

---

# Sahaj Marg Study Group

## ***Need and Wants of Life***

Set 1, Handout 2 (From Principles of Sahaj Marg, Set 1, Page 25-34).

Man has been defined in various ways. He has been called a social animal, which he undoubtedly is. In a cosmic sense, he is a universe in himself when compared to an atom, and in turn is but an atom when compared to the universe. He is stated to stand mid-point between the atom and the universe. But a simple description could be that man is a complex of physical and emotional needs.

All living beings have needs which must be fulfilled if they are to survive. The basic needs are the very obvious ones such as food, shelter, protection from the environment, a mate, etc. When man existed at the level of the animal, the needs were basic to his existence and were comparatively easily fulfilled, even though his existence was, in what is usually called today, a primitive state. Nevertheless, primitive man would appear to have been a much happier and more contented person than modern man, perhaps for the very simple reason that there was no confusion in his appraisal of his needs, and therefore his approach to their satisfaction could be direct and immediate. Certainly primitive man did not have all the traumas, psychoses, neuroses and the whole gamut of psychological illnesses that appear to accompany human life throughout the span of its existence today.

How has it come about that simple primitive man could be happy in such adverse environmental conditions, while facing extreme conditions of life where every moment of survival was a victory over his environment and his foes, whereas modern man, with all the conveniences and appurtenances of life, a life which has been made so easy to live that very often the minimum of physical activity is all that is needed, and where almost everything that he needs is at hand, or can be easily acquired without much personal effort or danger—how is it that in such an existence we find man unable to live in peace either with himself or with his surroundings? I do not think there is any question about this state of affairs particularly when we study the modern societies of the West. It is all too apparent that the more sophisticated and industrially advanced a society, the more the subconscious and repressed burdens members of that society appear to have to bear. Affluence indeed seems to have been accompanied by mental suffering, which in turn creates what are called psychosomatic illnesses. It is a moot point whether there are many free of the travails of such existence.

The aim of life, since the dawn of this century, appears to have become nothing less than an affluent existence made possible by the gigantic and incomparable advances in science, which in turn made possible revolutionary developments in technology. One of the great economists of the West has indeed termed modern society as the affluent society and paralleling this growth in affluence, we find a development below the surface of more misery than history would appear to indicate as prevalent in any past era. There were many dark periods in human

history filled with much suffering arising out of lack of physical needs, strife, bigotry, but all these led or would appear to have led to nothing more than physical suffering. But the suffering today has been shifted in plane to the mental level, and the greatest suffering of the affluent is at this level. By comparison, the less developed societies of the Orient would appear to enjoy better mental health even today, though their physical levels of existence may very often appear shocking to the Western eye. What is the reason for this almost inexplicable state of affairs? I would venture to suggest that perhaps our needs and the way we approach the satisfaction of those needs is at least one factor contributing to the madness of modern existence.

My Master makes a significant differentiation between needs and wants. Needs are legitimate, and man can legitimately expect such needs to be satisfied. Wants, on the other hand, are creations of man from his knowledge of the external world. Needs arise from inside whereas wants arise from outside. If needs were all that are to be fulfilled, people and governments would have a very easy time doing so. But it is precisely the ever-increasing wants of today's society and individuals that are found to be difficult and often well-nigh impossible of satisfaction. Indeed it would be correct to go a step further and say that today's orientation in society is towards enlarging wants and even towards creating more and more wants to keep the wheels of industry spinning. Our society may therefore be termed a society dedicated primarily to the creation of wants which later it sets out to satisfy. Needs are limited, therefore easily satisfied, and once satisfied, man is at rest. Wants, on the other hand, have no limit, and each want satisfied gives rise to the next want based on the prior satisfaction of the earlier one. Therefore, it is a vicious spiral mounting in its demands, and developing in the individual and society a frenzied craving for its satisfaction, but the goal ever recedes from the grasp of the individual. This is one of the main reasons for the psychological condition of today's individual. Society is after all composed of individuals and can reflect nothing but the sum total of individual attitudes and aspirations.

