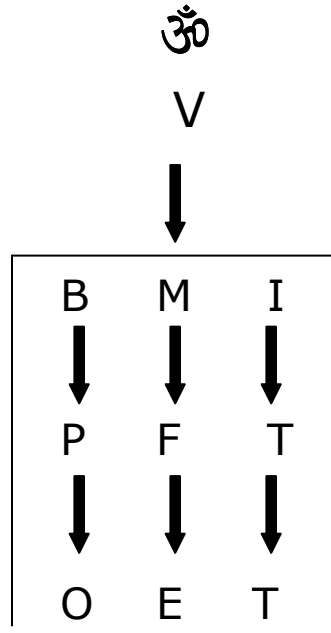


Manual for Living

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The eleven letters of the BMI chart provide the essence of Vedānta or scriptures in a nutshell. We can start vertically from the top and go down to see what is meant by each letter on the chart.



ॐ = Supreme Reality, the Self, *Paramātmā*
V = *Vāsanā*
B = Body
M = Mind
I = Intellect
P = Perceiver
F = Feeler
T = Thinker
O = Objects
E = Emotions
T = Thoughts

So far, we have seen what the letters represent in rows, but we will now see the inter-relationship between the same letters in columns. We can start at the top from the ॐ, and go down to *vāsanā* and from there we can see the three columns that represent the body (B), the mind (M) and the intellect (I). From the body, we can arrow down to the perceiver and the objects of perception. From the mind, we can arrow down to the feeler and emotions. Finally, from the intellect, we can arrow down to the thinker and then thoughts.

When we look at a person as an individual, we normally include three things that determine his individuality or personality.

What are those three things?

The combination of the body, mind and intellect put together is what we call a person or a personality. Each individual, unique to himself, expresses into the world through these three instruments - the **body, mind** and **intellect**.

How does the individual express himself through these three instruments? When he is expressing himself through the body (B), he is the perceiver (P) of the world of objects (O). The objects of the world and experiences can be many. He enjoys a multitude of objects in the world through the body as the perceiver of the objects. Through the mind (M), he expresses as a feeler (F) feeling different emotions (E) in his own bosom. The mind is the seat of emotions through which he feels different emotions like happiness, sadness, and anger. When we are expressing in the world through the mind, we can easily tell if the mind is in a happy or sad disposition. We see that somebody looks sad and we keep asking, "What's wrong? Are you not in a good mood? You're not your normal self!" The third and last medium of expression is the intellect (I), which is used by the individual to express himself as the thinker (T) with different kinds of firm thoughts (T). With the intellect, he thinks or is **supposed** to think.

These are the three instruments whereby a human being can express himself. Now we have to understand what the body is, what the mind is, what the intellect is. According to the scriptures, the body consists of ten different organs. There are five organs of perception or knowledge and five organs of action. Through the five organs of perception, we perceive the world. After having perceived the world, whatever we have to achieve, is done through the five organs of action. In human beings, the head is called *uttama anga*, the best part because majority of the organs are there. The other animals are called *tiryak*, meaning horizontal. In animals the head, the stomach and the lower abdominal organs are all in one straight line. In human beings, the organs are in a linear sequence. The head is supposed to be carrying four very important organs of perception – the eyes, ears, nose and tongue.

What are the five organs of perception?

Through the eyes, we see the world, through the ears we hear the sounds, through the nose, we smell different kinds of smells. Fortunately or unfortunately, the tongue is a two-in-one organ, since it is both an organ of perception and an organ of action. On one hand, it perceives taste and on the other, it is used in speech. Which is the fifth organ of perception? The skin through which we perceive touch. The sense organ of touch is spread all the through the body unlike the other organs like the eyes, nose etc.

What are the five organs of action?

The first two are the legs and hands through which we work. We have already seen one organ of action, the tongue. The other organs of action are the genital organs and the excretory organs through which all the impurities are expelled from the body. Both the organs of perception and action put together form the body.

