Laugh and the world laughs with you! Cry and you cry alone. Laughter is the best medicine! It exercises and stimulates the inner organs. It stimulates circulatory and respiratory function! It strengthens the solar plexus! It produces feel-good hormones! Laughter is cleansing, rejuvenating. Laughter strengthens and purifies! Let us all laugh loudly and vigorously together, for no reason at all, just because purely and simply, we are glad to be alive! Simply because we realize how fortunate we are to attain a human birth! Simply because everything is so mysterious and wonderful, let us throw our faces to the sky, and laugh with glee! Let us laugh consciously using Yogic knowledge to explore Hasya the Rasa of mirth, Laughter is a sign of detachment, Vairagya. It is an indication that we do not take ourselves so seriously. It is said life is a comedy for the man who thinks and a tragedy for the man who feels!

How mysterious is laughter. Man is the only animal who can laugh in true conscious merriment! And when we laugh, we produce all the vowel sounds of our ancient languages like Sanskrit and Tamil in the sounds we make. The sounds of laughter are based on vowel sounds. Ha – Hee – How – Hum – Vowels are the life force of the language. They are drenched in Prana! Conscious laughter using the vowel sounds is also a Sadhana, a means to evolve with awareness, an aid to rise out of animal dark instinctive impulsive conditioned ignorance into the light of conscious living. In fact, there is a branch of Yoga called Hasya Yoga, or the Yoga of Laughter – merriment.

There is a systematic method of using the vocal chords to consciously laugh using all the vowels progressively. It is emotionally very purifying and lifts negative moods. We teach this in our Ashram as a good catharsis for negative emotions. In fact a very commonly used Yogic technique is based on the use of the sound “Ha!” joining it to breath and movement. “Ha!” is the basic sound of laughter, in all languages of the world, although it can also be employed with negative emotional valences as well, as to express derision. “Ha” is a sound which empowers the solar brain, the solar plexus, which is the seat of stamina and strength. Laughter works with the breath and Prana. Let us explore the relation between breath, emotion, laughter and vowel sound.

The Hindu sages classified human emotions into nine modes called the Nava Rasa, or literally “The Nine (Emotional) Tastes (Flavours)”. These emotion are, in their correct order: Shringara, erotic love Hasya, mirth or laughter; Karuna, compassion, Roudra, fierce anger, Veerya, courage, heroism, Bhayanaka, fear; Bibatsa, disgust, Adbhutha, awe or wonder; Shanta, peacefulness. These emotions are the dominant moving forces in most common human life and must be controlled and refined before the mind can be made steady and calm. Various methods have evolved to refine these emotions.

Our emotions, all types of emotions are classified by the Hindus as consisting of nine emotions. The concept in Bharata Natyam of Nava Rasa: erotic love, mirth, compassion, anger, heroism, fear disgust, awe, peacefulness and. All those feelings, and desires, are ways
by which we can communicate with other fellow beings in an exciting fashion. Laughter! Sobbing! Sighing! Shouting! Think about it! All emotions require extreme use of the breath! Can you imagine any sort of desire or emotion which is not associated with the manner of breathing!

Show me any emotion in which the breath does not move dramatically. Pundits in India teach children Sanskrit or classical Tamil in a vibrant manner, emphasizing breath control. They teach how the language lives. In Sanskrit there are 16 Vowels or **Swaras. Swara** means the life of the language; the consonants are simply the links of the Nadas, the tail of Nada, sound, but vowels are the life force in sound.

There are 16 vowels in Sanskrit: a ā i ī u ū ṛṝ ṭṝ ṭḷ ṭḥ ṃṃ ṭḥḥ. These vowels are the power of the language! Every one of these sounds is a colourful sound: Anandam! Anandam! Satchidanandam! Sounds filled with bliss, reality, consciousness. Every vowel in Sanskrit or in Tamil is a name for God. So we teach children to enter via sound or Nada into the energy essence. The sounds get right into the Nadis and vibrate. It’s a learning mechanism, but its marvellous therapy as well. This is the basis, of course, of Mantras. Prana moves with laughter as laughter is based on the vowel sounds. For laughter involves the use of all the vowel sounds. Laughter is the best therapy. The best therapy for everyone in the world begins with learning to laugh, using consciously the sixteen vowel sounds. Laughter can be an evolutionary tool. It can be a form of Mantra, if one consciously employs the vowel sounds in making the sound of laughter. This conscious laughter can act as a cleanser, of old animal reptilian instinctive conditional responses to real or imagined environmental survival challenges. Conscious expression through sound can release repressed primordial desires in a controlled, sublimated manner.

