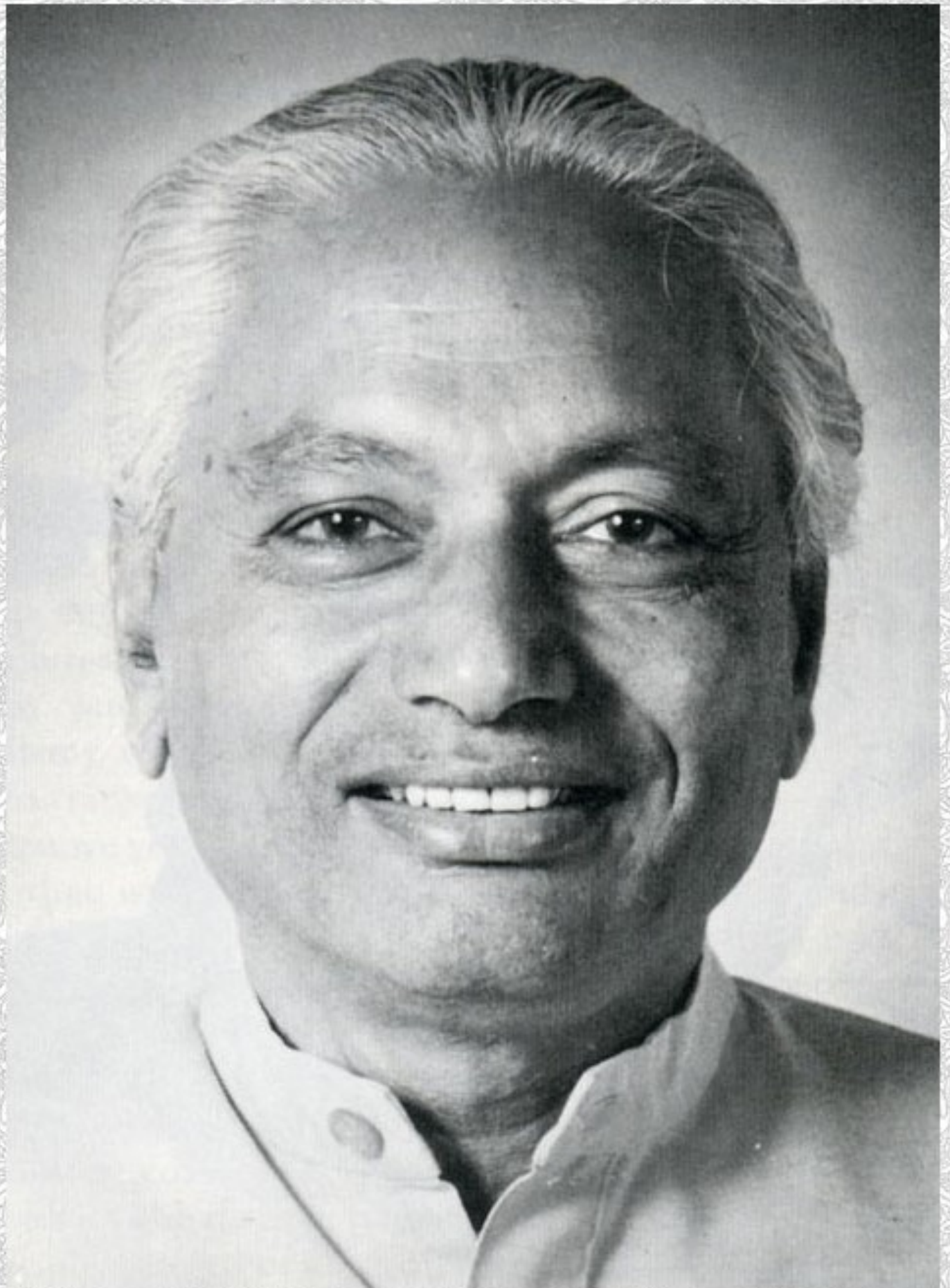




The Yoga of Vasistha

two talks given at the
Yoga Convention
organized by the European Union
at Zinal Switzerland
September 1977

Swami Venkatesananda



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Talk 1 - The Yoga of Vasistha
Talk 2 - The Qualifications of a Yoga Student

Talk 1 - The Yoga of Vasistha

We are dealing with a scripture of great importance but which is perhaps not as well-known in the world as for instance the Bhagavad Gita may be, especially in the West it is very little known because there are no translations available. In India it is considered the monopoly of swamis only. I am afraid I have not understood why. Perhaps because the philosophy is revolutionary. There are some stories woven into the scripture which are fairly unacceptable to orthodoxy.

