

# **MANUAL OF THE NEW YOGA**



## **LESSON 5:**

### **THE NEW YOGA OF ACTION**

#### **(KRIYA YOGA)**

**...from awareness of action  
to awareness in action**

**For that vibration (*spanda*), which is a slight motion of a special kind, a unique vibrating light, is the wave of the ocean of awareness, without which there is no conscious experience at all. For the character of the ocean is that it is sometimes filled with waves and sometimes waveless. This awareness is the essence of all.**

**It is the powers of the self (*atman*) that, emerging from the ocean of awareness and uniting together in various and sundry ways, create finite realities. The mutual interaction of the powers to manifest the finite is termed the power of action (*kriya shakti*).**

*Abhinavagupta*

**...the “calling” which most deeply touched our nature, and moves us in its service, is to be *felt as a strongly grounded motivation* to act in the world, visibly moved by a deeply rooted compassion for the suffering and needs of all other sentient beings. *Compassion is: moving and being moved for the sake of others.***

*David Michael Levin*

**I exercise occult and subtle power, carrying water, shouldering firewood.**

*Zen Master Koji*

## **FROM THE BHAGAVAD GITA**

All creatures come into existence from ... action.

Your domain is the field of action alone, and never its fruits. Do not be motivated by the fruits of action nor attached to inaction.

As taught by Me since ancient time, O Blameless One, there are in this world two kinds of disciplines: the yoga of knowledge .... And the yoga of action for yogins.

He whose intellect is established in the yoga of knowledge casts off both good and evil even while living in this world.

Yoga is skill in action.

Not by abstaining from action does a man achieve freedom from action ...

There is no knowledge without action and there is no action without knowledge. Therefore ... one who knows the secret of action and knowledge is capable of releasing human beings from bondage.

This world is action-bound, save when this action is intended as sacrifice [of the notion of the ego as agent or doer]. For the sake of sacrifice, engage in action free of attachment [free of identification with action, with the ego as doer or agent of action, with the end results or gains of action].

Therefore always perform, unattached, the right deed, for the man who performs action without attachment [identification] attains the Supreme.

He who rejoices in the *atman* [awareness self] alone, who finds satisfaction in the *atman*, who is content only in the *atman*, for him there is no action that he needs to do.

Having abandoned attachment to the fruits of action, always contented, depending on nothing, even whilst fully engaged in action he does not act at all.

For Me ... there is nothing to be done in the three worlds, nothing ungained to be gained - and yet I engage in action.

Whilst the unwise act because of their attachment to action, O Bharata, so the wise should also act, but without attachment, desiring the welfare of the world.

The wise man should not create a division in the minds of the ignorant who are attached to [identified with] action; the wise should direct them to enjoy all actions and dutifully engage in them himself.

Actions are actualised by the intrinsic qualities belonging to manifest reality, each actualising their individual nature. He whose self (*atman*) is deluded by the ego thinks 'I am the doer'.

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# THE ESSENTIAL MESSAGE OF THE GITA

1. Awareness of action is not action.
2. Awareness is non-action (*naishkarmya*).
3. Aware action is action that arises freely out of non-action - out of awareness.
4. Aware action is action in which the quiescent stillness of non-action is sustained.
5. Aware action is free and autonomous action without an agent – without ego.
6. Awareness alone is the ultimate source of all action, released within itself.
7. Unaware action is action in which awareness loses itself and becomes bound.
8. Engage in action like those without awareness – but do so with awareness.
9. Unaware action is action driven by need and desire.
10. Aware action is action free of all needs and desires.
11. Aware action alone will fulfil all needs and desires.
12. There is no perfection in action - only in awareness.
13. Even whilst acting, rest in quiescent awareness.

## THE KRIYA YOGA OF PATANJALI

The path designated as *kriya yoga* by Patanjali was equated with the essence of yoga itself, which he defined as “the restriction of fluctuations (*vritti*) of consciousness”. The term *vritti* derives from the root *vrt* – ‘to whirl’. *Vritti* can be compared to ripples or disturbances on the surface of a smooth lake, the lake being awareness itself. In terms of The New Yoga, *vritti* are principally ‘mental’ movements or fluctuations of awareness of the sort which Patanjali associated specifically with (acts of) perception, conception, misconception or remembering. These have their basis in *samskaras* - “subliminal activators” (Feuerstein) or *action patterns* lying latent beneath the surface of the ‘lake’ of awareness. The *expression* of these action patterns in patterns of mental activity and experience, and their *embodiment* in patterns of physical activity and experience, both gives them form and reinforces them - thus shaping the individual’s destiny or *karma*.

