

2012 River Retreat Chela Dharma

Peace of Mind

Introduction

Karma Yoga teaches us how to act in such a way that we maintain our peace of mind. Peace of mind is essential for true success in earthly life as well as spiritual life and Self-Realization. However, “thought is father to the deed.” In order to engage in right action, we must have control of our thinking. Raja Yoga, the science of meditation, has much to say about how we can achieve control of our thoughts and become masters of our mind and senses instead of slaves to them. The goal of Raja Yoga is Samadhi, a state of complete identity with the ultimate Self of all beings (Brahman), which is the requisite for true Freedom, the theme of this year’s retreat. Samadhi is attained via deep meditation. Meditation is attained through concentration. Concentration is achieved by setting aside all other thoughts/objects but the one you have chosen to focus upon. If the mind is restless and distracted by the activity of its thoughts and the senses, or if it is dull and incapable of right thinking, then one will need to acquire tools for mastering this wayward mind. As Holy Mother states, “the mind is everything, my dear.”

What rocks your boat? What ruffles your feathers or unsettles your nerves? Minor irritations and major meltdowns both get in the way of our peace of mind. Actions performed in a restless or depressed state of mind create karma – good, bad, or mixed. The adept yogi or yogini attains a state of peace that actually allows him to recognize the *potential* for his mind to go out of balance and correct it before it gets unsettled. The aspiring yogi/yogini engages in practices to achieve peace of mind.

The mind is like a pair of glasses with interchangeable lenses. A tamasic state of mind is like wearing dark, even opaque, lenses. A restless mind could be a spectrum from lightly tinted to very dark lenses. A sattvic mind is like wearing clear lenses that cause no distortion of one’s view.

Have you ever noticed that someone who is always thinking negative thoughts sees and experiences negativity at every turn? Or maybe you know someone who is easily offended and has a habit of turning circumstances into opportunities for taking offense or feeling victimized? On the other hand, there are people who are cheerful of mind and even tempered under all conditions. Why should the mind, the supreme organ of perception in the human being, be anything other than a vehicle for illumined Intelligence? It is in our power.

This summer’s chela dharma lessons will be focused on three important teachings from the powerful Raja Yoga given to us by the great Indian Rishi, Patanjali: 1) recognizing the different functions of the mind, 2) recognizing the causes of pain-bearing (klishta) thoughts, and 3) learning yogic methods to promote even-mindedness. We will draw from Swami Vivekananda’s *Raja Yoga* commentaries on the Yoga Sutras, Babaji’s teachings, and others. These studies assume that you are practicing the yamas and niyamas with sincerity. Without a firm practice of these first two limbs of Yoga, there can be no peace of mind. Make sure you review these and contemplate them as part of your daily contemplation practice (see back page). As Holy Mother has stated, “You need peace, first and foremost.”

“There is no wisdom in the restless-minded; nor is there meditation in him. For the one who cannot meditate there is no peace. And how can the peaceless enjoy happiness?” Sri Krishna, Bhagavad Gita (2:66)

Lesson One: Chit happens

Make sure it doesn't "just happen" to you!

Yoga chitta vritti nirodha

Union with Reality (Yoga) is restraining the mind-stuff (chitta) from taking various forms (vrittis). – Yoga Sutras 1:2

- *Yoga* = union with Reality
- *Chitta* = mind stuff or mind field
- *Vritti* = literally “whirlpool”; thought-form, thinking vibration, mental waves
- *Nirodha* = dissolution, end, control, restraint

Swami Vivekananda, from *Raja Yoga*

A good deal of explanation is necessary here. We have to understand what Chitta is, and what the Vrittis are. I have eyes. Eyes do not see. Take away the brain center which is in the head, the eyes will still be there, the retinae complete, as also the pictures of objects on them and yet the eyes will not see. So the eyes are only a secondary instrument, not the organ of vision. The organ of vision is in a nerve center of the brain. The two eyes will not be sufficient. Sometimes a man is asleep with his eyes open. The light is there and the picture is there, but a third thing is necessary -- the mind must be joined to the organ. The eye is the external instrument; we need also the brain centre and the agency of the mind. Carriages roll down a street, and you do not hear them. Why? Because your mind has not attached itself to the [sense] organ of hearing. First, there is the instrument, then there is the organ, and third, the mind attached to these two.

