

Exploring the 'light' of life

Swami Maheshwarananda Puri explains to **R.C. Ganjoo** some of the finest and sensitive facets of *yoga* which help individuals to explore the path of "Light" within and beyond.

In *yoga* we differentiate between

JIVATMA- Soul
ATMA-Self
PARAMATMA-God

Jivatma is the individual, and

Atma and *Paramatma* are Universal.

- *PARAMATMA* is the Supreme Principle, whatever we call it: God, Supreme Self, Divine Self, Love, Truth or Reality.

- *ATMA* may be described

as God's ray of light, which exists as the "light of life" in every living being. It is part of *PARAMATMA* and is therefore identical in nature with it. Just as the seed of tree contains all the qualities of the tree, the *Atma* also carries the qualities of the Supreme Self.

- *JIVATMA*, the individual soul, is the reflection of the *Atma* within an individual, a "wave" that emerges from the ocean of existence and wanders from embodiment to embodiment, and after a long process of development and experience again returns to the unity of the *Atma*.

The soul that has manifested itself in a form, however, does not identify with its divine essence but rather with its attributes, the physical body, the mind, the thoughts, etc. The aim of the path of *Yoga* is to dispel this illusion.

What is the reason that the individual soul separates from God? The cause lies in the principle of *Ahamkara*, the ego. Here ego means "the will to exist", it is the aspiration for manifestation and self-expression in the sense of "I want to exist".

Ahamkara is the seed from which the variety within nature comes into existence. The difference in form is relevant only to the external manifestation and to the expression of



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consciousness and intellect--the essence, however, is the same within all, *Atma*.

One cannot explain or describe the *Atma*. The closest comparison is with light or space. Space cannot be cut, burnt or otherwise destroyed. Space always remains space. One can divide space by

household, and again disperse after he has left his palace(the body).

The philosophical schools of India, particularly Yoga philosophy, have examined the essential question regarding our existence -"whom am I ?"- and given us an answer to this.



fences or walls to create "individual" spheres that can be shaped or decorated differently, but as soon as the demarcations are removed the undivided, unified space again emerges.

Just as walls divide space, the body, mind, intellect, disposition, qualities and experiences assembled as the "person", mark the boundaries or the self for a while. The body dies, the person changes, but not the *Atma*.

Our true Self is unborn, unchanging and immortal, it is the "king" around whom the cosmic forces gather in the royal

Examine yourself. Are you a body? The Mind? Your qualities, thoughts or feelings? Or are you something else? As you continue to search more deeply, you realise the more subtle aspects of your being, right up to the level of the elements. Then finally you recognise that you are not the *Tattvas* or *Gunās* either, and experience yourself as:

SAT-Truth
CHIT-Consciousness
ANANDA-Bliss.

Sat-Chit-Ananda is the

essence of the divine Self that lives within you, the eternal, infinite and immutable *Atma*.

The only true reality within us is the *Atma*. Everything else is unreality. *Atma* is *TRIKALADARSHI*, the knower of past, present and future, and also *CHAITNYA*, the conscious witness of everything that happens.

KARMA

Consciousness is in everything that exists the elemental force of the Universe that vibrates in every atom. The development of consciousness commences first at the level of the stone, and continues in metal, crystal and vegetation. Plants already have the ability to feel, but are not able to express or communicate their feelings to others.

At the next level of development are life forms such as coral and anemones that appear to be plants but actually belong to the animal kingdom. Then come fish, birds, mammals and finally human as the most developed earthly beings.

Because 'we' are "I-consciousness" and behave wilfully. We also bear responsibility for our behaviour. That is why the cosmic law of *KARMA* (action, deed) is valid for us humans. The Karmic Law states that every action we take will at some time come back to us in the same way as it went out from us.

Therefore the most important precept that should be observed is: To harm no one by our thoughts, words, deeds.

We produce *Karma* :

1. through thoughts.
2. through words.
3. through actions that we perform ourselves.
4. through actions that others do under instructions.

After death the physical body

remains on the earth and decays, the elements detach from one another and return to their source. We again find ourselves as bodiless, spiritual being in the astral plane because the subtle sheaths -the astral, mental and causal bodies -continue to exist. In these all our feelings, knowledge and memories remain. But there is one thing we lose after death-Kriya Shakti, the ability to act.

Only in the physical body are we capable of doing good or bad. After death we are unable to do anything. Our earthly possessions, title and position no longer have any value. Whatever level we reach in the Cosmos depends entirely upon our Karmas.

There are three types of Karma:

- *SANCHITA KARMA*
- *PRARABDHA KARMA*
- *KRIYAMANA KARMA*

SANCHITA KARMA (accumulated, amassed) is the accumulated from all or previous lives. It would be impossible to experience and endure all Karmas in one life . Therefore only a small part of the *Sanchita Karma* comes into effect with each birth.

PRARABDHA KARMA (begun, started) is the portion of the accumulated karma that has "ripened" and appears as a particular problem in the present life.

KRIYAMANA KARMA (created, produced), however, is everything that we produce in our present life. This Karma flows into the Sanchitakarma and consequently shapes our future.

The Law of *Karma* says that the energetic vibration arising from each action will one day come back to the one it originated from, either with the same qualities or even stronger through other intervening interactions.

Through our actions we plant the "seeds" of our future destiny

and therefore whatever happens to us is the "fruit" of our own past. If we think and act negatively we increase the disaster-bringing influences of our destiny, whereas positive thoughts and deeds develop the happiness-bringing potential.

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lucky' or "That was unlucky". But it is really our own vibration that pulls us towards luck or misfortune . We are driven hither and thither by it , just like a boat moved about in the wind and currents.

Karma is a vibration that surrounds our subtle inner and outer self. It is the energy and radiation that surrounds us, it is the expression of our entire personality, the sum of our subtle sheaths). Its fine vibration is not limited spatially and accompanies us everywhere .

Positive *Karma*--love, forgiveness, help and selfless service, practising mantra, prayer and meditation--generates a positive , healing energy that purifies and enlightens our Phänomen. If the being of a person is filled only by the radiance of positive and divine qualities, his Phänomen is completely illuminated. Such a person is an " enlightened one ", one who is united with God-

because God is love, light, harmony, knowledge, reality, truth and unity.

However, through negative thoughts, words, deeds and harmful qualities , such as anger, hatred, jealousy, attachment, passion, greed, fanaticism and egotism, destructive energies are produced which darken our Phänomen. We produce negative *Karma* because we lack knowledge and clarity.

The purpose of our existence here on earth is to gain correct knowledge and insight . If we do not make use of this opportunity and remain in ignorance , then after death we must again return to the world in a new birth to clear all unresolved *Karmas*.

Whether we believe it or not, rebirth is a fact. As humans, however, we have the possibility to make more rapid progress towards the light through the practice of good karma. This is why we should not allow the precious opportunity given by a human life to slip by ! We are travellers who have come to the "Hotel of the Earth" for just one brief night. Soon a new day will dawn and we must again depart. We can take nothing with us, everything remains here except the quality of our actions.

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