

**A** GREAT PHILOSOPHICAL WORK of Vedanta known as Yoga Vasistha speaks of three interrelated methods that are geared to educate the unconscious, integrate the personality and enlighten the intellect. These three are: *tattwa jnana* (knowledge of the Self), *vasana kshaya* (destruction of *vasanas* or subtle desires of the unconscious), and *manonash* (destruction of the conditioned mind).

In Part One, we focused on *tattwa jnana*. Now in Part Two we will study *vasana kshaya* and *manonash*.

## Vasana Kshaya

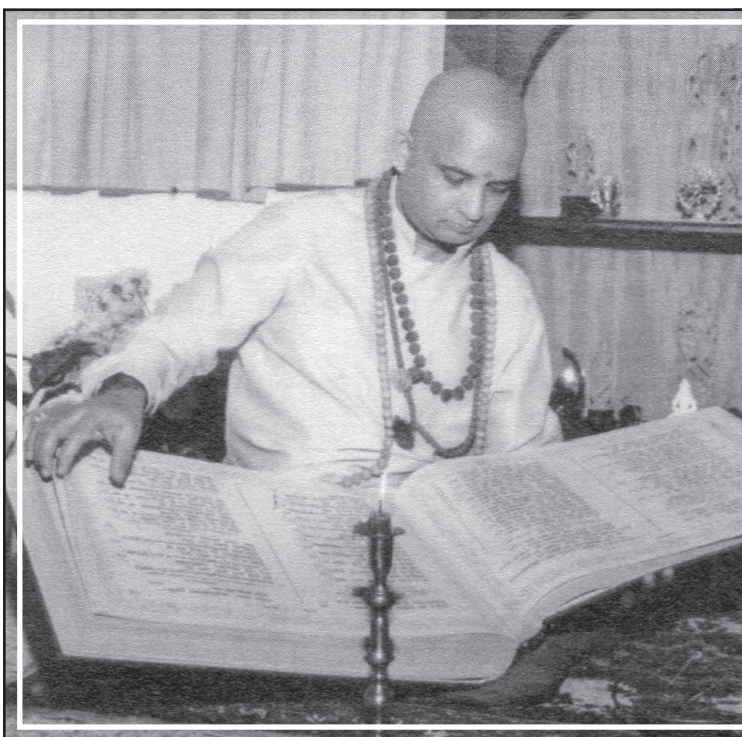
The second project before an aspirant is *vasana kshaya*, which means educating the unconscious in order to bring about the destruction of the subtle desires that are based upon ego-consciousness.

The unconscious contains subtle impressions of positive and negative experiences that you have gathered from many lives. But all those impressions are not operative all the time. The group of those impressions that are operative at any one time are

known as *vasanas*. You can consider them as subtle inclinations that you are not consciously aware of. But if you were to meditate and adopt certain advanced techniques, you would begin to know them; or if you go to some expert psychoanalyst, you will, to some extent, begin to know what is hidden within your unconscious.

**B**UT WHETHER YOU know the contents of your unconscious or not, Vedanta presents a way of re-educating, or reorienting the pattern of your unconscious. This is done through four practices which, according to the scripture of Yoga Vasistha, are called the four gatekeepers to the Palace of Liberation.

Sage Vasistha, the Guru of Sri Rama, teaches his disciple the great secret of Liberation. He teaches that in the Palace of Liberation there are four gatekeepers, and if the four gatekeepers are your friends, they will let you in. Therefore, make friends with these four. He further says that if you find it difficult to make friends with all the four, then just make friends with any three or any two of them, or even only one. If you make friends with even one, then the other three will follow.



# VEDANTA IN LIFE

By Swami Jyotirmayananda

PART TWO

**T**HE FIRST OF THESE GATEKEEPERS is *shama*, or serenity. Keep watch over your mind and make it a point to keep it serene. If things go wrong, understand that night follows day, and day follows night. The rainy season passes on and then spring comes. So, if such is the nature of things, then why should you become so upset? Try to promote serenity of mind.

