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COLLECTORS' EDITION

heartfulness

purity weaves destiny

Daaji shares
the wisdom and
practices of
Yoga
for mental
health and
joyful living

*Yogic
Psychology*



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A Life of Wonder and Purpose

Dear readers,

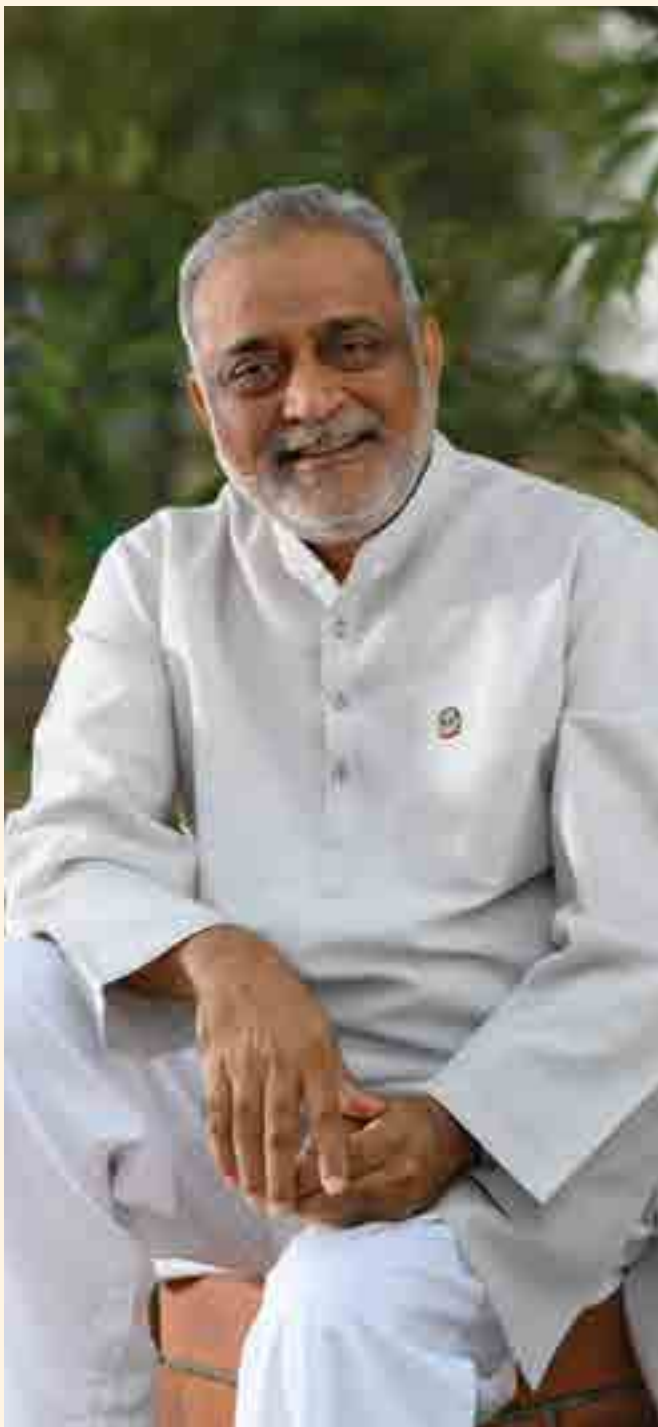
Remember those happy days of childhood, when life was so full of wonder and we had not a care in the world? If we try to discover why we no longer feel so light and carefree as we grow older, it always comes down to “life happens!” Effectively we lose our innocence, as we deal with the pressures of day-to-day existence, responsibility and challenges. We are thrown out of the cocoon of love and simplicity into a world where we must navigate complexity, disappointment and ever-progressive entropy away from the center of our being.

Finding the solution to that problem has been the great existential challenge of human life, from time immemorial until today. How to retain or regain innocence, purity and simplicity? How to live a carefree life, with lightness, joy and a positive outlook? How to live a purposeful life that spans all the dimensions of human existence? How to master this life so that we are prepared for what comes next? All of this, no matter what life throws our way.

The solution is simple: Yogic Psychology offers an understanding of these processes, and the methods to transcend and master human entropy, and stay connected with our center. The great Sage Patanjali curated all the wisdom of the ancients in his Yoga Sutras in seed form. But it is only in the modern era of Yoga that a perfectly simple set of practices has been developed that can take us there. These methods are free of charge and available to everyone. In this edition, Daaji explores the yogic understanding of psychology, relating it to modern-day science and psychology, and also shares some of the simple yogic practices and approaches that can transform lives.

Enjoy!

The editors



Kamlesh Patel

Also known as Daaji, he is the current Heartfulness Guide. He offers a practical, experiential approach to the evolution of consciousness that is simple, easy to follow, and available to people of all ages and walks of life. Daaji is also a prolific speaker and writer, and his two books, *The Heartfulness Way* and *Designing Destiny*, are both #1 bestsellers.

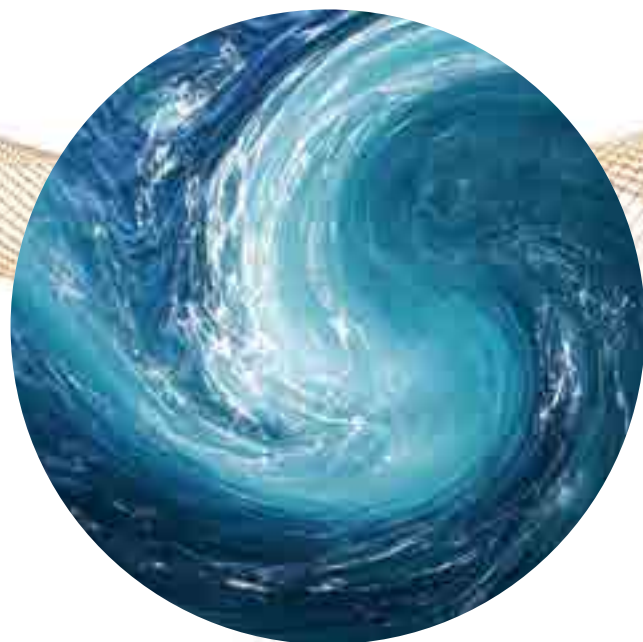


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*India is undoubtedly the
land of the understanding of
psychology.*

SISTER NIVEDITA

YOGIC PSYCHOLOGY





Have you ever thought to understand psychology through Yoga? Yoga is a vast science of the physical body, subtle bodies and the soul, exploring the origin of consciousness, and what causes changes in the field of consciousness. In this series of articles, DAAJI explains the fundamental basis of yogic psychology, which is the ancient science of Raja Yoga, discussed in texts like the Ashtavakra Gita, the Sangeetha Vashista, and which was first codified by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. DAAJI enlightens us on this understanding of the human mind and the various common mental tendencies and imbalances, and he also gives us solutions to create mental well-being through Heartfulness practices.

Patanjali is famous today for giving us Ashtanga Yoga, the eight limbs that define the path of Yoga, and these are beautifully expounded in chapters 2 and 3 of his Yoga Sutras. But Yoga offers so much more that is of great benefit to the world, and this is especially true in the field of psychology.

Today many people are plagued by depression, mental disturbance, anxiety and distress, as a result of our complex societies, urban lifestyles, breakdown of relationships, and unnatural way of living that is out of sync with the circadian rhythms that are hardwired in our physiology. Circadian rhythms determine our optimal sleep and feeding patterns. Even the metabolism of our cellular energy follows the rhythm of the circadian clock. If we don't follow natural rhythms, our cellular energy levels decline, as the mitochondrial network is impaired. As a result, lifestyles with irregular daily rhythms have been linked with various chronic health conditions, such as sleep disorders, obesity, diabetes, depression, bipolar disorder, and seasonal affective disorder. When we are swimming upstream against the current, when we choose a lifestyle that is out of sync with natural cycles, our system suffers.

INTRODUCTION



Yoga offers us so much help to find balance. If we start at the very beginning of chapter 1 of the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali starts by explaining what Yoga is:

1.1 Atha yoga anushasanam

Now, after prior preparation,
comes the discipline of Yoga.

1.2 Yogash chitta vritti nirodhah

Yoga is the cessation of all the modifications
of the mind in the field of consciousness.

What does Patanjali mean by prior preparation? Generally we enter the path of Yoga only when we are totally frustrated with our minds as they are. We reach a point where perhaps we have had some major failures in life, when someone says, “Do Yoga to regain your health,” or when we are tired of being addicted to two things – the hopes and expectations we have for the future and the entanglements that bind us to our past. We no longer want to be slaves of the weight of the past.

This very human need to divest the burdens of the mind is the base of many forms of self-improvement, including western psychology. This instinct to free the mind and

heart of burdens has been at the foundation of religion, philosophy, ethics, psychology, and also creative art forms like dance, music and painting.

And, actually, for those of you who still want to develop and hone your mental skills and knowledge, perhaps you need more preparation before coming to the path of Yoga. Why? Because Yoga is not a pastime. It is not a hobby or a fitness regime at the local Yoga Studio once or twice a week. True Yoga is for those adventurous souls who are ready to embark on a journey beyond the mind to the spiritual center of being. Along the way, the mind and heart are purified, they are ennobled, and they become supreme, and it is one of the amazing benefits that Yoga brings, but that is not its purpose.

Patanjali tells us that when we are really ready for Yoga, discipline is required, and what is discipline? Discipline means to be a disciple, and for that the most important pre-requisite is an attitude of willingness and openness to learn, to be a student, to accept that “I don’t know,” and I need help. It requires craving to know the truth, receptivity, humility and a sense of wonder. A disciple remains a restless seeker, seeking to understand the mysteries of the Universe. Without this attitude of discipleship, there is no discipline of Yoga.

This is one of the reasons why all the great sages and saints have praised humility, insignificance and innocence. Without these noble qualities, there is no discipline of Yoga, whereas with these qualities our consciousness is flexible and remains open. Like little children, we return to purity, letting go of all the modifications of the mind.

And what are these modifications of the mind? Patanjali’s descriptions and scientific codification of our mental processes are broader in nature than modern behavioral sciences and psychology, for one very important reason: because Yoga starts with the baseline of mental well-being, the balanced mental state, the original condition. There is no need for interpretation or analysis of this mental state, as it can be perceived by direct experience, scientifically, as a vibration-less state. It is the pure state of no-vibration that lies at the center of our existence,

*True Yoga is for those
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amazing benefits that Yoga
brings, but that is not its
purpose.*

beyond consciousness. This pure state is Patanjali’s definition of Yoga, the ultimate state of stillness we aspire to experience. It was the starting point of our whole existence, before creation, and it can be our end point.

Patanjali then goes on to explore the reasons why modifications and related vibrations arise in our field of consciousness; anything that takes us away from that state of mental balance and stillness.

These mental modifications exist in all of us. While the details vary from one individual to another, the types of variations are part of the human condition. We can call them psychological deviations because they pull us away from that state of stillness at our spiritual center, the soul. The process of refining and transcending these modifications is what Yoga is all about, as we gradually elevate the mind and go beyond the mind.

A pure field of consciousness is still – well, almost still – with just the baseline activity of existence, and the soul

INTRODUCTION

is happy when we regain that balanced state, as we do in deep sleep. In contrast, the interplay of senses, thoughts, feelings and tendencies draw us into the world of outer experience and activity, creating various energetic patterns in the field of consciousness. The soul is also happy with movement, provided there is purity and lightness, and constant fluidity between underlying stillness and activity in the field. So in Yoga we do two things:

1. Turn the attention inwards to stillness, and
2. Refine the focus and type of outward activity so that our thoughts and activities are conducive to evolution, happiness and balance.

We cannot stay in total stillness all the time or we would be dead, and Yoga is also all about skill in action. So how to bring stillness into activity? I have written about this in an earlier article on "The Stillness Paradox."

This combination of stillness and activity brings peace and joy, which is the quality of the soul. When the waves of the *vruttis* settle and we are calm, as happens during meditation, we see our true nature, and then we can externalize this reality in all our activities.

The modifications start out as natural, normal functions of the human mind, the *vruttis*. They are the whirlpools or vibrational patterns that are created in the field of consciousness as a result of living, feeling and thinking. Patanjali describes 5 of them: right thinking, wrong thinking, imagination, sleep and memory.

As a result of these patterns in the subtle field of consciousness, our neural pathways develop cognates or patterns that are hardwired into the nervous system, and repeatedly over time they result in behavioral habits and tendencies. What starts out as vibrational patterns in the subtle body's field of consciousness, goes on to affect the mind, our behavior, our nervous system, and eventually all our other physical functions.

The next step in this process is when the *vruttis* develop colorings, altering our perception and leading to confused thinking and a 'colored' or distorted view of reality. We no longer refer back to the center of our being, our soul, as the guiding light, and instead





start using the mental faculties on their own without the heart's superior guidance. We are now one dimension removed from the source of wisdom, and this is accompanied by a tendency to think things through, rather than feel what is right in any situation. These colorings or mental impurities are known as *kleshas*, and Patanjali also describes 5 of them: ignorance as a result of veiling reality, mine-ness and egotism, attachment and addiction, aversion and repulsion, and clinging to life through fear of death.

As these mental patterns become hardened over time, they eventually become obstacles to our overall well-being and distract us from succeeding in both worldly and spiritual pursuits. Patanjali describes 9 such obstacles, which are known as the *vikshepas*: illness and disease, mental laziness and dullness, dilemma and indecision, carelessness and haste, laziness and sloth, inability to abstain, false perception, failure to attain the next stage on the journey, and failure to maintain that stage. I would like to add three more to Patanjali's list of *vikshepas*, which are relevant in the modern context: guilt and shame, fear of missing out (FOMO), and digital distraction.

Accompanying these obstacles are symptoms that are the expressions of the perturbed mental state we have created by moving so far away from our balanced center of still consciousness. These symptoms are the 5 *vighnas*: physical and mental pain, despair and depression, trembling and nervousness, and

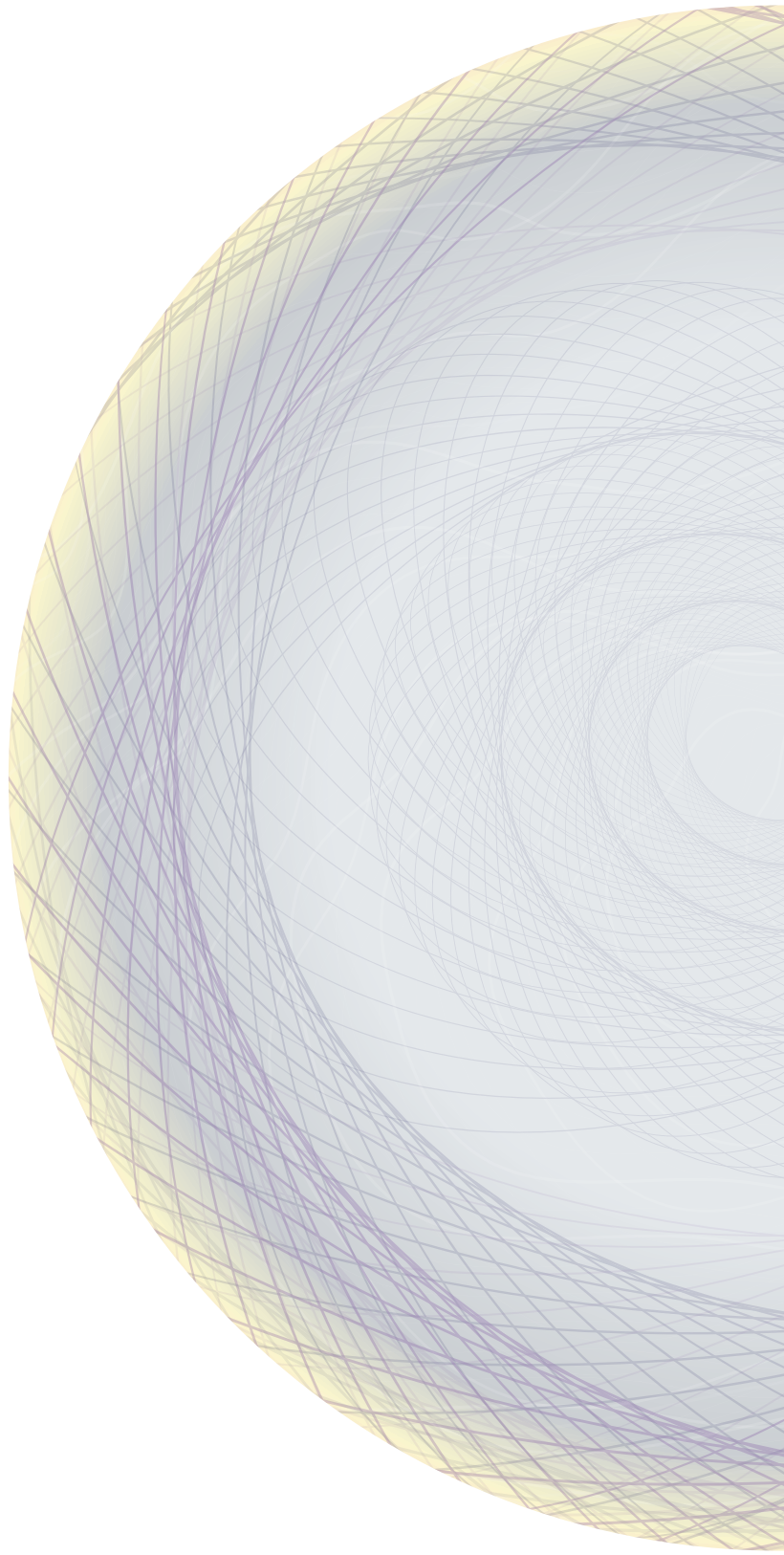
irregular breathing – both inhalation and exhalation.

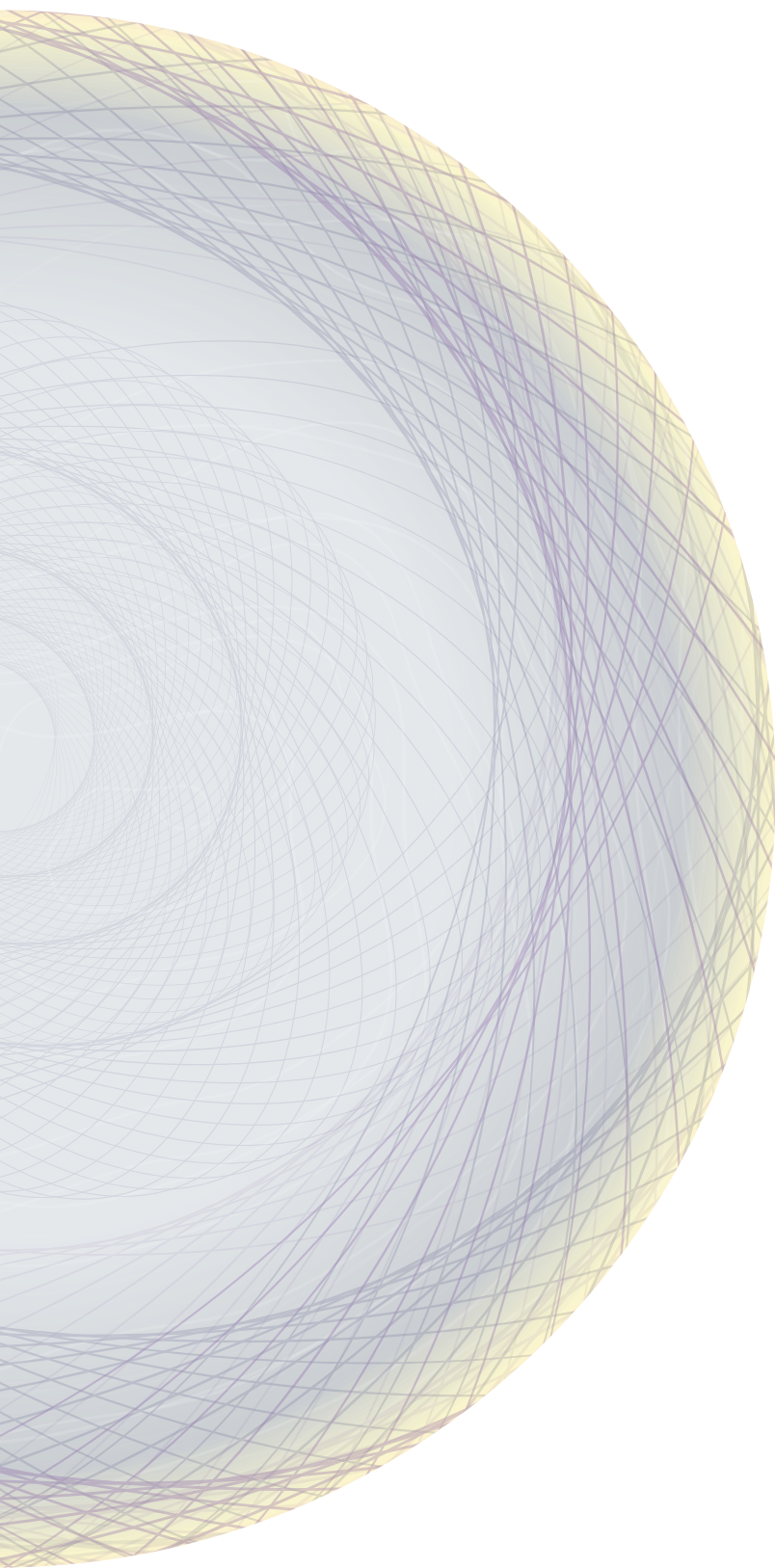
In this series of articles, we will explore all of these mental modifications that Patanjali describes, as well as some of the practices that help us transcend them. Yoga is actually the pure science of the inner being, and Patanjali was a scientist of the highest caliber. Unlike most spiritual teachers, he was not mystical. Instead his legacy is based on practical experience. His description of the mental modifications in the Yoga Sutras is really the first written codified treatise on psychology, and as such deserves its due recognition.

While Patanjali beautifully described and codified the process of developing mental complexity and illness, and the need to return to a simple pure state of consciousness, he did not offer us a set of simple practical methods to remove the complexities and return to simplicity. Neither did anyone else, until the 1940s, when Ram Chandra offered the world a set of simple, effective practices to reach the pinnacle of human existence, available to everyone, everywhere, free of charge. This has revolutionized Yoga to an incredible extent: first as a means to become balanced and happy, and second as a means to fulfill a human potential that goes far beyond this physical realm of existence. The expansion of the practical, experiential base of inner awakening to consciousness has been the important evolution of Yoga during the last 150 years.



VRITTIS





Pramana – means of right or valid knowledge

Viparyaya – false or wrong knowledge

Vikalpa – fantasy, imagination

Nidra – sleep

Smriti – memory



VRITTIS



The five *vrittis* are the types of thought patterns or tendencies that are the energy patterns we create in the field of our consciousness or *chit*. 'Whirlpool' is a literal translation of the word *vritti*, so the *vrittis* are whirlpools – the waves and ripples that form in the field of our consciousness as a result of energy and movement. Our mind is either still and calm, or it is active with a certain level of turbulence and ups and downs. How still or active our field of consciousness is, and the nature of that activity, determine how we perceive the universe.

Imagine your field of consciousness as being like an ocean, and the waves and currents are the *vrittis*. The more turbulent the ocean, the harder it is to see the ocean floor, which can be equated with the inner Self or soul. The field of consciousness is happy to return to its original state of stillness and calm, but the interplay of senses and tendencies draw us out into experience and emotional reactions, sometimes bringing mental turbulence. So the first step in Yoga is to turn the attention inwards and return to stillness. This is also what brings peace and, ultimately,

joy, which is the quality of the soul. Without this stillness, lasting peace and happiness are not possible.

Patanjali explains that:

1.3 Tada drashtuh svarupe avasthanam

At that time [of meditation], the Witness abides in itself, resting in its own essence, its true nature.

1.4 Vritti sarupyam itaratra

At other times, we instead identify with the modifications of the mind, taking on the identity of those thought patterns.

When the waves of the *vrittis* settle and we are calm, as happens during Meditation with Transmission, we see our true nature. At other times we identify with the modifications, e.g. sorrow or fear or excitement. For example, if you are angry with your boss, because he has accused you unjustly of doing something wrong, will your consciousness be calm and still? Will you be able to think clearly during the day and make wise decisions? And what happens when a child is scared of the teacher in the classroom at school? Will they learn effectively and grasp concepts well? No, it is not possible, because fear blocks the electrical impulses from passing through to the cognitive centers in the pre-frontal cortex of the brain, making learning very difficult. The thinking process of the child is not able to function freely.

With the daily practices of Heartfulness, we are able to remove these emotionally reactive states from our system and remain connected with the inner center of stillness throughout the day, even when we are not meditating. We do this by using the method of Cleaning to remove

the emotional charge that arises with reactivity, and by cultivating the state of Constant Remembrance that follows from Meditation, so that our consciousness remains centered even while we go about normal daily activities and interact with others.

Patanjali then goes on to classify the *vrittis* as being either colored (*klishta*) or uncolored (*aklishta*):

1.5 Vrittayah pangchatayyah klishta aklishtah

There are five types of thought patterns, and they are either colored or uncolored.

Colored versus uncolored refers to impure versus pure, leading to bondage versus leading to freedom, and leading to turbulence versus stillness. So the mind can either become a source of bondage or a source of freedom, depending on how we cultivate and train it. Yoga is really only concerned with this one thing: how do we use the mind? Mastery of the mind, cessation of the turbulence in the mind, is Yoga.


Patanjali then describes the five *vrittis*:

1.6 Pramana viparyaya vikalpa nidra smritayah

The five varieties of thought patterns are
 Pramana – right knowledge,
 Viparyaya – wrong knowledge,
 Vikalpa – fantasy or imagination,
 Nidra – deep sleep, and
 Smriti – memory.

TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND INACCURATE KNOWLEDGE





The capacities of the mind are like rays of light; when they are concentrated they illuminate, resulting in direct perception. In most people, however, the faculty of direct perception remains unused, lying dormant, waiting to be switched on. This knowing through higher wisdom and revelation comes very naturally in the state of inner balance, or Samadhi, as a result of meditation.

Here we will explore the first two of the *vrittis* – *pramana* and *viparyaya*.

The definitions “right or accurate knowledge” and “wrong or inaccurate knowledge” do not really do justice to the words *pramana* and *viparyaya*, but there is no equivalent in English. Patanjali elaborates on these definitions in the Yoga Sutras.

PRAMANA

1.7 Pratyaksha anumana agamah pramanani

There are three ways of gaining true knowledge:
by direct perception,
by deduction and inference, and
by the words of those awakened ones who have
knowledge.

True knowledge, *pramana*, emanates from purity and stillness, and is one of the uncolored *vrittis*. It leads to freedom. And according to Patanjali, true knowledge comes in three ways:

The first way is through direct perception – the absolute knowing that comes in an illuminated mind with an awakened faculty of superconsciousness. This may happen spontaneously in anyone, but it can be developed and cultivated through spiritual practice. It is the purest, most unadulterated source of knowledge that we have.

The capacities of the mind are like rays of light; when they are concentrated they illuminate, resulting in direct perception. In most people, however, the faculty of direct perception remains unused, lying dormant, waiting to be switched on. This knowing through higher wisdom and revelation comes very naturally in the state of inner balance, or *Samadhi*, as a result of meditation.

In Heartfulness Meditation, this is aided by *Pranahuti* or Transmission, which brings us to that balanced state. The direct perception of a person with a pure and expanded consciousness is the most infallible source of knowledge and wisdom we have, and is generally attributed to great beings like Buddha, Christ, Krishna and Mohammed. But the possibility is there for all of us to utilize the same capacity of direct perception if we are willing to practice. We can call this capacity inner perception.

The second way to gain true knowledge is through outer perception, what we normally call “observation,” and the related process of experimentation – what we know as the scientific method. This form of *pramana* is not as pure as direct perception, as it depends on mental processes, but it is still very valid. As explained by Swami Vivekananda, “In acquiring knowledge we make use of generalizations, and generalization is based upon observation. We first observe facts, then generalize, and then draw conclusions or principles.”

How do mental processes interfere? Perfect observation requires the observer to be subtler than what is being observed. Otherwise, the observer may obscure the object under observation. That is why Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle has baffled the scientific world, since what is being deployed to measure the speed or the position of

an electron is not as subtle as the electron! The observer must be subtler than the observed. In the field of quantum science, the observer effect is well known. An observer is never a mere presence. Observation is an act, and so an observer acts, interferes, and changes things. The state of observation is often goal-oriented; the observing mind seeks an outcome. In other words, it is often an imposition. The observational mind is rarely passive or disinterested.

Per contra, witnessing is passive. It is neither participatory nor involved. When we are in a very subtle state and we witness things, we do not interfere with them. Humility at its pinnacle creates this neutrality, this subtlety within – a pure non-interfering state where we do not expect or impose anything. To a witness, thoughts are like clouds passing in the sky.

Who is this witness? It is not the mind. The mind is incapable of pure witnessing. The mystery is revealed by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita:

The Supreme Purusha in this body
is also called the Witness,
the One who permits, the Supporter,
the One who experiences,
the Great Lord and the Supreme Self.

*In Heartfulness Meditation, direct perception is
aided by Pranahuti or Transmission, which
brings us to that balanced state.
The direct perception of a person with a pure
and expanded consciousness is the most
infallible source of knowledge and wisdom.*

It is our inner dweller, the soul, who witnesses. Mind-consciousness creates the observer, whereas consciousness of the soul creates the witness. So outer perception is also refined, developed and cultivated through spiritual practice. As our being becomes subtler and subtler we become better scientists! And this second method eventually becomes identical with the first method – inner and outer perception are no longer separate processes. Ram Chandra explains it the following way in his book *Sahaj Marg Philosophy*:

Sages in India have generally attempted philosophy by first going into the life of practicality. They have opened the secrets of existing things as far as they could do at their level of advancement. ... We should always attempt the expression of things when our practice or abhyas is over. This is the key point for the philosopher to note in order to achieve the accuracy of things.

The third way to gain true knowledge is through absorbing the teachings of enlightened beings who themselves have the capacity of direct perception. We are then able to make this knowledge our own by verifying it through our own experience (methods 1 and 2). It saves us time, like passing through a forest on a well-worn path rather than forging our own path. This is why we search for enlightened teachers, read books by them, read the great scriptures of the past and, finally, based on the heart's signals, we conclude for ourselves.

In fact, all three methods are intertwined and part of a spectrum of perception. We can use the three in a complementary way so as to arrive at our own understanding of right knowledge. The common factor in the success of all three methods is in having a pure field of consciousness, so that we can make the best use of the knowledge given to us.



