

## **Yoga Sutras – Living the Science of Harmonious Union**

### **First, the heavies:**

The yogi makes every effort not to be a howler telling untruth or a simpleton believing in something because somebody said it or it is written somewhere. (243)

You might have noticed the highly aggressive and conceited nature of very intelligent people who are incorrigibly egoistic. This is the case of sattva losing its game when bracketed with rajas. The only way to keep the superiority of the leadership of sattva is by making it intimately loyal to the pure light of the Absolute. (YS 337-8)

Yoga is not a passive way of closing one's eyes to injustice. If the yogi has a moral conscience, he or she has to challenge all three kinds of involvement in violence (greed, anger and delusion). (267)

It is not difficult to cultivate an awareness that is both critical and sympathetic. (371)

### **Then, in order:**

According to Vyasa, Yoga is *samadhi*, “equipoise in consciousness.” It is not the steady state of inert matter in its stagnation of evolution, but the continuous rebalancing of a poise that is kept up in and through the flux of a cosmic order of continuous transformation and transvaluation. (3)

In the definition of Yoga given in this sutra [I:2] there is no mention of the total restraint of consciousness. From that we deduce that cognitive consciousness continues to operate even when restraint is exercised. (10)

We do not see sunlight except as it is reflected from an illuminated object. Similarly, purusha as such is not seen. When the pure light of purusha illuminates an object, that illumination is the person's cognizance. In that cognizance the person experiences not merely the self-effulgence of purusha but also the clear and pure mirroring quality of nature. That particular quality of nature is called *sattva* for the reason that it gives an identity of a cognition that is not falsified with any defect of the mirroring agent. (YS 10-11)

Events are not registered on a clean slate. Each time a centrifugal reverberation is created in the psychosomatic apparatus, all the latent culturings of the past are stirred and the most relevant of the potencies that have been acquired surge into dynamic operation. This, in turn, creates new potencies to come to fruition in the future. If the painful tendencies are slowly weaned off, the neutral witnessing consciousness can shine forth in its full effulgence. Such is the view of Vyasa about *vritti*, modifications. (YS 29)

For your actualization, you require appropriate instruments, congenial environments, and the will to actualize. Thus it is up to you to live in an environment that is not conducive for drawing out the potentials of any evil disposition with which you are genetically endowed. Again, it is up to you not to will an action that can strengthen an evil *samskara*, a malignant disposition. It is again in your power to nullify the potentiality of a negative force by accentuating the positive thrust of a benevolent disposition. This freedom of the individual to change themselves, to reorganize the psyche, is given in the present sutra as the cultivation of detachment and repeated exercise in the building up of benevolent dispositions as well as the eradication of malevolent dispositions. The cultivation of non-attachment is here termed *vairagya* and the repetitive practice by which a desirable potency can be actualized is called *abhyasa*. (56)

An Indian god is never more serious than Shakespeare's Puck or Ariel. After all, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and Devi are all only poetic fancies, metaphorically referring to deeper psychic realities. (58)

As an aspirant yogi you have to take initiative with unflagging interest, to have a critical examination of your preformed habits, and then scrape or modify the behavioral pattern in such a manner that it is cleansed of ignorant adherence to evil or superficial modes. Instead of a static view of an effect or a cause, you are expected to develop a transparency of vision by which you can clearly see the manifested effect and the entire process through which, from the primeval cause to the present effect, the manifestation came. You should also have the sagacity to unhook all expectations of the future from the performances in which you are presently engaged. (YS 59)

Nature is said to have two inverse impacts on our minds. One is the concealing of truth and the other is the precipitating of imaginary pictures that are easily taken for true. The veiling principle is called *avarana* and the projecting principle is called *vikshepa*. Eliminating the *vikshepa* from our mind will automatically pull off the veil. Every moment is thus a moment of challenge to decipher the mystery of life presented in the form of enigmas, paradoxes, and conundrums. That is why it is said that there is no holiday in spirituality and no one can act as a proxy. (YS 59)