To give you what the scripture contains is to give you a catalog of a library. It contains a cosmology which is most modern, it contains theories of physics which is not only nuclear but subatomic. And - what is extremely important - it gives a vision that is at the same time grand and subtle. For instance the other day I was reading a very interesting book. It is titled 'Lives of a cell', by Lewis Thomas, where he describes the human body in cosmic dimensions - which means that every cell in this body is an enormous organism within which there are independent organisms which themselves house other organisms, worlds within worlds. That is by about the basic theory of the Yoga Vasistha. Thomas has something very beautiful to say to us, to us especially as students of yoga. He says on the basis of his studies that he does not even visualise the earth as an organism. He says the best view of the world could be that it is one single cell. The Vasistha gives a beautiful story which resembles exactly that. If one has this view, then I think all the division that haunts our vision will disappear. You and I, including the dog, are not only one, but we are cells, we are small little things in one cell.

The scripture contains wonderful health hints, psychosomatic theories. It has wonderful instructions for meditation and for worship, and beautiful descriptions, if not instructions, concerning warfare; all this and highly romantic stories.

But we are not concerned with all that. What is our life? What am I? What must I do? Why am I here? Most of our problems revolve around these questions. The question itself is introduced with a story. The story concerns Rama who - as Mr. Jean Herbert remarked a few minutes ago - is regarded by the Hindus as an incarnation of God; and this incarnation of God becomes a student in front of the sage. The sage is held in such esteem and respect that even an incarnation of God sits at his feet to learn - a reason why I felt a bit nervous when all these sages are sitting down below.

Rama had gone on a pilgrimage, perhaps it was the first time that he was exposed to the human problems - suffering, old age, disease, and death. Rama returns to the palace and goes into seclusion. When he is eventually brought

to the court of his father, and asked, "What is wrong with you," he says, "There is nothing wrong with me, but there is something worse."

Socrates is said to have remarked that the unexamined life is not worth living. Rama suggests, "I have examined life, it does not seem to be worth living." We are protecting the body with such great care; it is aging day after day, hour after hour, and whatever we do it is going to die. At one stage he says, "Look at this ungrateful body', it is ungrateful, I feed it, clothe it, shampoo it, and it kicks me out. And I build, I construct mansions, and they become ruins. I want to live there, but soon rats live there. What is life and what for?"

All this seems to be reasonable but it is not wisdom. Some of us, at some time or other in our lives, reach this point. "I am living a useless life. What for is all this? I feel so insignificant. I feel I am a dry leaf which is wafted in the wind." There arises despair - what St John of the Cross might have called the dark night of the soul. The response to this question is the teaching contained in the scripture.

Vasistha declares right in the beginning that that is the qualification for one who can profit by a study of this text - the feeling that "I am bound psychologically and I want to get out of this prison." If this qualification is not found, then perhaps you can read the scripture, have perhaps write a thesis on it, or sit and deliver talks. At the end of your discourse probably you will hear nice applause; and if your thesis is accepted, you may get a diploma, but nothing more. If the soul experiences this dark night and that soul craving for light is exposed to this teaching, it is instantly enlightened. So that I may not forget this (and to conclude the story itself) I might add now that, at the conclusion of the discourse, Rama enters into deep contemplation and the word I referred to yesterday "shaktipada" also occurs in this text.

When Rama enters into this deep contemplation, on account of the grace of the guru Vasistha, an other sage sitting and listening, watching all this, says, "Ah, Vasistha, you are the guru, because you have by shaktipada brought about enlightenment in this disciple." That is when a teacher becomes a guru. Rama is completely absorbed. But Vasistha says, "Not yet, come on, get up; you've got to do some work."

Another interesting sidelight to this aspect of the teaching is the sage considers nothing extra important. Only then is it possible to live without expectation of reward, to live without attachment, when neither this or that makes any difference. When Rama was awakened to his duties in this world, he says, "What must I do with meditation and what must I do with ruling the kingdom? Neither need I withdraw from this nor need I get involved in that." I do not have to sit here and talk, it is not so important; but getting up and going away is not also important. And so let what happens, happen. And this

is what happens now. That is the highest spirit of karma yoga also and that is what one means by surrender to God or the divine ground of all things, and doing God's will.

