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*Yoga as Conscious Evolution*

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# Yoga as Conscious Evolution

*Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo*

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*Editorial note: Yoga has become today a household term. It has gone far beyond the boundaries of the Indian peninsula where it was born and developed. Its usefulness to humanity is also established beyond doubt. Yet there is still a lack of deeper understanding of what yoga truly is. This issue is dedicated to this understanding of yoga through the luminous words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. For want of space we have taken up only Traditional systems of yoga. Sri Aurobindo's yoga will be dealt in a separate issue.*



*He who is free from bondage, is free, is mukta. But the last bondage is the passion for liberation itself which must be renounced before the soul can be perfectly free, and the last knowledge is the realisation that there is none bound, none desirous of freedom, but the soul is for ever and perfectly free, that bondage is an illusion and the liberation from bondage is an illusion.*

CWSA 12: 6

**Sri Aurobindo**

# What is Yoga

## Life and Yoga

In the right view both of life and of Yoga all life is either consciously or subconsciously a Yoga. For we mean by this term a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the secret potentialities latent in the being and — highest condition of victory in that effort — a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos. But all life, when we look behind its appearances, is a vast Yoga of Nature who attempts in the conscious and the subconscious to realise her perfection in an ever-increasing expression of her yet unrealised potentialities and to unite herself with her own divine reality. In man, her thinker, she for the first time upon this Earth devises selfconscious means and willed arrangements of activity by which this great purpose may be more swiftly and puissantly attained. Yoga, as Swami Vivekananda has said, may be regarded as a means of compressing one's evolution into a single life or a few years or even a few months of bodily existence.

CWSA 23: 6

## The object of Yoga

The object of our Yoga is self-perfection, not self-annulment. There are two paths set for the feet of the Yogin, withdrawal from the universe and perfection in the Universe; the first comes by asceticism, the second is effected by tapasya; the first receives us when we lose God in Existence, the second is attained when we fulfil existence in God. Let ours be the path of perfection, not of abandonment; let our aim be victory in the battle, not the escape from all conflict.

Buddha and Shankara supposed the world to be radically false and miserable; therefore escape from the world was to them the only wisdom. But this world is Brahman, the world is God, the world is Satyam, the world is Ananda; it is our misreading of the world through mental egoism that is a falsehood and our wrong

relation with God in the world that is a misery. There is no other falsity and no other cause of sorrow. CWSA 12: 96

### **An ascent to the Divine Perfection**

By Yoga we can rise out of falsehood into truth, out of weakness into force, out of pain and grief into bliss, out of bondage into freedom, out of death into immortality, out of darkness into light, out of confusion into purity, out of imperfection into perfection, out of self-division into unity, out of Maya into God. All other utilisation of Yoga is for special and fragmentary advantages not always worth pursuing. Only that which aims at possessing the fullness of God is purna Yoga; the sadhaka of the Divine Perfection is the purna Yogin.

Our aim must be to be perfect as God in His being and bliss is perfect, pure as He is pure, blissful as He is blissful, and, when we are ourselves siddha in the purna Yoga, to bring all mankind to the same divine perfection. It does not matter if for the present we fall short of our aim, so long as we give ourselves whole-heartedly to the attempt and by living constantly in it and for it move forward even two inches upon the road; even that will help to lead humanity out of the struggle and twilight in which it now dwells into the luminous joy which God intends for us. CWSA 12: 98

### **Change of consciousness**

Yoga is a means by which one arrives at union with the Truth behind things through an inner discipline which leads us from the consciousness of the outward and apparent to the consciousness of the inner and real. Yoga consciousness does not exclude the knowledge of the outer apparent world but it sees it with the eyes of an inner, not an outer seeing and experience, alters and sets right all its values in the light of an inner deeper greater truer consciousness and applies to it the Law of the reality, exchanging the law of the creature's Ignorance for the rule of a divine Will and Knowledge.

A change of consciousness is the whole meaning of the process of Yoga[.]...

Yoga is the science, the process, the effort and action by which

man attempts to pass out of the limits of his ordinary mental consciousness into a greater spiritual consciousness[.] CWSA 12: 327

### **Key to an inner larger consciousness**

Any psychic discipline by which we can pass partly or wholly into a spiritual state of the consciousness, any spontaneous or systematised approach to the inner Reality or the supreme Reality, any state of union or closeness to the Divine, any entry into a consciousness larger, deeper or higher than the normal consciousness common to humankind, fall automatically within the range of the word Yoga. Yoga takes us from the surface into the depths of our consciousness or it admits us into its very centre; it takes us up to the hidden top-most heights of our conscious being. It shows to us the secrets of the Self and the secret of the Divine. It gives us the knowledge, the vision, the presence of the Immanent and the Cosmic and the Transcendent Reality; that is its supreme purpose.

CWSA 12: 329

### **Yoga Partial and Complete**

Yoga means union and the whole object of Yoga is the union of the human soul with the supreme Being and of the present nature of humanity with the eternal, supreme or divine Nature.

The greater the union, the greater the Yoga, the more complete the union, the more complete the Yoga. ...

The complete Yoga will be one which accepts God in the world and oneness with all beings and solidarity with the human kind, fills life and existence with the God-consciousness and not only raises man the individual but leads man the race towards a total perfection.

CWSA 12: 334-35

**Sri Aurobindo**

***In brief, we have to replace dualities by unity, egoism by divine consciousness, ignorance by divine wisdom, thought by divine knowledge, weakness, struggle & effort by self-contented divine force, pain & false pleasure by divine bliss.***

CWSA 12: 101

**Sri Aurobindo**

# Hathayoga

## Principle behind Hathayoga

Hathayoga aims at the conquest of the life and the body whose combination in the food sheath and the vital vehicle constitutes, as we have seen, the gross body and whose equilibrium is the foundation of all Nature's workings in the human being. The equilibrium established by Nature is sufficient for the normal egoistic life; it is insufficient for the purpose of the Hathayogin. For it is calculated on the amount of vital or dynamic force necessary to drive the physical engine during the normal span of human life and to perform more or less adequately the various workings demanded of it by the individual life inhabiting this frame and the world-environment by which it is conditioned. Hathayoga therefore seeks to rectify Nature and establish another equilibrium by which the physical frame will be able to sustain the inrush of an increasing vital or dynamic force of Prana indefinite, almost infinite in its quantity or intensity. In Nature the equilibrium is based upon the individualisation of a limited quantity and force of the Prana; more than that the individual is by personal and hereditary habit unable to bear, use or control. In Hathayoga, the equilibrium opens a door to the universalisation of the individual vitality by admitting into the body, containing, using and controlling a much less fixed and limited action of the universal energy.