Analyzing our needs, the most apparent one of course is the physical need for food and shelter. It would appear that these are comparatively easily satisfied provided only that degree of importance is given to them that they deserve. Primitive man did not indulge, until quite late in his own existence, in the art of cooking. Cooking is after all only the conversion of what nature provides into a form considered more acceptable to man himself. There is an art of embellishing what nature provides. It is a truism to state that very often cooking naturally available food, whether vegetarian or non-vegetarian, deprives it of much of its intrinsic value, adding perhaps something to its taste and appearance. I am sure there are numerous votaries of raw food who would be prepared to testify to the basic wholesomeness and palatability of raw foods. There are quite large communities of people who are able to subsist on them very happily and, what is more important, very healthily, too. When we proceed from cooking to the next stage of embellishment where it is dressed up merely to please the eye, we have

already transferred the area of acceptability of food from the mouth and tongue to the eyes, nose, etc. That is, what should be examined from one level of the physical organization is now being examined from another. This undoubtedly is a perversion and is no doubt a contributory cause for much of the world's ill-health today in those societies where only the most highly dressed-up food is served. This shows us the importance of tackling each need from its own level in us, i.e., the physical must be treated purely from the physical, the mental from the mental, and so on.

Food must be such as will not only be palatable but will refresh and add strength to the body. This is, or should be, the primary consideration. Naturally, the body has to be strengthened by opposing it to external forces of nature, and the simplest way is physical exercise. Therefore, there are two aspects to physical existence, one is the provision of fuel for the inside, and the other is the pitting of the body against the external world to develop its strength, ability and other associated physical characteristics.

At the mental level, applying the same formula, what the mind needs is food for its existence, and solid effort in overcoming mental obstacles for its development. Man must devote adequate time to the study of such literature as will enrich his mind, and the literature should be of such quality and quantity as to make him throw his entire mental equipment into the study of such works. Unfortunately today we find that what most people read is the lowest type of literature such as the yellow journals, cheap romances, gory criminal fiction and so on. That such minds do not develop at all beyond the juvenile level is therefore no surprise. The curricula of most educational institutions do not appear to take this into adequate consideration from the point of view of the needs of the student.

Thirdly, coming to the emotional level of man, here again what emotional sustenance man receives is very often of the wrong type. Love is one of the fundamental aspects of man's existence, and in the fulfilment of this very vital emotional need such irrelevant media as romantic literature, cinemas and casual liaisons are indulged in, discovering too late that none of these can satisfy the pent up emotion where what is needed is a steady and canalized outlet for the emotional power of man which often does not need, or but rarely needs, physical expression. It is a well recognized fact that the physical expression of love must succeed the mental development of love or emotional development of love. But in modern society things are topsy-turvy, with very tragic consequences. The latest manifestation of such an unfulfilled need is the fast spreading drug habit combined with, or preceded by, a loose set of moral values.

Perhaps I may add that, as far as the emotional life of man is concerned, religions were expected, in a very fundamental measure, to make available an object of adoration or love which could elevate human emotional life to sublime levels far above the ordinary human level. The present day mental condition of most people would appear to indicate that religions, too, have not been able to

play their part. Here again what man solidly needs is something which he can venerate and adore, but all that is offered in most religions is an idol or other representational form of the deity. And the only way he is taught of approaching such an object of adoration is the ritualistic way which is largely outmoded and which, to the mind of modern man, very often appears as mere child's play.

We all know that while the non-satisfaction of purely physical needs may at worst impair the physical organization in some way or the other, albeit not very seriously, the non-satisfaction of emotional needs is much more serious. In the field of emotion, love is dominant, supported by, and evoking in its turn, such sentiments as faith, hope, charity, courage, etc. If this basic emotional instinct is unfulfilled, such associated mental-physical complexes cannot manifest themselves. It is well known that where there is no love there can rarely be courage, and I would request you here not to confuse courage with sheer bravado or the front-line necessity to kill. Similarly, where there is no love, there can be no faith, charity or chastity and, therefore, existence devoid of love is an empty existence. Love must grow and embrace more and more within its orbit of expression. Love for one's wife must enlarge into a deep love for the family resulting from such love. Familial love must grow to include neighbours, for, after all, if a neighbour is sick, notwithstanding the marvels of modern medicine, we are likely to be the next victims; if the neighbour is poor, his poverty affects us; if he is the victim of gangsterism and hoodlum attacks, we are sure to feel the repercussions. So our neighbour's well-being is a matter of immediate concern to us. Thus, slowly, as love matures, it must widen in scope until ultimately it envelops the entire universe within its sublime embrace. My Master has said that the only way of approaching the Ultimate is through love.

