

INTRODUCTION TO THE PRACTICE OF YOGA

by

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Happiness, that eluding something, is the quality of your being. It is not the quality of what you are doing; it is the quality of what your being is. Of course, you are very clear in your mind that nothing is worthwhile in this world if you are not happy, if there is no joy inside yourself. Not knowing how this joy arises – wherefrom we can expect happiness – we run hither and thither in all the ten directions of the world, doing anything and everything under the impression that these activities connected with several things in the world are in some way related to the process of enhancing our happiness within.

If all your efforts in any direction have brought nothing to enhance the degree of your joy inside, you must be very circumspect and careful to note what is wrong with everything that you have been doing. A distressed, trouble-torn, emotionally depressed, dry feeling of one's individuality cannot be regarded as any indication of worthwhile success in life. You can look at the thermometer of your life every day and see the degree of joy that it shows in your performances. Does it rise by at least a little bit? How would you read the thermometer of the examination of your own feelings every day?

The rush of the impulse towards external activity may prevent you from inwardising your consciousness, and engage you in a lifelong pursuit of various types of activities, not giving you one minute of time to find out what is happening to you inside. You want so many things to take place in the world. Many things have to be done in one direction or other. Well, you can observe the changes taking place in the world or the benefits that seem to be accruing in society by human activity, but what about yourself? You are trying to make other people happy. That is your main purpose in any kind of work. Are you not one of those people who also are to be made happier inside? Does it mean that you have to dry up your joy inside in order that you may inundate the whole world with the water of satisfaction? A very important investigative process of this kind is to be carried on by you.

This logic of investigation applies also to the practice of yoga. Anything and everything is regarded as the appurtenance of yoga practice. Everyone has one yoga hat on the head, and anybody can say anything about it. Many think that it is a performance. "I do yoga," they say. The word 'do' is used. So yoga is considered as a kind of doing, and not being, actually. You forget that if your being is absent, your doing is like pouring ghee on ashes. Why do you say "I do yoga"? The language is inadequate to express what your real intention is.

Because of this doing idea associated with the practice of yoga, you go to schools of physical exercise known as *asanas* – disciplines of the body, muscles, nerves, and all that. You start counting the breath that you are breathing, and by this counting process of your breathing, you are under the impression, "I am in yoga". You may perform varieties of worship, go to temples, take holy bath in rivers, visit mahatmas, study books; these are the yogas that you are thinking in your mind.

It is important to remember that in whatever you do, you are concerned very much. Unless you contribute a part of your being in what you do in a religious way or secular way,

the activity of yours will be minus the element of being. It will be non-being. Here is a secret behind the teaching of the Bhagavadgita, for instance, which has never been understood by people. The pundits of learning may tell you so many things about the Bhagavadgita, but the core of it is always eluding the grasp.

Activity binds. That every work is binding because it produces a reaction, is something known to everybody, but the great master of the Bhagavadgita tells you there is a kind of activity which cannot bind you. In technical terminology that is called karma yoga – action converted into a yoga by itself. It is not an action that is done, but an action that is transmuted into yoga so that it may transmute the element of conditioning in any work that you do. If yoga is not behind a karma, it becomes mere action which produces a nemesis of reaction. If yoga is present, it will convert the iron of all your work into the gold of inner satisfaction.

What is this yoga that the Bhagavadgita is telling you? Sri Arjuna, the great disciple, was not able to grasp this mighty teaching. Again and again he was asking questions: ‘but’ and ‘why’ and ‘then’ and ‘and’ and so on. His questions ceased when the great master revealed himself as the Universal Spirit, which engulfed the very existence of the questioner. “I am doing everything, and I have already done what is to be done.” These are the few words that you can read in the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, where the cosmic Universal Consciousness seems to be giving a message of eternity to humanity.

