



Narayanashrama Tapovanam

How to Introspect

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The entire spiritual sādhanā is to get anchored to our **true universal identity** even when interacting with the world. In reality, it is to move from our selfish, self-centred, egoistic, **constricted mindset** to a flexible, all-embracing, impersonal, impartial, **expansive mindset**. The whole process is internal and based on a **transformation of our intelligence**.

This is done through **Vicāra or Introspection**. By constant application of vicāra, the intelligence becomes refined and subtle, so the supreme Truth of our universal identity **dawns in the Intelligence**, removing all worldly maladies:

विचारात्तीक्ष्णतामेत्या धीः पश्यति परं पदम् ।

दीर्घसंसाररोगस्य विचारो हि महौषधम् ॥

Vicārāt-tikshṇatām-etya dhīḥ paśyati param padam ।

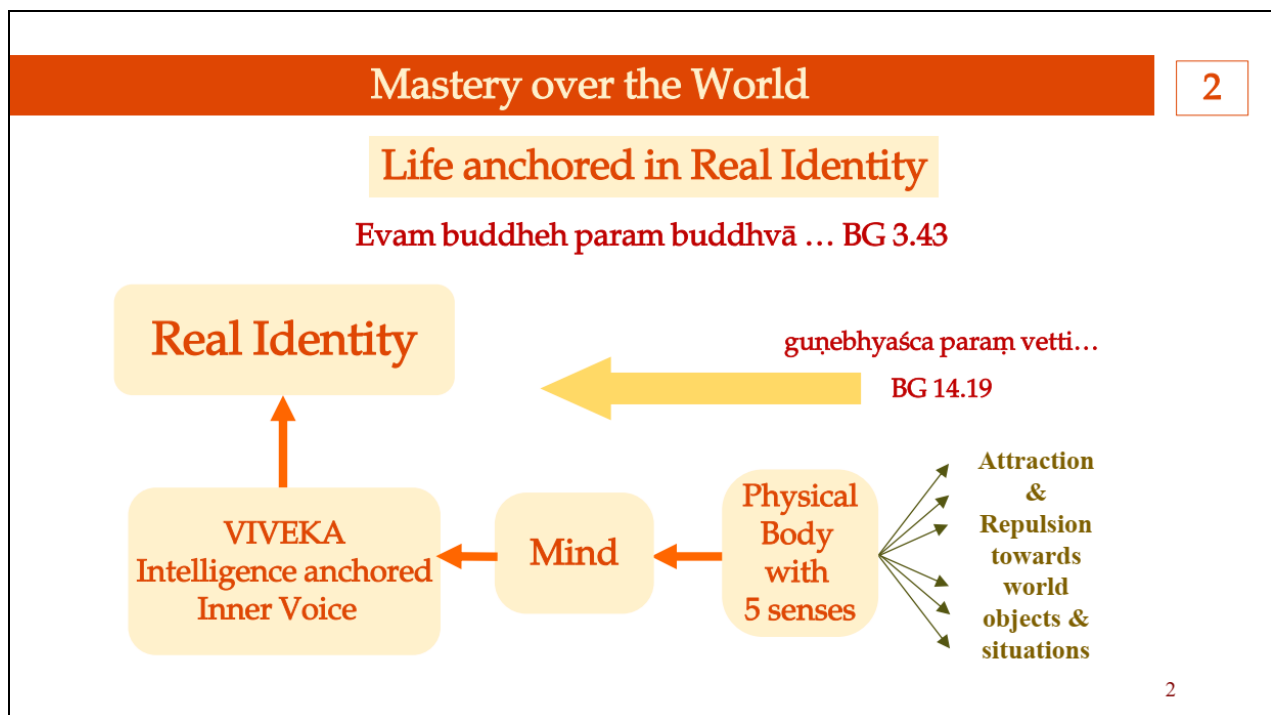
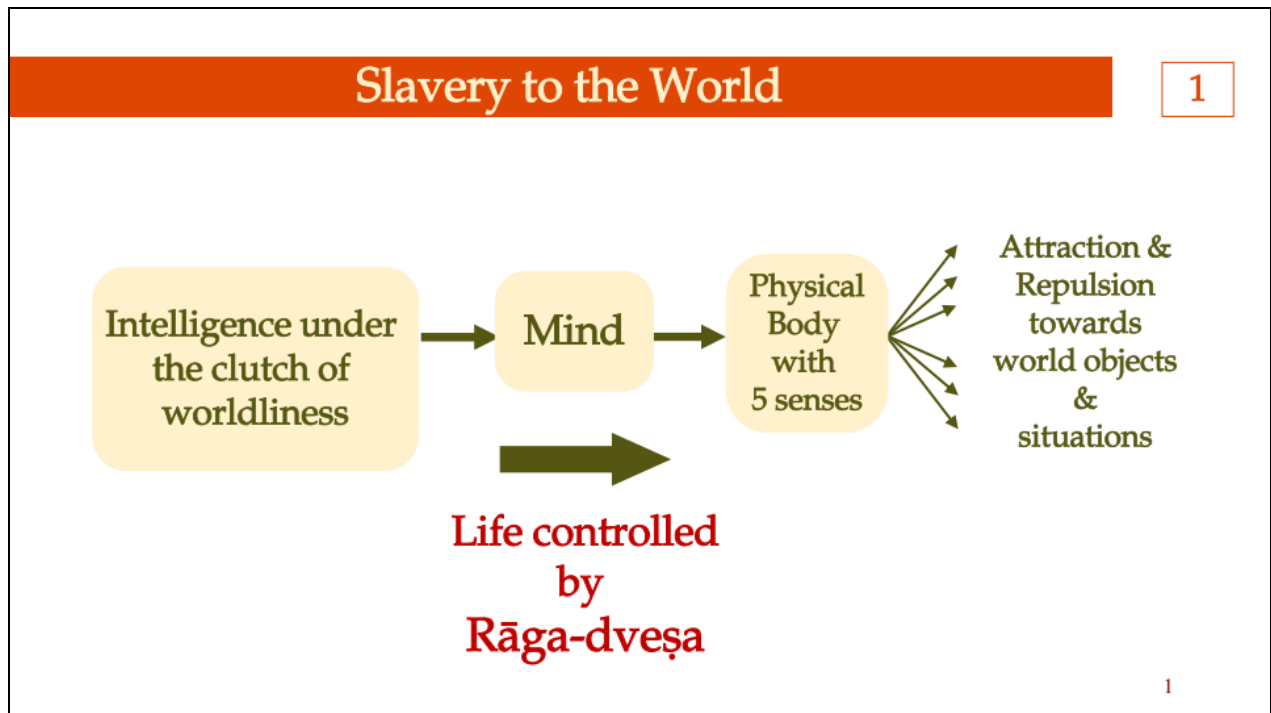
dīrgha-saṁsāra-rogasya vicāro hi mahaushadham ॥