The ‘law of karma’ can thus be reinterpreted as something rooted not in a linear relation of ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ but rather in the principles of “morphic resonance” and “formative causation” as conceptualised by the biologist Rupert Sheldrake. According to Sheldrake any potential pattern or form (*morphe*) is automatically reinforced by *resonance* with its own mental or material actualisation, thus giving it the character of a “morphic field”. “Formative causation” is the principle by which such morphic fields automatically exert a formative influence on the actualisation of further “morphic units” (whether atoms, cells or whole organisms) tending to shape them in their own likeness. Manifest form or pattern in other words, is intrinsically self-reinforcing or self-reproducing - even without any energetic or genetic causality being involved. Mental fluctuations or *vritti* can be ‘restrained’ by cutting them off at the stem (dis-identifying from mental patterns of thought and perception). Yet as Patanjali recognised, they can only be truly *eradicated* by getting to their *roots* - blocking their emergence as patterns of thought and perception *at the very point of their inception* in our awareness. In The New Yoga of Action this applies to *bodily* as well as *mental* action patterns. For it is the latter that reinforce the former. And we can become aware of the *samskaras* behind both only by *sensing them in a bodily way*.

## KRIYA YOGA AND KARMA YOGA

In the tantric tradition *kriya* (action) is the fifth of the primary pentad of divine powers or *shaktis*, following *cit* (consciousness), *ananda* (bliss), *iccha* (desire/intent), and *jnana* (knowing). *Kriya yoga* is also intimately related to *karma yoga* - the words *kriya* and *karma* being historically derived from the same root (*kri* - to 'make' or 'create', 'do' or 'act'). Yet as Georg Feuerstein explains, "... the word *karma* can signify not only 'action', but also 'work', 'product', 'effect', and so on." That is why he agrees with Webster's dictionary definition of *karma* as "the force generated by a person's actions held in Hinduism and Buddhism to perpetuate transmigration and in its ethical consequences to determine his destiny in his next existence." This is also why *kriya yoga* - as the yoga of action - is intimately related to *karma yoga*. The term *kriya* was initially used by Patanjali to refer to an eight-fold path of meditative practices designed to free the individual from the entirety of latent action patterns or *samskaras* which gave shape to an individual's actions and thereby also their destiny or *karma*. The reduction of *kriya yoga* - indeed of 'yoga' as such - to the practice of bodily postures or *asanas* known as *hatha yoga* was the result of a long development, one which only fully took hold in 1930's America. Its historic roots however, lie in a lineage of *tantric* adepts known as the *nathas* - in particular *Matseyendranatha* and *Goraksanatha*. The focus of their 'practice of the body' (*kaya sadhana*) was not the physical body alone but the psychical body and its powers or *siddhis*.

The deeper significance of both *kriya* and *karma yoga* however lies in the historic role they have played in countering the identification of Indian religious and ethical philosophy with *world renunciation and inaction*. Thus, as Feuerstein points out "...Gandhi was modern India's most superb example of a *karma-yogin* in action." Furthermore "... the law of karma does not intrinsically encourage fatalism ... On the contrary, it is a call to assume responsibility for one's destiny. This call is made in all the psycho-spiritual traditions of India, which, as liberation teachings, insist on the freedom of the will." Though free action is defined in *karma yoga* as *naishkarmya* or 'non-action', its essential meaning is *aware action*, a "freedom in action" (Feuerstein) that comes from transcendental *awareness* - an awareness of action that transcends any given act, pattern or dimension of action, even whilst engaging in it.



## ACTION, IDENTITY AND THE EGO

The so-called ‘law of karma’ does not refer to a linear relation of *cause and effect* but to a ‘non-linear’ or *reciprocal* relation – the way in which every *action* automatically and instantaneously *reacts upon* the very agent of that action, either reinforcing their current identity or pattern of action, or altering it. Western philosophy and psychology on the other hand, are bound up with the notion that the agent or ‘subject’ of both awareness and action is an unchanging ‘ego’ or ‘I’, one whose identity remains permanently *immune* from alteration by its own actions. In simple terms, the ‘I’ that washes the dishes is no different from the ‘I’ that lies ill in bed. This reduction of identity to an unchanging *ego-identity* is reflected in language itself, where the word ‘I’ is used as an unchanging grammatical ‘subject’ of any verb or action. Here language itself contradicts our everyday experience of feeling different in ourselves – experiencing a different self - when engaged in different types of action.