What is the mind?

Before we try to understand the mind, let us look at an example. If water is stored in a glass, it is called a glass of water, if it is in a bottle, it is called a bottle of water, if it is in a pot it is called a pot of water, if it is in a tank it is called a tank of water. When is water called a river? A continuous, perpetual, free flowing mass of water bounded by two banks is called a river. If at all the water becomes stagnant, it is not considered a river. Similarly, the continuous flow of thoughts is called the mind. That is the reason when we are in deep sleep we do not react even to insults because in the deep sleep state the mind ceases to exist. Dare somebody insult us when we are awake? We challenge them because there is a mind to react. When we are in deep sleep, there is no mind; it ceases

to exist, meaning that the flow of thoughts has stopped. Therefore, the general definition of mind is the continuous flow of thoughts. Let us look at another definition of mind. The mind is very fluctuating and indecisive. Should I go or not? Should I eat or not? Should I see or not? Wherever and whenever there is a thought that is fluctuating, confused, wavering or wobbling, that is trying to decide, yet not decided, that state of thought is called "mind".

What is the intellect?

Intellect also consists of thoughts, but there is a functional difference between the mind and the intellect. They can be compared to isomers, sharing the same molecular formula, but with a functional difference. The essential structure and formatting of both the mind and intellect is the same, both are nothing but thought matter, but there is a functional difference. Whenever there is fluctuation or *chanchalatva*, that state is the mind, and whenever there is decisiveness, that state is called the intellect. That is the difference between mind and intellect, *manas* and *buddhi*.

There are some more subtle differences between the mind and intellect. When we hear a new word or phrase, we immediately begin scanning our random access memory trying to find a match. However, when we come across a familiar word like chrysanthemum as an example, it immediately strikes a familiar chord in our memory. Different variations of the size, color and shape of chrysanthemums appear in our understanding. The mind functions in the realm of the known, recognizing familiar objects. How does this happen? The eyes see the form, they communicate the information to the mind, and the mind takes it to the *chitta*, the memory bank. There a search is performed by name or form, or a combination of both name and form. If we are shown a jasmine and told that it is a chrysanthemum, we search for both the word (name) and shape (form). After going through our memory, which is formed by our past experiences, we come to the conclusion that the form that is being shown to us is a jasmine, not a chrysanthemum. Until this information has been forwarded and processed by the *chitta*, it is *manas*, which functions in the realm of the known. Once the information has been processed and matched, the intellect decides that, this is a jasmine. That decisive factor is called the intellect. However, supposing, we come across a word we have never heard before like "gugga-bugayam", the mind immediately and instantaneously searches the memory bank and returns a negative result, "I do not recognize this". At the same time, there is a part of us that still tries to figure out what the word could be. That part is the intellect, which functions in the realm of the unknown also. It is like a search engine that can return results from unknown realms. The mind cannot go beyond the realm of our known experience; the intellect continues the quest into the unknown.

Therefore, we see that we have three beautiful instruments at our disposal – the body, the mind and the intellect. Each one of us is blessed by all three and everybody's mind and intellect is of equal capacity. How much of their potential we can tap into and use is in our hands. Each one of us through the body, the organs of perception, perceives the world of objects. After perceiving the objects, the mind feels different kinds of emotions; the intellect starts thinking so that it can make decisions. Each individual expresses in three different planes. At the grossest level, he is a perceiver of the world, a little subtler he is a feeler of emotions, and a little subtler still, he is the thinker thinking different kinds of thoughts.

What then makes each individual unique?

No two people are the same. Even if they are identical twins born to the same mother, they think differently, behave differently, talk differently, walk differently, and like different things. If the mother asks them what they want for breakfast, one may want *dosa* and the other *puri*. Where does this difference come from? That difference is

indicated in the BMI chart by the letter "V". The "V" stands for *vāsanā*, which in Sanskrit means smell. There can be two kinds of smells – *suvāsanā* and *durvāsanā*. *Suvāsanā* mean good smell and *durvāsanā* means bad smell. If we smell a jasmine flower and say it is *suvāsanā*, that decision is also based on an earlier experience of nurturing thoughts as this being a good smell.