Yogavāsishtha Ramayana 2.14.2

The process of **vicāra** takes place through **Viveka buddhi**, which is the intelligence guided by our inmost reality, as opposed to our usual worldly intelligence working under the clutch of desires and rāga-dvesha.

The infinite variety of the world is always pulling us away from our inmost anchor. Know that this **outward pull (centrifugal force)** is not generated by the objects, but by **our own rāga-dvesha** – clinging to what we like (attraction) and hating what we dislike (repulsion).

Be a Master, Not a Slave



To interact with the world variety remaining anchored to our core identity, we have to balance this distracting force by generating enough of inward (centripetal) force.

Viveka enhances this centripetal force to keep us focused within. Also, by giving rise to **vairāgya** (impersonality) it reduces the centrifugal force.

We have to resort to Viveka in every moment of our life through two modes of sadhana:

➤ **Meditational Viveka**

- In Vedantic meditation, we have to first discover the **unchanging subject “I”** by applying viveka.
- Viveka tells us how to attain the **real subject “I”**, transcending our inherent tendency to look for something different from the subject. It is Viveka that shows us the path to transcend subject-object duality through **surrender or effortlessness**.

➤ **Interactional Viveka**

But, how to identify with this unchanging “I” even during interactions? Again, Viveka tells us how to outlive our small, egoistic, identity every moment by cultivating expansiveness, impartiality and impersonality in our interactions.

So, the goal of both meditational and interactional viveka becomes attaining the same universal “I”.

Being anchored to our real identity, we will be able to live with strength and stability even in the midst of variegated external situations the modern world presents.

PRACTICE

1. **Look Within.** Shift the focus **FROM** external events and situations **TO** the mind's response to them.

2. **Follow** that which makes you feel **inner expansion, lightness, and strength.**

Avoid that which makes you feel **shrunk, small and weak within.** Remember, our growth is in inner expansion. A good life is a pilgrimage from **self-centredness to Universal-ness.**

3. **Never blame** others. Blaming thoughts about anybody **pollutes our mind.** Creates tension and stress in our own mind.

4. **Love good qualities.** The easiest way to imbibe any quality is to love that quality.

5. **Instead of seeking love from anybody, LOVE everybody.** It is "love" welling forth from within that fulfils us.

6. **Never dwell** in the **past** (either lamenting/repenting or boasting), or loiter in the imaginary **future.** Analyze the past impersonally, and plan the future wisely. But, **accept the present** readily, and go ahead with courage and unaffectedness.

