

# THE COSMOLOGY OF YOGA PRACTICE

---

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

The Divine Life Society

Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India

Website: [www.swami-krishnananda.org](http://www.swami-krishnananda.org)

You have performed the Yoga physical exercises. But the word 'Yoga' that is attached to these physical exercises should awaken us to a new vision that is behind these physical performances. Why do you call these 'Yoga', when they are only physical exercises? Here comes the meaning of 'Yoga'. This has to be understood before we can derive the benefit that these special exercises are expected to bestow upon us. To understand how a physical exercise like this can become Yoga, you have to know the very background, rather the philosophy, behind these Asanas, the Yoga exercises. These Yoga Asanas are based on a cosmology on which the whole Yoga system is rooted. Though you may look just as individuals who have performed a few physical feats, there is a relevance of these exercises to certain meanings which go beyond the visible form of the exercises. It would be proper if I mention to you in a few words what this cosmology is, though this is a vast subject on which great experts have written volumes.

Yoga holds that the universe is a complete organism, a wholeness by itself. The so-called parts and isolated units in

this universe are, to an extent, comparable to the parts or limbs of the human body, constituting a wholeness never independent of one another. We see varieties in this world making us believe that everything is different from everything else, in the same way as, with a narrow vision of certain parts of the body, we may think that the feet have no connection with the head, if our thought is limited only to the area of the feet and does not extend to the region of the head. If you see the body only through some blinkers, the whole organism of the body cannot become an object of perception. Then, naturally, we cannot see the connection between the legs and the head, for example, and if anyone instructs this narrow-minded individual on there being such a thing called relevance from the feet to the head, that would be a 'philosophy' for him, something which he cannot comprehend. He is instructed about that which he cannot see, and only told theoretically of there being a larger relevance inherent in the visible parts which are the immediate objects of perception. According to the philosophy of Yoga, the universe is not made up of discrete particles, as material science may make out. Even science has now started thinking thrice before pronouncing any judgment on the nature of the universe ultimately. The universe is not constituted of atoms, molecules, etc. It is not connected with a 'transcendent' meaning in the sense of a creator extending beyond the universe of creation. There is no transcendency in the universe; the so-called transcendence is only a word that we use in respect of that which we cannot comprehend or that which has not yet become the object of our consciousness. If our

understanding can expand itself adequately, it can visualise the cosmos as a completeness.

Now, cosmology is the doctrine of creation. How is it that you appear to be different from me and everyone appears to be different from everyone else, in spite of the fact that there is an inward structure of the whole of universe? The centre of the universe pulses itself outwardly in a centrifugal manner. There is an urge towards externalisation in space and time. This urge that arises in the centre of the cosmos is usually known as the creative will. Everything is pushed from the centre outwardly to such an extent that the one complete whole gets distracted into particular individualities, as it were, even as our coherent complete waking mind divides itself into many particulars in the dream world that we sometime experience. The centre of our mind is externalised in dream. We see a world of shape, space and time, and we are the cognisers or the observers of this dream world. The vast space-time and cosmos that you see in dream is not outside your mind. The externalisation is only apparent, but the apparent externalisation is so intense that you have desires, loves and hatreds even in dream. You can have hunger and thirst and everything that you see in the waking world even in dream. So, merely because it is an appearance, the experience of its being a reality is not precluded at that time. Likewise, says the Yoga system, this universe of creation is to be explained. What has happened to us today, is precisely what happens to the waking mind in dream. It has dissociated itself into the various objects, and then retains itself as the subject of these visibles. The waking mind cuts itself off into the realm of objectivity and

subjectivity. This centrifugal impulse of the universe moves onward and onward until it reaches the climax of creation to an utter particularity and externality, where one becomes totally conscious of the objects only, completely oblivious of the subjective element in such experience. What are we doing in this world? We always look outside, gaze at things externally and judge outward objects and never pass a judgment on our own selves. We are convinced that there is nothing to say about our own selves. Everything is 'okay' with us. The subject has lost consciousness of itself and has transferred all its values to the objects, so that we live in an object-world. And all evaluation that we make in life in any field of activity is objective, not in the sense of impartiality which also goes by the name of objectivity, but in the sense of a total transference of value from the conscious subject to the externalised name-and-form-complex, which is known as the object.