Once three fisherwomen went to the market in a neighboring village to sell fish. By the time they sold all the fishes, it had become dark and it had started raining. Fortunately, one of the fisherwomen had a friend in the flower business who lived in that village. She proposed that they go to her friend's house, sleep there, and leave for home early the next day. The three fisherwomen spent the whole night tossing and turning although the room provided by the friend was cool and comfortable. Finally, one woman got up and said that she was bothered by the fragrance of the flowers. So, what did she do? She went out and brought in the basket, in which she kept the fishes, put it under her head and fell fast asleep! *Suvāsanās* and *durvāsanās* are nurtured and decided according to our taste, which again depends on our *vāsanās*.

How important is *vāsanā*?

That is the only layer that is separating us from ॐ, *Paramātmā*, God, the Lord or whatever name we want to give to the Supreme Reality. Every little thing we do in this world leaves its impression, its smell on our sub-conscious mind, which is called *vāsanā*. All these impressions propel us into a certain way of living. This leads us to a catch-22 situation. What comes first - the chicken or the egg? Let us not fall into the trap of wondering whether the *vāsanās* were first or the actions were first. We are here, and we have to understand it logically from the standpoint of where we are. We already have many kinds of *vāsanās* or imprints, which propel us to think, act and behave in a certain pattern. Each individual is unique because of his or her *vāsanās*. Each one of us has the same set of eyes and sees the same world, but the perception is different. It is said that the beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. These differences in perception are because of the impressions within that make each one of us unique. In this uniqueness, we have *suvāsanā* and *durvāsanā*, good *vāsanās* and bad *vāsanās*, good impressions and bad impressions. These *vāsanās* in our mind propel the body to perceive the world of objects in a certain fashion alone. They propel the mind to feel certain kinds of emotions in a certain way alone. They push us to think in a certain pattern alone. "*Andaz apna apna*". Each one of us has his or her own way of looking at the world of objects, the world of emotions, the world of thoughts. These different combinations and permutations make each one of us unique.

How do we train the BMI so that we are well equipped to face life in the right way?

How many of us feel that we have an absolute control over our own body? We can train others to listen to us, but when it comes to our own body, we have absolutely no control over it. We cannot even sit in one place in one controlled posture. Our organs of perception– hearing, vision, smell, touch, and taste are not under our control. We have so many other instruments in the body. None of them is under our absolute control. Our condition is like that of a driver with a learner's permit who is in the driver's seat, but does not have any control over the steering. Each one of us goes through life, carrying an invisible sign on our front and back that says "L", meaning learning to control my own body.

Next, we come to the mind. The mind, as it is defined, is never ever stable. Many of us wonder how we can control the mind. The mind has ten different gates through which it can escape. The moment we try to close one gate, the mind has already escaped through another gate. The mind keeps running and all this running around leads to a dissipation

of energy. In spite of having many labor saving gadgets, we are still tired and fatigued at the end of the day. Why is this? It is because the mind is running out into the world through the ten different gates and we are constantly struggling to keep it under our control. This leads to so much energy being used and wasted, so that at the end of the day we feel totally tired. It is as if we are trying to fill a vessel with ten holes full of water. Will that vessel ever be full? It cannot ever be because despite our best efforts, water will be leaking from the unplugged holes.

