

that is all. A banyan tree lives sometimes five thousand years, but it is a banyan tree and nothing more. So if a man lives long, he is only a healthy animal. } But one or two ordinary lessons of the hatha-yogis are very useful. For instance, some of you may find it a good thing for headaches to drink cold water through the nose as soon as you get up in the morning; the whole day your brain will feel very cool, and you will never catch cold. It is very easy to do: put your nose into the water, draw it up through the nostrils, and make a pump action in the throat.

After one has learnt to have a firm, erect seat, one has to perform, according to certain schools, a practice called the purification of the nerves. This part has been rejected by some as not belonging to Rāja-yoga; but since so great an authority as the commentator Śankarāchārya advises it, I think it fitting that it should be mentioned, and I will quote his own directions from his commentary on the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*: "The mind whose dross has been cleared away by prānāyāma becomes fixed in Brahman; therefore prānāyāma is taught. First the nerves are to be purified; then comes the power to practise prānāyāma. Stopping the right nostril with the thumb, draw in air through the left nostril according to capacity; then, without any interval, eject the air through the right nostril, closing the left one. Again inhaling through the right nostril according to capacity, eject through the left. Practising this three or five times at four periods of the day—before dawn, during midday, in the evening, and at midnight—one attains purity of the nerves in fifteen days or a month. Then begins prānāyāma."

Practice is absolutely necessary. You may sit down and listen to me by the hour every day, but if you do not practise, you will not get one step farther. It all depends on practice. We never understand these things until we experience them. We have to see and feel them for ourselves. Simply listening to explanations and theories will not do.

There are several obstructions to practice. The first obstruction is an unhealthy body; if the body is not fit, the practice will be obstructed. Therefore we have to keep the body in good health; we have to take care about what we eat and drink, and what we do. Always use a mental effort, what is usually called Christian Science, to keep the body strong. That is all; nothing further about the body. We must not forget that health is only a means to an end. If health were the end, then we would be like animals; animals rarely become unhealthy.

The second obstruction is doubt. We always feel doubtful about things we do not see. Man cannot live upon words, however he may try. So doubt comes to us as to whether there is any truth in these things or not; even the best of us will doubt sometimes. With practice, within a few days, a little glimpse will come, enough to give one encouragement and hope. As a certain commentator on Yoga philosophy says: "When one proof is obtained, however little that may be, it will give us faith in the whole teaching of Yoga." For instance, after the first few months of practice you will begin to find you can read another's thoughts; they will come to you in picture form. Perhaps you will hear something happening at a long distance when you