

Practice

Swami Suryadevananda

When we first learn to drive, we practice in some parking lot or area without much traffic for several reasons. Aside from learning to operate the car mechanically, driving is a dynamic process that involves presence of mind in each moment and we have to make sure we can get the car where and how we want it. This relatively quiet or sequestered area allows for understanding the car's operation and our response in driving. This is not the end, not the beginning, but a part of the overall process of learning, because we as long as we drive, there is something to learn. Driving is not just about the car, road and conditions—it is about adjustments from moment to moment as conditions develop.

Once we get a feel for the mechanics of the car, we understand driving or movement and adjustments with traffic while staying the course. None of these are in conflict: the mechanics of the car, driving and moment to moment adjustments without crashing or getting off course. These are part of the one movement of driving.

Practice in yoga evolves as we do. All the different practices first take some familiarity and for this, one may practice with others but 'doing with others' is not the purpose of yoga. Though practice can be collective, effort becomes understanding and is therefore individual, as you get out of anything what you put into it.

In the case of driving, one must learn how to drive on the open roads as soon as slightly familiar with the car and its usage or one could get too comfortable in safe environments and never be able to really drive at all. The same thing happens when parents over-protect their children out of attachment—they get accustomed to attention, protection and continual care. One can begin in a group, but it is very beneficial to practice individually as soon as there is some understanding of the practice.

It is in personal practice that one confronts difficulties and obstacles, so one must find ways to resolve or dissolve them. Only practice on your own can bring you to the crossroads of uncertainty and doubt where additional clarification may be necessary. The reason for these doubts is that we are so used to looking at problems and their solutions outside—they are inside in the journey of self-discovery. Besides, our egos insist that the problem must be because of something or someone out there. It becomes difficult to look sincerely, without bias, and scrutinize every motive as suspect. This benchmark will not be crossed until individual practice is undertaken sincerely.

Swami Venkatesananda expresses the heart of yoga best, "Yoga is all those practices that enable you to discover health—which is not an absence of sickness, but which is the wholeness and holiness ... an inner state of being in which there is no division at all."

Swami Sivananda's yoga of synthesis is also called the yoga of little. Practicing a little of each practice keeps the heart, mind and body fresh and this freshness is indispensable to cultivating and sustaining vigilance. It also keeps one from specializing (which is the quality of the ego) and promotes humility and respect for others when one sees others capable of things one is not. One may start yoga practice with tremendous enthusiasm, but one soon discovers that it is not so easy—the little 'I' interferes tremendously. The yoga of synthesis gives you a full array of practice to keep the thought current going and vigilance active. If I am not able to meditate for whatever reason this morning, I can keep the meditative mind through another practice.

This meditative mind is a mind that wants to know the truth by direct observation. When I do asanas, what is it that makes the body shake a little and gives me the flexibility to stretch just a little more? When I hold my breathing in pranayama, what is it that makes me breathe now? How is it that the very act of inhalation becomes exhalation and in the very same space and of the very same energy—and, why does it feel different? When I chant or repeat a mantra, how is it that chanting or repeating the mantra seem to originate in the same space, at the same time and of the same substance as well? When I meditate, how is it I feel a thought of joy arise in the mind and a moment later, a thought of anger or fear? These happen in the same space, being of the same substance of thought, but my reactions seem completely different even though they are basically the same thing—am I reacting to them or to myself? And on and on...

A full range of practice not only gives all-round development but keeps one from stagnating, and one can go on to a different practice should another be difficult at the time. All practices have as their aim the discovery of the division being the work of the mind—of thought and non-division as the truth of things. When one discovers how to practice or do what needs to be done without the interference of thought, which is habit and conditioning—the same ability can and should be used in the entire fabric of life. The different practices give you insight into finding a way to abide in non-division through different mediums, as life is a series of situations that calls for response and if I can find a way in a little more controlled setting—I should be able to apply the same insight gained in the open fields of life too. I must be able to find a way of living in which I neither get hurt nor cause hurt, and this happens when I am able to dispense with thought's interference, responding to all that life requires from moment to moment.

Practice Makes Perfect

We are familiar with the old adage, 'Practice makes perfect'. Before we look at making perfect, let us examine what practice means. Three dictionary meanings of practice are: to do or perform

something habitually or repeatedly; to do something repeatedly in order to acquire or polish a skill; and, to work at a profession.

Practice...

