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Yoga Meditation Advaita

Adhikara: Preparing for Liberation

Every Friday with Radhikaji

What is Adhikara?

As opposed to many other spiritual traditions that preach and convert, the Indian spiritual tradition is based on the idea of adhikara or qualification. A teacher often asks if the student is an "adhikari," the one who has the "adhikara." The adhikari is one who is ready to receive this teaching. The Indian masters parted reluctantly with the teachings. An adept will often test the aspirant in many different ways to confirm that he is a genuine seeker.

An adhikari is one who:

- Feels, "I am bound, I should be liberated."
- Seeks something permanent; is uninterested in the transient and ever-changing.
- Sees pain and suffering in all worldly life.
- Asks "What is happiness? What is suffering?"

An adhikari is one who asks fundamental questions like:

- Who am I?
- From where have I come and why have I come here?
- What is my relationship with the universe and other human beings?
- What is the essential nature of my being, and what is the essential nature of the manifested world, and its cause?
- What is the relationship between the center of consciousness and the objects of the world?
- Do we live after death?

Qualities of a Genuine Seeker

An adhikari or genuine seeker is one who has through keen observation and spontaneous spiritual experiences come to the conclusion that there is nothing permanent in the world and that the world illusion arises as result of the conditioning of the mind and will cease when the conditioning ceases. Such a seeker turns away from the world and is ready for Yoga. The following must be noted:

- Turning away from the world is not meant to be forced upon oneself but is the natural result of insightful observation.
- The path of Yoga chosen depends on the intensity of this insight.
- This is only the starting point of the internal journey. Mastery comes only with practice.

At first a genuine seeker requires confirmation of his natural insights. The Truth must be confirmed not from just one source but different sources.



The seeker must have four basic qualifications to be an adhikari. These are:

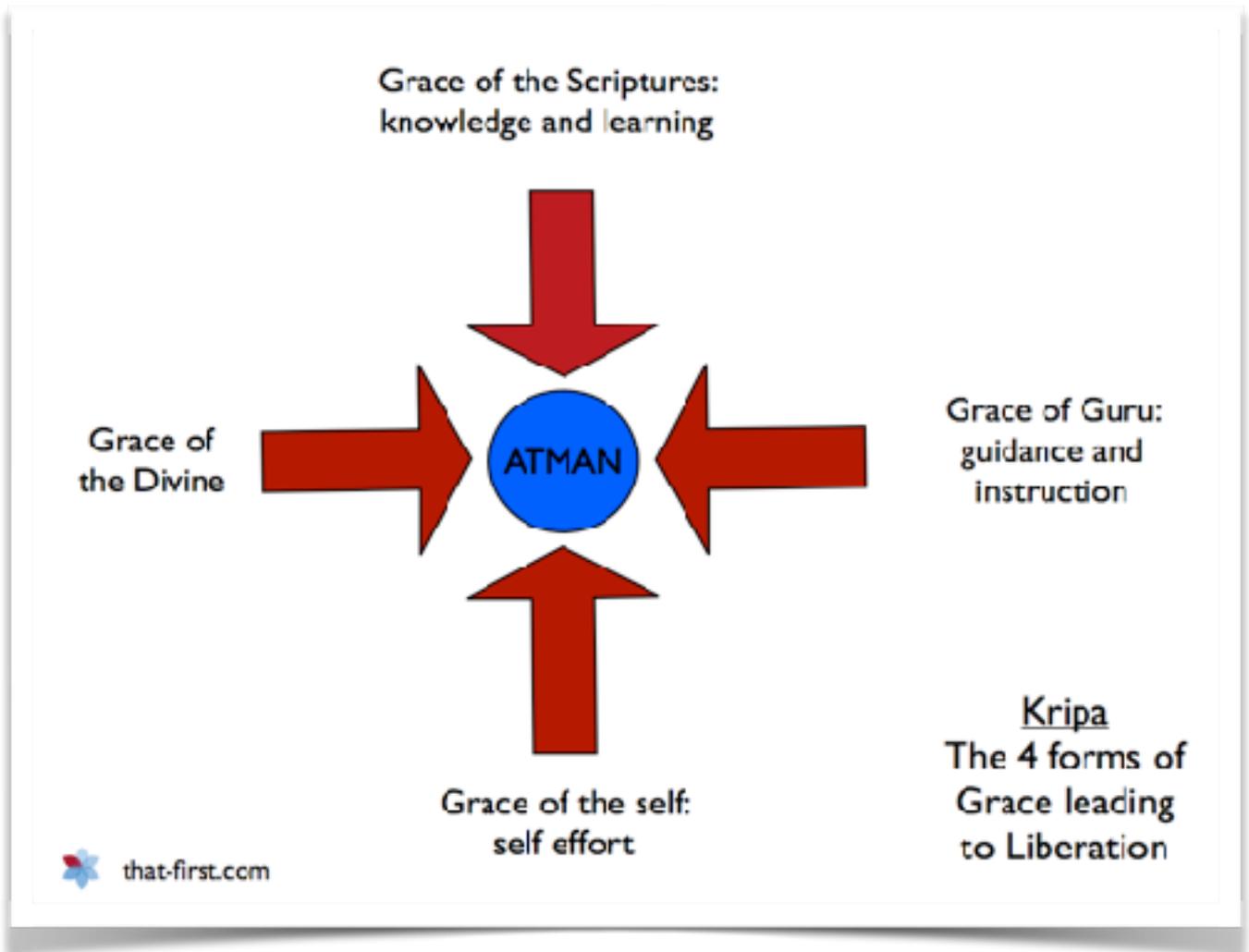
- Viveka - Discrimination, knowing the difference between right and wrong
- Vairagya: Non-attachment
- Mumukshutva: Intense desire to be liberated from suffering
- Sampathi: Discipline that results from the above, leading to firm abhyasa over a long period of time

