference between Ishwara and Brahma?
4. Describe what is Maya.
5. Describe the three Gunas.

THE EIGHT LIMBS OF RAJA YOGA

Raja Yoga is the path of systematic analysis and control of the mind. Compiled by Patanjali Maharishi, Raja Yoga is also known as 'Ashtanga' Yoga, because its practices can be divided into eight limbs:

1. YAMAS - RESTRAINTS

- a) **Ahimsa** - non violence, non-injury
- b) **Satya** - truthfulness; non-telling of lies
- c) **Brahmacharya** - chastity, sublimation of the sexual energy
- d) **Asteya** - non-stealing, non-covetedness, lack of jealousy
- e) **Aparigraha** - non-accepting of gifts or bribes

2. NIYAMA - OBSERVANCES

- a) **Saucha** - purity (external and internal)
- b) **Santosha** - contentment
- c) **Tapas** - austerity
- d) **Swadhyaya** - study of religious scripture
- e) **Ishwara-pranidhana** - worship of the Lord, surrender of the ego.

Together the Yamas and Niyamas form high moral character and ethical conduct. The mind is uplifted and purified for deep meditation.

3. ASANA - STEADY POSE

For spiritual practice, as for any other pursuit in life, a healthy and strong system is also essential. Steady mind presupposes steady body. Attain one-pointedness of mind and forget about the body.

4. PRANAYAMA - CONTROL OF THE VITAL ENERGY

The physical nerves as well as the astral energy tubes (nadis) must be pure and strong enough to withstand various mental phenomena and disorientations that can occur during practice. In the process of turning the mind inward, old negativities may surface. On rare occasions they may even appear symbolically in the form of visions. A frail person may discontinue sadhana rather than confront these aspects of the sub-conscious.

5. PRATYAHARA - WITHDRAWAL OF THE SENSES FROM OBJECTS

6. DHARANA - CONCENTRATION

Concentrating the mind upon either an external object or an internal idea, to the exclusion of all other thoughts.

7. DHYANA - MEDITATION

Meditation is defined as 'an unbroken flow of thought towards God.'

8. SAMADHI - SUPER-CONSCIOUS STATE

It is sublime beyond description: beyond the mind to grasp. Samadhi transcends all ordinary, sensory experience as well as time, space and causation. Samadhi represents the goal of all existence. It is what all living beings are moving towards.

KARMA

KARMA

The word 'Karma', from the Sanskrit root 'kri', signifies action or deed, whether physical or mental (including thought). Karma is the sum total of our acts, both in the present life and preceding ones. Karma means not only action, but also the result of the action. The consequence is really not a separate thing, but is a part of the action.

Wherever there is a cause, an effect must be produced. A seed is a cause for the tree, which is the effect. The tree produces seeds, and becomes the cause for the seeds. The cause is found in the effect and the effect is found in the cause. The effect is similar to the cause. This is the universal chain of cause and effect which has no end.

There is no such thing as blind chance or accident. If your finite mind is not able to find the cause of an event, it does not mean that this is accidental.

Everything in Nature obeys this law of cause and effect. The laws of gravitation, cohesion, adhesion, attraction and repulsion, the law of like and dislike, the laws of relativity, continuity, and association on the mental plane operate in strict accordance with this law of cause and effect.

From the vibration of an electron to the revolution of a planet, from a mango falling to the ground to the powerful willing of a yogi, from the motion of a runner to the movement of the radio-waves in the subtle ether, from the transmitting of a telegraphic message to the telepathic communication of a yogi in the thought-world, all these are the effects of invisible forces that work in concord with the law of cause and effect. No event can occur without having a positive, definite cause. The breakout of a war, the rise of a comet, the occurrence of an earthquake or a volcanic eruption, the breakout of an epidemic, lightning, floods, diseases in the body, fortune, misfortune, all have got definite causes behind them.

The law of causation including the law of action and reaction, the law of compensation, and the law of retribution - all come under one general heading: the Doctrine of Karma.

THE LAW OF ACTION AND REACTION

If there is an action, there must be a reaction. The reaction will be of equal force and of similar nature. Every thought, desire, imagination, sentiment causes reaction. Virtue brings its own reward; vice brings its own punishment. This is the law of reaction. God neither punishes the wicked nor rewards the virtuous. It is their own karma that brings reward and/or punishment. No one is to be blamed.

This law operates everywhere with unceasing precision and scientific accuracy. The law of action and reaction operates both in the physical and mental planes.

THE LAW OF COMPENSATION

The law of compensation operates everywhere in nature. The seed breaks and a big tree grows. Fuel burns and is destroyed, but there is heat. The law of compensation keeps balance and establishes peace, equilibrium and harmony in nature. No one can defy this relentless, irresistible law. If you do a negative action, you will reap a bad fruit in compensation.