VIPARYAYA

Patanjali writes:

*1.8 Viparyayah mithya jnanam atad rupa
pratistham*

Wrong knowledge or illusion is the false understanding
that results from perceiving things as other than what
they really are.

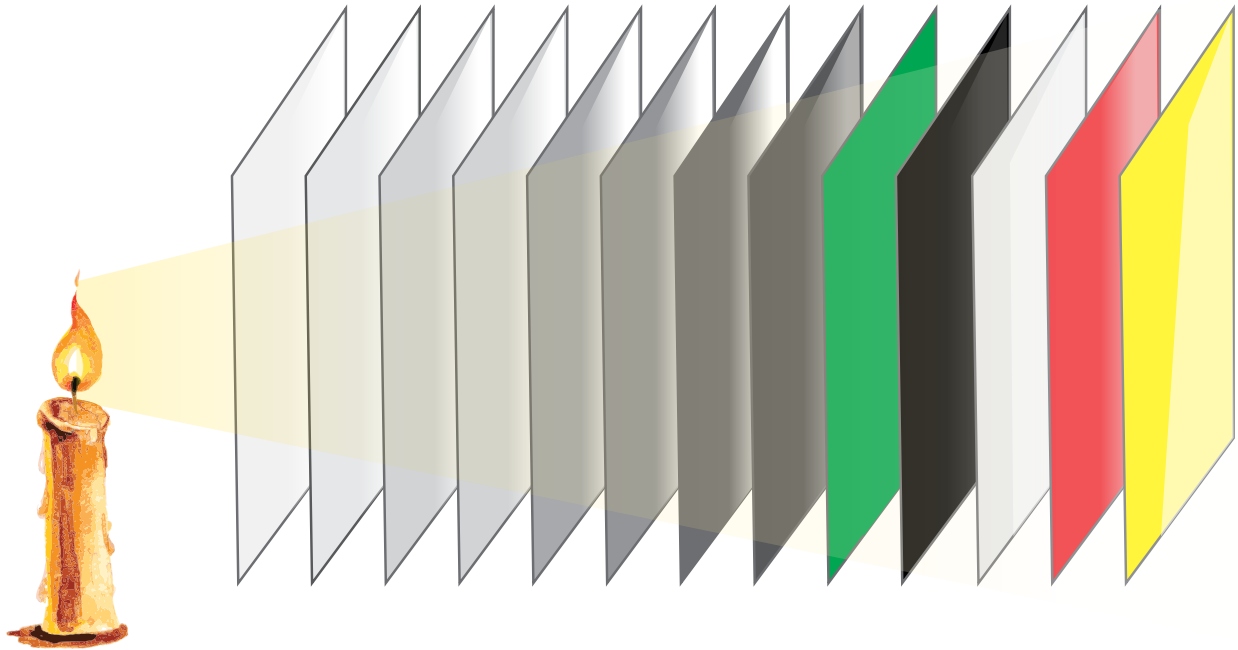
The concept of inaccurate knowledge needs very little explanation; there are so many scientific studies that show that our perception can be distorted by so many things – drugs and alcohol, lack of sleep, stress, fear, anger, prejudice, other strong emotions, and also by addiction to things like food or sex.

What happens, for example, when we are stressed? We go into “fight or flight response” mode. The stress hormones are active, the sympathetic nervous system is primed, and blood shifts to our limbs and to the back part of the brain, in order to heighten our instincts for survival. We are prepared to attack or defend. It is an automatic

physiological response. All our energy is directed towards survival, and the mind is not able to be contemplative but in a strongly reactive mode. What will be our perception of another person in that state? We are much more likely to project our own state onto them.

Also, anything that blurs the clarity and purity of the chakras in the region of the heart will lead us towards false knowledge, and may result in consciousness being colored by emotional reactions like guilt, shame, worry, anxiety, fear, fearless arrogance, anger, sensual desire, greed, jealousy, resentment, envy and hatred. When the heart is burdened by the impressions from the past, known as *samskaras* in Yoga, it is like putting lenses of colored glass in front of a candle flame – when one lens is placed in front of the flame, it clouds the image of the flame to some extent, but as we add more and more lenses of different colors, eventually we don’t see the flame at all. The lenses are a good analogy for the layers of impressions we accumulate through life’s experiences, each one covering more of the light of the *atman* or soul. In fact, our ability to perceive with clarity is directly proportional to the purity of our field of consciousness.

*When the heart is burdened by the impressions from
the past, known as samskaras in Yoga, it is like putting
lenses of colored glass in front of a candle flame – when
one lens is placed in front of the flame, it clouds the
image of the flame to some extent, but as we add more
and more lenses of different colors, eventually we don’t
see the flame at all.*



That is why we have the practice of Cleaning in Heartfulness, to remove all these impressions that accumulate in our system from past experiences, and also the ones we are creating in the present. Otherwise we will always perceive ourselves and the world with a colored consciousness, and as a result we remain prey to illusion or *viparyaya*.

In summary, the comparison of these first two *vrittis*, *pramana* and *viparyaya*, highlights the importance of maintaining a pure field of consciousness. With this comes the clarity and discernment known as *Viveka* in Yoga. It is the first of the four *Sadhanas* of Yoga, the *Sadhana Chatushtaya*. We become capable of receiving knowledge through direct superconscious perception, through unbiased observation, and through the wise teachings of enlightened beings. That is the way of *pramana*.

Sadhana Chatushtaya

Viveka
Discernment

Vairagya
Detachment

Shama

Moulding or
regulation of
mind

Dama

Control of
senses follows
automatically
when we fix our
goal on Reality

Uparati

Self-withdrawal,
desire free; different
from Vairagya which
can also mean
aversion to worldly
things

Abhyas - Pravritthi Path - Stilling of mental
tendencies through Ashtanga Yoga

Vairagya - Nivritti Path
Renunciation

Yama - Good Conduct

Niyama - Regularity; Observation

Asana - Posture

Pranayama - Breath Regulation

Pratyahara - Inner Withdrawal

Dharana - Mental Focus

Dhyana - Meditation

Samadhi - Original Condition (Balance)

Saucha
Purity

Santosh
Contentment

Tapas
Penance

Swadhyaya
Study of Self

Iswar Pranidhan
Surrender to God

Ahimsa
Non-violence

Satya
Truthfulness

Asteya
Honesty

Brahmacharya
Celibacy

Aparigraha
Non-possessiveness

Stone-like
Condition

Consciousness within
an Unconscious State

Sahaj
Samadhi

THE TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF YOGA

Shat-Sampatti

Spiritual
Attainments

Mumukshutva

To Seek
Liberation

Titiksha

State of fortitude,
also a state of total
satisfaction

Shraddha

Faith; devotion
with faith

Samadhana

State of self-
settledness to the
Goal

Kshipta

Disturbed condition of mind due to sensations such as
hunger, thirst, anger, sorrow, desire of fame and wealth

Moodha

Condition of mind, including the tendencies
that cause laziness, indolence and idleness

Vikshipta

Tendency which drives the mind away from the sacred
thoughts and brings irrelevant ideas during meditation

Ekaagra-Vritti

Tendency to fix attention
on one thing at a time

Niruddha

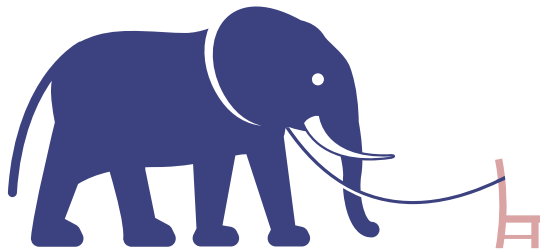
Tendency which brings the mind to state of perfect self
control, free of all complexity and perturbation

VRITTIS

In today's world, most of us are doing just the opposite – we are carrying such a heavy burden of impressions in the subconscious mind that we struggle to follow the way of right knowledge, despite our best efforts, and we easily get confused. There is a distortion of truth and knowledge, and it creates an unstable base. Take the example of a mighty elephant. He is conditioned little by little; first he is tied to a tree with a rope, and each time he is tied he feels helpless and stands in one place. Eventually he becomes so conditioned that he no longer believes in his own ability to act, and this mighty elephant can then be tied to a light plastic chair in the circus, when he could tear the whole tent down if he wished to do so. With this sort of conditioning, we lose the right perspective, unable to witness our own strength.

It is very difficult to be happy, peaceful and make wise decisions when the foundation of perception is shaky. So many of us are frustrated, because no matter how hard we try to do the right thing, often things go wrong.

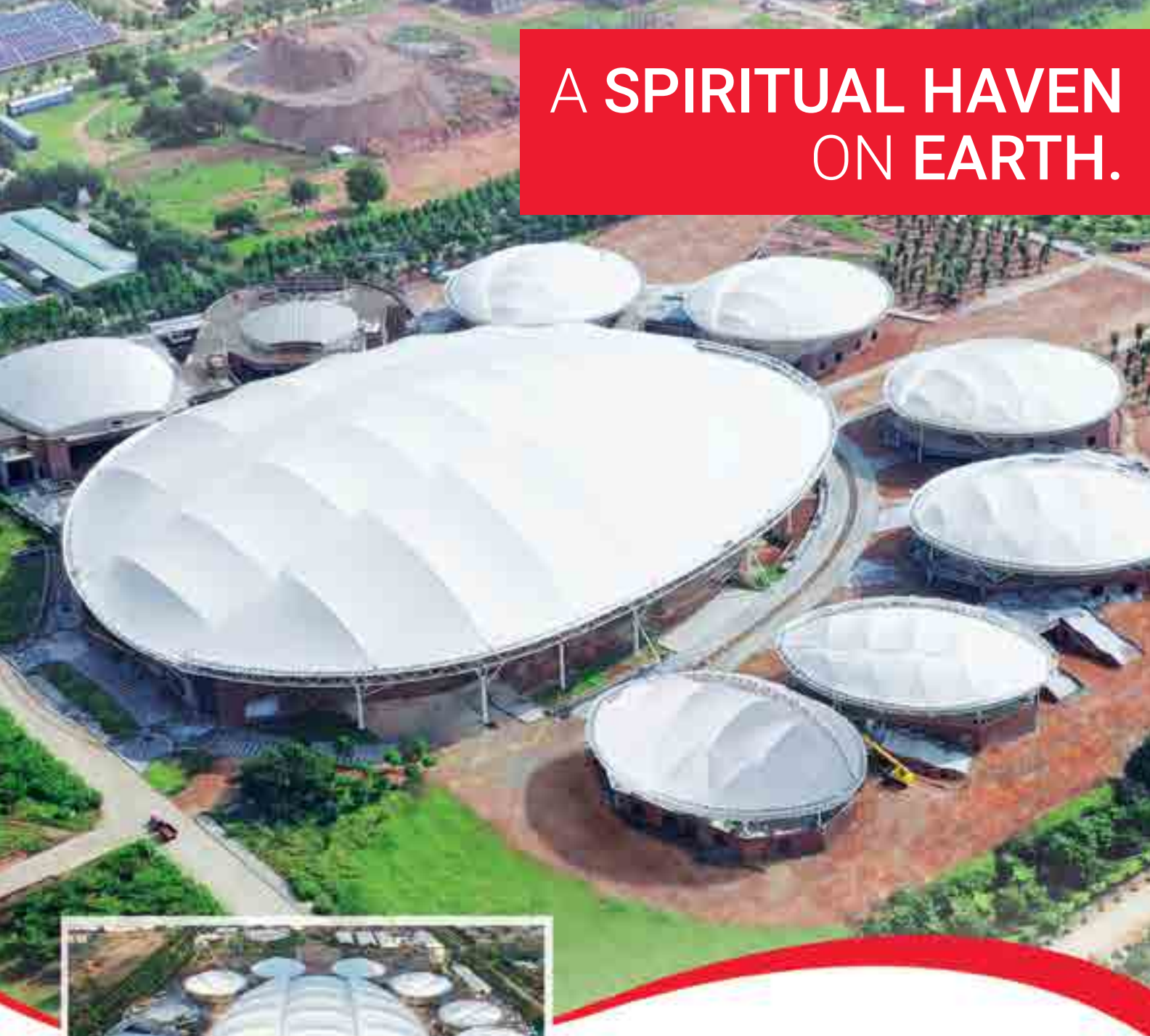
Our heart becomes our guiding compass, and we learn to listen to the heart with ever-increasing confidence and joy. Then life takes on a different dimension – psychologically we experience true well-being.



PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The first step in this journey is to acknowledge our current state, to accept that we need to be centered in stillness, and that our perception is colored by the tendencies or *vrittis* that we have created in our field of consciousness, leading to *viparyaya*. When we start to experience the discipline of Yoga, through glimpses of inner stillness, we are able to journey towards our center of being and experience *pramana* directly. As we further develop this ability, our heart becomes our guiding compass, and we learn to listen to the heart with ever-increasing confidence and joy. Then life takes on a different dimension – psychologically we experience true well-being.

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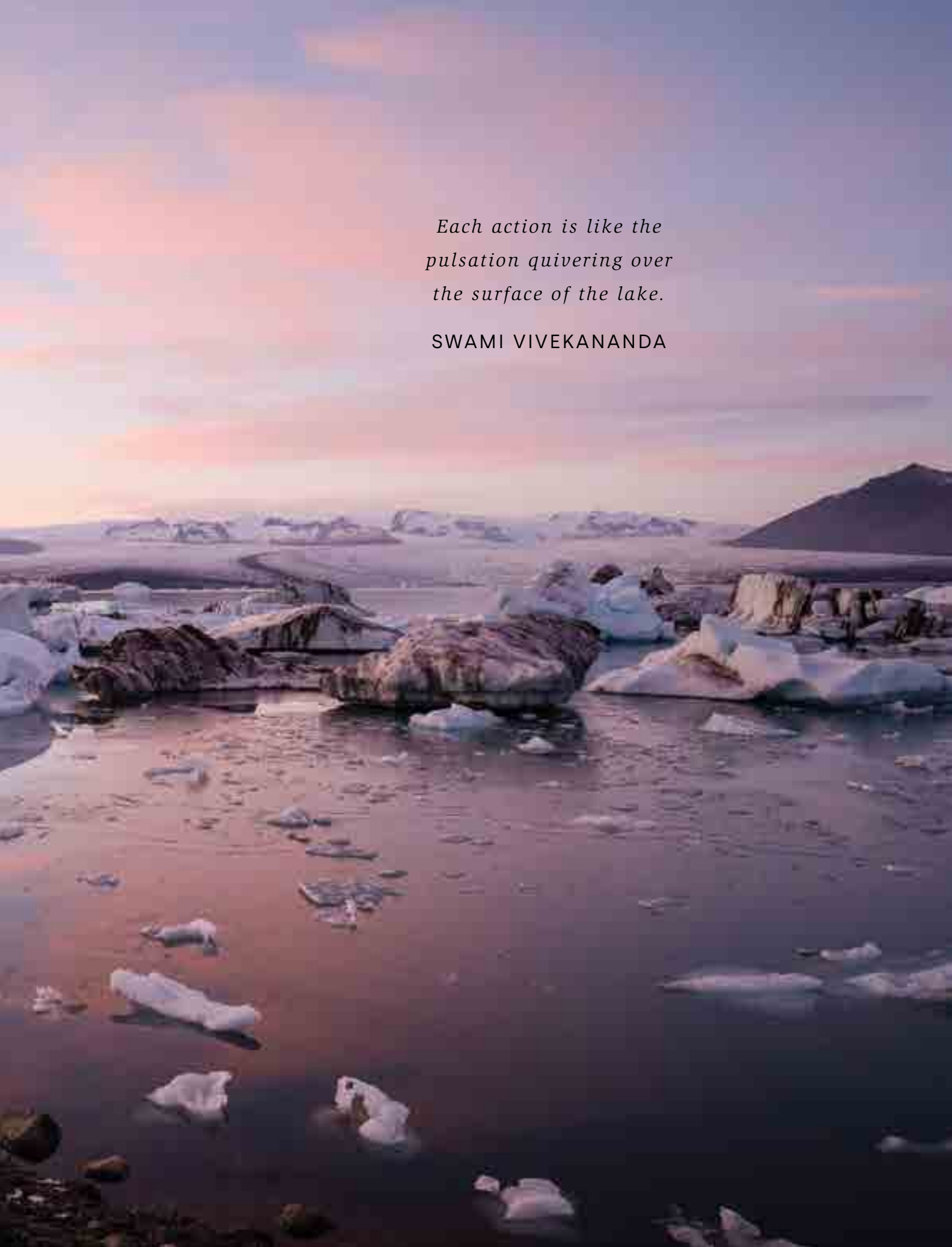
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A full-page background image showing a vast lake filled with numerous icebergs of various sizes. The water is a deep, calm blue, reflecting the soft, warm colors of the sky. In the distance, a range of snow-capped mountains is visible under a sky transitioning from a pale pink near the horizon to a light blue at the top. The overall mood is peaceful and majestic.

*Each action is like the
pulsation quivering over
the surface of the lake.*

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

IMAGINATION



Now let's explore the third *vritti*, *vikalpa*, which means "imagination" or "fantasy." Imagination is a very important mental faculty with which we form and create new ideas, images and concepts that cannot always be verified by *pramana*. It is necessary for creativity, innovation and discovery, but it can also lead us into a spiral of delusion.

Patanjali writes:

1.9: *Shabda jnana anupati vastu shunyah
vikalpah*

Fantasy or imagination is a thought pattern that has verbal expression and knowledge, but for which there is no such object or reality in existence.

Vikalpa is not the general term used for all types of imagination. There are four Sanskrit words that can loosely be translated as imagination: *vikalpa*, *kalpana*, *pratibha* and *bhavana*. *Vikalpa* is, in a sense, the lowest form of imagination. It describes the apparently random fantasies that continuously surface in the mind like mental static.

Vikalpas are imaginary stories, thoughts and images that play out in our minds, for example, a fantasy that plays out during a daydream in class at school, or seeing a shadow in the dark and fearing it is a ghost. Most of the ongoing chitchat in our minds belongs to the category of *vikalpa*: "What will happen if I ...?" "What if she doesn't like me?" etc. Such chitchat is composed of all sorts of illusory beliefs and mental constructs. We preempt reality with our fantasies and expectations.

There is a wonderful story about *vikalpa*. One night, a young man decided he wanted to cross the river on the outskirts of town to visit his beloved. There was a storm and the river was dangerous, but he was determined to cross to see her. So he looked around for a boat to carry him and eventually saw a log floating by. He grabbed onto it, and let the log carry him downstream across the river. When he arrived at the home of his beloved, all the

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lights were off, but he saw a rope hanging down from her balcony. So he climbed the rope and went to her.

She was delighted but surprised to see him, asking, "How were you able to visit me on such a terrible night?"

He thanked her: "Because you left the rope hanging for me, I was able to climb up to your balcony."

"But I left no rope hanging," she said.

When they went to the balcony to look, they were shocked to discover it was a snake hanging down.

The next day, after the storm had passed, he returned home. On reaching the river, he discovered that he had held on to a human corpse to cross the river, not a log. Love had blinded him to reality and given him the courage to reach his beloved, no matter what.

Love can give us one perception of reality, but what happens to a lover who falls out of love because of a series of events? Do they still perceive their beloved in the same way? No. We are preconditioned by our own expectations, and when disillusionment sets in everything changes.



Through imagination we can be creative and embrace other perspectives, because the mind follows imagination. It is a very powerful projective capacity of the human mind that leads to transformation and evolution. It is the basis of aspiration and vision, one of the most important aspects of human consciousness.

The other three forms of imagination have a higher, nobler purpose. *Kalpana* is intentional mental creation. For example, a prayerful suggestion that all people are becoming peace-loving is an example of *kalpana*. We are creating something through the power of thought, something that does not yet exist in the physical dimension. *Kalpana* helps us to aspire towards a goal or vision, and reminds us to work to achieve that goal. *Pratibha* is the spontaneous visionary insight that comes from expanding consciousness into higher realms of superconsciousness, and *bhavana* is the ability to call something into existence as a result of yogic contemplation and visioning.

In fact, to imagine is one of the distinguishing human qualities, representing new possibilities, allowing us to create a vision for the future. Through imagination we can be creative and embrace other perspectives, because the mind follows imagination. It is a very powerful projective capacity of the human mind that leads to transformation

and evolution. It is the basis of aspiration and vision, one of the most important aspects of human consciousness. In its highest form it is visionary and inspiring.

This visionary quality of imagination has been described by philosophers of all cultures for thousands of years, and is encapsulated by Einstein in his statement, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution." Yet this sort of imagination is very far from the ordinary imaginary static or noise in our field of consciousness that we know as *vikalpa*.

So is it the same fundamental aspect of the human being that leads to both magnificent visions and delusional fantasy? What allows us to imagine something that does not exist? The four mental functions of *chit*, *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahankar* may allow us to think of new concepts, project our existing experience into new dimensions, and use our willpower to bring about change, but these four subtle bodies cannot create something new out of nothing without the *atman*, the combination of thinking (*man*) and movement (*ath*) that is the soul. It is this divine aspect of our being that is able to create. So it is the combination of the subtle bodies and the soul that gives us our faculties of imagination and creativity.

In fact, the concept of imagination raises many questions, including:

Can we create something completely new that has never existed before, or do we 'catch' something that already exists in the ether that cannot yet be verified by the senses? Perhaps it exists in higher dimensions already. I will leave you to ponder over these questions about imagination in general, but let's now turn our attention to the lowest type of imagination, *vikalpa*. Why do these random imaginary thoughts come into our minds, and where do they come from?

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution."
—Albert Einstein

VIKALPA

Vikalpa is the background fantasy in our field of consciousness. It creates constant noise in the system. It exists because there are accumulated complexities and impurities in our field of consciousness, which are also known as *samskaras* or impressions. In an attempt to purify consciousness, the mind is always trying to throw them out, and so they surface as thoughts. The more complex the impressions, the more complex the *vikalpas*. They may bubble up from our subconscious, in the same way that dreams do when we are sleeping.

In fact, the psychotherapist, Carl Jung, developed 'active imagination' as a meditation technique so that the contents of the subconscious mind could surface as images, narratives or separate entities. He used this technique to serve as a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious, and worked with dreams as well as imagination and fantasy. Jung's aim was to bring about harmony and integration from fragmented and dissociated parts of the human mind.

Cleaning removes their root cause in the subconscious, by directly removing the underlying impressions that have formed. There is no need to analyze, to understand or to experience the effects of the impressions.

Jung thought that ‘active imagination’, a way of bringing *vikalpa* into awareness, springs from the desires and fantasies of the unconscious mind, which ultimately wants to become conscious. He showed that once such fantasies surface, they become weaker and less frequent. This technique was one of several that would define Jung’s distinctive contribution to the practice of psychotherapy. This technique not only has the potential to allow communication between the conscious and unconscious aspects of an individual’s personal psyche, but also between the personal and collective unconscious.

Anything that colors the purity of the field of consciousness can lead to *vikalpa*, whether that distortion has come from the subconscious within or from the external environment around. For example, *vikalpa* may be the result of the atmosphere in a certain place: if you happen to pass through an area of a foreign city where there have been many crimes, you may suddenly be gripped with fear for no apparent reason. You are sensing the thoughts

and feelings of the victims of those crimes. Whether the distortion has come from your inner environment or from the external environment, it is because of complexities that the mind wants to throw out in order to purify consciousness.

That is why we have the practice of Cleaning in Heartfulness, to remove all these impressions that have accumulated in our system from past experiences, and also the ones we are creating in the present. Cleaning is a much more direct practice than Jung’s “active imagination,” as it bypasses the need to observe thoughts and emotions that surface into the conscious mind. Cleaning removes their root cause in the subconscious, by directly removing the underlying impressions that have formed. There is no need to analyze, to understand or to experience the effects of the impressions. They are simply removed, like dirt is removed from the body when taking a bath. With Cleaning, gradually the background noise of *vikalpa* reduces, until eventually the field of consciousness is clear and pure. Otherwise we will always perceive ourselves and the world through a distorted consciousness, and remain at the mercy of *vikalpa*.

Until we arrive at a stage of purity of consciousness, how can we make use of these fragmentary fantasies that arise in our thoughts, these *vikalpas*? As Jung observed, they show us our subconscious desires and tendencies. By simply witnessing them arise and leave, without judgment. It is like looking in an inner mirror, so we become aware of many aspects of our psyche, and we can then see how to refine our personalities and tendencies. This awareness can then be used to refine our character. In Yoga, this is the practice of *swadhyaya* or self-study, one of the five *Niyamas*, the second limb of Ashtanga Yoga.

It is easily done by letting the mind drift, witnessing it, and seeing what it thinks and feels. “Mind is not soul or spirit. It is only matter in a finer form, and we own it and can learn to manipulate it through the nerve energies,” in the words of Swami Vivekananda. This is the first step of *Pratyahara*, the fifth limb of Ashtanga Yoga.



Consider the following:

1. You sit to meditate first thing in the morning, and your mind is flooded with fantasies of a sensual nature. What can you do? As soon as you become aware of this distraction, stop meditating and clean point B, one of the satellite points of the heart chakra, for 5 minutes, so as to regulate and calm the tendency. You will then be able to meditate without being distracted by sensuality.
2. You sit with your family after dinner in the evening, enjoying their company, but very soon your imagination starts to run all over the place thinking of ways to get back at a colleague who blamed you for something you didn't do, leading to his promotion and your sidelining. What can you do? As soon as you become aware of the distraction, meditate on

point A, another one of the satellite points of the heart chakra, for 5 minutes, so as to regulate and calm the tendency. Then you will be able to find a productive solution to the problem, accept what has happened, and let go of the resentment.

When consciousness is not pure, our perception remains colored and the faculty of imagination is easily diverted into these complex and unproductive fantasies of *vikalpa*. In contrast, what happens when we have a pure consciousness, and we are able instead to project a vision for humanity into this purity, without any distortions? Perhaps we visualize everyone at peace, or in osmosis with the Source, or that we are all developing correct thinking and right understanding. How the soul will then shine forth and its faculty of creation and imagination become potentized! We would then be eligible for Samuel Coleridge's statement that "Imagination is the condition for cognitive participation in a sacramental universe."

SLEEP



*All manifest life seems to require
a period of sleep, of calm,
in which to gain added strength,
renewed vigor, for the next manifestation,
or awakening to activity. Thus is the march of all
progress, of all manifest life –
in waves, successive waves,
of activity and repose.
Waves succeed each other in an endless
chain of progression.*

—Swami Vivekananda

The fourth *vritti* is sleep, defining yet another state of mind, for a completely different purpose. Patanjali says:

1.10: Abhava pratyaya alambana vritti nidra

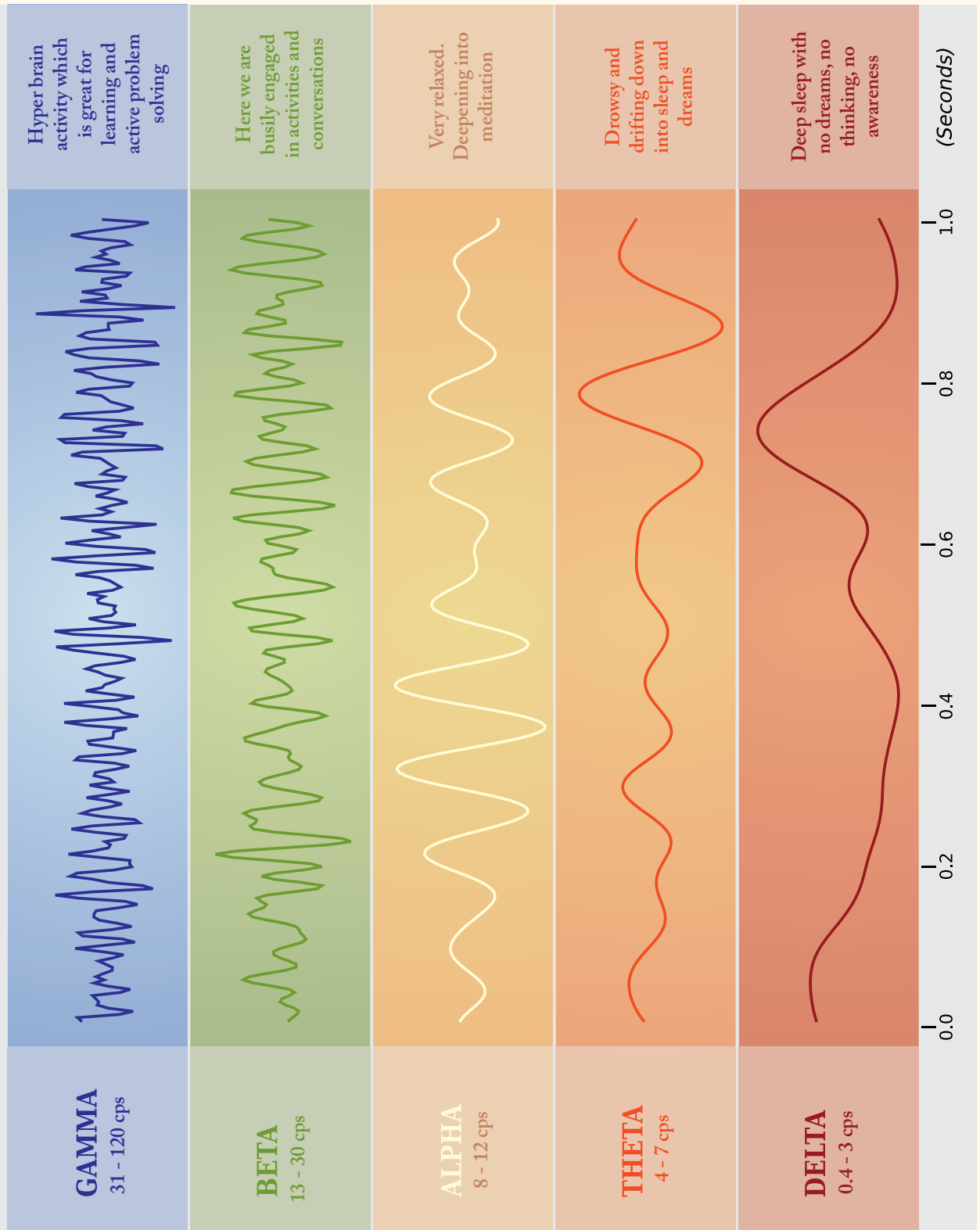
Deep sleep is the subtle thought pattern
that embraces nothingness –
the negation of other thought patterns.
It is defined by the absence of content.

Deep sleep is an unconscious state with no content. In deep sleep, our brainwave frequencies slow down almost to zero, and these are known as Delta waves between the frequencies of 0.5 to 3 Hertz. There is minimal activity. At all other times, except during *Samadhi*, we have thoughts; but not during deep sleep. *Samadhi* and deep sleep are not all that different, except that in *Samadhi* we can be aware.