What is this “I have done everything”? Who is this “I”? The Total Being of the universe is speaking. That is to say, all activity is the operation of the total being of the cosmos. This action cannot bind anybody. It cannot bind, because there is no individuality at the back of the performance. I hope you are able to appreciate what I’m speaking, and understand it.

The extent of your feeling of attunement with this Universality present behind every particularity is also the extent of the success you achieve in seeing to it that karma

does not bind. Only the Universal Being is not bound by karma, because the karma spoken of in terms of the activities of Universal Being is the emanation of being itself. The performances of God are not actions performed by the hands and feet of God; they are the radiation of the very being of the Supreme Being.

This is an illustration of how you have to conduct yourself in the world. If whatever you do is an emanation of what you are, then no action can bind you, because you cannot bind your own self. It is something other than you that binds you. If the work that you do is a drudgery, a slavish work that you are doing for somebody's sake, it can bind you. But whatever you do in the world is a joyous emanation of your inner being. Who can bind you? You cannot bind your own self. The entire area of your activity is the widespread extension of your own individuality. If this consciousness has not arisen in you, everything that you do will bind you. You will be reborn.

Now I am coming to the point of what yoga is. It is an element of attunement of your inner being with the larger being that is ahead of you. You may say there are degrees of largeness of your being, until it reaches the highest expanse of Absolute Universality. If you have covered even one millimetre of distance in the direction of this achievement of Universal in yourself, to that extent karma will not bind you. You may do yoga *asanas*, you may do breathing exercises, you may count the beads and calculate the number of breaths; but this work you are doing is not something done by the impulsion to do something outside. It is your whole being rising up, welling forth in abundance of satisfaction in the form of this performance. Work becomes a joy. Any activity becomes worship in the sense that in everything that you do, worship or otherwise, you are present there. If you are not present in what you do, it is not karma yoga. Think over how many people in the world can find themselves in the work. The reason why people work at all is also not clear to everybody. "Oh, I have to do this, I have to do that" – some very desultory answer comes. All activity, office going,

factory working, drudging, labouring, whatever it is, is an automatic impulse that is arising from within in order to expand yourself in your area of action. You must listen to every sentence that I speak. Unless your self has not expanded itself to the area of your action, that work that you do outside is not your work. Therefore, it cannot bring you any fruit. It will only react, like an electric shock that you receive if you touch a live wire.

So yoga, to mention briefly to you as an introduction, is a uniting of your being with the larger being. Whatever that larger being be, it is up to you to consider what it is. The larger being is not outside you, like a shirt that you put on. When you put on a coat or a shirt, your being expands, and you feel happier. "Now I have become bigger." But it is outside you. The coat, shirt and decoration is not a part of your being, so any kind of dress and makeup, whatever it is, cannot increase the quantum of your being, because the being is what it is; it cannot be something that you foist upon yourself. If the activities of the world are only a shirt of one kind, by which you appear to be wonderful, that is minus the being that you have. This is the reason why there is futility finally, hanging like a Damocles sword on everybody's head. People get fed up with any kind of work. "I am tired, disgusted. Everything is useless," say people who have been working for 40-50 years. "I am exhausted. Work is not for me anymore. I will go to a soundless place of no disturbance. I will go to an ashrama. I will go to a holy tirtha." This kind of going to ashrama will not benefit you, because you are the same defective personality that is trying to enter the heaven of the ashram.

It is difficult to understand the inner core of yoga practice. You will find very few people who will take so much interest in you that they will inject their own higher being into yourself. That kind of an action of a Guru is called initiation. Initiation is not some chant: "Do something." The Guru enters into the mind of the disciple, the Guru being a larger dimension of the spirit. If the Guru is not larger than the disciple in the comprehension of spirituality inside, that

initiation is futile. The Guru does not speak so much as he feels the necessity to overwhelm the inner being of the disciple, and part of his being works through the disciple's mind.