*CWSA 23: 33-34*

## Object of Hathayoga

The pure Hathayoga is the means of the fulfilment through the body. Its processes are physical, strenuous, colossal, complex, difficult. They centre in Asana, Pranayam and the purification of the body. The number of Asanas in the modern or mixed Hathayoga is limited, but even then they are numerous and painful; in the ancient or pure Hathayoga, they were innumerable and the old Hathayogins practised them all. The Asana means simply a particular position of the body and is perfect or "conquered", in the technical language, when a man can stay in a single posture, however strained or apparently



impossible, for an indefinite period without being forced by strain to remember the body. The first object of the Asana is to conquer the body, — for the body must be conquered before it can become divine, — to be able to lay any command upon it and never be commanded by it. The second object was to conquer physical nature, by developing the four physical siddhis, laghima, anima, garima, mahima. By perfect laghima man can rise into the air and tread the winds as his natural element; by perfect *anima* he can bring the nature of the subtle body into the gross body, which the fire will no longer burn, nor weapons wound, nor want of air stifle, nor the waters drown; by perfect garima he can develop an adamantine steadiness which the shock of the avalanche cannot overbear; by perfect mahima he can, without muscular development, outdo the feats of a Hercules. These powers in their fullness are no longer visible in men, but in some degree they belong to all adepts in Hathayoga. Their existence no one can doubt who has gone deep into Yoga at all or had any personal experience of siddhis. The third object is to develop in the body Yogic force, which is called *tapah* or *viryam* or the fire of Yoga. The fourth object is to become *urddhwaretah*, that is to say, to draw up the whole virile force in the body into the brain and return so much of it as is needed for the body purified and electricised.

CWSA 1: 504-05

### **The system of Asanas**

The Hathayogic system of Asana has at its basis two profound ideas which bring with them many effective implications. The first is that of control by physical immobility, the second is that of power by immobility. The power of physical immobility is as important in Hathayoga as the power of mental immobility in the Yoga of knowledge, and for parallel reasons. To the mind unaccustomed to the deeper truths of our being and nature they would both seem to be a seeking after the listless passivity of inertia. The direct contrary is the truth; for Yogic passivity, whether of mind or body, is a condition of the greatest increase, possession and continence of energy. The normal activity of our minds is for the most part a disordered restlessness, full of waste and rapidly tentative expenditure of energy in which only a little is

selected for the workings of the self-mastering will, — waste, be it understood, from this point of view, not that of universal Nature in which what is to us waste, serves the purposes of her economy. The activity of our bodies is a similar restlessness.

It is the sign of a constant inability of the body to hold even the limited life energy that enters into or is generated in it, and consequently of a general dissipation of this Pranic force with a quite subordinate element of ordered and well-economised activity. ...

The first object of the immobility of the Asana is to get rid of the restlessness imposed on the body and to force it to hold the Pranic energy instead of dissipating and squandering it. The experience in the practice of Asana is not that of a cessation and diminution of energy by inertia, but of a great increase, inpouring, circulation of force. The body, accustomed to work off superfluous energy by movement, is at first ill able to bear this increase and this retained inner action and betrays it by violent tremblings; afterwards it habituates itself and, when the Asana is conquered, then it finds as much ease in the posture, however originally difficult or unusual to it, as in its easiest attitudes sedentary or recumbent. It becomes increasingly capable of holding whatever amount of increased vital energy is brought to bear upon it without needing to spill it out in movement, and this increase is so enormous as to seem illimitable, so that the body of the perfected Hathayogin is capable of feats of endurance, force, unfatigued expenditure of energy of which the normal physical powers of man at their highest would be incapable.

*CWSA 23: 53 1-32*

### **The Principle behind Pranayama**

Pranayam is the mastery of the vital force, the mobile energy which keeps the universe going. In the human body the most noticeable function of the prana or vital force is the breathing, which is in ordinary men necessary to life and motion. The Hathayogin conquers it and renders himself independent of it. But he does not confine his attention to this single vital operation. He distinguishes five major vital forces and several minor, to each of which he has given a name, and he learns to control all the numerous pranic currents in which they operate. As there are innumerable asanas, so there are a great

number of different kinds of Pranayam, and a man is not a perfect Hathayogin till he has mastered them all. The conquest of the Prana confirms the perfect health, vigour and vitality gained by the Asanas; it confers the power of living as long as one pleases and it adds to the four physical siddhis, the five psychical, — prakamyā or absolute keenness of the mind and senses including telepathy, clairvoyance and other faculties commonly supposed to be supernormal; *vyapti* or the power of receiving other men's thoughts, powers and feelings and projecting one's own thoughts, feelings, powers or personality into others; *aiswaryam* or control over events, lordship, wealth and all objects of desire; *vashita* or the power of exacting implicit and instantaneous obedience to the spoken or written word; *ishita*, the perfect control over the powers of nature and over things inert or unintelligent. Some of these powers have recently been discovered in Europe as phenomena of hypnotism or will-force; but the European experiences are feeble and unscientific if compared with the achievements of the ancient Hathayogins or even with those of some of the modern. The will power developed by Pranayam is, it should be noted, psychical and not spiritual. CWSA 1: 505-06

### **The movement of Prana**

The Prana has according to Yogic science a fivefold movement pervading all the nervous system and the whole material body and determining all its functionings. The Hathayogin seizes on the outward movement of respiration as a sort of key which opens to him the control of all these five powers of the Prana. He becomes sensibly aware of their inner operations, mentally conscious of his whole physical life and action. He is able to direct the Prana through all the *nāḍīs* or nerve-channels of his system. He becomes aware of its action in the six *cakras* or ganglionic centres of the nervous system, and is able to open it up in each beyond its present limited, habitual and mechanical workings. He gets, in short, a perfect control of the life in the body in its most subtle nervous as well as in its grossest physical aspects, even over that in it which is at present involuntary and out of the reach of our observing consciousness and will. CWSA 23: 535

Besides these two great practices the Hathayogins have numerous others such as the extraordinary means by which they clean out daily all the physical impurities of the body. By these numerous and difficult physical practices they attain an extraordinary power, vitality, virility, longevity, and are also able to attain knowledge transcending the ordinary human bounds, leave the body in Samadhi and, in one word, exercise every mere power that comes by Yoga. But the practice of unmixed Hathayoga generates a colossal egoism and the Yogin seldom exceeds it. The modern Hathayoga is mixed with the Rajayoga and, therefore, neither so virile and potent nor so dangerous as the ancient.