The ego is that portion of our identity that regards itself as an initiator of action and as independent of action – unchanged by its own actions. In this sense ego-identity is essentially an illusion, for all aspects of our identity, including the ego-identity, are *a part of action* and not separate or *apart from it*. They themselves are patterns of action emerging from and within awareness. The ego is also that portion of our experienced self or identity that regards awareness itself as its private property.

The aim of yoga is to not to destroy the ego but to undo the experienced illusion of ego-identity, the idea that we are unchanging centres, subjects or sources of awareness. We undo this illusion by learning to experience the ego as just one aspect of our experienced identity among others - one which we can be *aware of* in the same way we are aware of other aspects of our experienced self. For all aspects of our identity emerge within the awareness field of our inner self – that self which does not ‘possess’ but *is* awareness. There simply is no ultimate *agent* of action outside of SHIVA - awareness itself. As awareness itself, SHIVA is not some divine super-ego which engages in action but that which *releases* action from within itself. The action it releases is SHAKTI – the *autonomous self-actualisation* of all the *potential* forms and shapes *of* awareness latent *within* awareness.

## AWARE EXPERIENCING AND AWARE ACTION

*All experience and all action* spring from awareness – giving expression to different patterns and qualities of awareness. *Unaware experiencing* leads to identification with particular, fixed or limiting ways of experiencing ourselves, other people and the world. *Unaware action* is action that is driven by and in turn reinforces such limiting identifications. It is action that comes from unaware experiencing. Such action is purely *reactive* – a reaction *from* our own unaware experience of ourselves and *to* our own *unaware experience* of other people and the world.

*Unaware experiencing* thus goes together with *unaware action*. To ‘free’ oneself from accumulated *karma* means to free oneself of the accumulated *identifications* that result from and reinforce *unaware action* – all forms of *reactive relating*. To not ‘accumulate’ *karma* in the first place however, means to cease to engage in *unaware action* – to cease to act and relate at any moment in a way that is *purely reactive*. For whenever we hastily *react* to or react from a particular experience without first giving ourselves time to become *aware* of what we are experiencing we reinforce the *karmic* vicious circle linking *unaware action* with unaware experiencing.

*Aware experiencing* thus goes together with *aware action*. You can be *aware* of how you are experiencing another person (for example as hostile, hurtful etc) and of the way it affects you (for example making you feel hurt) without *reacting to* that particular way of experiencing the other, and without *reacting from* the particular way it makes you feel or experience yourself.

*Every action implies other possible actions*. Reactive, unaware action is *unfree* action – for it excludes other possible actions. Without giving ourselves time to become aware of what we are experiencing therefore we can neither dis-identify from our experience nor *freely choose* our actions from within a broader field of awareness - one that embraces and includes the alternative possible actions. Whenever we simply *react* in an unaware way on the other hand, we contract our awareness to one line of action alone – as if there were no possible alternatives, nothing else we could do or say. That is the true meaning of *karma* as bondage or unfreedom.

*Aware experiencing leads to aware action* – for only through awareness of experience can we act in a way that does not spring from unaware identification with our experience of ourselves, other people and the world. Only *aware action* is truly *free action* – for only awareness of the way we act allows us to freely choose our actions with awareness, rather than just ‘acting out’ our identifications. *Kriya yoga*, as the yoga of action, is therefore the essence of *karma yoga*, freeing us, through new ways of acting, from our ‘karmic’ accumulation of unaware identifications and patterns of action (*samskaras*).

The smallest bodily action (*kriya*) or sequence of actions (*krama*), from the raising of an eyebrow to a particular way of walking or talking, is itself an *act of identification* – reinforcing one identity or pattern of action as opposed to other, possible ones. Identity is a pattern of action. *Karma* in the negative sense is simply action (*kriya*) understood as *unaware acts of identification* which *confine* our awareness to a particular identity or *pattern of action*. Through such actions we can act or play out *parts* of ourselves or ‘part selves’, but we do so in such a way as to lose awareness of our whole self or soul. This whole self or soul is ultimately the ‘awareness self’ - the self that *is* awareness in all its incarnations, identities and dimensions. If we limit our sense of who we *are* to what we *do* then we allow those actions to *define* and *confine* our identity and we lose touch with our awareness self. Unaware action is action in which awareness loses itself in unaware identifications - thus becoming ‘karmically’ bound to particular identities or patterns of action.

*You are not what you do but the way that you do it.* Every aspect of your *experienced identity* is not a ‘what’ but a ‘how’ – a specific *way* of acting or *pattern* of action. An identity is a *pattern of action*. A new identity is a new pattern of action, one which lends a new quality to our awareness. Any *aware alteration* in the way we act *alters both our identity and our awareness* – lending it new qualities and a new pattern. But action that is not itself *aware* cannot lead to an *alteration* in awareness. We cannot *alter* our awareness through the way we act if we are not *aware* of how we act.