Now, all this that I am speaking to you amounts to saying the 'being' is the most important thing. If you have not changed internally after years of activity or writing theses or professorial activity, you are the same dry bone who returns home exhausted. "What is all this? I have no time. I am going, that's all." And yoga does not want you to be like that. A new education is all this. The entire educational curriculum with which you are acquainted is a topsy-turvy activity going on, where you see the outside as inside and the inside as outside. It is like looking at your own face in a mirror and trying to decorate it and beautify it, taking care of it, hugging it and worshipping it, thinking that you are there in the mirror. You are seeing yourself wrongly in the mirror of the world, and are going outwardly to see where you are. Everywhere you find this mirror of space and time where you are reflected, and you run here and there. "I am here, I am here, and I will get joy. Catch it. If I catch this shadow, I become more, because I am appearing to be everywhere because of the reflection of myself everywhere, in all things." But you see the reflection only, like a dog barking in a hall where many mirrors are kept because it is seeing itself everywhere.

Now, you may do yoga exercises. Mostly, when you do yoga exercise like *asana*, your physical body is trained very well. At that time, what are you thinking in your mind? The mind also has to do the *asana*. When you do *sirsasana* and your body is upside-down, topsy-turvy, you should not forget that the mind is also together with this body. It should not think in the same way it as was thinking when the head is up and the leg is down. Actually, this topsy-turvy pose, psychologically speaking, is nothing but the transferring of externality into internality. The world outside enters into you, and you enter into the apparently outside world, so that there is a rapprochement between what you think you are and what you see as the world. When this psychological

process goes on simultaneously, together with your yoga exercise, it becomes real yoga. Even yoga *asana* is a yoga only. So is the case with anything – with counting the breath, or doing beads, or concentrating on any particular thing.

When you concentrate on something, you feel that you are doing yoga. On what are you concentrating? You are concentrating on something which is not your being at all. You are concentrating on a non-being. Anything that is not your being is to be considered as non-being, and non-being cannot bring any satisfaction to your being. Unless the object of concentration is converted into your own being and you regard the so-called external object as a larger, widened part of your own being, the concentrated object will not bring you any satisfaction. The whole thing is simple. The external panorama of life, whatever be its nature, has to become part and parcel of your existence. Ultimately, God is called Existence – Sat. He is not *kriya*, but existence – existence which is conscious, and it is therefore happy. Satchitananda is the name of the Supreme Being.

Is your existence consciousness of its own happiness inside – or does your existence, as a physical, psychological individual, feel that your happiness is located in a tree, or in a shop, or in some object outside? If your happiness is located elsewhere, how will it enter into your heart? You are going to borrow the concept of happiness which appears to exist somewhere else.

You have to remember once again that the atmosphere around you is part of your very skin itself. It is touching you. It is not merely touching you like an external thing, as my finger will touch a table, but it enters into your very skin and vibrates through your skin. The whole world is vibrating through your very skin, nerves and arteries. That is why you are affected by it. Otherwise, you will not mind a whit about the existence of the world. Why are you thinking of the world? Because it is not leaving you like that. It is an externalised form of your otherwise universal being. But the

externalised aspect of it should be transmuted into the Universal that is really there.

So, all happiness and satisfaction inside is an expansion of your being. The being is identical with your consciousness. If your consciousness is outside the body, the being cannot be happy. Whenever you think something outside, you are moving outside yourself in the direction of what you are not. This is a deep philosophical, spiritual and psychological introduction that I am giving to you before you enter into the actual practice of yoga.

This institute, the Yoga-Vedanta Academy, is associated with the words 'yoga' and 'Vedanta'. What is this yoga and Vedanta? What are these two things? To some extent I have mentioned to you what yoga is. It is the application of a knowledge which is supposed to be Vedanta. Vedanta is not a textbook that you can purchase from a shop. It is a kind of knowledge, which is another way of saying it is an increase in your understanding capacity. Your faculty of knowledge enters into the very being of what you are learning. It is not outside you in the classroom, it is in you itself. Knowledge is inside you; it is not outside. It is not that you are a learned man in the classroom and a poor fellow in your bedroom. It cannot be like that. If you are a learned man, everywhere you are a learned man. If you are a happy man, you are a happy man everywhere – in the marketplace also. So, you cannot be one thing inside and another thing outside. Yoga prohibits this kind of dichotomy of your being.