But that is the end. In the beginning Vasistha points out, "You are in despair; why does despair arise in our life?" Why does fear arise in our life? Why do we get attached to anything in this life? Why do we hate anything in this life? All these arise from hope or desire. "I want happiness, I want peace of mind." When you want it, you get just one piece of mind, a morsel. This hope inevitably leads us to its own destruction. We desire happiness but somehow it always leads us to unhappiness. Why is that? So Vasistha says, "Give up all these ideas of running away from this world, do not even try to examine what this despair is, do not try to investigate whatever is a passing phenomenon.

There is a resounding statement by Vasistha. "Why do you waste your time considering unreality?" This is another pastime among religious people who therefore do not like this scripture very much - because religious people are very fond of pointing out to us all the time, "That is unreal, this is unreal. This is maya, you must avoid it, abandon it." - with the result that all the time I am thinking of maya. You tell me, "Swami, when you sit down for your meditation, do not think of something." As soon as I sit down, I remember what you said and that souvenir lasts till my meditation lasts. But if you had not told me, I would not have thought of that. Why not say, "When you sit down, think of God."

So Vasistha says, "Do not even let your mind dwell on what has been considered unreal."

I will only give you one verse which is extremely beautiful: bhramasya jagatasya 'sya jatasya 'kasavarnavat apunah smaram manye sadho vasmaranam varam

The meaning is very beautiful and simple. The world is bhrama (how would you translate that) an appearance, hallucination. All this is hallucination? He says, "Yes, look at the sky. What do you see there, something that is blue and you know that there is nothing that is blue there. Sure? Look at it again, you still see it blue." So that this hallucination will continue as long as you continue to look at it and wonder. You have hallucinated this world and you have strengthened this hallucination by constantly thinking of it, and this constant thinking may be that "this is real" or that "this is unreal". He says, "Can't you think of something else?"

What is the reality? That which is, is real. This example occurs quite often in the scripture. Here is a bracelet. It is made of gold. Bracelet is a word. Please follow this carefully, it is fairly tricky. Bracelet is a word which we have used conventionally. You also see this as a form, there is a certain form to this.

Obviously if there is no form, you cannot see. As soon as the form is seen, it generates a concept and a word in your mind. If you dismiss the word and look at the form, you can play with something very interesting. Is it gold or is it bracelet? Both? How? There is only one thing. How can it be two? It is gold, the substance is gold. The reality is gold. It appears in a certain form. And convention has given it a name.

If that is clear, everything is clear. There is despair in my mind. Mind is a word, despair is a word. And I look at this thing called 'despair'. And perhaps I see a cloud - of despair. It is a form. Where is it? In the mind. What is it? Mind. And the despair is gone because despair was only a word. It had a certain psychological form, but the reality of that is nothing but pure consciousness within. The two have to work together. Something which happened in the outside world sent me into this ocean of despair. Or something happened outside and I became afraid and I did not bother to look into it because I took the external circumstance as something real. And so my attention was completely and totally directed towards this external appearance. Somebody called me a fool, and by reacting to that, I accepted that I was a fool. This is common sense. If he calls me "Swami Venkatesananda" I turn to him. I respond. If he calls "Swami Satchidananda" I will not turn to him at all. He said, 'You fool', and I turned to him. It is quite obvious. If I am not a fool, why should I react to him at all. Can we, in such a situation, look for the reality. What is the reality of him I call the other person? What is the reality of that body, that mind? And at the same time what is the reality that I call me that reacts. Are there two completely separate and independent realities? This dual inquiry has to continue together, not one after the other. The subject and the object have to be looked into, inquired into - together. Then one arrives at this understanding that what was called "me" is nothing more than memory - the first two letters of memory is 'me'. Is there a thing other than memory to which I can point, "This is me"?

A student of the Yoga Vasistha finds, discovers that enlightenment consists of just three steps. Everybody, all of you can have it - instant enlightenment. There is an appearance, what is the substance behind the appearance. What is the reality that sees it? What is the substance of memory? The mind. What is the substance of the mind, and who understands all this? There is pure consciousness. In that consciousness, you and I, the subject and the object, appear to be divided.

