



# *Hearful Perception*

Dear friends,

It is said that Ramdas Swami, the guru of Shivaji, would narrate the Ramayana in such a divine manner that Hanuman himself attended and listened in disguise. In one of these sessions, Ramdas described the moment Hanuman first set eyes upon Sita after she had been taken prisoner and disappeared. He found her sitting in Ravana's garden, surrounded by white flowers.

Hearing the story, Hanuman was jolted from his absorption. Throwing off his disguise, he arose and said, "Sir, I have been listening to your narrations with great pleasure, for I enjoy nothing more than hearing stories about my Lord, but I am sorry to inform you that one detail is incorrect. The flowers in Ravana's garden were not white, as you described, but red. I know this for a fact, as I was personally present and saw them with my own eyes."

The beauty of Ramdas's narration was that he was endowed with divine vision. He was not merely retelling the Ramayana, as so many people do; he was seeing it firsthand, like Sanjaya in the Bhagavad Gita, and describing what he saw. With the confidence that

accompanies such perceptive abilities, Ramdas explained to Hanuman that he must have misremembered this detail, because the flowers were very definitely white.

“Then let us bring this matter to Lord Rama,” Hanuman declared, and off they flew. After listening to both their opinions, Lord Rama said, “I am sorry, but I am unable settle your dispute. You see, I was not present at the time.”

They withdrew from Rama’s presence and Hanuman said, “Let us visit Mother Sita. She will be able to verify that the flowers were red.”

They explained the matter to Sita, and she said, “Ramdas speaks the truth. The flowers were pure white. They were not red at all.”

“How is it possible?” wondered Hanuman. “I saw with my own eyes that the flowers were red.”

“Yes, you saw them as red,” Sita explained, “but at that time your vision was clouded with rage, having just discovered that I was a prisoner of Ravana. That is why the white flowers were seen by you as red.”

Hanuman had been so angry that his rage had altered his vision. Even white flowers appeared fiery. He had momentarily entered a state of maya, of illusion, and thus perceived the real as unreal, and the unreal as real. It was a state of wrong understanding caused by incorrect thinking.

Similarly, suppose a fearful traveler is walking alone at night. He sees a tiny lightning bug moving in the dark and takes it for a ghost, after which he sees a rope and mistakes it for a snake. Another man is talking to his boss on the phone late at night and his wife concludes that he is being unfaithful. In both cases, the reality of the circumstances is not seen, as it is perceived through the filters of incorrect thinking. Both scenarios start with unknowns: the unknown source of light, the unknown identity of the rope, the unknown person on the phone. Every moment we are faced with unknowns, but it need not give space for illusion to develop.

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Babuji Maharaj has recognized the cause of this maya. The reason we are unable to see the real as real, the cause of wrong thinking and incorrect understanding, is the inner baggage we carry—our samskaras.

Samskaras are impressions of emotionally impactful experiences that become embedded in our consciousness and remain in the subconscious, exerting a subliminal influence on our lives, and causing us to view our present reality through the lens of past experiences. Our old emotions and thought patterns become superimposed onto the present reality, which consequently becomes biased. This store of emotional memories now conditions our interpretation of events. It is as if we are seeing the world through colored lenses.

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I am reminded of The Wizard of Oz, in which everything in the city of Oz was believed to be emerald-green—but that was only an illusion. Oz was just like any other city. The illusion of greenness was maintained because every resident was given a pair of glasses with green-colored lenses, which they were expected to wear at all times. The colored lenses gave the residents the false impression that the city was colored green.

That was fiction, but our real-life vision is just as distorted. The biases we experience in our lives are worse because, unlike the denizens of Oz, whose vision was obscured by a single pair of glasses, we have multiple filters obscuring our perception. A pair of glasses can be easily removed, but our filters lie so deep that our soul carries them along with our consciousness from one life to another life. The “glasses” we wear are not of a single color, but multiple hues are embedded in their lenses, making them nearly opaque. Moreover, these filters simply pop up unannounced. When the light of reality is prevented from entering our consciousness, we live in darkness, a kind of hell.