Vedanta, to mention to you, is the metaphysical background, the philosophical foundation of the implementation of it being yoga. Yoga is the actual implementation of the knowledge acquired by the investigations carried on through the processes of Vedanta. So yoga and Vedanta is not a proper way of expressing it. There is no 'and'; there is only a hyphen. It is like Sat-Chit. Sat and Chit are not two things. Even a hyphen is not actually permitted. It is Sat which is Chit. It is yoga which is Vedanta.

Again, to repeat what I told you a little before, the Universal is behind every kind of performance. Vedanta is the knowledge of the Universal. Yoga is the implementation of it, putting it into practice in your daily life. Without knowing anything, you cannot put it into action. You cannot work without knowledge. What kind of knowledge? You will say, "I am very much educated." This is not the knowledge that we are speaking of. It is the knowledge that will transform the implementation of this knowledge into a totality of your being itself. At every step, your happiness increases. It is as if every day your salary is going on rising. Today it is one hundred; tomorrow it is two hundred. Every day it is rising endlessly, and your joy appears to be rising comparatively and proportionately. It is not a salary that is coming from outside. It is arising from your own larger dimension.

'Vedanta' is a word that signifies a knowledge which is connected with the larger existence of this whole creation. Everything, even a little broomstick, has a larger existence. It looks like a little piece, but it is made of some substance which is to be found anywhere. The brick that you are using for building a house is a part of the earth principle, and the earth is not only in the brick; it is everywhere. Every object is everywhere if you consider the substance out of which it is made. So is the case with yourself. The bodily framework, whatever be the nature of this body, is made up of a substance that is pervading everywhere. There is physical matter, the earth element in our body. There is the water element. There is heat, there is air, there is also space inside us. All the five elements are inside us. Actually, you should not say they are inside; they are forming the structure of your individuality. These five elements - earth, water, fire, air and ether - are the building bricks of your own personality. Minus these building bricks, you cease to exist. If you pull out all the bricks, cement and steel in the building, the building will not exist. Minus these five elements, you do not exist. So it is futile for you to think that you independently exist minus your concern with the world of

material and social existence. You are connected with matter, nature, air, sun, moon, stars, water, society, people. There is nothing with which you are not connected.

This large connection that you seem to have inside is to be dug up onto the conscious level of your personality. And every step in the practice of yoga takes you nearer and nearer to a worldwide, flood-like joy that is around you always. Yoga is a joy. From the bliss of God, the world has come. Due to the bliss of God, the world is sustaining itself. The world will melt into the bliss of God one day, and God will withdraw the externalised form of His bliss into His Universal Form. The whole thing is joy. God's joy is spreading itself in the form of every little bit of thing, including yourself. But you must see things as God would see. This is the highest kind of yoga – as Viratsvarupa sees.

Though this cannot be achieved in a day – it is a mighty adventure – you can at least be prepared for this great success that you are expecting in this battlefield of life, which is nothing but the conflict between the finite and the Infinite, the so-called inner and the outer. Yoga is a marvel. *Ascharyavat pasyati kaschid enam ascharyavad vadati tathaiva canyah*: One can behold what yoga is as a great wonder that is before you. Oh, great wonder! And the person who can teach you this is a wonder. One who can receive this knowledge is a wonder, and the result that follows also is a wonder. The whole thing is a wonder everywhere – majesty, divinity, rejoicing, abundance and perfection everywhere.

The way in which you can keep all these ideas in your mind is an indication of a future blessedness for you. *Hari om tat sat*.