Similarly, if we consider the human body with ten different gates, we will be surprised to see how much energy is being wasted. Do all of us get angry? We cannot even begin to imagine how much energy is wasted in ten minutes of intense anger. It is equivalent to the energy spent by a cyclist going uphill with the wind against him for half an hour. We do all kinds of exercises and eat special diets to rejuvenate us, but the basic problem is the uncontrolled mind, which is sapping all our energy. We can never feel fresh with that kind of a mind. Even after having slept like a log for eight to ten hours, we get up complaining that we are still tired. Definitely a mistake is being committed somewhere. Where is that? The mind is playing havoc with us. We are losing much of our energy unknowingly because the body is not under our control; the gates are not plugged. Because the body is not under our control, the mind takes us for a ride, plays hide and seek with us, we try to catch it in one corner and it escapes from another. When we sing the "Om Jai Jagdish Hare" *ārati*, there is a statement where we say that we surrender our mind to the Lord, but is our mind ours to surrender? Where is the mind? Already running out somewhere from our "holey" body with the ten holes.

What is the world of objects?

In Sanskrit, the world is called *prapancha* or *jagat*. Why is it called *prapancha*? There are five basic elements – earth, water, fire, air and space and the various combinations and permutations of these five elements are being expressed as this world. What is *jagat*? It is that which shines and attracts according to Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj (*Jag jag jag jo chamakta hai, woh jagat hai*).

What is the world of emotions?

The world of emotions exists in our heart. We know what kind of emotions we are experiencing. Emotions have been broadly classified as *ṣaṭa vikāra*. *Vikāra* is the abnormal nature of the mind. What are the *ṣaṭa vikāras*? *Kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada* and *mātsarya*. *Kāma* is desire. Desires are endless, they keep on continuing. When desires are not fulfilled, what is the result? *Krodha* or anger. Supposing desires are fulfilled, then what is the result? *Lobha* or greed. Why are we running after the things that we have or don't have? Why are we attracted or distracted by them? *Moha* or delusion. We are like the famous Indian runner, P. T. Usha - we keep running after the things we like, far away from the things we don't like. Every time we achieve our desires, the result is *mada*, the sense of pride in our achievements. If we do not achieve our desires and someone else does, the result is *mātsarya* or jealousy.

What is the world of thoughts?

As you think, so you shall become. We make so many decisions, but are not able to keep any of them. If we do not respect our own decisions, how can anyone else respect us? Not thinking is not an option. Think we must. We must make our thinking a productive endeavor so that our thoughts can be used in a proper fashion. We must also learn to respect our own decisions.

Can we escape from acting?

No one who is alive has an option to break free from actions. If we are alive, we have to keep working; we have to keep living, doing something or the other. Act we must. Work we must. We are not given an option or choice. Each one of us when we exist has to express through the body, through the mind, through the intellect. We perceive the objects, feel the emotions or think different kinds of thoughts. We do not have an option of escaping from life. When we think of escaping from life or changing the atmosphere because we are bugged by the present situation, wherever we go, we will have to ultimately face another kind of life wherein we exist again. So act we must. There is no choice of escaping from action. Our understanding of acting or not acting, working or not working, doing or not doing is limited. If I am doing something and I suddenly stop, I say that I am not working. For example, if a child is upset about something and is asked to do something, he refuses to do it because in his mind, doing something is working, and not doing it is not working.

Let us expand our understanding a little further. When we are doing some work, we call it working. When we stop working, stopping work is also an act, which means that we are doing something. If I am speaking that is an action, if I stop speaking that is also an action. Stopping an act is also an act that we have to recognize. Supposing we have put in a lot of effort going uphill on a bicycle, after having reached a certain height there is a slope so no effort is required, but we are still moving, still doing. Similarly doing something or not doing something, we are still working. Once Gurudev was conducting a *yajña* on the fifteenth chapter, there was a crowd of about 15,000 – 20,000 people. Suddenly Gurudev stopped and asked if there was anybody there who thinks he is beyond the range of actions. He paused for 5 – 6 seconds, but nobody lifted his or her hand. He chuckled to himself and said, "If by mistake anybody had lifted their hand, we would have attended their funeral." Because it is only in that position that we are beyond action. Until we reach that position we have to do something or the other, we have no choice but to act. However, we do have a choice about how we act. How I perceive this world of objects, I have a choice. How I feel the emotions, I have a choice. How I think, I have a choice. The choice of existence is not in whether I have to do or not do. Do you must. There is no escape from action. Whether we work productively or unproductively, work we **must**.

