

# Yoga - Its Meaning and Aim

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On the .mp3 file, Doctor Lewis plays "The Yogi Marching Song" on the organ before the lecture.

"Yoga - Its Meaning and Aim."

Yoga means union, that's all. Yoga is nothing mystical; nothing frightening. And people who practice yoga are not queer at all. They're the most scientific people, because yoga is an exact science; the science which gives us union with the Infinite; the science of uniting the individual Soul with the Cosmic Spirit. If we practice yoga, what happens? We break the idea of separateness, which is inherent in us. The idea of separateness from God is the cause of all delusion, and that delusion in turn is the cause of all suffering.

In the [Bhagavad] Gita we have it depicted nicely. The fact that if delusion, which comes from the idea of separateness, is the cause of all our suffering, what is our first and highest need? To know God, and thereby break the idea that we are separate from Him; it says in the Gita: "...Yoga is literally union, and it means harmony with the divine Law, becoming one with the divine Life<sup>1</sup>..."

Yoga gives you union, not only with this life, which according to delusion is separated from the one Divine Life, it gives you union with your real existence, which is Divine Life. How? "...by the subdual of all out[ward]-going energies. To reach this, balance must be gained..." That is to reach contact with God, balance of the energies in the body, which take us away from Him, must be attained. That balance attained, then we can turn those energies inward, toward the Soul, that we may once more be joined to the Great Self, and, therefore, be above the opposites of pain and pleasure, and feel and realize, that those opposites are simply waves in the One Great Divine Life.

And also in the Bible, the Bible, we read the same thing. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew, the 4<sup>th</sup> Verse, what does it say: "Thou shalt not live by bread alone..."

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Annie Besant was one of the first to broadcast the teachings of the Gita in India and abroad with her cheap but readable and excellent English translation. The following extract from her preface is both interesting and instructive. The Bhagavad Gita or The Lord's Song, Preface, Page 12

by the ordinary laws of life, of oxygen, and food, and so forth, no, "but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."

Now, do we know the mouth of God? Do you know the mouth of God? Do you know the Word that comes in through the mouth of God? Do you know the Great Cosmic Energy that flows in through the Medulla Center in which is all the power and strength you need – greatest of all in which is the Love of God? Do you know that? Yoga, if you practice it, will give you the perception of realizing that. Not only that, will give you the power to merge in that One Great Presence of God. That's what yoga will do. Yoga means union; union with the Presence of God with you, in you, in a conscious way.

Now going on; yoga is one of the several Hindu systems of thought, developed from the ancient philosophical writings of the Vedas in the first thousand years, in the thousand years before Christ. It is old. It has been handed down. Now, those Vedic writings consist, or have been grouped into the Six Hindu philosophies. There are three important ones: Sankhya, Yoga, and Vedanta.

Now, in the first one, we have the knowledge, the knowledge of what real life is; the knowledge that we are not just this body, which seems so real, and nice we and feel it, and everything. No. The knowledge is we are not, that we're something as we always say in our prayers, "Father, I am not this body." I am the Unchanging Cosmic Energy, and Thy Consciousness. That's what I am. Now, this first system of philosophy gives you the knowledge of that. Now, if you know that, and follow that knowledge, then you reach Vedanta, which is the end of all things. You'll know that we come from the One Ocean of Spirit, and that we finally merge, and become one with that Ocean of Spirit: Sat, Chit, Ananda; Ever-conscious, Bliss, Eternally. But, yoga seems to me to be the greatest of the three, because yoga it gives us the practical method whereby we can apply those methods to make this knowledge of what we are, make it our realization, and also realize that the end of things is Vedanta. So, that's why yoga is so wonderful. It is an exact science; the science, which gives you Union with the One Eternal Spirit, which unites the Individual Soul with the One Great Cosmic Soul.

All systems, all these Six systems of Hindu philosophy, strive for that one thing – Union of the Individual personality with the Great Over-Soul, or Oneness with God. But, I think, perhaps, the best definition of yoga is this: "Yoga is a way of life." If we just take yoga as a theory, or something to be thought of once in awhile, and some of the exercises done, that, that isn't of any use – yoga is a way

of life – a coordination of a system of thought. How? With regular, a regular program of daily, life exercise. That's the important thing.