## KARIKA

What is any 'being' except its *way* of be-ing?

What is any 'body' except a way of bodying?

What are the senses except ways of sensing?

What is this life except a way of living?

What is this 'human being' before you except their ways of being – of sensing and breathing, looking and listening, moving and speaking, living and dying?

What is that voice you hear from them except a way of sounding?

What are those words they utter except a way of saying something?

What is that look on their face except a way of looking at things?

What is that face except a way of facing things - facing themselves, facing their world and facing other beings and facing their own feelings and those of others?

What are feelings themselves except ways of feeling things?

What are the 'things' or 'beings' we face and feel except other ways of be-ing? What is this single 'tree' I see except its way of treeing – of branching and leafing, flowering and fruiting?

What is this single branch except its singular way of branching? What is this single leaf except its singular way of leafing?

What is this single flower except its singular way of flowering?

What are its unique tones of red, yellow or blue except its unique ways of reddening, yellowing or bluing? What is this green blade of grass except its way of greening, and of standing and quivering in the breeze?

What is any 'thing' or 'being' that exists except a way of *ex-isting* - of 'standing out' within our field of awareness, and comporting itself towards us?

What is 'light' except the way in which things are illuminated for us in awareness and in doing so, radiate or illuminate their own qualities of awareness?

What is that majestic tree, mountain or outcrop of rock, except a seemingly motionless but deeply moving compartment – a *way* of comporting itself in the landscape around it, and one that can move us and every other being in all manner of ways, even as we move around or upon it?

What is any being's 'identity' except a *pattern of action* that is at the same time a pattern of interaction – of dynamic relation?

## ACTION, SPACE AND PERCEPTION

Experience too, is no ‘thing’ but an ‘-ing’. For what we call ‘experiencing’ is the presencing or *actualisation* of specific experiences within a space of awareness. Thus experience too is also *action* occurring or unfolding within that space. All spaces are spaces of awareness. All that we experience actualises itself or comes to presence itself in these spaces of awareness, inner or outer. That means also that all spaces are not only spaces of awareness but spaces of *potential experience*, and *potential action*. All space is what Winnicott called “potential space”.

Perception is a primary mode of experiencing. But what we perceive, for example, as a doorknob is not just a visual object in the spatial field of our awareness. We perceive it *as* a ‘doorknob’ only because we do not simply ‘see’ some round object but sense what it would feel like to grasp and turn in the act of opening the door. Similarly we perceive the door as a door, and not just as a piece of painted wood, because we sense what it would feel like to open and go through it. Even the *potential* action and experience of opening the door is no mere act of mental imagination, but something we sense in a *bodily way* just looking at the door. Door and knob, perceived as a doorknob are already an invitation to act with our whole body. Even without actually opening the door the doorknob is already experienced in our field of awareness as the expression of the potential *pattern of bodily action* that constitutes ‘opening the door’. Before we can actually go and open the door however, that pattern of *potential action* in space needs to have *already been enacted*, not in our mental imagination, but as “virtual action” (Shapiro), one anticipated through our already existing *bodily* sense of it. In addition “The simple act of opening the door reveals and describes a relation between the doorknob and the door, or the door and the next room.” The movement of actually opening the door with our *physical body* is but the enactment of a *potential pattern of action* already sensed with our *felt body* and based on its sense of a *pattern of interrelatedness* in space. It is with our felt body or awareness body that we first sense patterns of relatedness in space and give them form as virtual patterns of action – not only before but *in order* to then enact them with our physical body.

