HUMAN beings have long attempted to tether, with all manner of pacifist philosophies, their innate longing to become much more than what they are right now. People have decreed that one should be desire-less, be content with what one has or what God has given one. But such philosophies have only worked for the sick and the aged. When one doesn’t have the energy to sit up in bed, it feels sensible to say, “What I have is enough. I want nothing more.” The minute a little more energy courses through you, you are once again ready for something more.

No matter what you do, no matter what you become, you want to be something more. If that something more happens, you want something more. If that happens, again something more. That means that what you are really looking for is limitless expansion. Whether it’s money, love, pleasure or knowledge — the currency may vary from person to person — but the common factor is “limitlessly more”. This is the nature of our existence: there is something within us which is not willing to settle for any kind of boundary. When this longing finds a conscious expression, in the East we say it is yoga. Yoga means “union”. It is a way to experience your life beyond all boundaries.

Once, I visited the Coimbatore Central Prison to do a yoga programme, and I thought this was a perfect place! A prison is far more organised than one’s home: food is on time, people open and close doors for you, and you have complete privacy — nobody will disturb you. Although the prisoners’ lives within the prison walls are physically so much better for many than what they knew outside, there is pain in the air. Not once would I come out without tears in my eyes. All that happened to their lives is that somebody else locked them up. Just that loss of freedom. Many people lock themselves inside their own homes. Whether this is done to you from outside or you do it to yourself, human beings suffer in horrible ways.

The basis of your experience, what differentiates what you from what is not you, are sensations. We consider whatever is within the boundaries of our sensation as “me”, and that which is outside this boundary as “not me”. Suppose there is a glass of water. In your experience, that water is not you. But the moment you drink it, it becomes you. All that happened was, you included this water into the boundaries of your sensation, and suddenly it’s you. Yoga is a means to expand the boundary of your sensation in such a way that you are able to experience the whole universe as a part of yourself. In your experience, everything has become one.

To fulfill this human longing to expand limitlessly, it is most important that joy is a constant companion of your life. If you do not know how to be joyful by your own nature, then the fear of suffering will make every step you take in life only half a step, not a full stride. The fear of suffering has crippled humanity, has constipated human consciousness so severely that human beings have become so much smaller than what they should have been. If you have the assurance that your joy is not contingent upon external realities, that no matter what happens, you will be anyway joyful — then you will explore your full potential, and break all boundaries.

Even though being joyful is the natural aspiration, for many human beings, joy is only a rare visitor in their lives. People do not know how to handle their thought and their emotions. Being joyful is not going to happen simply because you wish it: right things have to be done. This is true for one’s external situations and for one’s interiority as well. It is time to handle the inner dimension in a logically correct and scientifically verifiable way. The book Inner Engineering: A Yogi’s Guide to Joy is a little step in that direction. Sadhguru, a yogi, is a visionary, humanitarian and a prominent spiritual leader (www.ishafoundation.org)