CWSA 1: 506

### **Limitations of Hathayoga**

The results of Hathayoga are thus striking to the eye and impose easily on the vulgar or physical mind. And yet at the end we may ask what we have gained at the end of all this stupendous labour. The object of physical Nature, the preservation of the mere physical life, its highest perfection, even in a certain sense the capacity of a greater enjoyment of physical living have been carried out on an abnormal scale. But the weakness of Hathayoga is that its laborious and difficult processes make so great a demand on the time and energy and impose so complete a severance from the ordinary life of men that the utilisation of its results for the life of the world becomes either impracticable or is extraordinarily restricted. If in return for this loss we gain another life in another world within, the mental, the dynamic, these results could have been acquired through other systems, through Rajayoga, through Tantra, by much less laborious methods and held on much less exacting terms. On the other hand the physical results, increased vitality, prolonged youth, health, longevity are of small avail if they must be held by us as misers of ourselves, apart from the common life, for their own sake, not utilised, not thrown into the common sum of the world's activities. Hathayoga attains large results, but at an exorbitant price and to very little purpose.

CWSA 23: 35

**Sri Aurobindo**

# Rajayoga

## The first condition

Man fulfilling himself in the body is given Hathayoga as his means. When he rises above the body, he abandons Hathayoga as a troublesome and inferior process and rises to the Rajayoga, the discipline peculiar to the aeon in which man now evolves. The first condition of success in Rajayoga is to rise superior to the dehatmak bodh, the state of perception in which the body is identified with the self. A time comes to the Rajayogin when his body seems not to belong to him or he to have any concern with it. He is not troubled by its troubles or gladdened by its pleasures; it has them to itself and very soon, because he does not give his sanction to them, they fall away from it. His own troubles and pleasures are in the heart and mind, for he is the rajasic and psychical man, not the tamasic material. It is these that he has to conquer in order that he may realise God in his heart or in his buddhi or in both. God seen in the heart, that is the quest of the Rajayogin.

CWSA 1: 507

## Tranquilising the mind

Now Pranayam in its proper sense, the mastery of the vital force in oneself and Nature, is essential to every Rajayogin, but it can be brought about by much simpler methods. The only physical process that the Rajayogin finds helpful enough to be worth doing, is *nadi-shuddhi* or purification of the nerve system by regular breathing and this can be done while lying, sitting, reading, writing, walking. This process has great virtues. It has a wonderfully calming effect on the whole mind & body, drives out every lurking disease in the system, awakens the yogic force accumulated in former lives and, even where no such latent force exists, removes the physical obstacles to the wakening of the Kundalini shakti.

But even this process is not essential. The Rajayogin knows that by tranquillising the mind he can tranquillise the body, by mastering the mind he can master both the body and the prana. This is the great se-

cret of the Rajayoga that mind is the master of the body, creates it and conditions it, body is not the master, creator or lawgiver of the mind.

*CWSA 1: 508*

### **Moral purification through *yama and niyama***

Rajayoga also uses the Pranayama and for the same principal psychic purposes as the Hathayoga, but being in its whole principle a psychological system, it employs it only as one stage in the series of its practices and to a very limited extent, for three or four large utilities. It does not start with Asana and Pranayama, but insists first on a moral purification of the mentality. This preliminary is of supreme importance; without it the course of the rest of the Rajayoga is likely to be troubled, marred and full of unexpected mental, moral and physical perils. This moral purification is divided in the established system under two heads, five *yamas* and five *niyamas*. The first are rules of moral self-control in conduct such as truth-speaking, abstinence from injury or killing, from theft etc.; but in reality these must be regarded as merely certain main indications of the general need of moral self-control and purity. *Yama* is, more largely, any self-discipline by which the rajasic egoism and its passions and desires in the human being are conquered and quieted into perfect cessation. The object is to create a moral calm, a void of the passions, and so prepare for the death of egoism in the rajasic human being. The *Niyamas* are equally a discipline of the mind by regular practices of which the highest is meditation on the divine Being, and their object is to create a sattvic calm, purity and preparation for concentration upon which the secure pursuance of the rest of the Yoga can be founded.

It is here, when this foundation has been secured, that the practice of Asana and Pranayama come in and can then bear their perfect fruits. By itself the control of the mind and moral being only puts our normal consciousness into the right preliminary condition; it cannot bring about that evolution or manifestation of the higher psychic being which is necessary for the greater aims of Yoga.

*CWSA 23: 538-39*

## **Rajayogic concentration**

Rajayogic concentration is divided into four stages; it commences with the drawing both of the mind and senses from outward things, proceeds to the holding of the one object of concentration to the exclusion of all other ideas and mental activities, then to the prolonged absorption of the mind in this object, finally, to the complete ingoing of the consciousness by which it is lost to all outward mental activity in the oneness of Samadhi. The real object of this mental discipline is to draw away the mind from the outward and the mental world into union with the divine Being. Therefore in the first three stages use has to be made of some mental means or support by which the mind, accustomed to run about from object to object, shall fix on one alone, and that one must be something which represents the idea of the Divine. It is usually a name or a form or a mantra by which the thought can be fixed in the sole knowledge or adoration of the Lord. By this concentration on the idea the mind enters from the idea into its reality, into which it sinks silent, absorbed, unified. This is the traditional method. There are, however, others which are equally of a Rajayogic character, since they use the mental and psychical being as key. Some of them are directed rather to the quiescence of the mind than to its immediate absorption, as the discipline by which the mind is simply watched and allowed to exhaust its habit of vagrant thought in a purposeless running from which it feels all sanction, purpose and interest withdrawn, and that, more strenuous and rapidly effective, by which all outward-going thought is excluded and the mind forced to sink into itself where in its absolute quietude it can only reflect the pure Being or pass away into its superconscient existence. The method differs, the object and the result are the same.