Once we are convinced that act we must, the next thing that we must understand is that whatever we do, every minute perception, feeling or thought leaves its impression on our heart. All the minute details of everything we do, feel or think are registered in the sub-conscious or *chitta*. Just as a computer has memory where information is stored, similarly in our *antahkaraṇa*, we have the *chitta* wherein all the minutest details of our experiences are recorded. To give an example, it is like the black box in the airplane, which records even the slightest sounds and movements in the cabin. Similarly, this *chitta* has the capacity to record every movement whether it is at the physical, mental or intellectual level. We have a thought, it is registered. We act, it is registered. We feel something, it is registered. These imprints form a vicious cycle. Let us understand what that cycle is. As they say, habits die-hard. HABIT. Remove the "h" from HABIT, a bit (A-BIT) still remains. Remove the "a", bit (BIT) still remains. Remove the "b", it (IT) still remains. Remove the "i", the "t" (T) still remains. Everything that we do forms a pattern, an imprint in our sub-consciousness called *vāsanā*. When these imprints gain more potentiality because of habit, they keep propelling us, forcing us, pressuring us to act in the same pattern. For example, we feel that our day does not start on the right note unless we have an early morning cup of hot coffee. Suppose we do not get it one day, we end up with a headache. The moment we get it, the headache is gone. Why do we get a headache in the first place? Because a habit has been formed from the force of the "V" (*vāsanā*), the imprints that have been left by prior experiences, which forces us early in the morning to think of coffee. This is a very small example, which is being used to show that our whole life runs in a certain pattern. As soon as we wake up in the morning, the first thought of coffee enters our mind, we think of it and feel good expecting the coffee

to come at a certain time. We are waiting, the coffee has not yet arrived, and the force of the thought of coffee keeps on increasing and gathering momentum. Then we find out there is no milk or coffee powder in the house. **“NO COFFEE! NO COFFEE! NO COFFEE!”** The increasing pressure and repetition of the “no coffee” thought irritates us and causes a headache, not the actual absence of coffee.

Every emotion, negative or positive is caused by the imprints lying deep in our sub-consciousness. Each one of us reacts to situations and circumstances in a different fashion. If ten people are given a piece of work, they will do it in eleven different ways, not one of them being common. Why? Because of the force of the imprints within that pressures them to work in a certain pattern. Therefore, whatever we are going to do is going to create imprints. However secretly we may try to act, it still creates a pattern. We cannot escape from doing and everything we do creates this pattern. How terrible is the pattern? Unless and until the pattern is satisfied, it is not going to be washed out. The moment we put forth effort to get satisfied, it creates another imprint. The new imprint gathers potentiality and pushes us into doing something else. Therefore, we end up acting, gathering imprints and acting again.

Where does this end? Added to that is the fact that all our endeavors are done with the basic goal of gaining contentment, which is never gained. This is called *karma chakra*, a vicious circle. Many of us have this question – why do we get back to square one? It is because our **square** is a **vicious circle** - which keeps pulling us, back to the same pattern repeatedly. Wherever and whenever, we are expecting happiness, contentment, and satisfaction through BMI by experiencing the changing multiplicity of OET as the PFT, our every endeavor results in a state of pain and incompleteness. This state of pain and incompleteness is called sin or *pāpa*. **Pāpa** is not just doing “bad” actions, it is even subtler than what we have defined for our convenience. Many a time, religion appears to be a game of convenience for us. We use religious terms wherever, whenever and however we find convenient. We say that we will go to hell when we do something wrong. Where is hell? Any state of discomfort and disease of the BMI experienced by the individual is hell or *naraka* and is the result of our sinful actions.

How can we fine-tune the BMI?

