

Discourses/Articles

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THE TRUE MEANING OF YOGA

You would have gathered that yoga is basically a perceptual change, and not merely an act of doing something with your body. You may do anything—stand on your head for hours—but the perception of things has not changed. The erroneous perception will condition even the practice of your *asanas*, *pranayama*, etc. Whole problem is perception, not something that is being done. “I do yoga,” people say. “We do yoga.” What kind of yoga are they doing? The same persons that they were years back are they today also. The same operational method of perceiving things continues, and no attempt is made to change the way of perceiving things.

This basic requirement is forgotten, and it is not known that every step in yoga is a corresponding change in one’s own perceptual procedure. If you have not changed even one wit and you are the same person, then all your doings are outside you; they are not connected with you. For instance, whatever I have told you earlier would have made you have the conformation that things are not just standing in front of you. Nothing is just sitting in front you as the eyes report to you, but we always look outward—like this. The basic relationship of things in general will require you to know that the very thing in front of you that you are beholding with your eyes is also behind you in another form altogether, as things are not in one place; they not just in front of you. Not only are they also behind you, they are to your right and and to your left, and they are above and below. Things are everywhere.

How do you look at a thing, if this is the case? A practice, a kind of exercise, is to be undertaken in order to change the perception of things. Never look at an object as you generally look at, because it is not in front of you. The pervasiveness of the location of every object necessitates the acceptance of its presence everywhere. So it is pervading you from all sides. A good manager or an executive will look ahead, will look behind, will look to the right and to the left, and top and bottom. Every side of an issue is taken into consideration. Not only in business management, but even in legal argument in a court you cannot go on speaking in a stereotyped manner without taking into consideration the consequences and the repercussions of the statement that you are making in regard to the implications of the case. So is the case of a general in the army. He does not just go ahead, like a foolish man. He takes into consideration all ten directions of the situation that is arising front of him, behind him and so on.

In a way, yoga is a kind of military operation. As cautious as a general is in the field, so is the yoga student. A general of the army faces a widespread situation around him, everywhere around him, and we are also facing in yoga a widespread situation. Our problems are not sitting in one place; they are everywhere. They arise from top to bottom, right and left—everywhere. Anything is everywhere. It is not in one place.

So a yoga student, before starting actual meditational practice, should have a clarified mind as to what it is that is intended. You must know very well that yoga is not a change in the way of doing things, but a change in the way of your being itself, because all doing proceeds from being. Whatever you are, that comes out of you. The doing cannot be a great thing if you yourself are not a great person. A puny, stupid individual cannot perform great things, because the thing that is done is an emanation of one's own self. A finite individual cannot produce an infinite result.

It is necessary to know there is a parallel action taking place between oneself and everything that one thinks or sees. Action is not taking place outside. It is taking place everywhere, whenever you start doing something. So the reaction also will come from every side. The reason is that we are personally involved in the very process of acting, and the end result, as well as the very process, are directly connected with ourselves. The whole thing is moving in action, including our own selves; but we think that we are apart from the action and something is being done outside, with our hands. The idea that an action is outside is wrong. It is everywhere. The outside thing cannot produce any result.

Whatever you have learnt up to this time is a great fundamental scientific solution to the very perceptual process that I have presented before you—a very important thing to remember. It is a change in the way of seeing things—primarily how you see and evaluate a thing. Suppose you sit for meditation. Primarily, without going very high up into this technique, just cast your eyes around like this—with open eyes. What am I seeing? I am seeing something—a vast phenomenon of nature in front of me. This is an exercise I am telling you. What is there behind me? The same nature that is in front of me is behind me. What is there to the right of me? The same nature is there like a sea, spreading itself to the right of me. What is there to the left of me? The same nature is there. What is there above me? The same nature. What is there below me? The same nature. What is there finally? The thing that you are seeing is not in one place.

Can you adjust your mind to the acceptance of this position that when you behold a thing, you are beholding that which is in all places? So your dealing with the thing is actually a dealing with that which is surrounding you from all places. A thing is an atmosphere rather than a substance. This requires tremendous power of will, because for ages, ages, years and years you have been thinking in one way. You have been the son or a daughter of some parents. You have been in a city or a village. You had these relations. You have this, you have that. This is not the way of yoga-looking, because there is a pervasiveness of issue involved in the yoga exercise.