In the Yoga Sutras sage Patanjali tells us that repetition is necessary, but efforts must not be repetitive. Repetition is completely fresh application, while repetitive is the very same effort made again—mechanical repetition. There must be heightened awareness and increased vigor with each repetition, otherwise the mind gets duller and the energy wanes when action is repetitive.

In the Bhagavad Gita, we see the dual process of right application or abhyasa which is at the same time avoidance of what is not useful, or vairagya—both of these being one single movement of intelligent redirection of energy—for which the inner intelligence needs to be awake, alert and empowered.

The mighty scripture 'Yoga Vasistha' tells us to exert in the direction which is conducive, thus the non-conductive will weaken by disuse. All that we wish to shake off has gained strength and momentum by repeated use; and it is not only the non-conductive which must be shaken off but the mechanism of habit forming or accumulation of conditioning. I have to live without gathering conditioning and in such a way that empties existing conditioning till the mechanism itself is rendered incapable.

Swami Sivananda teaches the same principles in two terse words: "attach ... detach". Attach the mind to God, detach it from the world. We are not asked to renounce the world—we cannot; we are asked to renounce worldliness or limitation for the infinite in whose midst we are right now.

When a scientist wishes to discover something, he applies himself tenaciously but is ever fresh—setting aside all his learning and even his hopes. He knows that he is his own biggest obstacle and what must be let go while observing—that a state of freshness is what must fuel the observation. He must enter into the observed and become one with it to know its secrets, and it is for this that he exerts repeatedly. Each attempt is fresh and this freshness is not merely physical freshness, but he knows that he must let go of himself, he must surrender in order to enter the observed as it is only then that any discovery is possible.

All discoveries are results of contact with the substance of things. Einstein once remarked, "It is not that I am particularly smart, I just stay with problems longer." Habit can never practice—as it is only habit, and if we are doing something to acquire a deeper insight or discovery, habit will never know any success. Even in appreciating music, we often hear it again and again, letting go of ourselves each time and discovering the richness of the composition. We hear each piece and get a feel for how it all comes together in excellence—we must enter the music for this. This entry can only come about if we let ourselves go completely. If one is not willing to do this, there will

only be cursory appreciation but never any real discovery or experience—nothing substantial at all.

If we are doing something to get good at it as a profession, we find ourselves at a crossroad, as the 'I' that wants a profession as a result of effort stays outside the effort which alone can bring success. In a profession, this 'I' must stay outside to make sure it is marketable, etc., and one never gives his whole being to the effort as a large chunk always stays outside.

Sincerity is sustained total application without reserve—you must give yourself. Most professionals do not know how to give themselves as they are unable to do so, since they always stand outside as an observer full of hopes and ambition. Ambition in work has a greater purpose beyond the action so the effort is mediocre at best—partial, fragmented and half-hearted. Sincerity is sacrifice—an offering of yourself without remission but intelligently, so that the offering is not mechanical. One exerts ever fresh, with all of one's ability and energy—ever alert to make sure efforts have direction but never concerned about the result. Each application is a total application where all of yourself is given to the task—learning from each attempt in order to see what interference should be left out.

Whatever you want to discover is in front of you—what prevents the discovery? A scientist has his observable breakthrough right in front of him, and if there are many scientists working on the same problem, each of them do as well. What makes one yell 'eureka' and the others look on in amazement? They may each have comparable education and work under similar conditions too. You must really want something so that you are ready and willing to give your entire being to it right now—not later and not in a trickle, but—all of you just now. When this fire is ignited, everything is possible.

It is this fire of sincerity that can practice, as it knows that the 'I' is what stands in between aspiration and discovery and exerts repetitively to dislodge the 'I'. We see often that people on a serious quest to know or discover something give little to no attention to what distracts others—their whole being is roused into action in one single direction and the object of discovery is not as important as the journey of dislodging the 'I' which must happen. If the object of discovery was supreme, a real scientist would bask in the sunshine after his discovery, but he seems pulled by another call to discover. We see the same in mountain climbers who having scaled one peak, look to the horizon for another. Outer challenges require inner conquest and this inner mastery has to be more important always. The outer challenge or task on hand is only an opportunity that calls for practice—not of an action of doing something, as such, but through the action of discovering how to let go of the 'I' that interferes and enter that which is to be known by giving oneself completely to it.

Practice is whole-souled reapplication exerted intelligently to discover the truth of something by being one with it—by standing with it. Practice is the repetition of a process till we abolish any

gap between us and the observed—it is offering yourself wholly to that which is to be known. Intelligent practice leads to perfection—not just a perfect discovery, but inner perfection itself.