*CWSA 23: 540-41*

## **The Patanjali's system of Rajayoga**

Rajayoga is of three kinds, sachesta, salpachesta and nischesta, with effort, with little effort, and without effort. Patanjali's, the only systematised kind, though each is quite methodical, is sachesta, involving great strain and effort throughout... The first step is the preparation of the moral nature, the discipline of the heart, its perfection in the

four great qualities of love, purity, courage and calm, without which siddhi in the Rajayoga is impossible. Patanjali prescribes the practice of the five yamas or regulating moral exercises, truth, justice and honesty, harmlessness, chastity and refusal of ownership, and the five niyamas or regulating moral habits, cleanliness and purity, contentment, austerity, meditation on Scripture, worship and devotion to God. In order to establish these habits and exercises and remove the impurities of the heart it is evident that Patanjali intends us to use the method of *abhyasa* or constant practice. ...

Afterwards Patanjali recommends the quieting of the body and the mastering of the Prana by Asana and Pranayam. The reason of this is clear enough. The Pranayam of the Hathayoga does not lead to purity, but to force and intensity; every quality that it finds potent in the system it raises to tenfold activity and power. Unless therefore the life and character be previously made quiet and pure, Pranayam done in one's own strength may do immense moral, physical and mental mischief....

Next comes the mastery of the mind, that restless, self-willed and shifting force which is so difficult to control. Again, as in his previous steps, Patanjali relies wholly on *abhyasa* or practice. He arranges concentration in four stages of development, *Pratyahara* or the drawing inward of the senses from their objects; *Dharana*, or the success in this process resulting in the fixing of the mind for a moment on a single thought, feeling or object, — such as a single part of the body, the tip of the nose or the centre of the brows for preference; *Dhyana* or the continuation of this state for a fixed period; *Samadhi* or the entire withdrawing into oneself for an indefinite time....

Concentration once attained, we proceed to what Patanjali evidently considers the essence of Yoga, the coercion of all *vrittis* or functionings of the mental and moral qualities so as to arrive at *san-yama* or turning of the whole passionless intelligent Will in the spirit on whatsoever the Yogin wishes to possess, from the realisation of God to the enjoyment of mundane objects. But how is this silencing of the *vrittis* to be effected? for the *yamas* and *niyamas* only establish certain good habits of life, they do not thoroughly purify mind and



heart. We have to do it by a process of removal by replacement, always depending on *abhyasa*, replacing bad *vrittis* by good, the many good by the few better, the few better by the one best, until we arrive at absolute *sanyama*. This can be done, not easily but without insuperable difficulty if the power of concentration is thoroughly attained by Patanjali's method. CWUSA 1: 508-10

### **Kundalini awakening**

The preliminary movement of Rajayoga is a careful self-discipline by which good habits of mind are substituted for the lawless movements that indulge the lower nervous being. By the practice of truth, by renunciation of all forms of egoistic seeking, by abstention from injury to others, by purity, by constant meditation and inclination to the divine Purusha who is the true lord of the mental kingdom, a pure, glad, clear state of mind and heart is established.

This is the first step only. Afterwards, the ordinary activities of the mind and sense must be entirely quieted in order that the soul may be free to ascend to higher states of consciousness and acquire the foundation for a perfect freedom and self-mastery. But Rajayoga does not forget that the disabilities of the ordinary mind proceed largely from its subjection to the reactions of the nervous system and the body. It adopts therefore from the Hathayogic system its devices of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*, but reduces their multiple and elaborate forms in each case to one simplest and most directly effective process sufficient for its own immediate object. Thus it gets rid of the Hathayogic complexity and cumbrousness while it utilises the swift and powerful efficacy of its methods for the control of the body and the vital functions and for the awakening of that internal dynamism, full of a latent supernormal faculty, typified in Yogic terminology by the *kuṇḍalini*, the coiled and sleeping serpent of Energy within. This done, the system proceeds to the perfect quieting of the restless mind and its elevation to a higher plane through concentration of mental force by the successive stages which lead to the utmost inner concentration or ingathered state of the consciousness which is called Samadhi. CWUSA 23: 36

## Limitations of Rajayoga

We perceive that as Hathayoga, dealing with the life and body, aims at the supernormal perfection of the physical life and its capacities and goes beyond it into the domain of the mental life, so Rajayoga, operating with the mind, aims at a supernormal perfection and enlargement of the capacities of the mental life and goes beyond it into the domain of the spiritual existence. But the weakness of the system lies in its excessive reliance on abnormal states of trance. This limitation leads first to a certain aloofness from the physical life which is our foundation and the sphere into which we have to bring our mental and spiritual gains. Especially is the spiritual life, in this system, too much associated with the state of Samadhi. Our object is to make the spiritual life and its experiences fully active and fully utilisable in the waking state and even in the normal use of the functions. But in Rajayoga it tends to withdraw into a subliminal plane at the back of our normal experiences instead of descending and possessing our whole existence.

CWSA 23: 37

## Kundalini, the Chakras and the Integral Yoga

The process of the Kundalini awakened rising through the centres as also the purification of the centres is a Tantrik knowledge. In our Yoga there is no willed process of the purification and opening of the centres, no raising up of the Kundalini by a set process either. Another method is used, but still there is the ascent of the consciousness from and through the different levels to join the higher consciousness above; there is the opening of the centres and of the planes (mental, vital, physical) which these centres command; there is also the descent which is the main key of the spiritual transformation. Therefore there is, I have said, a Tantrik knowledge behind the process of transformation in this Yoga.

\*

There is [*in the Integral Yoga*] no willed opening of the chakras, they open of themselves by the descent of the Force. In the Tantrik discipline they open from down upwards, the Muladhara first — in our Yoga, they open from up downward. But the ascent of the force from the Muladhara does take place.

CWSA 29: 460

Sri Aurobindo

# Jnanayoga: the Path of Knowledge

## Self Realisation through the path of Knowledge

The Path of Knowledge aims at the realisation of the unique and supreme Self. It proceeds by the method of intellectual reflection, *vicāra*, to right discrimination, *viveka*. It observes and distinguishes the different elements of our apparent or phenomenal being and rejecting identification with each of them arrives at their exclusion and separation in one common term as constituents of Prakriti, of phenomenal Nature, creations of Maya, the phenomenal consciousness. So it is able to arrive at its right identification with the pure and unique Self which is not mutable or perishable, not determinable by any phenomenon or combination of phenomena. From this point the path, as ordinarily followed, leads to the rejection of the phenomenal worlds from the consciousness as an illusion and the final immergence without return of the individual soul in the Supreme.

