

Lessons from our Great Masters

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Thank you and I welcome you! It is a joy to see all of you! Many things that you are talking about at this conference seem like Latin for me and when I was invited to attend I said, 'Why me? I know nothing about what you are doing'. 'No sir', came the answer, 'if all the sheep are white it will not be very clear, we need a black sheep and you are the black sheep! Therefore we want you to come so that everybody will see a difference between black sheep and white sheep'. So here I am.

I want to talk to you about what our Great Masters reflected upon and some ideas they presented. First I want you to reflect on what is the human system. The human system of all of us is classified into five categories. Number one is the physical body nourished by food. That is fine, but then the next step is more important. Without breath we cannot survive, of course, with food we can manage for a few days but without breath we will die in a few minutes. So the second form of human system outside the body is our breathing mechanism, without breathing we cannot survive. Then, if you have good breath and a good body but you are not educated you are like a fool. So the next human system is called a human structure with a lot of learning. Without learning there is always a risk; with learning there is some confidence. The third level is called the education structure. Education is where we learn something. The next layer is our personality, for what we learn depends upon our own personality..

For example Balu went to the US for his higher education. A lot of people thought 'Oh, Balu has gone to America he will stay there for ever'. But he didn't do that. He got interested in something else and came back to India. Balu comes back to India and says 'we must do some research about our knowledge system'. How did this happen? That is what we say education is not what influences you; your own nature contributes to how you apply your education. There are some doctors who do a lot of social work; there are some doctors who exploit a lot of people. We have a certain nature that nature and that is responsible for how we use our learning process. At another level it is not only our own nature at work but also what is called conviction. We must have certain convictions. If we don't have certain convictions we won't succeed. That is the inborn conviction in our nature. The last category is very important: it is called a relationship. When we have a relationship, we have certain sentiments, we have certain good feelings. That is our human structure, if we have a very good relationship we want to stay on with the relationship. It could be a partner, it could be a dog or it could be a mentor, whatever it is.

So, our human system can be presented in five categories: body, breath, education, our own nature, our own conviction and most important, our own human relationship. This is the human structure that I want you to reflect on.

The next part is that we have something that is called *Svabhava*. *Svabhava* is something in us. This something can be sleeping and when we have some rain, the seeds sprout. So when we are exposed to something or when we are in contact with

something our own nature takes over. And that nature is what makes the person. It could be a good nature, it could be a bad nature. This is what is called *Svabhava*. It is not necessarily positive, it is not necessarily negative but it is deeply rooted. Western psychologists call it a genetic factor. Based on environment, exposure, experience, it will sprout. Certain *Svabhavas* must be encouraged, certain *Svabhavas* must be controlled. Our Indian wisdom emphasizes that human beings have four interests. The first is we have a duty to fulfil, we have a responsibility, we have certain moral values and that is what's called Karma. Karma is a very famous word, which Buddha also emphasized. That is almost like if you take care of your principles, your values and your ethics, somehow it will take care of you. This is what's called Karma.

Next, we have some requirements. It is not enough to think you need to provide something. You have to put in some effort so that you can provide. That is why I am always amazed how in conferences everybody gives support so that all these conferences can happen. This is our need for certain requirements. Without requirements we cannot fulfil anything. It could be food, it could be shelter, it could be some clothes, it could be a transport system, or it could be helping some people by giving them resources.

Next, human beings must continue their lineage. It is very important that the human system is continuous in lineage. For example, if my father had not had a child I wouldn't be standing here. That is what is emphasized, we must continue our progeny so that the river continues to flow. If there is no progeny the river stops and the word becomes dry. That is the third aspect.

The most important aspect is that in life sometimes certain mistakes happen. In life certain things do not always happen the way they should happen. So what happens is that sometimes we get burdened. It could be a spiritual burden; it could be a mental burden. So when it is too heavy we cannot carry on. That is why it is emphasized that you must shed this burden so that you are totally at peace. We must do whatever is required so that we can be released from all these wrong actions that were done intentionally or unintentionally and we can be free. That is the aim of human beings to be totally free. Do whatever has to be done so that you are totally free.

Now, having said that, how can this be achieved? The answer is yoga. Yoga is a mirror. Yoga is a very important mirror. Yoga should not be mistaken as simply a posture. If you observe your body, it will tell you how your body is. If you observe your breath, it will tell you how your breath is. If the breath is very smooth that means there is no tension. If the breath is very turbulent or agitated there is something disturbing the mind. So in yoga there are certain postures that allow us to look at the physical profile. Certain ways of breathing are suggested so that we can observe our breath and perhaps modify it. For example, when you make long exhalations the mind becomes very quiet.

The next step is that we need to know how we are. That is why yoga emphasizes meditation. By certain meditation techniques we will be aware of how we are. For example, if we are taught the sun meditation and it takes a long time, this means the mind has become dull. Alternatively, when meditation becomes short, this means the mind is slightly disturbed. That is why we suggest that early in the morning if you meditate, it could be on anything you like, based on the duration of the meditation you will know whether the mind is dull or the mind is hyperactive. This is one of the

mirrors of yoga. Apart from that, yoga also offers certain correction techniques. It has now become very popular and many people get healed through yoga practice. In fact it is said that if you can take care of your own responsibilities through meditation practice or breathing practice, you will be totally independent. So this is what yoga offers as a tool to take care of yourself.

The whole concept of yoga is total attention. In order to have total attention we need certain preparation. Preparation includes food discipline. Food discipline is a very important part of yoga practice. In traditional systems food is considered a very important tool for health. Good food equals good health, bad food equals bad health. So, proper food equals proper lifestyle. One of the most important things yoga also offers is social conscience. We should not be selfish. The most important emphasis of yoga in the present context is social attitude. Social attitude means: show compassion, tell the truth, and never tell a lie. Tell truths that will not hurt somebody. Do not exploit people, never exploit people. Have a decent human relationship with partners. And the last and most important thing is whenever something is offered, do not use it for yourself, receive it and give it to society. So this is one of the social attitudes that yoga emphasizes, it is called *Yama*.

Yoga also emphasizes personal attitude, proper discipline and cleanliness (that's what Switzerland is famous for, cleanliness. Whenever I come to Switzerland I always double check because when I came to Switzerland in 1966 I didn't even know how to use a toilet. It is so clean and in India we are not so clean). Cleanliness is next to godliness they say. So cleanliness is also very important. We should be clean so that we respect others.

Contentment is also very important. We cannot expect everything to happen in life. Nothing is in our hands. Yoga says: in personal discipline, be content with what you have. Life is not as bad as it used to be. A lot of people are unhappy and that is going to disturb them. That's why yoga says the highest happiness is contentment. If you don't have contentment, you can never be happy.

Next, have personal discipline. Don't sleep too much, do not eat in excess, eat food that is good for you. Next is to have an inquiring mind. At least read some books; it could be a philosophical book or a book that will inspire you. By reading you may get inspired. Finally, do not get disappointed when something goes wrong. This is not in our hands. I always say, 'we have done our best and now it is up to somebody else'. The greater the expectation, the greater the disappointment. Less expectation equals more satisfaction. This is what personal discipline is. This way we are going through a holistic process through which we know our responsibilities and we clarify our human structure, and with that I am sure life will be more peaceful.

Thank you for listening!