Why do we need to sleep? Delta wave sleep is rejuvenating and refreshing, because when we rest the body and mind other healing processes are able to purify and restore our system. Freshness comes as a result of deep sleep – we are mentally inactive, so our brainwave frequencies are almost zero, reflecting the stillness in our mental process.

*In deep sleep we are absorbed
in the soul in a state of
oneness. This is a deeply
spiritual state, close to God,
but we are generally not
aware of it. Because we are
close to God, resting in the
soul, we experience joy and
bliss, also without knowing it.*

HUMAN BRAIN WAVES



There are very few waves in the mind – the lake of consciousness is almost still.

More importantly, when the body and mind are not creating waves, demanding attention, we withdraw into the soul. In Yoga, this deep sleep state is known as *sushupti*. The knowledge of the physical body comes in the waking or *jagratha* state. The knowledge of the mind comes in the dream or *swapna* state, and the knowledge of the soul comes in the deep sleep or *sushupti* state. In fact, it is the soul itself.

In deep sleep we are absorbed in the soul in a state of oneness. This is a deeply spiritual state, close to God, but we are generally not aware of it. Because we are close to God, resting in the soul, we experience joy and bliss, also without knowing it.

*With the help of
Transmission, it becomes
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learn how to take this
condition out into daily life
with eyes open.*

Some yogis speak about retaining consciousness in the deep sleep state of *sushupti*, but is it really conscious? Not as we generally think of it. We can say it is consciousness without familiar awareness. Consciousness is a function of the mind, whereas in *sushupti* we are at the very center of our existence, beyond the mind, in the realm of the soul. In Heartfulness it is beautifully described as the state of higher ignorance or perfect ignorance, beyond the conscious mind, beyond the thinking mind, and beyond the observing mind. The early Christian mystics called it “the cloud of unknowing.” It is a state so much subtler than consciousness, on the verge of absolute nothingness. As the measured brainwave frequencies show us, it is not completely zero, but these very low Delta wave frequencies reflect the minimal autonomic activity necessary for rejuvenation. It is baseline existence.

Adepts of meditation are able to attain a similar state to *sushupti* while meditating, in deep *Samadhi*. What is the difference between *sushupti* and *Samadhi*? *Samadhi* can be with full awareness and consciousness. But it is not always so – there are various stages of *Samadhi*, starting with the deep sleep like state of unconscious stone-like *pashantulya*, and ending with full conscious awareness. It depends on how we meditate, how we expand our consciousness, and how we connect with the soul.

The fully aware state of *Samadhi* is known as *Sahaj Samadhi* or the *Turiya* state – awareness in nothingness. In this *Turiya* state, very low frequency Delta brainwaves are measured just as they are in deep sleep, and in Heartfulness this can happen even in the very first meditation due to the effects of Yogic Transmission. We touch the soul, we nourish the soul, and we feel as rejuvenated by meditation as we do by deep sleep.

With the help of Transmission, it becomes quite easy to experience the *Turiya* state. While our body is fully relaxed, our mind perceives things. We are not sleeping, but we are in such a relaxed state. And then we learn how to take this condition out into daily life with eyes open. We transcend the *Turiya* state to the *Turiyatit* state, which happens when we carry that deep meditative state within

Sleep is the vritti that takes us deepest and closest to our Center, our soul, and we do this every night of our lives, from the time we are in the womb until the time of our death. If we can discipline our sleep cycles, it will enhance our lives and contribute to our spiritual evolution.

us all the time. This will only happen when the mind is so pure and elastic that there are no complexities or heaviness blocking our ability to traverse all these states of being. It is the result of two things: our ability to let go of all the colorings (the state known as *Vairagya*) and our practice (known as *abhyas*).

Patanjali says:

1.12: Abhyasa vairagyabhyam tat nirodhah

The *vrittis* are stilled through spiritual practice and the letting go of all the mental colorings.

Through practice and arriving at the state of *Vairagya*, we start to resonate with the Absolute state, the original state of stillness. We not only touch the soul during deep sleep but also during *Samadhi*, with more and more awareness. That connection then continues on through all our daily activities. Restlessness disappears. Our waking and deep sleep states are no longer so different.

To simplify, we can say that:

Consciousness + thinking = waking state, *jagratha*
Unconsciousness + thinking = dreaming state, *swapna*
Unconsciousness – thinking = deep sleep, *sushupti*, death
Consciousness – thinking = *Sahaj Samadhi*, *Turiya*

Witnessing can exist in any of these four states. Whether it does or not depends on how evolved our consciousness is, and the potentiality behind that consciousness. The most difficult state for witnessing is *sushupti*. How many of us can be a witness to what happens in deep sleep or death? Practice is the key. It allows us to make use of these deep states of *sushupti* and *Samadhi* for spiritual growth.

There is an interesting question we can ask here: Why is it that we believe we are ignorant in *sushupti*?

One perspective is that our conscious mind is not active in this deeper state of sleep and hence no information is possible from that state.

Another perspective is that there is nothing to be known there! What can we know about the soul, about nothingness? Why would we want to know about something that is beyond knowledge? On entering that state, the elements of the waking and dream states withdraw and merge into seed form. From that point of view there is usually no awareness. So we call it ignorance, without understanding the real thing.

So sleep is the *vritti* that takes us deepest and closest to our Center, our soul, and we do this every night of our lives, from the time we are in the womb until the time of our death. If we can discipline our sleep cycles, it will enhance our lives and contribute to our spiritual evolution. How well we sleep, and how deeply we sleep, also determine our state of mind throughout the day.

Generally, it is better to sleep early to be in tune with natural cycles. On the night you miss a good night's sleep, observe how you carry out your activities the next day.



Then compare that with a night when you go to bed early, before you are exhausted, and see how you carry out your activities the following day. Sleeping well allows you to be creative. You can observe the difference for yourself.

There is a very interesting TED talk by Jeff Illif called “One More Reason to Have a Good Night’s Sleep,” in which he describes how our neurological system detoxifies itself during sleep. Our central nervous system does not have any lymphatic drainage, so the cerebrospinal fluid flows through the space between the cells removing toxins from the brain during sleep. In sleep-deprived people, the toxin removal is reduced greatly. These toxins then affect us, so we become vulnerable to bad moods. What happens

the next day? We are more irritable and less resilient, and we are less creative. At best we will create more enemies! It is not surprising that sleep-deprived individuals are responsible for a large number of road accidents. They also cannot engage in creative discussions and fruitful conversations, because they are annoyed with every little difference of opinion.

When we sleep well, our morning meditation also improves drastically. When we meditate with a rested mind we will have a better grip over consciousness. And when we meditate well, we will be able to dive into deep states with awareness, into *Sahaj Samadhi*, so that we nourish the soul and let its joy radiate into every aspect of our lives.

MEMORY





Try to imagine life without memory. How would you learn from your mistakes? You would not remember how to do those things that make up your daily routine, such as making breakfast, going to work, doing your job etc., and you would not be able to build relationships with the people you cherish and love, because there would be no shared memories and no fond nostalgia. Your chance of survival would be seriously compromised, because you would repeat dangerous things that put you at risk, such as walking in front of a traveling car, eating something poisonous, or putting your hand in fire. You would not be able to learn a profession or trade, because you would not remember anything. How can a doctor treat patients without remembering human anatomy or the diagnoses of diseases?

There is no doubt that the fifth *vritti*, *smriti* or memory, has profound practicality and survival value. Even single-celled organisms without brains and central nervous systems, like amoebae, are able to learn, exhibiting memory. Memory is a primitive function of consciousness, fundamental to our existence on Earth; we remember in order to survive.

At the same time, our memories can hold us back and weigh us down significantly. There are two main reasons. The first reason is the emotional association we give to memory – the “charge” – as we accumulate experiences, because of the likes and dislikes we attach to them. For example, “I hate thunderstorms,” “I love picnics,” “All teenagers are rude.” We have one or two experiences and then we generalize. The second is the fact that we create habits or behavioral tendencies because of those associations. While habits can be useful, they limit us. We lose neuroplasticity. We restrict ourselves by the cognates of the past. As a result, effectively, the past interferes in the present.

VRITTIS

For example, if a person had a traumatic experience while swimming as a child, he may fear being in water for the rest of his life, and it may carry over into future lives also. If a young girl associates the smell of lavender with her mother, she may feel safe and happy with every woman who wears lavender perfume she meets as an adult. If a boy's tantrums successfully got him the attention he wanted when he was small, he may continue to create tantrums as an adult in his relationships in order to demand attention. Our patterns very easily become fixed, and most of them are unconscious.

In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali describes the fifth *vritti* as follows:

1.11: *Anubhuta vishaya asampramoshah smritih*

Memory is when the *vrittis* of perceived subjects do not slip away. Instead they form impressions, which can come back again to consciousness. Memory is the recalling of past experiences through these impressions that have settled in the field of consciousness.

Creating memory is the laying down of experience in the form of vibrational patterns in the field of consciousness. These are known as impressions or *samskaras* in Yoga. Remembering is the recalling of those stored memories. Both these processes are happening continuously. Constantly we are referring our present feelings and experiences to cognates from the past. So the past is being projected into the present and coloring our experience.

Patanjali says that the *vrittis* can either be colored (*klishhta*) or uncolored (*aklishhta*), that is, either impure or pure. And this is so true of memories. For example, in *The River of Consciousness*, Oliver Sacks¹ shares so many documented examples of how we mis-remember situations and events, based on a number of factors, including the merging together of various memories over time, our emotional colorings, and what other people tell us of past events. In



fact, there are all sorts of colorings. We build up a library of impressions that interact with each other, creating real and imaginary memories. Our memories become colored. Gradually, over time, the mind becomes like a painter's canvas that has layer upon layer of painting on it, all mixed up together. There is no longer purity or clarity in perception.

Compare this with small children, whose minds are still fresh and clear. They are so full of life, so full of wonder, and so open in their approach to the world. They are not bogged down by memory. There is nothing tainting their worldview. It is for this reason that Yoga values so much the regulation of the mind through meditative practices and the removal of impressions. The whole effort

¹ Sacks, O., 2017. *The River of Consciousness*, Penguin Random House, USA.



involved in Yoga is to remove these obstacles, the things that bind us and hold us down, so that we become like small children – and that is especially true of removing the emotional charge of memories.

Patanjali also says:

4.6: Tatra dhyana jam anasayam

Of all the types of consciousness that we see,
only the original state that is uncovered in meditation
is free from latent impressions and desires.
It exists without any support, without motivation
– it is desireless.

This original state is the goal of Yoga. We aspire to uncover what existed before creation. It is the state of *Samadhi*; a state without thought. It existed before we created our own inner ecology over time. When we are in *Samadhi*, we are totally in the present. There is no thinking, only witnessing. Meditation is, in effect, the letting go of thinking. This is such an important concept, which is at the very crux of Yoga, and it highlights the central role of meditation in Yoga. In meditation we learn how to let go of thinking and simply witness. More about this later.

This is why Yoga can never be associated with any belief system or religion – because all religions require language, dogma and belief, whereas the original state is beyond all these.

Patanjali continues:

*4.9: Jati desha kala vyavahitanam api
anantaryam
smriti samskarayoh eka rupatvat*

Since memory and deep impressions (*samskaras*)
have the same form, the relationship of cause and effect
continues to be played out, even though there might
be a gap in location, time and state of life.

In other words, there is continuity. We may die and be reborn into another body, at another time, in another place, but that is only the death of the physical body – the subtle bodies and the soul carry on. And the subtle bodies carry the impressions with them around the soul from one life to the next. That is why in research studies done by psychiatrists like Dr Brian Weiss, people remember things from their past lives. And it is also why impressions from past lives can affect us subconsciously in the present, without us even being aware.

It is only once we transcend the mind, in *Samadhi*, that there is no longer any need for rebirth. We are then liberated – because there are no more desires to be fulfilled. We have reached the original state beyond creation.

REMOVE THE ROOT CAUSE

4.10: *Tasam anaditvam cha ashisah nityatvat*

There is no beginning to this process
of deep impressions,
as the desire to live and be happy is eternal.

Each new experience is built upon the tendencies laid down by past experiences. There is no beginning to desire and the wish for happiness. Try to witness your desires. If you watch them, and are alert to the way they affect your behavior, you will soon understand why it is so useful to remove them from your field of consciousness. The good news is that there is an end to desires, through the practices of Yoga. As energy is gradually released from being bound up in desires – by removing the vibrational knots or complexities in the field of consciousness – it becomes available to help you soar higher and higher. And as more and more of the knots of desire are removed, your energy will be able to soar high enough for you to reach escape velocity.

4.11: *Hetu phala ashraya alambana
samgrihitatvat esam abhave tad abhavah*

As the knots of energy of impressions
are held together by
cause and effect, the effects disappear
with the causes.

What does Patanjali mean here? Think of the effects he speaks about as your emotional reactions. You may be fearful, angry, jealous, anxious, self-pitying or resentful, or you may be kind, compassionate, loving, generous and forgiving. But these are only the effects of underlying causes that exist within your system. What are the underlying causes? They are the *samskaric* impressions in your field of consciousness.

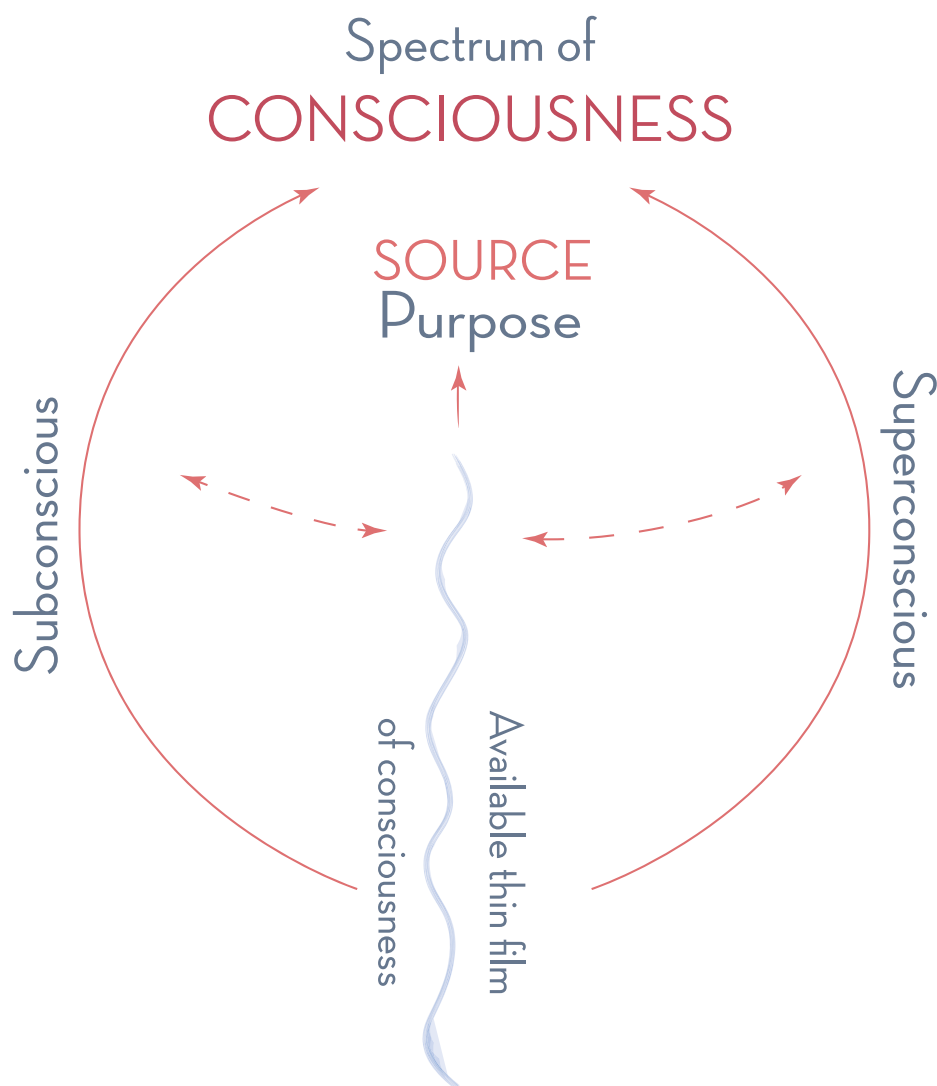
It is important to understand that the effects cannot be removed by trying to change the effects. If you fell a tree but leave the roots intact, many trees will regrow from the roots. Similarly, if you try to change outer behaviors without removing the underlying *samskaras*, the behaviors will re-emerge as soon as the conditions are conducive. Trying to control your emotions is a good start – it is good to be aware and willing to change behavioral patterns, such as learning to manage anger. But it is still tackling the problem from the cosmetic and superficial level. That is why the medical approach to mental illness has limitations, and why we have a global epidemic of depression. Medication and behavioral changes can only attempt to manage symptoms, the effects. They cannot address the root cause. To remove the root needs something more. Hence we require something like the Heartfulness practice of Cleaning, which works deeply at the innermost level, removing the root cause itself.

For permanent change, the *samskaras* or energy knots have to be removed. If you try to manage this only by controlling your emotions, they will continue to accumulate in your subconscious, and you will end up with a pressure cooker inside you ready to explode. Heartfulness Cleaning does the opposite; it releases the effects by removing the root cause.

4.12: *Atita anagatam svarupatah asti
adhva bheda dharmanam*

Past and future exist in the present,
but they are not experienced in the present
because they have different characteristics;
they are on different planes.

Generally we are unconsciously influenced by the past and anticipating the future; whereas if our consciousness is pure we see eternity as it is – eternally in the present moment. Most of us are limited to the thin film of consciousness that we use, and as a result we do not understand the relationship between past, present and future – between subconscious, conscious and superconscious.



In Heartfulness Meditation, we learn how to expand consciousness until it becomes infinite. With the aid of Yogic Transmission, what was earlier subconscious, i.e. below consciousness, is illuminated into consciousness. What was superconscious, i.e. above consciousness, is also illuminated into consciousness. No longer do we need to compartmentalize these three parts of the consciousness spectrum and be so unaware of what is happening within us.

Of course the autonomic functions of the mind that allow us to breathe, to digest food, that allow the heart to pump blood, and allow us to process all the stimuli that we take in, still go on unconsciously, and we want them to. But the emotions related to memory can be removed, and behavioral change can also then take effect in a real way.



THE WITNESS

Once the emotional charge of our likes and dislikes is removed, through the meditative practices and lifestyle changes of Heartfulness, we learn how to witness instead of observe, without the mind interfering in the process. Observation is influenced by the pre-judgment of conditioning, of previous information, because it involves impressions. There is constant interference. This is what is referred to in Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. As observers, we are always involved, as our likes and dislikes draw our observation in the first place, and based on them we judge and interfere. As mentioned earlier, observation is usually goal-oriented, as in the scientific method where we start with an hypothesis – our own preconception based on observation. The observing mind seeks an outcome. The observing mind is not passive or disinterested. Compare this with witnessing, which is neutral.

The Buddha expressed this idea of the witness in a slightly different way. The term he used for meditation was “right memory.” You can also call it uncolored memory, or unbiased memory. Right memory is truthful. It is freeing. It is authentic. All this comes from meditation where we learn to simply witness and allow everything to surface and leave.

The result? Clarity of mind and the associated ability to discern and make wise decisions. To arrive at that state we need to journey through the Heart Region, and master the emotions associated with the five elements of the chakras in the Heart. In this process, all the *samskaric* complexities and impurities associated with those emotions unravel and dissipate. We arrive at a state of clarity and authenticity.

LETTING GO

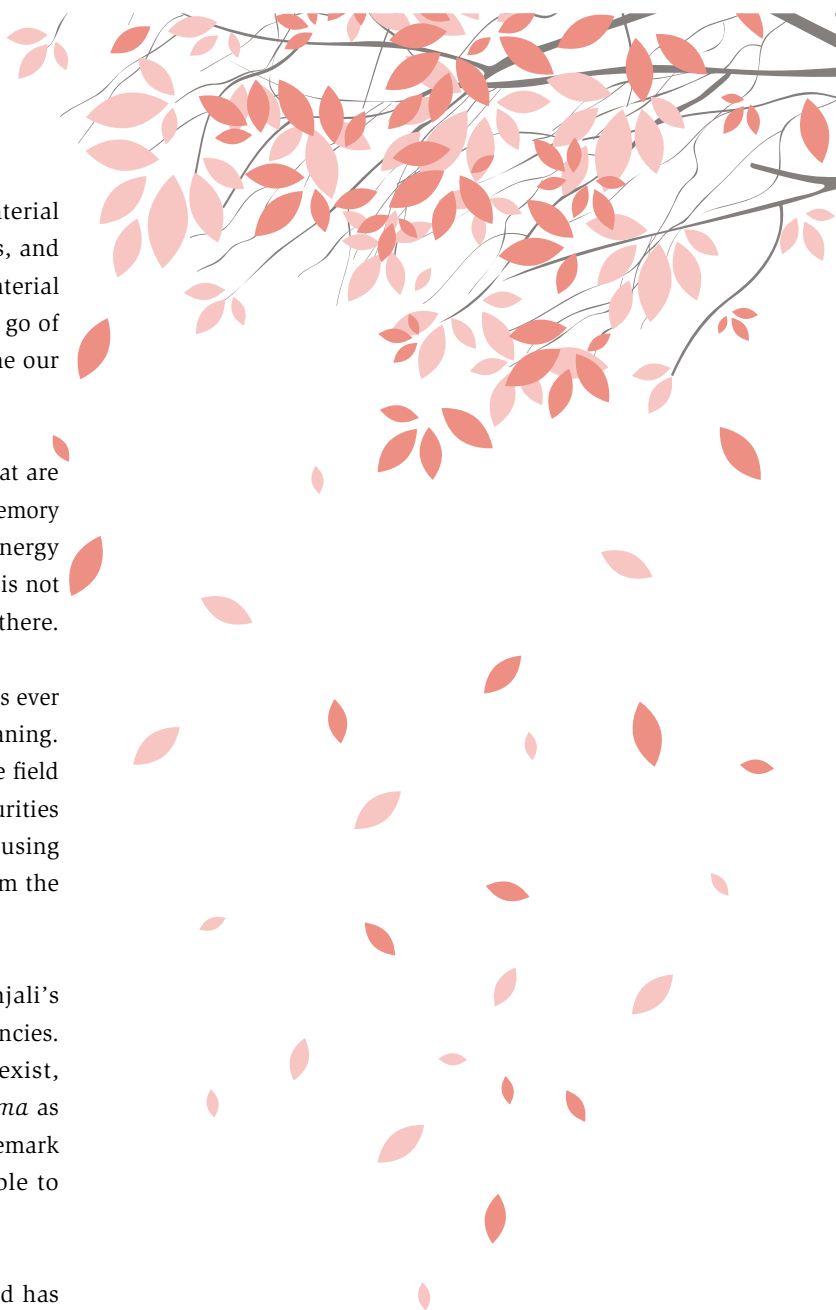
Accumulating memories is like accumulating material possessions. Memories are our mental possessions, and those we hold dear are like our most precious material possessions. Generally they are much harder to let go of than material possessions. We allow them to define our identity. Our ego becomes entangled in them.

Are we willing to let go of our memories? And what are we losing anyway? It is not the information of the memory but the emotional interference, the knot in the energy field, so that the charge is diffused. When the past is not continuously there, the uncolored present can be there.

How is this possible? One of the most potent practices ever conceived in yogic psychology is Heartfulness Cleaning. Its purpose is to remove impressions – to purify the field of consciousness of all the complexities and impurities that accumulate. Impressions are removed daily, using the power of thought, just like dirt is removed from the physical body when taking a bath.

Cleaning also helps with the first limb of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga, *Yama*, to remove unwanted tendencies. The possibility of removal of tendencies does exist, otherwise why would Patanjali have included *Yama* as the first step of Ashtanga Yoga? I am making this remark because some *sannyasis* feel that it is impossible to remove *samskaras*.

Heartfulness Cleaning is simple and effective, and has revolutionized Yoga since it was first introduced in the 1940s by Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur. It is Cleaning that removes the emotional charge. It is Cleaning that disentangles the past influences. It is Cleaning that allows us to redesign our destiny.



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEART

One of the more interesting findings in neuroscience is about the way memories are formed. Scientists talk about implicit memory, which forms unconsciously, and explicit memory, which forms consciously. When we react emotionally in a situation, e.g. out of fear, it is usually very rapid, bypassing the cognitive cortical centers of the brain. Our system utilizes other nerve pathways, such as from the heart neurons via the pneumogastric (tenth) cranial nerve to subcortical structures like the cerebellar tonsil. The heart's electromagnetic pulses also rapidly influence the whole body and beyond. So when there is a feeling or emotional response involved in the laying down of memory, or in the retrieval of a memory, then we use implicit memory, which cannot be managed or removed through cognitive mental processes, because the memory pathways do not go through the cognitive centers. It is a different type of memory.

It can, however, be dealt with by the heart, especially through the practices of meditation on the heart and cleaning of the heart, because the heart can respond instantaneously. Only through heart-based practices can we learn to master emotions and arrive at uncolored 'real' memory.

In *The River of Consciousness*, Oliver Sacks explains that hallucination and imagination involve the same memory pathways in the brain as 'real' perception does. Neuroscientists have so far concluded that there is no mechanism in the mind for ensuring reality and truthfulness. So in that sense the mind is amoral, because the 'guiding factor' or conscience to determine what is right (*pramana*) and what is wrong (*viparyaya*), what is real and what is imagination (*vikalpa*), is not found in neuroscience. Memory is constructed in a highly subjective way. What we feel to be true is as much dependent on imagination as on the senses, because events and situations are experienced. Subjectivity is built into the very nature

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uncolored memory and hence
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sense of well-being and a
purposeful destiny.*

of memory. And memory arises not only from experience but also from the interchange of many minds.

So where does reality come from? Where does truth come from? Again, we come to the role of the heart. Through Heartfulness practices we experience the heart as the subtle organ that tells us what is real and not real, what is right and wrong etc. The inference of this is very profound: by listening to the heart we discover the voice of conscience becoming clearer, so that we can discern and discriminate with ease. We develop *Viveka*. But there is one important caveat – this only works when the heart is pure, when the field of consciousness is pure.

Ultimately, the more we are able to purify our consciousness, by removing the *samskaras* at the root of mental complexities, the more likely we are to have clear, uncolored memory and hence a healthy mind, an overall sense of well-being and a purposeful destiny.