Integration of Spontaneous Spiritual Experiences

Earlier the seeker arrived by chance naturally to insights conducive to Self Realization. However these insights must be integrated and established. This is possible only through effort.

There are three kinds of effort:

- Knowledge of the scriptures - This is considered important for the scriptures are maps left behind by seekers who have gone before us on this inner journey.
- Instructions of a Master - Scriptures alone cannot guide us. Sometimes we may have to stop and ask the locals for directions. A Master is one who been on this inner journey before and knows his way around. Why not just ask for help?



- Self Effort - The fatalists surrender to the will of deities and make ritual offerings in order to appease these deities. When you give up fatalism and belief in deities you have undertaking self effort, that is action (karma) and create samskaras (impressions) conducive to Self Realization. Disciplined self effort is also called abhyasa in the scriptures.

The fourth: The fourth, that is, grace comes when the other three are present.

How to Prepare the Foundation

Not everyone has adhikara. Not everyone is an adhikari. Those who are not adhikaris cannot be denied this knowledge if they are willing to prepare for it. In order to prepare the right foundation, it is absolutely necessary to understand how primitive urges impact your lifestyle as well as your spiritual development. The primitive urges must be skillfully regulated so that the pranic energy is not dissipated. Instead, the pranic energy is channelized to bring happiness and success into every aspect of your life.

The four primitive urges are:

Sexuality

Food

Sleep

Self-Preservation

Sexuality

Regulating sexuality does not mean you have to lead a life of celibacy. A promiscuous lifestyle, on the other hand, can be just as harmful as repressed sexuality. Both excessive indulgence as well as suppression can cause disturbances in the pranic vehicles. Having a deeper relationship based on mutual respect with a partner goes a long way toward maintaining physical as well as mental health.

Food and sleep are grosser aspects of the primitive urges, since they are required for the immediate maintenance of the body. However, on further

contemplation, you may realize that the sexual urge is deeply connected to the most powerful of all primitive urges: self-preservation. The sexual urge has been deeply ingrained in us, so that we have offsprings and ensure that humanity does not die out. The sexual urge manifests most strongly when the body is mature, healthy and capable of child bearing and child raising. The desire for sexual union is an external manifestation of the natural desire within us to merge with the eternal.

The sexual urge has been highly distorted and is associated with great shame, secrecy and taboo. This is why it is important to see it as just another appetite. Just as we experience hunger for food, we also experience a sexual appetite. If we can regulate our food habits through regular intake of meals, why do we find it strange to do the same for the sexual appetite? Sexuality, too, can be satisfied on a regular basis, such as 2-4 times a week, with a steady partner. Both partners are then mentally as well as physically prepared, taking the time to enjoy each other's company. In this way, sexuality can be transformed from a physical need to respectful and considerate companionship.

