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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is a compilation of the 110 lectures that Swami Krishnananda delivered from March to August in 1976 on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are a manual on mind control, meditation and mental discipline—a manual for spiritual freedom. Crisp and pithy in rendition, the *sutras* have an aphoristic quality and urge deeper reflection and dedicated application.

Across various philosophies the denotation of yoga varies. Patanjali uses the term 'yoga' to denote a complete cessation of mental modifications so that consciousness rests within itself in the state of *moksha* or liberation. This teaching has been delivered through emphasis on practice rather than mere philosophy. This is verily a manual for us to operate the mind and thus our life.

The Yoga Sutras are divided into four *padas* or chapters. The first chapter, the Samadhi Pada on which this volume is based, focuses on concentration of the mind and the practical aspects necessary for attaining meditative absorption. The second chapter, the Sadhana Pada, is about attaining and holding that single-pointedness through reining in the agitations of the mind by cultivating dispassion, discrimination and dedication. The third chapter, the Vibhuti Pada, focuses on the technique of *samyama* which is the combination of concentration, meditation and communion for the liberation of the spirit, while the fourth chapter, the Kaivalya Pada, is a metaphysical disquisition which deals with various subjects as a sort of explanation of some of the themes dealt with in the earlier chapters.

It is fitting to draw the reader's attention to the clarity and simplicity with which Swamiji Maharaj comments on these *sutras*. Swami Krishnananda was the living embodiment of that awareness to which the *sutras* and all spiritual texts guide. It is commonly said that Sanskrit, the language of the Gods, is by far the only one that has transcended, to some extent, the limitations of vivid expression and bears in it the ability to express the nuances of spiritual processes and the resultant experiences that the great Sages and Masters have experienced and conveyed to us. That Swamiji Maharaj is able to bend the limited English language to yield to his knowledge is a completely humbling experience.

These Yoga Sutras of Patanjali spoken by Swami Krishnananda are being made available to the public for the first time. It is our desire to retain the original lectures in their spoken form to a large extent. There are some unique twists of phrases and application of words that are uniquely Swamiji in origin and it has been sought to allow those to be as they were intended, without undermining the reverence to the English language. Consequently the lectures have been edited in very few places to render them the way Swamiji Maharaj himself spoke them.

CHAPTER 1

THE AIM OF YOGA

The whole of our life is a successive series of efforts - whether it is the effort that I put forth, or that which someone else puts forth. All these efforts have a common background, although the efforts of human beings are variegated and there is also an apparent diversity of the aims behind the efforts. The farmer's effort is towards producing harvest in the field; the industrialist's effort is towards production of goods and such other items in his field; the effort of the schoolmaster or the professor is in another direction; and so on and so forth. We have an apparent diversity of aims, motivated by a diversity of efforts.

But this is a great illusion that is before us, and we live in a world of illusions which we mistake for realities. The illusion arises on account of our inability to see beyond a certain limit of the horizon of our mental perceptions. The farmer forgets that the production of the harvest in the field is not the only aim, or rather the ultimate aim, of his efforts. It has another aim altogether connected with certain others, and so on and so forth, in an endless chain which cannot easily come within the comprehension of an untutored mind. The stomach does not eat for its satisfaction. We know very well why the stomach eats. The stomach may say "I eat", but it does not eat; the eater is somebody else, though it is thrust into the stomach. The legs do not walk for their own sake. What do the legs gain by walking? They are walking for some other purpose - somebody else's purpose, not their own. Nor do the eyes gain anything by seeing; the eyes see for somebody else.

Likewise, there is an inherent and underlying basic aim which is transcendent to the immediate purpose visible in front of any particular individual who puts forth effort, just as the legs do not walk for their own sake, the eyes do not see for their own sake, the stomach does not eat for its own sake, and so on, and they seem to be functioning for some other purpose. They can miss this purpose, and then there is what we call dismemberment or disintegration of the personality. When the aim is missed, the effort loses its motive power and it becomes a fruitless effort, because an effort that has missed its aim cannot be regarded as a meaningful effort. Also, it may be possible that we may be conscious of an immediate aim before the effort, but the aims that are further behind or ahead may not be visible to our eyes.

