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# Sahaj Marg Study Group

## *Purification and Regulation of Mind*

Set 2, Handout 2 (From Principles of Sahaj Marg, Set 1, Pages 50-55).

I don't know whether people in the West recognize that all the modern problems that the world faces, particularly in the developed nations—problems of pollution, problems of corruption, problems of health—originate in the mind, and through the mind in science, in technology. I raise this question because when we talk of yoga, people are generally inclined to say, "What is the value of yoga?" They wish to know what is the applicability of yoga to modern life. There is also a general tendency to belittle yoga as something which is not applicable to societies except primitive ones. The teachings of my Master are specially formulated to prove to the world that yoga is a **must** not only for primitive societies but even for the highest developed ones. The basis for this is the fact that everything originates in the human mind and, therefore, unless the mind is purified and regulated in its functioning, and has a definite orientation in which it should function, it may yet function efficiently, but not necessarily for the good of mankind.

We are all familiar with the use of power. You see power by itself is neither corrupt nor good. But the way in which power is used, whether it be physical power or mental power, is what determines the utility of that power to mankind. And when we recognize that everything begins with the mind, whether it is scientific discovery or philosophic speculation, whatever it may be, then we will understand that if we are to cure the ailments that are facing modern societies, it is with the mind we have to start working and not at the periphery of existence.

Now, right at this stage, I would like to clarify that yoga is very much misunderstood, particularly in the West. What people generally mean by yoga here in the West is hatha yoga which is good for the body, of course. I am specially mentioning this because at any level we function, the force that is used or the power that is applied can work only at that level. When we work at the physical level the effect can only be at the physical level. So, in our Sahaj Marg system of yoga, which is based on raja yoga, the culminating point of yogic systems, the emphasis is on the mind and the training of the mind by appropriate techniques. My Master says that when we start with the subtlest level of human functioning, then the effect of that purification or regulation automatically percolates into the rest of the system, into the grosser levels of the system. It is not only automatic, it is natural. But on the contrary if we start at the grosser level it need not affect the finer levels of functioning. In our system of Sahaj Marg we therefore start with the mind.

In this system there are two aspects of mental training. The most important one concerns the Master's own work. By continued thinking, by continued activity, we impress upon the mind certain impressions that we create and that are created in

us. As habits are strengthened by repetition of the same act, similarly the mind also gets a tendency in a definite direction by the formation of such impressions. What my Master says is that the first step in yoga is to purify the mind and remove those impressions of the past. The essential step, the first step, is of course to accept his work and permit him to work on us. Having accepted his service, the second step in yoga is what we have to do ourselves. Master generally covers this in the single word 'co-operation'. Now co-operation is very easily understood but it is practiced with considerable difficulty. To really co-operate we have to accept that his work will be successful; and secondly, we must follow the instructions and practices that he prescribes for us. We can call this second step the moulding of the person by his own effort to some extent. In that moulding, there are of course the practical aspects of yoga itself which we have to follow meticulously. Then there are the usual ethical and moral precepts that are laid down, and assuming that we are able to do all this, we are then in a position to begin the practice of yoga. So the system of Sahaj Marg, which is the name of the yoga system that we practice, accepts any individual human being, whatever may be his present condition or state of mind, because the past, the burden of the past, the Master removes, and the future we create by co-operation with him. The process of removal of the impressions is called 'cleaning'.

You will all appreciate that there is no use in removing the impressions of the past if we are going to continue creating further impressions by thoughts and actions. So our participation in this yogic teaching is to mould our lives in such a way that we do not create more impressions, and thus we avoid creating a further past for the future, because everything becomes the past. Today is the past for tomorrow. The next step is to take the forward step of practicing the meditation, which makes the mind capable of becoming a real instrument of human endeavor. So our system is very simple. That is why it is called Sahaj Marg, which means the 'natural way' or the 'simple way'.

We are taught that we should sit in meditation for about an hour in the morning. Nowadays, Master specifies half an hour, but originally it used to be one hour. And about this meditation, we are often asked a question, "We are not able to concentrate. What should we do?" My Master has clarified that meditation is the process and the result is concentration. Now this concentration, by itself, is not of much value in our development because concentration is only the use of a power, and power, by itself, does not lead to evolution. But it has a positive advantage in our daily life because by meditation, when we are able to make the mind concentrate, we are able to exclude thoughts we don't require, or we don't wish to receive. Here I come to one of the most important teachings of my Master. When we have thoughts it is our attention, it is the power of our attention, that gives the power to the thought. A thought by itself has no power. It is the attention that we give it that gives the thought its power. By meditation if we are able to exclude such thoughts without fighting with them, without attending to them, then the mind achieves a state—a state of existence, a state of being—where a single thought alone can exist at a time. Thus, the process of meditation

gives us the ability to concentrate, or makes the mind come into a state of concentration, which we in India call one-pointedness.