Here are some important points to remember:

- Regulate sexuality with a single, intimate partner.
- Promote a healthy relationship with your partner based on mutual respect and participation in each other's lives.
- Maintain regular days and times for sexual union with your partner. This prepares you physically and mentally.

Food

What we eat has a tremendous effect on our practice. Anything that is not water, is considered to be food. There are three kinds of foods: sattvic, rajasic and tamasic. When we speak about diet here, we are talking about diet with respect to yogic practice. Foods that are light and easy to digest are sattvic. Sattvic foods promote and support yogic practice. Rajasic and tamasic foods should be avoided.

Tamasic foods make the body feel heavy and the mind dull. They include frozen foods and processed foods. Foods with artificial coloring, aromas and preservatives are also tamasic. Food that is overcooked, reheated too often, deep fried or kept overnight is considered to be tamasic. Mushrooms and aged cheese are also tamasic. Breads with yeast are tamasic, therefore flatbreads are to be preferred. Red meats, such as beef, lamb and pork are also tamasic. White sugar, all sugary drinks and aerated drinks are tamasic too. Alcohol, drugs and all kinds of intoxicants fall into this category.

Rajasic foods stimulate the mind and body. In excess, they cause irritation, aggression, hyperactivity and sleeplessness. Extremely pungent food is rajasic. Heavy grains like wheat and heavy lentils are also rajasic. Garlic, chillies, and onions, are rajasic as well. Hot beverages such as black tea, green tea and coffee are rajasic. White meats, such as poultry and fish are rajasic. Eggs too, are rajasic.

Sattvic foods are those that purify the body and do not allow toxins to build up in the body. They are freshly cooked and easy to digest. Almost all fruit and vegetables are sattvic; figs and lemons are especially sattvic. Grains like unpolished rice and oats are sattvic. Buckwheat and Millet are also considered to be sattvic. Legumes, such as mung dal, chickpeas, chana dal as well as mung beans are sattvic. Spices, such as fresh ginger, turmeric, coriander, cumin, cardamon, cinnamon and saffron are sattvic. Among milk products, fresh yogurt and ghee are sattvic. Sweeteners like natural honey and jaggery are sattvic. Seeds like sesame and flax are sattvic. Sprouts of different varieties also fall into this category.

A sattvic diet is one with a lot of variety and color. Foods of different color provide us with all the nutrition we require, such as green spinach, purple blueberries, orange papayas, red beetroots and yellow mangoes.

Milk was considered to be sattvic but these days the milk is tamasic due to the industrial processes of homogenization, pasteurization, etc. The huge dairies with poor air, light and space conditions cause stress for the cows. Under these conditions the cows cannot give sattvic milk. Organic milk is an option to consider, since the cows live in better conditions. Another option to consider is goat's milk or sheep's milk since these are not as industrialized as cow's milk.

Among fats and oils, sesame oil and ghee are sattvic. Always use filtered oils, also called Native or Native Virgin oil. Do not use refined and processed oils. Processed and refined oils fall into the category of tamasic foods.

Use rock salt; it contains different trace elements and minerals. Never use refined salt. Refined salt falls into the category of tamasic foods.

Always practice before meals since it is not possible to practice on a full stomach. If you are doing four practices a day, do a morning practice before breakfast, afternoon practice before lunch, evening practice before a light and early evening meal and then a fourth practice before going to bed at night. If you want to practice after a meal, you need to wait for two hours after a light meal or four hours after a heavy meal.

The best kind of fast is the daily fast. The word breakfast comes from "break the fast." Every night you fast and this daily fast should ideally be around 12-14 hours long. If you finish dinner at around 8 p.m., you can eat breakfast after 8 a.m. next morning. This gives the body the entire night not only to digest the food but also enough time for deeper cleansing and regeneration. The daily fast is one of the best things that you can do for your overall well being. If you eat a heavy meal, it is best to keep a fourteen hour fast. Crash diets and extreme fasts are not necessary as long as you keep the daily 12-14 hour fast. The daily fast is suitable for healthy persons. Those who have any health issues should consult a physician before trying the daily fast.

Eat slowly and with awareness. To increase your awareness while eating, it might be useful to count the number of times you chew your food. Absent-minded eating of food while walking, watching television, surfing the internet, reading books or comics is not healthy. This can lead to overeating,

eventually to obesity, diabetes and other health issues. Never overeat. The yogis have a hand rule for food intake: fill half the stomach with solids, quarter with liquids (not water) and keep a quarter empty.