No doubt it is a hard task to keep the mind serene, but repeated effort must be maintained day by day, no matter how many times you fail. If you fail, you have nothing to lose. Someone scolds you and your mind becomes agitated. At that time remember that serenity is a greater treasure than being agitated and revenging upon a person for what he did. Further, when things go well, it is a more difficult task to be serene. When suddenly there has been success in business and a lot of money has been made, one becomes so elated that their mind becomes agitated. At this time try to be serene, because all the world can give is but so little. What your soul hungers for is eternity, so why be so excited about little things?

When you look at monkeys being so excited about little things in the forest, you laugh at them. But what about human beings? They are doing the same thing, excited over such little things. Men of tremendous power, of immense wealth, have come and gone. It is only little things that have made the mind so swollen and egotistical.

So, by guiding your thoughts along these lines, develop serenity. Befriend *shama* and the other qualities will come to you automatically. The unconscious will no longer be a storehouse of frustrated impressions, but will become a storehouse of Divine impressions. You will promote an enlightened unconscious.

Consider your unconscious as your basket and the world as your garden. You are a flower picker, gathering flowers of different types to make garlands. There are flowers that are beautiful and Divinely fragrant, and there are flowers that are wild, poisonous, and very nauseating to smell. Some go after the poisonous types of flowers and

ignore the fragrant ones; they pick all the foul smelling flowers and, consequently, their whole basket smells.

Similarly, you can gather Divine impressions of humility, cheerfulness, compassion and purity, and your whole unconscious will be fragrant, or you can gather negative impressions of anger, greed, hatred, violence and selfishness, and your whole unconscious will develop a foul smell. It will radiate nothing but tension. The choice is yours, and you can choose serenity by adjusting your vision, picking up those impressions that are fragrant and repelling those that create a negative influence in your unconscious.

**T**HE SECOND GATEKEEPER is *satsanga*, good association. All the scriptures of Yoga and Vedanta give great emphasis to *satsanga*. The association that you keep has a constant influence on your unconscious, and it is extremely difficult to outstep the force of association. Intellectually you may be very bright and think, "I am a very alert person; nothing will happen to me. I can sit with people who constantly talk about violence, gambling, and all the unnecessary things of this world; yet, nothing will happen to me if I do so. I am very alert."

That is wrong, however. You can never be so alert as to avoid the influences of association. No matter how alert you are, your unconscious goes on imbibing from your surroundings. If you are in a *rajasic* or outgoing type of environment, you are bound to imbibe that restlessness in your unconscious. There is a saying in India by a Hindi poet: "If you enter a room full of soot, no matter how clever you are, when you come out, a fleck of that black soot is bound to be sticking to you somewhere." You may be walking around saying that you were so careful and nothing has happened. But there will be a fleck, if nowhere else, right on the tip of your nose.

Good association, therefore, has immense influence on the unconscious, and it must be promoted. People must develop the habit of coming together in families or in groups, studying the Gita, the

Upanishads or the Bible, or whatever is inspiring and creates an atmosphere of prayer and meditation. Even if it is just for half an hour, it would be a great movement. If the importance of *satsanga* could be conveyed to the masses, it would pave the way for a great cultural advancement in the course of time.

**T**HE THIRD GATEKEEPER is *santosh* or contentment. Learn to experience the unique joy of contentment. Do not compare yourself with others and thus promote feelings of discontent. You may see a person and think, “Since he is laughing, obviously he is happy. I am not laughing and I do not have so many wonderful clothes.” This is just a simple illustration, but it has profound implications.

By comparing yourself with others, you create an atmosphere of discontent. But if you have insight into the law of karma, you will understand that in the karmic process you are placed in a situation that is the best for you. God has placed you in that situation for your evolution. Trust that situation and take advantage of it.

Being content doesn’t mean that now you will stop all your effort. It simply means that you will

not be agitated. You will not allow your mind to entertain thoughts of despair and frustration. Rather, your mind will be vibrant with a sense of joy, no matter what happens, because you understand that there is a Divine movement behind your personality, even though your ego does not understand it. You begin to have faith in Divine purpose.

You do not compare yourself with others, because you are unique in your own way. Others are unique in their own way also. If you were in another’s place, you would not always be happy. Rather, you might always be miserable. Therefore, develop contentment.

**T**HE FOURTH GATEKEEPER is *vichar* or enquiry. Enquiry means asking yourself, “Who am I?” It is a spiritual investigation carried on in the stillness of your mind. Many people become puzzled if they feel happy, and nothing seems to have happened to give rise to that feeling. And they ask others, “Why am I happy? Nothing has actually happened — no good news.” The roof may be leaking and things may have gone wrong, and yet you are happy. Why?