I will ask a question. We eat food every day so that we may be alive. But why do we want to be alive? Is there a purpose behind it? This question we cannot answer. Here is a question which is beyond ordinary logic. Why should we work so hard, and eat, and maintain ourselves, and exist? After all, we are doing all this for existing. Why do we want to exist? Suppose we do not exist; what is the harm? These kinds of questions will be pressing themselves forward when we go deep into the aims of the different activities of our life. Finally, when we press the aim to its logical limits, we will find that the human brain is not meant to understand it.

We are limited individuals, with limited capacities of understanding, and we can have only limited aims in our life - but we have unlimited desires. This is a contradiction. How can unlimited desires be fulfilled with limited aims? Life is a contradiction; it has begun as a contradiction, and it ends as a contradiction. This is the reason why not one has slept peacefully, or woken up peacefully, nor lives peacefully. There is a subtle contradiction in sleep and a pressing contradiction when

we wake up, and an annoying contradiction throughout our daily activities, so that there is only contradiction. There is nothing else in life; and all effort is meant to remove this contradiction. But if the very effort at removing contradiction is itself involved in a contradiction, then we are in a mess, and this is exactly what has happened to Tom, Dick, Harry, X, Y, Z, A, B, C, D - whoever it is.

The whole difficulty is that the structure of life is arranged in such a pattern that the depth of human understanding is incapable of touching its borders. We are not simply living life - we are identical with life itself. One of the most difficult things to define is life itself. We cannot say what life is. It is only a word that we utter without any clear meaning before our eyes. It is an enigma, a mystery - a mystery which has caught hold of us, which extracts the blood out of us every day, which keeps us restless and tantalises us, promising us satisfaction but never giving it. Life is made in such a way that there are promises which are never fulfilled. Every object in the world promises satisfaction, but it never gives satisfaction - it only promises. Until death it will go on promising, but it will give nothing, and so we will die in the same way as we were born. Because we have been dying without having the promise fulfilled, we will take rebirth so that we will see if the promise can be fulfilled, and the same process is continued, so that endlessly the chain goes on in a hopeless manner. This vicious circle of human understanding, or rather human incapacity to understand, has arisen on account of the isolation of the human individual from the pattern of life.

This is a defect not only in the modern systems of education, but also in spiritual practices - in every walk of life, in every blessed thing. When the individual who is living life has cut himself or herself off from the significance of life, then life becomes a contradiction and a meaningless pursuit of the will-o'-the-wisp. Why do we cut ourselves off from the meaning of life and then suffer like this? This is the inherent weakness of the sensory functions of the individual. The senses are our enemies. Why do we call them enemies? Because they tell us that we are isolated from everything else. This is the essence of sensory activity. There is no connection between ourselves and others, and we can go on fighting with everybody. This is what the senses tell us. But yet, they are double-edged swords; they tell us two things at the same time. On one side they tell us that everything is outside us, and we are disconnected from everybody else and everything in this world. But on the other side they say that we are bound to grab things, connect ourselves with things, obtain things, and maintain relationship with things. Now, these two things cannot be done simultaneously. We cannot disconnect ourselves from things and also try to connect ourselves with them for the purpose of exploiting them, with an intention to utilise them for our individual purposes. Here again is an instance of contradiction. On one side we disconnect ourselves from persons and things; on the other side we want to connect ourselves with persons and things for our own purposes.

The ancient sages and masters, both of the East and the West, have deeply pondered over this question, and one of the most magnificent proclamations of a solution to these problems is found in the Veda. Among the many aspects of this solution that are presented before us by these mighty revelations, I can quote one which to my mind appears to be a final solution - at least, I have taken it as a solution to all my problems - which comes in the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda and the Atharva Veda. In all the four Vedas it occurs: *tam eva viditvā atimṛtyum eti nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya*. This is a great proclamation. What is the meaning of this proclamation? There is no way of escape from this problem, says this mantra, other

than knowing 'That'. This is a very simple aphoristic precept that is before us: Knowing 'That' is the solution, and we have no other solution. Now, knowing 'That' - what is this 'That'?