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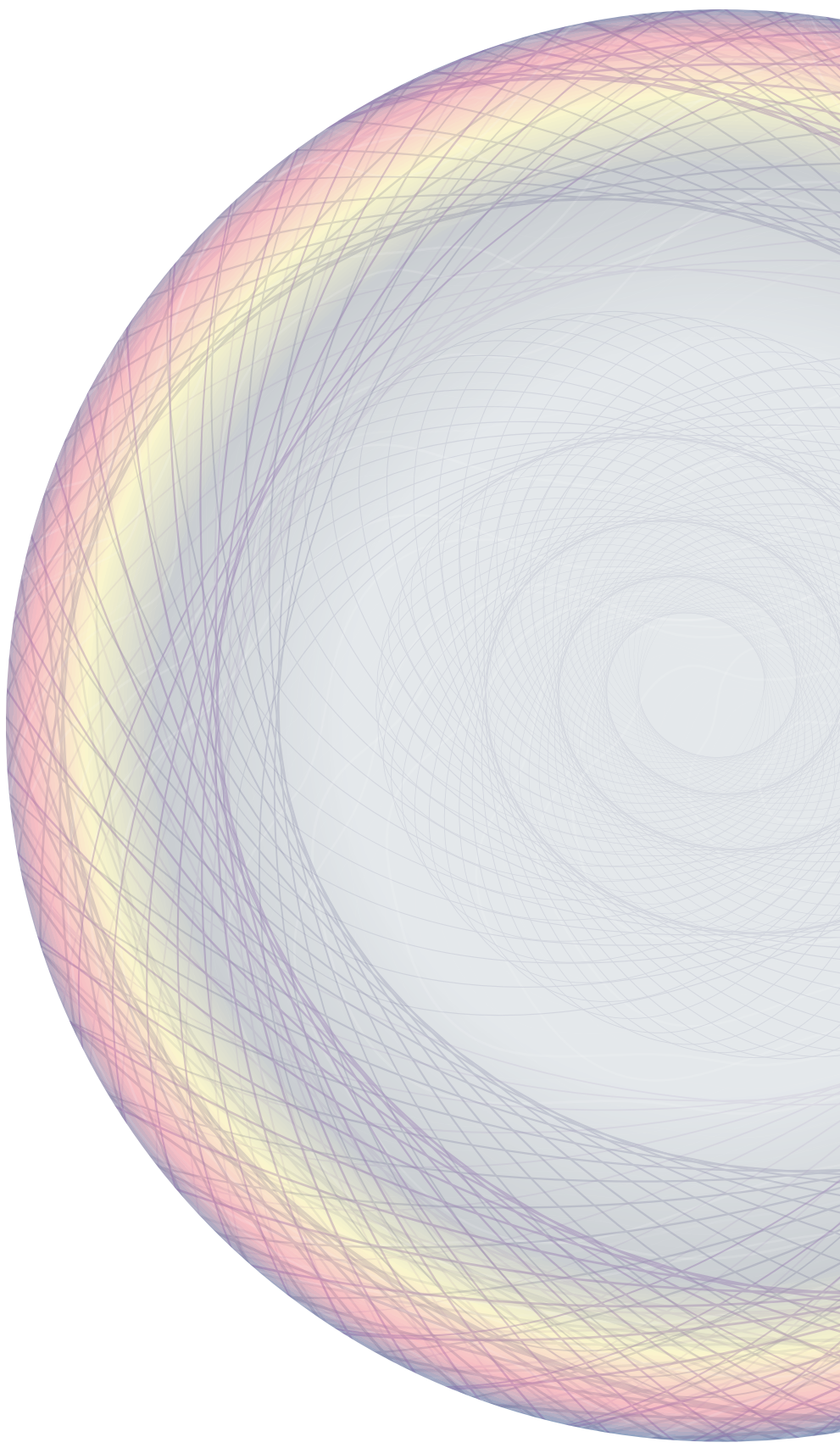
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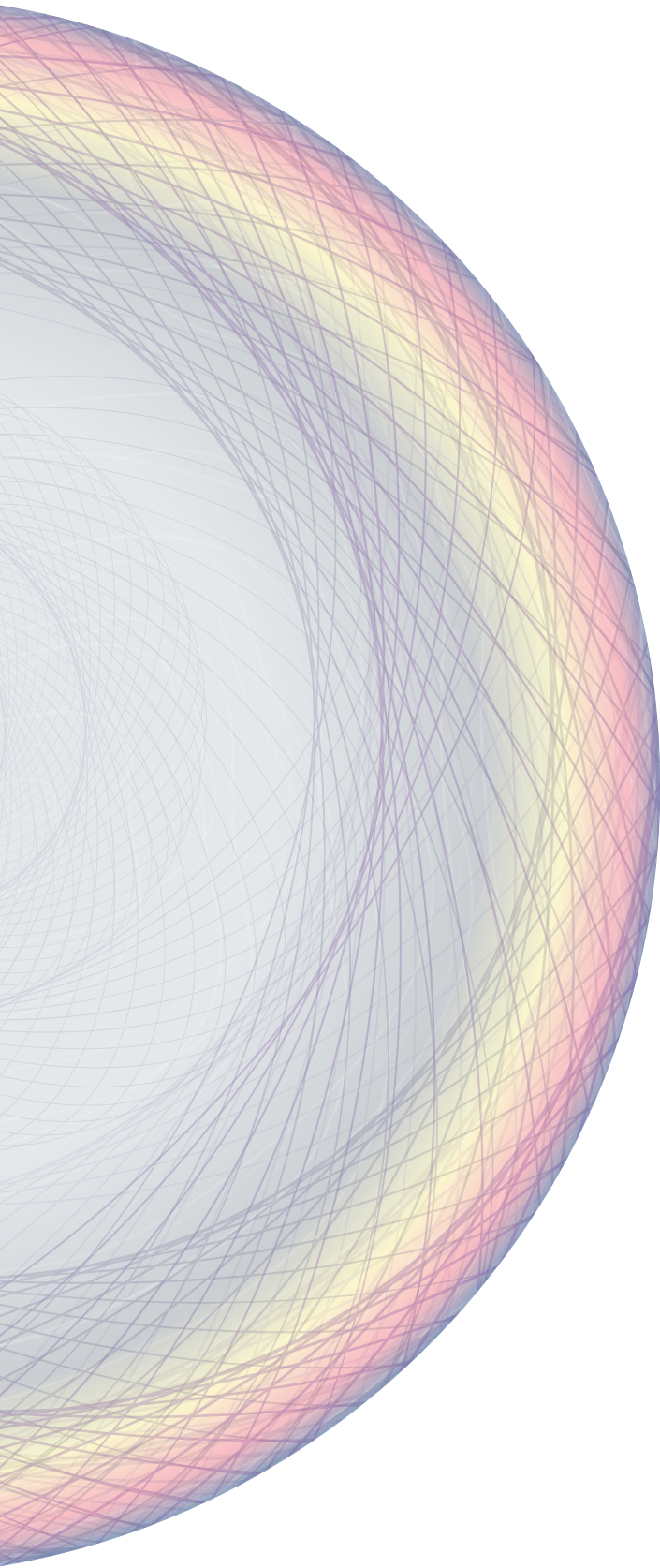
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KLESHAS





Avidya – ignorance, veiling

Asmita – mine-ness, egotism

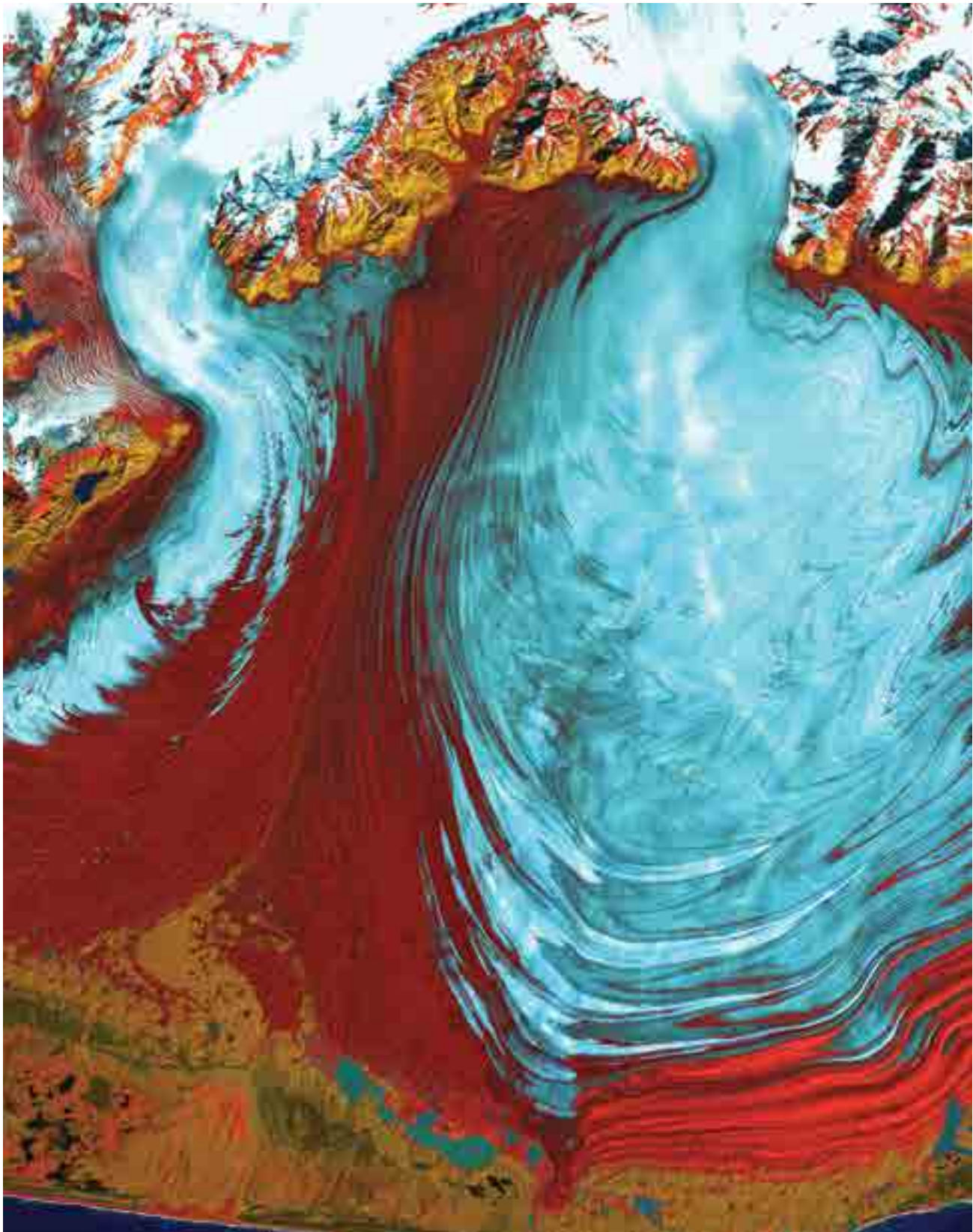
Raga – attachment, addiction

Dvesha – aversion, repulsion

Abhinivesha – clinging to life,
fear of death



KLESHAS



Let's first recap and remind ourselves of the fundamental principle of yogic psychology: that our original inner mental state is one of purity, stillness and *Samadhi*, which is also the ultimate goal of Yoga. It is the pure state of no-vibration that lies at the center of our existence. It is the healthy state of balance and contentment, from which all the heart-based qualities like love, compassion and generosity emanate, because it is a state of oneness. Yogic psychology has never been based on pathology, but on attaining that pure state, which is the baseline for mental well-being.

This state of no-vibration, no-thing-ness, or the original void, is present in every fiber of our being. Physicists describe it as being present at the center of every atom. In Yoga, that baseline is our reference point, the eye at the center of the tornado, the ultimate state of the vibration-free stillness. It was our starting point and will eventually also be the ending point of our existence. If we are able to master that state while we are alive, we transcend the need for the cycle of birth and death known as reincarnation, as we go beyond consciousness itself, to what is beyond consciousness.

In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali has codified the various modifications and vibrations that arise in our field of consciousness; all those things that take us away from the balance and stillness at our center, the soul. The process of refining these modifications is what Yoga is all about. Up till now, we have explored the basic types of thought patterns or tendencies known as the 5 *vrittis*, which can either be colored or uncolored, i.e. impure or pure. The process of coloring becomes cumulative, however, and leads to negative mental states that eventually become afflictions or obstacles to well-being and further evolution.

These 5 basic afflictions are known as the *kleshas* in both Hinduism and Buddhism, those negative mental states that cloud the mind and cause suffering and the conditions for suffering to arise. They lead to mental complications and imbalance, preventing us from being centered and contented.

Here is what Patanjali has to say about the *kleshas*:

*2.2: Samadhi bhavana arthah klesha tanu
karana arthash cha*

If your practice is aligned with your goal (*Samadhi*), the obstacles along your path (*kleshas*) will disappear and ultimately you will reach your goal.

*2.3: Avidya asmita raga dvesha abhinivesha
kleshah*

These obstacles are
Avidya – ignorance, lack of awareness,
Asmita – egotism, identification with the impermanent body,
Raga – likes, pleasure,
Advesha – dislikes, pain, and
Abinivesha – clinging to life, fear of death.

2.10: Te prati-prasava heyah sukshmah

When *samskaras* are removed, these afflictions can be resolved back to their origin.

*This state of no-vibration, no-thing-ness,
or the original void, is present
in every fiber of our being.*

KLESHAS

2.11: *Dhyana heyah tad vrittayah*

Through meditation, the outer expression of the afflictions disappear.

2.12: *Klesha mulah karma ashayo drishta adrishta janma vedaniyah*

Whether they are fulfilled in the present or the future, *karmic* experiences have their roots in these five afflictions.

2.13: *Sati mule tad vipako jatya ayur bhogah*

While the roots, the *samskaras*, remain, karma manifests in rebirth in the form of station in life, lifespan, and types of experiences.

2.14: *Te hlada paritapa phalah punya apunya hetutvat*

Virtue brings pleasure; vice brings pain.

Patanjali starts his discussion on *kleshas* with the importance of having a goal, but not everyone starts a meditation practice with the goal of *Samadhi*, or complete oneness with the original balanced state. So another way of looking at this is: in which direction are we traveling? Along the way to the ultimate goal there may be many other goals, like peace of mind, liberation, development of love and compassion, self-confidence and clarity of mind. The important thing is to be traveling in the right direction – centripetally towards simplicity rather than centrifugally towards complexity.

Patanjali goes on to define the 5 *kleshas* or mental afflictions, and then establish their relationship with the formation of *samskaras*. *Samskara* theory is a critical aspect of yogic science: that impressions or modifications in the field of consciousness result in complex energy patterns being formed, which harden and create *samskaras*

over time and through repetition. It is like the process of a track being formed through a forest. First one or two people walk along a particular path, flattening the grass or undergrowth. Others follow the same path until eventually there is a clearly marked track, which is regularly used and may eventually become a thoroughfare and even a road. What started as temporarily flattened grass over time becomes a hardened road.

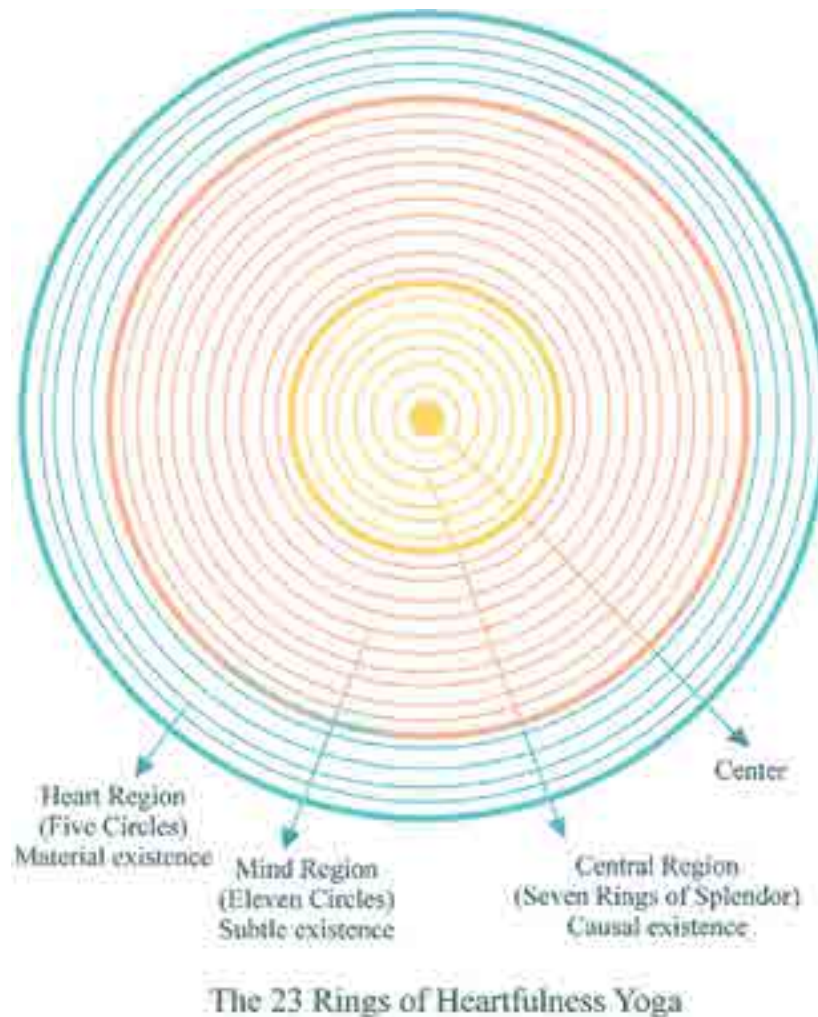
Similarly, an initial behavior or response, for example fear of the dark, can be reinforced over and over again in a person, until it eventually becomes a mental tendency or even a phobia. It has hardened into a *samskara*. Fear of the dark relates to a few of the *kleshas* – first, the fear of death and clinging to life; second, dislike or pain; third, egotism, because of identification with the body and concern for the body; and finally, the ignorance or lack of awareness at the base of the fear. The mind has become colored because of past experience, so that the default response in that person is that being in the dark is inherently dangerous.

It is very difficult to completely get rid of *kleshas*, as many of the *samskaras* behind them are formed subconsciously through emotional responses, in this particular example fear. The associated pathways in the nervous system for such responses are not through the cortex of the brain, but directly from the heart to the mammalian brain or amygdala. They are not responses that involve cognitive thinking, but instead subconscious processes that affect us without our conscious control. They can potentially surface at any time. As a result, our need for vigilance is never-ending. It is also why the first two limbs of Ashtanga Yoga, *Yama* and *Niyama*, are so important for our self-development.

Heartfulness Cleaning is an effective method for removing *samskaras* that is independent of the neural pathways and parts of the brain involved in their formation. As it was developed in the 1940s by Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur (Babuji) as a way to purify the field of consciousness of *samskaras*, it was not available as a technique when

Patanjali wrote the Yoga Sutras. Cleaning is one of the most potent tools that yogic psychology offers the world, because it works by cleaning the complexities and impurities in the field of consciousness at the vibrational level, rather than trying to change behavioural patterns, thought processes or the nervous system.

When we look at how the human system works, generally everything starts from the causal body or soul (the cause of our existence), which then affects the subtle bodies, at the level of the heart-mind, and then this permeates outwards to affect the systems of the physical body, e.g. the hormonal, nervous and circulatory systems. Our human system is actually like a series of layers from the center outwards, defined in Heartfulness by the 5 *koshas*, the 3 bodies and the 23 rings. By working at the subtlest vibrational level of the subtle bodies, Cleaning does not rely on thinking and analysis to remove the roots of afflictions.





Some spiritual teachers, like Osho, have spoken of removing *kleshas* through *prati-prasav* as a process of reabsorbing the behavioral effect back to the cause, by reliving those past experiences that caused the afflictions. He also called this process involution. The reliving involves letting the past surface without judgment, without liking or disliking, being a witness to the process without getting entangled or affected by anything that surfaces. But it can take forever to reabsorb *samskaric* tendencies back to their source, as the roots may have started many lifetimes ago and be buried very deep in the subconscious mind. And, if we are not careful, sometimes reliving the experience may cause a reaction in us, so it can actually intensify the *samskara* rather than removing it.

Heartfulness Cleaning is much simpler. It does not require reliving. It is the next generation of yogic practices. In fact, all the *samskaras* of one lifetime can easily be removed in one session with a Heartfulness trainer, without the person even being aware.

Once the root cause – the *samskara* – is removed, then it is definitely up to us to refine the associated outer behavioral patterns. That is why all great spiritual teachers have given guidelines for living, for example, the Vedas, Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali's *Yama* and *Niyama*, Buddha's Eightfold Path, the Ten Commandments of Jesus, the golden rules found in the Quran and the Talmud, and the Ten Maxims of Ram Chandra. For this we need self-study and self-awareness, as discussed below.

Psychologists and psychiatrists also work to change mental and behavioral patterns resulting from the past, in order to cure their patients of mental afflictions and bring about well-being. They do so through behavioral modification therapies like Gestalt, Transactional Analysis,

Integral Therapy, Primal Therapy, psychoanalysis, hypnosis etc. But again, without the removal of the root *samskaras*, it will always be a longer and more tedious process.

Patanjali tells us that the outer expression of the *kleshas* will disappear through meditation. In meditation, we learn to identify with the source of our existence, the soul, rather than with the body or the mind, so in that sense meditation does help to remove some of these afflictions because we do not give our afflictions the power of our attention. The more we ignore them and focus on a higher purpose, the more chance they will have to dissolve.

Also, in Patanjali's time, yogis meditated for hours and hours every day, and so it may have been possible to remove afflictions through meditation alone, although I doubt it would have worked for most people. Maybe for someone like the Buddha, but how many people had his determination and fortitude for self-study and *tapasya*? In any case, how many of us have time for hours and hours of meditation every day? Thankfully the practices of Yoga have evolved in modern times, and Heartfulness Cleaning can remove the root cause, so there is less need to sit in meditation for hours and hours every day.

For all of us, the mind is affected by the accumulation of the past, of *samskaric* patterns and responses that are hardwired into our central nervous system, creating channels that define our thoughts and actions, creating the blueprint for our destiny. Neuroscience also recognizes this. Whatever we have done in the past has formed the habits that determine what we do today and what we do today determines the future. Every thought and every action is self-perpetuating until we remove the root cause.

The seeds of our karma are our *samskaras*, and they carry over from one life to the next by impressing upon the subtle body around the soul. They create vibrational patterns, and so, at the time of conception for the next birth, these vibrational patterns draws us to certain parents, culture, life experiences etc. I have written about this at length in *Designing Destiny*.

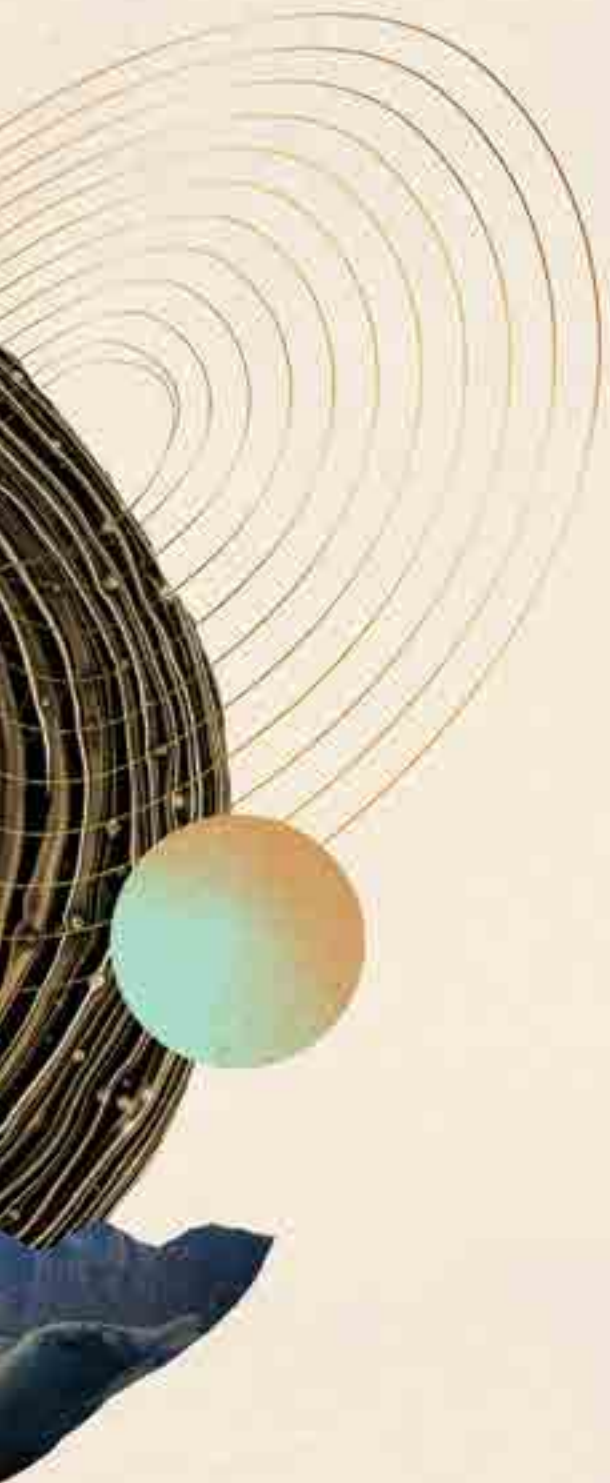
*Whatever we have done in
the past has formed the
habits that determine what
we do today and what we
do today determines the
future. Every thought and
every action is self-
perpetuating until we
remove the root cause.*

And as Patanjali says, virtue brings pleasure and vice brings pain. This is natural cause and effect.

To evolve, however, we don't want to be attached to either pleasure or pain, virtue or vice, or any of the other dualities of earthly existence, as they are always two sides of the one coin. Ultimately, where there is pleasure there is pain, just as where there is the brightest light there is the darkest shadow. Duality is part of the physical world, and in Yoga we are transcending our temporal physical nature towards our eternal nature. And while we remain rooted in the emotional baggage from the past, this is not possible. Our mind remains an accumulation of the past.

It is worth reflecting on the relationship between *samskaras* and *kleshas*. Here is something to think about: The *kleshas* are an outer expression of the *samskaras* that accumulate in our field of consciousness, and yet *kleshas* also lead to the formation of *samskaras*. So what is needed from our side to cut this cyclical loop?





The nature of the Soul is eternal bliss.

*What can make it sorrowful except
ignorance, hallucination, delusion; all
this pain of the soul is simply delusion.*

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

LACK OF AWARENESS



In Yoga, *avidya* is crucial to understanding mental well-being. It is considered to be the core affliction that is the foundation for all other afflictions. It is the mental defect where one is unaware of what is most vital and essential. Patanjali says:

*2.4: Avidya kshetram uttaresham prasupta tanu
vichchinn odaranam*

Only through *avidya* are the other afflictions able to operate, whether they are latent, budding, fully expressed or overwhelming.

What is *avidya*? It is usually translated into English as ignorance or lack of knowledge, but here Patanjali is not writing about the knowledge acquired by learning facts or even through past experience. Actually, accumulating knowledge is only going to complicate rather than purify consciousness. Real *vidya* comes with purity, with the removal of beliefs, prejudices and clutter in the mind. A better translation of *avidya* is lack of awareness, as *vidya* is possible when there is a pure canvas of consciousness upon which awareness and perception can work as a witness. In essence anything that takes us away from centeredness is *avidya* and anything that aids us in moving towards our center is *vidya*.

Avidya is the lack of awareness resulting from a limited consciousness. So the next question is: What limits consciousness? The coverings of *samskaras* that cloud the purity of our consciousness. And there are two things that are largely responsible for this process of accumulating *samskaras*: desire and ego.

Desire comes from our mental process of judging things according to what we like and want, or dislike and don't want. Desire also arises due to a feeling of lack of things (*abhav*), and due to the overwhelming impressions (*prabhav*) that things create in us. Desire de-centers us from our main nature (*swabhav*).

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avidya is lack of awareness,
as vidya is possible when
there is a pure canvas of
consciousness upon which
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essence anything that takes
us away from centeredness
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KLESHAS

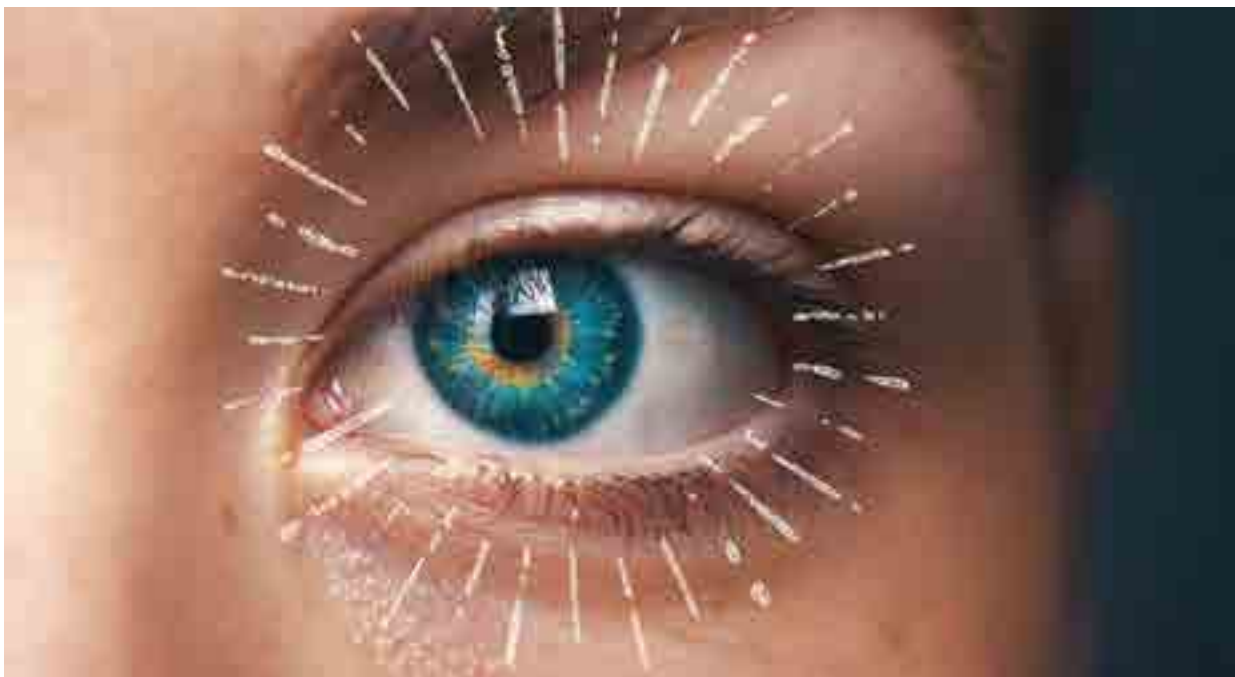
Ego is the function of our mind that identifies with and attaches to "possession." When the ego is desireless, i.e. it has no likes and dislikes, when it is only identified with the higher Self, then its purpose is to take us to our ultimate destination, and it is one of our greatest instrument in fulfilling our duty or *dharma*. But most of us identify with other things – our body, mind, work, children, spouse, culture, country, religion, reputation, and even with material things like our house and car.

It is by becoming conscious of desires and ego, and the role they play in creating mental afflictions, that we start to understand mental well-being. In a simplistic way, we can say that during our spiritual journey, the *yatra*, we learn to master desires in the Heart Region, and master the ego associated with the Mind Region. In fact the play of desires can create drama even if you are traversing through the Mind Region and likewise the ego can display many of its thorny sides while we are in the Heart Region.

So the process of going from *avidya* to *vidya* is the process of divesting all identifications, likes and dislikes, in order to return back to simplicity.

Avidya can manifest at any time, even in experienced yogis, because of cultural beliefs and lifestyle. For example, even the wisest and most open-minded of us may still hold beliefs because of our backgrounds and cultural experiences at an early age. So it helps to be vigilant about Patanjali's first two limbs of Ashtanga Yoga, *Yama* and *Niyama*, especially the fourth *Niyama* of *swadhyaya* or self-study. Self-study makes us aware of our intentions and actions, shining a light on our thoughts and feelings. We refine our character by bringing those habits and tendencies to light that limit our personalities. Rather than being judgmental, *swadhyaya* is done with self-compassion and is used for continuous improvement.

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for continuous improvement.*



Heartfulness facilitates self-study in a number of ways:

- ★ Through Meditation we learn to become the witness to our inner universe. A few minutes of daily Meditation makes us more and more meditative, the effect of which percolates into our mundane day-to-day activities.
- ★ Whenever any inner stir arises, we are quickly aware and can do what is necessary to remove it through the process of Cleaning. We don't need to be entangled in the emotions of what we see in ourselves.
- ★ We are encouraged to write a journal, so as to sensitize ourselves to our inner world. Through this practice we become a better and better witness, with self-acceptance and self-compassion, and we are able to change more easily.
- ★ Through Prayerful Connection with our higher Self, we listen to our heart and honor its higher wisdom.
- ★ Through the practice of Constant Remembrance, we remain constantly connected with the wisdom of the higher Self. This provides an inner canvas of consciousness that remains immune to *samskara* formation.

2.5: Anitya ashuchi duhkha anatmasu nitya shuchi sukha atmakhyatir avidya

Avidya is mistaking the temporal to be eternal, the impure to be pure, the painful to be pleasurable, and the lower self to be the higher Self, the soul or Atman.

Rather than identifying so heavily with the peripheral transitory aspects of life – the body, other ego-identifications, behavioral patterns and emotional afflictions – we learn to identify with the inner aspect of our existence, the eternal soul, the source of all joy and pure consciousness. Awareness allows us to see Reality.

The practices of Heartfulness are designed to do exactly that – to uncover our original state of purity and balance. This is why Yoga has never looked at psychology from the perspective of pathology, because it has always focused on the positive approach of attaining the healthiest mental state possible for human beings, that of *Samadhi*. That is our focus in Yoga.

THE DUALITIES OF EXISTENCE





The first of the *kleshas*, *avidya*, which we explored in the last article, is the basis of the other four afflictions – *ashmita*, *raga*, *dvesha* and *abivinesha*.

It is the ignorance resulting from a limited consciousness that creates lack of awareness. And the two things that are largely responsible for restricting consciousness and leading to mental affliction are desire and ego.

It is by becoming conscious of desires and ego, and the role they play in creating mental afflictions, that we start to understand mental well-being. In a simplistic way, we can say that during our spiritual journey, the *yatra*, we learn to master desires in the Heart Region, and master the ego associated with the Mind Region. In fact the play of desires can create drama even if you are traversing through the Mind Region and likewise the ego can display many of its thorny sides while we are in the Heart Region.