There is another interesting exercise. Holding up a handkerchief - this is one end, this is another end - of the handkerchief. It does not have a beginning and an end. Where is the handkerchief? Between the two ends. But what about these two ends? Are they not handkerchief? Do you see two ends and in between them a thing called a handkerchief? But, or are you seeing just one

piece of cloth? Are there three things here? The left end of the handkerchief, the right end of the handkerchief, and a handkerchief in the middle, or is there just one handkerchief? You see both. You can blink once - you see just the handkerchief, and you blink again - of course you see this end and that end and handkerchief. Such is the world. We have accepted that these two - the subject and the object, are two inevitable ends; that these are two completely different things, opposite things, one opposed to the other. And we have transferred this division onto everything in our life. You, I, life, death, happiness, unhappiness, success, failure, friend, enemy. We have divided all that because somehow we have divided the one indivisible. We blinked once and we saw something two, and by constantly reaffirming this, we have made that into a reality.

Consciousness being omnipresent and infinite, manifests itself - manifest, no other word is possible, in infinite ways, everywhere. It is not possible for this diversity to disappear. What can and should disappear is seeing it as diverse and opposed to one another. The infinite remains infinite all the time and the infinite conceives of all this infinite creation within itself. A beautiful symbolism is given to us. What is this objective creation? Vasistha says, this objective creation is like uncut figures in a marble slab. Visualise a marble slab. You are a sculptor and you sit and think of the lovely figures you can carve out of that. All those figures exist in it already, potentially. And you can visualise one big Buddha or you can even visualise some more, hundreds of buddhas in that one figure of Buddha, smaller buddhas, minuscule buddhas. That is how this whole world exists. The world exists not as the world in reality, the world is a word, and there is a psychological form. The psychological form is nothing more than a hallucination which arises in consciousness. Accepting that as an independent reality, we chase something and we reject something else; we call an experience happiness and run after that. And all these form impressions on the mind, again, strengthening bondage or strengthening at least the idea of bondage that I have.

There is another favorite theme in the Yoga Vasistha. Without canceling the theory of karma, Vasistha suggests another point of view. Happiness, unhappiness, prosperity, adversity, honour, dishonour, all these come floating down life's stream. Some of us I am sure can bear witness to this. I do not think we have seriously worked to be unhappy. We have never aimed at unhappiness, but unhappiness comes to us. How did it come? We do not know. Somebody says karma, somebody says something else. Vasistha says that it is accidental coincidence - it just happens.

What is the advantage in this theory? You do not take these passing phenomenon too seriously - with the result: your attention is constantly directed towards the reality in all this. The external world and the external circumstances arise in this cosmic consciousness - which you call god, and the

same consciousness experiences these external circumstances, and these are known as subjective experiences which also change - and that's all. You are freed from the delusion of considering these appearances as the reality. Having been freed, says Vasistha, you do not sit idle. Because, when you sit idle, you are rejecting something which is the flow of life.

Finally, perhaps this comes almost as anticlimax. Vasistha tells Rama, "Live in this world as life is lived here completely free of all sorrow. But if you have to weep, weep. If you have to express suffering, express suffering. If you have to express joy and happiness, do so. Because you are free.

I saw only one person who measured to that description and that was my guru Swami Sivananda, Who was a completely enlightened and liberated person and He was totally human. If you went to Him with an unhappy story, even before you shed tears you would find tears in His eyes; and if you had something joyous to tell Him, He was more happy than you were. One who was completely uninhibited, free psychologically and spiritually. He was extremely busy, not because He wanted to achieve something, but because He had realised achievement or non-achievement are both irrelevant to life.

Your life is not 'your' life. It is part of this cosmic being. And whatever that cosmic being decides, has to happen and will happen. The direct understanding of this is surrender. Please, this is not a mental action. Can I see it? In order to see it, I must have passed through this despair. I must have come to the direct understanding that what I want does not happen. If you think that sometimes you wanted something and you worked for that and it happened, Vasistha would say it was accidental coincidence. Because it does not happen all the time. As a matter of fact, if you have kept a log book, you might notice that more often than not it did not happen. When one sees that, one completely surrenders. And at that point he pays attention, directs his attention towards the source of all these cravings, desires, hopes and anxieties, and comes face to face with the mind, not 'my' mind or 'your' mind, with 'mind', and realises that that mind itself is pure consciousness. In it there appeared to be conditioned motivations and even that appearance is discarded. That is a life totally free, instantly freed and divine.

Talk 2 - The Qualifications of a Yoga Student

The first thought that arises when one thinks of the qualifications of a student of yoga is: who is to decide. I am a student of yoga and if I asked from here, "What are the qualifications of a student of yoga?", I am sure I will have so many answers that, in order to fulfill those qualifications, I must live for another 15 thousand years. It has been my good fortune to have lived at the Feet of a great Master and I have met several great Masters since. And strangely (but not so strangely) every Master has got a different set of qualifications. I hope you will please bear that factor in mind.