Beasts cannot laugh. Jackals’ howling is sometimes described as a kind of laughter or the sounds of so-called “laughing hyenas” are described as such, but these are not true laughter. True laughter is possible only for humane. Laughter – genuine, good humoured laughter, springing from good will, a sense of the absurd and just a genuine joy at the mischief of God in his manifestation is a sign of higher evolved intelligence. The Jewish prophets said, “A merry heart doeth good like medicine, but a gloomy face draws the spirit downward like a poison”. Many Yogic Kriyas, Jattis and Pranayama use the sound of full throated laughter with vowel sounds to cleanse emotions and lower mind. Conscious laughter is an evolutionary too!

Man has been a long time in the making…. Billions of years, to be precise. It has been a long journey from the amoeba whose whole consciousness was centered on ingestion and excretion, up through protozoa and multi-cellular creatures, to the fish, the amphibian the reptiles, the mammals. Slowly, collecting systems as the life form evolved, like building block by block, the organism became more complex, more diversified. The crown of all this evolutionary unfolding is MAN, the creature who developed the prefrontal lobed brain and rose to walk on two legs. Man – the first creature whose brain structure allowed the manifestation of Manas, consciousness or self awareness.

Man is the first living creature on earth to know and to know that he knows. But the brain is filled with old memories – the reptilian, the mammalian segments are still conditioned with the old primordial fight – flight survival responses. As Alexander Pope, English poet put it, “Man is a being nature created” half to rise, half to fall!” The lower bestial instincts are at constant war with the higher conscious possibilities.

This is the real struggle of evolution, consciousness trying to control unconsciousness. This has been a long long process. The Puranas tell us the evolution of a single soul goes through
8,400,000 different forms. The soul is born 2,100,000 times in forms born from sweat; 2,100,000 times in forms born from seed; 2,100,000 forms born from egg and 2,100,000 times in forms born from the womb. All souls eventually make these passages, lifetime after lifetime till they obtain freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Yoga has evolved as the science of accelerating this process and “growing consciously”. **Hence Yoga is called the science of conscious evolution.**

Yesterday someone here said, “You can’t see the mind. So it doesn’t exist.” I can’t see the wind either but I can see what the wind does and I can see how it’s blowing. I can forecast storms, cyclonic movements. I can predict the future by the weather. Whether we have crops in Tamil Nadu or we starve to death. Please don’t tell me we cannot understand the mind because we cannot see it. We cannot see atoms, but no one will deny their existence. The next thing you’ll tell me is that we cannot understand the sub-atomic structures. We do have facilities by which we can understand the mind. We must cultivate those facilities because they are very subtle.

I will show you how we can understand the mind, which we cannot see. Before we begin, please remember this axiom: **exercise to exorcise. Exercise can exorcize** (throw out) old demons (conditioned responses from mammalian / reptilian experiences). We can free ourselves from our sub-conscious conditioning through conscious exercise, systematic aware effort in particular patterns. In Yoga there is a complex system of such exercises on the physical (Asana, Kriya, Jatti, Mudra), mental (Jnana Yoga Kriya) and emotional (Raj Yoga Jnana Yoga Kriya) levels. These exercises exorcise old conditioned patterns of behaviour and free consciousness to re-create new conscious responses. I will describe first a mechanism that you must understand, and by the way, this was understood four thousand years before the time of Christ by our Yogis, our Rishis.

Let us backtrack into basic embryology. The female ova and male sperm unite in a glorious explosive burst, in the union of polar opposites thus producing a fertilized egg, the **Zygote**, which pauses for a fraction of a second in eternity in wholeness before proceeding to split in two and then, constantly divide itself mitotically in a process known as cleavage through the stages of **Morula** (with 16 cells), Blastula (with over 100 cells) leading up to the development of the embryo. The cells of the Morula are initially aggregated in a close unit, but later arrange themselves into an outer, peripheral layer known as the **Trophoblast** and an **Inner Cell Mass**, from which the embryo is developed. From this, three lines of cells are formed, just like the sacred three lines of holy ash on a devout Shaivite’s forehead. The **endoderm** unfolds into the linings of the internal organs; the **ectoderm** becomes the skin and nervous structures while the **mesoderm** becomes the muscular structure. The tip of the **ectoderm** starts to fold back upon itself, and a rudimentary brain develops. The core of that brain contains all the ancient primitive impulses of the reptilian complex; the next layer becomes the mammalian brain, and around all that forms the cerebral cortex, the defining structure of man capable of manifesting consciousness.