## MEDITATION, STRESS AND BODILY ACTION

According to Karl Marx, the essence of human being is “sensuous human activity”, in particular the bodily activity of creative human labour. It was Marx’s understanding that when workers no longer own and sell the products of their labour but instead are forced to sell their labour power itself, they become alienated from their bodies and from the sensuous and creative bodily activity that makes them most human. Instead, they become wage slaves - disposable ‘employees’ whose labour time, as well as its products, are both the property of the modern capitalist employer. In the inexorable drive for the maximisation of profit through increased productivity, both labour *time* and the *pace* of labour in the workplace is continually increased. Hence the ubiquitous phenomenon of ‘stress’. The felt need to ‘reduce stress’ and ‘slow down’ resulting from the pace of ‘modern life’ is itself turned into a source of profit by the entertainment and leisure industries – not to mention the alternative health industry. Yet taking the occasional holiday and lying on the beach, sitting oneself in front of the TV or computer screen after work – even attending so-called yoga classes and spending the odd hour meditating in a fixed bodily position are not ‘slowing down’. Like illness, they simply offer odd periods of total *immobility and non-action*. To really ‘slow down’ means just that – slowing the *pace* of our everyday bodily movements and thereby also slowing our mental activity. It means breathing and moving more slowly, dressing and eating more slowly, walking and talking more slowly. Above all, it means *working* more slowly. This includes slowing the pace of meetings and discussions by *speaking* more slowly - thus giving more time to *listen* to ourselves and others. But *working* more slowly – including speaking and thinking more slowly - is subversive anathema to *capitalism*, which values only speed and ‘quick thinking’. Managers and political bosses still fail to recognise that slower thinking is deeper thinking - leading to better decision taking. Meditation should not be used as a *compensation for the stresses of everyday life and work*. It should be understood as a slowing down of our bodily actions *in the course of our everyday life and work*. This is not achieved through temporary escapes into stasis - aided by what passes as ‘yoga’ today. It is slowing down and not stasis that creates *breathing space for awareness* - thus deepening the *quality* of the time we give to our life and work, and allowing for wiser, more *aware* action, communication and decision-taking.

## **ACTION, NON-ACTION AND 'WILL-POWER'**

In tantric teaching, the five principal powers or SHAKTIS of the divine are *cit* (awareness), *ananda* (bliss), *iccha* (will or intent), *jnana* (knowing) and *kriya* (action). Central to this pentad of powers is *icchashakti* – the power of will or ‘will-power’. Its secret lies in the unity of action and non-action. In both Western and Eastern cultures *non-action* has been falsely identified with mere *inaction* – with idle passivity, apathy or lethargy. In reality however, *aware, freely chosen, knowing and intentional non-action* is *the highest form of action* – indeed it is *the very condition of all action*.

The secret of ‘willpower’ is not ‘wilfulness’ but *free will*. That is why in essence there is no such thing as ‘acting against one’s own will’. For the very essence of will or intent is free will – action that is freely chosen or intended. Free will finds expression in *aware* action – action that is both freely chosen and *knowingly* intended. By its very nature however, every act is a choice. Every choice is a choice of *alternative* possible actions – at the very least the choice *whether* to act or not. Therefore the very condition for choosing to act in a particular way is choosing *not to act* in any number of alternative ways. The greater the range of potential actions we are aware of in any situation, the freer our choice of action is – the freer our ‘will’ is. By limiting the number of alternative actions we diminish our freedom of will. Restricting our awareness to black and white choices, or to single choices, gives only the illusion of ‘strength of will’.

Even if all we are considering is a single course of action however, only if we can freely choose *not to act* in a given way is our choice to act in that way truly free. Without the power to choose *not to*, there can be no true *choosing* to. Free will and free action therefore begins with *restraint* – the power of *non-action*. True ‘strength of will’ is embodied in restraint - the strength required to *restrain* from action. Thus we cannot freely choose to listen to another unless we first of all actively restrain our own acts of speech. Restraining from action is itself a form of action. It is the unity of action and non-action. The more our *not speaking* is an aware and intentional *act* of restraint or *non-action*, the more actively we can listen - and the greater the awareness with which we can speak when we choose to.

Choosing *not* to act in any way is itself a form of speech. It means saying 'No' to an action - not in words or through some *defensive reaction* or aggressive *counter-action* but through the restraint of intentional *non-action*. Every freely chosen act, since it involves the restraint of other possible acts, simultaneously says 'No' and 'Yes'. Aware and free action is *never* merely 'Yes' saying or 'affirmative action'. It is always grounded in an act of saying 'No', in the active restraint of non-action. The Yes-saying of action is grounded in the No-saying of non-action. Unless we feel free to say 'No' to an action therefore, we cannot freely say 'Yes' to it. Action that is not rooted in this restraint, in the capacity to say 'No' to itself, is not *free* action. And action that is not felt by an individual to be fully *free* tends, by its nature, to be *blocked*. Illness has its roots not in blocked 'energy' but in *blocked action*. *Blocked* action however is not the same thing as *restrained* action. On the contrary, action becomes blocked when a person feels *bound or constrained* to act in a certain way, and therefore *powerless to restrain from action*. In place of this aware self-restraint of action therefore, some alien counter-impulse seems to 'constrain' or 'block' the individual's actions whether from within or without - in the form of an inwardly felt 'lack of will' or through circumstances or events which serve to preclude action.