The process of going from *avidya* to *vidya* is the process of divesting all the likes and dislikes related to desire, as well as the various identifications of the ego, in order to return back to simplicity. In Heartfulness, this process of moving from mental complexity and affliction to mental purity and health, is done through the journey of the 13 chakras from the outer periphery of being to the Center of Being.

We receive so much help in this process from our spiritual Guide and his yogic Transmission that keeps our attention focused towards the Center. Even still, we have to be vigilant to refine our outer behaviour. We bring those habits and tendencies to light that limit our personalities and work on consciously removing them. The remaining four *kleshas* are manifested through these tendencies that are the result of desire and ego, and are best considered together.

EGOISM

The second *klesha* is *asmita*, egoism or “mine-ness.” Patanjali says,

2.6: *Drig darsana saktyor ekatmata iva asmita*

Egoism is the identification of the seer
with the instrument of seeing.

In Patanjali’s view, egoism stems from identification with the wrong thing. What is the seer? The seer is the highest Self, the soul, the eternal infinite aspect of our being, our Center. What is the instrument of seeing? The subtle body or heart-mind. So our mental problems arise when our ego starts identifying with the instruments of seeing – consciousness, the intellect, the thinking mind, and the sense organs. They are only instruments, and when we identify with these instruments it results in a misdirected ego. It is because of this that we start developing likes and dislikes, attractions and aversions, and the whole process of forming *samskaras* begins.

In a sense we can say that when we do not acknowledge the soul and its central role in our lives, we are doomed to mental affliction and ill-health. Per contra, when we constantly refer to the soul throughout our daily activities, we remain in connection with our Center, and that is the recipe for holistic, integrated mental health.

In Heartfulness this ability to interiorize is called Constant Remembrance, also known as retaining the meditative state, or meditating with open eyes. Constant Remembrance emerges out of meditation, once we learn to retain and enhance the meditative state we experienced in morning meditation throughout the rest of the day. In other words, meditation is the mother of Constant Remembrance – hence the importance of meditating every morning.

As an aside, there is something relevant to say about the effect of identification on the divergence of science and

spirituality, at least by the 1600s. Remember the famous pronouncement of René Descartes, “*Ego cogito, ergo sum*,” meaning, “I think, therefore I am”? The reality is the opposite: Thinking is due to my existence. What is it that grants the ability of the mind to think?

Descartes reasoned that he could be certain he existed because he thought, whereas he perceived his body through the use of the senses, which were often unreliable. He concluded that the only true knowledge came from thinking. He also concluded that thinking power came from his essence. Descartes defined thought as “what happens in me such that I am immediately conscious of it, insofar as I am conscious of it.” Thinking, for Descartes, was every activity of which he was immediately conscious.

As a result, Descartes discarded perception as unreliable and accepted only deduction as the true method. This became the basis of the scientific method, which still underpins science today, and does not accept direct perception as a way of obtaining true knowledge.

Why were the senses unreliable for Descartes? Because of the colorings in the field of consciousness due to the formation of *samskaras* – effectively the *kleshas*. But is it really possible for thinking to be correct when the field of consciousness is impure? It becomes difficult for intellect to arrive at the correct inference with impurities spoiling consciousness.

As scientists have found during the 20th century, the outcome of any scientific experiment is dependent on the mind of the observer. The importance of purity of consciousness is as important in the field of science as in the field of direct perception! When we identify our very existence with thinking, it is identified only with the instrument of seeing instead of the seer, and that becomes a source of egoism. This is the current plight of humanity.

Per contra, true yogis first purify their consciousness through practice before even attempting to understand

the world. They identify with the soul. That way, the true witness, the soul, can use the instruments of consciousness, intellect, thinking and the senses, as well as superconscious perception, to arrive at the best possible answer. The answer can then also be verified by the scientific method whenever there are measurable variables. But not everything can be measured by science!

Coming back to *asmita*, our mental health and well-being is dependent on what we identify with. The soul is unchangeable, so when we identify with the soul, can we become angry or sad? No. But when we like or dislike, when we have attachment and aversion, then we can react, positively or negatively, and then it is possible to become angry or sad. We are identifying with the instruments of seeing, not the seer, and so we feel pleasure and pain. And, on top of that, we identify still more externally with family members, friends, office colleagues, and associate ourselves with them with an emotional bond. So, we move farther and farther from our individual center.



ATTACHMENT AND AVERSION

The third and fourth *kleshas* are *raga* and *dvesha*, which Patanjali defines as:

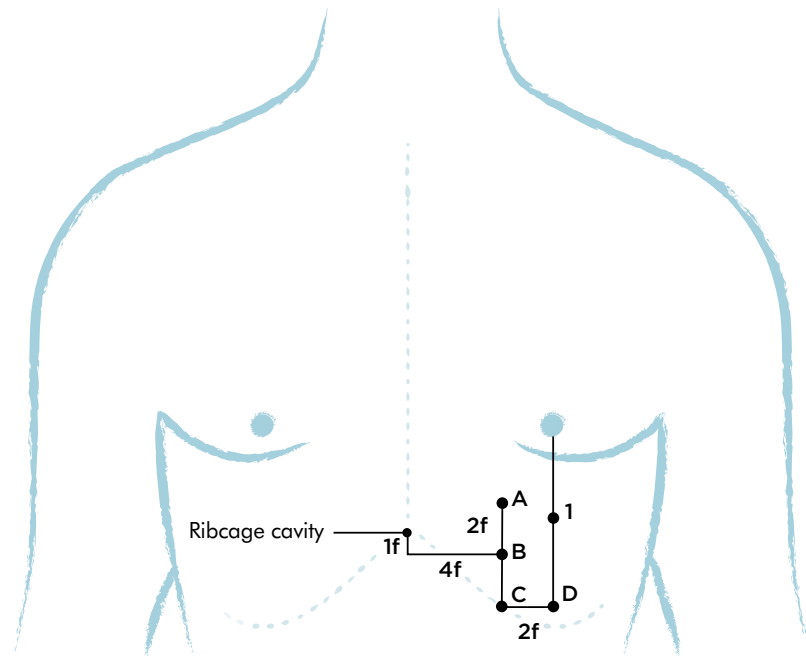
2.7: Sukha anushayi ragah

Attachment is that which follows from identification with pleasurable experiences.

2.8: Dukha anushayi dveshah

Aversion is that which follows from identification with painful experiences.

When we constantly refer to the soul throughout our daily activities, we remain in connection with our Center, and that is the recipe for holistic, integrated mental health.



Points A, B, C and D around point 1 of the Heart Region

We become attached wherever we find pleasure, and we feel aversion wherever we find pain. If we observe our thinking process, we will find that this happens all the time, with people, food, clothing, places and principles. It can apply to anyone, anything and any concept. “I like her hairstyle,” “I don’t like the way he speaks to me,” “That house is beautiful – I want one like it,” etc. The current of the mind flows towards those things we like, and recoils from those things we dislike. The effect of the “like” and “dislike” vibrations settles down at point C of the heart, and eventually forms *samskaras*.

Everything starts at point C, the strategic point or landing point for *samskaras* into our system. It is our reactions of likes and dislikes that create the first vibration or stir in the field of consciousness. This affects point C, and from there the energy forms an impression.

To prevent point C from being affected by likes and dislikes, try to maintain a meditative state throughout the day, so that the mind is unaffected. The beautiful lotus flower floating in muddy water is a wonderful analogy: it grows

in the dirtiest water, maintaining its pristine purity and beauty. When this is done, impressions will not affect the field of consciousness. This is one of the most important things we can do for our mental and spiritual health, and it highlights the importance of maintaining a meditative state throughout the day.

CLINGING TO LIFE

The fifth of the *kleshas* is *abivinesha*, which Patanjali defines as,

*2.9: Sravasa vahi vidushopi tatharoodho
bhiniveshah*

*Clinging to life, flowing through its own nature,
can be found even among the wise.*

Clinging to life, the instinct for survival, is found in all living beings. It is an evolutionary imperative that defines the ecology of all species. But where does this instinct

So the key is to have a regular daily practice that removes samskaras. If we are able to remove the root cause of afflictions, we can hope to reach our potential of mental well-being, balance and purity.

come from? In the language of Yoga, these instincts are based on *samskaric* patterns from the past. Instinct is the result of past experience, often from previous lives, that is stored in our field of consciousness. So clinging to life is the instinctive result of an aversion to death that has come from the experience of many past lives. We have known the pain of dying so well. This *klesha* is also based on the ignorance of identifying with the body instead of the soul, which is eternal and infinite in nature.

RESOLVING THESE AFFLICTIONS

Patanjali tells us,

2.10: Te prati-prasava heyah sukshmah

When *samskaras* are removed,
these afflictions can be
resolved back to their origin.

2.11: Dhyana heyah tad vrittayah

Through meditation,
the outer expression of the afflictions disappears.

*2.12: Klesha mulah karma ashayo drishta
adrishta janma vedaniyah*

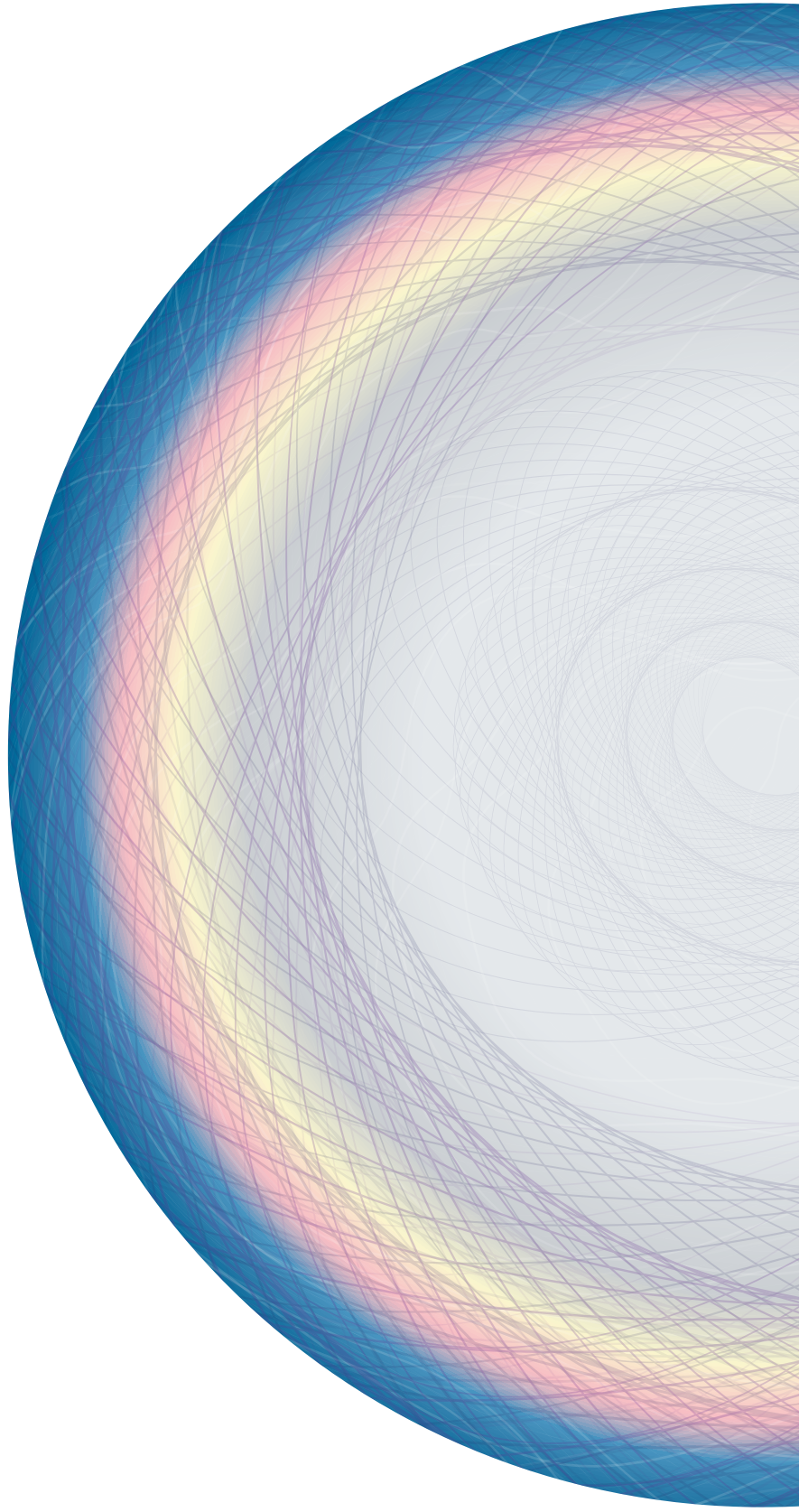
Whether they are fulfilled in the present or the future,
karmic experiences have their roots in these five
afflictions.

So the key is to have a regular daily practice that removes *samskaras*. If we are able to remove the root cause of afflictions, we can hope to reach our potential of mental well-being, balance and purity. If not, we are stuck with mental complexities, patterns and tendencies, life after life. It is a simple step to do the daily practice of Heartfulness Cleaning to remove them – just as simple as taking a shower to clean your body. It takes but 15 to 20 minutes every evening.

This practice of Cleaning is one of the greatest contributions Heartfulness has given to the modern world, as it is so effective in removing the root cause of desires. But it is not enough on its own: The identification of the ego cannot be cleaned and has to be refined through another process. That we will take up another time.



VIKSHEPAS





Vyadhi – disease, illness

Styana – mental laziness, dullness

Samsaya – dilemma, indecision

Pramada – carelessness, negligence,
haste

Alasya – laziness, sloth

Avirati – lack of abstaining,
absence of non-attachment

Bhranti-Darshana – false perception

Alabdha-Bhumikatva – failing to
attain

stages on the journey

Anavasthitatvani – inability to
maintain the stage, instability

FOMO

Digital distraction

Guilt and shame



VIKSHEPAS



In this series so far, we have seen how complexities and impurities start to accumulate, by exploring the normal everyday workings of the human mind – how the 5 *vruttis* work in the field of consciousness. Some of the *vruttis* are pure and in sync with mental balance, while others are colored and take us away from that pure, balanced state. Then we explored the next layer of complexity – the 5 *kleshas* or mental afflictions that take us further away from our center of balance, and result in suffering.

Now we continue further away from that center, into the realm of entropy, complexity and instability, as we become more and more entangled in the afflictions that play out in our daily lives. We create behavioral patterns and habits through the accumulation of *samskaras*, and these lead to all sorts of ailments. Yoga calls these ailments or obstacles *vikshepas*. Patanjali described 9 of them in his Yoga Sutras, a few thousand years ago. In this day and age we can add a few more to the list.

We have already discussed the need to spend some time every day focused inward on the core of our being, of our existence, in order to counteract the entropy that would otherwise take us outward into entanglements, suffering and afflictions. That is what we do in Heartfulness Meditation – we turn inward through the heart. It is very simple: when we direct the attention of the mind towards the heart, we move towards balance, peace, stillness and harmony; when we direct the attention of the mind outward into the external world, without a strong connection to the heart, we encounter more and more entropy and instability.

Daily life is the interplay of the two currents – the outward and inward flow of energy and attention. Once we are well established in our inward connection with the heart, it permeates our being and oozes out into every other aspect of life, so that we are able to avoid the pull of outward entropy. This is the most preventative approach to mental health we could possibly take. Imagine if every young person knew how to do this before embarking on the journey of life, how different the world would be.

Now, what happens when that inward attention or connection is not developed, when we are not centered in the core of our heart? We become like leaves tossed about in the wind. Whatever colorings or afflictions are there in our system become more complex and manifest as the *vikshepas*, the obstacles and distractions to our further progress.

Patanjali described these obstacles as follows:

*1.30: Vyadhi styana samsaya pramada-alasya-
avirati
bhrantidarsana-alabdha-bhumikatva-
anavasthitatvani
citta-vikshepah te antaryah*

Vyadhi – disease,
Styana – languor, mental dullness, apathy,
Samsaya – dilemma, indecision,
Pramada – carelessness, haste, indifference,
Alasya – laziness, sloth,
Avirati – absence of non-attachment, sensuality,
Bhrantidarsana – false perception, blindness,
Alabdha-bhumikatva – not attaining the condition or stage, lack of determination, and
Anavasthitatvani – instability,
not retaining the condition
are the obstacles that distract the mind.

In the modern context, we can add more to the list:

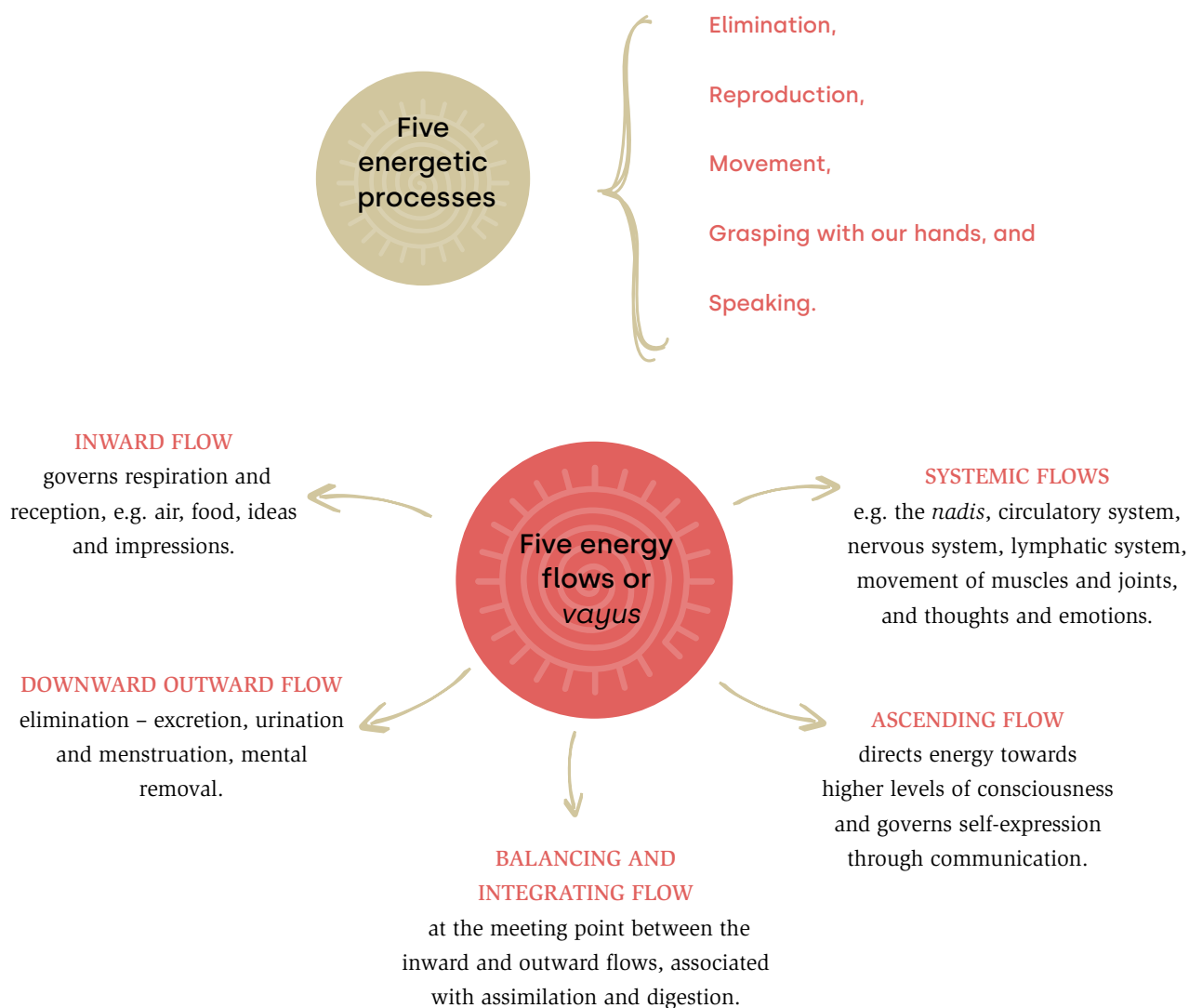
Fear of missing out (FOMO),
Digital distraction, and
Guilt and Shame.

DISEASE



The first of the *vikshepas* is *vyadhi* or disease. Here Patanjali means physical disease, where the system is unbalanced and away from ease. Where does disease start? Rarely does it initiate in the physical body itself, unless it is the result of an accident or physical trauma. Generally, it starts in the sheath of *prana*, in the bio-energy field known as the *pranamaya kosha* in Yoga.

The *pranamaya kosha* is the sheath where we experience the flow of energy within us, and with the world around us. Yogis describe this energy flow according to five energetic processes (*karmendriyas*) and five energy flows (*pranas*):



The sheath of *prana* is subtler and more refined than the physical sheath; it is also not glued to it. It envelops us like an energy bubble, and also creates the aura. The chakras of the subtle body are associated with this sheath. Because it is affected before any physical illness occurs, traditional healing systems like acupuncture, acupressure and polarity work on the energy meridians.

Whenever an imbalance or illness happens, the first *kosha* to be compromised is usually the *pranamaya kosha*. Sometimes we can even predict the health of a person just by looking at the aura around their face, and Russian research shows us that disturbances in this bio-energy sheath have also shown up in Kirlian photography months before any physical disease manifests. Kirlian photography also captures unique images of individuals after meditation, with newer levels of consciousness affecting the aura in a positive way.

It is our attitude that affects our *pranamaya kosha* to a large extent. When this *kosha* is light and shining, our overall health is benefited. We radiate whatever state we have in our energy sheath, whether that is a loving joyous feeling or a negative feeling. When we are stressed, angry, or emotionally reactive, we need more energy. As a result, the *pranamaya kosha* is activated and this is what activates the sympathetic nervous system: our heart rate goes up, our breathing changes, and our body goes into its stress response.

Today, stress is the known as the great epidemic of the early 21st century, leading to all sorts of other chronic diseases, both physical and mental.

This is one of the reasons why *pranayama* came into being in Yoga – to balance the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems. When our sympathetic nervous system is activated by stress, we can calm ourselves by activating the parasympathetic system through the *Chandra nadi*. And when we need to be more active and engaged, we

*Moderation of emotions and
mental faculties harmonizes
the pranamaya kosha,
which in turn harmonizes
the physical body.
The Heartfulness practices,
including Point A Meditation
and Point B Cleaning,
are very beneficial
in refining this kosha and
thus, ultimately,
in preventing disease.*



can activate the sympathetic system through the *Surya nadi*. We are able to bring about balance.

The *pranamaya kosha* is not easy to refine, because here the ego mixes with consciousness, and that can be a volatile mix! All our energetic processes and cognitive senses derive their energy from this sheath, which also regulates our waking consciousness. Emotions like passion and anger are fed by it. Fights and conflicts result from its misalignment, and we may become very egotistical if it is not refined. Excessive desire and materialism also upset the balance of the *pranamaya kosha*, leading to dis-ease.

Per contra, moderation of emotions and mental faculties harmonizes the *pranamaya kosha*, which in turn harmonizes the physical body. The Heartfulness practices, including Point A Meditation and Point B Cleaning, are very beneficial in refining this *kosha* and thus, ultimately, in preventing disease.

Continuous mind chatter, likes and dislikes, attraction and repulsion, all make this sheath unstable. So it helps

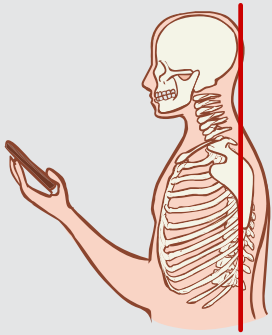
to cultivate a smooth way of speaking, gentle body language, and a gracious inner attitude.

Heartfulness practices provide the foundation for this moderation. It is our reactions of likes and dislikes that create the first vibration or stir in the field of consciousness, which affects point C, the strategic point or landing point for *samskaras* into our system. To prevent point C from being affected by likes and dislikes, try to maintain a meditative state throughout the day, like a beautiful lotus flower resplendent and contented in a dirty pond.

When we are humble and respectful towards everyone, no matter what their status in life, including young people and the elderly, and when we constantly dive into a state of insignificance and curb the ego, we find that this sheath becomes more and more refined. It finds its true luster when we have totally refined the ego to its original purity.

As we have already discussed, Heartfulness Cleaning removes the underlying *samskaras*, cleaning the

EFFECT OF BENDING THE HEAD ON THE CERVICAL SPINE



0°
5 Kilos



15°
12 Kilos



30°
18 Kilos



45°
22 Kilos



60°
27 Kilos

When we are healthy, centered and whole, the energy in our pranamaya kosha circulates freely, without blockages. Energy is not dissipated entropically, and is instead being recycled. And this is important because we also need energy to connect with the Center – we need escape velocity, and that requires a healthy body and a healthy mind.

complexities and impurities in the field of consciousness at the vibrational level, and this significantly reduces the volatility of the *pranamaya kosha*.

The word for health in Sanskrit is *swasthya*, meaning "to be centered in one's Self." In English, also, the word "health" is from the same root as the words "whole" and "holy." When we are healthy, centered and whole, the energy in our *pranamaya kosha* circulates freely, without blockages. Energy is not dissipated entropically, and is instead being recycled. And this is important because we also need energy to connect with the Center – we need escape velocity, and that requires a healthy body and a healthy mind.

This aspect of careful utilization of energy gives us a clue as to why the *Asanas* for meditation are cross-legged with feet and hands turned inward, with a straight back and closed eyes. The body dissipates energy easily through the fingers, feet and eyes. When our hands are gently

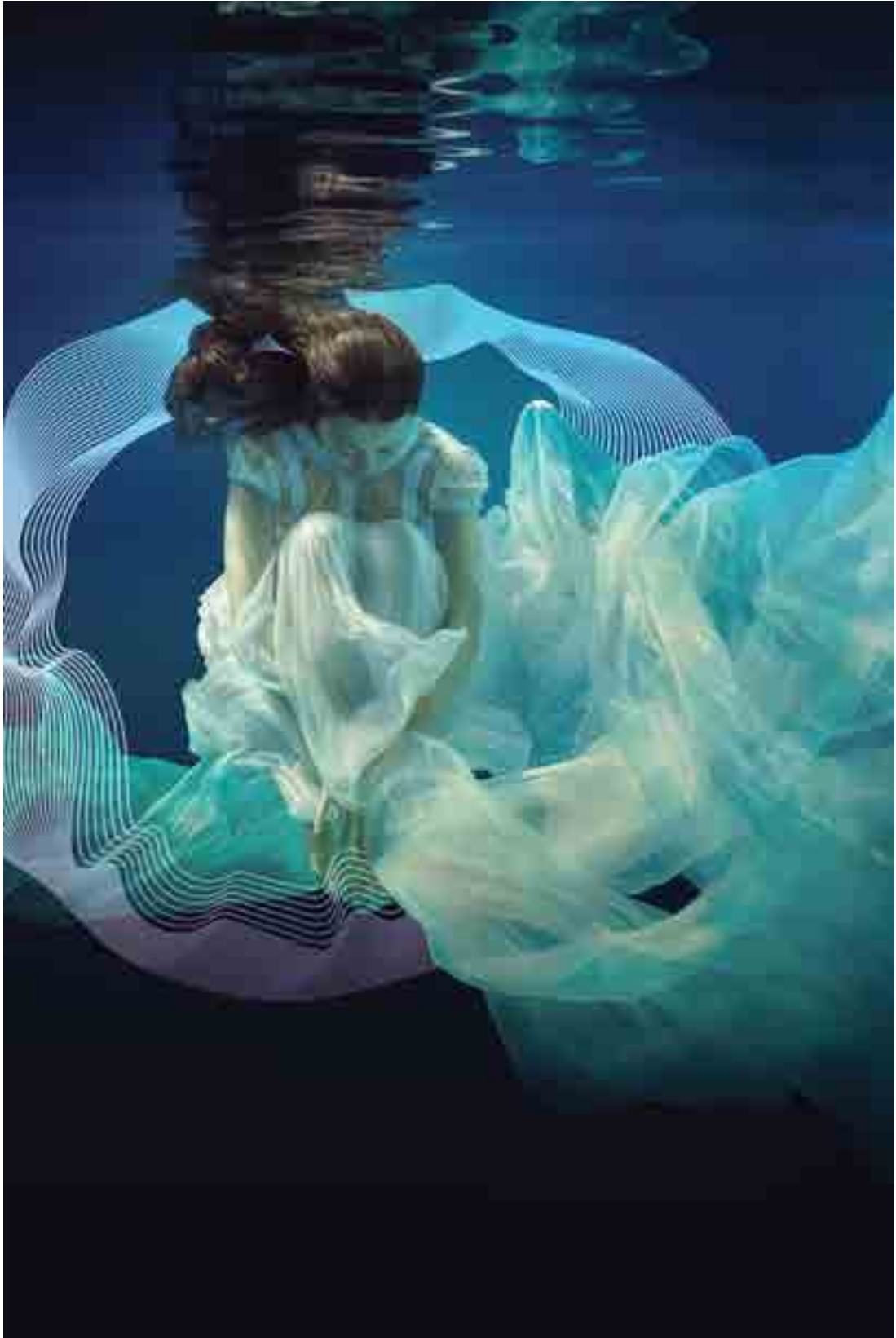
clasped, and our feet are crossed, they form closed circuits and energy is conserved.

Open eyes actually dissipate the largest amount of energy from our *pranamaya kosha*, and when we close our eyes this energy is conserved well.

When the spine is straight, we conserve energy in another way. With the body and head upright, gravitation doesn't lead to more energy being dissipated than needed. Even when they are balanced lightly on top of our necks, our heads weigh around 5 kilograms. When the head is straight and balanced, it will feel almost weightless. But when our heads fall forward during meditation or at other times, 15 degrees of movement away from the balanced position adds 12 kilograms to the weight of the head, and 60 degrees of movement adds 27 kilograms of strain on the neck and shoulders. So it is important to stay upright, steady and balanced in a relaxed way during meditation.

Now, let's move to another level of functioning entirely: imagine the role Transmission or *pranahuti* plays in regulating the bio-energy sheath and directing our attention toward the Center, away from the entropy of afflictions and obstacles. In the very first Heartfulness Meditation, a person can dive deep into *Samadhi* because of Transmission, because it is the subtlest energy emanating from the core of our heart itself. While it requires a Guide of the highest caliber to infuse Transmission into our hearts in a masterly way, so that it acts as a catalyst in our system, the process is simple. The Guide is taking the *prana* of *prana* itself, the ultimate form of energy – so subtle that it has no hint of actual energy left in it – and is utilizing it to transform us from the inside out. Through Transmission we learn how to stay connected. It gently entices us from the core of our heart itself, so the connection becomes more and more effortless. In fact it is an effortless antidote to our individual entropy.