Creation does not end merely here. The propulsion to create ends in the manifestation of lifeless material things like stones, bricks, granite, etc. There creation is said to end. When there is a total unconsciousness of everything, creation has achieved its purpose. In the beginning you have the consciousness of all things, and in the end it is an absence of the consciousness of everything. Now, we are in a transitional period. We are individuals being pushed forward, onward, onwardly by the centre of the cosmos, through the impulsion of centrifugality and individualisation. The universe is not an individual, because it comprehends within itself all individuals, just as you cannot call the human body as a cell because all the cells are included within this completeness called the body.

But if a particular cell in the physical body were to be capable of asserting its isolation from the other cells of the body, which also go to make up the whole constitution of the body, that would be the predicament in which we are today. We constitute parts of this cosmos, and we are inseparable parts thereof, originally connected with everything. Now your incapacity to see your connection with me or my incapacity to see my relation with anything else outside is due to the interference of space and time in the middle. Space and time are not something existent materially or substantially. They are only conditions of externalisation. A peculiar magic, as it were, has been cast upon us, by which the universal completeness of the universe, to which we originally belonged, is totally lost sight of and we are aware only of the segmentation of the body from the universe of totality. We cannot feel that we have anything within the brick walls, for instance, notwithstanding the fact that there is some connection there, if you go deep into the physics of the objects.

Now, this propulsion to create this centrifugal impulse of creation, which disconnects parts from one another, does its work in a very gradual manner. It is not a sudden severing of limbs, but a slow process of self-alienation. There is a cosmical awareness originally in the system of things when the parts were not separated from the whole. Thus, the first thing that is to be done in order to make us forget our oneness with the universe is to make us unconscious; this is what they call 'brainwashing' in modern language. Some mysterious power, you may call it by any name, the power of externalisation, brainwashes the parts of their conscious connection with the whole. This

unconscious seed of externality is called the causal body in our personality. We have five layers of personality. The causal one is the deepermost, the inwardmost, the unconscious layer into which we revert when we are fast asleep. This is what they call the unconscious psyche in psychoanalytical language. More outward and external to this causal region or level of our individuality is the rational or the intellectual level. The intellect tells us that everything is outside, and that which compels us to see things only in space and time outside is the unconsciousness that is behind the unconsciousness of our connection with the universal completeness. The intellect follows suit here. Lower than the intellect or reason is the mind which is the instrument of thinking. Our judgment, which is the function of the reason, employs the thinking faculty as the means or the instrument to goad us on into activity in social life. The mind does not directly act upon objects. It moves through the vital energy and the nervous system that pervades throughout the body like electricity. The energy is known as the Prana. The vital force in us which permeates the entire body, the energy as you call it, is the Prana-Sakti which is the externalised form of the mind connecting itself with the physical body.

Now, we have come to the level of the physical body. Here you are at the level of the Yoga-Asanas. You may now know how far you have come down from the original reality of things. And the physical exercises that you perform become a 'Yoga' when you understand the history of your descent from the cosmic total. These physical exercises are a systematisation and organisation of the functions of the body in such a way that the energy

pervading the body is inwardised and the centrifugal impulse is forced to move back towards the centripetal aspiration for the higher realisation of realities beyond us. The centripetal is the inward urge moving towards the centre, and the centrifugal is the opposite, moving away from the centre towards the circumference.

Now, from this little introduction of the cosmological basis of the Yoga system, you will know why these exercises become a Yoga. They are not like football and tennis, or some such game, for they are a wholeness by themselves. Though these Asanas appear to be different from one another, they have a common purpose, just as the various dishes or items of food that you eat may be variegated and different one from another, yet the purpose of eating is common, which is the appeasement of hunger, and it is the same in every person. The satisfaction that comes out of the consumption of food is the same, notwithstanding the fact that the items of food are different, one from the other. Likewise are these Yoga Asanas. There is the Padmasana, there is the Sirshasana and there is every other kind of Asana. All these are like items of dishes served before you but aiming at a common purpose of uniting the powers of the body into a focus of concentration and attention so that they are forced to go inward into the Prana level from the merely physical, the intention finally being to go further on from the Prana level to the mental level, from the mental level to the rational or the intellectual level, and then pierce through this dark curtain of oblivion, ignorance, which has made us forget our connection with our Parent, which is the universe. The purpose of Yoga is to make you complete beings, to make you hale and healthy in your personality, to