As far as possible eat freshly cooked and mildly spiced foods. Avoid heavy foods, especially in the evening. Have regular meals at fixed times; this prepares the body and mind for the absorption and assimilation of food. Those who are busy and travel a lot, need to find flexible and creative solutions, such as carrying healthy home cooked meals.

Drink around two liters of liquids through the day. This quantity is only a rough indication. You may need more liquids when down with fever or diarrhea, after sports, in summer or after exposure to cold air. Avoid sugary drinks like aerated drinks. Make yourself herbal tea instead of tea and coffee. Pour hot water over fresh ginger and your ginger tea is ready. You can do the same with peppermint leaves or tulsi leaves. You can also make a delicious herbal mix with different spices such as saffron, cardamom, cloves and cinnamon.

You can experiment a bit to see how food impacts you. Most of the time you will notice that food is deeply connected with emotions. When sad or disappointed you want to eat comfort foods like chocolate. Food is not just for the nourishment of the body. You need to observe how food affects the mind and nourishes it. Most of us are motivated by our sense of taste rather than the appetite. Often we experience a hunger for food that is determined by the taste and memories. As far as possible, eat only when really hungry; do not burden the stomach with more food, if there is no appetite.

Some important points to remember:

- Drink 1-2 liters of water everyday.
- Keep a daily 12-14 hour fast at night.
- Fill half the stomach with food, one quarter with liquids other than water and keep one quarter empty. Never overeat.
- Do not eat between meals. Have 3-4 meals daily at regular times.
- Do not keep food overnight. Prepare food daily.
- Eat slowly and consciously.
- Avoid coffee, black and green tea. Drink freshly made herbal teas without sugar instead.
- Eat only when you are hungry.

Sleep

Since we cannot interfere too much with the natural sleep patterns, regulating this primitive urge is all the more difficult.

There are many misguided practitioners who believe that once they practice some sort of asanas or do a little of what they call meditation, they do not need sleep at all or need just a couple of hours of sleep. Some drink coffee and energy drinks to stave off sleep. Extreme disturbance of the sleep pattern can cause serious damage to mental and physical health. Interference with the sleep pattern is dangerous.

Good quality sleep means no disturbance during sleep. A sick person generally does not have good quality sleep. Emotional disturbance also means poor quality sleep. Noise and light pollution also cause disturbances in sleep. Most of us need around 2-3 hours of deep sleep and 5-6 hours of dream time. Sleep deficiency leads to poor concentration, depression and anxiety, loss of memory and impaired learning ability. It also accelerates aging, impairs judgement and causes accidents. Sleep deprivation has also been connected to increase in appetite, eventually resulting in obesity.

It has also been observed that excessive food causes dullness, drowsiness and inevitably sleepiness. Thus, it is clear that the four primitive urges are deeply connected to each other and influence each other.

These days, it is difficult to maintain regular sleep patterns due to the strong influence of mobile technology and other media such as internet and television in our daily lives. Most people leading modern lifestyles work long hours and get too little sleep. They build up a huge sleep deficit and try to compensate on weekends. This leads to irregular sleeping patterns causing mood swings between hyperactivity and sloth. Getting a healthy amount of sleep is important. For most people 7-8 hours of good quality sleep is sufficient, except in the case of infants, adolescents, the aging, the sick, and pregnant women. These generally need more sleep. If you sleep too long, you might feel heavy, dull and experience sloth. If you sleep too little, you may get irritable, impatient and snappy. As one gets older, one needs less sleep. Those above the age of forty years may find themselves sleeping less or sleeping lightly.

Daytime naps or power naps are useful, especially for those who work a lot and are extremely stressed. If it is possible, lie down for 15-20 minutes. This will rest your body and mind. Do not fall asleep. The short rest will make you more creative and fresh for the rest of the day. Do not nap for longer than twenty minutes.

It may not be easy, but it is important, to work out a good bedtime ritual that helps you wind down. Go to bed at the same time every evening and wake up at the same time every morning. Most people use the time before bedtime for watching television and surfing the internet. The continuous movement of images disturb the mind instead of soothing the mind. It is best not to watch television and surf the internet at least an hour before bedtime. It is also recommended that you put your mobile phone on airplane mode, at least an hour, before bedtime. Turn off all devices and even better, do not keep any devices, such as mobiles and laptops, in your bedroom. Choose a bedtime ritual that soothes the mind, for instance, enjoy a relaxed stroll, practice meditation or read a page from a book that calms the mind and strengthens positive thoughts.