Samskaras bias our perception, and cause us to judge things as either good or bad. We judge certain things as beautiful and others as ugly; some as holy and others as profane. We miss the fact that holiness is everywhere, that beauty is everywhere. Judgment exists



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in the eye of the beholder. We superimpose it on reality. Real unbiased vision sees things as they are, without addition or subtraction, without judgment or interpretation at the emotional level. Vision emerges when all filters have gone, and our shastras identify this pure vision as darshan.

Most people understand darshan in its limited sense, namely, to glimpse a holy person. But many people glimpsed Lord Krishna during his lifetime and hardly one saw him for who he was. So, who had his darshan in the real sense? It reminds me of Babuji's statement, "Many come to see me, but nobody really sees me."

Many people hated Lord Krishna. Only a few loved him. Duryodhana demeaned him, calling him a mere magician. Arjuna admired him, but viewed him in a limited way, as a friend. Even Radha, in her immense love and adoration for Krishna, did not perceive him in his full magnitude as the Lord of the Universe. Everyone who saw him had a different perspective. Nobody saw the full truth.

This is because each person is unique. Of the billions of people in this world, imagine how many impressions we collectively carry, how much conditioning we bring to our shared moment on Earth, and how many individual perspectives there are. Generally, the result is disagreement and disunity.

We were not always like this. Originally, each consciousness was identical. The pure vision of reality was commonly held. Differences crept in with wrong thinking, and we started creating our own little worlds. Babuji describes these worlds of ours as islands—lands that drift apart from one another and apart from unity, toward individuality, isolation, and the ego-driven existence.



The ego, by its very nature, is self-centered, and seeks its own survival. The ego's biggest fear is the destruction of its identity. From its perspective, even physical death is preferable to ego death. Preoccupied with the continuity of its existence, the ego always wants to see itself, as if glancing in a mirror to ensure that it still exists.

How can the ego see itself when it has no form of its own? The answer is that it identifies with knowable objects, which are perceivable and external to the subjective knower. Pointing to something external, it declares, "I am that," and it is satisfied. In this way, it may identify with the mind, the body, or even things external to the human organism, such as culture, language, taste, possessions, etc.

Replying to a letter, Babuji once wrote, "It is good that you like to have the darshana of the *maha-purushas* (saints). Better would it be to try to have the darshana of yourself alone." To have the darshan of the real Self, one must drop the false identities gathered by the ego. But the ego is highly attached to its false identities. When they are threatened, it can lash out aggressively. Ask yourself how you feel when something you consider to be a part of you is criticized—your religion, your nation, your community, your family, etc. The strength of that feeling is a clue to the intensity of the ego's identifications—the masks of the true identity.

Assertive egos are destroyers of unity. While working in a group, others may want to do things differently from you. If you are too identified with your own ideas, even constructive suggestions from others will seem like personal threats. Imagine everyone in a group adopting a "my way or the highway" style of working! Imagine what the result would be! Differing perspectives are healthy when we remain flexible and avoid ego battles.

An egotistical style of working puts a bar to the Master's work of making us conduits for the divine energy. If the flow of divine energy encounters resistance within us, friction is produced. Phenomena such as "jerks" during meditation are a sign of resistance in the system.

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Ego and samskara are partners. Samskaras form when we react emotionally. The ego is the reactive element in us, triggering samskara formation. Why does the ego react? It reacts when one of its identifications is either enhanced or threatened. This reaction comes in the form of like or dislike. The positive or negative emotion produced in that reaction then becomes an impression.

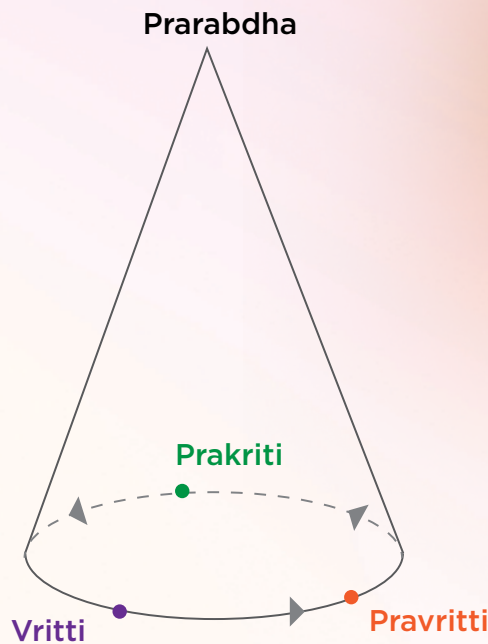
In complementary fashion, samskaras determine the objects with which the ego identifies. Ego and samskara, then, are co-creators of maya, filtering our perception and distorting our vision of reality.