The mind takes the impression farther in, and presents it to the determinative faculty -- buddhi -- which reacts. Along with this reaction flashes the idea of egoism. Then this mixture of action and reaction is presented to the Purusha (like Atman), the real Soul, who perceives an object in this mixture. The organs (Indriyas), together with the mind (Manas), the determinative faculty (Buddhi), and egoism (Ahamkara), form the group called the Antahkarana (the internal instrument/cause). They are but various processes in the mind-stuff, called Chitta. The waves of thought in the Chitta are called Vrittis (literally "whirlpool"). What is thought? Thought is a force, as is gravitation or repulsion. From the infinite storehouse of force [prana] in nature, the instrument called Chitta takes hold of some, absorbs it and sends it out as thought. Force is supplied to us through food, and out of that food the body obtains the power of motion etc. Others, the finer forces [psychic prana], it throws out in what we call thought. So we see that the mind is not intelligent; yet it appears to be intelligent. Why? Because the intelligent Soul is behind it. You are the only sentient being; mind is only the instrument through which you catch the external world. – from Vivekananda's commentary on Yoga Sutra 1:2

Further discussion:

One of the most important gifts of Indian psychology is its explanation of the processes of the mind. By learning to recognize these different functions we become better observers of our mind. Then, by learning to observe the activities of the mind, we realize that there is an unaffected Witness/Soul that is the source of our awareness as “I,” who is the Sentient principle in all perception. In Yoga Psychology it is called Purusha (“the dweller in the city/body”) and can be considered the same as Atman in Vedanta. This is the “seer” and It is never the “seen.” Separating the seer and the seen is essential to gaining control of the mind and achieving peace of mind. Some of you will remember “the teaching of the hand.” Share that with the others.

- What is needed for perception? Which are insentient and which are sentient? (slightly trick question)
- Make a diagram on the white board of the process of perception from sense object to Purusha.
- Swami Vivekananda describes four processes of the *antahkarana* (inner instrument) that produce the waves of thought (vrittis) in the chitta. Review what Swamiji says in the reading, then practice, via discussion and personal reflection, recognizing each of these processes in your mind's thinking:
 1. *indriyas* (5 sense organs ever seeking their objects: sound, touch, form/color, flavor, odor)
 2. *manas* (dual mind that shifts between good/bad, hot/cold, happy/sad, pride/worthlessness, love/hate, attachment/aversion, etc.)
 3. *buddhi* (the discriminative/determinative faculty)
 4. *ahamkara* (the separate "I" maker, the sense of ownership and agency around one's physical and mental experiences)
- Antahkarana means "inner cause" (*antah*, inner; *karana*, cause), or "inner instrument." Why is this an apt name for the mind?

Pithy Points to Ponder (from Babaji's classes)

Controlling the mind is the first duty of the practitioner.

What is the test of concentration? Time stops.

Thought is father to the deed. Therefore, if one stops thought, action also stops – what to speak of the world of matter.

Lesson Two: The Vrittis are our Universe

Swami Vivekananda, from *Raja Yoga* (continued)

"Take this book; as a book it does not exist outside, what exists outside is unknown and unknowable. The unknowable furnishes the suggestion that gives a blow to the mind, and the mind gives out the reaction in the form of a book, in the same manner as when a stone is thrown into the water, the water is thrown against it in the form of waves. The real universe is the occasion of the reaction of the mind. A book form, or an elephant form, or a man form, is not outside; all that we know is our mental reaction from the outer suggestion. "Matter is the permanent possibility of sensations," said John Stuart Mill. It is only the suggestion that is outside.

"Take an oyster for example. You know how pearls are made. A parasite gets inside the shell and causes irritation, and the oyster throws a sort of enameling round it, and this makes the pearl. The universe of experience is our own enamel, so to say, and the real universe is the parasite serving as nucleus. The ordinary man will never understand it, because when he tries to do so, he throws out some enamel, and sees only his own enamel. [emphasis added] Now we understand what is meant by these Vrittis. The real man is behind the mind; the mind is the instrument in his hands; it is his intelligence that is percolating through the mind. It is only when you stand behind the mind that it becomes intelligent. When man gives it up, it falls to pieces and is nothing. Thus you understand what is meant by Chitta. It is the mind - stuff, and Vrittis are the waves and ripples rising in it when external causes impinge on it. These Vrittis are our universe.