How do we escape from this mechanical rut and circular pattern of life, where we perform an action, create an imprint and are pressured to act again, thereby creating another imprint? As long as these imprints exist, to exhaust them we keep taking births. The imprints in the *chitta* are not just of this life, but from many earlier lives also. Unless those imprints are totally washed out, we cannot escape from the cycle of birth and death. If a cloth gets a stain, what do we do to remove it? We have different kinds of detergents and washing methods. To remove the *vikāra* of the cloth, we perform the *samskāra* of washing. Now what are the detergents available to wash this “V” (*vāsanā*), which are formed by the PFT running after the OET? Do we need Tide or Clorox? What do we need? If it was that easy, then Ādi Śankara would not have needed to write so many texts. If it were that easy, then all the *sādhus* and *swāmīs* would be unemployed!

How do we achieve our goal of crossing over the “V” by using the three instruments that we have at our disposal – the body, mind and intellect? Each one of us is essentially the Lord incarnate, but we are unable to experience it because the body, mind and intellect create limitations that do not allow us to understand our own true nature. If there is a radio that is only producing static, it is not the fault of the instrument. It has to be tuned properly so that it produces music. Similarly, fine-tuning is required for these instruments of the body, the mind, and the intellect. Keeping this in mind, the *rishis* had developed three techniques called *karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna*. Through the body perform *karma yoga* for the tuning of the body, through the mind perform *bhakti yoga*, for the tuning of the

mind and through the intellect perform *jñāna yoga* for the tuning of the intellect. The practice of all three leads to a balance in life.

Our expressions are a combination of all three things – physical, emotional and intellectual. When we talk of the personality of a person, it is the combined expression of all three facets. When we look at the lives of *mahātmās* like Swami Chinmayanada, Swami Tejomayanada, Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Yogananda Paramhansa, we see that their greatness and uniqueness lies in the absolute tuning of their body, mind and intellect. They made good use of the three instruments they had. All of us have the same three instruments, but we hardly make use of them. We are blessed with a beautiful body, a potent mind, and a piercing intellect, but they need to be tuned. How can we tune these instruments? There is saying that you should use a thorn to remove another thorn. Tune them through the world of objects, through the world of emotions, through the world of thoughts. The process of tuning the body is called *karma yoga*. The process of tuning the mind is called *bhakti yoga*, and the process of tuning the intellect is called *jñāna yoga*.

What is *karma yoga*?

Karma yoga is the art or knack of performing *karma* in such a way that we free ourselves from the shackles of the “V” (*vāsanās*). These *vāsanās* pressure us and propel us to action. All of us have inherited vast amounts of these impressions not just from this birth, but also from countless births before. The slightest movement performed by us until now is recorded in the *chitta*. If we have to cross over the “V” then we have to use the body in a proper way. By body is meant the two sets of five – the first set is five organs of knowledge or perception and the other five are called the organs of action. We had talked earlier about the intrinsic design of how perception and action takes place. This entire process happens in a fraction of a second. As soon as we see something familiar, we recognize it immediately. The immediate-ness is so immediate that we do not even see the intrinsic process behind the recognition. The mind through the instruments of the body- the organs of perception goes into the world outside recognizes the objects and comes back. Supposing after perceiving an object through the *jñānendriyas*, we like it and want it, the mind now whips up the *karmendriyas*. It programs the legs to walk towards the object, the hands to pick-up and feel it. When we are working in this fashion, each one of us having the same sets of five organs of knowledge and five instruments of action, same mind, same intellect, we still react differently. The cause again is the *vāsanās* or imprints inside the *chitta* or sub-conscious, which propel us to act in a certain pattern.

Karma yoga is the intelligent way of working in day to day life, performing actions in such a way so that all the imprints that are already existing are totally expressed, removed or sublimated, acting intelligently so new imprints are not formed to create a layer between the instruments (BMI) and my own self, my own real nature (ॐ). We are placed in a certain position wherein we have to perform certain duties and responsibilities by *prakṛti* or nature. In fulfilling these duties **what we do is not important, how we do what we do is very very important**. Understanding this and acting is called *karma yoga*.