If you take an individual life as an isolated event that begins with the birth of the physical body and terminates with its death, you cannot find any correct explanation or solution for the affairs of life. However, your present life is nothing, when compared with the whole soul-life. It is momentary, a mere fragment. Whenever you want to find the cause or antecedent of anything, you will have to go deep into the affairs of the eternal soul-life. The law of compensation embraces the whole soul-life. Life does not end with the disintegration of this physical body. There is reincarnation. There have been countless previous lives also. You will have to take into consideration the widest view of the life of the soul. Then the line is quite clear. Then you will find a perfect, satisfactory solution for all the intricate and complicated affairs of life; then there will be no room for grumbling or lamentation or misapprehension.

REINCARNATION

I died from the mineral and became a plant;
I died from the plant, and reappeared in an animal;
I died from the animal and became a man.
Wherefore then should I fear?
When did I grow less by dying?
Next time I shall die from the man,
That I may grow the wings of angels.
From the angel, too, must I seek advance;
All things shall perish save His face.
Once more shall I wing my way above the angels;
I shall become that which entereth not the imaginations.
Then let me become naught, naught, for the harp string crieth unto me,
verily unto Him do we return.

- Jala Al-Din Rumi (Sufi Mystic Poet)

In the above words, the great mystical poet Rumi beautifully explains the essence of the Reincarnation doctrine. The purpose of life, all the great religions tell us, is 'to realise God or Self'. This cannot be achieved in the duration of but one lifetime. It takes innumerable lifetimes to reach the goal of spiritual evolution, passing from the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms, and finally to Man. Only at this stage is it possible to gain release from the wheel of birth-death and rebirth.

BODY - A VEHICLE FOR THE SOUL

The union of the soul with a particular body is known as birth, and its separation therefore is called death. When the soul leaves its physical sheath, it transmigrates into another body - human, animal, or even vegetable - according to its merits.

The process of transmigration continues - we cannot say through how many lives - until the soul, being purged of all its impurities and having acquired a true and full knowledge of the imperishable nature of the soul, attains moksha, or final emancipation, and enjoys eternal bliss.

PROOFS FOR REBIRTH

Love at first sight is a feeling from a previous life. These souls loved before. They remember it, and feel as though they have met each other before. Such loves are not simply a matter of sexual attraction, and are seldom broken off. Buddha told his wife of her kindness to him in a previous birth and also gave details of the previous lives of other people.

A human being can be compared to a plant in that each grows, flourishes and dies, but not completely. The plant leaves behind it the seed,

which produces a new plant. Each person leaves his karma behind - the good and bad actions of his life. The physical body may die and disintegrate, but the subtle impressions do not die. Each one of us must take birth again to enjoy (or suffer) the fruits of these actions, pay our debts, etc.

Every child is born with certain tendencies or predilections generated by past conscious actions. Child prodigies are people who have made deep grooves in their minds by learning something, such as music or mathematics, in one birth, and carry these impressions to the next birth. Heredity, or genetics, cannot explain all these inequalities and diversities. The family of geniuses are quite often ordinary people. A person develops tendencies and aptitudes in several births, and becomes a genius in one birth. Buddha gained experience in many births, and became a buddha (enlightened one) only in his last birth. All virtues cannot be developed in one birth. They must be cultivated by gradual evolution. The existence of saints and adepts indicates that there is rebirth.

THE LAW OF RETRIBUTION

Each wrong action brings its punishment, in accordance with the law of retribution. The law of causation, law of action and reaction, law of compensation, and law of retribution all operate together. He who hurts another person hurts himself first. He who cheats another cheats himself first.

Remember that God is neither partial nor unjust. God is not responsible for the wealth of one person nor the poverty of another. You suffer on account of your own actions.

There is nothing chaotic or capricious in this world. Things do not happen by accident or chance in a disorderly manner. They happen in regular succession, following each other in a regular order. There is a certain definite connection between what is being done now by you and what will happen in the future. Sow always the seeds which will bring pleasant fruits and which will make you happy herein and hereafter.

HOW KARMA IS FASHIONED

Each human being is threefold in nature, consisting of Ichha, Jnana, and Kriya. Ichha is desire or feeling. Jnana is knowing. Kriya is willing. These three fashion the individual's Karma. The person knows objects like chairs, trees, etc. He feels joy and sorrow. He wills to do this or not to do that.

Behind the action, there are desire and thought. A desire for an object arises in the mind. Then you think how to get it; then you exert to possess it. Desire, thought, and action always go together. They are the three threads that are twisted into the cord of Karma.

Desire produces karma. You work and exert to acquire the objects of your desire. Karma produces its fruits as pain or pleasure. You will have to take birth after birth to reap the fruits. This is the Law of Karma.

HOW DESTINY IS BUILT UP

Thinking is the real karma. It materialises and becomes an action. If you allow the mind to dwell on elevating thoughts, you will develop a noble character. If you entertain negative thoughts, you will develop a base character. Therefore, shape your character by cultivating sublime thoughts.

