

OASIS | ACHARYA PRASHANT

# Why do we keep hurting ourselves?

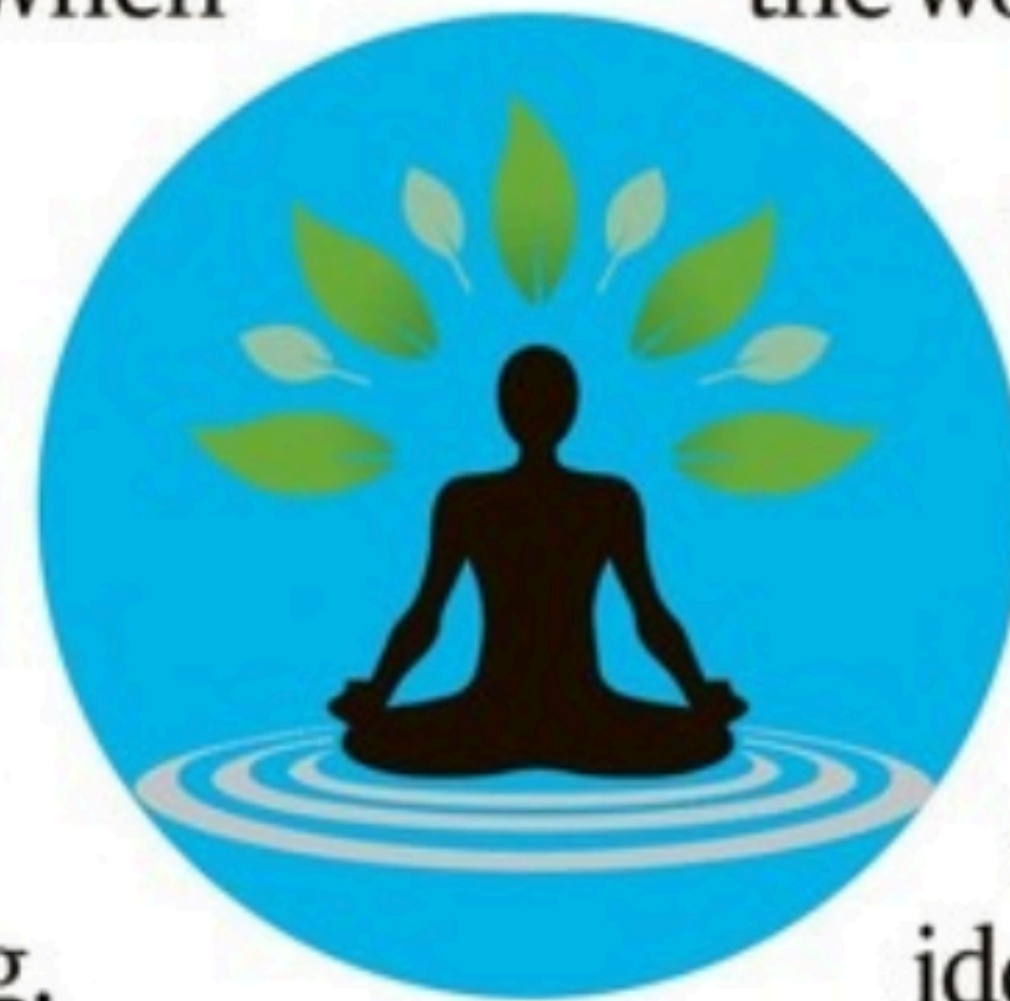
Nobody wakes up and decides to suffer. Nobody intentionally chooses self-harm. Whatever we do: whether it's entering a toxic relationship, numbing ourselves with entertainment, tolerating a dead-end job, or drowning in addictions, we do it hoping it will bring some relief, some pleasure, some sense of meaning. Even our worst choices are made in the belief that they'll somehow help us.

But that's precisely the problem: we don't see clearly. We call our compulsions love. We call our conditioning freedom. We call our coping mechanisms healing. What we're really doing is acting out of ignorance. What the sages called avidya: a deep ignorance of

who we are and what we truly need.

Self-harm isn't just about physically hurting ourselves. It is also when we live unconsciously, chasing goals given to us by society and family. It's when we follow pre-conditioned desires and make harmful decisions, thinking they are wise. It's when we act as per our base impulses and call them intuition. And after all this, when things fall apart, we wonder what went wrong.

The real harm often begins much earlier. Not when a relationship turns bitter, but when we entered it, thinking it would fulfil us. Not when the job becomes suffocating, but when



we joined it out of fear, mistaking it for security. Not when we collapse under stress, but when we started measuring our worth by standards borrowed from the world.

The root of self-harm is this: we act from a consciousness that has surrendered to the body, to its instincts, memories, and patterns. Our 'I', the sense of self, gets wedded to what it is not. We start identifying with our urges, with pleasure, with conformity, and we call it normal life. But don't animals do the same? If our goals are no different from theirs—territory, approval, dominance, pleasure—then something

is deeply amiss.

How to know if we're trapped in this cycle? Look at what you've been repeating for years. Look at what everyone else is doing. Look at whether your deepest impulses resemble those of the jungle. And most of all, look at your suffering. Not to suppress it, but to ask: Why is it here?

The honest mind doesn't pretend. It watches. It questions. It learns to pause. And it's in that quiet, honest questioning that something begins to shift. Real freedom doesn't come with a grand declaration; it begins with a soft, almost whispered recognition: All this while I've been harming myself, without even knowing it.