The Mind and the Gunas: sattva/balance, rajas/restlessness, tamas/dullness

"The bottom of a lake we cannot see, because its surface is covered with ripples. It is only possible for us to catch a glimpse of the bottom when the ripples have subsided and the water is calm [sattva]. If the water is muddy [tamas] or is agitated [rajas] all the time, the bottom will not be seen. If it

is clear, and there are no waves, we shall see the bottom. The bottom of the lake is our own true Self; the lake is the Chitta and the waves the Vrittis.

“Again, the mind is in three states, one of which is darkness, called Tamas, found in brutes and idiots; it only acts to injure. No other idea comes into that state of mind. Then there is the active state of mind, Rajas, whose chief motives are power and enjoyment. "I will be powerful and rule others." Then there is the state called Sattva, serenity, calmness, in which the waves cease, and the water of the mind - lake becomes clear. It is not inactive, but rather intensely active. It is the greatest manifestation of power to be calm. It is easy to be active. Let the reins go, and the horses will run away with you. Anyone can do that, but he who can stop the plunging horses is the strong man. Which requires the greater strength, letting go or restraining? The calm man is not the man who is dull. You must not mistake Sattva for dullness or laziness. The calm man is the one who has control over the mind waves. Activity is the manifestation of inferior strength, calmness, of the superior.

Further Discussion

- Swamiji States: “The universe of experience is our own enamel, so to say, and the real universe is the parasite serving as nucleus. The ordinary man will never understand it, because when he tries to do so, he throws out some enamel, and sees only his own enamel.”
 - Have you ever watched something with a group of friends and found that each person had a very different explanation for what happened? Explain.
 - Is it possible to interpret a situation correctly if you are protecting yourself in anyway? Give an example.
 - Discuss this statement by Babaji: “In order to tell it like it is, you have to see it like it is.”
 - What are the ramifications of Swamiji’s statement above in your daily life, in our society, and globally?
- The Three Gunas: discuss each guna and how it affects the mind.
 - A simple method for rising out of tamas is to consciously apply rajas: if your mind and body are lazy, dull, or depressed, then go do something active. Exercise, forget yourself in serving others (they are God in human form), spend time in Holy Company. Once your mind is active then apply sattva: study, contemplate, then meditate on the true Self.
 - *Uttisthata jagrata, prapya varani bodhata!* Arise, awake! Stop not til the goal is reached! Why does this famous Upanisadic verse say first to “arise” then “awake”?
 - Babaji teaches a simple formula for recognizing and shifting the mind’s tamasic and rajasic tendencies: Change Brooding Mind into Thinking Mind. From Thinking Mind one will attain Illumined Mind. Discuss: Brooding Mind and Thinking Mind. (hint: thinking mind is not thinking on worldly subjects)
 - Lex Hixon encouraged spiritual aspirants to seek out all the things that one broods on in the mind and get rid of them. What would *you* get rid of?

Quotes

The powers of the mind should be concentrated and turned back upon itself, and as the darkest places reveal their secrets before the penetrating rays of the sun, so will this concentrated mind penetrate its own innermost secrets. – Swami Vivekananda, CW 1:131

Those who really want to be Yogis must give up, once and for all, this nibbling at things. Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life – think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, and this is the way great spiritual giants are produced. Others are mere talking machines. If we really want to be blessed, and make others blessed, we must go deeper. The first step is not to disturb the mind, not to associate with persons whose ideas are disturbing. All of you know that certain persons, certain places, certain foods, repel you. Avoid them; and those who want to go to the highest, must avoid all company, good or bad. Practice hard; whether you live or die does not matter. You have to plunge in and work, without thinking of the result. If you are brave enough, in six months

you will be a perfect Yogi. But those who take up just a bit of it and a little of everything else make no progress. It is of no use simply to take a course of lessons. To those who are full of tamas, ignorant and dull – whose minds never get fixed on any idea, who only crave for something to amuse them – religion and philosophy are simply objects of entertainment. These are the unpersevering. They hear a talk, think it very nice, and then go home and forget all about it. To succeed, you must have tremendous perseverance, tremendous will. “I will drink the ocean,” says the persevering soul, “at my will mountains will crumble up.” Have that sort of energy, that sort of will, work hard, and you will reach the goal. – Swami Vivekananda, CW 1:177-178

Lesson Three: Vrittis

Getting to the bottom of things.....