You sow an action and reap a habit. You sow a habit and reap a character. You sow a character and reap a destiny. Hence, destiny is of your own making. You can undo it by doing virtuous actions, and changing your mode of thinking.

People of gigantic will have developed this will through countless births. The potencies of their thoughts and actions collect and, in one birth, out bursts a spiritual giant like Buddha, Jesus, and Sankara. No action goes in vain. Patient, indefatigable effort is needed. You will have to watch every thought, word, and action.

The human will is ever free. Selfishness has weakened it. One can render ones will pure, strong, and dynamic by getting rid of base desires, and likes and dislikes.

ASTRAL BODY AND THE MYSTERY OF MIND

Most people believe only what their senses perceive. They accept as unquestionable, knowledge acquired through these sources. They do not understand that their senses are imperfect instruments and that the mind is constantly employed in correcting mistaken reports of the senses.

Vedanta philosophy views the world as unreal. It has no independent reality without the senses and mind of the observer and, hence, is true only in relative terms.

Even extrasensory perception (ESP) is limited and imperfect. It is dependent for its knowledge upon the mind, which itself is imperfect. The highest Truth is perceived only when we transcend the three dimensional plane created by the senses and mind and go beyond time and space.

Teleportation, telepathy, and many other things that cannot be clearly explained, are, in reality, phenomena of a four dimensional world.

The astral body is composed of nineteen elements:

- 5 organs of action (karma indriyas)
- 5 organs of knowledge (jnana indriyas)
- 5 Pranas
- 4 elements of Antahkarana (inner instrument): mind (manas), intellect (buddhi), subconscious (chitta) and ego (ahamkara).

The astral and physical bodies are connected by a subtle cord along which vital current passes. Physical death ensues when this cord is severed. Mind and matter are the veiling power of the consciousness that creates the world. This veiling power is known in Sanskrit as Maya Shakti, which makes the whole (Purna) seem to be the 'not-whole' (Apurna), the infinite seem finite, and the formless appear to have form.

Humanity shares the subconscious plane of the mind with the lower animals. It is the first stage of mental development in the scale of evolution.

In the subconscious mind lies all the knowledge and impressions received from various sources.

Self consciousness (ego consciousness) comes with the unfolding of the intellect. Cosmic, or universal, consciousness comes with the unfolding of the intuitional mind (higher mind). This gradual growth of ego consciousness is an important part of Yoga philosophy's explanation of human evolution.

Yoga philosophy separates mind according to its three functions:

- a) subconscious (instinct)
- b) conscious (reason)
- c) super-conscious (intuition).

The dawning of the pure, or higher, mind exerts its influence to pull the intellect towards it. At the same time the lower, or impure, mind is exerting its influence to draw the intellect back. This battle between higher and lower minds for control of the middle mind (intellect) started when intellect was in its infancy.

The subconscious is the seat of desires, passions, appetite. The task of the intellect is to reason, and that of the higher mind is to radiate intuitive knowledge. (Intuition is direct, experiential perception).

In mythological stories and legends, the fight between the higher and lower minds is portrayed as temptation by the devil or demon on one hand, and being helped by a guardian angel, deva or saint on the other.

Yoga's science of mind has gone even beyond the higher mind and discovered the source of all knowledge. Herein lies the eternal peace and joy that everyone seeks.

The subconscious, instinctive or automatic mind controls the involuntary functions of the body. It is the seat of the lower emotions and animal instinct, and carries on the automatic functions of our daily activities.

Yoga philosophy teaches that the real self is not any of these bodies. To attain liberation one must stop identifying with the sheaths (the upadhis), and identify with the Self, which is beyond all the sheaths. Each sheath may be purified and transcended:

Annamaya kosha (gross physical sheath) by asanas, proper diet.

Pranamaya kosha (energy sheath) by pranayama.

Manomaya kosha (emotional sheath) by music, chanting, mantras, rituals and selfless service.

Vijnanamaya kosha (intellectual sheath) by study of the scriptures, right inquiry, (Who am I?) and meditation.

Anandamaya kosha (bliss sheath) by samadhi.

THE FIVE MAJOR PRANAS

Name	Colour	Chakra	Region	Function
Prana	Green	Anahata	Chest	Respiration
Apana	Orange/Red	Muladhara	Anus	Ejection of urine, faeces, reproduction
Samana	Yellow	Manipura	Navel	Digestion
Udana	Violet/Blue	Vishuddha	Throat	Deglutition. Takes the Jiva to Brahman in sleep. Separates physical from astral body.
Vyana	Rose	Swadhisthana	Entire body	Circulation of blood

There are also five minor pranas:

Naga vayu performs the function of belching and gives rise to consciousness

Kurma vayu opens the eyelids and causes vision

Krikkara vayu causes sneezing, hunger and thirst

Devadatha vayu produces yawning

Dhananjaya vayu pervades gross physical body; does not leave it even after death

THE THREE BODIES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

The yoga system classifies three apparent 'vehicles' of the soul in its journey towards perfection. However, in reality, there is no bondage or limit which can be set on the spirit. In the ultimate sense, the soul or spirit is without division. Mind and bodies are the active powers which seemingly impose limitations and bring individual consciousness. For full details, see *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga*, chapter 2

1) PHYSICAL BODY

The gross physical body, known as Stula Sharira, is composed of five elements: earth (Prithivi), water (Apas), fire (Agni), air (Vayu), ether (Akasha). Its stages of existence are birth, growth, change, decay, and death.