Scriptures of most religions treat their votaries as if they are immature people with animal instincts and a discrimination that is no better than that of children. Moral norms are taught with the help of anecdotes and parables, which forcefully describe how wickedness is drastically punished and good is always rewarded. Believers' minds are fed with the lures of an enchanting heaven, a place where the most exaggerated hedonistic pleasures are lavished on those who are selected to enter paradise. In the same manner,

hell is described as a terrible place of torture. Both the preachers and their congregations forget that when they die their brains and sensory systems transform into dead matter and thereafter the dead have no bodies to experience pain or pleasure. When the faithful are told that they might go to hell and be cast in the burning flames of brimstone, the fear of being scorched comes to them. Such outright stupidity is enshrined in the most adorable scriptures of all religions. Most people remain ethical in their outward life, fearing such punishments, and do good to others, coveting an honored place in heaven. Henri Bergson, in his *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, exposed the dubiousness of static religion and closed morality. The alternatives are dynamic religion and open morality. (73-4)

The person who is bracketed with you in social life may seem uncouth or overbearing. If you cultivate your identity with that person, then it becomes your duty to transform them into a very likeable person. You can accomplish this not by aggressively intruding into the lives of others but by helping them to understand themselves and making common programs with them so that no one need feel that they are alone in this world without a comrade to assist. (114)

Yoga is the canceling out of the pairs of opposites whereby the dualities in principles and the multiplicity in manifestation can all be reduced to one single unitive principle. No science is possible unless the scientist has a methodology of reduction by which the multitudinous factors implied in the study can all be reduced to a single primeval substance or entity. In the same manner, the scientist should have a method by which the unified principle can be re-elaborated systematically into the manifoldness of manifestation. The Yoga of Patañjali claims to have such a binary method, which implies both the unifying reduction and the power of methodic elaboration. (127)

When your own nature is becoming more and more evident to yourself, the imperfections of your social personality will become more and more clear. In its place *īśvara*—the universal person not afflicted with the love/hate dualities of physico-social life—can be accepted as a better model for imitation or identification.

The word *īśvara* is derived from *īś*, which literally means “ruling from within.” The life of an individual is not an amorphous chaotic structure that comes from the randomness of the physical world. It has a goal to achieve and laws to abide by. The innate law of everything that governs, controls, and maneuvers it to function for the purposeful attainment of a given goal is *īśvara*. If you know there is such a guiding principle in your life, life becomes all the more dear and an incentive comes to live as correctly as possible. Thereafter, the lower aspect of the self will always be in resonance with *īśvara*, the higher Self. That *īśvara* is looked upon as your true teacher or preceptor. Relating always with that *īśvara* to develop insight into the meaning of your life combines both the purificatory and educative aspects. (149)

If you have lived for a long time with an undisciplined mind, allowing yourself to be conditioned with indiscriminate social habits, you cannot easily wean yourself from your established habits; you may find that the aloneness postulated by Patanjali's Yoga cannot be easily attained. (149)

Inner impurities and spiritual absorption cannot go together. Diehard habits are the breeding ground of spiritual obstacles. If a seed is allowed to grow, in course of time, the stem of the plant will branch off and bring forth leaves, flowers, and seeds that belong to that particular species. In the same manner, each individual has many innate tendencies that can sprout. Hence, on the one side, new negative tendencies should not be encouraged to implant themselves in your personality formation and those that are already established, like parasites, are to be rooted out meticulously. (150)

Trying to reach the summit has three stages. First is exerting yourself physically and mentally (*tapas*). The second is understanding your own resources and applying your abilities to the best advantage (*svadhyaya*). The third is fixing your goal on the summit and attacking the problem by getting into a constant dialogue with the Absolute (*Isvara pranidhana*). When these three disciplines go hand in hand, you are disciplining yourself with kriya yoga.

It is easy to imagine. It is a little more difficult to explain to another what you see in your imagination. It is even more difficult to act according to your word. That is why action is given primacy in the self-discipline that is recommended. Kriya yoga has a positive goal. It also has a negative goal. The positive goal is to bring yourself into a state of equipoise and imperially obtain absorption. When the mind is not disturbed by conditioned states, absorption naturally comes. (152)

From the very start of life, our conceptual beliefs are built upon unexamined and vague hearsay, false conjectures, and the propaganda literature of people with vested interests. Because of having lived in family and community circles of undisciplined people, our minds cling on to several prejudices. That state is generally called avidya, being steeped in wrong prejudices and inadequate methods of right reasoning.... Avidya generates wrong passions and uncritical fascination for sheer appearances. (155)