APATHY AND MENTAL DULLNESS



The second of the *vikshepas* is *styana*, meaning languor, apathy and mental dullness. Apathy is one of the greatest obstacles to any endeavor, as it is a state in which we waste energy. Our energy is drained, we go round and round in circles, and we may talk a lot but it does not translate into doing. We lose interest, and without interest nothing is possible.

What does the word “enthusiasm” mean? It comes from the Greek word *enthousiasmos*, meaning “possessed by God, inspired.” Transmission is another way of infusing Divinity into our hearts, inspiring us, enthusing us, so that we have interest. With Transmission apathy can disappear overnight. The source of all energy, the source of all vitality, the life in life, is being infused into us so subtly and so gently. It is like a tree that has been thirsting for water all through the hot dry summer, and one day the monsoon rains arrive. The level of vitality in that tree will improve instantly. Similarly, when we receive Transmission, life takes on a new level of vitality. The Transmission nourishes our soul and the ripple effect is so palpable, comforting our heart, mind and body.

Even still, the need to conserve energy is there, because if we keep on dissipating energy we will lose the vitality we receive through Transmission, and we will deflate like a balloon that has been untied. The balloon will be inflated then deflated, inflated then deflated, inflated then deflated. What a waste if nothing is retained after each meditation! That is one reason why it is important to sit for a few minutes after meditation and absorb the inner condition received, in order to acquire it, enliven it, imbibe it, become one with it, in union, so that it does not dissipate. That way we make the most of every opportunity.

Finally, Swami Vivekananda has beautifully explained that it is our consciousness, our “*chit*, our mind-stuff, that is the engine that draws in the *prana* from the surroundings, and manufactures out of this *prana* the various vital forces: first of all the forces that keep the body in preservation, and lastly thought, will, and all other powers.” So imagine

Transmission is another way of infusing Divinity into our hearts, inspiring us, enthusing us, so that we have interest. With Transmission apathy can disappear overnight.

how effective this *chit* will be in utilizing *prana* if we keep it in a purified refined state, regularly immersed in Transmission in daily meditation. Now, compare that with a *chit* weighed down by mental afflictions, obstacles and heaviness. There is no comparison. With a pure consciousness, vitality is effortless, while with a consciousness that is complex, impure, entangled, and has succumbed to entropy, apathy is almost inevitable because energy is always dissipating from the system. It is as difficult as swimming against the current.

Swami Vivekananda goes on to say that it is also *prana* that makes new neural pathways in the brain: “With every fresh idea we make a new impression in the brain, cut new channels through the brain-stuff.” So imagine the impact of Transmission, the most potent form of *prana*, on neuroplasticity! Imagine the inspiration, the creativity, and the expansion of potential for continuous improvement and scaling new heights that comes by the simple act of meditating every morning with *pranahuti*.

DILEMMA AND INDECISION





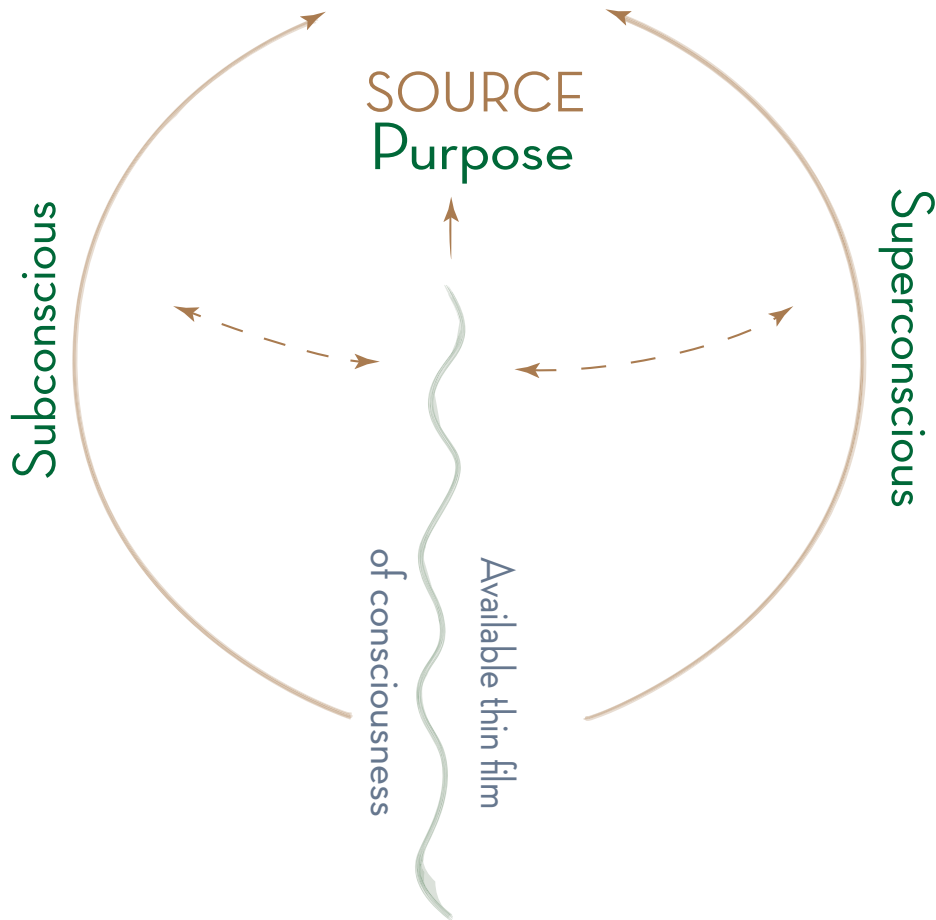
The third *vikshepa* is *samsaya*, which is usually translated as "doubt," but there are many words for "doubt" in Sanskrit, *shanka* being the most common. A more appropriate translation of *samsaya* is "dilemma" or "indecision." It is that state of confusion, where we are not clear in our own judgment and decision-making ability. Why? Because our field of consciousness, the heart-mind field, is not calm. We are unable to dive deep, listen to the heart, and trust its wisdom.

We all know that feeling of sitting on the fence, unable to make a decision; the confusion, the weighing up of pros and cons. We still use the same the faculties of the mind – thinking (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*) and ego (*ahankar*) – within the canvas of consciousness (*chit*), but we use them at a superficial level because we are unable to go deeper. We skim the surface because there is too much clutter in the heart, and the mind is turbulent, like an ocean during a storm.

This is a common state of consciousness for many of us, and so issues become dilemmas. The mind is not fine-tuned enough to perceive to any depth, and so we are left with many challenges. "What to do?" is the question we often ask. In this condition, our available consciousness is only a very thin film. Most of the spectrum of consciousness is unavailable to us, in the realms of the subconscious and the superconscious. We do not have the skills to access it, and so the mind remains very limited.

We evaluate and try to make decisions from a superficial perspective, within that thin film of data, because we cannot see from a higher and deeper perspective. Simultaneously, the mind is pulled by charged emotions, likes, dislikes and prejudices, so there is little clarity – only turmoil and drama.

Spectrum of CONSCIOUSNESS



Compare this with pure consciousness, uncluttered, light and infinitely expansive. Diving deeper into the heart, especially in meditation, we access a much greater spectrum of consciousness. Other dimensions open up that are not accessible at the surface level. For a start, as well using rational deductive thinking, we also use the faculty of feeling to make decisions, where the heart gives signals of a more direct and subtle nature.

The heart is our barometer for how we feel about everything, including the choices we make in life. When we are happy with those choices, the heart remains a silent witness and there is natural contentment. When the heart is not convinced, we feel restless. The heart sets our direction like a rudder, and tells us when we need to change direction.

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those choices, the heart
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and there is natural
contentment.*

Listening to the heart's signals is the first step. The second step is to make use of those signals, to ask the heart questions in such a way that we get clear indications. The more we listen, the clearer the messages become. As in neuroscience, the more we use the pathways, the stronger they become. The third step is then to have the courage to follow the heart's guidance – the guidance from our own divine source. In essence, we are allowing the soul to guide our lives.

The heart is not static. Our inner environment is constantly changing, as our consciousness expands and contracts, and is purified or filled with complexities and impurities, as the case may be. Consciousness is fluid like the ocean, so the reference point of the heart is dynamic. And everything about us is tied to this state of consciousness: the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the habits that slowly adjust to our changing level of evolution, and the environment we are in. We are always in a state of continuous improvement, a work in progress.

And when we don't listen to the heart, when we go against our conscience because we follow lower patterns and mental justifications, what happens? We keep on recycling those experiences and habits, and creating more and more complexities and impurities, leading to more and more entangled *vikshepas*.

Which way we go is actually a choice, especially when we have the simple Heartfulness Cleaning practice to remove complexities and impurities on a daily basis.

Here is also another complementary method to resolve dilemmas and confusions:

Just before offering the Heartfulness Prayer at night before sleep, offer your problems, challenges and dilemmas also. There is no need to seek an answer right away. Often, by the time you wake up, the answer is there, although the answer may come in a form other than words.

Samsaya arises especially in the choice of a spiritual path, and a teacher who will support us on that path, as blind faith is not the best way to choose – some level of testing is needed to establish that it is the right path and the right Guide. There is an initial need to question and use a scientific approach in order to experience and decide. Then, once we are satisfied, trust comes, which eventually transforms into acceptance and gratitude, love and surrender. If *samsaya* is still present as an obstacle at a later stage, something is wrong. Maybe it is our inability to surrender and accept, or may be it is the Guide who is not up to the mark. So vigilance is required, and a lot of discernment and discrimination, known as *Viveka*, which is the first step on the path of Yoga. *Viveka* is the antidote to indecision and dilemma, and it is directly proportional to the purity of the heart, of consciousness. *Viveka* allows us to listen to the 'Voice Real' within.

CARELESSNESS, HASTE AND INDIFFERENCE



The fourth *vikshepa* is *pramada*, which translates as carelessness, haste and indifference. When do we become careless? When do we do things hastily, with indifference? When we do not take interest. It is the opposite of being careful, the opposite of excelling in whatever we do, from cleaning the bathroom to becoming one with the Ultimate. It is the opposite of putting our hearts into everything we do. When we act without enthusiasm, we have not “put God into” whatever we do. In other words, we are disconnected from the Source.

Once again, this happens because of the layers of complexities and impurities that fill our consciousness. We cannot penetrate to any depth, we are operating within the thinnest film of consciousness at the surface level. We are not able to feel connected. The simple antidote is a three-fold process: meditate in order to dive deep, purify the field of consciousness, and connect with the source. These are the 3 practices of Heartfulness – Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer.

Through Heartfulness Meditation we become so aware, so sensitive to everything within, as well as to everything in the outer world. Our observational skills become fine-tuned, especially with the aid of Transmission or *pranahuti*. In stillness, it is so much easier to be careful. We are infused with God through Transmission. We first discover God within ourselves, and then in everything and everyone. In this state, how could we possibly be indifferent to those around us? How could we remain careless? Life becomes more alive and vital, and *pramada* is negated.

There is a Heartfulness Suggestion that can help with this:

Think that everything surrounding you – the air particles, people, the birds, the trees, everything around you – is deeply absorbed in Godly remembrance. All are in osmosis with the Source, and developing increasing peace and moderation.

Think that everything surrounding you – the air particles, people, the birds, the trees, everything around you – is deeply absorbed in Godly remembrance. All are in osmosis with the Source, and developing increasing peace and moderation.

Start by feeling absorbed in Godly remembrance yourself first, so its echo is felt outside. A time will come when you notice that you don’t have thoughts at all. Little by little the mind becomes fine-tuned. This simple suggestion keeps your mind focused. As Yoda says in Star Wars: “Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter. You must feel the Force around you. Here, between you, me, the tree, the rock, everywhere. Yes, even between this land and that ship.” And there is another benefit: wherever you go – to the theatre, a shopping mall or college – the feeling in the atmosphere around you will be affected.

Try it as an experiment when you have some free time. Slowly the absorbency will expand around you. If you also think of a friend who is living somewhere else, you will send these vibrations there also. Allow this feeling to expand. There are no limits to this expansion. Even the Universe will be too small when you allow a consciousness packed with love to expand.

Today there is so much talk of compassion fatigue, burnout and indifference, and we often blame the media for showing us constant negativity and horror in the news, making us numb to empathy, compassion and love. We blame stress and lack of sleep for hyping up our nervous systems so that we are irritable and unable to pause long enough to care about others. We blame our workplace environment for always rushing us and causing us to be hasty in everything we do, including decision-making. These are all examples of *pramada* – carelessness and indifference, rushing around, unable to pause and dive deep into the heart in order to feel and make wise decisions.

Is this the life we want to lead? We all know Aesop’s fable of *The Hare and the Tortoise*, and there are numerous proverbs in all languages about haste. Here are just a few:

Haste is the enemy of perfection.
Portuguese proverb

Patience is the key of joy; but haste is the key
to sorrow.
Arabic Proverb

Haste and hurry can only bear children with
many regrets.
African Proverb

People fated to be happy need not haste.
Chinese Proverb

Of hasty counsel take good heed, for haste is
very rarely speed.
Dutch Proverb

Mulla Nasruddin also demonstrated this quality with his peculiar brand of humor. One day, while seated on his donkey, rushing through the marketplace, followers and friends tried to stop him to chat every few meters. He kept going faster and faster, replying, “I can’t stop

Spiritual growth is all about refinement – removing negative tendencies and cultivating noble qualities. It is all about becoming more God-like every day. It is all about becoming the best we can possibly be, and then unbecoming – removing every conceivable obstacle to oneness with the Ultimate.

*Pause, remain poised,
especially when
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approach every task at
hand with poise and
grace.*



to talk now. Can't you see I am busy? I'm looking for my donkey!"

This captures the human predicament. It is critical to slow down, have time for those around us, enjoy the beauties of life, and become conscious of the search and ourselves as seekers. So pause, remain poised, especially when everyone else is rushing, go into your heart, feel your center and recalibrate yourself. Try to approach every task at hand with poise and grace.

Pramada results in sloppy thinking, sloppy action and sloppy work, so even in the worldly sense we will not achieve excellence in any field while this *vikshepa* is still creating obstacles. That is one of the many reasons why successful people meditate. Excellence depends on removing this obstacle of *pramada*. And in the spiritual field it is even more critical to transcend it. Spiritual growth

is all about refinement – removing negative tendencies and cultivating noble qualities. It is all about becoming more God-like every day. It is all about becoming the best we can possibly be, and then unbecoming – removing every conceivable obstacle to oneness with the Ultimate. There is no room for *pramada* or any of the *vikshepas* in that equation.

LAZINESS



The fifth *vikshepa* is *alasya*, which translates as laziness and sloth. There are different types of laziness. One type is the laziness that arises because the soul becomes more prominent, as not-doing is the quality of the soul whereas activity is the quality of the body. But that is not the type of laziness Patanjali is referring to here. He is talking about the laziness that comes from giving up.

Laziness results when the other *vikshepas* become crippling. For example, when we are indifferent, careless and hasty, it is symptomatic of the fact that we have lost our faith and confidence in life. We no longer see the point of being enthusiastic and putting our hearts into whatever we are doing. We are living without really being alive. This can also happen in a spiritual practice when we go through the motions of meditating or praying without real interest. It becomes mechanical rather than heart-felt. It takes us nowhere.

When we observe small children, we see that they are full of wonder. Life is a playground, filled with energy for life. They are living in the flow of the *prana* of the universe, the bliss of the inner being, and they are not jaded or blocked by frustration, negativity, disappointment, failure and hopelessness. Everything they see is wonderful. They are not competing with anyone else, they are not bogged down by complexities and impurities, and they are still in touch with their feelings and their truth.

When the Heart Region of a human being fills with complexities and impurities in the form of *samskaras*, all the *vikshepas* come into play, leading to a negative spiral which eventually results in lack of motivation, incapacitation and inactivity. Just like a car that has broken down because it has never been serviced, our whole system eventually breaks down. This is *alasya*.

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Imagine when a person in this state has their first taste of Heartfulness Meditation, and feels the 'life-in-life' of Yogic Transmission being infused into their system. There is an immediate effect. It is as if a lifeline has been thrown to them, a transfusion of motivation, to bring them back from sloth towards a zest for living, and the courage and confidence to move forward. Hope reappears. Renewed interest creates the will to be disciplined and have a purpose. That is something life-changing.

ABSENCE OF NON-ATTACHMENT



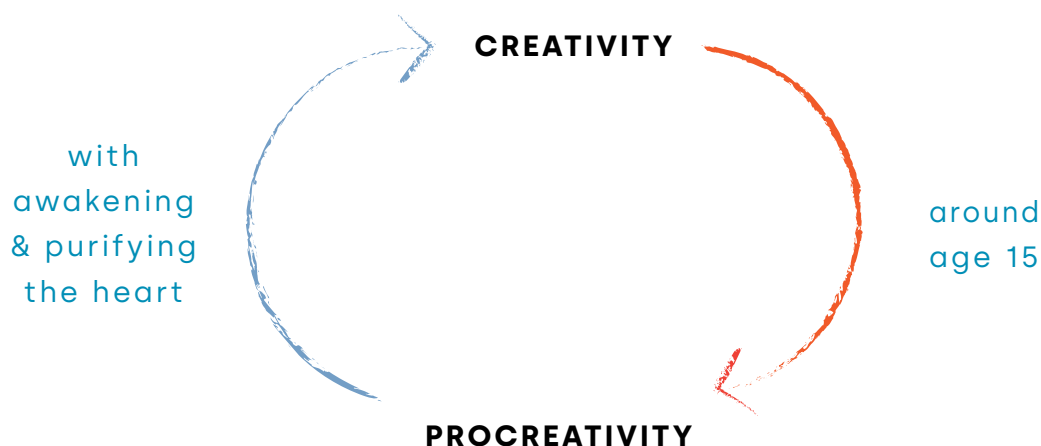
The sixth *vikshepa* is *avirati*, which translates as “absence of renunciation,” or “absence of non-attachment.” *Avirati* is the result of indulging, of going beyond needs to desires, and of gratifying the senses. It is the opposite to one of the four main sadhanas of Yoga, *Vairagya* or renunciation. The over-indulging of the senses can be associated with many types of behavior, but it is most often discussed in relation to sexual behavior, thoughts and attitudes, because they involve all the senses.

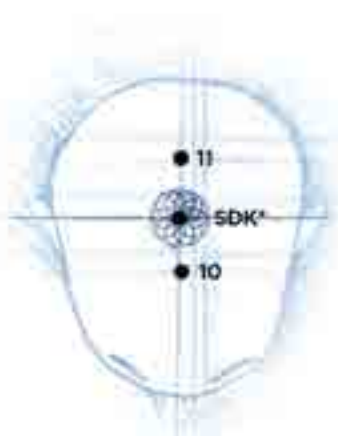
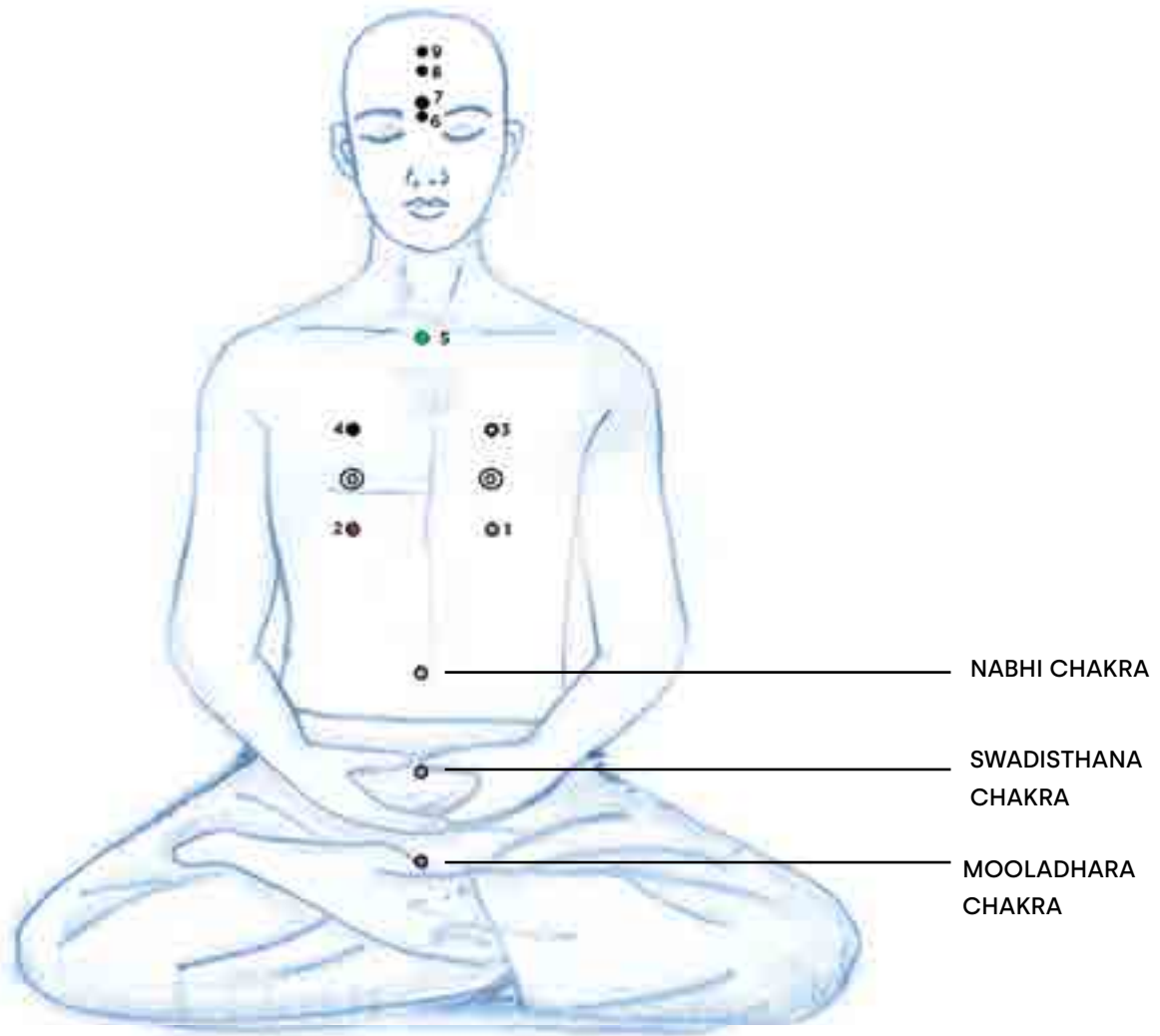
In the modern world of ready abundance and consumerism in many countries, *avirati* also relates to other aspects of life, such as our relationship with food, and indulging in addictive or obsessive behaviors towards other things, e.g. TV and digital gadgets, drugs and alcohol. It also underpins our fascination with fashion, interior design and decoration. In fact you could say that today’s fashion and cosmetics industries are the expression of *avirati* or over-indulgence of our sensory stimuli.

Let’s first explore why it is important to transcend this obstacle in relation to sexual behavior and desire. In Yoga, passion is known as *kama*, and it is a divine emotion, necessary for the continuation of the species. If tomorrow we all became celibate, humanity would disappear within 100 years. *Kama* can never be destroyed, but it is important to know how to manage it wisely.

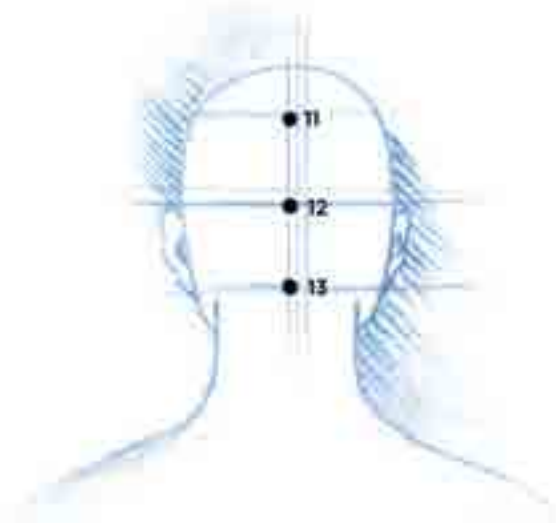
First of all, why does sensual energy build up in our physical system? As children, our creative energy is applied to many different activities – play, art, music, dance, storytelling, imagination, problem-solving, and so many other things. Then around the age of fifteen, a lot of this creative energy is channeled into procreative energy.

Where does the energy in our system come from? It accumulates in us when we eat food, drink water, and take in energy from the sun and other sources. In many of us, it accumulates in the lower chakras, as it cannot easily move up into the higher chakras unless and until





*SDK - SAHASRA DAL KAMAL



Over-indulgence in food can lead to blockages in the energy flows of the human system, as the pranamaya kosha becomes burdened. This is one of the reasons why fasting can be so beneficial in balancing the human system.

they are awakened. These lower chakras govern our basic instinctual survival nature, and they are known as the *mooladhara*, *swadisthana* and *nabhi chakras*.

When our energy is centered in these lower chakras, we function like other animal species, with our focus on basic survival instincts: eating to survive, competing with others for resources, and procreating for the survival of the species. There is a very big difference, however, between other animals and human beings. Most animals eat simply to survive – they don't take more energy than is required. Similarly, most animals have a defined breeding season – once a month, once every few months, once a year etc., so that the number of young born is well regulated and the species manages its population size naturally. They utilize the energy input and output in a very regulated fashion that has developed through years of evolutionary process. Human beings, on the other hand, have distorted the natural patterns and cycles because of desire. Because of the build-up of energy in the lower chakras, sex acts like a safety valve, a release, in which the energy taken in is released back into nature, and the build-up is dissipated.

Our relationship with food is also associated with the lower chakras, but instead of dissipating energy, eating adds to the energy balance, compounding the problem. And over-indulgence in food can lead to blockages in the energy flows of the human system, as the *pranamaya kosha* becomes burdened. This is one of the reasons why fasting can be so beneficial in balancing the human system.

Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh wrote about this balancing of energies in a letter to one of his associates in 1924, saying, "Let us observe keenly our anatomical structure and understand the various faculties active within the human body. Let us consider only two of these in the first phase of our study. These are the two basic instincts: satisfying hunger and thirst and satisfying the carnal desire, which is rampant.

"The feelings of hunger, thirst and the need for sleep indicate that there is deficiency of nutrition or water, or that the body is tired, lacks strength, and needs rest and recuperation. This results in the desire to satisfy that feeling, which is fulfilled by Nature through the mind and senses. In Hindi, this desire is called *kama shakti*, the force of passion or sensual desire.

“Corporal desires are also part of *kama shakti*, and relate to the instinctual need to reproduce. But the other limb of the same *kama shakti* is subtle, and does not fulfill the deficiency, instead ejecting the surpluses and fulfilling the deficiencies. So, the human seed or seminal fluid, which accumulates in a cavity in the body until there is no more room, is ejected by the subtle force. Finally if this essence, which is thrown out of the body, is implanted in a fertile womb, the other wish of nature is then fulfilled, namely, that from one there become many.

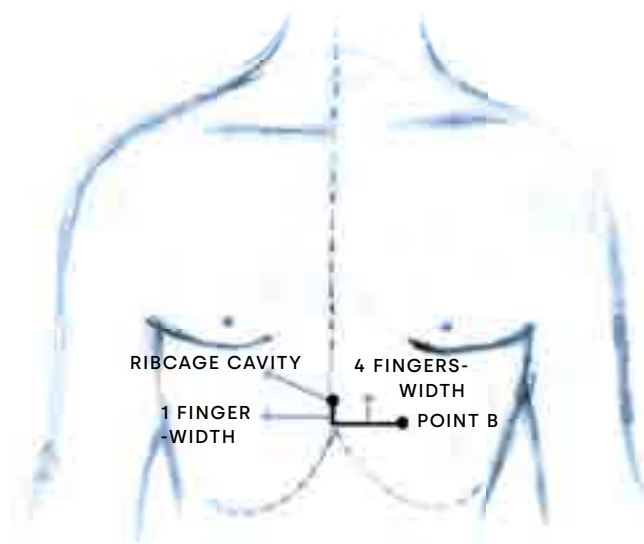
“Surplus and waste substances that accumulate for long periods in the body breed poisonous matter. This you can witness as the result of constipation or of being unable to urinate. But an excess of semen creates a sense of embarrassment and affects the wisdom of the heart.”

By doing a regular yogic practice with the help of a capable Guide, we are able to shift the fulcrum of energy upwards. This happens in Heartfulness from the very first

meditation sessions with a trainer, when the heart chakra is awakened. The *yatra* or inner journey is activated, and as the chakras are traversed, the center of energy moves upward, so that the human system becomes a transformer. Energy is transmuted into more and more subtle states. Matter becomes energy and eventually it becomes Absolute: physical becomes subtle becomes causal. The most peripheral and complex eventually becomes central and pure.

In addition, Heartfulness offers a simple morning practice known as Point B Cleaning, which is done first thing in the morning in order to manage the build-up of sensual energy. It is practiced for five to seven minutes as follows:

Fix your attention on Point B and imagine that all impurities and heaviness are going out of Point B from the front of the body. Imagine that as this process is going on, the glow of the soul begins to appear from behind.



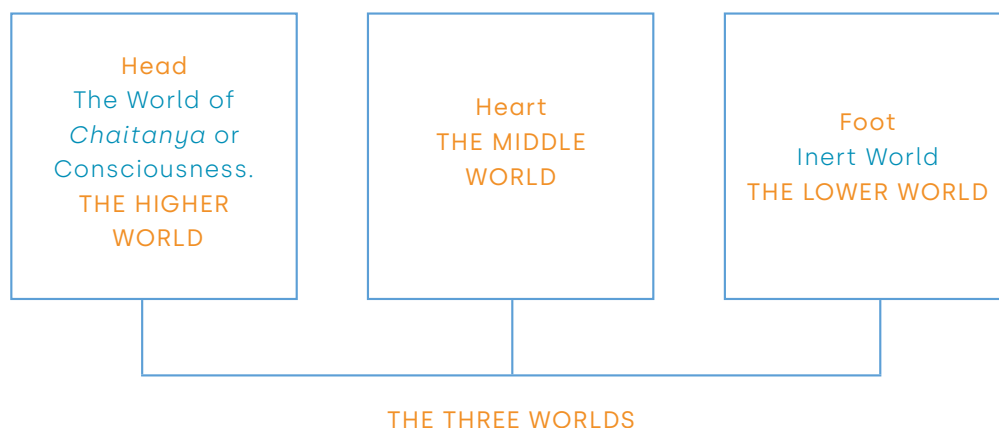
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Just as celibacy is not the natural state, at the other extreme, passion can also get out of hand and end up in sex addiction or perversion. Through Heartfulness practices, instead of either extreme, the procreative energy is managed and balanced. For this purpose, the cleaning of point B works as a passion detox or sex detox, so that sensual desires are no longer overwhelming. Imagine the harmony that would result in human societies if people practiced this technique daily!