...Makes Perfect

What allows one to give oneself to the observed for its discovery and another to hold back, standing outside always? Sincerity is dedication and to dedicate oneself is to offer oneself completely. Perhaps that is why it feels there must be some sacrifice, some giving up for something—something becoming sacred. The attainment is the flowering of sacrifice—that which results when something is sought, pursued without the pursuer—without the 'I'. We realize that the sacrifice of limitation is the way to discover largeness in any form and through this, we discover that sacrifice is not a giving up but a getting—a release from limitation.

Knowing that this is what is required for any discovery or substantial gain—what seems to be the difficulty? We stand outside things and people to take care of ourselves and our interests better and the standing outside things and people or divisiveness is what ruins and disallows everything. The walls we create in the name of our interests and security are the prison walls of our self-internment.

What is called sadhana or spiritual practice is different from other practices in that what is sought is discovery of the 'I' and its transformation. Unless we are fully onboard, ready and enthusiastic about sacrificing the ego—spiritual practice will result in some mechanical expertise. You may be able to do some asanas, chant or sing, do some social work or give intellectually thrilling lectures, but these are not spiritual as they are devoid of spirit. Spiritual is what is supposed to happen when these are done in the spirit of yoga—in the spirit of doing these practices to discover and transform self, and therefore one is full of spirit. This fire must gradually spread throughout the entire fabric of our existence.

The spirit of yoga is rooted in these principles of self-discovery and transformation. Ego or thought interfere with action in every department of life and its riddance becomes the primary concern of the yogi or seeker. When the mind attains its balance, that is, when thought finds its place as a function in consciousness instead of its false dominance as personality—self-inquiry is possible.

The first goal of the yogi is to understand the ego—the movement of thought and discover how to do what needs to be done without thought-interference. Thought must be used as needed, but one must not be used by thought. The first steps in yoga are the steepest, as one must go against oncoming rushing rapids of conditioning—perhaps more difficult than salmon swimming upstream, as you are not swimming against something else but against your own self—not by force but by a determination that sees the going with the flow as being a way that causes pain and sorrow.

The various practices in yoga must have this spirit of discovery and transformation and therefore, your enthusiastic undivided attention. They are not processes to primarily gain health or peace of mind so you can go on with your life as usual but ways to understand the so-called 'usual' that is a path beset with sorrow and its avoidance. Health, peace and happiness are already there but these have been eclipsed by factors that must be understood and disposed of.

Spiritual Practice or Sadhana

All yoga practices have this word 'yoga' at the end: hatha yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga—without the yoga spirit, these are actions just like any other and will at best give just some surface benefit.

Hatha Yoga

Swami Sivananda reminds us to mentally repeat the mantra in the practice of asanas as this takes our attention beneath the physical action itself. We do not actually do the asanas—we merely indicate the intention to the inner intelligence by assuming a posture and holding it. If the attention is turned inward, one discovers that it is this undivided or infinite intelligence that does all things. We hold the posture at the level of flexibility we have and if we observe carefully, the work of the inner intelligence is felt by adjustments in the body and we suddenly feel that we can now get into the asana just a little bit more. When the inner intelligence acts, we feel its power or energy which is the inner intelligence acting. We do not see the inner intelligence but can feel its power and energy in all actions and if we are humble, we recognize that anything good or excellent comes from this, and that the inner intelligence is the real doer.

When you feel thirsty, the body gets up and walks to get a glass of water—there is no 'I' in the action at all. The body walks, gets the water, drinks and the body processes the water and thirst is not felt. The 'I' could be drifting in daydreams elsewhere—the inner intelligence takes care of the body. That which takes care of the body so well also keeps you safe on the road when you drive and drift mentally.

In eating, we do the same thing a monkey does—put food in the mouth. It is the inner intelligence which digests and produces energy. We don't even go to sleep, we go to bed—sleep comes when we surrender to this inner intelligence. As long as we lie in bed thinking, sleep waits patiently as 'we' would like the experience of thought. When we are too tired, the inner intelligence takes over by causing drowsiness so it can do its work or maintenance and rejuvenation without our interference.

In hatha yoga practice, if we turn the attention inward to see this marvel at work, we can feel the movement or power of the inner intelligence as it works by making adjustments within the body to allow for the asana. If we are fully alert, we feel that it is this intelligence and its power that

do the asana, and at that moment we are directly in touch with it—the asana just happens in its own time.