I also assume that most of you are familiar with the basics. You have read many texts, you have heard many talks, and when I am tempted or made to listen to many talks, it is then that I am extremely grateful to god for having fixed two ears one opposite the other. It is not possible to carry all that information in one small head.

Is there a means of arriving at an understanding of these qualifications independent of an exterior, external prescribe. If you can do that, then you instantly understand all the great masters' teachings. Because all these masters have also examined the problem and arrived at their own teachings. Please remember that I am not saying, "Reject their teachings"; but in order to understand their teachings, you must learn to look within.

There is a fantastic mantra in one of the Upanishads. I think you appreciate some sanskrit: utthisthata jagrata prapya varannibodhata - that is the mantra.

Sanskrit is a versatile language. You can use different words to represent the same thought. And the different words used are picked for their tonal value. If you want to express a certain emotion, you choose a word that represents that emotion. There are, you know, honey-like flowing words and there are some very strong words. We have here a very strong word - utthisthata - get up, wake up. I hope you appreciate that. If I am sleeping and you want to wake me up and you come near me and sing sweetly, "Swami, please wake up," I will probably sleep more soundly. So, you knock: utthisthata, wake up, jagrata, be alert, prapya varannibodhata, then approach a superior person and attain enlightenment or awakening. That seems to be the path and this suggests the qualifications necessary in a student of yoga.

Are you prepared to wake up? Then you begin to see life itself in a very different light. "I am in darkness, I am in bondage, I am a conditioned being. I would like to get out of darkness. I have been asleep spiritually and I would like to get out of this." I hope you heard that. I have been asleep. Not that someone else put me to sleep. The person who wants to wake up does not throw responsibility on others. I am

asleep, I am in ignorance, and I have conditioned and limited myself. The person who continues to blame others for the state in which he is in, he is asleep and he wants to sleep.

Who wakes us up? Life wakes us up, because life is awake. When you are asleep, life is awake. I am not talking of the spiritual awakening and all that. When you go to sleep tonight, what is it that wakes you up? Life. Some people have died during the night and they do not wake up. They do not get up again. So what wakes you up? Life wakes you up.

Now, transpose it in spiritual life. Life brings you all sorts of experiences. Life brings you what you call pain. Life brings you what you call unhappiness, sorrow. That is the awakening knock. But we think that the unhappiness comes because of someone else, because of that, because of circumstances, and like the person who slaps the alarm-clock shut and goes to sleep again, we go to sleep. The first and foremost qualification of a keen student of yoga is that he does not blame anyone for the state in which he is. That is perhaps enough for most of us. Because most of us are trapped in this.

Most psychologists suggest today that I am unhappy, or I have some psychological aberration "because my mother was so and so, my father was so and so; or I fell down from a cliff when I was six". Even that is blaming someone else. If I have fear, I have got it now, it is in me now. We are not talking of my childhood. That child is "dead" too. I am something different now. So, unless I stop blaming others, including my own past, I cannot observe myself - I am not awake. When you are walking through the tunnel, you see the light in front of you, you see the light behind you. Even so when you are in darkness you think you see some light in the past or in the future. It is an absurd pastime.

The first qualification therefore is to realise that no one is responsible for the state I am in, neither others nor my own past. No-one can bring about a spiritual awakening in me. Someone can help, anyone can help, an alarm-clock can help, but I have to do it. And this spiritual awakening, this awakening is brought about by life itself. But even to be awakened by life a certain grace and a certain inner alertness is necessary.

Then it sometimes happens that one who is thus awakened from sleep soon goes back to sleep. When the unhappiness is past, and therefore when the challenge has also disappeared, we go to sleep again. Why does that happen? A certain glimpse which we had seems to disappear. There is a beautiful expression in sanskrit, it is called smasana vayragya. It means the dispassion or inner awakening that one experiences when attending someone else's funeral. Somebody young and very closely related to you, suddenly dies. You say, "My god, one day I will die too. I must be very careful from now at least

because I may also die soon." This lasts usually till you get back home. Then eat, drink and be merry - the same life goes on. That light, that shock, can it be sustained? I have been awakened and I must sustain that light, that glimpse. It is not final awakening or enlightenment because I have not really experienced death within myself, but I have a glimpse of the fact that I too will die.