Life then takes on a different dimension and a new meaning. Nature transmutes to sequentially higher stages

of supernature; consciousness transmutes to sequentially higher stages of superconsciousness. This is how our being expands, and our subtle bodies can disengage from their close attachment to the physical body. The center of our *pranamaya kosha*, of the energy flows in the human system settles in the heart, where it belongs, at the middle link of our existence.

Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh wrote: “The heart, being at the center, functions to absorb the effects of the higher and lower regions, which is its characteristic.” He demonstrates this in a simple diagram:



When love is also there, sex is not purely physical; it can also involve subtler aspects, but it is still at a lower level. Higher bliss, known as ananda in Yoga, which emerges naturally with the spiritual journey, is more subtle than lower physical pleasure. The more subtle it is, the more potent.

As each chakra awakens, with the support of the Guide's Transmission, the energy moves higher and higher, and sensuality is no longer the driving force.

Sex offers a more physical form of ecstasy, because it involves the outer senses and desire. When love is also there, it is not purely physical; it can also involve subtler aspects, but it is still at a lower level. Higher bliss, known as *ananda* in Yoga, which emerges naturally with the spiritual journey, is more subtle than lower physical pleasure. The more subtle it is, the more potent. That is why yogis have run after bliss, and extolled it so much. But they can also indulge in desiring the ecstasy of these subtler forms of bliss. *Avirati* is perhaps even more of an obstacle in these higher realms, as it is so potent.

Many seekers have been caught in this trap of meditating to find their bliss. Many wait for those intoxicating states of consciousness that can be found in deep meditation, in various stages of *Samadhi*. They are not willing to renounce this bliss to go beyond it to the Absolute state. In such cases, meditation is also like a drug for ecstasy. This is one of the biggest hurdles in the spiritual journey – moving beyond *satchidananda* to higher states of Reality and nothingness. As Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur once said, "I feel irritated to see someone acclaim *satchidananda*. This is like a worm feeding on cow dung and admiring its flavor. The *satchidananda* state is nothing compared to *laya avastha*."

Even in a marriage, over a lifetime together, the pleasure and bliss in each other's company becomes more and more subtle, until eventually it reaches a stage of apparent nothingness. Some time back, I was lucky enough to observe an elderly couple taking a stroll along the river in Princeton, New Jersey, their steps totally in sync. You could see they had been together a long time. They didn't need to speak much, communicating their togetherness in the subtlest ways. They settled on a park bench overlooking the river, pulled out a flask of tea and some sandwiches, and together enjoyed their lunch in perfect silence. Their movements were in tune – the way she poured the tea was full of gentleness and care, as was the way he received the cup. They ate their sandwiches and enjoyed the stillness of the riverside.

They had reached a stage in their marriage of purity in connection and communion. This is the other end of the spectrum from the days of young love, when a couple is more physical and verbal in their demonstration of love. Now, extrapolate this evolution to a higher dimension altogether, and you will have some idea of where we may be headed with seeking subtlety in the spiritual realm. And eventually a subtle state of *Vairagya* arises very naturally, without force or repression, because the field of consciousness has been purified.



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FALSE PERCEPTION



The seventh *vikshepa* is *bhrantidarsana*, meaning false perception, delusion or blindness. It is the opposite to another one of the four main *sadhanas* of Yoga known as *Viveka* or discernment. If we define consciousness as the degree of perception, when we falsely perceive it interferes with our consciousness and its evolution.

In fact, *Viveka* and *Vairagya* are the foundation of mental well-being, and come about naturally as a result of yogic practice. Both *avirati* and *bhrantidarsana* arise when we go in the opposite direction – towards dissonance, disharmony, entropy, separation and complexity.

How does false perception arise? And how do we distinguish what is false and what is true? In order to understand this, we need to go back to the beginning. Try to experience the original state of our being, where there is only stillness, nothingness and total peace, by meditating with Transmission. From that center everything we think and do emanates. We can call it the default position, the zero position, the balanced state. Of our three bodies, it is our soul that is at home in that center, in the balanced state of nothingness.

Now, contrast that with the interplay of senses, thoughts, feelings and tendencies that draw us out into the world of movement and thinking, creating the various *vruttis* in the field of consciousness. But our soul is also embodied, and is connected with the physical body, so the soul, the *atman*, is also involved in movement and thinking (*atman*: *ath* means ‘movement’ and *man* means ‘thinking’). The soul is just as much at home with movement and thinking as it is with stillness. There is a constant dance between stillness and activity, between activity and repose.

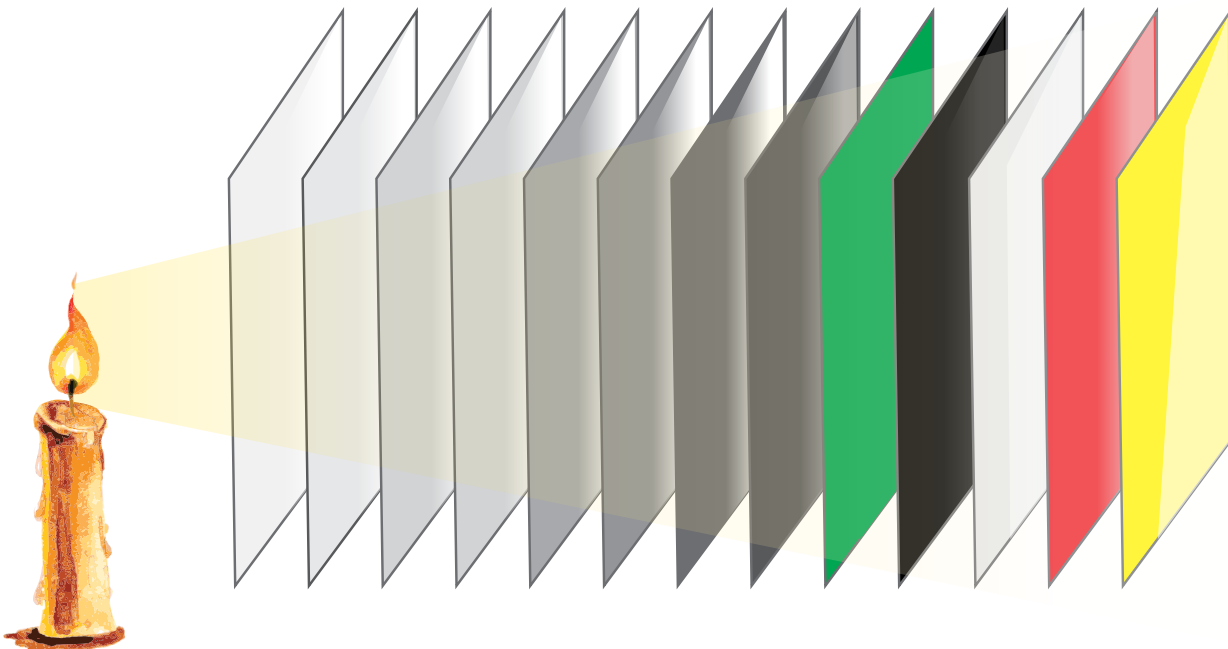
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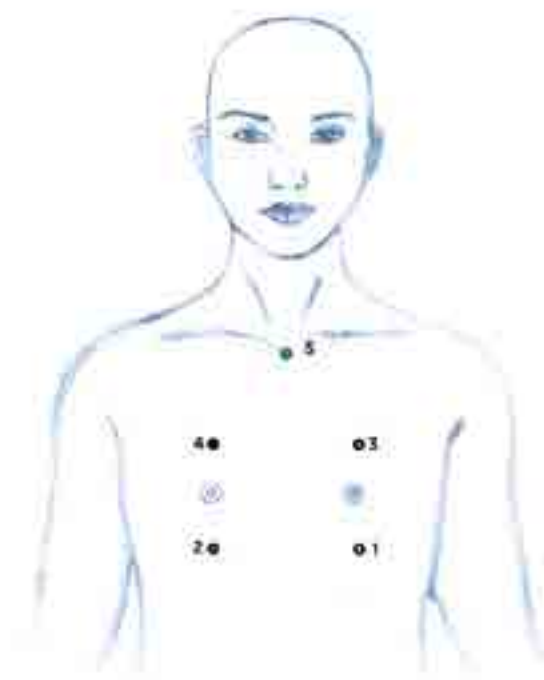
Therefore, in Yoga we try to maximize the potential of all three – stillness, thinking and movement. To do this, we do two things: turn our attention inwards during meditation towards the stillness of the center, and refine our outward activities so that our thoughts and movement are in tune with our inner Nature. Then they are conducive to evolution, happiness and balance. We cannot rest in stillness all the time, and that is also not the aim of Yoga, which is just as much about skill in action. So instead we learn to integrate stillness and activity in our daily actions.

In this combination of stillness and activity, lived out in purity and simplicity, the soul can shine, radiating inner joy and happiness. When the waves of the *vruttis* calm down during meditation, we see our true nature. As we master the art of meditation, we then can externalize that true nature into our daily activities. This is another one of the specialties of Heartfulness – to carry the meditative state with us into the other 23 hours of the day when we are not meditating.

What complicates and pollutes the purity of the balanced state? The impressions that are activated and then accumulate in our heart-mind field of consciousness, as the *vruttis* become colored and repetitive, forming a web of complexity that is then mirrored in the neural networks and pathways of the nervous system. These we call *samskaras*, and they create cognates by which we perceive the world – layer upon layer of them – so that our perception can be likened to looking through many lenses of different colors, until eventually we cannot see clearly at all.

If we are not regularly removing these impressions, it will be like driving at night through heavy fog; we see only a few feet in front. There is no clarity, no vision, and no larger perspective. It is like the old English proverb, “You can’t see the wood for the trees.” More specifically, as per the spiritual anatomy of Heartfulness Yoga, it is only once the 5 chakras of the Heart Region have been purified and traversed, up to the throat chakra or air point, that





THE FIVE CHAKRAS OF THE HEART REGION

real clarity and discrimination – *Viveka* – become the natural state of being. In fact, *Viveka* is not as simple as distinguishing between right and wrong; it is also distinguishing between two right things and knowing which is more appropriate. True *Viveka* enables us to discriminate against anything that interferes with our goal or purpose in life.

As a case study of *bhrantidarsana*, Rohan is 25 years old. He is a very successful engineer living in Silicon Valley, California, with a good salary and a generally healthy lifestyle. He has had a few girlfriends, and each time a relationship ends he feels rejected, hard done by, mistreated and betrayed by women. By now he has come

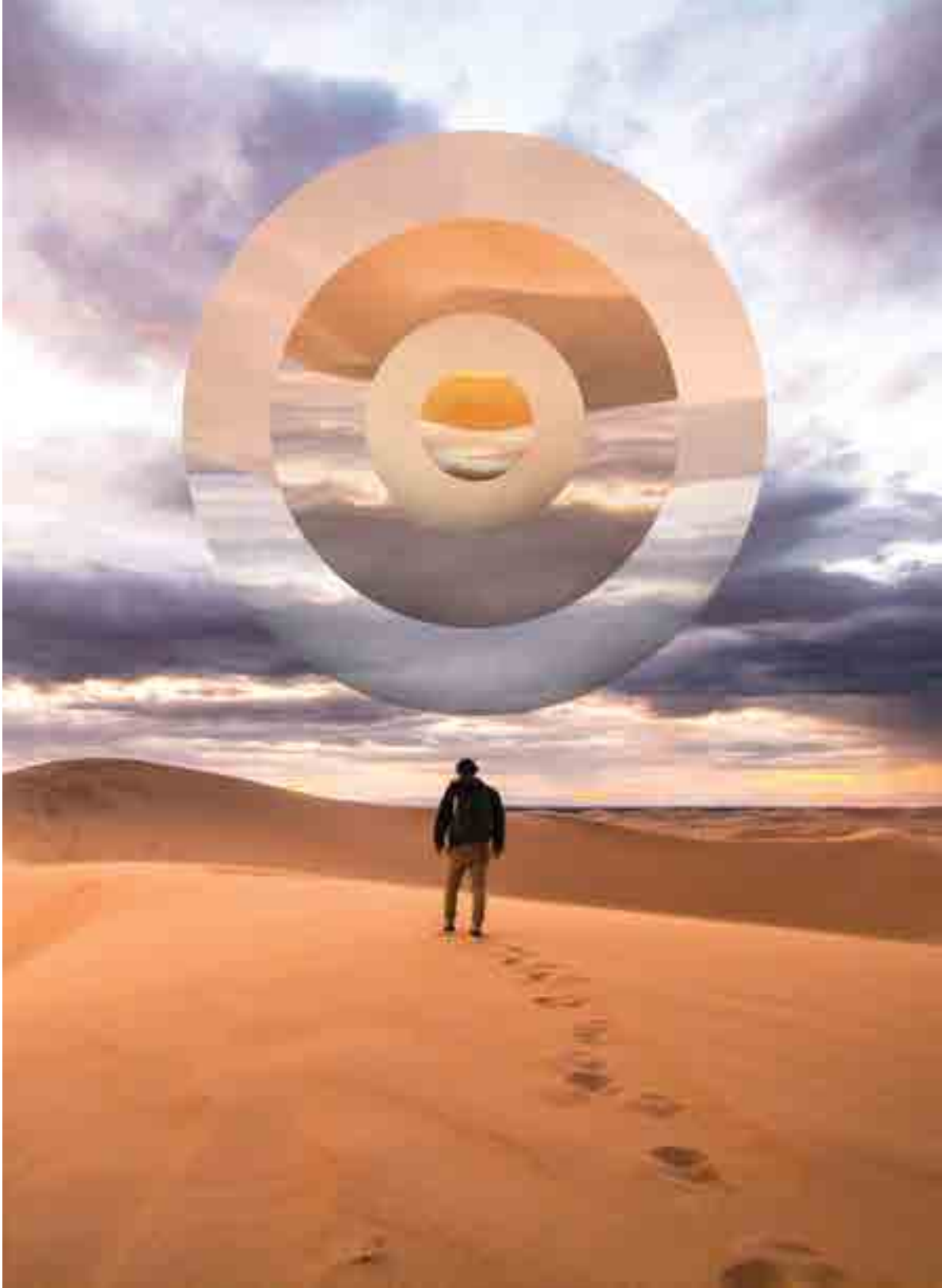
to expect this to happen – feeling that women are using him for his money and success. Everything is always their fault in his eyes.

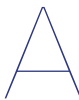
This makes him sad, because he really wants a permanent committed relationship and marriage. Will he embark on a new relationship with openness, or is he likely to start with the false perception that all women will use and betray him? He is not even aware of this pattern; he is blind to his own prejudice, as it has become an automatic subconscious response. His subconscious cognates will surely sabotage the next relationship from the outset, without him knowing that he is affecting the outcome. Anyone new will gradually be forced to live up to his expectation of failure, unless he becomes conscious of the patterning and chooses to remove it.

How will Rohan change his patterns? The most effective way is to remove the past impressions or *samskaras* that have accumulated in the subconscious mind. In Heartfulness, this is done daily during the evening practice of Cleaning. After a few months of Heartfulness practice, Rohan is already noticing big changes in his inner environment. Some of his old habits have already left as a result of the Cleaning practice, and he has learnt simple ways to change his behavior. Gradually, he is mastering his emotions, and approaching life with positivity and confidence, along with more openness and humility. Through Heartfulness Meditation and Prayer, he is also learning to listen to his inner voice through the heart, develop clarity and make wise decisions. His heart is opening and becoming more generous. The obstacles are melting away, one by one.

Bhrantidarsana is easily reversed by removing the *samskaras* that are the root cause, and developing the generosity of heart to accept a true perception based on purity and clarity.

FAILURE TO ATTAIN THE NEXT STAGE & FAILURE TO RETAIN A STAGE



 *labdha-bhumikatva* is the *vikshepa* where we are not able to attain the next stage or level in the spiritual journey, and *anavasthitatvani* is the failure to retain a stage once it has been given. There can be many reasons for these two obstacles. They may occur because of lack of interest, lack of determination, a feeling of impotency, or because we are not able to refine our character in order to maintain the spiritual level. Especially at the higher spiritual stages, such a profound level of humility, nobility of character and dependency on a capable Master are required. And acceptance and self-transcendence are vital for progress. We need constant help from the Master to refine ourselves in order to become eligible to enter and retain these stages.

How do we work to overcome these two obstacles? The first thing is to understand that our potency comes through our connection with the Source, with God, through the heart. Individually we are impotent islands, whereas once we are connected, our full potential is realized; we are connected to the Source of life itself. The easiest way to stay connected with the Source is to associate with a Master of the highest caliber, who can transmit the essence of *pranahuti* from the Source itself. The spiritual journey is only a way to expose more and more of that connection by uncovering the layers that keep us separate. Prayer and meditation are both ways we evoke and maintain that connection.

The second thing is to understand that spiritual progress is not linear; it proceeds with a natural rise and fall. At each stage of the journey, i.e. at each chakra, point or knot, there is a sequence of experiences, which is beautifully explained by Ram Chandra in his books, *Towards Infinity* and *Voice Real*:

1. “On entering into every successive knot, there is a slight feeling of heaviness in the mind, on account of which people often discontinue the practice. But if we take into consideration that every attack of illness is followed by the restoration of good health, we will be better encouraged to attempt a crossing of the knots.”
2. After this heaviness comes “a peculiar state, awakening within the mind a consciousness of the divine force, pervading all over.”
3. Next, as we become more attuned to the new stage, we experience “a divine state prevailing everywhere, and everything absorbed in its remembrance.”
4. But this does not last. As we merge more and more with the new stage, there is “neither feeling of the divine force nor that of remembrance, but only a feeling of negation.”
5. Eventually, “everything is gone. No impression upon the heart, not even that of existence.”

So when we progress to enter a new chakra or knot, there will always be a feeling of discomfort and restlessness, just as when we move location in our worldly life there is change and upheaval. Only once we settle into the new environment does our consciousness open up to a higher level of awareness, and then we start to experience Divinity from that higher level. This is a joyful and blissful experience, and we feel that we have moved forward. If we continue to progress, we become so merged in that level that it becomes part of us, and then we lose awareness

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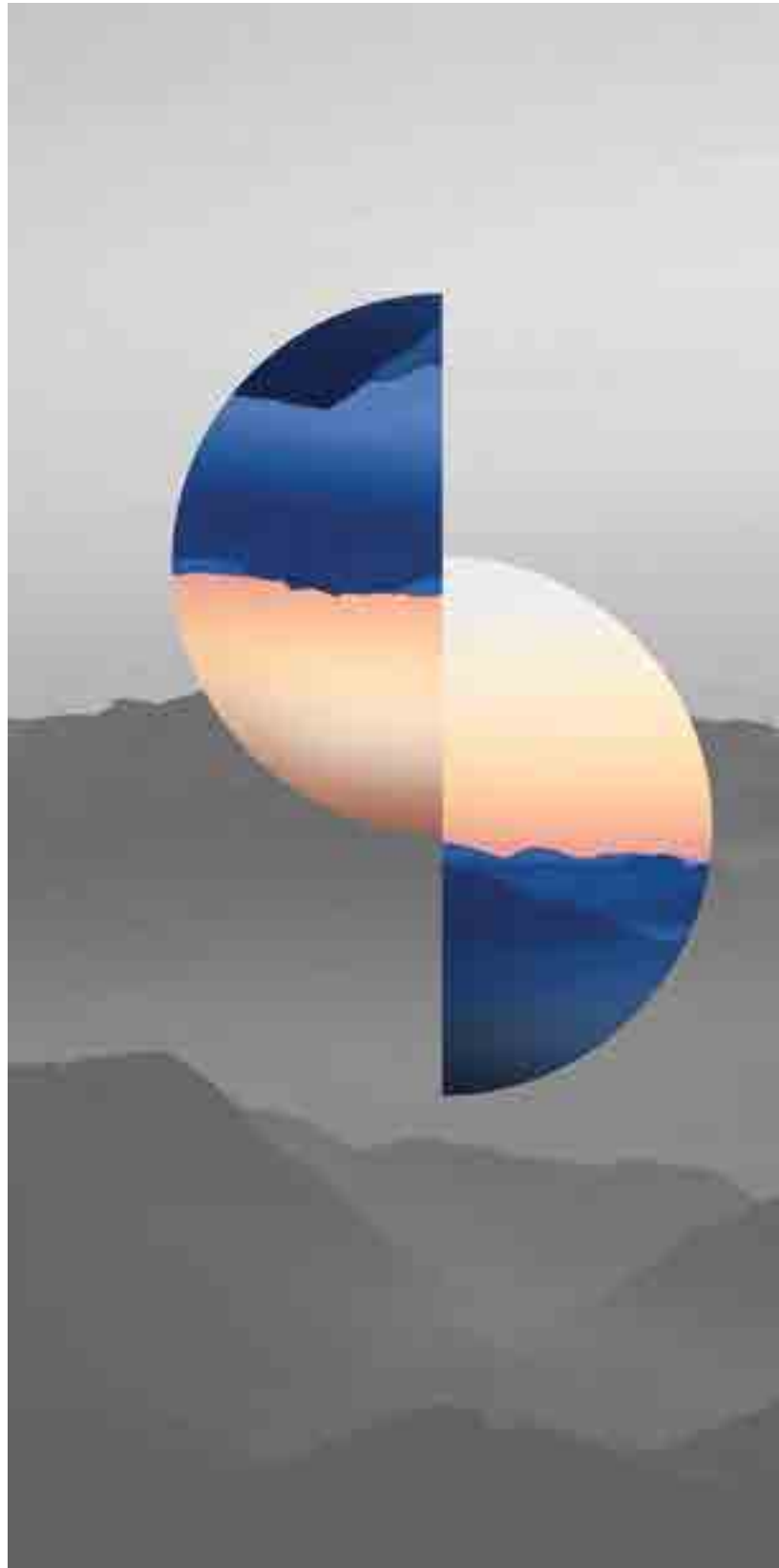
of its very existence. It is now in our subconscious mind, and there is only a sense of negation or nothingness remaining. Eventually even that is gone.

But there is a trap in this cycle. Generally we like the blissful “high” periods, and assume they mean progress, while we associate the stages of restlessness and nothingness in this sequence with a lack of progress, or even a regression. We become disheartened without understanding the bigger picture.

Attachment to bliss can be a big hindrance for us: When we feel so blissful, we want to live in that state forever, and the idea of moving away from bliss often creates resistance. There is the possibility of infinite expansion at each chakra, but it is horizontal expansion. It is better to move even one inch into a higher dimension than expand infinitely at a lower level. That’s why it requires an effort even to move one inch, and most of us fail to understand the significance of that little effort in moving further.

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you are practicing the mind
will be calm and easily
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find yourself progressing fast.
All of a sudden the progress
will stop one day, and you will
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stranded. Persevere. All
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fall."*

— Swami Vivekananda



Anything that annoys us in another person is what we need to work upon in ourselves. Without a noble character, spiritual progress is of no use.

Swami Vivekananda describes it thus: “Some days or weeks when you are practicing the mind will be calm and easily concentrated, and you will find yourself progressing fast. All of a sudden the progress will stop one day, and you will find yourself, as it were, stranded. Persevere. All progress proceeds by rise and fall.”

So courage and faith are required to avoid losing hope and focus in this process. If we keep starting and stopping, nothing is possible, because our neural pathways need the automatism of regular practice to become so well established that our new level of consciousness becomes habitual, automatic, and subconscious. Why is there such a need? It is so that our mind is freed up to learn new things at a conscious level. Unless and until this habitual nature is established, any activity remains conscious and incomplete. Once it becomes subconscious, we have fully imbibed and become one with any spiritual stage. That is why it helps so much to have one goal, and to keep reminding ourselves that we need to reach that goal even if the journey is difficult at times.

But perhaps the biggest reason we are victims of *alabdha-bhumikatva* and *anavasthitatvani* is our inability to change our character and behavior. As a result, we don’t retain a spiritual level even if a capable Master takes us there. Often we are not even cognizant of the character traits

that pull us backwards. And even when we are, we may think that we have changed, but then a stressful situation takes us back into old habits again. This is such a common problem that nature, in her generosity, has given us each other as mirrors. We see this in everyday life: Anything that annoys us in another person is what we need to work upon in ourselves. Without a noble character, spiritual progress is of no use. Swami Vivekananda has described it beautifully: “Stages do nothing at the time of death. Moderation is required and that is lacking everywhere. Spirituality alone can do nothing. It must go side by side with morality.”

This aspect of psychology is why *Yama* and *Niyama* are the first two steps in Patanjali’s Ashtanga Yoga. *Yama* is the removal of all unwanted qualities, and *Niyama* is the integration of noble qualities in the refinement of our lifestyle. And in Heartfulness we have so much help with both these steps. Meditation allows us to introspect and evaluate ourselves. Cleaning removes the root *samskaras* that result in behavioral habits and tendencies. Prayer gives us a way to connect with the Divine and submit our weaknesses and faults so that we can change. Every day we can recalibrate and follow a path of continuous improvement. It is a simple solution to one of the most difficult problems facing human beings since time immemorial.

*The divine currents are absolutely free
from impurities, vikshepas, and layers
of complexities.*

RAM CHANDRA





FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) & DIGITAL DISTRACTION





have added these two *vikshepas* to Patanjali's list, as they have only surfaced as serious obstacles to progress in the modern era.

FOMO is described by researchers as “the uneasy and sometimes all-consuming feeling that you’re missing out, that your peers are doing, knowing about, or in possession of more or something better than you.” It is exacerbated by the fact that we live in a world of WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and constant news on our smartphones. It is a fear that others are living a better life, and having more fun. It stems from a sense of envy, leading to a feeling of helplessness.

Advertisers are always preying on this insecurity, by inviting us to buy products that will enhance our sense of belonging – those “Can’t miss out experiences,” be it a new car, a bigger house, the latest kitchen products, the newest smartphone or the latest fashions. FOMO is not new, it has been around for centuries, but it has become more obvious since the advent of social media. The first scientific studies were done by a marketing strategist, Dr. Dan Herman, in 1996, and the acronym FOMO was coined by Patrick McGinness in 2004 in *The Harbus*. Since then, it has been studied more and more frequently as a modern phenomenon.

Social media are both a cause and effect of FOMO, which is characterized by a desire to be connected with what others are doing. Social media feed this *vikshepa*. We could even say that social media are the modern opiates of the people. They are so addictive. Unfortunately, social media post the highlights of people’s lives, so we are always comparing our own lives with the best of others. People show their best side on social media, or a sensationalist side to get attention. It is a biased view of life; it is not reality. And we compare ourselves to that, and it becomes an unfortunate competition.

FOMO is associated with all walks of life, ages and genders, and is a very real and common feeling in today's world, stemming from insecurity and a feeling of lack, and sometimes leading to physiological symptoms and behaviors. Many sufferers are simply overwhelmed by the amount of information needed to "keep up" with current activities and trends. FOMO is also associated with a negative effect on overall mood and life satisfaction.

Where does this lack really come from? You may blame social media, but are they really the culprits? In fact, the fundamental sense of lack is an inner lack – a lack of inner contentment, of inner connection, a feeling of not belonging. Someone who is connected with their own Source every day, every hour, every moment, is contented in their own being, irrespective of what others have or do. There is a sense of confidence and courage to live in the world without competition and comparison with others, without succumbing to peer pressure or media pressure.

Finding that inner contentment is actually very simple – meditate, go within and experience the connection. With Transmission it is even easier, as Transmission is the connection. Hence, Heartfulness Meditation is a natural antidote to FOMO.

FOMO has become inextricably linked with the digital era, and digital gadgets provide their own problems. First there is the amount of time people spend watching screens instead of communicating face-to-face with others, playing sports, reading books, going for walks, or simply being in nature. The classic is when you go to a restaurant and see four people sitting at a table for dinner, all on their individual smartphones instead of talking together.

Second is the radiation associated with these gadgets. Electromagnetic technology is an integral part of our lives – Wi-Fi, the Internet, Bluetooth, mobile phones, computers, tablets, microwave ovens, medical equipment, and all the other man-made sources of electromagnetic radiation in our environment. Today we know much more about their effects. In 2011, WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer announced it was classifying electromagnetic fields from mobile phones and other





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sources as “possibly carcinogenic to humans” and advised everyone to adopt safety measures to reduce exposure.

There is now a field of research known as bioelectromagnetics and authorities in many European countries recommend that people use hands-free to decrease radiation to the head, keep mobile phones away from the body, and do not use a mobile phone in a car without an external antenna.

Our subtle body is our energetic body which has its own electromagnetic field created by the negative and positive polarity of charge. As a result, the subtle body is affected by other energy fields in the environment, for example, the build up of positive ions in the atmosphere before a thunderstorm creates restlessness, while the release of negative ions once the storm arrives brings relief.

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In nature, everything is in a state of dynamic balance, with complementary energy flows switching like alternating current throughout the day. The same sort of alternating pattern is seen in the complementary sympathetic and parasympathetic currents associated with the *Surya* and *Chandra Nadis* in our bodies, where at times one predominates, then the current switches so that the other predominates. Then there are the main inflection points at sunrise and sunset, the stationary points, where the turn of the flow is more prominent, like the turning of the tide. We see these patterns of polarity at the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels, whether in the planetary movements or in particles at the atomic movement.

When we add man-made EMFs to our environment, they interact with our natural EMFs. So the stronger the man-made EMF technologies in our environment, the more likely they are to affect us. Some people get headaches, rashes, nausea and nervous complaints. The effects happen first at the level of the subtle body, the energy field, and eventually filter down to the physical body.

A few years back, a group of schoolgirls in Denmark did an experiment. They were experiencing difficulty concentrating in school, and when they slept with the phone next to their head they sometimes also experienced difficulty sleeping. They took 400 watercress seeds and placed them in twelve trays: six in a room without radiation, and six in the next room with two Wi-Fi routers. The seeds were given the same amount of water and the same conditions of light. After twelve days the cress seeds next to the router did not grow so well, and some of them mutated and died.

The experiment drew international attention and scientists replicated it with controls, other experimental variables and using other plants. I have tried it using mung bean seeds in four different environments with astounding results, as follows:

RADIATION EXPERIMENT WITH MUNG BEAN SPROUTS



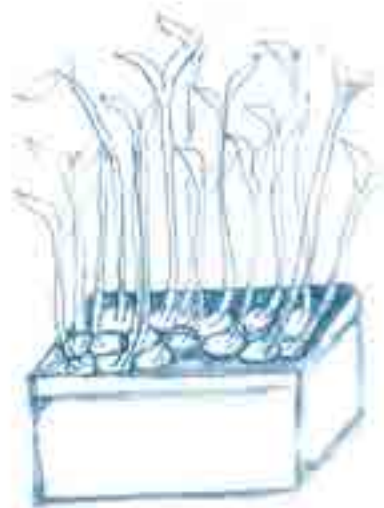
WI-FI



BLUETOOTH



CONTROL
NO RADIATION



NO RADIATION
MEDITATION OR PRAYER ROOM



MUNG BEAN EXPERIMENT

I would suggest that every child do this experiment, so they can see for themselves the effect that radiation has on living organisms. One of the Danish students said after finishing their experiment, “None of us sleep with the mobile next to the bed anymore. Either the phone is put far away, or it is put in another room. And the computer is always off.”