Knowing has been generally regarded as a process of understanding and accumulation of information, gathering intellectual or scientific definitive descriptions in respect of things. These days, this is what we call education. We gather definitions of things and try to understand the modes of their apparent functions in temporal life. This is what we call knowing, ordinarily speaking. I know that the sun is rising. This is a kind of knowledge. What do I mean by this knowledge? I have only a functional perception of a phenomenon that is taking place which I regard as the rise of the sun. This is not real knowledge. When I say, "I know that the sun is rising", I cannot say that I have a real knowledge of the sun, because, first of all, the sun is not rising - it is a mistake of my senses. Secondly, the very idea of rising itself is a misconception in the mind. Unless I am static and immovable, I cannot know that something is moving. So when I say, "The sun is moving", I mean that I am not moving; it is understood there. But it is not true that I am not moving. I am also in a state of motion for other reasons which are not easily understandable. So it is not possible for a moving body to say that something else is moving. Nothing that is in a state of motion can say that something else is in motion. There is a relative motion of things, and so perception of the condition of any object ultimately would be impossible. This is a reason why scientific knowledge fails.

All knowledge gathered through observations, whether through a microscope or telescope, in laboratories, etc., is ultimately invalid because it presupposes the static existence of the observer himself, the scientist's capacity to impartially observe and to unconditionally understand the conditions of what he observes - very strange indeed, really. How does the scientist take for granted or imagine that he is an unconditioned observer and everything that he observes is conditioned? It is not true, because the observing scientist is as much conditioned by factors as the object that he observes. So, who is to observe the conditions of his own observing apparatus: his body, his senses - the eyes, for example, and even the mind, which is connected to the body? Inasmuch as the observing scientist - the observing individual, the knowing person - is as much conditioned and limited as the object that is observed or seen, it is not possible to have ultimately valid knowledge in this world.

All our knowledge is insufficient, inadequate, temporal, empirical - ultimately useless. It does not touch the core of life. Therefore, we will find that any learned person, whatever be the depth of his learning, whatever be the greatness of his scholarship, is miserable in the end. The reason is that life is different from this kind of knowledge. It is an all-comprehensive organic being in which the knowing individual is unfortunately included, a fact which misses the attention of every person. It is not possible for anyone to observe or see or know anything, inasmuch as the conditions which describe the object of observation also condition the subject of observation. The Veda points this out in a mystical formula: *tam eva viditvā atimṛtyum eti nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya*. Now, when it is said, by knowing 'That', every problem is solved, the Veda does not mean knowing this object or that object, or this person or that person, or this thing or that thing, or this subject or that subject - it is nothing of that kind. It is a 'That' with a capital 'T', which means to say, the true object of knowledge. The true object of knowledge is to be known, and when 'That' is known, all problems are solved.

What are problems? A problem is a situation that has arisen on account of the irreconcilability of one person, or one thing, with the status and condition of another person, or another thing. I cannot reconcile my position with your position; this is a problem. You cannot reconcile your position with mine; this is a problem. Why should there be such a condition? How is it that it is not possible for me to reconcile myself with you? It is not possible because there is no clear perception of my relationship with you. I have a misconceived idea of my relationship with you and, therefore, there is a misconceived adjustment of my personality with yours, and a misconception cannot solve a problem. The problem is nothing but this misconception - nothing else. The irreconcilability of one thing with another arises on account of the basic difficulty I mentioned, that the person who wishes to bring about this reconciliation, or establish a proper relationship, misses the point of one's own vital connection - underline the word 'vital' - with the object or the person with which, or with whom, this reconciliation is to be effected. Inasmuch as this kind of knowledge is beyond the purview or capacity of the ordinary human intellect, the knowledge of the Veda is regarded as supernormal, superhuman: *apaurusheya* - not created or manufactured by an individual. This is not knowledge that has come out of reading books. This is not ordinary educational knowledge. It is a knowledge which is vitally and organically related to the fact of life. I am as much connected with the fact of life as you are, and so in my observation and study and understanding of you, in my relationship with you, I cannot forget this fact. The moment I disconnect myself from this fact of life which is unanimously present in you as well as in me, I miss the point, and my effort becomes purposeless.