Even if it is a simple exercise like yoga *asana*, it is not an activity of one individual body that is taking place. It is a pervasive relationship that the body has got with the atmosphere in which it is involved and the substance out of which it is made. You do yoga *asana*, bend the body in different ways; but you have also to bend the relationship of this body with the nature of which the body is made. The whole nature is doing yoga *asana*. If the nature is opposed to you, and you are against the operations of nature outside—you cannot accommodate yourself with what is happening outside—then the exercise remains an isolated effort not bringing any particular result.

When you sit for meditation, remember the whole nature is sitting here. This is not a story I am telling you. It is a fact. You are also connected, physically, to everything in

the universe, to all nature. The entire nature is sitting here, erect, straight, poised, adjusted, and complete on all sides. In the Upanishads it is said that even the earth is meditating, as it were. All nature is meditating; it is maintaining a balance. Anything that maintains a balance is actually doing yoga. When you sit for meditation, look around; cast your eyes in all ten directions. “What am I seeing? I am seeing my own father and mother who has produced me—the great nature, which is not only around me, but in me and it is *me*, actually speaking.” The distractions of the mind will slowly cease because of there being no necessity to think anything extraneous.

That the world is outside, things are in one position, and everything is somewhere and not other places, is the old prejudiced habit of thinking. Yoga-thinking is not the same as ordinary human thinking. It is an internal modification of the very structural pattern of the operation of the mind. The whole thing rises into the occasion of a complete inner transformation. When you see a thing, you are seeing everything. Immediately the mind will come to a halt: “Am I seeing something? No; I am seeing everything, because this thing that I am seeing in front of myself is everything. So what I am seeing in front of me? I am seeing everything. Where is that everything? In all ten directions.” Immediately when you think of the mind adjusting itself to the ten directions equally, in a balanced condition, you attain stability in *asana*. You won’t have jerking, pain and so on afterwards.

Your maladjustment with things outside causes the discomfort in the mind and the body even when you are seated in meditation. Yoga is balance—in body, in social relations, in thinking, in emotion, in understanding, and in the very being itself. But when you actually start this exercise, you will find you are tired. An unwilling horse is easily tired, and it will never draw the carriage. It will simply keep quiet. A mind that is unwilling is not going to be accessible to your instruction to meditate. The mind cannot be made to undergo any exercise if it is unwilling to do that. The unwillingness arises in the mind on account of its feeling inside that you are interfering with its old habits, which are correct habits according to it: “The old habit of thinking and doing is correct, and I am conforming; that it is okay. Now you are saying something different. I am not willing to yield like that.” Here it is not enough if you are merely understanding. A strength of will is necessary. You may have to even speak loudly to yourself: “What am I seeing? I am seeing that which is around me in all directions,” so that your attitude towards any particular thing is virtually an attitude towards everything—perceptual inclusiveness.

You can chant the Om mantra continuously. The chanting of Om is not a sound that is produced in a harmonious manner. The sound produced by the recitation of Om is not inside your mind or inside the body; it is everywhere. Like the ripples of water in a lake moving in all directions, so the ripples of this wave of chant will be felt as pervading all the outside surrounding also, together with the feeling that you are getting adjusted to this vibration. After fifteen minutes of this exercise, try the other exercise of seeing and thinking at the same time that the thing is not only in one place. First of all you can open your eyes and see: “The thing that I am seeing is behind me everywhere.” Then close the eyes, and feel in the mind this is the situation.

You will find during this time that things are with you. Can you understand the result of this feeling that the things are with you? It is so because of the fact that you

yourself are a thing like any other thing. You are not a subjective operational center segregated from other things which you regard as objects, because the standpoint of an object, so-called, permits the same attitude towards you—to recognize you as an object. The so-called subject and object are a misnomer, really speaking. Such words should not be used, because the things this side and that side, which you call subject and object, are parallel to each other. They are on an equal footing. So you are not looking at an object, but are looking at a situation that includes yourself as well the object. Thus the one who has this awareness of a different situation altogether is neither sitting this side as a subject nor operating outside as an object. It is an inclusiveness.

Every act of perception is an inclusiveness in the operation of the mind. Unless a blend of awareness is brought about between that which is seen and that which sees, the perception will not take place. If there is a complete disparity between the situation that is outside and oneself, you cannot behold anything, nor appreciate anything, nor benefit from anything. Every meaningful perception is an operation of equality of status between the seer and the seen. It is not that we are superior to the things that we are seeing. They are as important as you who sees, because everything has eyes to see as you have got eyes to see. In this manner you adjust yourself to an equanimity of position in your *asana*, as well as your thought and feeling; and also have a surety in your mind. Since these exercises are going to touch the very reality of things, you are going to benefit from these exercises immensely.