So, coming back to the qualifications again, can the truth concerning life become part of my life, part of my consciousness, Can I be constantly aware of the truth concerning life? That is alertness. I was thinking of Swami Sivananda for a moment because it is His birthday tomorrow and it is wonderful that Mr Jean Herbert also was born around the same time. That is how Swami Sivananda described Maya. Maya is not something which you can avoid, push away. It can not even be defined properly. That which makes you forget the truth that you have glimpsed is maya. Who can answer that question, who can describe it for you? So ask yourself, within yourself, within your own heart. Haven't we made so many resolves in life? What makes us forget that? We will still carry on with that funeral idea - I have attended this funeral and I know that I am also going to die. I may die today, tomorrow, 100 years hence. What makes me forget that? The question itself is light. As long as that question shines in your heart, you cannot forget it. It is so simple.

What makes me forget it? Again, if you are observant, you will see that. I look at an object and I think my pleasure, my happiness comes from it. It is then that this alertness is completely destroyed and the moment this alertness is destroyed, the little awakening that I had is also gone, and I am fast asleep once again - till life brings another knock. Thank God we have plenty of it in life.

This thing called alertness is described variously in the yoga texts. Patanjali calls it yama and Vasistha calls it satsanga, vicara.

First we will deal with this yama. I think most of you know already the classification of this yama. And I think most of you also know that the sanskrit word yama has many meanings. Two are important for us. One is self-restraint, discipline, second it is the Name of the God presiding over death. It is strange how a word that represents discipline also means the Name of God of death. I think there is a very significant connection. Self-discipline is not possible unless I am constantly conscious of death. Incidentally discipline by others is not discipline at all. I think all of you understand that; there is no need to go into it. If you tell me, "Swami, you must do this," and I do it, it is only superficial, inside I am rebellious. But self-discipline is not possible unless this death is brought into daily life. It is then that that discipline takes on a wonderful new meaning. In English the word

discipline also means study. Self-study. Till I know I am "Soi meme" I am not swami. I must study myself, and when I study myself, this discipline arises spontaneously.

And therefore one of the important factors of this yama is satyam. This lovely little word has also been interpreted variously. They say that you must speak the truth and that is all it means. We had a nice wonderful swami who used to tell us very often that he was a very honest and truthful man; if he thought you are an idiot, you are a fool, you are a vicious person, he told you so. So that he was quarreling with everybody all the time. That is not honesty. That is called rudeness. Satyam means truth, not only truthfulness, but truth.

What is truth? I am observing myself, what is truth? I am alive and this life includes constant change. Truth is not something which is crystallized - that is steadily sitting there like a piece of stone. But truth is dynamic and therefore it is changing constantly. Therefore there is a constancy in it, and there is a change in it. That contains a paradox, paradox in the true sense of the word: that this is something which cannot be taught by anyone. It cannot be taught but it can be caught. If one is alert, you can catch it. There is something constant and there is something constantly changing. When you see that, you do not shy away from this thing called death. Nor do you disregard that which is for the moment. One sets a tremendous sense of balance. The balance arises from this vision of truth. Then a disciplined life becomes natural. You are not going to run away from happiness because it floats down the stream of life. While it is there enjoy it. When it goes, let it go. Change. Something else comes along. Somebody else calls this unhappiness, but since it has come to me it is most welcome and because I say "Bien venu", it becomes my guest. I do not ill treat it and it does not ill treat me also. A little bit of unhappiness and that goes away.

So the beautiful quality, qualification of a student of yoga called equilibrium becomes natural. The other side of this is hypocrisy. You want to show off. "I am a student of yoga. She is pinching me but I should not react." That is hypocrisy. "She is pinching me, it hurts. But since I have an image of yoga and I think that you told me that a yogi must always be in a state of equilibrium, I do not respond to it." That is hypocrisy. I have seen my master Swami Sivananda behave in a most extraordinary way. Somebody put some scent on His forehead and it flowed into His eyes. It burned His eyes. He was sitting on a platform with a few thousand people around Him. And He stopped her and asked for some water, washed His eyes and everything was normal. And the problem is immediately solved.