We are gradually led by this proclamation of the Veda into a tremendous vision of life which requires of us to have a superhuman power of will to grasp the interrelationship of things. This difficulty of grasping the meaning of the interrelationship of things is obviated systematically, stage by stage, gradually, by methods of practice. These methods are called yoga - the practice of yoga. I have placed before you, perhaps, a very terrible picture of yoga; it is not as simple as one imagines. It is not a simple circus-master's feat, either of the body or the mind, but a superhuman demand of our total being. Mark this definition of mine: a superhuman demand which is made of our total being - not an ordinary human demand of a part of our being, but of our total being. From that, a demand is made by the entire structure of life. The total structure of life requires of our total being to be united with it in a practical demonstration of thought, speech and action - this is yoga. If this could be missed, and of course it can easily be missed as it is being done every day, then every effort, from the smallest to the biggest, becomes a failure. All our effort ends in no success, because it would be like decorating a corpse without a soul in it. The whole of life would look like a beautiful corpse with nicely dressed features, but it has no vitality, essence or living principle within it. Likewise, all our activities would look wonderful, beautiful, magnificent, but lifeless; and lifeless beauty is no beauty. There must be life in it - only then has it a meaning. Life is not something dead; it is quite opposite of what is dead. We can bring vitality and life into our activity only by the introduction of the principle of yoga.

Yoga is not a technique of *sannyasins* or monks, of mystics or monastic disciples - it is a technique of every living being who wishes to succeed in life. Without the employment of the technique of yoga, no effort can be successful. Even if it is a small, insignificant act like cooking food, sweeping the floor, washing vessels, whatever it is - even these would be meaningless and a boredom, a drudgery and a stupid effort if the principle of yoga is not applied.

In short, I may conclude by saying that happiness, joy, success, or the discovery of the significance of things, including the significance of one's own life and the life of everyone, would not be possible of achievement if the basic structural fundamentals are missed in life and we emphasise only the outer aspects - which are only the rim of the body of life whose vital soul we are unable to perceive, because we do not have the instrument to perceive the soul of life. We have the instruments, called the senses, to perceive the body of life, but the soul of life we cannot perceive, because while the senses can perceive the bodies and the things outside, the soul of things can be perceived only by the soul. It is the soul that sees the soul of things.

When my soul can visualise your soul, then we become really friends; otherwise, we are not friends. Any amount of roundtable conferences of individuals with no soulful connection will not lead to success. Ultimately, success is the union of souls; and yoga aims, finally, at the discovery of the Universal Soul, about which I shall speak in some detail later on.

CHAPTER 2

THE FOUNDATION OF THE DISCIPLINE IN YOGA PRACTICE

Once upon a time, people were under the conviction that parallel lines can never meet. But today, some extraordinary people say that under extraordinary conditions parallel lines can meet. Also once upon a time, Euclidian geometricians, the geometricians of the world, were cocksure that the three angles of a triangle make two right angles, and that nobody can controvert this truth. But today, this is not regarded as ultimately true. Under other conditions than conceivable by the ordinary mind, the three angles of a triangle need not make two right angles. Likewise, yoga is something which will take us by surprise and require of us to cast aside our usual workaday notions - even the notion of God, the notion of things, and the world, and persons around. When yoga comes in its true form, it will be a marvel to the tradition-ridden mind. We will be required to cast aside all the ideas of God which we have been holding in our minds up to this time. We will be required to cast aside our idea of society and the world. We may be required to dispense with the idea of our own person also. Whatever we have been regarding as worthwhile will become worthless before this great knowledge. Whatever has been regarded as usual, ethical and moral may become meaningless before this great requirement. Whatever we have been regarding as sacred will become absolutely devoid of significance before it. All this will come, one day or the other, before the seeking soul.

Nobody imagined that the earth goes around the sun. It is difficult to imagine that the earth goes around the sun. Everybody thinks that the sun is going around the earth because we can see the sun moving; so naturally, why should not the sun move? Can we not believe our eyes? And may I ask a question to you? If you cannot believe your eyes and say that the sun is moving, how can you believe anything else in this world, including myself sitting here and yourself sitting here? If you cannot believe one thing, well, perhaps the same rule may apply to many other things. If we cannot believe our eyes for a commonly accepted phenomenon like the rise and set of the sun every day, how can we believe that there is a tree in front of us, or there are people in front of us, or there is anything at all meaningful in front of us?