In addition there is another concept of brain: We can view the thinking instruments by which man navigates his way through the environment challenges as having three different locations in the physical body. There are three brains – one in the head, the lunar one; one in the navel area, the solar plexus and one at the bottom of the spine, the earth brain. One is oblong (medulla oblongata), one is round (Solar medullaris) and the other is a conical shape (conus medullaris). These are the three human brains; all contain grey matter, all have potential to think. One is the solar brain, solar plexus. One is the lunar brain, the one which goes mad as a lunatic. The third brain is the earth brain at the base of the spine. All three have their own intelligence. It is said some pilots fly their planes by the seat of their pants – they use this
instinctive earth brain. Connecting these brains are the sympathetic ganglia on the left and right sides of the spinal column. The peripheral nerves, the left and right peripheral nerves are Ida and Pingala. In my serpent, reptilian brain I carry every single memory of the brain of primordial forms experienced through lifetimes in various bodies. Every single fear that man harbours is hanging around in this area and in the lower part of the pelvis, and in the thalamus and the Amygdala. This area contains every memory in the limbic system of mammalian development with all its learned responses survival. These are the demons which must be exorcised with exercise.

The Sanskrit word for consciousness is Manas. Someone who possesses consciousness is a “man” (Manas). We are only potential humans. Frankly I’m embarrassed by the human race. We can scarcely call ourselves low grade animals. Most animals I see are better than human beings. One experiences this whole barbarian thing, right down in the reptilian / mammalian area of the lunar brain receiving constant impulses from the lower nervous system. And this whole primitive conditioning is wound up in countless reflexogenic feedbacks; neuro feedbacks. A famous Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoyevsky said, ‘Every human experience is a conditioned experience’. His statement is true for the majority of men locked in the mammalian – reptilian complex. You are off the path. I’m off the path. We are on the road to hell, unless we can get out of this bestial conditioning. I had an opportunity one time to meet with Azer Zakirov, the famous Russian dissident. He said, “I’ve read some of your books and I’m very hopeful that you Yogis, you Hindus have found out a way out of this human / animal brain dilemma; this conditioning dilemma”. He said, “Do you believe that every human experience is a conditioned experience?” I said, “Yes”. “Ha!” he said, “I’d hoped you wouldn’t say that! Why do you write your books as you write them, if we can’t be free?” If we are no better than beasts! I said, “Zaker Sahib there is conditioning. This is true. You believe you’re nothing but the body. All human body experiences are conditioned.” But I added. “We are more than human. To free ourselves we must learn to consciously use another part of the brain”. How do we get there? Well, there is Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga of course, and endless Kriyas and Prakriyas; endless, literally endless techniques. Still there are some really simple practices that we can teach to children.

I want to share an experience with my Guru Swami Kanakananda Brighu. As a child I suffered from dyslexia and couldn’t learn. I used to hold my mother’s knee and cry, why can’t I learn? My Guru said, “Look I’ll show you what to do. Sit down.” He took up two big bricks. He put them on either side of my head. He said, “Now I’m going to open these bricks up, and I want you to close your eyes while I do so.” Then, he said, “I’m going to bang these two bricks together right on your head!” I said, “Oh no you’re not because my head’s in between”. I could see what was coming. That’s one way to wake someone up. Hit them over the head with a ton of bricks. Another way is to be struck by a lightning bolt but you may or may not survive that treatment. I want consciousness for you without killing you! Let me teach you a Jnana Yoga Kriya designed to centre your consciousness in a physical place in your brain which will allow you to use your brain correctly.

Close your eyes again, now, wait for a moment, I want you to imagine that there are two big stones, very big stones, hanging by cables from the roof above you and ...mentally I’m going to ask you to put your hands between your head between the stone and push these stones as far apart as you can with your hands. Then I’m going to clap my hands and then I want you to take away your hands so these two stones are going to bang together. And I want you to find out where you are in your brain when this psychological impact occurs. After this I’m going to give you a full minute after I clap my hands and if you want to stay in this mental place for the rest of the day, stay in it and see for yourself where you are. All of you close your eyes. Imagine on each side of your head is a giant stone dangling from
the roof above you and mentally put your hands between your head and these two stones. Now push mentally your hands, pushing those two stones wide apart. Keep pushing. Push them harder. Harder still. (claps hands)- LET GO!