2) ASTRAL BODY

The astral body, Linga Sharira or Sukshma Sharira, is the means of experiencing pleasure and pain. It is composed of nineteen elements:

five organs of action (karma indriya)

five organs of knowledge (jnana indriya)

five Pranas

four mental principles - mind, intellect, subconscious and ego. These are also known as the 'Inner Instrument' (Antahkarana).

3) CAUSAL BODY

The causal, or seed, body, known as Karana Sharira, is the blueprint of both the gross and subtle bodies. It contains the samskaras, subtle impressions of all lives lived.

The astral and causal bodies remain together. They leave the physical body at the time of death.

THE THREE BODIES CONTAIN A TOTAL OF FIVE KOSHAS (SHEATHS):

1. ANNAMAYA KOSHA (FOOD SHEATH)

In the gross physical body, it is composed of the elements of the physical world. Made of food, it will go back into the food cycle after death. Existence, birth, growth, change, decay and death are its qualifications.

2. PRANAMAYA KOSHA (VITAL SHEATH)

In the astral body, it is composed of the five vital energies: Prana, Apana, Samana, Udana, Vyana, plus the five organs of action (Karma Indriyas): mouth, hands, feet, anus and genitals. It experiences hunger, thirst, heat and cold.

3. MANOMAYA KOSHA (MENTAL SHEATH)

In the astral body, thinking, doubting, anger, lust, exhilaration, depression, delusion are its workings. Its constituents are:

Manas (mind) - thinks and doubts

Chitta (sub-conscious) - storehouse

Jnana indriyas (sense organs, or organs of knowledge) - eyes (sight), ears (sound), nose (smell), tongue (taste) and skin (touch).

4. VIJNANAMAYA KOSHA (INTELLECTUAL SHEATH)

In the astral body, it consists of the buddhi (intellect) which analyses and determines the true nature of any object and Ahamkara (ego) the self-assertive principle, working with the five organs of knowledge. Discrimination and decision-making are its functions.

5. ANANDAMAYA KOSHA - (BLISSFUL SHEATH)

In the causal body, it experiences bliss, joy, calmness and peace.

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE VARIOUS SHEATHS

We first look at an object. This information is relayed, via the retina of the eye, by the optic nerve to the brain. From the brain, it is transmitted to the mind (manas). If looked at from a distance, it will be extremely difficult to decide what the object is. Mind (manas) now starts thinking and doubting whether the object is a flower or a piece of plastic, or perhaps a piece of paper. In order to reach a proper conclusion about the nature of the object, it must be analysed further. So we use intellect (buddhi). But, the intellect cannot directly come to any final conclusion without first inquiring and comparing with the submerged experiences lying within the subconscious mind (chitta).

Intellect now analyses by touch, 'it is soft so it is not like paper' or 'it has the texture of a petal'. The intellect may want further evidence before a conclusion is reached as there perhaps could be paper as soft as this. So, it goes again into the subconscious to compare this experience of the object with all other sensual experience lying within the subconscious. It smells the object, and compares it with previous experiences. It tastes the object, and compares likewise. Intellect says, "it smells and tastes like a flower, but it could still be artificial" (doubting - manas). After diving deep into the subconscious and comparing this experience with thousands already stored there, intellect comes to a conclusion. There is no more thinking and doubting, no more analysing. Now ego (ahamkara) asserts, "I know, it is a flower and not artificial". If, however, after searching and comparing, the intellect did not find any similar colour, texture, taste or smell in the subconscious, then ego would assert, "I do not know".

PLEASE NOTE:

In Raja Yoga

Chitta means mind stuff = total mind = Antahkarana

In Vedanta

Chitta means subconscious mind.

Everyone wants to do his/her best. Each of us would like to think that we are perfect. Yet despite repeated resolutions, we often find ourselves being less than what we would like to be. The cause of this predicament is the ahamkara, or ego. Sri Sankara, one of the wisest men of all times, stated in the *Viveka Chudamani*, "Calamity is due to subjection to ego, bad agonies are due to ego, desire is due to subjection to ego; there is no greater enemy than ego." This ahamkara is the cause of all bondage and is the chief barrier to the experience of inner reality.