Self-Realization teaches Raja Yoga, which is the greatest of yoga, because it combines all of the best parts of all of the phases of yoga. Now, if you follow Self-Realization, follow its techniques, you will have not only the theory of what you are, where you're going, and how to do it, but you'll have a system of daily life exercises. Isn't that wonderful? You don't have to give much time, but you have to do them. We should certainly give one hour a day and follow these life exercises, which are given through Self-Realization, by the efforts of the beloved Master. Follow those, and then we can attain, in a conscious way, Oneness with that which does not pass away; that which does not fade, and leave us high and dry; it takes us to oneness with the great Eternal Father, the Great God.

So, the yogi, rather than to submit to automatism, or be swept along with the tide of social conditioning – you know, if you follow along like a sheep, finally, somehow it'll percolate through and you'll be lifted up a little bit. They don't wanna do that. They don't wanna be automatons, or they do not wanna wait for ordinary evolution. So whatta they do? They take themselves in hand, and by regular independent action, they follow these eternal truths. Discipline themselves; physically, mentally, and Spiritually, that they may attain Union with the One Infinite Father, to master their entire consciousness and being. Some master the body. But look within the mind is in a whirl. Some do not master the body, but inside they're fairly calm. But the yogi, through independent action, masters body, mind, and Spirit. "He stills the waves of the mind stuff," which Patanjali says, "and he can merge in the Ocean of Spirit within."

How does he do this? The yogi begins at the ordinary physiological level of functioning, just as you are now. That's all that big word means. It takes yourself, as you are now, and he begins first, to what? To attain certain postures; whereby, the body can be kept in a comfortable position; so that, finally, he can break the attachment to the body. If you are practicing yoga in the wrong position, and you are constantly reminded that you are the body by a spine that is not straight, that is bent over, you cannot break that attachment, and get rid of that thing which keeps the Soul tied to the body. So the yogi begins to do that first. He gets the body in the right position. Patanjali said, "Any position with the spine straight, any comfortable position with the spine straight, is suitable for yoga." Having done that, then he goes inward, and through the certain techniques of yoga, of Self-Realization, he begins to regulate the respiratory

system, and the heart action, so that they quiet down, releasing the Life Force, and attachment to those things.

Now, we have to do that before the yogi can ascend to the Higher Realms. He cannot hope to control the mental action or the discipline through concentration of these mental states, until he has, at least, first, quieted the body, and then stilled the respiration and the heartbeat. With your respiration (pant several times), how can you concentrate mentally? You cannot do it. And so, he, after attaining proper posture, then he regulates the breath through the techniques of yoga. And then he is fit and ready to go and discipline, to rise above, and discipline the mental phases of his life. This he does. Then he leaves the mental plane. He cannot leave the mental plane for the Higher Intuitional Plane, until he has stilled the waves of the mind through yoga techniques. When he does that, then he goes to the Intuitional Plane of the Soul, and thereby attains Union, attains Superconsciousness, ecstasy, samadhi, whatever you wanna call it. It's nothing but Union with God within us.

And so, that's how the yogi does it. By following these processes, the end of which is to consciously merge and be one with the Infinite, the Father of All, that's what the yogi does. He's not satisfied to be a doormat; an automaton. No. He must know, now, in this life it can be done, that he is one, one with God.

Now yoga is very scientific. "Yoga is the science of all sciences," the Master told me. To know God is the science of all sciences, isn't it? God is behind all of the sciences. To know Him is the greatest science there is. Yoga is very scientific, if it is practiced that way. But if, if it is practiced and followed by following those who do not know the science of yoga, that's different. But yoga itself is the most scientific.

Now, those of you who have a scientific bent of mind, read, read Dr. Behanan's book, Yoga: A Scientific Evaluation. Dr. Behanan was born in Travancore, India. He graduated from Calcutta University with a B.A. in 1923. He went to the University of Toronto – studied there. He came to Yale. There he received his Master's degree. Also at Yale, he received the Sterling Fellowship, which enabled him to study in India for two years. To go there, and mix with the yogis, to study there for two years yoga, that he might write this book, or give this to the world, "A Scientific Evaluation of Yoga."