When you enquire deeply, you will understand that happiness does not come from happenings; happiness is yours because it is right within your own heart. When you begin to look for that source of stillness and joy within yourself, you enquire “Who am I? Am I this personality who will exist only for a short time?” By pursuing such enquiry with great persistence and patience, you eventually understand that the inner “You” is the Eternal Self; you are not this perishable personality. Your inner Self is like the sky; your personality is like the clouds. Clouds come and go, but your innermost being is unaffected.

When you are in deep sleep, you are not in touch with your ego or your mind, yet “You” still exist. The same “You” exists also when you are active in daily life, but due to ignorance there is leaning upon the ego, leaning upon the mind, and this causes misery. Through Enlightenment, however, you will come to realize that you are dif-

Being content means  
your mind will be vibrant  
with a sense of joy,  
no matter what happens,  
because you understand  
that there is a Divine  
movement behind  
your personality,  
even though your ego  
does not understand it.  
You begin to have faith  
in Divine purpose.



ferent from the ego and different from the mind; you are different from the body, mind and senses; you are the Eternal Self.

This world is like a drama in which your personality plays a role. Let it play its role perfectly. Things that you have to do, do them well, but with an internal detachment. The real “you” is not dependent upon the fruit of action, upon the world of time and space. You are the everlasting Self, the Self that abides in all. This form of reflection is called *vichar* or enquiry.

**V**ASANA KSHAYA also implies developing qualities such as fearlessness, cheerfulness, honesty, sincerity, and all the great Divine qualities. These all promote good impressions in your mind. And these good *vasanas* must be cultivated with great care, for they are your real treasure.

You may have all the wealth in the world, but if your unconscious is filled with negative impressions of anger and hatred, then that is what you carry with you, and these impressions go on determining the degree of your happiness or your sense of freedom. This being so, you must constantly discipline your mind and senses by various Yogic methods.

## Manonash

The third important method of educating the unconscious is *manonash*, a technique adopted by Raja Yoga that consists of the practice of *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation) and *samadhi* (superconsciousness). The term *manonash* literally means “destruction of mind,” but it really implies mastery over the mind in your daily life.

*Dharana* or concentration is the practice of focusing the mind on any object, whether concrete (such as a flower, a Divine form, a candle flame) or abstract (such as peace, love, bliss). When the focused state of mind continues to flow on without interruption, it is known as *dhyana* or meditation. With increasing intensity of meditation, you enter into *samadhi* or superconsciousness. As you scale

the different rungs of *samadhi*, you develop intuitive vision, which destroys ignorance, the root of all negative mentations (related to egoism, attachment, hatred and fear of death). Thus, you finally attain the ideal state of *manonash*.

In day-to-day life, *manonash* implies keeping your mind free of the influence of attachment and hatred, and allowing it to enter into the state of profound *samadhi*, wherein the roots of attachment and hatred are negated. When you move in the world without being affected by attachment or hatred, your mind is said, figuratively speaking, to be destroyed.

**S**O IF, in your daily life, you attend to these three points — *tattva jnana* (knowledge of truth), *vasana kshaya* (destruction of subtle desires) and *manonash* (destruction of mind) — you would be moving towards the blessed goal of liberation. Therefore, attend to enlightening your intellect by listening, reflection and meditation; to educating your unconscious by adopting the four gatekeepers of Liberation; and to mastering your mind by the practice of concentration, meditation and *samadhi*.

When these points are practiced during your life, you are moving on to the goal, no matter how small your steps may be. As you move on you will begin to take longer leaps and strides. A Divine Hand begins to guide you. You may take tottering steps towards an elevator, but once you get into the elevator, you start going up fast. Similarly, there are many elevators awaiting you on the Divine path.

There must be a sustained practice day by day, an understanding that no matter where you are, or what circumstances you are in, your destiny is Self-realization. You do not have to wait and go to a remote place in the Himalayas, find yourself a cave and get yourself initiated by some impossible guru. You can have all these here and now. That is the great message of Vedanta — a teaching that is for all, not for a select few. All are select. There isn't a person who is not meant to attain Liberation.