Man! Know Thyself! This cry has been uttered to mankind by the sages of all climes and all times, as the pivot point of spiritual living. The oracle of Delphi, Socrates, Alexander Pope the English poet, William Shakespeare, and of course, our Indian Rishis have counseled men repeatedly – Know Thyself! Even the Irascille Frenchman Voltaire decided at the end of his famous satirical novel Candide that it was best to “cultivate one’s own garden”.

But, despite admonitions through the ages, man loves nothing better than to chatter endlessly in an attempt to “know his neighbor”! In fact, most people speak with great authority about the character, life, appearance of everyone about them – even people they know only through the media! How many people hate George Bush, people who have never meet him and know him only through media projections! But, they are very authoritative in their hate! Or, how the same people love their favorite rock star, sports hero or cinema heroine. And, what an authority they are on their lives! Yes! Definitely! It is much more fun and exciting to know our neighbor than to know ourselves!

The third Niyama of Patanjali’s Yoga is Swadhyaya – Self Study. The Yogis teach us if we do not know our own selves, we can never know anything else. We will be viewing everything through the falsie conditioning of unconscious, layers of our Samskara. We will project our own motivations onto others! We will conceal our own faults and failing by attributing them to circumstances on the other people we lack the courage to look within and see how shallow, how petty, how sitting, how weak and stubborn our own little ego has become! Yet, without Swadhyaya, without knowing our own small self, how can we know the Big Self! When we remain unaware, unconscious of our own hidden thoughts, feelings, actions, those Samskara become the bars of the prison which keeps us in bondages. The thorough deep knowledge of our own self is like a fire which burns away the dross which ahs encrusted over our real self during millions of births. Slowly, our conditioning melts away, as the sun’s rays pierce the dark inner cave – and the jewel within in finally seen!

The jewel of Self Realisation is the prize of sincere, earnest Swadhyaya. And we are then blessed with Santosham, contentment. A real contentment that produces a quiet art of loving what we have and what we are!

Yes! We may not be a great personality or a heroine figure, but we are a part, an essential part, of a garden and great whole! Swadhyaya leads to Santhosam which lead to Samadhi – oneness with all. When we are all, how can we be small? Everyman’s joy is our joy! Every man’s sorrow is our sorrow! Every man’s talent, success, intelligence is also ours! We are not islands, but part of a whole.

Swadhyaya – Santosham – Samadhi! Three essential steps in Sadhana!