And so, just to read perhaps, one of his testimonies, he says this: "It is difficult to refrain from the conclusion that there is similarity between the neuromuscular

condition under yogic breathing and concentration on the one hand, and the state of relaxation and reduced tension indicated by the above experiments on the other." In other words, yoga is scientific to do what? To bring about within you relaxation, lack of tension, that you may get out of this body, which keeps us tied to this universe. Get out of the mind, which runs here and there. Relax it; reduce the tension that we may merge in Spirit.

Then he goes on to say: "I cannot refrain from putting on record a change in my own emotional life which seems somehow to be an outgrowth of these practices. They have led to an emotional stability and balance which I do not remember having possessed prior to taking these exercises. Psychiatrists are wrestling with emotional stability, but yoga goes to the fountainhead of intuition of the Soul which was far above your emotions and which can level them off and smooth them up." And so, yoga is very scientific, and those of you who would like to read that book, please do. Yoga: A Scientific Evaluation by Dr. Behanan.

Now, going on just a bit; yoga, this one important thing, which I want you to remember; yoga is not only a scientific system of procedure, correlating physiological and psychological conditions in the body, but, remember this, it unites, it unites the devotee with the Infinite. That's the part that people miss. So, those of you who are interested in yoga remember, yoga is the means to an end. What is the end? Union with God.

Now, when you make yoga the end, you miss the real function, the real worth of yoga – Union with God. If you practice yoga, the practice of yoga is very exhilarating. It gives you peace of mind, as the gentleman says, "by reducing the tension in the body, producing relaxation." But that's not the end of yoga. The end of yoga is Union with the One Great Father of All. And, you will not be satisfied, until you have that union. So remember, yoga is scientific. But the end must be, not the scientific practice of yoga alone, but merging in the One Great Presence of God within.

Now there are many kinds of yoga, just for a moment, I will say there is Hatha Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Raja Yoga. I don't know whether I missed any or not.

Now Hatha Yoga simply means a specialized branch of yoga dealing with postures. Postures; and this will give you health and long life. Do you understand? It's a branch. A specialized branch of the one great system of yoga, which means Union with God – don't forget that.

Now Bhakti Yoga is a specialized branch in devotion. Gyana yoga is a specialized branch of wisdom. Kriya Yoga, Kriya Yoga, which Self-Realization teaches, because, remember, Self-Realization teaches Raja Yoga, which takes the best of all yoga systems. Kriya Yoga is a scientific accelerator to lead the devotee back to Union with God. It is the greatest Spiritual accelerator to bring about the goal of all yoga. Which is what? Ecstasy, samadhi, superconsciousness, which boils down to the conscious realization of our Oneness with God; now, that's what Kriya Yoga will do in the shortest possible time. And remember, Kriya Yoga is unique to Self-Realization Fellowship. Self-Realization Fellowship is based on that unique technique of Kriya Yoga, one of the greatest parts of yoga system, which gives one scientifically, in the shortest possible time, ecstasy, or Union with God.

Now Patanjali, the great exponent of yoga, in his curriculum of yoga, he gives the Eight Steps. I will not go into 'em, just to name them, 'cause the time is short. There are Eight Steps. Yama, Niyama; those are the positive and negative morality. Don't do this, don't steal. The positive is be upright, be religious, be good. Before you can practice the later steps of yoga, you have to do those things. You have to be at least morally good.

Then we come to the next one which is the, which is Asana. Posture; now, the Master says, following Patanjali's wisdom, "Any posture with the spine straight, and the body in a comfortable position, is right to practice yoga." See how wonderful Self-Realization is. Sit up on your bed, with one or two pillows, according to your natural bent. Some need one, some need three. But get the body comfortable, with the spine straight, and practice your yoga.

Now, after the postures comes Pranayama. A great big, long, word, which simply means prana, and yama: control of prana – control of the Life Force in the body. Self-Realization, through the Recharging Exercises, we control the Life Force in the muscles – the outer part of the body. Then we go in, and through the different techniques, we control the mental process, and attain concentration. Going beyond that, through pranayama – control of Life Force – we put our concentration, we put that control of prana, where – on God.

There's pranayama in a few words, that's all. It's nothing mystical. That leads to a certain state, when you perform pranayama. What is the state? Interiorization – you forget you are the body. You forget the outward sensations. You arrive in

an interior state, whereby you are fit to go on. What's that state? Pratyahara – Interiorization of your consciousness, that's all.