The trees of individual destiny grow from samskaric seeds planted in the soil of ego. Our samskaras generate our hearts' intentions, which the mind works to fulfill. The mind's workings and tendencies are known as *vriddhis*. Our *vriddhis*, in turn, drive our *pravriddhis* (tendencies). Together, *vriddhi* and *pravriddhi* color our *prakriti* (nature) with the qualities of the three gunas—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.

According to the qualities of our nature, we keep repeating certain activities. A foodie keeps going to restaurants. A surfer keeps chasing waves. A movie buff keeps going to the cinema. Such activities facilitate the collection of particular varieties of samskara, unique to each person's nature. From life to life, incessant activity and the accumulation of samskaras lend greater definition to our nature. This is what we understand as *prarabdha* (destiny).

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We are the creators of our individual destinies, but there is a divine destiny as well—a destiny which can only be realized once we have dissolved our individually-created worlds and effected our own individual *pralaya* (dissolution).

It is for this purpose that the great Rishi Patanjali offered the path of Yoga, by which we can negate the *vrittis* that would otherwise design our destiny *by default* and keep us spinning in the whorl of maya. It is the same purpose for which Pujya Babuji devised the methods to remove the *samskaras* which sustain our *vrittis*. *Chit vritti nirodh* is in a sense the state of Yoga. Fueling our *vrittis* will never come to our rescue, that is why it is *a-yogya*, not Yoga.

Unfortunately, the ego's tendency is to defend its creation and identify with *vritti*, *pravritti*, *prakriti*, and *prarabdha*. This makes change difficult. Beloved Chariji used to say that a fool recognizes their mistakes only in retrospect, if at all; an intelligent person realizes their mistakes while committing them; and a wise person sees the mistakes beforehand and avoids them.

How to categorize a person who sees their mistakes but stubbornly insists that their actions are correct? How can such a person transform? How can a person effect their individual *pralaya* when they are so busy building their creation? It is like copper transmuting into gold; how will it ever happen? This perhaps explains why we miserably fail to change ourselves. It can also explain why, in Babuji's diagram of twenty-three circles, the rings of ego support the rings of maya.

Sahaj Marg offers us inner training to master a lifestyle that allows us to perform noble tasks without forming samskaras. Removing the burden of samskaras is easy. The day's accumulation of samskaras are removed during our evening Cleaning. Past samskaras from this incarnation are cleaned by preceptors during individual sittings. Samskaras from past lives are removed during *bhandaras*, during group satsanghs, in the physical presence of the Master, and, if the abhyasi is devoted and arrives at *layavastha*, at any time at all.

Preventing the formation of samskaras is more of a challenge. To avoid impressions while living in this world is like avoiding coal dust inside a coal mine, or getting wet when walking in a rainstorm. We cannot avoid the rain, but we can protect ourselves from getting wet by wearing a raincoat. What can serve as a "raincoat" for the mind and heart, so that they remain unaffected even during emotional turmoil? It is the protective suit of *constant remembrance that is drenched with love for the Lord*.

Constant remembrance is a unique kind of filter. It filters out impressions before they stain our consciousness. With its protective canopy of humility, constant remembrance filters out ego and delivers us from the effects of bias, so that the divine destination remains in clear view. Even the mundane and the illusory become divine and extraordinary when our perception remains heartfully immersed in love for our Maker. If God is divine, then His creation is divine, as the Source and the outcome are one. Everything becomes divine.

With love and respect,

*Kamlesh*



*On the occasion of the 123<sup>rd</sup> Birth Anniversary of*  
**PUJYA SHRI BABUJI MAHARAJ**  
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