Can I similarly face life in all its aspects? Does reality make you suffer? Or does the appearance make you suffer? Are you in love with reality or are you in love with an appearance? There are a number of young people here -

probably they are in love with each other - husbands and wives, in love with each other. And am I loving you or am I loving the appearance, the body with what appears to be a charming beautiful face. This body is changing, subject to change. So one faces this truth, this reality. It is when I love you as Miss so and so, Mrs. so and so, then when you go away, I am unhappy. If you love you, if I love the truth, the fact in you, that which may dwell in that body, but which is more permanent, more constant, then I am not unhappy at all when you leave me. As long as you are here in person in physical form, I enjoy that. I am not saying that since I love your spirit, "Oh well you can starve and you can go, you can jump into the lake, I don't care." No, here is a form which is part of this total reality, so it is appreciated, it is admired, it is loved. There it is, balance again.

So, my guru Swami Sivananda used to say constantly - Remember God and remember death both together. Then you are established in the constant and you are able to participate in the changing. Then you are able to live your changing life but realise the eternal here and now. That is truth.

Another aspect of this truth is also interesting from our point of view. If you sit for your meditation in the morning and ask yourself a few questions - what do I want to do now? I want to meditate, I want to repeat a mantra, I want to study my mind, I want to observe my mind. Half a minute I think or one minute later I am thinking of something else. Why do I do that? "I want to meditate." If I want to meditate, why do I think of something else? In the same way, "I want to enjoy peace of mind." And you ask yourself, when you lose your peace of mind, "Did somebody snatch it away from me?" Is it a sort of handbag or purse which somebody snatches away from you? "I want to be happy." Why do I go and do things which make me unhappy?

Very often I feel that the philosophy that has been condemned all over the world - called the epicurean philosophy, pursuit of happiness - I think that is probably better than what we are doing. If I pursue happiness, very soon I will realise that the only person that disturbs this happiness is myself, because I am running after a temporary thing called pleasure and I am mistaking the form for the spirit, the appearance for the reality. The reality does not make me suffer, it is only the appearance that makes me suffer when I pursue it. Even the appearance does not make me suffer; but when I pursue that, pleasure it makes me suffer. The understanding of that will enable me to drop all this pursuit of pleasure, and there is instant happiness, unbroken happiness, because even when the unhappiness comes along, I am only going to greet it, and give it a send off a little later. When it goes I say, "Adieu."

So when I want happiness, why do I make myself unhappy? And when I want to practise yoga, why do I do something else? I want to practise yoga, I want to bring about an inner awakening, satori, samadhi and all that, but most of

the time I am only thinking of my figure, or my business. What for? Am I practising yoga or something else? The most important connotation of the word satyam is sincerity. I am not talking only to you, I am talking to myself too. I am asking this question at least 100 times a day. "Am I sincere or not?" If I am sincere, nobody in the world is going to make me insincere.

When I stop blaming others for my unhappiness and when I see the truth that life itself brings happiness and unhappiness, and pain and pleasure and all the rest of it, I am not offended by anyone in the world, I am not hurt by anyone in the world. If you call me an idiot, that is your problem, not mine. If you jump into the swimming pool, do I get wet? And if you use your own mouth and your own tongue and use insulting expression, it does not affect me, it affects you. So the yogi is totally unhurt. He cannot be hurt. And that is a great blessing. "Blesse" or hurt when it comes from someone else is received as a blessing by the yogi. He is totally unhurt.

When you are unhurt, and only then, do you become ahimsa. Totally non-violent. Non-violence again is not something which I can do. All that I do is violent. But when I am completely unhurt, then my relation with everyone in this world is pure love. Whatever you do is helping me. If you say, "Swami, you are a lovely, wonderful man, you are a good man," I am looking within to see if I am such a wonderful, good man. And if someone says, "Swami, you are an idiot," I am looking within. "Am I such an idiot?" So all are helping me, nobody is trying to destroy me. And therefore I am friendly and in love with total life. So this love also arises spontaneously from this discipline - self-discipline.

Since the yogi constantly pursues this truth concerning himself, there is what is known as brahmacharya. Brahmacharya does not merely mean continence or chastity, but it is a constant movement - constant flow of one's awareness towards truth or brahman. When the mind is constantly aware of the truth, then it does not pursue pleasure; because it realises that if there is pleasure in life, it is in life and not in an object. And even then, in the course of life, there is pleasure, the student is conscious of it arising within himself. And he is aware that that pleasure or sense of happiness arises in that consciousness. Pleasure arises in consciousness. Pain is another experience that also arises in consciousness. Happiness arises in consciousness, unhappiness arises in the same consciousness, in the same mind. That is brahmacharya.