And the last three steps are important. Dharana means concentration on one thing. And in Self-Realization, we concentrate on what? The greatest thing in the body – the Holy Ghost – with the Light at this point [Doctor points to the Spiritual Eye between the eyebrows], and the sound within; but greatest of all, the Presence of God in that Holy Ghost. That's the State of Dharana – concentration on one thing. It might be on this microphone; it might be on a nice new dollar bill; but in yoga, concentration is on the Presence of God within the body as the Holy Vibration with Light, Sound, and Consciousness. The Love of God in you.

Now the next state in yoga is Dhyana, which means expanding your consciousness from the body to the Presence of the Holy Ghost in all creation: the Cosmic Light, the Cosmic Sound, and the Cosmic Presence of God in creation as Christ Consciousness. Now isn't that simple? Forget all this stuff about yoga. These are the simple things, simple steps, leading to the final step of the Eight Steps of Patanjali: samadhi, or ecstasy, superconsciousness, whereby the separateness from God is removed, the individuality as the Soul is merged in the One Consciousness of God. There you have, in a few short words, the Eight Steps of Yoga.

Now, going on just a bit to conclusion; yoga, like any exact science, can be applied in any clime, anywhere, to everybody. There is a...some people think yoga is not suitable to the Western mind. That's a falsehood. That's a falsehood. That's ignorance, that's all. You read Dr. Behanan's book where he says he stayed, he stayed with those yogis, who are human beings, just like you, and like me; he stayed with them, and he found they had something which other people do not have. Yoga can be applied to the West just as well, perhaps better, than the East, because we have more comforts here. We have a better start.

So, another reason that yoga can be applied in the West just as well, look at the work the Master has done. Look at the thousands and thousands throughout United States – throughout the world even – where he spoke, throughout England, other places. They all have followed yoga. They all practice. Many of them do the practices daily, and they have attained, many have Oneness with Spirit. So, you see, this idea that yoga is only for the Eastern mind is not right. The Master has proved that, and there are thousands who are following yoga, right now, this very minute.

And so, in the East, of course, we have an unbroken chain of practice of yoga for centuries – for a long, long time – that has laid the Spiritual foundation for the proper human life. Man, you know, is an animal. He's also a Spiritual animal. So the East has followed, has followed the Spiritual side of the creation of the human being. It has developed that through ages, through long-continued practice of yoga so that the Spiritual foundation is right, is there. But India, also, or the East, needs, needs the development of the physical side.

Now in the West, in the West we, of course, have followed more the outward things. We are following the Forces of Nature. Look what we've done with the atom, and so forth. But the West must be careful that it is not engulfed in following these outward forces and energy, and thereby miss, miss the great Spiritual Energy and Powers that are within. The combination of what India has done and America should so, is right. And so, yoga can be applied to all – everyone – whether he is in the East, or the West, as the physical side, but it also, has the Soul. And what is the Soul? The Soul is the same. The Soul is the same in an Easterner and in a Westerner. And that Soul must be cultured and developed.

Finally, finally, we come to the end. The aim of yoga is what? The aim of yoga is human Salvation. Human Salvation is the reason, the common reason why both East and West should practice yoga – human Salvation; human Salvation. In the East, although in the East and the West there are differences, diverse differences as to external activities, outward things, still within the Soul is the same. And, therefore, we must do that. We must, through physical, mental, and Spiritual discipline of yoga; we must unite once more our Soul with the Infinite. Whether we are in the East or the West makes no difference. Remember, the Soul is the same. That's our highest and greatest need, is to do that. And when we do that, what happens? We remove the delusion, the ignorance, the idea of separateness from God. And when that is removed, what happens? The cause of all suffering is removed. The cause of all suffering is what? Ignorance, delusion, thinking we are separate from God when we are not.

So, if we practice yoga, control the body, still the waves of the mind, look within at this point [the Spiritual Eye], what do we see? We see the Great Light of the Infinite. Seeing that, we realize our oneness with That. Seeing that Light, having that Light, merging in that Light, we are freed forever, from all delusion, all suffering. And that suffering is replaced by what? The Great Love of the Infinite.