Initiation is from the side of the initiated rather than from the side of one who is initiating. The person who is seen to be ritualistically giving an initiation is at best only a witness. Absolute dedication has to come from the initiate. (176)

You can create a conducive environment by carefully structuring your world. You can withdraw your mind from the marketplace where it gets easily soiled. Nightmares come out of you because

you have irrational fears lurking in your mind. By going deeply into the areas of the mind and illuminating them with the inner light of the Self, this darkness will go. (198)

Yoga does not offer a solution after death; it is showing us how to live in the here and now. (199)

To most people, dreams, deep sleep, and moments of inner absorption do not appear very important. They think they live only when they are wakeful and engaged in transactions. In wakeful consciousness, the seer is the subject and the world interacted with or encountered is the object. The stuff of the seer is consciousness. What you recognize as awareness of your mind is only a peripheral aspect of the self-luminous light of your own Self (*atman*). From this peripheral consciousness, as you move inward to the depth of your consciousness, you pass through the regions of preconscious or semiconscious areas, a non-differentiated region of consciousness where there is no distinction of the subject and the object, and finally you come to the pure homogeneity of your deeper Self.

This deeper aspect, in the view of Patanjali's Yoga aphorisms, is the purusha or spirit. The purusha does not act; it has no limbs, and it is indivisible. Just as a light has its own luminosity and is capable of illuminating other things, the purusha can know and can also make things known. Purusha can be considered as the bright dynamic energy of consciousness. When we look at this world from the side of the spirit or purusha, it is first seen as a noumenon surrounded by the consciousness of mind, having for its adjuncts the senses and a body equipped with sensory and motor systems. (199-200)

The inner organ of a person is such that whatever image is projected on it will leave an impression that can remain in the depth of consciousness to the very end of life. Thus you are not

only suffering from what is immediately projected on your senses and inner organ, but also from the stored impressions that remain with you as painful memories or inviting visions. Patanjali is of the opinion that, pleasant or unpleasant, these memories are the source of misery and should not be encouraged. According to him, all programming is to be avoided and he prescribes the abolition of the conjunction of the seer and the seen. But this is not always considered to be the greatest ideal. His two commentators—Valmiki of the Yoga Vasistha Ramayana and Vyasa of the Bhagavad Gita—give the alternative of positive programming, turning to what is good for you. (201)

In our everyday life experience we have on one side the self, the subject, “I.” On the other side is the physical world. Between the experiencer and the experienced, three functions are involved: cognition, reaction, and registration for recall. First, the cognizing faculty comes in the form of illumination. After the “I” cognizes, it reacts in the form of an action program. Then the confection of these two as an experience is stored for future reference.

According to Indian schools of philosophy, these three functions come from nature: sattva provides clear illumination for cognition; rajas gives the dynamism to respond to situations; and tamas provides the memory storage that is absolutely necessary for one to know how to deal with the world. Patañjali says we are thus equipped for two opposing reasons. We can experience the world and bind ourselves to it or we can free ourselves from all its knots. It is up to us whether we want to be free or stay in this world of happiness and sorrow. (202-3)

In life there is a magical element that can also be real. We have two worlds, the world of light and the world of darkness. Life is generated between the Sun above and the Earth below. A seed needs both to grow. A seed is so small yet magically it can become a whole tree. Even if a heavy stone is above the seed, the sprout will circumvent it and find a way to come up. Similarly, a root that



is very tender and soft can even break a wall that is in its way. Life has this magic power of being able to make a breakthrough. This is *pradhana*, a very forceful energy. It is magic because it achieves things you don't think it can. Its domain is the actual, where action can take place. The actual belongs to the present; the real is the essence of the actual, a philosophical abstraction of present, past, and future. Each day, the actual aspect has to break through all the impediments of life. (204)

Narayana Guru wrote sixty works that can fit into a small book. Then Nataraja Guru devoted himself to explaining and elaborating those teachings. He wrote five thousand pages on only nineteen of the original works. I am studying and writing thousands more pages, but there is still so much untapped, left for others to continue. So much came from one man, like radium that goes on radiating. Such great geniuses change the world. We need to begin with changing ourselves. If we find the unperishing truth within us, we can go on tapping that forever.