As you learn to cooperate with the inner intelligence and its energy or movement—you learn how to fit into a wider aspect of existence. You stretch just as much as it is felt possible—not thought possible, but felt. You cooperate with the inner intelligence and in this act of cooperation—one can feel that it is the inner intelligence that does the asana—not 'I'. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna, "Yes, I do everything ... but you kindly do something ... and though I am the doer ... the glory is all yours!" Marvelous! Just like getting a glass of water, when we cooperated with thirst and did something ... thirst was dispensed with. Through the practice of hatha yoga, we discover directly this 'do something' and experience firsthand— 'It' is doing everything. There is great relief and security in knowing we don't walk alone in life.

Surrender to the inner power which is the inner intelligence in action happens and it does the asana. When we need to think about some work urgently, we do the same thing, we surrender to the inner intelligence and ideas come. Emphasis on the asana, getting into the posture may muscle you into the posture, but some flexibility and perhaps some soreness may be the gain— not different from other exercises.

The same principles apply in pranayama practice, as when the gaze is turned inwards again, one sees that what is called inhalation itself modifies into exhalation, and in the very same space too. Not only this, there is no real gap between inhalation and exhalation—there is movement of energy and we have called this inhalation when it moves one way, retention when it is held, and exhalation when it moves the other way. When we retain the breath, this same energy compels us to breathe and we discover cooperation or surrender not by non-doing, but by doing what needs to be done without interfering.

Karma Yoga

Turning the attention inward is what separates karma yoga from social work. The focus is not in doing good work but in getting rid of all that is not good within such as greed, ambition, anger, lust, which is all craving for any form of outcome and egoism or self-assertiveness as an individual entity. Without this spirit of inner watchfulness, you may be able to get some work for society done as social work, but the ego may still be very much alive or made even stronger.

The yogi sees karma yoga as a tremendous opportunity to weaken the self-asserting ego and it is this attitude that makes it yoga. In social service, some work is offered; in karma yoga, the ego is the offering and work merely an avenue. The yogi or spiritual seeker will never entertain thoughts of "they don't appreciate me ... I will offer help somewhere else where it is appreciated ... I would like to do just this, why is it not possible? ... I am a volunteer after all ..." and so on. You have to treat volunteers with kid gloves as they are free help and something is better than nothing. Yogis

or real spiritual seekers do not look to this pampering or fattening of the ego but to its riddance. "Let there be appreciation, non-appreciation and it does not matter if my presence is acknowledged or not, or if I am told exactly how it is to be done even though I know"—all this is welcome, as the yogi looks within to see the movement of the ego and finds a way to do what is needed free of it. Freedom from interference of all conditioning that exists and the ability to function without adding conditioning are what is important.

In karma yoga, you concern yourself with the work, the environment, others and of the reactions of your ego on all of them while working. You see the rise of the ego and continue to work while watching it in all its forms and movement without its interference. You find a way to act without the interference of thought.

Bhakti Yoga

Unless the ego has been thinned out quite a bit, what we call bhakti yoga or the yoga of devotion is done by the ego and for its selfish ends only as it is very much alive. You cannot function in the world selfishly, rooted in ambition, self-interest, self-aggrandizement, driven by personal gain and try to sit at home or at a place of worship and feel closeness with God—it is not possible. The same mind that functions in the world watching out for its own interests is the one that will sit and worship God as the divine omnipresence—how is this possible? Personal presence (interests) first throughout the day and then divine omnipresence for some minutes later is a contradiction—is it not?

This is why hatha yoga and karma yoga are essential for a deepening experience in devotion. If the body is weak to begin with, you will be concerned about constant adjustments and the end of practice and will not be able to offer yourself to the divine—to God. If selfishness has not been thinned by real karma yoga, it will not be possible to integrate yourself completely in devotion either. You will always stand outside, as you have to take care of these interests of greed, personal ambition, your stockpile of wealth, belongings and status. If these are important to you, you must stand outside everything, including relationships.

The psyche splits with the dominant part being the caretaker and custodian of these things you have deemed so very important, and a small sliver—a weakened little corner—sits and prays to God for his help in preserving and amassing more for yourself or taking care of personal interests. That which you are more concerned about will always stand outside acts of devotion and even friendships and relationships. There is no real love for God—only a plea for his help and protection and one tries to use God just as a powerful or well-connected acquaintance, which is what we do in what is called 'networking' nowadays. Selfishness requires placing oneself outside the largeness of its existence in order to take care of oneself first, but this does just the opposite as any separation results in a diminishment of being.