Be attentive to the present. Plan very well learning from past experiences, and considering all future possibilities and consequences. But, do not indulge in the expectation of gain and happiness that may (or may not) come at the end.

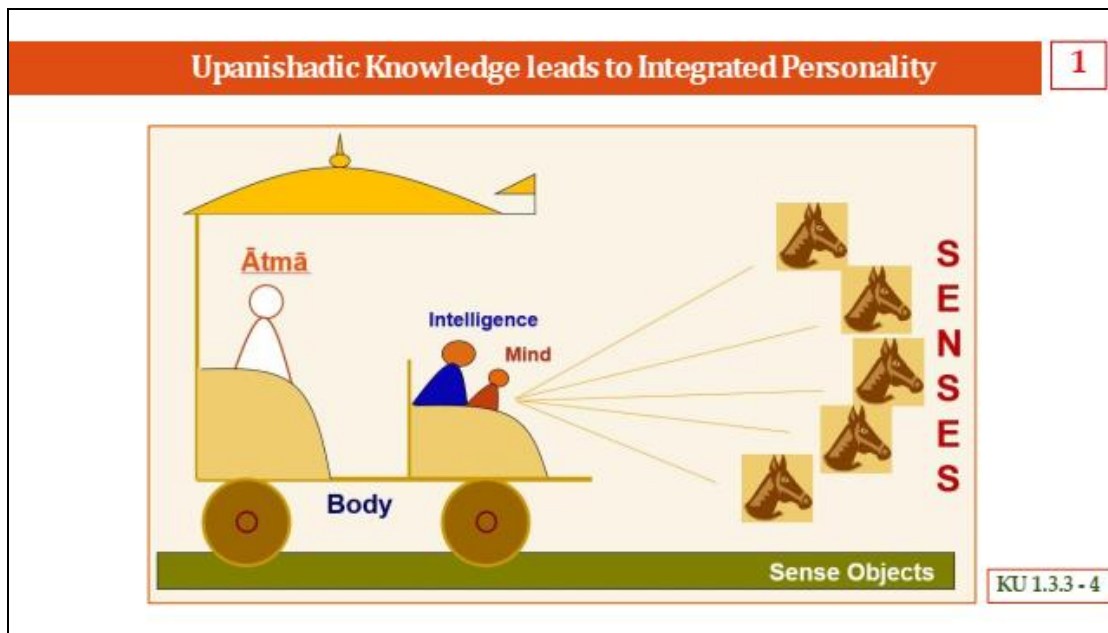
7. Remember: Difficulties are, in fact, **opportunities for further growth.** They are gateways to elevation and expansion.

8. **Never fight** with the negative thoughts or traits. Fighting with them will allow them a greater hold on your mind. Instead, fill the mind with positive thoughts and liberal qualities. When the negative thoughts come, ask them **in a friendly way,** to leave you. But, make sure you **do not indulge** in them anymore.

9. **Watching and restraining words** will increase your **inner strength**, poise and attention tremendously. Before blurting forth anything – stop; look into the mind; and then speak what is necessary. **Just express your thoughts for whatever they are worth, and do not cling egoistically to what you said.**
10. **Any correction** becomes most effective when applied to the **causal level**. To correct a **wrong behaviour**, look for the **thoughts** giving rise to such behaviour. To transform the thoughts look into the **mindset (bhāva)** that is giving rise to such thoughts. A good, liberal mindset will generate good, liberal thoughts; which in turn will be expressed through good liberal actions/behaviour.
- In spiritual sādhanā, the **mindset (bhāva)** is transformed by repeated contemplation on our own real identity, which is free of any constriction, taint or affectation.
11. **Indulging constantly** in the worldly thoughts of likes and dislikes, we become **slave** to the world. By thinking more and more about our own unaffected core identity, we become **master** of the world.
12. **Spend time with** the sky, sun, mountain and ocean, thinking about their qualities:



Develop an Integrated Personality



- Intelligence and mind should lead the senses based on guidance from the inner voice of Truth (master of the chariot).
- The mind (controlling the reins) must heed the guidance of the intelligence, winning over the influence of greed and hatred. The senses cannot be controlled directly by the intelligence. The intelligence has to guide the senses through the mind. Only disciplined senses will act according to this guidance.

Therefore:

- Regulate the senses (horses) through physical disciplines.
- Strengthen the mind through mind-related disciplines.
- Sharpen the intelligence (charioteer) by spending time to understand the Truth.
- Listen to the voice of Truth.

Disciplined senses following the mind, mind guided by the intelligence, intelligence always looking for guidance from the inmost Reality, will lead us to the ultimate auspicious goal.

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