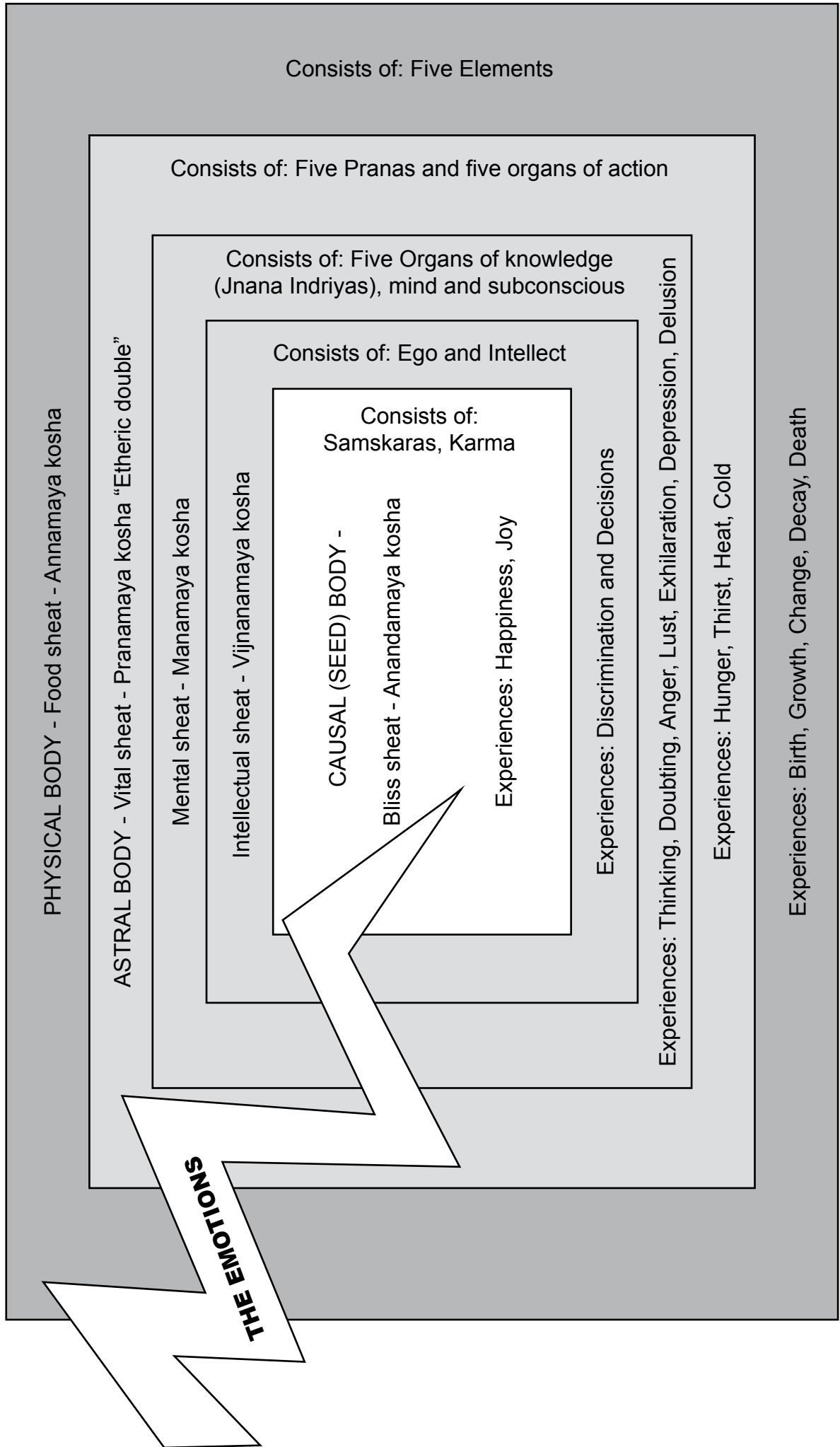
Ego is the self-arrogating aspect of the mind. It separates the individual from unity with others and with the Self, for the ego asserts 'I-ness'.

Ahamkara is the greatest obstacle to tranquillity; it occupies the mind with thoughts of whether we are better or worse, possess more or less, and have greater or lesser power than others. It is attended by desire, pride, anger, delusion, greed, jealousy, lust and hatred. The ego is the most difficult aspect of the mind to control, for its nature is such that it deludes even while one is striving to overcome it. It is that part of the being that most strongly resists being controlled.

Questions:

1. What are the three bodies?
2. What is the physical body made of, and what are its experiences?
3. What are the nineteen elements of the astral body?
4. What are the experiences in the causal body?
5. Describe the relationship of the five koshas to the three shariras.
6. Describe the functioning of the five major pranas.
7. What is the difference of meaning of the word 'Chitta' in vedanta and in raja yoga?
8. Describe the antahkarana. What does the ego do?