Avoid drinking coffee, black tea and green tea after 2 p.m. since these disturb the sleeping patterns. You can drink herbal teas, a warm fresh lemon drink with honey or just hot water instead. Do not eat a heavy dinner or indulge in after-dinner snacking in the evening.

Here are some points to remember:

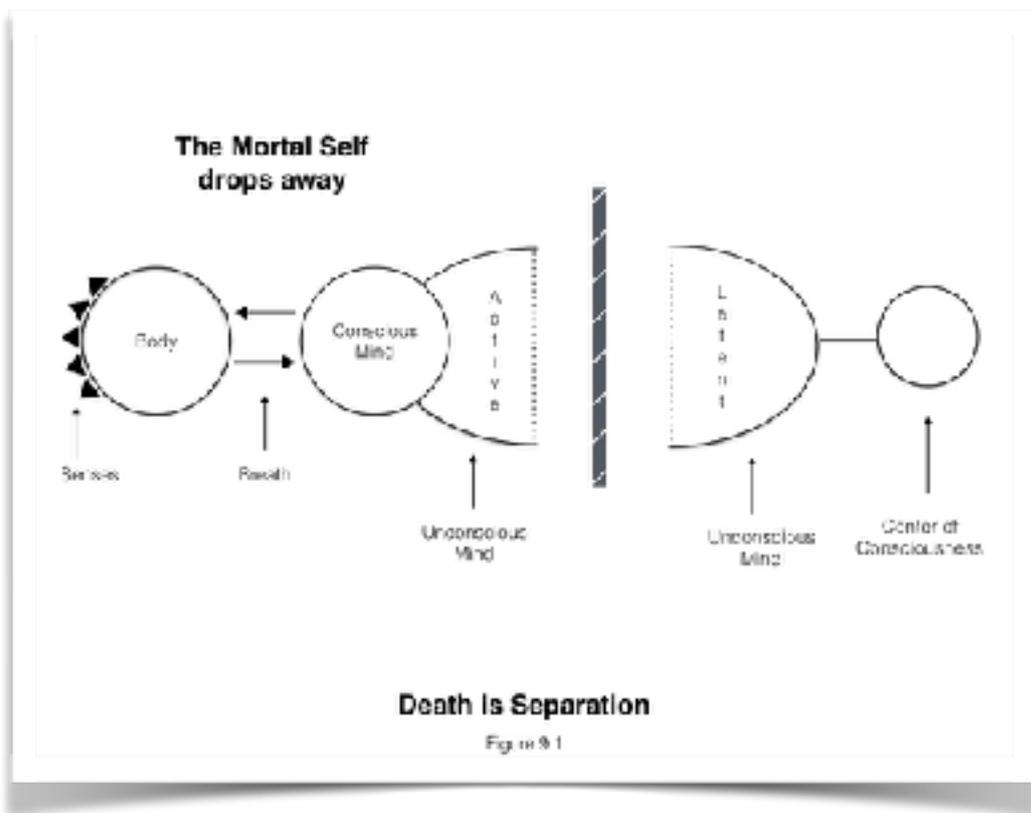
- Go to bed at the same time every day.

- Wake up at the same time every day.
- Get around 7-8 hours of quality sleep.
- Have a dark and quiet room as your bedroom. Air out the room regularly.
- Avoid keeping devices in your bedroom.
- Do not drink coffee, black tea and green tea after 2 p.m.
- Do not eat heavy meals in the evening. Avoid after-dinner snacking.

Self-Preservation

No one wants to talk about the fear of death. The fear of death is deeply rooted in us. Self-preservation also manifests in the fear of aging, fear of losing the loved ones and fear of losing your worldly possessions such as your house and job. Fear is not merely about physical death. Fear comes from the death of a false self-identity. If you have the self-image of being young and healthy for the rest of your life, this self-image starts falling apart, when you discover your first gray hair. If you want to create a larger than life self-image of your manhood, then you will feel attacked if someone questions your ability to park a car. While the gender battle over the ability to park a car may be amusing, this is a serious attack for a strong self-identity. Such attacks on the self-identity are experienced exactly like the threat of a physical death. The death of a self-identity is probably more painful than a natural physical death. Natural death is like falling asleep. Sleep is known as *sahodara*, the "little sister" of death. You might have a physically painful death if you die of unnatural causes, such as an accident or drowning, but the process of separation itself is not physically painful.