But this exclusive consummation is not the sole or inevitable result of the Path of Knowledge. For, followed more largely and with a less individual aim, the method of Knowledge may lead to an active conquest of the cosmic existence for the Divine no less than to a transcendence. The point of this departure is the realisation of the supreme Self not only in one's own being but in all beings and, finally, the realisation of even the phenomenal aspects of the world as a play of the divine consciousness and not something entirely alien to its true nature. And on the basis of this realisation a yet further enlargement is possible, the conversion of all forms of knowledge, however mundane, into activities of the divine consciousness utilisable for the perception of the one and unique Object of knowledge both in itself and through the play of its forms and symbols.

CWSA 23: 38

## The traditional and the Integral Way of Knowledge

The traditional Way of Knowledge proceeds by elimination and rejects successively the body, the life, the senses, the heart, the very thought in order to merge into the quiescent Self or supreme Nihil

or indefinite Absolute. The way of integral knowledge supposes that we are intended to arrive at an integral self-fulfilment and the only thing that is to be eliminated is our own unconsciousness, the Ignorance and the results of the Ignorance. Eliminate the falsity of the being which figures as the ego; then our true being can manifest in us. Eliminate the falsity of the life which figures as mere vital craving and the mechanical round of our corporeal existence; our true life in the power of the Godhead and the joy of the Infinite will appear. Eliminate the falsity of the senses with their subjection to material shows and to dual sensations; there is a greater sense in us that can open through these to the Divine in things and divinely reply to it. Eliminate the falsity of the heart with its turbid passions and desires and its dual emotions; a deeper heart in us can open with its divine love for all creatures and its infinite passion and yearning for the responses of the Infinite. Eliminate the falsity of the thought with its imperfect mental constructions, its arrogant assertions and denials, its limited and exclusive concentrations; a greater faculty of knowledge is behind that can open to the true Truth of God and the soul and Nature and the universe. An integral self-fulfilment, — an absolute, a culmination for the experiences of the heart, for its instinct of love, joy, devotion and worship; an absolute, a culmination for the senses, for their pursuit of divine beauty and good and delight in the forms of things; an absolute, a culmination for the life, for its pursuit of works, of divine power, mastery and perfection; an absolute, a culmination beyond its own limits for the thought, for its hunger after truth and light and divine wisdom and knowledge. Not something quite other than themselves from which they are all cast away is the end of these things in our nature, but something supreme in which they at once transcend themselves and find their own absolutes and infinitudes, their harmonies beyond measure. *CWSA 23: 291-92*

### **The power of concentration**

By concentration on anything whatsoever we are able to know that thing, to make it deliver up its concealed secrets; we must use this power to know not things, but the one Thing-in-itself. By concen-

tration again the whole will can be gathered up for the acquisition of that which is still ungrasped, still beyond us; this power, if it is sufficiently trained, sufficiently single-minded, sufficiently sincere, sure of itself, faithful to itself alone, absolute in faith, we can use for the acquisition of any object whatsoever; but we ought to use it not for the acquisition of the many objects which the world offers to us, but to grasp spiritually that one object worthy of pursuit which is also the one subject worthy of knowledge. By concentration of our whole being on one status of itself, we can become whatever we choose; we can become, for instance, even if we were before a mass of weaknesses and fears, a mass instead of strength and courage, or we can become all a great purity, holiness and peace or a single universal soul of Love; but we ought, it is said, to use this power to become not even these things, high as they may be in comparison with what we now are, but rather to become that which is above all things and free from all action and attributes, the pure and absolute Being. All else, all other concentration can only be valuable for preparation, for previous steps, for a gradual training of the dissolute and self-dissipating thought, will and being towards their grand and unique object.

CWSA 23: 318

### **Concentration on the Idea**

This concentration proceeds by the Idea, using thought, form and name as keys which yield up to the concentrating mind the Truth that lies concealed behind all thought, form and name; for it is through the Idea that the mental being rises beyond all expression to that which is expressed, to that of which the Idea itself is only the instrument. By concentration upon the Idea the mental existence which at present we are breaks open the barrier of our mentality and arrives at the state of consciousness, the state of being, the state of power of conscious-being and bliss of conscious-being to which the Idea corresponds and of which it is the symbol, movement and rhythm. Concentration by the Idea is, then, only a means, a key to open to us the superconscient planes of our existence; a certain self-gathered state of our whole existence lifted into that superconscient truth, unity

and infinity of self-aware, self-blissful existence is the aim and culmination; and that is the meaning we shall give to the term Samadhi.

CWSA 23: 321

### **Steps of concentration**

The first step in concentration must be always to accustom the discursive mind to a settled unwavering pursuit of a single course of connected thought on a single subject and this it must do undistracted by all lures and alien calls on its attention. Such concentration is common enough in our ordinary life, but it becomes more difficult when we have to do it inwardly without any outward object or action on which to keep the mind; yet this inward concentration is what the seeker of knowledge must effect. Nor must it be merely the consecutive thought of the intellectual thinker, whose only object is to conceive and intellectually link together his conceptions. It is not, except perhaps at first, a process of reasoning that is wanted so much as a dwelling so far as possible on the fruitful essence of the idea which by the insistence of the soul's will upon it must yield up all the facets of its truth. Thus if it be the divine Love that is the subject of concentration, it is on the essence of the idea of God as Love that the mind should concentrate in such a way that the various manifestation of the divine Love should arise luminously, not only to the thought, but in the heart and being and vision of the sadhaka. The thought may come first and the experience afterwards, but equally the experience may come first and the knowledge arise out of the experience. Afterwards the thing attained has to be dwelt on and more and more held till it becomes a constant experience and finally the dharma or law of the being.

This is the process of concentrated meditation; but a more strenuous method is the fixing of the whole mind in concentration on the essence of the idea only, so as to reach not the thought-knowledge or the psychological experience of the subject, but the very essence of the thing behind the idea. In this process thought ceases and passes into the absorbed or ecstatic contemplation of the object or by a merging into it in an inner Samadhi. ...