make you total individuals and not distracted psyches, not persons harassed by worries and feelings of insecurity and annoyance, but persons who can stand on their own legs with a power that comes not merely from the meal that you take, the food that you consume, but from the power that descends from the universe. Where from is the strength of the legs that walk? They do not eat any food, you do not give them tea and coffee, the feet eat nothing, but how are they so strong? The strength comes from their organic connection with the total system of the body. Just imagine, the feet which do not consume any diet are strengthened merely by their organic relatedness to the whole system of the body. Likewise, your strength does not merely depend upon the food that you eat, the money that you have, the social status that you may occupy – nothing of these. None of these things is the source of your power. Your strength lies in your inward relationship with the power that is transcendence and that is the universal. The more you are able to feel your relation with the wider creation outside, the more are you also able to approximate your individual existence with the larger dimension of the universe; then the more is your strength. This fixing of the consciousness upon the larger dimensions of the Reality beyond the mere physical location of the body is the art of meditation that people speak of so much. You must have heard that there is such a thing called meditation which gives energy, strength, power, etc. How does it bring energy? It brings energy because you draw sustenance from the five elements, - from earth, water, fire, air, ether; from even the trees; from the solar system. The solar system is full of energy and we do not feel its presence on account of our isolatedness from it

even as the law of the government cannot sustain a person, protect him or guard him when he becomes a renegade and cuts himself off from the organisation.

So does this universe of force, including the solar energy etc., not appear to help us in any manner whatsoever, because we have deliberately isolated ourselves from the whole. We have become what they call 'prodigal sons', who have run away from their parents with the false notion that they can live independently by themselves. And you know when any limb of the body assumes independence, it is called a paralytic stroke, and the limb cannot function afterwards. It is strengthened and vitalised only when it is organically related to the body. The moment it assumes independence, it is there no more. We are weaklings, so called, psychically, physically and socially on account of an inward severing of the values from the Cosmic Value. These physical exercises or the Asanas are the beginning, the initial stages of your movement towards the larger realities that are ahead of you, finally your aim being to unite your being to become as vast as possible in your comprehension. This inclusion of the larger dimensions within your vision and field of activity is what is called human consideration, love, affection, sympathy, and the like. Your feeling for others is an outer indication of your inward connection with things. Do you not work for human solidarity? Do you not feel that there should be one humanity, that mankind should be in peace? How does this idea arise in your head, if you have no inward relation with mankind as a whole? Don't you wish that the whole universe should be in peace? Why should this idea occur to your mind at all, if you are not going to be inwardly related

to the whole cosmical setup of things? Your wish for immortal existence and long life and your desire for infinite possessions are indications of your being something more than what you are today in this little body. Your originality, the archetypal existence of yours, is in the heavens, as the philosophers like Plato tell us. You are like reflections of these originals. The originals are in the higher realms of existence which are deeper than the physical. We have spoken about various levels or planes of existence. They say there are seven planes at least, the physical being the lowermost. There is then the astral, the causal and the universal. We have descended too low to the physical, materially isolated bodily level, from which we have to rise up to the original Reality which is our true stature. This art of unifying your being with the Being of the universe by graduated stages begins with the performance of these physical exercises called the Asanas and ends in cosmic Meditation. Then you become a source of Power and competency in every work that you perform. You are administrators, and you become master-administrators because of the knowledge that you have of the set-up of things in their organic connectedness. You do not then treat people as if they are objects or tools or implements who have to be utilised for ulterior purposes. You treat them as brothers, and there lies your success – when you treat people as you treat yourselves. Here is the way to success. If you look down on people as nobodies and if there is even a little inkling of exploitation of any sort, in respect of others, then the law of the universe will react and tell upon your system. The law of the universe is cooperation and not competition. It is not warfare. That is

the law of the universe, the total solidarity for which the prayers of the ancient sages were directed in such scriptures as the Vedas, the Rigveda concluding with a prayer for universal cooperation, collaboration not merely in a social manner, but even in the field of thinking, in collective aspiration and all activity. Yoga, therefore, is not a system of religious thinking, it is a science of living in a manner that shall make you perfect in every way. Perfection is the watchword of Yoga, it is neither an 'ism', nor a religion, a cult, a creed, nor a faith – nothing of the type. It has no difference of caste, creed or colour, East, West, North, South, etc. It is perfectly scientific and impersonal as the law of gravitation, as the laws that operate in mathematics or logic. I have tried to place before you, in outline, the tremendous significance that is behind the performance of Yoga exercises, placing you in a universal context of things and making you feel a satisfaction that belongs to the whole cosmos, and whoever the Creator of this cosmos be, He shall protect you.