How can this be put into practice? Our responsibilities and duties have to be fulfilled, the day-to-day work has to continue, but how many of us are living our daily lives alertly? How many of us are aware that we are breathing? I know I am breathing, that is a different issue, but how many of us are aware that we are breathing every moment? Maybe one or two people. It is fun to watch people sitting outside in the lawn. There is no need of a lawn mower to cut the grass. How many of them are aware that they are sitting there plucking blades of grass? Are we aware of our actions? We are not aware of what we are doing. How we talk, how we walk, how we do things every small minute

thing reflects who we are. Most of the times we just do things to get them over with. There was a *mahātmā* who used to say, "It is very important how we dress, and what we address". The intent of this statement is that we should pay full and complete attention to our thoughts and behavior. Every minute thing that we do in this world happens without our awareness, as if by force. We believe in freedom, in absolute independence, in having total control, but then we are not even aware that our actions are not independent, we are forced to do things as they happen without our knowledge. Becoming aware of what we are doing is the first step in changing our actions into *karma yoga*. When we are aware of our actions, can anything wrong happen? When we are completely, 100%, totally in the present, can anything wrong happen? When we are acting with total awareness in the present moment, nothing can go wrong.

The second point to understand about *karma yoga* is that all of us are generally working for a specific result. Right from childhood, each one of us, once we start understanding that we can get something out of life by our actions, questions, "What's in it for me?" (WIIFM) when asked to do something. We develop the intellect of a trader - we do not invest anything unless we see what is the return. Even a small child immediately asks what am I going to get in return when asked to do a simple thing like getting a glass of water. We usually give the child a candy or something else that he likes for doing these small tasks. Since then it becomes a lifelong habit - do something, expect something in return. When we do something, we are not performing the action for the action *per se*; we are performing it for something else. When we are performing an action, the result is bound to come whether we expect it or not. The result **will** come. If the result is bound to happen, why unnecessarily spoil the pleasantness of the present moment by wracking the mind with expectations of something that is definitely going to come. Do something; the result is bound to happen. We do not need to keep worrying about it or expecting it. It **will** happen, it **shall** happen. Every *karma*, every action has its result, and it comes unasked for. Our motive that propels us to action need not be the expectation of a certain result. Whenever we make a future appointment, disappointment is bound to happen. If we do not make the appointment, then where is the disappointment?

The third principle of *karma yoga* - let not your work be a source of agony. Now how does this happen? Whatever we have to do has to be done in the present moment. We cannot do it in the past or in the future. Even if we go "**Back to the Future**" when we start working, we have to work in the present. We cannot work in the future; we cannot work in the past. What happens when we are working in the present? Either the weight of the dead past or the tension of the unborn future spoils the joy of the present moment. We know very clearly that the past has gone by, and it is not going to return. Although it is gone for good, it leaves very strong imprints behind so that we live under the weight of the dead past. When we talk to older people, they start talking about the past, living in the present; they only dwell in the past. This is also one of the reasons why we do not have any growth in India. Once upon a time there was *Rāma-rājya* in India - we talk about the glorious past, but do nothing to maintain the glory in the present. We are anxious about what is going to happen in the future. What is going to happen will happen. Why do you want to disturb your present moment? Be ready for whatever is going to happen. Be sure to equip yourself to face it. We are always nostalgic about and dwell in the pleasant experiences of the past. If they were not glorious, we are worried about the past repeating itself. We should look at every mistake that happened in the past as a teacher, not as a source of apprehension for the future.