A third process is neither at first to concentrate in a strenuous meditation on the one subject nor in a strenuous contemplation of the one object of thought-vision, but first to still the mind altogether. This may be done by various ways; one is to stand back from the mental action altogether not participating in but simply watching it until, tired of its unsanctioned leaping and running, it falls into an increasing and finally an absolute quiet. Another is to reject the thought-suggestions, to cast them away from the mind whenever they come and firmly hold to the peace of the being which really and always exists behind the trouble and riot of the mind. When this secret peace is unveiled, a great calm settles on the being and there comes usually with it the perception and experience of the all-pervading silent Brahman, everything else at first seeming to be mere form and eidolon. On the basis of this calm everything else may be built up in the knowledge and experience no longer of the external phenomena of things but of the deeper truth of the divine manifestation.

*CWSA 23:323-24*

### **Renunciation**

It will be seen that the scope we give to the idea of renunciation is different from the meaning currently attached to it. Currently its meaning is self-denial, inhibition of pleasure, rejection of the objects of pleasure. Self-denial is a necessary discipline for the soul of man, because his heart is ignorantly attached; inhibition of pleasure is necessary because his sense is caught and clogged in the mud-honey of sensuous satisfactions; rejection of the objects of pleasure is imposed because the mind fixes on the object and will not leave it to go beyond it and within itself. If the mind of man were not thus ignorant, attached, bound even in its restless inconstancy, deluded by the forms of things, renunciation would not have been needed; the soul could have travelled on the path of delight, from the lesser to the greater, from joy to diviner joy. At present that is not practicable. It must give up from within everything to which it is attached in order that it may gain that which they are in their reality. The external renunciation is not the essential, but even that is necessary for a time, indispensable in many things and sometimes useful in all; we may

even say that a complete external renunciation is a stage through which the soul must pass at some period of its progress, — though always it should be without those self-willed violences and fierce self-torturings which are an offence to the Divine seated within us. But in the end this renunciation or self-denial is always an instrument and the period for its use passes. The rejection of the object ceases to be necessary when the object can no longer ensnare us because what the soul enjoys is no longer the object as an object but the Divine which it expresses; the inhibition of pleasure is no longer needed when the soul no longer seeks pleasure but possesses the delight of the Divine in all things equally without the need of a personal or physical possession of the thing itself; self-denial loses its field when the soul no longer claims anything, but obeys consciously the will of the one Self in all beings. It is then that we are freed from the Law and released into the liberty of the Spirit.

CWSA 23: 333

### **Inward rather than an outward process**

Again our renunciation must obviously be an inward renunciation; especially and above all, a renunciation of attachment and the craving of desire in the senses and the heart, of self-will in the thought and action and of egoism in the centre of the consciousness. For these things are the three knots by which we are bound to our lower nature and if we can renounce these utterly, there is nothing else that can bind us. Therefore attachment and desire must be utterly cast out; there is nothing in the world to which we must be attached, not wealth nor poverty, nor joy nor suffering, nor life nor death, nor greatness nor littleness, nor vice nor virtue, nor friend, nor wife, nor children, nor country, nor our work and mission, nor heaven nor earth, nor all that is within them or beyond them. And this does not mean that there is nothing at all that we shall love, nothing in which we shall take delight; for attachment is egoism in love and not love itself, desire is limitation and insecurity in a hunger for pleasure and satisfaction and not the seeking after the divine delight in things. A universal love we must have, calm and yet eternally intense beyond the brief vehemence of the most violent passion; a delight in things



rooted in a delight in God that does not adhere to their forms but to that which they conceal in themselves and that embraces the universe without being caught in its meshes.<sup>1</sup>

CWSA 23: 329-30

### **The central Knot**

But the centre of all resistance is egoism and this we must pursue into every covert and disguise and drag it out and slay it; for its disguises are endless and it will cling to every shred of possible self-concealment. Altruism and indifference are often its most effective disguises; so draped, it will riot boldly in the very face of the divine spies who are missioned to hunt it out. Here the formula of the supreme knowledge comes to our help; we have nothing to do in our essential standpoint with these distinctions, for there is no I nor thou, but only one divine Self equal in all embodiments, equal in the individual and the group, and to realise that, to express that, to serve that, to fulfill that is all that matters. Self-satisfaction and altruism, enjoyment and indifference are not the essential thing. If the realisation, fulfilment, service of the one Self demands from us an action that seems to others self-service or self-assertion in the egoistic sense or seems egoistic enjoyment and self-indulgence, that action we must do; we must be governed by the guide within rather than by the opinions of men. The influence of the environment works often with great subtlety; we prefer and put on almost unconsciously the garb which will look best in the eye that regards us from outside and we allow a veil to drop over the eye within; we are impelled to drape ourselves in the vow of poverty, or in the garb of service, or in outward proofs of indifference and renunciation and a spotless sainthood because that is what tradition and opinion demand of us and so we can make best an impression on our environment. But all this is vanity and delusion. We may be called upon to assume these things, for that may be the uniform of our service; but equally it may not. The eye of man outside matters nothing; the eye within is all.

CWSA 23: 331

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1. *Nirlipta. The divine Ananda in things is niskama and nirlipta, free from desire and therefore not attached.*

## Asceticism and detachment

Rules like these [*not reading newspapers, eating a fixed diet, keeping only a few things*] are intended to help the vital and physical to come under the discipline of sadhana and not get dispersed in fancies, impulses, self-indulgences; but they must be done simply, not with any sense of superiority or ascetic pride, but as a mere matter of course. It is true also that they can be made the occasion of a too great mental rigidity — as if they were things of supreme importance *in themselves* and not only a means. Put in their right place and done in the right spirit, they can be very helpful for their purpose.

\*

This is a feeling (the unimportance of things in Time) that the ascetic discipline sometimes uses in order to get rid of attachment to the world — but it is not good for any positive or dynamic spiritual purpose.