What we all need is a god, or if you prefer to call it so, a Universal Power or anything like that, but what we need is such an entity as we can approach with love and reverence. This would appear to be a spiritual need, higher than the other needs. Even an atheist would agree that there are times in his life when he has, perhaps unconsciously, cried out to God for succour, only proving that the need for God is universal in its prevalence. When we negate such a need, we do so artificially without knowledge of the frightful consequences of such repudiation. The time has, therefore, come to re-establish in our minds the truth that God is necessary to us, whether He is visible or invisible. Whether He can manifest himself or not is not the point. What He is must ever remain a mystery because what is known has no mystery about it, and only the unknown is mysterious. As the old English proverb would have it, "Familiarity breeds contempt," and it is perhaps for this reason that God chooses to remain invisible and inaccessible! But this does not mean that God's existence and love cannot be experienced. As my Master has often remarked, God cannot be seen or known in the conventional sense, but His presence can be experienced if the approach is in the right way.

How to bring God into our lives is the question. The first need of course is to recognize that we need Him. The people of the West would particularly appear to

suffer from some sort of complex that God is no longer necessary to them. I have come across such a statement in many discussions with my Western friends, particularly with those who are successful in material life, who ask incredulously, "But why do I need God when I have everything I want?" Such a question would never occur in the East where we believe that the foundation or the base of all existence is God himself, while also being its summit or crown. In the East we believe that God is in everything that we think, we do, we see and so on. That is, to us of the East there is nothing which is not of God and from God, and therefore this question of the need for God cannot arise at all to an Eastern mind. In the West, somehow man has become divorced from God, and according to my Master no health, whether of the body or the mind, can exist where this schism has been created between man and his Maker. This inner need is indeed paramount because even in the West we have innumerable aspirants who have recognized and accepted it and who, after a brief period of practice of our Sahaj Marg yoga, have testified conclusively that their existence has become filled in some mysterious manner.

This paramount inner need, a universal need in the minds of all men everywhere, is what my Master has set out to satisfy and fulfil. If God is not in us He must be put back into us, and Sahaj Marg, which is a form of raja yoga rediscovered by my Master's own Master who also bore his name, and was called Shri Ram Chandrajji of Fatehgarh, claims to satisfy this vital need. I have told you that Sahaj Marg is a system of raja yoga. Raja yoga is of course yoga of the mind, the term meaning literally the king of yogas. You all know what yoga means or should mean—union. The union is the ultimate union of man and his Creator, and no lesser union is implied. In raja yoga the way is the way of the mind, and what is done is meditation. All this is very simple because no doubt all of you have come across various yoga systems and are familiar with all the concepts or the broad concepts and terminology of such systems of the East. But Sahaj Marg has something very unique which sets it apart from all other yogas.

What are these features which set Sahaj Marg apart from other systems? Firstly, you all know of the great rishi Patanjali's eight-fold or eight-limbed yoga. It is said to incorporate the entire yogic learning in a practical form. Of the eight steps, the first two are devoted to eradicating negative factors from the human system, and to develop within the system the purity of mind and body necessary to go on to the third stage— asana, or postural yoga. Asanas are today very familiar to all, and have found ready acceptance over a wide section of the population. There are numerous schools of Indian yoga which teach nothing but *yogasanas*. There is another term under which this yoga goes, hatha yoga, which embraces within its practice, asana and the fourth stage, viz., *pranayama* or the art of right yogic breathing. According to my Master, these first four steps of yoga are really unnecessary and impracticable. He says that all men, even the evildoers, know right from wrong, but the problem is that this knowledge alone does not help, the will to act right being lacking. We must perhaps accept Master's statement that

no man who knew right, and who had the opportunity of doing right, would deliberately do wrong.

I remember, in this connection, once there was some discussion about the efficacy of hatha yoga for realising the ultimate aim of yoga, which is union with the Ultimate. My Master categorically stated that hatha yoga by itself is valueless if that be the aim. When I asked him why it had become necessary for rishis to practise this, he gave me an explanation which I think you will all agree is very logical. The rishis of the ancient times used to sit in meditation continuously for days, weeks and, if legends be true, months and years too, without a break. They had, therefore, neither the opportunity nor, perhaps, the inclination for physical exercise. However, the body had to have a minimum tension imposed on it to keep it fit at least to a minimal extent. Therefore, the rishis devised a system of yoga postures which they could adopt one after the other while sitting in meditation or contemplation, and thus kill two birds, as it were, with one stone.