There is story of how the Emperor Akbar once held a competition in his kingdom to see who would have the healthiest cat. Birbal got a cat and served it very hot milk the first day. Thereafter the cat would not even drink any cold buttermilk because it looked like the milk that had burnt his mouth. The cat's experience was that any white liquid is hot; anything hot burns its lips. So therefore, it would not even touch the buttermilk. At the end of three months, it was the sickliest looking and most unhealthy cat in the kingdom.

As the cat, we also have the fear that the unsuccessful past might repeat itself and that thought keeps us worried in the present. The present is again disturbed because of the future. We keep planning and our plans are so beautiful, so gorgeous, so great, but then as Gurudev said. **“Plan your work and work out your plans.”** We keep planning and planning and planning, but do not work to execute the plans because we are only interested in living in a dream world where we constantly keep planning and expecting. All that we have succeeded in doing is daydreaming. Planning is a must, but then working out that plan in the present moment is also a must. The second part we very easily forget, so that the present moment is again disturbed and agonized. The art of living, the right way of action is living in the present, fulfilling our responsibilities and duties and performing actions so that we are aware of them and they do not create any kind of impressions in us. Every moment very cautiously lived, very perfectly understood and analyzed, this is *karma yoga* through the body.

What is *bhakti yoga*?

Now what is *bhakti yoga* through the mind? What do we have to do if we have to cross the impressions to reach our own true nature, which is indicated by the ॐ, through the mind? The mind is a flow of thoughts that always keeps disturbing us because we are tackling the problem in a wrong way. The basic nature of mind is *chanchalta* and we expect the mind to be not *chanhcala*. How can that happen? It is like expecting a small child to sit without any movement. How can we expect the children to do what the so-called mature adults cannot do? Why fight against nature? Similarly, the mind cannot sit quietly. If we are awake, it has to go off in different tangents. So, how do we bring the mind in a proper state of control so that we can reach our own true state, our own being? Since the mind is nothing but a flow of thoughts, introduce a self-ascertained thought to the mind, which is nothing other than *japa*. No other thought can exist in our mind when we repeat the name of the Lord. When we are aware of that particular moment and keep repeating that thought and being aware of the repetition, definitely the other thoughts will dwindle away.

What is *bhakti*? When we have filled our heart with the Lord and His name. It is again the offering of the thoughts. But what kind of thoughts? Those thoughts which are taking us towards the Lord. When we talk of *japa*, repetition of the name, many of us have a question as to why should we repeat the name of the Lord alone. Why not chant any word, for example, “Coca-Cola?” This experiment was conducted on some Balavihar children in India. After chanting “Coca-Cola” for five minutes, they were asked about their experiences. One girl said that all she could think of was Salman Khan. The second boy said he just wanted to drink some Coke. None of the children had any control over their thought process because of this repetition. Rather, it led to the eruption of a continuous chain of other thoughts. The names used for *japa* are specifically created so that the mind comes absolutely under our control. They are not just any words or sounds. Every sound has its vibrations and its effect on our minds. These words have been specially formulated so that their positive effect is maximized when we chant them. This process is called *bhakti yoga*.

What is *jñāna yoga*?

Everybody is endowed with *buddhi*. The basic difference between the *buddhi* and *manas* is that *buddhi* is the decision-making faculty. The *chanchalta* or wavering nature belongs to the mind, the faculty of decision making to the intellect. How many times do we notice that our decisions are right? Which is more? Right decisions or wrong decisions? The underlying assumption is that every decision we make should bring us happiness. Do our decisions lead to happiness? It is very hard to even accept that we make wrong decisions. If our intention and purpose behind the decision was to gain happiness and

that is missed, then definitely the decision we made was wrong. The intellect has to be educated in a proper way in order to make the right decisions. The method for educating the mind is the process called *satsang* – good company, reading good books, attending *satsangs*. This education of the mind is called *jñāna yoga*.

Karma, bhakti and *jñāna*, the three ways to free ourselves from the bondage of our own self-created prison, the prison that we cannot feel, that we cannot taste, that we cannot see so that we can come to realize our own true blissful nature of ॐ.