Every step in yoga in the right direction is a success of a great achievement which cannot be destroyed. *Svalpam apy asya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat* (Gita 2.40), says the Bhagavadgita: Even a little modicum of your movement in the right direction is a great credit that you are adding to your own self. This credit is never destroyed. Hurry, haste, quickness should be avoided in meditation. “Let me do some meditation quickly and go.” This idea should not be there. “I am not seeing a person or a thing; I am seeing the whole of nature which has manufactured these persons and things. I am seeing the mother of all things, the parent of everything.”

Some kind of discipline, psychologically, is necessary for every person. Usually we do anything at any time. We eat any time, sleep any time, do things any time, and no systematic arrangement of a daily program is maintained. We must have some kind of plan made within ourselves as to what is the work that is to be done on a particular day—in a general way and also in a specified manner. Usually people do the same thing every day, with minor differences. It should not be a burden on the mind to go on thinking of what is to be done. It is a routine habit that is taking place. The work that you do should become spontaneous rather than a pressure that is exerted from outside. The need for work does not arise from outside. It arises from a total situation. Nobody is compelling you to work. The whole situation around you is compelling you to do something which is nothing but an adjustment of yourself in a particular manner, either by doing something or by thinking something. This is a psychophysical adjustment that is called for. Yoga is psychophysical adjustment.

That the things that we need in this world are included in that which we are aspiring for, is also a conviction that has to be driven into our mind: “The thing that I want in this world is not removed from my realm of aspiration.” We don’t lose the world when we go to God. We lose nothing, practically. That which is our need or a requirement

externally, so-called, is included in that which is totally pervasive. The external thing or the internal thing, both are included in the total. So when you seek the total, it is futile to go on thinking of another thing which is outside. That which is the total operational conviction in the mind includes that which you are considering as that which is external or internal. The thing that you need is neither inside nor outside. To repeat, it is everywhere; and, therefore, the greed for grabbing things—running after that which the senses actually want—we are told that generally these things have to be restricted. But there is no need for restraining anything. You are not putting a pressure on the sense organs not to do what they want; you are only enlightening them to see that what they see is not in that place where they are looking at. It is a situation which is larger, where even the seeing of a thing is included in the larger situation of your being included in that situation. The obtaining of it, for the matter of that, also is a total situation. Whole thing is a total thing. No particularity is allowed here. This is an exercise which is deeply psychological, subliminal. The sub-conscious mind does not permit such things, really speaking.

We have done many good deeds in the previous birth. All of you have done great meritorious deeds in the previous birth. Otherwise, you would not have had the chance of coming and sitting here, and listening to this balming message of your glorious ideal. The *prarabdha*, as it is called, the *karma* that has come with us when we take a physical birth, has various phases of operation. We have committed some errors in the previous birth. We have done great good deeds, and we have also done mixed deeds—partially virtuous, partially not. All these will constitute the mode of our operation in this life. Where it is a very good, virtuous, pure white act, there we will find an occasion to live a comfortable life, happy life and listen to messages of glory and high achievements. But, at the same time, there are impediments.

There are *sattvica*, or pure *karmas*, which are allowing us to think like this and be sitting here and listen. There are also *rajasic karmas*—distracting actions—and *tamasic karmas*. We are many a time stupid and lethargic and unable to think. That is due to a *tamasic* aspect of *prarabdha* working in us. At other times we are very much excited, want to run here and there, do this or that. That is the *rajasic karma* that is operating. Now you are here in a *sattvic* mood. You are not disturbed. You are not sleeping. You are awake, in a *sattvic* mood, and able to understand and absorb into your mind that which is actually beyond the ordinary capacity of the mind. You have to adopt such means of performance by which the *rajasic* and the *tamasic* potentials of *prarabdha* are effectively mitigated.

It is said that the *prarabdha karma* cannot be destroyed. What you have done in the previous birth will have to be experienced in this birth, whether you want it or not. You cannot destroy the result of an action that you have performed earlier. *Na bhuktam ksheeyate karma kalp kotistairapi* (Bramhavaivarta Purana, Prikriti 37.16): Inexperienced result of an action will last forever, until it is experienced. You will get what you have given.