When a very old person dies, one says, "You do not have to feel sad because she led a very rich and fulfilling life." On the other hand, when someone dies young, one says, "It is tragic, he was so young, he had so much to live for." A long and fulfilling life means you are able to live out your desires, until they return to the unmanifest state, where you rest. We perceive separation from this body and this plane of existence and from our loved ones as painful.



You live a busy life and live out many of your desires and samskaras but at some point time the body gets tired. You, Pure Consciousness, have associated with the nashvar, "the perishable." You forget that you have attached yourself to the perishable. You do not remember that you are Pure Consciousness, that you are not going to die, that you will come back again and enjoy this all over again, as long as you have the desire. Every time you go through the same process of separation and experience that pain of

separation. After innumerable times of experiencing this pain of separation, it has become etched deep in your ancient memories. The fear of death or separation is a vasana, a diffuse memory of deep fear mixed with a numb pain. You do not remember all these deaths or separations; you are only left with this unknown fear. The fear of death has been learned over innumerable lives but it can be unlearned.

When you know your eternal nature through direct experience, then you know that you are not really dying. You become fearless. Fearlessness means you are no longer attached to this plane of existence, the "nashvar," because you know through direct experience that you, Pure Consciousness, are eternal and imperishable.

This brings us to the question: How can one regulate the primitive urge of self-preservation? No doubt, this is the most difficult of all the four primitive urges to regulate, since we completely suppress the fear of death.

Approach the primitive urge of self-preservation with respect. Take up at least one of the following exercises:

- Make a list of all your fears, such as fear of loneliness, fear of aging.
- Make your last will and testament.
- Contemplate on what you would do with your life if you were to die in a year.
- Do something every day that gets you out of your comfort zone, like talking to a stranger or asking someone to do you a favor.

The Four Primitive Urges and Awareness

You can gently regulate the four primitive urges. However, when one of the four primitive urges has become completely dominant and taken over your life, you need to get back in charge. For example, excessive consumption of sugar can lead to extreme obesity, diabetes and innumerable other health related issues. Under the circumstances, it might be necessary to completely cut out refined sugar from the diet. This is known as tyaga or "abstinence." The same is true for alcohol or drug addiction.

Excessive indulgence in sexual desires is harmful for physical as well as mental hygiene. There is a long tradition of celibacy in spiritual and religious traditions throughout the world. Celibacy is a form of tyaga. Celibacy without mental and spiritual development can be too restrictive and even counterproductive. Celibacy is appropriate only when the person has grown out of the strong physical need and mental desire for sexual satisfaction. Until then, regulation of sexual desires with a steady partner is to be preferred.

To lead a balanced and healthy life, a life of moderation is recommended. You can enjoy sweets and chocolates without forming harmful habits. You may notice that even when the primitive urges are satisfied on a regular basis, still the mind tends to remain preoccupied with thoughts of sex, food, sleep or self-preservation. This shows the clear connection of these primitive urges to the emotional level.

The hold that most of the primitive urges have on you diminishes with increasing age: you need less food and sleep, and the sexual desire is not as strong. This leads many to believe that the practice of advanced pranayama would be easier with age. This may not be necessarily true. It seems a strong foundation in practice is required, else it is very difficult with increasing age to unlearn deep rooted habit patterns. Also, the primitive urge of self-preservation begins to get really active as the body ages.

In most cases, regulation of the four primitive urges is to be preferred to tyaga. With self-awareness and sensitivity to subtle differences, you will observe that the four primitive urges are interconnected. When one of the four primitive urges is strictly managed, the others become active in an effort to compensate. The primitive urge of self-preservation is so deeply buried that one often remains completely unaware of it. The urge for self-preservation is so basic and primitive that most of us cannot get a handle on it at all. Sleep is hard to observe, since we lose our awareness totally. Sex is deeply connected with strong emotions and social taboos, which makes it difficult to observe and regulate in the beginning. This leaves us with food, as the easiest primitive urge to observe as well as regulate. It is not without a reason that so much emphasis is put on good food as well as regular habits related to food.

As you become more aware of your lifestyle and the primitive urges, you will realize that discipline is not so difficult after all. In fact, awareness and discipline will help you really enjoy your life.