The three bodies



THE AWAKENING OF THE KUNDALINI

The Kundalini is awakened at a speed dependent upon the degree of purity, the stage of evolution, the amount of purification of the psychic nerves and the vital sheath, and the degree of dispassion and yearning for liberation. Purification of the heart is very necessary. Nature will awaken the power and give the student knowledge when he is ready. Nothing of deep importance will be revealed before the student is ready, and able to absorb it totally. No teacher can give the student the power nor lead him to self discipline. Among factors which rely on the awakening of the Kundalini, the following are probably the most important:

1. SELFLESS SERVICE

It is difficult to find a better method for mental and spiritual purification than serving others without regard of reward. Passive goodness is insufficient. Active service is essential for one's spiritual growth. Give as the sun, as the trees, as the flowers that we may sustain and perpetuate the evolutionary cycle of the universe and its strongest force, which is love. Love vibrates in the form of service. Regard others' happiness and pain as your own. There is no stranger or alien in this world. We are all in the process of evolution.

As you develop this spirit of selflessness, ideas of egoism and 'mine-ness' melt. The kundalini will awaken by itself.

2. SERVICE OF A GURU

A proper guide is absolutely necessary as we attempt to awaken the kundalini. We work in time and space, using our bodies and minds as laboratories in our experiments with perfection. In the process of trial and error learning, we can use the knowledge of others who have travelled a similar path before us. This is why the guru and his store of spiritual knowledge, learned from his own guru in turn, is essential.

The nature of the guru-student relationship bears some discussion. The guru tests the student in various ways; many students lose faith and are not benefited. These days, it is difficult to understand the nature of the relationship that should exist between the student and guru. Such spiritual relationships are both difficult to find, to understand and to practise. Such a relationship is beyond the typical student/teacher one. It encompasses all the devotion of a parent/child or husband/wife relationship. It involves dedication and the lessons learned are not always easily discernible and measurable by concrete standards. The guru can elevate the mind of the student, and transmit a certain spiritual power to

the sincere aspirant. While the guru is necessary, he can ultimately only lead the student to the door of his own wisdom; the student will have to progress by means of his own self-discipline and desire for purification.

3. YOGIC DIET

The diet should be regulated and light, agreeable, nutritious, sattvic (pure) and balanced. One should consciously try not to overeat, nor eat foods which are especially difficult to digest or highly spiced. We are what we eat. The purity of the mind has a great deal to do with the purity of food. The grosser and more processed the foods we consume, the less close we are to the natural source. For the best meditation, fruits and milk are especially beneficial. Moderation in diet is the wisest yogic rule.

4. PLACE AND TIME FOR MEDITATION

Regularity of time and place for meditation is essential. Have a spot that is private, where the distractions are minimal. Sit there everyday at the same time. Early morning hours are good as they are particularly sattvic. You should be bathed and should never attempt meditation on an overloaded stomach.

5. MENTAL CONTROL

In a basic sense, all Yoga is aimed at mental control. You should be as conscious of the activities of the mind as you can be at all times. Know that you can command your subconscious to aid you in your purification process. Sow seeds of goodwill at all times. Do not let your thoughts dissipate. Gain one-pointedness. Know that your thoughts and words are powerful instruments; do not waste them. Develop mental control and you will be led to bliss consciousness.

The importance of thought power should be emphasised. Swami Sivananda has pointed out that each thought is a vibration that never perishes. It goes on vibrating. If the thoughts are noble, holy and forceful, they set up vibrations in other sympathetic minds. For instance, all people who are concerned with global peace should send out thoughts in accordance with their capacity. The result is that often, without conscious knowledge, the consequences of one's mental work can be felt. They work with great forces already set in motion. One should make it a point to devote meditation time to the projection of 'peace thoughts'. This will combine with similar thoughts; the total of such combined thoughts cannot be measured.

6. ASANAS AND PRANAYAMA

With the practice of asanas, pranayama, mudras, bandhas and meditation, heat and energy are produced. After a long period of continuous practice, the Sushumna will be freed of impurities. At that point, the awakened kundalini passes upward through the sushumna to the sahasrara chakra, the thousand petalled lotus.

When the kundalini is awakened, it does not proceed directly at once to the sahasrara chakra. You will have to take it from one chakra to another. Once the kundalini is awakened, it is very difficult to take it up to the manipura at the navel, to the ajna at the forehead, and then to the sahasrara at the crown. It demands a great deal of concentration and patience on the part of the practitioner. The yogi is tempted to remain in the lower chakras, rather than continuing his

practices. He mistakes the lower states of bliss for the higher. The yogi should shun all psychic powers as these serve as obstacles in his path. He may be fixated on the powers rather than on the final goal of illumination. One must constantly be on the alert. Even after reaching the ajna chakra, the student could conceivably fall back to the lower chakras. As the kundalini current rises through the spine, it sometimes crawls like an ant or, in especially pure yogis, it jumps and reaches the Sahasrara rapidly. Sometimes, it rises in a hopping manner, or in a zigzag manner. Sometimes it swims quietly, in a fish-like manner, in an ocean of bliss. The yoga practitioner will get help from within as he moves from one chakra to another. A mysterious power, a mysterious voice will guide him at every step. He should have faith in this power, and allow it to lead the way, since it is the student's own intuitive nature unfolding.