But the *sattvica* meditational effort has a very imposing effect on the other *karmas*—*rajasic* and *tamasic*. They are put down for the time being. You have got so many desires in your mind, but you put down all of that just now when you are listening to me. That is how the *sattvica karma* acts in subjugating the impulses of that which is

contrary to the actual spiritual practice. You are not agitated here and you do not want to run away immediately. That is, you have subjugated even the *rajasic karma*. That is the power of *sattva*. You are poised. The state of being in poise for the time being puts down the effects of *rajasic* and *tamasic karma*. Inwardly the other *karmas* also will be acting, little by little, causing some inconvenience physically, mentally etc., but the power of this pressure exerted upon them by the *sattva* activity will make them harmless—like toothless snakes. The snake will be there, but it has no teeth; the teeth have gone. The teeth have been pulled out by the *sattva*. Though the distracting *tamasic karmas* are still there as cobras moving about, they cannot harm, because you have pulled the teeth out.

Sitting for meditation should be a daily practice. If you miss a meal one day and take your meal next day, it will disturb your stomach and your appetite. Like the intake of medicine is continuous, and the intake of diet also is continuous, the intake of the exercise of meditation should be continuous—though it need not be for a long time. That you have no time to sit is an irrelevant matter. You can sit for five minutes at least. The quantity or the duration of sitting is not what is important. The quality of your thinking is important. One minute of intense thinking is superior to an hour of dull thinking.

As the *sattva* predominates, the capacity to think becomes more and more intense. The love for contact with Reality is such a flaming passion in the minds of spiritual seekers that it will burn up all obstacles if the practice continues every day. The strength of the *sattva* forces will go on getting accentuated and increased more and more so that the potential of distraction and lethargic quality may substantially get mitigated. This is one thing that you have to keep in mind.

There are many other aspects of our life that you have to look into also—the food that you eat, what you drink, the company that you keep, the books that you read, and your general activity. They have to be streamlined in such a manner that they do not harm your basic purpose. It is up to each person to keep a diary of this kind.

Today evening, assess yourself: “What have I done since morning? What is the first thought that occurred in my mind when I woke up?” It is very important to make note of what is the first thought that arose in your mind when you woke up. Similar is the case with the thought with which you are going to sleep in the night. Keep a note of this. “Now I am going to sleep, but what I am thinking at this moment.” That thought will influence the condition into which you are entering in sleep. And the thought of the early morning, which is the first thought that arises after you wake up, will influence the whole day. It is commonly said, in a humorous way: Start the day with God, end the day with God, and live with God.

A diary of self-check about one’s own personality—which is hidden inside, mostly unknown to even one’s own self—is to be ransacked in order that the submerged potentials of difficulty, lying in ambush to pounce upon you one day or the other, have to be taken note of. What we are thinking now is practically an operation of the conscious mind. What is inside in the subconscious mind is not coming up at this moment.

Psychologists tell us that there are layers of psyche, deeply buried unconscious potentials, which carry us forward to repeated births and deaths in future, which lie sleeping as if they are not existing at all. They seek an atmosphere of operation in order that they may rise into the subconscious level and, finally, to the conscious. Our experiences are not only outside in the conscious mind. The conscious experiences are actually conditioned by the subconscious instinct and the potentials of the unconscious. So it is not that we are exactly as we appear in the conscious mind. There is a determining faculty within our own selves which conditions even our decisions and our performances.

Psychoanalysts say that there is no free will. What we call free will is only an illusion created by the potential of the unconscious and subconscious which presses us to work in a particular direction, and because of the connection of this pressure with the conscious mind, it looks that we are deliberately doing something, like hypnotized persons who think the work is done deliberately but actually it is done by the mind of the person who hypnotizes. So our operations are not entirely free in a literal sense. We should not be foolhardy in imagining that we are masters of everything. To the extent we are deeper than the three layers of the mind, to that extent we may say we are masters. But we are working on a particular level which is illusionally projecting itself as an independent medium, not knowing it is a puppet that is pulled by the strings of the submerged instincts of the subconscious and the unconscious. In a puppet show, the operator is not seen. We see only the dancing of the puppets. "Oh Wonderful!" we say. But why is it wonderful? There is something else inside which we cannot see and we are not supposed to see.

Yoga is not merely *chitta-vritti-nirodha* in the sense of a restraint of the conscious mind. The word *chitta* that is used in yoga does not mean only conscious operations. It is the total psychical energy that is called *chit*. The entire psychic power in all its levels is *chitta*. Restraint of a total operation of all the three layers of the psyche is what is referred to as *chitta-vritti-nirodha*. When you are thinking something and you stop thinking, it does not mean that *chitta-vritti-nirodha* has been attained, because you may be stopping the process of thinking a particular thing due to a pressure from another side which is also calling your attention.