Of course, some people must have shared the opinion of Freud and suggested that the sexual drive is the most intense, and so decided that brahmacharya must mean celibacy or chastity. Yesterday Mr. Jean Herbert referred to Hanuman. Hanuman was supposed to have been as Mr Jean Herbert said 'a celibate and chaste person, At one point he is said to have declared that "I have conquered lust, sexuality, but I have been overcome by anger." So, that

sexuality is not the only problem with man. If you will pardon my digression again, I know of several very chaste people where sexuality is concerned, who are completely and totally occupied with making money or gaining power. You must have seen a few at least - great big politicians who want power. They have no time for even their wife. So it is not the only problem. But there are problems arising from one's intelligence, one's mind that constantly distract one's attention to truth.

He who avoids all these distractions has brought death into his daily life. That which we have pushed away from our lives, imagining that by merely not thinking of it, it will go away, the yogi brings into his everyday life and this has a tremendous effect - when I remember death from moment to moment and I realise that that is what is happening to even this body from moment to moment. Between the time I came here and now probably several billion cells have disintegrated.

When I die from moment to moment, the past is cut off. Since our life normally is propelled by the past into the future, the future does not exist for a man who does not have a past. Not clear? I had some experience last year and it was a terrible experience; and whenever I remember it, because it is fully registered in the mind, whenever I remember it, I am afraid, and from that memory and from that fear arises a hope that it may not arise again in the future. That is why an infant is unafraid. If I am able to die from moment to moment, and then I am not haunted by fear, I have nothing to guard, nothing to protect.

What do we protect in our life? We protect all that which we call mine. Swami Satchidananda has got a beautiful joke, and with his permission I will convey it to you. The more things around you which you call mine - this is mine, my wife, my child, my car, my building. You know in wartime they have mines which they plant everywhere - all of them become bobs everywhere, all the mines. So these mines are ready to explode at any time. If the student of yoga dies from moment to moment, there is nothing called me and there is nothing to protect and there is nothing to defend.

What is the result? I have tremendous energy because all the energy that I have been wasting protecting this rubbish and all the energy that I wasted hoping and fearing, all that is available to me now. This is brahmacharya. That is alertness.

With this alertness - prapya varannibodhata, go, go to any person, someone superior to you, and enter into a dialogue, because it is possible that in all this you might have missed something important and it is possible that you might once again have jumped into another trap. There is a lovely saying in English: from the frying pan into the fire. Very often we do that, we escape from one

prison and got into the other - because once again we want to protect, we want security. The yogi looking at life itself, knows that there is nothing which needs protection. If you will pardon my arrogance, there is nothing that deserves protection. Everything is going to be destroyed by time. What are you protecting? When all that is gone, there is brahmacharya and there is total devotion. But it is possible as I said a few minutes ago that I leave one prison and enter into another. It is a master that may tell me, "Son, that's another trap."

So utthisthata jagrata - then go to the guru. When I go to the guru again I may go because I think I am awake, I think I am alert and still I am puzzled. There is some confusion, there is some doubt, "Is this the correct state, is this the truth?" One needs confirmation or correction from the superior person.

If you have had all these disciplines, then satsanga becomes an instantaneous life transformer, and in the dialogue with the guru, verbal as well as non-verbal, there is vicara. Vicara has been translated in English as inquiry but the root meaning of the word is "efficient movement of consciousness". Efficient movement in consciousness. The student of yoga constantly resorts to this satsanga and vicara, so that this inner awakening may become confirmed or corrected and the alertness may be permanent and the cloud or the shadow of doubt that comes in and goes occasionally, is also dispelled.

That is the only role in the guru in our life. The guru is the light dispelling this darkness. The guru is not a person who is going to take over my responsibilities. He is not going to do my spiritual practice for my sake. My guru Swami Sivananda often made fun of that idea. It is dinner time now, I won't keep you for long and if you have a guru who you are sure will do all the yoga on your behalf, will carry your burden and will do all that, please ask that guru to go in and take dinner on your behalf. If the guru cannot eat for me, how can he do everything that is necessary on my behalf?

If you have devotion to the guru and a heart to heart contact, then in that dialogue, in that presence, (I come back to Mr. Blitz's word "presence") there is a verbal and non-verbal dialogue. In that dialogue the cloud is dispersed. And therefor another qualification for a real student of yoga is a complete and total devotion to the guru. Then enlightenment in the words of Vasistha is easier than crushing a flower that is in your hand. Even to crush a flower that lies in your hand needs some effort - but for enlightenment no effort is necessary.