The moving kundalini may cause heat so intense that physical ailments occur, but this can be considered as a form of karmic purgation. You may experience the vibrations of prana in different parts of the body as shocks of electricity as the kundalini becomes active. Know that the power has awakened. Other experiences that may indicate the awakening of the kundalini are the beholding of divine visions, experiencing divine smells, hearing mystical sounds, gaining inspiration and insight and removing doubts. The student may feel as light as air or may possess inexhaustible energy. Yoga postures come easily and the breath may stop without any effort.

Questions:

1. Describe the three planes of the mind.
2. What is the difference between instinct and intuition?
3. What is time?
4. How does the yogi transcend time and space?
5. How many nadis are there in our astral body?
6. Describe Ida, Pingala and Sushumna.
7. What are the seven major chakras?
8. What is Kundalini?

Conscious mind or intellect can control and guide the subconscious. It is the basic requisite for the ego or 'I' consciousness. Reasoning is the function of the intellect.

Super-conscious, or higher, mind is above intellect. Its purpose is to achieve intuition and higher consciousness. Beyond these three levels of the mind is the pure consciousness known as spirit, soul, or Self, which is formless, timeless, changeless, and infinite in its nature.

MIND, TIME AND SPACE

Mind can only think in terms of 'before', 'now' and 'after' - or 'past', 'present' and 'future'. But according to Yoga philosophy, reality, God, or truth can only be experienced beyond time and space.

Mind can perform its functions only in terms of time and space as a 'background'. Just as the artist needs a canvas (or similar material) to create his work, so the mind uses the elements of space and time for its creations.

The German mystic Meister Eckhart said, "Nothing hinders the soul's knowledge of God as much as time and space. Time and space are fragments; whereas God is One. Therefore, if the soul is to know God, it must know Him beyond time and outside of manifold things. God is One."

Time and space exist in the waking and dream states. In the deep sleep state there is only the experience of 'I am' and 'now'.

When there is concentration of mind or the mind is in a very happy mood, time appears to move quickly. But when there is agitation and distraction of the mind owing to worries and anxieties, time appears to move slowly. Again, in a dream, a whole series of the events of twenty years, will appear in fifteen minutes, yet in those fifteen minutes, time is equal to twenty years in the waking state. This demonstrates the relativity of time, or in other words, its unreality.

Einstein pointed out the unreality of time in his Theory of Relativity. He explained time as a form of perception (a way that we view the world), like the colour sense. Einstein discarded the notion of Absolute Time - of a steady, unvarying, inexorable, universal flow of time streaming from the infinite past to the infinite future. He went on to say, 'there is no such thing as a fixed interval of time independent of the system to which it is referred, and there is no such thing as 'now' independent of a system of references.

Mind is not limited by velocity, as is the case with all phenomena in the physical universe. It can reach a distant star in a moment, for both time and space are creations of the mind.

Yogis explain, as humans evolve, they will develop the ability to function on higher mental planes, and to transcend physical limitations. Yoga declares that the final liberation from the clutches of time and space is possible only when the mind itself is transcended.

CHAKRAS

Chakras are the centres of subtle, vital energy in the Sushumna nadi. They are storage places for energy forces or centres of consciousness. These chakras have corresponding centres in the spinal cord and the nerve plexus in the gross physical body. Since the physical centres have a close relationship with the astral centres, the vibrations that are produced in the physical centres by prescribed methods have the desired effects in the astral centres. As suggested earlier, each chakra represents a state of consciousness. It is a centre of subtle awareness and has a specific feeling, tone, bliss or joy. It is, in effect, a storage place for energy forces. A particular characteristic predominates at every chakra. There is a presiding deity in each chakra. The seven principle chakras correspond to the seven lokas, astral or mental planes.

The locations of the chakras and their correspondence in the physical body are:

1. **Muladhara:** located at the lower end of the spinal column, corresponds to the sacral plexus.
2. **Swadhisthana:** at the genital organs, corresponds to the prostate plexus.
3. **Manipura:** at the navel, corresponds to the solar plexus.
4. **Anahata:** at the heart, corresponds to the cardiac plexus.
5. **Vishuddha:** at the throat, corresponds to the laryngeal plexus.
6. **Ajna:** between the eyebrows, corresponds to the cavernous plexus.
7. **Sahasrara:** at the crown of the head.

When the Kundalini is awakened, it passes from the Muladhara through all the chakras. At every centre to which the yogi directs the Kundalini, a special form of bliss is experienced. Siddhis, or psychic powers, and knowledge are gained.

Each chakra has a particular number of petals with a Sanskrit letter on each petal. The vibrations that are produced at each petal by the sound energy of the Kundalini Shakti is presented by a corresponding Sanskrit letter. Every letter denotes a mantra of Devi Kundalini, existing in a latent form. These can be manifested in the vibrations of the nadis felt during concentration.