Meditation must always have a purpose because nothing is purposeless. Even without bringing yoga into the picture, we are almost always meditating on something or the other. When we are looking for a higher standard of living, or when we are keenly pursuing a better job, we are constantly thinking of it. I say this because the correct definition of meditation is to think constantly of something. When we bring yoga into the picture we get confused as to what meditation really means. The only sense in which yogic meditation differs from our normal meditation is in the aim of that meditation, the purpose of that meditation. Therefore, we have to meditate with a purpose in mind, and when we come into the field of yoga that purpose is evolution, or the fulfillment of human life to its highest perfect condition.

My Master often says that we are born as human beings but most of us die as animals. I was myself shocked the first time I heard him say this. So I would not be surprised if you are shocked now. But when we understand the psychology behind the Sahaj Marg system, we will ourselves appreciate that we have no choice in the matter, because our past existence, the impressions of the past existence, are definite and positive forces giving us a direction in this life. And unless we can find some power outside ourselves to eradicate those impressions of the past, we continue to be pushed in the same direction that we have laid down in the past. I say this because very often we are asked, "What is the need for a Master?" It is clear that without the help of an external force—you may call him a Master, or a Guru or anything you like—the removal of the burdens of the past is impossible by our own effort. Therefore, however well-intentioned we may be, our actions from now to the future are but a further superstructure on the foundation of the past. It is for this very important reason that all yogic systems, all mystic systems, have specified the need for a Master to help us. That is a brief outline of the system of yogic practice that we adopt, and on the need for a Master.

Now coming to the practice itself, we are advised to sit in meditation three times a day—morning, evening and bed-time. What we do is to sit comfortably without any botheration about *asanas* or things like that. I mention this point particularly, because people think that without adopting an asana, meditation cannot be done. Patanjali, the codifier of yogic systems, has himself said that any position which can be held comfortably for a length of time is an asana. Therefore it is not very important how we sit, or in what position we sit, so long as we can sit in that position for the length of time specified for our meditation. The only necessity is that the body should not disturb us during that period. So, having assumed a comfortable position, we close our eyes. Sometimes people ask us, "Can we not meditate with eyes open?" It is certainly possible when we reach higher levels of spirituality, but not at the earlier stages. It is the eye which receives most of the impressions from the external world. Obviously it is better not to receive further

impressions, because we are trying to remove the old impressions. Therefore, we meditate with eyes closed.

In this particular system the meditation process is very specific because we have a specific aim, which is somewhat higher than what is normally specified in the West for yogic systems. As I said earlier, our purpose is to achieve the highest human possibilities. Now we meditate on the heart. What we meditate on is the heart. There are systems which meditate on other points, like the point between the eyebrows, the point of the nose, etc., but we meditate specifically on the heart for three very valid reasons, very important reasons.

The first point is that it is the heart which is the seat of life. The second point is that when we meditate on the heart the effect of that meditation spreads throughout the system. The third point is the most important, but often the least acceptable, and that is that the heart is the particular seat of whatever Divinity we possess.

Therefore, for these three important points or reasons, my Master specifies meditation on the heart. In the Sahaj Marg practice we meditate on the heart, imagining that there is effulgence or light in the heart. We don't try to see light or to project any light. We begin with the idea that there is light in the heart, and if there are disturbing thoughts, as I told you earlier, we just ignore them, because it is our own attention which gives power to them to disturb us.

That now brings me to the most important and fundamental point in Sahaj Marg. In a sense we can think of Sahaj Marg as operating in three layers. The lowest is the cleaning of the past impressions by the Master's own power. The middle level is our own effort in meditation and avoiding such thoughts or such activities that can create further impressions. And at the apex we have the most important feature, and that is the system of transmission that is unique to this system. When the vessel is cleaned, we must put something into it. When the human system is similarly purified and cleaned of all the past, it is emptied. Then starts the final process of yoga, which is final not in the sense of time, but final in the sense of culmination. Master starts filling us with his own self. This process is called *pranahuti* in Sanskrit, which means 'life offering' or 'offering of life'. So this is the most important aspect of Sahaj Marg. Once we start this yoga, the purification is done by the Master. Our co-operation is minimal in trying to live a better life, think better thoughts, perform better actions, avoiding the negatives. Then comes the most important part of Master's work. He puts His spiritual essence into us, thereby transforming us into Himself.

I think that I have said more or less everything I have to say about Sahaj Marg. If any of you would like to experience this transmission, my Master generally has a short session of transmission after the talk is over. So if you would like to sit for a few minutes in meditation, following the practice that I have just explained to

you—I must emphasize there is no compulsion behind this—those who would like to remain and experience the transmission are welcome to do so. Thank you.