According to the Raja-Yogi, the external world is but the gross form of the internal, or subtle. The finer is always the cause, the grosser the effect. So the external world is the effect, the internal the cause. In the same way external forces are simply the grosser parts, of which the internal forces are the finer. – Swami Vivekananda, CW 1:132

Swami Vivekananda, from *Raja Yoga*

“The chitta-vrittis, the mind-waves, which are gross, we can appreciate and feel. They can be more easily controlled. But what about the finer instincts? How can they be controlled? When I am angry my whole mind becomes a huge wave of anger. I feel it, see it, handle it, can easily manipulate it, can fight with it, but I shall not succeed perfectly in the fight until I can get down below to its causes. A man says something very harsh to me, and I begin to feel that I am getting heated. And he goes on till I am perfectly angry and forget myself and identify myself with anger. When he first began to abuse me, I thought, “I am going to be angry.” Anger was one thing and I was another. But when I became angry, I was anger. These feelings have to be controlled in the germ, the root, in their fine forms, even before we have become conscious that they are acting on us.

“With the vast majority of mankind the fine states of these passions are not even known – the states below consciousness from which they emerge. When a bubble is rising from the bottom of the lake, we do not see it – nor even when it has nearly come to the surface. It is only when it bursts and makes a ripple that we know it is there. We shall only be successful in grappling with the waves when we can get hold of them in their fine forms. And until you can get hold of them and subdue them before they become gross, there is no hope of conquering any passion perfectly. To control our passions we have to control them at their very roots. Then alone shall we be able to burn out their very seeds. As fried seeds thrown into the ground will never come up, so these passions will never arise.” – CW I:241-43)

Swamij states that we cannot control the passion perfectly until we can get at their roots, their causes. What are the subtle causes of passion? What do the six passions - lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, jealousy – stand upon? They stand on what is called The Five Kleshas, the Five Obstacles to Yoga (union with Reality): 1) avidya, ignorance, 2) asmita, egoism, 3) raga, attraction, 4) dvesha, aversion, 5) abhinivesha, clinging to life/fear of death.

A simple rendering of these five subtle causes of passion and other vrittis explains that as a result of ignorance, one’s unlimited nature as Consciousness is obscured. This creates a sense of separate and limited identity. From this sense of separation one gets attracted or repelled by other seemingly separate objects, and life becomes a routine of seeking pleasure and shunning pain. Pleasure is used to avoid pain, and thus one clings to life and its pleasurable experiences while attempting to hide from death. Sri Ramakrishna has described fear of death as unseemly for the eternal Soul as a snake being in fear of a frog. He should be having it for dinner.

From Babaji's commentary in the Yoga Sutras comes the following indepth explanation of the Five Kleshas:

“These five are the cause of klisha vrittis (pain-bearing or impure thoughts). They are also termed Viparyayas, which means modes of misapprehension [emphasis added]. . . . Vedavyasa points out that these five, taken in the Puranic context, are the names of five major hells which the mind visits (the Sanskrit root, “klish,” means ‘to suffer’). They are thus the very seed of samsara itself, causing birth, death, and rebirth in ignorance. Thus, they are to be brought under control (nirodha).

Avidya refers to that ignorance through which one imputes unreal things over the Atman [unchanging, indivisible Consciousness/Soul]. It is taking the unreal for the Real, as Vedanta puts it. The other four kleshas are stated to proceed out of this first klesha. Therefore we see that ignorance (of our indwelling divinity), in Vedanta and Yoga, really is the primal sin.