When the body and mind are made fit and healthy, you are integrated and balanced and there is no leakage in devotion. Whatever be your devotional practices: chanting hymns, singing kirtan or songs, puja or worship—all of you is available without any part standing outside. The joy felt in standing with all acts like a candle jar that protects the flame of devotion as it rises to God.

Bhakti yoga is not limited to places of prayer or worship and must extend towards the recognition and adoration of the divine omnipresence. The effort goes from 'devotion to...' to 'devotion' in which the 'to' is the all—the 'to' must fall and devotion becomes living in the light of God's omnipresence. Selfish and mean acts are not possible for a devotee but very possible for a 'devotee of ...'. The heart expands tremendously—going horizons beyond tolerance into acceptance of others when there is no 'of' and contracts giving impetus to war in the name of God. The 'follower of...' and 'devotee of...' have been behind many wars and personal conflicts. The yoga in bhakti yoga sees this as insincere and missing the mark, as it beacons the yogi towards the light of non-division through the apparent differences in his inner ascent.

The various practices in bhakti yoga—aside from being a means of expressing love and devotion to God—strengthen one's aspiration, and this is very important as love of God or the truth is the best fuel in meditation.

Raja Yoga

Though raja yoga involves some of what we have covered earlier in hatha yoga, it aims at meditation and direct experience of the truth. The earlier limbs of yama or things not conducive to inner balance, and niyama or principles of living in balance, are ways to adjust oneself in different conditions harmoniously so as to not create from or react with memory.

These limbs of raja yoga are not rungs that are climbed one after another but are an all-at-once approach, just as limbs of the body are not isolated pieces but organic parts of one whole. They are all practiced at the same time with shifting emphasis as one evolves. None of the limbs are given up as one attains some success in another practice, but we discover that increases in some practices can contribute to slow progress in others.

Weaknesses in the body can be improved upon with asanas, pranayama, healthy diet and adjustments in our overall attitude too. The mind is connected with everything including the body and disharmony in the mind can result in physical weaknesses. Everything is interconnected and any lack of harmony can be felt in other parts.

The practice of karma yoga gives one an opportunity to lay the foundation of yama and niyama very well. Practice of bhakti yoga blends inner integration with outer integration, as that which you seek is everywhere and so one must have the same feeling in one's personal moments as one has amidst all. Bhakti yoga is a great harmonizer, but just like other yogic practices, it cannot

be mechanical or sentimental. A practice without the yogic or uniting principle can be reduced to mere sentimentalism.

Raja yoga brings us to concentration and meditation, but if practice has been alert, vigilant and intelligent, concentration has been building all along. Living a vigilant life is a life that aims at avoiding new conditioning and not strengthening old conditioning—but rather of discovering a way of living that is healthy, sane and free of inner turmoil. Vigilance thins the mind of ideas, notions and concepts that are at the root of disharmony, and a harmonious mind faces less distractions as looks within itself to discover the truth.

Just as sleep is not something you do, you go to bed—sleep comes if you are cooperative. Meditation too is not something you do but something that happens naturally as a result of who you are. Meditation is the fruit of inner harmony, balance and non-division.

During meditation, distractions arise and if one is alert, one observes that what are considered pleasant or good and what one would rather not experience rise in the same place and are made of the same substance. If one really sees this phenomenon, there is direct perception that what we call pleasant and unpleasant are essentially the same as they rise in the same space, are made of the same substance and fall in the same space too. Keen observation will show that what we consider pain itself transforms into what we call pleasure and these are actually interchangeable. One is considered pain because we call it so and the other pleasure, because we call it so. What we consider pleasure now can have a label change and it is pain the next moment on. For instance, we are happy to meet one we consider a good friend but something has gone terribly wrong and the same person is a non-friend, to put it mildly. Even in the initial stages of meditation, there is tremendous insight as the energy of conditioning dances on the stage of the mind. One has to be very alert and full of heart or willingness.

Meditation is a great revealer and transformer as you see yourself for what you are and the very act of observation without identification with the presentations while fully aware (not cold and artificially detached) leads to abandoning the thought. Meditation is the extrication of thought from consciousness and takes you all the way into inquiry and self-realization. Having said this, some clarity: self-realization is not a product of meditation but or any of the practices though, self-realization cannot be had without inner purification resulting from practice.