Here are a few simple things that will help to reduce this *vikshepa*:

1. Turn off Wi-Fi when it is not in use, and at night during sleep,
2. Use your mobile phone in the car only when necessary, and don't charge the phone in the car,
3. Keep your mobile phone in a bag, not in your pocket against your body,
4. Switch Bluetooth on only when needed,
5. Keep your phone away from your bed at night, and
6. Don't give small children phones to play with.

Digital technologies have revolutionized our global network, but today many of us are dependent on them to the point of addiction. The radiation they emit is harmful to health because of its effect on our subtle bodies, our consciousness, and only time will tell the long-term effects of constant use.

Today we look back at the ancient Romans and wonder why they were so foolish as to use lead utensils for cooking, resulting in lead poisoning. We look back at the 20th century and wonder why so many people smoked cigarettes. Will the people of the twenty-third century look back at us with the same disbelief in our rampant and unregulated use of digital technologies?



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GUILT AND SHAME



There is one more vikshepas that I have added to Patanjali's list, as it is often a crippling obstacle to progress, and indeed to every aspect of living, and that is the *vikshepa* of Guilt and Shame.

What types of impression dominate our lives? There can be so many, for example, worldly worries, sensuality and sexual attraction, prejudice, greed, grief, sadness, self-pity, jealousy, guilt and shame. As well as impressions formed by our thoughts and actions, we also form impressions by our inactions, creating even more guilt. These are the things that we should have done but did not do, and such things haunt us all our lives. For example, we may have hurt someone very dear to us without ever having made amends. Impressions like that are difficult to remove.

Most of the other emotions associated with the human heart have some redeeming purpose and help us on our spiritual journey when used constructively for a higher purpose, even the so-called negative emotions like anger, fear and worry. But at first glance it is hard to see much value in guilt and shame, other than that they indicate we have a conscience. Someone who feels no guilt and no shame for anything is amoral and psychopathic.

Is there a difference between guilt and shame? Guilt is a feeling that arises when we have either done something or not done something, for which we feel responsible. Psychologists explain it like this: With guilt we often want to make amends, and apologize for the hurt we have caused. Our attention is on the feelings of others, and correcting the situation. Guilt can eventually lead to socially-adaptive behavior. Shame, on the other hand, is focused inward, so that we view ourselves in the most negative light.¹ Shame is the result of having transgressed the values and principles we hold dear. We are no longer

Guilt can eventually lead to socially-adaptive behavior. Shame, on the other hand, is focused inward, so that we view ourselves in the most negative light. Shame is the result of having transgressed the values and principles we hold dear. We are no longer authentic, because we have lost our integrity with respect to our heart's wisdom.

authentic, because we have lost our integrity with respect to our heart's wisdom. To overcome this we have to forgive ourselves and find ways to change the inherent patterns that caused the transgression in the first place.

When shame is the result of someone else's behavior, as is often the case with the internalized shame that is found amongst victims of child abuse or domestic violence, the problem is even trickier, because children do not know how to deal with their feelings when the perpetrator is someone they love and rely on to protect them. They are helpless, even though they know that what has happened is wrong and against their heart's wisdom.

¹Kämmerer, A., 2019. *The Scientific Underpinnings and Impacts of Shame*, Scientific American, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-scientific-underpinnings-and-impacts-of-shame>.

Dr. Chris Germer has written, “Shame is probably the trickiest human emotion. It’s everywhere, so we barely see it. It’s also the glue that makes other emotions stick around longer than they should – fear, anger, guilt.”²

It also happens that sometimes we choose to go against our conscience, because our desires and mental justifications push us to make another choice. And until we change our thinking we will keep recycling those experiences and habits. Guilt and shame really drain our energy, pulling us further and further away from our center.

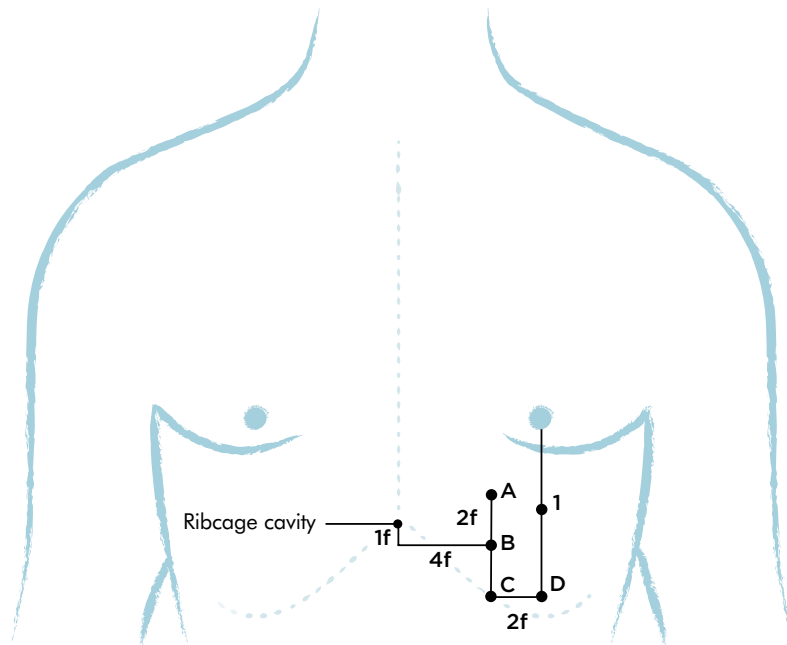
In terms of the chakras of the Heart Region, guilt and shame lodge at point D, one of the satellite points around the Heart.

They are impressions that give rise to a lot of heaviness in the heart, and they are the most difficult to clean. It is, rather, very difficult to remove impressions associated with guilt and shame. The Heartfulness Way offers a very effective practice that can be adopted as needed:

At bedtime, feel the divine presence in your heart, and repent for anything you have done wrong, even if it was unintentional. There is no recrimination in this process. While resting deep in your heart, prayerfully resolve not to do the same again. You will feel as if a burden has lifted.

You can also present any questions and confusions to your heart right after offering prayer. There is no need to seek an answer immediately. Sometimes the answer will come by the time you wake up. Even if the answer comes in another form than words, the solution will eventually arise.

To remove guilt and shame, a commitment of a very high order is required, and cooperation at every level. For this we need self-compassion, self-acceptance and courage. We need to open up and let go. The best time to do this is before sleeping at night. When we let go of these heavy emotions at bedtime, imagine the positive effect it will



POINTS A, B, C & D

² www.chrisgermer.com



have on our sleep! We do not need to remember all the things we have done or not done, because when we truly open ourselves, what has to be removed will be removed. Tears will often come. There will be many such sessions, and over time the heaviness will gradually dissolve.

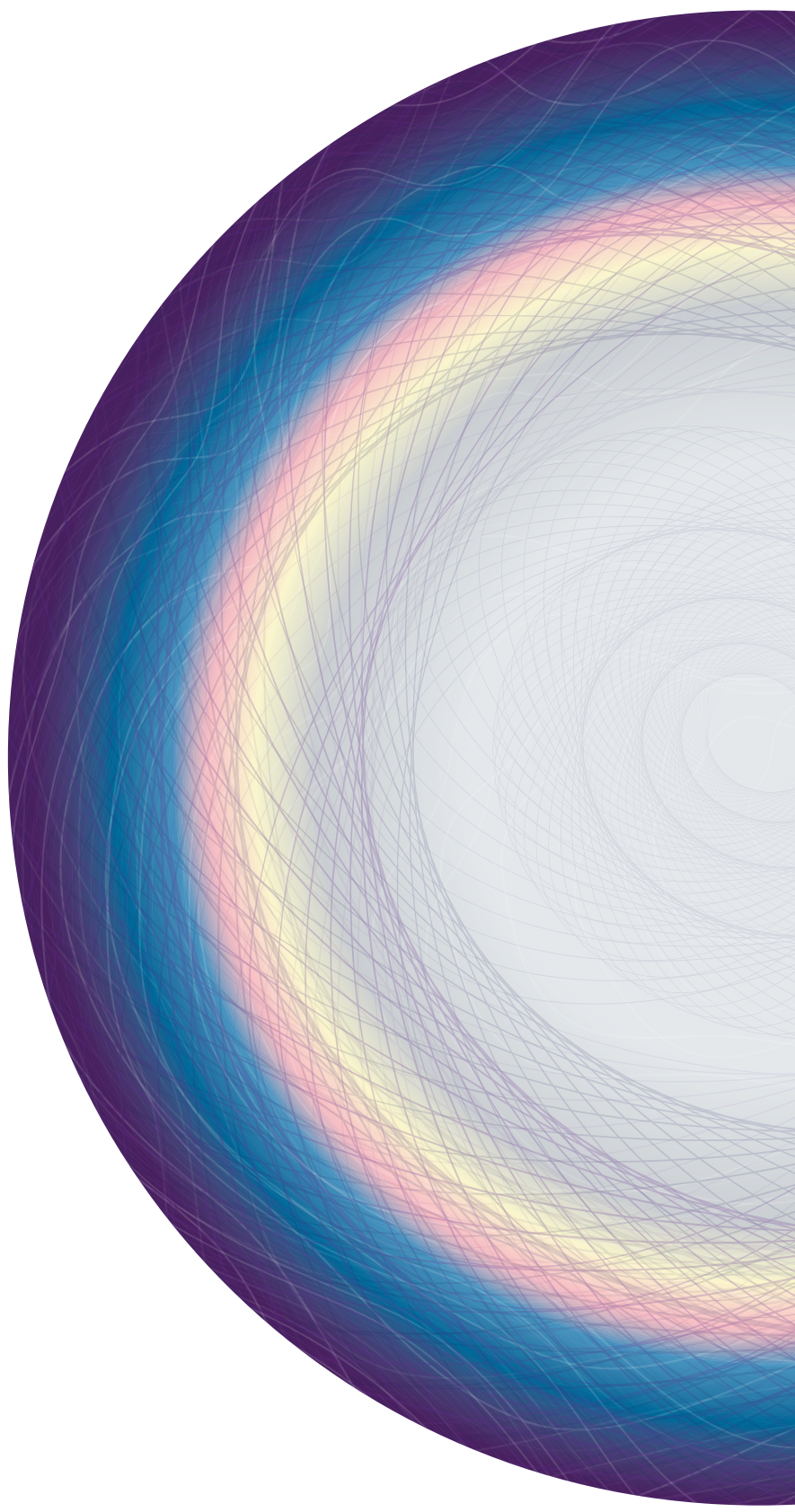
In Heartfulness, when we meditate with Transmission and practice Cleaning daily, guilt and shame will surely surface to be removed. They come to the surface to leave, so there is no point struggling with them. It helps, instead, to remain focused on where we are headed, on our purpose. Once we understand this, it becomes much easier to cooperate. In the words of Dr. Chris Germer, “Self-compassion is the antidote for guilt and shame.”

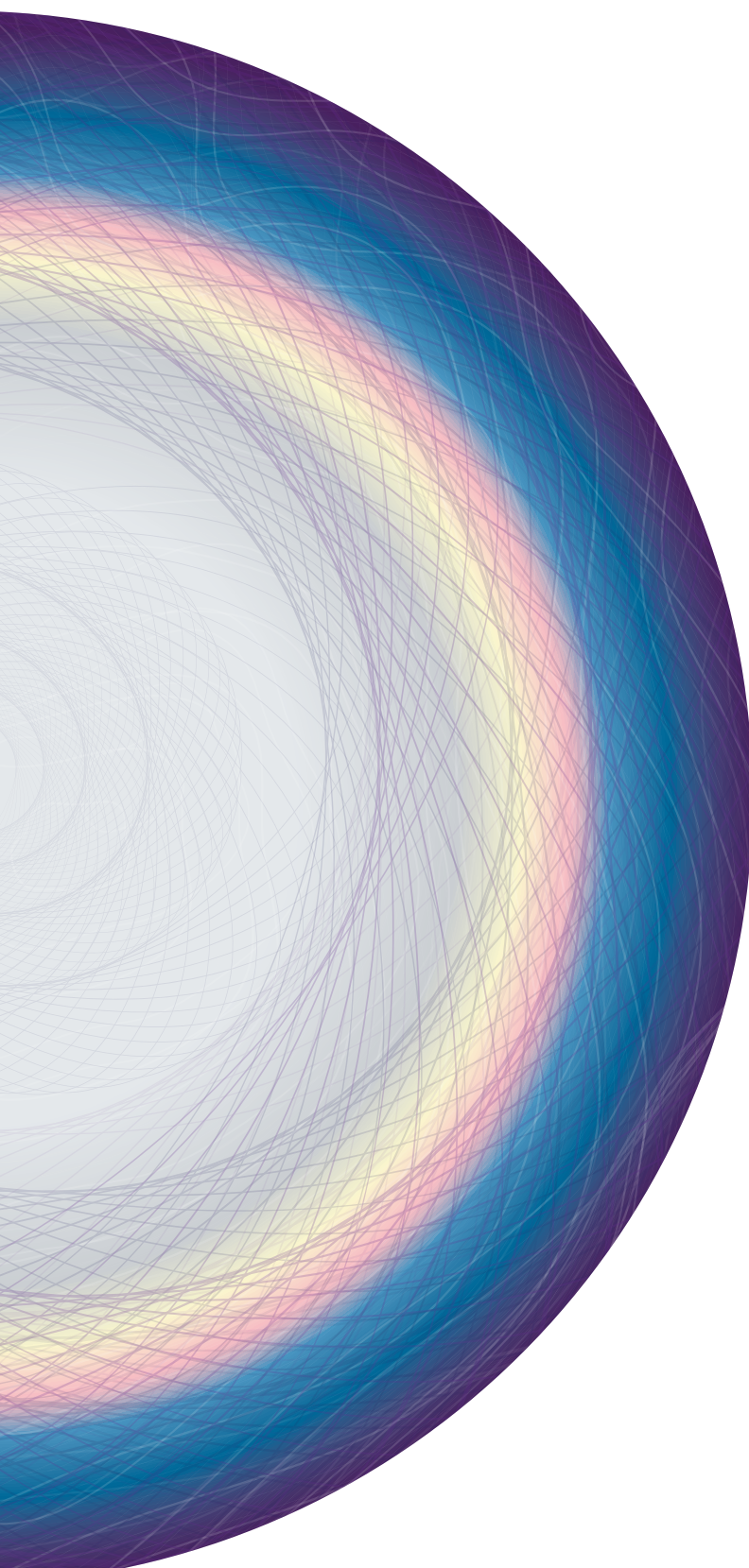
As our system is being vacuumized, all the complexities are being pulled out. And then we are filled with lightness, and with the universal knowledge and the divine wisdom we require to lead a properly balanced life. For this purpose, the help of a Guide of caliber is beyond value.

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VIGHNAS





Duhkha – pain, mental and physical

Daurmanasya – despair, depression

Angam-Ejayatva – trembling of the body, nervousness

Svasa – inhalation (irregular)

Prasvasa – exhalation (irregular)





Remember for a moment that the base of your consciousness is pure and still. When you have some time, perhaps this evening when you have wound down from the day, or very early in the morning when the outside world is also still, take a few minutes to dive deep within your heart and find that stillness. And then, during the day, witness for yourself what prevents you from being in that peaceful state all the time. Once we remove all the complexities, our inner nature returns to peace and stillness.

Meditation propels our consciousness towards the core of our being, the center of our existence, and that center is also present at the center of every atom in our body. Yoga is a journey back home to that state of mental well-being, by removing all the patterning, conditioning, complexities and impurities in our field of consciousness. In short, meditation stills our mind.

In this series, we first explored the normal everyday workings of the human mind within the field of consciousness – the 5 *vrittis* or tendencies – and how they create patterns and conditioning. The *vrittis* can either be pure, fostering well-being, health and spiritual growth, or colored, creating entanglement, pulling us towards complexity and impurity. From there we explored the next layer of complexity – the 5 *kleshas*, the colorings or mental afflictions that take us further away from our center of poise, thus leading to imbalance and suffering.

Then we explored how we move even further away from our still center, into the realm of entropy, complexity and instability, as we become more and more entangled in those patterns and afflictions that play out in our life. At this stage, these patterns and habits become obstacles and distractions to our ongoing spiritual journey; they are known as the *vikshepas*. And accompanying these *vikshepas* are the 5 *vighnas*, the outer symptoms of un-wellness that are presented to health practitioners, psychiatrists and healing centers worldwide.

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These 5 *vighnas* are the chronic diseases of our world! Stress, worry, emotional pain, anxiety and depression are a normal part of life for many people. The statistics on people taking antidepressants, painkillers, sleep medication, as well as self-medicating with illegal drugs and alcohol; the number of suicides; the incidence of chronic lifestyle-related diseases, like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, strokes and cancer, are all overwhelming. They are so common that we no longer see them as abnormal. Nor do we realize how much our lifestyles are out of sync with the circadian (daily) rhythms that are hardwired into our physiology.

These daily rhythms determine our optimal sleep and eating patterns. Even the metabolism of our cellular energy

follows the rhythm of the circadian clock. When we don't sync with natural rhythms, the mitochondrial network is compromised and our cellular energy levels decline. Lifestyles with irregular daily rhythms have been linked with sleep disorders, obesity, diabetes, depression, bipolar disorder, and seasonal affective disorder. Basically, we are swimming upstream against the current in a lifestyle that is out of sync with nature.

This list of modern symptoms is no different from Patanjali's description thousands of years ago of the 5 *vighnas* that accompany the *vikshepas*. Patanjali's *Sutra* says:

1.31: Dukha daurmanasya angam-ejayatva svasa prasvasa vikshepasahabhuvah.

Mental and physical pain, anguish and grief, despair and depression, trembling of the body and nervousness, and irregular inhalation and exhalation, are the conditions that accompany the distractions of the mind.

Back in Patanjali's time, these symptoms were not so commonplace, although ancient tales like the *Odyssey* and the *Mahabharata* show us that they were certainly present back then. Today, however, the *vighnas* along with the *vikshepas* are the health concern of our era. In a sense, we have reached an overburdened level of mental complexity and heaviness that requires something radical to bring us back to health and balance.

Difficulties, traumas and suffering are nothing new. In fact, many people today are more comfortable than humans have ever been in the past, but as a consequence our resilience to cope with difficulties seems to be lower than ever. A good analogy is a pair of scissors: we are so saturated with pleasure that we have become numb, like scissors that have become blunt through overuse, whereas our intolerance of pain is like super sharp scissors that cut our emotional heart, because we do everything possible to avoid pain.

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HOW DO COMPLEXITIES & IMPURITIES FORM & HOW DO THEY AFFECT US?

In earlier editions of *Heartfulness* magazine, I described the spiritual anatomy of a human being, with its physical, subtle and causal bodies, its chakra system, and its sheaths known as the *koshas*. I have also described how we create complexities and impurities that accumulate at various points in this spiritual anatomy, in the field of consciousness, through conditioning. They accumulate as a result of repeated patterns of feeling, emotion and thought, and these in turn lead to repetitive actions. Actions become habits, creating patterns of behavior

that become more and more fixed over time, forming impressions in the subtle body. These impressions are known as *samskaras*.

Swami Vivekananda describes this process in his book, *Jnana Yoga*: “Suppose I go into the street and see a dog. How do I know it is a dog? I refer it to my mind, and in my mind are groups of all my past experiences, arranged and pigeon-holed, as it were. As soon as a new impression comes, I take it up and refer it to some of the old pigeon-holes, and as soon as I find a group of the same impressions already existing, I place it in that group, and I am satisfied. I know it is a dog, because it coincides with the impressions already there.

“When I do not find the cognates of this new experience inside, I become dissatisfied. When, not finding the cognates of an impression, we become dissatisfied, this state of the mind is called ‘ignorance’; but, when, finding

¹ Vivekananda, Swami, 1899. *Jnana Yoga*, chapter 12, ‘The Cosmos, The Microcosm’. Vedanta Press, USA.

What leads to an anxious mind or a depressed mind? An anxious mind is one without peace, without stillness, always turbulent with disturbances and emotional entropy. It is symptomatic of turmoil in the field of consciousness, like an ocean in a storm, always churning, always reacting, addicted to the highs and lows.

the cognates of an impression already existing, we become satisfied, this is called ‘knowledge’. When one apple fell, men became dissatisfied. Then gradually they found out the group. What was the group they found? That all apples fall, so they called it ‘gravitation’. Now we see that without a fund of already existing experiences, any new experience would be impossible, for there would be nothing to which to refer the new impression.”

Any thought, emotion or action can lead to a vibrational impression in the field of consciousness, and when those impressions are repeated, habits form, creating fixed patterns, which become more rigid and solid over time as *samskaras*. The forces of soul can bend under the burden of *samskaras*. These *samskaras* are the roots of the karmic blueprint of our conditioning. Unless we remove them, we stay trapped in their patterns and we cannot break free, no matter how much we may want to change.

When we combine this understanding with Patanjali’s descriptions of *vrittis*, *kleshas*, *vikshepas* and *vighnas*, we see how the layers of *samskaras* form over time, creating emotional heaviness and dysfunction.

How to free ourselves from such a burden? Heartfulness offers a simple, highly effective set of methods to remove these layers and thus reduce the lifestyle maladies that characterize our modern societies. What leads to an anxious mind or a depressed mind? An anxious mind is one without peace, without stillness, always turbulent with disturbances and emotional entropy. It is symptomatic of turmoil in the field of consciousness, like an ocean in a storm, always churning, always reacting, addicted to the highs and lows.

Other symptoms include nervousness, trembling and shaking of the body, and shallow and irregular breathing, sometimes manifesting as panic attacks.

There are many simple Heartfulness techniques that can reverse these symptoms. Even something as simple as keeping your breathing calm and deep when you are feeling stressed and emotional is a great start. Left nostril breathing is even better. Relaxation and Meditation are even better still. There are so many lines of defense, and even more of prevention. It is worth learning some simple techniques your own mental well-being.

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*Sow a thought and reap an action,
Sow an action and reap a habit,
Sow a habit and reap a character,
Sow a character and reap a destiny.*

CHARLES READE



SOLUTIONS





Heartfulness

- Meditation
- Cleaning
- Prayer

SOLUTIONS





Our journey in Yoga is to return to the purity and simplicity of consciousness at the center of our being. As we divest more and more layers, our mental and emotional state lightens progressively. It is not a linear progression but a spiral progression. Mental well-being is not the purpose of Yoga, but it is certainly a very beneficial side effect.

The Heartfulness practices each have an important role to play in this, and most vital to the removal of impressions is the practice of de-conditioning we know as Cleaning. When we sit for Cleaning in the evening, we unload the impressions of the day and create a vacuum in the heart, similar to the way taking a bath washes away dirt from the physical body.

What is being purified? Consciousness, and this has a ripple effect on our perception, bringing clarity, understanding and wisdom. A pure consciousness can more easily make wise choices. In fact, Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh once said, “The soul of a human being will be clean in proportion to the power of discrimination they possess.” The purer the heart, the more wisdom flourishes.

Cleaning is complemented by Heartfulness Meditation. Over time, as a result of meditating in the morning with Transmission, we learn to absorb and carry the depths and fragrance of the meditative state with us throughout our daily activities. In a sense, we are meditating with eyes open, and this creates a field of protection, preventing emotional reactions and judgments, preventing the formation of *samskaras*. And so the need for Cleaning gradually diminishes and becomes more need-based, as we master the art of remaining meditative during all our activities.

Heartfulness Prayer at bedtime connects us with universal love, helping us to sleep in a deeply profound state, and also allowing us to go deeper in meditation the next morning. When we are flooded with so much love, we naturally have more resilience, and we also prefer to stay connected rather than being pulled to the periphery of our being by the highs and lows of a reactive consciousness.

SOLUTIONS

And so, as we interweave these three practices of Meditation, Cleaning and Prayer every day, our consciousness is always being recalibrated to remember its pure state, which is our constant reference point for mental well-being. This we call constant remembrance.

In the older yogic texts, the *vikshepas* and *vighnas* were mostly seen as temporary obstacles to spiritual progress, rather than maladies in the general sense as they are often viewed today. Here we will explore both worldviews, to shed more light on how we can work with them going forward.

Patanjali offers the following solutions to all these mental imbalances in his Sutras:

1.32: *Tat pratishedhartham eka tattva abhyasah*

To remedy this, practice meditation on one principle.

Bringing the mind to one object for some time will dismantle all these obstacles. As the purpose of Yoga is oneness with the Ultimate or Absolute state, the object taken up for meditation is complete oneness with the Ultimate, so that all distractions are removed. Any other object than the Ultimate is itself in flux, and so would not be helpful in this endeavor.

In this context, in Yoga it has always been considered very normal for *vikshepas* and *vighnas* to come to most people from time to time along the journey. The guidance



of teachers has been not to mind them when they come, just to keep on practicing, as they will eventually pass. This is true for both mental and physical symptoms, including nervous shaking. It is not that we bury our heads in the sand in an attempt to avoid the presence of obstacles, but rather that we do not indulge in giving too much focus and attention to them.

When Patanjali was alive, there was no yogic process of Transmission or Cleaning, which are both practices introduced by Heartfulness in the last 100 years. Both Transmission and Cleaning facilitate and accelerate the process of transformation: Transmission gently draws our attention inward to the object of meditation, taking us deeper and deeper through the dimensions of consciousness to the center itself; Cleaning removes the afflictions and obstacles, the *kleshas*, *vikshepas* and *vighnas*, along the way. Both these practices help to reduce the effects of these mental modifications significantly.

*Imagine what will happen
when our collective
worldview starts perceiving
a higher human purpose.
Everything will change. All
the obstacles will take a
back seat and remain
simply that – obstacles
along the way.*

In current mainstream society, however, both in the East and the West, the *kleshas*, *vikshepas* and *vighnas* are not just seen as temporary obstacles to be dissolved and transcended; they have themselves become the focus of our attention. Pick up any newspaper, popular magazine or scientific journal and you will find articles on stress, depression, anxiety, suicide, addiction, pain management, anger management or panic attacks. Culturally, we are focusing our attention on these modern maladies with such intensity that we are going deeper and deeper into them, and it doesn't seem to be helping. It is like watering the weeds that are choking a garden instead of just letting them die and only watering the plants you want to thrive. It is our choice where we focus our attention – energy flows where attention goes.

So, what if we shift our focus to the real goal of human life, the soul at the center of our existence, instead of towards the obstacles? Would we have the mental health epidemic we have today? Our focus has moved to the periphery and our energies are directed towards the obstacles themselves. As a result, they are magnifying rather than disappearing.

This is not to dismiss the suffering of all those people who are unwell, whose lives are painful, who feel hopeless, and who may see their life as not worth living. Their pain is real. It is only to say that with a shift in perception, with a shift in purpose, with a shift in consciousness, with a different education and training, we can start to heal these problems and bring some relief.

Imagine what will happen when our collective worldview starts perceiving a higher human purpose. Everything will change. All the obstacles will take a back seat and remain simply that – obstacles along the way. They may still need to be overcome, but they will no longer be center stage in our existence. Perhaps that is why Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur famously said, “No country or nation will survive without spirituality as its base, and every nation must sooner or later adopt the same

SOLUTIONS

Consciousness is pacified by cultivating attitudes of friendship towards everyone, mercy and compassion towards those who are suffering, joy towards those who are virtuous, and indifference towards those who are evil.

course if she wants to maintain her very existence.” All it takes is a shift of focus towards the higher purpose of human existence once a day in meditation. Such a shift is life changing.

Another piece of guidance from Patanjali is also life changing:

*1.33: Maitri karuna upeksanam sukha dukha
punya apunya visayanam bhavanatah chitta
prasadanam*

Consciousness is pacified by cultivating attitudes of friendship towards everyone, mercy and compassion towards those who are suffering, joy towards those who are virtuous, and indifference towards those who are evil.

Most of our difficulties in daily life come from not following the simple guidance found in this sutra. It is a vast topic on human relationships in seed form, which we cannot cover here. As a hint, however, I would like to share this much:

A meditative mind is always compassionate.

A compassionate heart gives birth to finer qualities, like cheerfulness and friendliness.

And such a heart avoids making judgments and remains indifferent toward wickedness, evil and badness.

The underlying divine laws of Nature associated with this sutra are very well described in Ram Chandra’s book, *Commentary on the Ten Maxims of Sahaj Marg*.

Following this, Patanjali then offers various additional ways to pacify consciousness, given that one practice may not suit everyone, but he does not offer any guidance or methods on how to do them. Actually, it is very difficult to find specific methods in any of the yogic literature, as they were generally handed down by word of mouth from Guru to disciple.

It is only in the most recent yogic era, since the middle of the 20th century, when Ram Chandra distilled the Heartfulness practices from all the yogic methods available from ancient times onwards, and made these available to everyone, that we now have a set of practices that can solve our problem of consciousness. It is for this reason that Heartfulness is able to heal humanity, by removing the obstacles to mental well-being that plague our modern world.

Before the current era, Yoga gave us the philosophy to know what was needed to reach the highest states of consciousness, and express the full divine potential of a human being. But now, in this current era, a set of simple practices has been gifted to humanity, for one and all to reach those same states. That is the promise of Heartfulness.

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*Many phenomena of the mind,
which appear to the West as
abnormal or miraculous, offer
no overwhelming difficulty
to the student of the ancient
Indian psychology, or Raja Yoga
as it is called.*

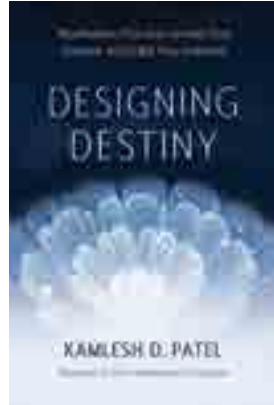
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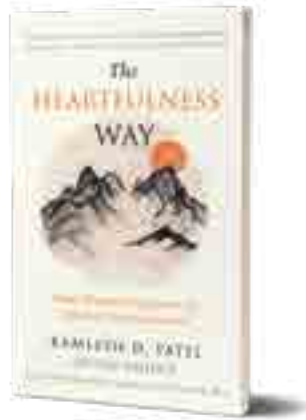
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