Asmita (egoism) refers to that delusion that causes the ego-self to think that the eight occult powers belong to and are beneficial to the Self, when the opposite is the case. The occult powers are things like making oneself light (so as to walk on water, etc.), making oneself huge or heavy (so as to crush enemies, etc.), the power to project oneself anywhere, the power to wield power over others, etc. They are called the Asta-siddhis (8 Occult Powers), and now we are finding out via the testament of the scriptures just why Sri Ramakrishna referred to them as “crow-droppings by the side of the road.”

Raga is that force of enjoyment that overwhelms and attaches one to pleasures that arise when the senses meet with their desired objects. Enjoying the Asta-siddhis and lordship over others are examples.

Dvesha refers to all that stands in the way to the above mentioned enjoyment, and which then gives rise to anger. It is the frustration of the ego in its attempt to own and enjoy everything.

Abhinivesha refers to that fear that arises when, after owning and enjoying the various powers and objects in the egoic state, one finds that they will ultimately and invariably be lost. A blind fear then seizes the soul, and a “dark night” sets in

Further Discussion

- List the Five Kleshas (memorize these). Why are these described as “modes of misapprehension”? What does it mean to take the unreal for the Real? What is unreal, what is Real?
- Ignorance, the first Klesha, is the root of the rest, compare this to Christianity’s “Original Sin” and eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
- Discuss how the Kleshas are the subtle causes of the six passions (memorize these) and other pain-bearing thoughts like guilt, shame, lack of self-worth, etc.
- Babaji’s commentary on the Five Kleshas refers to the 8 Occult Powers. When we hear of these, we are apt to think of fantastic psychic and mystical feats, but in fact, these are simply ways in which ordinary and occult/psychically-oriented beings seek pleasure from and power over *unreal* things that can bring no eternal satisfaction and actually distract them from true Bliss and Peace. The eight occult powers are listed below. Consider these in light of the Yamas and Niyamas.
 - Power of Invisibility (Ex: undetectability, nonresponsibility)
 - Power of Weightlessness (Ex: levitation, obsession with thinness)
 - Power of All-expansiveness (Ex: clairvoyance, invasiveness/meddling)
 - Power to Fulfill Desires (Ex: impression?, conjuring objects out of thin air)
 - Power of Glorification (Ex: sensation-mongering, beautification)
 - Power of Domination (Ex: control, manipulation, lust for power)
 - Power of Attraction (Ex: magnetism/charisma, allurements for selfish motive)
 - Power of Enjoyment (Ex: enjoyment of wealth, land, desires, etc)
- Sage Vasishtha states: “Sankalpic desire at three levels – the world, the mind, and the intellect – when utilized by the unilluminated mind is a detrimental force at the root of all suffering.” Consider this in light of the 8 Occult Powers.

- Discussion: What drives our reaction to the world we experience? What causes us to throw out that “enamel” of thought and construct a universe of mere reactions?

Quotes

Meditation is one of the great means of controlling the rising of these [passions]. By meditation you can make the mind subdue these waves. And if you go on practicing meditation for days and months and years – until it has become a habit, until it comes in spite of yourself – anger and hatred will be controlled and checked. – Swami Vivekananda

The purer the mind, the easier it is to control. Purity of the mind must be insisted upon if you would control it. [this is why we must seriously practice yama and niyama] Do not think covetously about mere mental powers. Let them go. One who seeks the powers of the mind succumbs to them. Almost all who desire powers become ensnared by them. – Swami Vivekananda

Brooding on the objects of senses, man develops attachment to them; from attachment comes desire; from desire anger sprouts forth. From anger proceeds delusion; from delusion, confused memory; from confused memory the ruin of reason; due to the ruin of reason he perishes.