In patriarchal cultures, masculinity is identified with agency - the *power of action*. The feminine is seen as the *passive object* of action. Even the identification of the Earth with the feminine ('Mother Earth') is not simply a recognition of Nature as a matriarchal source of nourishment and life. It is also a patriarchal reduction of the earth and all its resources to a passive object of violation and exploitation. But when the Earth has had enough of human exploitation it knows exactly how to say 'No'. The same cannot be said either of women or men who are reduced to objects of exploitation or violation. Saying 'No' in word or deed is one thing - difficult enough for many. Saying 'No' through non-action, through steadfast restraint of both word and deed - is even more of a challenge for most. The spiritual principles of 'pacifism' and 'non-violence' can only be effectively practiced when they are *embodied* as that power of will (*icchashakti*) that is rooted in aware restraint or 'non-action'. Christ did not 'turn the other cheek' in order for it too to be slapped - thus passively *surrendering* to the aggressive act of another. His turning of the cheek was an embodied act of self-restraint, one that in turn effectively restrained further acts of aggression - through *refusing* the black-and-white choice of *fight versus flight*.



Just as we can only freely do what we are capable of *not-doing*, so also does the converse principle hold. We can only restrain from doing something if we are *capable* of doing it. A person simply and purely *incapable* of violence cannot practice ‘non-violence’ as an ethical principle. Were Jesus to have been a meek sheep who *could not* strike back in anger, his turning of the cheek would have no meaning as restraint or non-action and also carry no power as an action. Religious moralities – as prescribed ways of acting - offer a mix of different, often mixed-up positions on the question of ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ action - simply in order to give recognition to the intrinsic unity of action and non-action. Thus *restraint* from action may be turned into a one-sided principle of non-action - for example through total abstinence from action (asceticism) or moralistic constraint on action (prohibitionism).

Religious principles of prohibition and practices of restraint have served the purpose of emphasising the intrinsically active nature of restraint or non-action. Yet, unlike the *tantric practitioner*, neither the Vedic ascetic nor the Christian ascetic-cum-celibate understand that the true purpose of restraining from acts that bring sensual or sexual pleasure is to *relish* such pleasure more sublimely and spiritually, to experience ‘awareness-bliss’ (*citanananda*) in all its innately sensual and sexual dimensions. Similarly, neither Buddhism nor Christianity affirm the *aggressive nature* of all truly free action. Simply moving to greet or hug someone, is, in the root sense of the word - an *a(d)-aggressive act* – ‘a step or movement to or towards’. If we are incapable of *feeling* intense aggressive or sexual impulses of a sort that *move or impel* our actions in a particular direction, neither can we learn true restraint of impulse and action. What is restrained is not repressed but *felt* all the more intensely. Violence is ‘unfeeling’ action as well as unfree action because it arises out of fear of feeling intense aggressive impulses - out of which fear comes the need to evacuate them by acting them out. Violence therefore, is not an ‘extreme’ form of aggression but the result of an incapacity to bear intense aggressive feelings and impulses – which are *enacted* in order to *evacuate* and *pacify* them. Violence is simply taken up as an alternative to and release of *blocked action* and *blocked aggression* – both of which come from a sense of *powerlessness* to *restrain* action. The violent individual feels *bound* to act in a violent way, and violence is therefore unfree as well as unfeeling action. It is *wrong action* not simply because of its *consequences* but because it is not right action – *free and aware action*. All its dire consequences spring from this.

# MACROMEDITATION

**This macromeditation is a sequence of successive pair exercises designed to practice the basic and decisive acts of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ saying - both as *speech acts* and through silently embodied speech or ‘non-action’.**

## **Warm-up exercise:**

Spend a minute exploring how many different ways and with how many different intensities and nuances, tones and undertones, you can utter the word ‘Yes’. Then let your partner do the same. Repeat the exercise with the word ‘No’, seeing how many intensities and nuances of meaning both you and your partner can convey with it.

## **Pair exercise (a)**

Stand facing a partner.

Seek to impose your will on your partner simply by saying ‘Yes’ in different ways - whilst your partner seeks to block your will by saying ‘No’ with matching intent and intensity. Allow pauses between each repeated ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to ensure that your next ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ is a *response* to the intensity, nuancing and tone of your partner’s last ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.

Reverse roles.

## **Pair exercise (b)**

Stand facing a partner.

Take it in turns for one partner to repeatedly say ‘Yes’ verbally, whilst the other says ‘No’ silently – with their *body* – using their face, eyes and body as a whole to firmly and fully *embody* their ‘No’ without need for speech or action. Again, allow intervals between each act of verbal ‘Yes’ saying to feel your partner’s silent, bodily No-saying, so that your next ‘Yes’ is a response to it.