If you follow those simple directions; you will find the imaginary impact of the two stones hitting your head will centre your awareness deep in the brain. This special Jnana Yoga Kriya. This is called Raashi Kriya in the Jnana Yoga system. Raashi means a shock with something heavy, a big mass. The Kriya is like an ancient version of modern electro-shock therapy. There are sixteen traditional Kriyas to get inside of your brain, inside of your mind. They are very simple and can even be used for children. There are hundreds of children studying in Ananda Ashrama in Pondicherry. In eight years we have trained more than 12000 youngsters. In the last twenty years, thousands of adults have gone through our teacher training and medical therapy training. So we have experience in these things.

How to settle down the hyperactive modern child of today, who is over stimulated with media driven sensual, and emotional input. Well, you’ve got to reach him some way. You may have to play games. The Yogic way of doing this is a mind process. And this is effective only while your mind is aware of what you’re doing. Yogic education is the only true education as it “educes” the true divinity and consciousness dormant in man. The modern educational system simply stuffs information into the animal / reptilian brain. In one way, one could say that the modern education system simply trains the animal – reptile nature of man and dresses it up in a tuxedo and top hat, or a fanny ball gown, but deep down does not restrain it in any way. In fact, the lower basic instincts of the limbic system are an empowered by the modern educational system. The Three R’s have been the basis of Indian education from British times: Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Of course, these are only Three R’s phonetically. Reading does start from R, Arithmetic starts from A, and writing starts with W. I think most of you are aware of the Hindi word for man is ‘Insaan’. The English word, insane perhaps comes from this. Man is insane by definition.

The Quakers have a saying: “Sometimes I think the whole world is mad, except thee and me and sometimes I don’t know about thee!” Mark Twain, the famous American humourist, said, when asked if he thought there was life on other planets. “I don’t know, but if there is, they are using the earth as their insane asylum”. A being inhabiting a human body but totally conditioned by reptilian / mammalian impulses could be defined as insane. Yoga can be called the process of going sane. In actual fact Yoga education gets away from this RAW stuff altogether. The mind-brain must be educated in the true sense, trained well. The consciousness must be educated through alert Yogic Sadhana and the unconscious impulses must be exorcized, thrown out from the being’s complex through intelligent exercise. The Three R’s of Yoga Education are Reason, Rationalization and Realisation. Another way to see the 3 R’s of Yoga is Repetition, Regularity and Rhythm. One must establish a Yogic life style based on these three “R”’s and then one can obtain a state of realization, reason and rationality. This is true education – these are the three 3 R’s – not the reading, writing, and arithmetic taught in school. Unless you can use this mind-cum-brain system reasonably, you will be unreasonable: insaan, insaani. Unless you can begin to rationalise things and understand that there is some reality, beyond animal emotions and sensation, you will be irrational, insaana, insaani. Realisation is Atma Jnana. This is the Yogic concept of realisation. As Arjuna exclaims at the end of the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, having heard and understood the teachings of Krishna: “I See! I See! I have regained my sanity!”

We can expand the Three R’s: add to this Regulation. One should educe from within, divine inspiration. One must realize one is not only a man. One is not only a conditioned entity.
There is an unconditioned reality within each human – The Rishis call it Atman, Paramatman. In Europe the Pantheists called it the Oversoul. It not conditioned by an earthly experience! is You are not what you think yourself to be. You have sixteen senses and they are all lying dormant. In Hindu philosophy, we accept eighteen senses. Real senses. No single sense has within itself Sat, or truth. Truth cannot be found through the senses, or through the emotions which are animal – reptilian based experiences. The senses and emotions must somehow be transcended. Pratyahara must be cultivated, detachment from sensual – emotional stimuli, if one is to take the first step into true humanness Dharana is the ability to delve deeply into every aspect of human experience to go deeper than the senses, deeper than emotions, deeper than memory – to find the essence. This is at we should to tell our children. Enjoy your senses but don’t let the senses seduce you. Realise! Have that revelation, understand that deeper education, must be re-creation. Your body, your mind, your emotions have a beautiful mechanism that can totally re-create a totally new being. The ancients found the way – they called it Yoga and shouted to us from a distance of thousands of years! “Lo! All Ye who suffer! Know! A path has been found, a path out of the all this darkness!”

Let us through back our heads and laugh at the sky with full throated Hasya on Mirth at the wonderful realization that there is a path, there is a way, out of all our conditioned Samskara – then, let us courageously and cheerfully begin to walk it – *Pade Pade*! Step by Step!