– Sri Krishna, Bhagavad Gita 2:62-63

Lesson Four: Practicing Peace of Mind

“All the suffering in the world comes from wanting happiness for oneself. All the happiness in the world comes from wanting happiness for others.” - Buddhist Master, Shantideva

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In the previous lesson we learned about klisha/pain-bearing thoughts, such as the passions, and where their source lies in the five Kleshas. There are aklisha vrittis too, non-pain-bearing thoughts. The intelligent person will practice these in order to maintain equanimity of mind, as well as use them to oppose the klisha vrittis. This is sometimes called “raising an opposite wave.” The “prayer of St. Francis” is an example in Christianity (see Notes at end).

maitri-karuna-muditopekshanam sukha-dukha-punyapunya-vishayanam
bhavanatash chitta-prasadanam

“Friendship, mercy, gladness, and indifference, being thought of in regard to subjects, happy, unhappy, good, and evil respectively, pacify the Chitta.” – Patanjali, Yoga Sutra 1:33

Swami Vivekananda, from Raja Yoga

“We must have these four sorts of ideas. We must have friendship for all; we must be merciful towards those that are in misery; when people are happy, we ought to be happy; and to the wicked we must be indifferent. So with all subjects that come before us. If the subject is a good one, we shall feel friendly towards it; if the subject of thought is one that is miserable, we must be merciful towards it. If it is good, we must be glad; if it is evil, we must be indifferent. These attitudes of the mind towards the different subjects that come before it will make the mind peaceful. Most of our difficulties in our daily lives come from being unable to hold our minds in this way. For instance, if a man does evil to us, instantly we want to react with evil, and every reaction of evil shows that we are not able to hold the Chitta down; it comes out in waves towards the object, and we lose our power. Every reaction, if it is controlled, will be laid in our favour. It is not that we lose by thus restraining ourselves; we are gaining infinitely more than we suspect. Each time we suppress hatred, or a feeling of anger, it is so much good energy stored up in our favour; that piece of energy will be converted into the higher powers.” – From Raja Yoga, chapter 1, verse 33 commentary.

In Babaji's chart, "The True Meaning of Siddhi – Perfection," he juxtaposes the Eight Great Accomplishments with the Eight Occult Powers. These are worth studying because before becoming "attainments" they are modes of practice that will cultivate peace of mind. Of particular note are the last five: 1) pursuing a spiritual path, 2) gaining knowledge of the scriptures, 3) study and concentration, 4) spending time in Holy Company (which provides Guru and spiritual friends), and 5) self-purification. Sage Vasishtha informs humanity, "*Those virtuous ones alone gain moksha (True Freedom) who, from their early childhood, train themselves in Atmajnan scriptures in the company of holy beings. Therefore know, oh sedulous seeker, that the state of Brahman is attained via the combination of the illumined preceptor, the jnana-shastras, and the sincere disciple.*" Elucidating on this idea, Babaji explained, "trained from an early age in these scriptures, you will not find souls suffering; they will be in subtle bliss, even when the body is in pain."

Also on this chart, Babaji presents positive responses (aklishta vrittis) to particular klishta vrittis. These are another example of "raising an opposite wave":

- Passion —————> Control
- Anger —————> Compassion
- Attachment —————> Self-analysis
- Fear —————> Evolutes/Origins
- Jealousy —————> Generosity
- Depression —————> Nonattachment

Further Discussion

- Swamiji encourages us: "*We must assert our godhead in the midst of all difficulties. Nature wants us to react, to return blow for blow, cheating for cheating, lie for lie, to hit back with all our might. It requires a superdivine power not to hit back, to keep control, to be unattached. It is very difficult, but we can overcome the difficulty by constant practice. We must learn that nothing can happen to us unless we make ourselves susceptible to it.... 'I have no control of the external world, but that which is in me and nearer unto me, my own world, is in my control. If the two together are required to make a failure, if the two together are necessary to give me a blow, I will not contribute the one which is in my control, and how then can the blow come? If I get real control of myself, the blow will never come.'*" Swami Vivekananda, VOF p. 215
 - What do you think Swamiji means by "nothing can happen to us unless we make ourselves susceptible to it"? Give examples from your life or others you have observed.
- Discuss the quote from Shantideva at the start of this lesson. What are the ramifications of this in your life? For collective humanity?
- Babaji states: "*If one is suffering, then one's mind must not be right. The illumined do not suffer. Suffering of the mind is unnecessary. If the mind is kept healthy by spiritual practice, then whatever pain comes does not cause suffering. Suffering is ultimately unreal. Suffering comes only to the body and the mind that has lost its balance. By practicing the yamas and niyamas, one should already have solved one's emotional problems.*" How do these statements empower us to attain peace of mind?
- Consider the Four Beneficial Attitudes in Swamiji's commentary and "opposite wave" prescriptions from Babaji's chart in this lesson. Choose one or more to make a special practice on. Discuss your reason for your selection.