Reverse roles.

## **Pair exercise (c)**

Making and sustaining eye-contact with your partner, take it in turns for one of you to silently say ‘Yes’ with their body whilst the other says ‘No’ with theirs. This time however, do not intend the ‘Yes’ you say with your *body* as one that seeks to impose your will on your partner. Instead feel it as a ‘Yes’ through which you fully affirm both yourself *and* your partner - affirming your own being, that of your partner and affirming *All That Is* without need of speech or action. Feel your bodily ‘No’ saying on the other hand, as a determined bounding of your being and awareness.

Reverse roles.

## THE ABSOLUTE AS AWARENESS AND ACTION

The absolute can be conceived both as awareness (SHIVA) and as action (SHAKTI). As a result, within the various Kashmiri schools of tantric metaphysics and meditation there were those of a SHAKTA orientation that emphasised the absolute character of action, and those of a SHAIVA orientation that emphasised the absolute character of awareness. Among these schools were those of KRAMA and KULA tantra. KRAMA metaphysics focused on the nature of the absolute as constant and inexhaustible *action*, both in its temporal character as sequence or succession (*krama*) and in its trans-temporal and trans-sequential character (*akrama*). KULA metaphysics on the other hand, focused on the nature of the absolute as awareness, both in its spatially bounded and bodied character (*kula*) and on its unbounded spatial character (*akula*). In essence *akrama* and *akula* constitute distinct but inseparable aspects of the same absolute – specifically in its relation to time and space respectively. For if ‘space’ is the *co-presence* of experienced phenomena within fields of awareness, then time is the continuous *presencing* or actualisation of those phenomena.

We tend to speak of time in spatial terms, talking of shorter or longer periods of time, or of events getting closer or more distant. The KRAMA school understood reality as something in *constant creation*, not merely within the contracted space of our immediate ‘now’ but in an absolute *time-space* embracing all ‘nows’ - past, present and future. *Akrama*, as the *trans-temporal* character of the absolute is not a static realm of ‘eternity’ but a realm of eternally unfolding *action* – the constant and continuous *co-presencing* of All That Is within a boundless *time-space* or “spacious present” (Seth). If *space-time* is the active *presencing* of particular phenomena within the awareness space or ‘here’ of our limited present or ‘now’, then *akrama* is the *co-presencing* of all phenomena within that unlimited *time-space* which also embraces all past and future ‘nows’. *Akula* and *akrama* are inseparable aspects of this *absolute time-space* of awareness and action, which has both a *temporally trans-spatial* and a *spatially trans-temporal* character - transcending both the spatial ‘here’ we experience in our limited ‘now’ and the temporal ‘now’ we experience in our limited ‘here’. *Awareness*, as ‘non-action’, is this transcendental time-space, and yet ‘at the same time’ the latter is nothing but a time-space of eternally unfolding *action*.

# MICROMEDITATIONS 1

- Feel the way you are breathing.
- Choose to breathe in a different way.
- Feel the difference in the way you feel when you breathe differently.
  
- Feel the way you are sitting.
- Choose to sit in a different way.
- Feel the difference in the way you feel when you sit differently.
  
- Feel the way you are walking.
- Choose to walk in a different way.
- Feel the difference in the way you feel when you walk differently.
  
- Feel the way you are speaking.
- Choose to speak in a different way.
- Feel the difference in the way you feel when you speak differently.
  
- Feel the way you intone your voice.
- Choose to tone your voice in a different way.
- Feel the difference in the way you feel when your voice tone is different.
  
- Feel your facial expression.
- Choose to express yourself facially in a different way or different ways.
- Feel the difference in the way you feel when you face the world differently.
  
- Feel the look in your eyes.
- Choose to look in a different way.
- Feel the difference in the way you feel when your eyes look differently.

## MICROMEDITATIONS 2

1. Feel the way you are currently breathing, moving, speaking or doing anything.
  2. Be aware of the pace of your speech, movement or actions.
  3. Choose to slow down your bodily action.
- 
1. Sense the muscles in different regions of your body – head, neck, chest, abdomen, arms, upper and lower legs etc.
  2. Be aware of any muscular impulse to imminent action or movement (*samskara*), without identifying with it or acting on it.
  3. Attend purely to your awareness of the activating impulse, not focusing your awareness on it, but letting it dissipate in your larger awareness *field*.
- 
1. Be aware of any thoughts that you sense are prompting certain *emotions* and feel the muscular impulses that serve to turn them into acts of speech or bodily *motion*.
  2. Attend to your awareness of those mental activators without *acting on them*.
  3. Do not *focus* on them, but let them dissipate in your larger awareness *field*.
- 
1. Be aware of any felt impulse to speech or action whatsoever – mental, emotional or felt in your muscles.
  2. Attend to your awareness of the action impulse without acting on it.
  3. Instead let *alternative potential actions* come into your awareness and choose to embody or enact one of these.
- 
1. Be aware of any felt impulse to speech or action.
  2. Choose *not to* follow that impulse for some time but instead to actively restrain from action.
  3. Feeling free to restrain from action rather than impelled to act, use that freedom to then follow the impulse and act with full freedom and awareness.

