

AFFIRMATIONS

EXCERPTS FROM *THE ART AND SCIENCE OF RAJA YOGA*

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Our true Self-identity

In essence, the soul is ever free. Identification with certain patterns of thought does limit its freedom, yet thoughts by themselves can be relatively free-flowing. It is when they become focused enough to generate a flow of energy that the real commitment to a particular kind of self-definition, or self-limitation, begins. When that energy-flow is translated further into outward action, the mental commitment becomes, so to speak, solidified; it is at this stage that it becomes very difficult to break it....

Guidelines for practicing affirmations

Initially, to get the attention of the conscious mind, loud affirmations may be necessary. For affirmations to be really effective, however, they must penetrate to, and alter the patterns of, the subconsciousness. To accomplish this, one must go deeper within himself. Loud affirmations must give way to whispers, then progressively deeper mental affirmations, until the subconscious is reached. Affirmations become potent to the extent that they can be made to resound in inner depths. To be most effective, they must penetrate beyond even the subconscious, to the superconscious....

The subconscious mind acts as a receptacle for whatever thoughts and impressions are passed on to it by the conscious mind. In this way it acts quite automatically and indiscriminately, like an echo returning sounds to their sender regardless of whether the sounds are beautiful or ugly. It is a convenient labor-saving mechanism devised by Nature to keep the factory of life functioning in whatever way it has been programmed to function, and to free the conscious mind to deal with new situations as they arise. Were it not for this mechanism, one would have to think his way carefully through each movement every time he tied his shoelaces or tried to walk.

Our subconscious mind can be a blessing to us, if we program it properly, but it can also hold us chained to delusions that we reject again and again on a conscious level. For its power to direct human life is enormous. The impressions, or *vasanas*, not of one lifetime only, but of many incarnations lie buried deep beneath the surface of our conscious awareness, subtly influencing our tastes and inclinations, our manner of doing things, the very understanding with which we may seek to change those influences. Man thinks he is free to do just as he likes; he little realizes to how great an extent his very likes are already decided for him by the tendencies (*samskars*) and impressions (*vasanas*) that he has built up in the past. ...

Not everyone's subconscious mind is so resistant to change....Paramhansa Yoganandaji, in speaking of the human mind, referred to "the thwarting cross-currents of ego." Every human characteristic is like an individual; each has a definite personality of its own. If the different characteristics with which the subconscious has been programmed are all hedged about possessively, or primed to aggressiveness with the thought of "I," the resistance to change, once the order comes from the conscious mind, may assume the nature of an all-out war. Sometimes only great suffering can soften the hard core of egotism, and make it malleable to improvement....



In dealing with the subconscious mind, similarly, one should familiarize oneself with its ways of functioning, and enlist its constant and friendly support in one's affairs, so that in anything one does he has the enthusiastic cooperation of his entire being, and does not have to walk, as so many people do, as if shackled to a heavy weight of subconscious reluctance and indifference. He should avoid becoming what Paramhansa Yogananda called "a psychological antique." He should deliberately change his habits from time to time, simply to keep them on their toes, and he should constantly streamline them, as one would an office, even eliminating them when they no longer serve any useful purpose. Above all, he will win their enthusiastic support if he affirms every new direction *with joy*, and with faith in their good will....

The best times for giving commands to the subconscious are when the door to it is most widely open. .. [T]hese times occur during deep meditation, and also just as one enters the subconscious in sleep, or emerges from it into wakefulness. Notice how, if you go to sleep feeling exhausted, you usually wake up still feeling exhausted no matter how many hours you have slept, whereas if you make it a point not to carry that thought into the sleep, you may wake up refreshed even on less sleep than usual. Again, the attitude with which you wake up helps to determine your whole day, which is why people often say of someone who is out of sorts, “He must have got up on the wrong side of bed today.”

Practice deliberately carrying wholesome affirmations into the subconscious. Either at bedtime, or sitting upright in meditation, repeat your affirmation out loud to begin with to generate energy and command the attention of all your conscious thoughts.... [Y]our conscious mind must be made awake and ready before it can go deep into the spirit of the affirmation. “I am awake and ready!” is itself a good affirmation to stimulate yourself to complete attention. Yoganandaji used to begin his lectures and services by demanding loudly of the audience: “How is everybody?” Then he would join them in the energetic response: “Awake and ready!” “How *feels* everybody?” And again, even more vigorously: “Awake and ready!” Sometimes in his younger days, partly to stir people out of their subconscious lethargy and resistance, and partly just because he was himself a man of extraordinary energy and joy, he would actually come running out onto the lecture platform, his long hair and orange robe waving with kindred high spirits.

Remember, then, put your whole self joyously into your affirmation. Then gradually let the words resound from deeper and deeper levels of feeling and awareness. As you do so, you will notice that the outward sound of the words automatically decreases, until it becomes only a whisper. Sink the words down deeper still, until you feel no desire to speak or to chant them



outwardly at all, and the affirmation becomes purely mental. Go deeper still, carrying the thought into the subconscious, zealously changing the mental patterns there.

It is unfortunate that the subconscious mind is so often referred to as the “unconscious.” This gives the impression that it is an inert thing, needing to be acted upon rather than enlisted in a good cause. Most people are, in fact, so susceptible to impressions from without that they become little more than echoes of the world around them. In their suggestibility they seem almost as if hypnotized. Under hypnosis, a person can be induced to give up smoking, or to overcome some irrational fear, but even under this seemingly desirable influence his suggestibility is increased, with the result that his resistance to subsequent harmful influences becomes lowered. The ordinarily impressionable person, similarly, may act properly when the influences around him are wholesome, but

in a hysterical mob he may find himself, to his later bewilderment, screaming for blood. My guruji taught that hypnosis is a spiritual crime. It is not very much better to treat your own subconscious mind as if it were a mindless slave. For it is *not* unconscious. Nor is it even a separate mind from the conscious. Both are parts of one mind—limited manifestations, in fact, of *superconsciousness*. In a universe where divine consciousness is the sole reality, there can be *no* complete unconsciousness, even in the rocks....

The way to treat your subconscious mind, then, is like a friend, not a slave. In feeding suggestions to the subconscious mind, then, do not seek merely to impose upon it. Inspire it rather, to participate creatively in whatever changes you are trying to effect in yourself. Remember, every affirmation is an act of *becoming*. For it to be most effective, you must see yourself *on every level* as a cause, not as an effect....

In making an affirmation, avoid negative statements, such as, “I don’t like smoking.” A truly creative act is always positive. (That is why we speak of “affirmations,” not of “condemnations.”) A negative thought is always an affirmation of reluctance, of rejection....

Above all, always say “YES” to life! Do everything willingly, joyously. Have only kind thoughts about people. If you want to get out of this cosmic delusion, don’t sit around wanly brooding over how fleeting and empty everything is. For everything is God, also. The difference between delusion and divine enlightenment lies not in things, but in the degree of our awareness. If we can be fully aware at every moment, we shall see God everywhere, no matter where we look. A positive affirmation of life is, in fact, intimately associated with the rising energy in the spine, of which I have already spoken, and without which spiritual awakening simply does not occur. Once all your energies can be focused in a single direction, your power of accomplishment will be, almost literally, infinite.