Quotes

If you want peace, my child, then do not look into anybody's faults. Look into your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my dear, the whole world is your own. – Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi

What is mature compassion? To have compassion for something that is perfect (the Atman) is futile; and to have compassion for bodies and egos is misplaced. So Vedantists are more about Love. You are

not serving egos or the human race, you are serving God - though not for that person in whom God dwells, but for yourself. You are the one who is learning. Any kind of service is for yourself. You can't help others, you can only help yourself comprehend the Great Self. Of course, It doesn't need help. This is the way you get rid of agency and ownership. Agency and ownership are what keeps the ego intact. – Babaji

Make no mistake about it: life is wanderlust based on desire. If we can at least turn it into an avenue for selfless service, then it has meaning and justification. – Babaji

Review from 2011

Last summer's lessons focused on the principles of Karma Yoga, the Yoga of union with God via selfless action. The Yamas and Niyamas from the Yoga Sutras were also given for memorization and practice. The main points from these lessons are given below for review and discussion before moving forward.

“Actions performed with attachment to the results are far inferior to those performed with equanimity of mind. Take refuge in evenness of mind, for wretched are the result-seekers.” – Sri Krishna

Swami Vivekananda, from *Karma Yoga*

- “The goal of mankind is knowledge. That is the one ideal placed before us by Eastern philosophy. Pleasure is not the goal of man, but knowledge. Pleasure and happiness come to an end. It is a mistake to suppose that pleasure is the goal. The cause of all the miseries we have in the world is that men foolishly think pleasure to be the ideal to strive for. After a time man finds that it is not happiness, but knowledge, towards which he is going, and that both pleasure and pain are great teachers...” – Swami Vivekananda
- “Now this knowledge, again, is inherent in man. No knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside. What we say a man "knows," should, in strict psychological language, be what he "discovers" or "unveils"; what a man "learns" is really what he "discovers," by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge.”
- “Karma in its effect on character is the most tremendous power that man has to deal with. Man is, as it were, a center, and is attracting all the powers of the universe towards himself, and in this center is fusing them all and again sending them off in a big current.”
- We are responsible for what we are; and whatever we wish ourselves to be, we have the power to make ourselves. If what we are now has been the result of our own past actions, it certainly follows that whatever we wish to be in future can be produced by our present actions; so we have to know how to act.”
- “...[A]ll work is simply to bring out the power of the mind which is already there, to wake up the soul. The power is inside every man, so is knowing; the different works are like blows to bring them out, to cause these giants [i.e. each of us, ed.] to wake up.”
- Pop Quiz! Name and explain each of the 5 Yamas & 5 Niyamas (in Sanskrit too if you can)
- Pop Quiz! List the 4 kinds of karma.

“Karma is the eternal assertion of human freedom. If we can bring ourselves down by our Karma, surely it is in our power to raise ourselves by it.” – Swami Vivekananda

Notes, etc.

Lesson One:

Yamas & Niyamas

- 5 Yamas: Ahimsa/nonviolence, Satyam/truthfulness, Asteya/noncoveting, Brahmacharya/continence, Aparigraha/non-indulgence/non-receiving of gifts with strings
- 5 Niyamas: Tapas/austerity, Saucha/purity, Santosha/contentment, Svadhyaya/study of revealed scriptures, Ishvara Pranidana/worship of God

Lesson Four:

* Prayer of St. Francis

Lord make me an instrument of Your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon, Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope, Where there is sadness, joy;
And where there is darkness, light.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not seek
so much to be consoled as to console,

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved, as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive--

It is in pardoning that we're pardoned;

And it is in dying* that we are born to eternal life.

**This means dying to selfishness and false identification with our individual body and mind as the Self/Soul.*

Sources:

CW = Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda

VOF = Vedanta, Voice of Freedom, (excerpts from CW) edited by Swami Chetanananda