1. If you feel there is something you just *cannot* do, actively *choose* not to do it.
  2. Empowered by the free exercise of your will in *not* doing something, await a spontaneous impulse to do it.
  3. If and when this spontaneous impulse arises, then *choose* to follow it. If your choice not to act has been strong enough, you will now have the power to act.
- 
1. Feel the way you are currently acting with your body – the way you are sitting, standing or walking, breathing or speaking, holding your head, the look on your face and in your eyes etc.
  2. Feel the particular sense of yourself and of your body as a whole that accompanies this way of acting.
  3. Feel for *alternate or modified* ways of acting with your body that allow you feel more of yourself or to feel yourself in a different way, and enact one of these.
- 
1. When you feel under time stress through having *countless* things to do, imagine time itself not as a line but as a three-dimensional space so vast and expansive as to embrace every possible action - past, present or future - within it.
  2. Let the imagination evoke a bodily sense of an expanded time-space of awareness in which no action whatsoever is needed because all possible actions are already being enacted within it.
  3. Rest in the state of quiescent awareness and non-action that comes out of this sense of expanded time-space until there arises within it a spontaneous impulse to act - to do *one* specific thing – and engage in that action from a place of quiescent awareness and non-action.
- 
1. Imagine you have been invited to go on stage and act *yourself* – as many ‘parts’ or aspects of your self that you can feel and in whatever dramatic sequence – but without using any words.
  2. Stand in front of a full-length mirror and, feeling yourself on stage in front of an audience, begin to act yourself without words – using your face, eyes, and whole bodily movements and gestures to *mime* different emotions and parts of your self.
  3. Seeing your image in the mirror, see how expressively you can silently mime yourself, how broad your expressive range of bodily movements, gestures and faces is, and how many different ways of feeling yourself you can give expression to with your body and actively communicate to your mirror image.

## LESSON 5 – SUMMARY

### Guiding Words:

...from awareness *of* action to awareness *in* action

### Questions to ask oneself:

Are my actions aware actions or unaware reactions?

Do my actions reinforce or transcend my existing patterns of action?

Do I sustain awareness in my actions or let them consume my awareness?

Will a given action constrict my awareness and delimit my sense of self or expand it?

### Summary of Principles:

Awareness is non-action.

Action emerges from and within awareness.

Identity is a pattern of action – a way of acting.

Aware action is action in which awareness does not lose itself.

*Karma* is the way action reacts upon and alters the agent of action.

True freedom of action comes from aware restraint of action – from non-action.

### Summary of Practices:

Resting in awareness or non-action.

Cultivating awareness of one's way of acting.

Sustaining awareness in action, rather than losing awareness in action.

Feeling how the smallest bodily action alters one's sense of self – of the 'I' that acts.

Sensing impulses without acting on them, or first restraining actions before acting.

### Mantra:

If you cannot choose *not to* act in a certain way, your action will not be a free action.

If you feel *bound* to follow an impulse, choose *first* of all to restrain the impulse.

If you don't feel *capable* of acting in a certain way, then actively *choose* not to.

## LESSON 5 – GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS

**AHAMKARA** – ‘ego’, illusion of an agent or doer separate from action

**ASANAS** – yogic postures

**ATMAN** – the awareness self, the self that is universal awareness

**HATHA YOGA** – the practice of yogic postures or ASANAS

**NATHAS** – lineage of tantric adepts from whom HATHA YOGA derives

**KARMA** – action in relation to its consequences

**KAYA SADHANA** – ‘practice of the body’/‘bodying’

**KRAMA/AKRAMA** – sequential (temporal) and trans-sequential action

**KRIYA** – action

**KRIYA YOGA** – the yoga of action as first delineated by Patanjali

**NAISHKARMYA** – quiescent awareness as non-action

**SAMSKARAS** – action pattern latent in awareness

**SPANDA** – ‘slight motion’ or subtle vibration

**VRITTI** – any experienced motion or fluctuation in awareness