\*

Sannyasa does not take away attachment — it amounts only to running away from the object of attachment which may help but cannot by itself alone be the radical cure. *CWSA 29: 383-84*

## Vairagya

I have objected in the past to vairagya of the ascetic kind and the tamasic kind — and by the amasic kind I mean that spirit which comes defeated from life, not because it is really disgusted with life but because it could not cope with it or conquer its prizes; for it comes to Yoga as a kind of asylum for the maimed or weak and to the Divine as a consolation prize for the failed boys in the world-class. The vairagya of one who has tasted the world's gifts or prizes but found them insufficient or, finally, tasteless and turns away towards a higher and more beautiful ideal or the vairagya of one who has done his part in life's battles but seen that something greater is demanded of the soul, is perfectly helpful and a good gate to the Yoga. Also the sattwic vairagya which has learned what life is and turns to what is above and behind life. By the ascetic vairagya I mean that which denies life and world altogether and wants to disappear into the Indefinite — and I

object to it for those who come to this Yoga because it is incompatible with my aim which is to bring the Divine into life. But if one is satisfied with life as it is, then there is no reason to seek to bring the Divine into life, — so vairagya in the sense of dissatisfaction with life as it is is perfectly admissible and even in a certain sense indispensable for my Yoga.

\*

There is the sattwic vairagya — but many people have the rajasic or tamasic kind. The rajasic is carried by a revolt against the conditions of one's own life, the tamasic arises from dissatisfaction, disappointment, a feeling of inability to succeed or face life, a crushing under the grips and pains of life. These bring a sense of the vanity of existence, a desire to seek something less miserable, more sure and happy or else to seek a liberation from existence here, but they do not bring immediately a luminous aspiration or pure aspiration with peace and joy for the spiritual attainment.

CWSA 29: 388-89

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*There are disciplines such as Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga that one can practise and yet have nothing to do with the spiritual life; the former arrives mostly at body control, the latter at mind control. But to enter the spiritual life means to take a plunge into the Divine, as you would jump into the sea. And that is not the end but the very beginning; for after you have taken the plunge, you must learn to live in the Divine. How are you to do it? You have simply to jump straight in and not to think, "Where shall I fall? What will happen to me?" It is the hesitation of your mind that prevents you. You must simply let yourself go. If you wish to dive into the sea and are thinking all the time, "Ah, but there may be a stone here or a stone there", you cannot dive.*

CWM 3: 21

The Mother

# Bhakti Yoga: The Path of Devotion

## The principle of bhakti

The Path of Devotion aims at the enjoyment of the supreme Love and Bliss and utilises normally the conception of the supreme Lord in His personality as the divine Lover and enjoyer of the universe. The world is then realised as a play of the Lord, with our human life as its final stage, pursued through the different phases of self-concealment and self-revelation. The principle of Bhakti Yoga is to utilise all the normal relations of human life into which emotion enters and apply them no longer to transient worldly relations, but to the joy of the All-Loving, the All-Beautiful and the All-Blissful. Worship and meditation are used only for the preparation and increase of intensity of the divine relationship. And this Yoga is catholic in its use of all emotional relations, so that even enmity and opposition to God, considered as an intense, impatient and perverse form of Love, is conceived as a possible means of realisation and salvation. This path, too, as ordinarily practised, leads away from world existence to an absorption, of another kind than the Monist's, in the Transcendent and Supra-cosmic.

But, here too, the exclusive result is not inevitable. The Yoga itself provides a first corrective by not confining the play of divine love to the relation between the supreme Soul and the individual, but extending it to a common feeling and mutual worship between the devotees themselves united in the same realization of the supreme Love and Bliss. It provides a yet more general corrective in the realisation of the divine object of Love in all beings not only human but animal, easily extended to all forms whatsoever.

\*

Really, however, the more intimate yoga of Bhakti resolves itself simply into these four movements, the desire of the Soul when it turns towards God and the straining of its emotion towards him, the pain of love and the divine return of love, the delight of love possessed and the play of that delight, and the eternal enjoyment of the divine Lover which is the heart of celestial bliss. These are things that are at once too simple and too profound for methodising or for analysis.

*CWSA 23: 39, 570*

## Adoration

Emotionally, the first form which this turning takes must be that of adoration. In ordinary religion this adoration wears the form of external worship and that again develops a most external form of ceremonial worship. This element is ordinarily necessary because the mass of men live in their physical minds, cannot realise anything except by the force of a physical symbol and cannot feel that they are living anything except by the force of a physical action. We might apply here the Tantric gradation of *sādhana*, which makes the way of the *paśu*, the herd, the animal or physical being, the lowest stage of its discipline, and say that the purely or predominantly ceremonial adoration is the first step of this lowest part of the way.

\*

Adoration, before it turns into an element of the deeper Yoga of devotion, a petal of the flower of love, its homage and self-uplifting to its sun, must bring with it, if it is profound, an increasing consecration of the being to the Divine who is adored. And one element of this consecration must be a self-purifying so as to become fit for the divine contact, or for the entrance of the Divine into the temple of our inner being, or for his self-revelation in the shrine of the heart. This purifying may be ethical in its character, but it will not be merely the moralist's seeking for the right and blameless action or even, when once we reach the stage of Yoga, an obedience to the law of God as revealed in formal religion; but it will be a throwing away, *katharsis*, of all that conflicts whether with the idea of the Divine in himself or of the Divine in ourselves. In the former case it becomes in habit of feeling and outer act an imitation of the Divine, in the latter a growing into his likeness in our nature. What inner adoration is to ceremonial worship, this growing into the divine likeness is to the outward ethical life. It culminates in a sort of liberation by likeness to the Divine,<sup>1</sup> a liberation from our lower nature and a change into the divine nature.

1. *sadrsya-mukti*.

## Consecration

Consecration becomes in its fullness a devoting of all our being to the Divine; therefore also of all our thoughts and our works. Here the Yoga takes into itself the essential elements of the Yoga of works and the Yoga of knowledge, but in its own manner and with its own peculiar spirit. It is a sacrifice of life and works to the Divine, but a sacrifice of love more than a tuning of the will to the divine Will. The bhakta offers up his life and all that he is and all that he has and all that he does to the Divine. This surrender may take the ascetic form, as when he leaves the ordinary life of men and devotes his days solely to prayer and praise and worship or to ecstatic meditation, gives up his personal possessions and becomes the monk or the mendicant whose one and only possession is the Divine, gives up all actions in life except those only which help or belong to the communion with the Divine and communion with other devotees, or at most keeps the doing from the secure fortress of the ascetic life of those services to men which seem peculiarly the out flowing of the divine nature of love, compassion and good. But there is the wider self-consecration, proper to any integral Yoga, which, accepting the fullness of life and the world in its entirety as the play of the Divine, offers up the whole being into his possession; it is a holding of all one is and has as belonging to him only and not to ourselves and a doing of all works as an offering to him. By this comes the complete active consecration of both the inner and the outer life, the unmutilated self-giving.