In this sutra Patanjali is drawing our attention to the *pradhana*, the power we have within us, and asking us to perfect our lives and bring our potentials out to finality. (205)

Every religion has a central axiomatic principle on which the morality of that religion is established. In the Upanishads the axiomatic teaching is given as the unity of the one Self that is in the heart of all. It is this realization that leads us to both ahimsa and satya. Then we will have no private world. When we look inward we will see the entire infinitude of consciousness as our truth, the only Absolute. We will not see another there. When we look outward, from the blade of grass under our feet to the far off invisible galaxies also, they are all one. So there is nothing to be privately desired or grabbed. Then the truth itself stabilizes us in our belongingness with all. It is this vision of oneness that cancels out all pairs of dualities in a realized person's life. The basic nature of life is the knowledge of a single existence and that existence is

not—even for a second—different from the total value or ananda of life. Thus the yogi is a person of open morality whose religion is a dynamic religion and not a static, structured one. (249-50)

The words that enter our systems have conceptual connotations that can inspire us, elevate our minds, and be beneficial to all. In the same way, there are certain words with vulgar meanings that can demoralize us.... Using words to teach, direct, conduct, inspire, console, and encourage another is a positive value of the tapas of speech. Even when a person is far away you can stretch your spirit to that person by writing appropriate words. All expressions of love that are physically possible can be given to another with words in a very intimate and intense way. That is also tapas of the word. (YS 255, 256)

Yoga is not a passive way of closing one's eyes to injustice. If the yogi has a moral conscience, he or she has to challenge all three kinds of involvement in violence (greed, anger and delusion). (267)

From the time of birth to the ultimate termination of the psychophysical organism, life is both polarized and torn between two values that are like two sides of the same coin. They are necessity and freedom. If necessity can be marked at the negative pole of a vertical parameter, freedom comes on the plus side at the omega point. Necessity binds us to the body and the physical basis of life whereas freedom allows us to soar very high into the sublime. Life is a perpetual theme of ascending and descending dialectics. (283)

The world of necessity holds before us the need to nourish and sustain the body, to tickle the senses, to over-awe the mind. These all belong to the negative pole of the vertical parameter. There is a noble desire that transcends all these: the desire to free oneself from the dictates of the transient, to gain absolute freedom. This is

the desire for emancipation or realization. Emancipation comes with the recognition of the homogeneity of the worthwhileness of every passing moment. It is a peak experience, not a transitory peak but a continuous one in which the fluctuating differences in the environmental factors that envelop each situation are glorified for whatever merit is outstanding in that given situation. (284-5)

The Bhagavad Gita gives two classical analogies of a yogi who is in a state of contentment. In a room where there is no wind, the steady flame of a lamp is burning with a pearl-like brilliance—even so is the mind of a yogi that is always shining forth and is not swayed by the horizontal winds of necessity. Another example is that of a tortoise. On finding the environment conducive, it puts forth its head, legs, and tail; when the environment is not conducive, it withholds them. A yogi of contentment enjoys what comes naturally and does not stretch forth his or her hand in need for whatever is not given. Such a person is truly free. (285-6)

In our daily practice we should again and again come to the neutral zero, where the ekagra, one-pointedness, of consciousness comes without effort. Only through a relaxation of all compulsions acting in the body does one come to the supreme silencing of the plurality of function. That is real ekagra, and not taxing one's sensory system or lifting oneself out of all awareness. (326)

The element of happiness that permeates both a situation and its witness sometimes becomes manifested as a time-transcending presence that has the quality of a beatitude or non-eventuality. Take for example, the situation where you are surrounded by a beautiful panorama and your eyes are focused on the changing colors of the setting Sun. The pale blue sky, blushing clouds, gentle breeze, your rhythmic breath, and unidentified thoughts that gently pass in your head are all one with your inner state of peace. Although technically there are modulations of consciousness, they are like the alpha waves of a relaxed brain. Hence, that can be

qualified as a natural cessation of *citta vritti* (mental modulation). (YS, 367)

It is not difficult to cultivate an awareness that is both critical and sympathetic. (371)