The necessity to be subject to impulses which are beyond our control, that necessity is the thing that is handled in yoga. Are we free in ourselves, or we are forced to do things and think in a particular manner? A cow that is tied with a rope—a rope that is sufficiently long—may not know that it is tied like that. It will be moving freely and grazing in the field, and will never know that it has been limited to the distance of the rope with which it is tied. It will know that it has been limited only if it moves a little further, to the full length of the rope. Then it will see that it is conditioned. So we have a kind of freedom which is granted by the distance of the rope with which we have been tied to our personality, and we may not know that the rope is there behind us. What is the rope? It is the impulse to be present in one particular body only, and concern oneself with one particular object only, and the incapacity to think that we are ubiquitously connected with ubiquitous things in the world and that no operation is localized. That object of achievement which brings a right-about turn of our operation so that situations are perceived as total, that they arise from everywhere, everything is there in a particular

situation—as it is wisely said, everything is everywhere at all times—is the fundamental psychological approach which should form the practice of yoga

But, mostly, many of us have got some fear inside that yoga is something which we are doing out of connection with the daily duties of life. Here is the snag in the very way of thinking: “My basic operational duty is something, whereas yoga is another thing, the tail-end of something.” Yoga is a pervasive controlling influence on even the duties that you are performing in life. That is *dharma*, or the cohesive force operating behind everything that you think and act, and yoga is nothing but a cohesive power that you are exercising in a total fashion, which includes your activity. So don’t say, “Yoga is outside my duties in life. I have got my family, I have got office, I have got lot of things; yoga is somewhere else.” No. Yoga is a pervasive attitude of consciousness, without which you cannot do anything, even in your office. A yogi can be a good executive, a good manager, a good office worker, a good sweeper, a good carpenter. Anything will be done expertly if a yogi does it. Even washing vessels—the yogi will wash the vessels more cleanly than the ordinary servant, because of the comprehensiveness and the total approach that he has got in everything. Nothing is insignificant for him.

This is a basic psychological total transformation that you are attempting in your mind. Unless you have changed a little bit, the yoga that you do will be outside your purview and will not touch you. Again to repeat: Yoga is not doing something, it is a change in the being inside; and the being is not only your personal, physical being, it is a Total Being in which you are involved in every circumstance. This is a refurbishing of psychological thinking, washing your brain completely, cleaning it thoroughly from dirt accumulated in the form of erroneous thinking whose impressions are embedded in the very brain, in the mind setup, in the unconscious and subconscious levels, even in your social life.

These are some of the preparatory steps that you can take before jumping into the heights of topmost meditation on the Absolute, which of course is very obvious before you. But all these problems that I have stated will become naught in one second if the consciousness is having such a concentration of the greatness of the Absolute. These difficulties that I have placed before you—psychological, social—will be set at naught in one second, just as all the troubles of your dream world are set at naught by waking because in waking you are in a different state of consciousness. Your meditation on the Absolute is an enhancement of the type of consciousness which is required; that abolishes all the problems in one second. All the ills of dream have gone, you have paid all the debts; nobody troubles you anymore because you have woken up. All troubles are consciousness operations. Waking into the consciousness of the Absolute is an awakening which is beyond the ordinary way of thinking in terms of checks and balances, profits and loss, statistics, etc. There are no statistics before the Absolute. It is a total inclusiveness which merges, absorbs into Himself all your problems also. When you reach the Absolute, your problems also go with you. They don’t exist anymore. They become nectar.

If that concentration, the power of affiliation to the Absolute consciousness, is deep in you, that one act of intense love for this Great Being is sufficient to save you forever and ever, and every other thing that you have to do is included in that one act because it is the supreme total act which removes the necessity to have any kind of individualized

action. When God comes, everything comes. If the Absolute is with you, the whole universe is with you. Your problems are gone in one moment when you awake to this consciousness. This is *mumukshutva*, longing for liberation, which is the final solution for your psychological problems, etc. The desire for the Absolute is the one thing that is necessary. You don't want anything else. You need not do anything else. Love God. Love the Absolute and be free. All *sadhana* is concentrated in this longing deeply within us for entry into this great, wonderful, immortal, magnificent, glorious Being, which is our own higher self. Love for God, love for the Absolute is the panacea for every kind of suffering, which wholly goes away. You are blessed!