Why I state all these things is because we have been rooted in prejudices - ethical and moral prejudices, social prejudices, personal prejudices, philosophical prejudices, and religious prejudices. We are born in prejudice and we will die in prejudice. Yoga is a cleansing medium which will rid us of all this dirt of prejudice. Even the prejudice of the most sacred and holy has to be cast aside.

I told you even the idea of God may have to be thrown away when true yoga comes in front of you. You may be wondering how I can cast out God. Well, you are not casting out God; your idea of God must go because yoga has come, and must come, to give you the necessary medicine to cure the illness of the soul. The soul's illness is more terrible and more difficult to understand than the illness of the body or any other type of malady.

In the Katha Upanishad, the great master says that this knowledge cannot be imparted by an ordinary person. Rather, a person cannot speak this knowledge. The person who teaches this, or expounds this knowledge, cannot be regarded as a person at all - *ananya-prokte gatih atra nāsty aṇīyān hy atarkyam aṇupramāṇāt* (Katha I.2.8). Extremely subtle is this point, beyond the comprehension of even the subtlest

understanding. Human thought cannot comprehend it and, therefore, human beings cannot teach it. Even one who receives this knowledge, a disciple, cannot be regarded as a human being, really speaking. Neither is the teacher a human being, nor is the disciple a human being when we come to the actual point on hand.

Yoga is a superhuman principle working for a superhuman purpose, through a superhuman medium. We cease to be ordinary persons before this masterly science. When we enter the field of this knowledge of the ultimate science of the mystery of life, we do not enter it as a man or a woman; we do not enter it as a human being at all. We enter it as a principle. We know that there is a great difference between a person and a principle. We are always fond of persons and not principles because we cannot see principles; we see only persons and things. But persons and things do not exist, to tell the truth. It is principles that exist. It is a law that exists. It is an order of things which ultimately is the constituting factor of even things. We are told even today that things do not exist, but only forces exist. What we call things and persons are only forces. There is no such thing as things and persons. But yet, we are wedded to this notion of persons and things to such an extent that we will die hard, indeed, in clinging to this notion of persons, things, and located objects. There are neither located objects nor persons and things - there are only powers, significances, meanings, which are impersonal ultimately and not abstract in the sense of what our understanding may regard as abstract.

To us, the concrete is that which we can sense - what we can touch is the concrete, and what we cannot touch, or cannot see, is abstract. This is not true; on the other hand, under certain conditions it will be seen that what we cannot sense is the real. What we sense is not the real. What we touch, what we see, is only a reaction produced by the operation of the forces in a particular manner. Can we regard a reaction as a substance? The tangibility of an object, the visibility of things, cannot be regarded as substantial from its own, or their own, point of view. These things are illusions in the sense that they are certain experiences caused by contact of certain types of located force with certain other types of force in the world. Yoga now comes as the revealing science which opens up the portals of a knowledge that is supermundane.

As it was said, usually yoga is defined as 'union', and we are, again, traditionally bound to the idea that union means one thing coming in contact with another thing; but, no such thing is yoga. It is not one thing coming in contact with another thing. It is a union in the sense of transcending the lower in the higher. A dream-object getting united with the waking consciousness cannot be regarded as a union of one thing with another thing. It is an overcoming of the impediments to a real expansion of consciousness. It is impossible for two things to come together in real union, because that which is dissimilarly constituted cannot come in contact with another thing which is also characterised by conditions different from its own constitution. We cannot come in contact even with God if our nature is different from that of God, because the principle is that dissimilar features cannot unite. If our characters or features are different entirely from those of God, there is no question - there cannot be any possibility - of our uniting ourselves with God. That there is such a chance, that such a possibility seems to be there, implies and ought to indicate that there is implanted in one's own heart and soul something which is characteristic of God Himself. It is very strange, indeed, to understand this. So, it is not real union even with God. It is a manifestation of the potentiality that is in one's own self.

Lastly speaking, we may say that it is a union in the sense of a child uniting itself with