Sahaj Marg yoga also does not recognize the need for the next two steps in Patanjali's yoga, but it really starts at the seventh stage, *dhyana*, or meditation, leading to the final step or stage of mergence with the Ultimate. My Master's teaching indicates that when the highest activity is performed, i.e., when meditation is established, the body assumes the posture natural and convenient to it. Thus asana is established by itself, not in an artificial or contorted way, but according to the needs of the body of the individual. Similarly, when meditation is established the breathing slows down and assumes its own cycle, and pranayama is thus established. When the mind becomes purified by meditation, the first two steps of *yama* and *niyama* are also established naturally and automatically. A poor mind can think nothing but poor thoughts, and poor thoughts can lead to nothing but poor actions. But when the mind is purified and correctly directed, pure thoughts and pure action result. Therefore, when we commence with meditation and establish it firmly, all the other steps of the yoga of Patanjali become automatically established in us. This is an effortless and natural way of doing things. That is why Master's yoga is called 'Sahaj Marg' which literally means the natural way.

Secondly, there is the system of transmission, *pranahuti* as it is called in Sanskrit. If I may be permitted a short reference to the Upanishads, particularly the Kena Upanishad, a student asks his teacher by what does the eye see? By what does the nose smell? By what does the ear hear? And so on, and the teacher replies that it is not the eye that sees, but the eye of the eye. Similarly what hears is the ear of the ear, and what speaks is not the mouth but something behind the mouth, the real speaker. The rishi goes on to add that life itself lives only by the existence of the higher life which it contains, and this is called the *pranasya prana* or the life of life. My Master has maintained that while the body lives by the soul, the soul must in turn have that by which it exists, and this is the ultimate life force or *pranashakti*. In our transmission under the Sahaj Marg system, it is this that is transmitted into the heart of the student of yoga by the Divine power associated with my Master, and which power it has been possible

for him to endow upon the preceptors, as they are called, who are vested with the responsibility of offering such transmission to students who come to them. This transmission is something which must be felt and which can be felt. You will agree that all life is transmission. In every action that we perform, or by which we receive, an act of transmission is involved, but in the transmission of Sahaj Marg it is the highest gift of life's life itself, and it is this that sets the Sahaj Marg system of raja yoga apart from all other extant systems of yoga.

We therefore believe that a hitherto largely unfulfilled need of man is now being satisfied by such transmission. While the other needs, the physical, the mental, the emotional, can be taken care of by man himself without recourse to much assistance or guidance from others, for this paramount spiritual need a Master is a must, because it is the Master who has this power of transmission, and without him it cannot be either given or received. Even the preceptors, to whom I have referred earlier, transmit only by virtue of the power that is opened up in them to do so. Without the Master there can be no preceptors.

I know that to Western minds the concept of a Master is very often repugnant and I have often wondered why it should be so. Do we not seek guidance even in trivial matters where our capacity falls below our need? Do we not seek the guidance and assistance of doctors, of launderers, of barbers, and in fact of innumerable other offerers of service? And we do so without losing our individuality or sacrificing our ego! Why should not such an attitude also include a Master of yoga for spiritual needs? After all, as my Master often says, when a man is in a serious physical condition he literally surrenders to a doctor, gets anaesthetized and loses all consciousness, and what is going on is unknown to him. This surrender to a doctor is purely on the basis of hearsay, on the basis of the doctor's reputation, or his degrees. Why it should not be possible for us to similarly surrender to a Master of yoga is something that passes comprehension. I am glad to note from our travels in the West that the Western mind seems to be changing, and is now willing to seek guidance in a sphere very vital to its existence. This change is something which must be fostered and allowed to develop and become universal.

I have given you some ideas inculcated in me by my Master. My Master sits before you, having travelled to the West solely to offer his services in making available the highest help in attaining oneness or identification with the Creator. I request all of you to participate in his programme and realise the benefit that his presence among you can confer.