The numbers of petals of the lotuses varies: Muladhara (4), Swadhisthana (6), Manipura (10), Anahata (12), Vishuddha (16), and Ajna (2). All the fifty Sanskrit letters are on the fifty petals. The number of petals in each chakra is determined by the number and position of the nadis around it. Each chakra gives the appearance of a lotus with the nadis as its petals. The chakras have their petals hanging downward when the Kundalini is at the Muladhara Chakra. When it is awakened, they turn upwards i.e. they always face the side of the Kundalini.

(For a description of purification of the nadis using bija (seed) mantras, see Samanu breathing exercise in the section on Pranayama.)

SUSHUMNA NADI

When we study the construction, location and function of the spinal cord and Sushumna nadi, we can really say that the spinal cord was called the Sushumna by yogis in ancient time. Yoga students should have a thorough knowledge of this nadi.

The Sushumna extends from the Muladhara chakra, located in the second vertebra of the coccyx region, to the Brahmarandhra, the opening of the skull. Western anatomy recognises a central canal in the spinal cord made up of grey and white brain matter. The spinal cord is suspended in the hollow of the spinal column. In the same way, the Sushumna, within the spinal column, has subtle sections. Its colour is red like fire. The Sushumna pierces all lotuses and is pure intelligence.

Within the Sushumna there is a nadi by the name of Vajra which is as lustrous as the sun with rajasic qualities. Again, within this Vajra nadi, there is another nadi, the Chitra, of sattvic nature and pale in colour. The qualities of fire (agni), the sun (surya), and the moon (chandra) are the three aspects of Brahman. Within this Chitra, there is a very fine, minute canal through which the Kundalini, when awakened, passes from the Muladhara to the Sahasrara chakra. In this canal exists all the main chakras, each representing a different state of consciousness.

The lower extremity of the Chitra nadi is the door of Brahman. The Kundalini passes through this door to its termination point in the cerebellum. The Chitra is the highest and most beloved of all nadis. Brilliant with five colours, it is the centre of the Sushumna, and is called the Heavenly Way. Another description says that "the Chitra is beautiful like a chain of lightning and shines like a lotus in the mind of the sages. She is extremely subtle, the awakened pure knowledge, the embodiment of all bliss, whose nature is pure consciousness".

CONQUEST OF DEATH

Mortality means decomposition. Anything that is made of two or more ingredients must eventually decompose (die). When the body dies, the astral and causal bodies separate from the physical body.

Heaven and Hell are temporary abodes, where the soul enjoys the fruits of its good actions (karma), as long as its merits last, or suffers because of its bad actions. After that time the soul will put on a new body and strive to achieve its further evolution.

All actions, good or bad, are like chains that bind the soul to the wheel of birth and death, for both generate karma. There is no action that is either good or bad in itself. Its quality depends upon the motive behind it.

Three kinds of impurities hinder attempts to meditate successfully:

- a) **Mala**, or selfishness, (the grossest impurity) is found in all human beings in varying degrees. It can be removed through the practice of selfless service (Karma Yoga).
- b) **Vikshepa Shakti**, or tossing of the mind, causes unsteadiness. This impurity is overcome by pranayama, devotion and chanting.
- c) **Avarana Shakti**, the veiling power of the mind, is the most subtle. Its effect is to hide 'the Reality' or 'Self'. It produces body consciousness. Vedantic meditation and right inquiry into 'Who am I?' remove this veiling power and allow the 'Self' to be experienced.

The literal meaning of vedanta is 'the end of knowledge'. Vedanta philosophy may be seen as simply an exposition of the sacred syllable OM.

OM is the Hindu 'Word' of Creation. In the Bible, John 1-1, it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

OM is also known as Pranava (that which pervades life or runs through the prana or breath).

OM consists of A + U + M. According to the rules of Sanskrit grammar, A and U when joined together become O, and thus A,U,M, produces

the sound 'OM'. The sound A is guttural; it comes from the throat. U (OO) proceeds from the middle of the vocal regions, the palate. 'M' is labial and nasal, which comes from the extremity of the vocal organ or the lips. Thus, 'A' represents the beginning of the range of sound; 'U' represents the middle, and 'M' represents the end. It covers the whole field of the vocal organs. Thus, OM represents all language and, since world and language are interrelated, it represents all the world.

From the standpoint of vedanta, **A** represents the gross material universe, which is observed in the waking state. **U** represents the astral plane and dream state. **M** represents the experience that lies above and beyond mind and the deep sleep state.

Vedanta defines reality as 'that which persists in all circumstances'. All three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep are unreal, because each in turn disappears to give way to the other. Only the witness of these three states (the 'I') does not change. Beyond the three states lies the 'Turiya' or fourth state.

Yoga philosophy declares that only the realisation of the Self or God can bring the peace, joy, and liberation that everyone strives for.

Bondage of the soul is death and freedom of the soul is the liberation or conquest of death.

Questions:

1. What is mortality? What is death?
2. What is heaven according to vedanta?
3. What are the three impurities?
4. Describe the meaning of OM.
5. What is reality?
6. How do yogis attain immortality?