

Virtue As Yoga

Sometimes Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī describes The Divine Life Society as having seven pillars—the four principal yogas as represented by the words Serve, Love, Meditate, Realize in The Divine Life Society crest, and *ahimsa*, *satyam*, and *brahmacharya*, which Gurudev described as the foundation of yoga and Vedānta and which are the conditions of membership in The Divine Life Society. Gurudev declared, “Practice *ahimsa*, *satyam*, and *brahmacarya*. This is the foundation of yoga and Vedānta.” And he wanted us to integrate the four yogas, to have an integral yoga, so that head, heart, and hand would all be engaged in our yoga practice.

Many of us would like to engage our entire being in our yoga practice, in our search for God, but we run into practical difficulties. Let alone practicing an integral yoga, we scarcely have time to practice any yoga in this busy modern world. However, we all know that, whether we have time to practice a yoga or not, we should live decent lives, we should live according to *dharma*. And this is the special significance of the practice of *ahimsa*, *satyam*, and *brahmacarya*—non-injury, truthfulness, and purity—because, in actual fact, the practice of these fundamental virtues, if properly understood, is itself yoga.

Non-injury is a reflection of God as love, truthfulness is a reflection of God as truth, and *brahmacarya* is a reflection of God as purity. The practice of these virtues or, indeed, of one alone, will not only make us better human beings, will not only act as a foundation of yoga and Vedānta, but they have the power to become a yoga of their own and connect us directly with God as love, truth and purity.

We practice in the beginning not hurting others. That grows into the practice of benefiting others, of expressing love for them. Finally, we see others as our own Self; we see others as God sees them, through God’s eyes of love. Truthfulness begins with speaking the truth to each other. We then graduate to strictly telling the truth to ourselves and then we begin to understand the truth that God alone is. *Brahmacarya* begins with self-control. Then it becomes everything for God, nothing for me. Finally, we see nothing outside ourselves—there are no objects here, only God’s purity.

Thus, in this busy modern world, we may not have time for sufficient practice of our individual yoga, but we can practice virtue, especially the virtues of *ahimsa*, *satyam*, and *brahmacarya*. And if there is sincerity and

determination in our heart, they can become our yoga—our connection to God.