Jnana Yoga

Jnana yoga is also called the path of wisdom or path of knowledge. This wisdom or knowledge is not accumulative as we commonly think of learning, for we see it is not merely jnana or wisdom but yoga—integration, natural and whole. Exposure to wisdom through scriptures, contact with the enlightened or holy ones and keen observation of what is actually going on from moment to moment in every situation has the potential to discover existing conditioning and insight into

right response—this living wisdom is jnana yoga: wisdom or light that saturates one's heart and mind so responses to every situation are without coloring or conditioning.

In study, either by scriptures or talks and such, studying a subject will not take you very far, as yoga implies a change in you and accumulation of knowledge is not fundamental change—it is mere addition. In jnana yoga, wisdom or insight into what actually is—not inner conditioning—must get responded to in life as it unfolds. Wisdom must lodge in the heart and not merely in the mind where it builds up as mental accumulation.

Swadhyaya is self-study—you are studying yourself through study of the scriptures, listening to talks or teachings. You have to be fully attentive so that you can see what the words point to, what the words indicate and not get stuck in the words themselves. All teaching points to something that is beyond verbiage or expression—what is to be known. If one is truly attentive, the very act of active listening is transformation because one sees—one sees at that very moment and this direct seeing is experience which transforms then and there—here and now.

One cannot listen with the mind and its accumulation—it is the heart that somehow feels bound that has to listen, as that which feels bound can act without interference or delay. For this, there must be no interference of thought, and all the earlier practices aim at cultivating this inner vigilance.

Letting the truth read or heard reflect in consciousness is called manana—it is not mere contemplation, but an effort to really see what the words point to. This can only take you so far and the yogi feels the need to experiment and know by direct experience—this is called nidhidhyasana or uninterrupted prolonged meditation. The mind must have attained a considerable degree of quiescence before this is possible and the purification afforded by the other practices without remission or fall is requisite.

Jnana yoga requires tremendous purity of being in its truest sense—even trace elements of shrewdness aimed at self first must be let go. When a conditioned mind hears talks or reads scriptures, it will naturally be selective, interpretive and decide what if any of what is heard or read is 'usable' and 'productive'. This does not mean that one should not read or listen, but one should know the danger of the conditioned mind that will interfere and be alert enough to listen through its attempts. One can derail quite easily in jnana yoga and become very learned, very well informed and be able to deliver thrilling lectures, but at the same time be lacking even an ounce of natural goodness and thereby—lacking sincerity.

Sincerity in Practice

Sincerity is the single most important requisite for success in spiritual life—remember why you walk the path. Spiritual practices are called 'practices' because we keep at it 'till we get it'—till it becomes natural and then still keep at it so we don't lose it—and incidentally, it also becomes a

good example to others. The 'till we get it' is most important as it necessitates fresh, non-mechanical approaches: mindful repetition but not repetitive as the Yoga Sutras remind us.

There must be great love for practice as we are not practicing for some purpose—intelligent practice awakens and empowers the inner intelligence which knows best how to respond. The mind is a function of that inner intelligence or consciousness and must regain its place as such—a function, and not its mistaken assumption, that of an independent entity. The burden of the mind's conditioning—all that it remembers is what it feels necessary having assumed responsibility for life and everything in it. When a small fragment tries to do everything, it goes into overload and eventually into breakdown. The mind has to see that life can go on very well without its self-created responsibilities and assumptions. It has a very useful role and it has to discover this. The practices of yoga are aimed at the mind finding its place in consciousness.

Consciousness then responds directly to life, using the mind as needed; and when this consciousness or undivided mind functions naturally, it is free to inquire into its own self without struggle. True, great effort is required in self-inquiry, but not struggle. Struggle necessitates division—some part to struggle with another. Yoga practice aims at getting rid of this self-created division so the whole can pursue self-inquiry without struggle.

There is no short cut or magic in the spiritual path. Expertise in knowing, doing or performing will not help at all. It takes hard work, constant hard work, and calls for tremendous endurance which is mental strength. You have to climb on your own shoulders—the shoulders of habit and so it is all about heart. Struggle is optional in practice and life in general, as all struggle is experienced within—and for this, the psyche or content of one's consciousness must have division. If I am one and whole—how comes this division? Sincere and intelligent practice without remission exerts towards solving this.

suryadevananda.org