There is also the consecration of the thoughts to the Divine. In its inception this is the attempt to fix the mind on the object of adoration, — for naturally the restless human mind is occupied with other objects and, even when it is directed upwards, constantly drawn away by the world, — so that in the end it habitually thinks of him and all else is only secondary and thought of only in relation to him. This is done often with the aid of a physical image or, more intimately and characteristically, of a mantra or a divine name through which the divine being is realised. There are supposed by those who systematise to be three stages of the seeking through the devotion of the mind, first, the constant hearing of the divine name, qualities and

all that has been attached to them, secondly, the constant thinking on them or on the divine being or personality, thirdly, the settling and fixing of the mind on the object; and by this comes the full realisation. And by these, too, there comes when the accompanying feeling or the concentration is very intense, the Samadhi, the ecstatic trance in which the consciousness passes away from outer objects. But all this is really incidental; the one thing essential is the intense devotion of the thought in the mind to the object of adoration.

CWSA 23: 573-74

### **The way of Integral Bhakti**

The way of the integral Yoga of bhakti will be to universalize this conception of the Deity, to personalise him intimately by a multiple and an all-embracing relation, to make him constantly present to all the being and to devote, give up, surrender the whole being to him, so that he shall dwell near to us and in us and we with him and in him. *Manana and darśana*, a constant thinking of him in all things and seeing of him always and everywhere is essential to this way of devotion. When we look on the things of physical Nature, in them we have to see the divine object of our love; when we look upon men and beings, we have to see him in them and in our relation with them to see that we are entering into relations with forms of him; when breaking beyond the limitation of the material world we know or have relations with the beings of other planes, still the same thought and vision has to be made real to our minds. The normal habit of our minds which are open only to the material and apparent form and the ordinary mutilated relation and ignore the secret Godhead within, has to yield by an unceasing habit of all-embracing love and delight to this deeper and ampler comprehension and this greater relation. In all godheads we have to see this one God whom we worship with our heart and all our being; they are forms of his divinity. So enlarging our spiritual embrace we reach a point at which all is he and the delight of this consciousness becomes to us our normal uninterrupted way of looking at the world. That brings us the outward or objective universality of our union with him.

CWSA 23:601-02

## Image of the Beloved

Inwardly, the image of the Beloved has to become visible to the eye within, dwelling in us as in his mansion, informing our hearts with the sweetness of his presence, presiding over all our activities of mind and life as the friend, master and lover from the summit of our being, uniting us from above with himself in the universe. A constant inner communion is the joy to be made close and permanent and unfailing. This communion is not to be confined to an exceptional nearness and adoration when we retire quite into ourselves away from our normal preoccupations, nor is it to be sought by a putting away of our human activities. All our thoughts, impulses, feelings, actions have to be referred to him for his sanction or disallowance, or if we cannot yet reach this point, to be offered to him in our sacrifice of aspiration, so that he may more and more descend into us and be present in them all and pervade them with all his will and power, his light and knowledge, his love and delight. In the end all our thoughts, feelings, impulses, actions will begin to proceed from him and change into some divine seed and form of themselves; in our whole inner living we shall have grown conscious of ourselves as a part of his being till between the existence of the Divine whom we adore and our own lives there is no longer any division. So too in all happenings we have to come to see the dealings with us of the divine Lover and take such pleasure in them that even grief and suffering and physical pain become his gifts and turn to delight and disappear finally into delight, slain by the sense of the divine contact, because the touch of his hands is the alchemist of a miraculous transformation. Some reject life because it is tainted with grief and pain, but to the God-lover grief and pain become means of meeting with him, imprints of his pressure and finally cease as soon as our union with his nature becomes too complete for these masks of the universal delight at all to conceal it. They change into the Ananda.

CWSA 23: 602

**Sri Aurobindo**



# Karma Yoga: The Path of Works

## Dedication to the supreme Will

The Path of Works aims at the dedication of every human activity to the supreme Will. It begins by the renunciation of all egoistic aim for our works, all pursuit of action for an interested aim or for the sake of a worldly result. By this renunciation it so purifies the mind and the will that we become easily conscious of the great universal Energy as the true doer of all our actions and the Lord of that Energy as their ruler and director with the individual as only a mask, an excuse, an instrument or, more positively, a conscious centre of action and phenomenal relation. The choice and direction of the act is more and more consciously left to this supreme Will and this universal Energy. To That our works as well as the results of our works are finally abandoned. The object is the release of the soul from its bondage to appearances and to the reaction of phenomenal activities. Karmayoga is used, like the other paths, to lead to liberation from phenomenal existence and a departure into the Supreme. But here too the exclusive result is not inevitable. The end of the path may be, equally, a perception of the Divine in all energies, in all happenings, in all activities, and a free and unegoistic participation of the soul in the cosmic action. So followed it will lead to the elevation of all human will and activity to the divine level, its spiritualisation and the justification of the cosmic labour towards freedom, power and perfection in the human being.

CWSA 23: 39-40

## Channel for God to pour upon the world

The Yogi puts himself into direct relation with that which is omniscient and omnipotent within man and without him. He is in tune with the infinite, he becomes a channel for the strength of God to pour itself out upon the world whether through calm benevolence or active beneficence. When a man rises by putting from him the slough of self and lives for others and in the joys and sorrows of others; — when he works perfectly and with love and zeal, but casts away the

anxiety for results and is neither eager for victory nor afraid of defeat; — when he devotes all his works to God and lays every thought, word and deed as an offering on the divine altar; — when he gets rid of fear and hatred, repulsion and disgust and attachment, and works like the forces of Nature, unhasting, unresting, inevitably, perfectly; — when he rises above the thought that he is the body or the heart or the mind or the sum of these and finds his own and true self; — when he becomes aware of his immortality and the unreality of death; — when he experiences the advent of knowledge and feels himself passive and the divine force working unresisted through his mind, his speech, his senses and all his organs; — when having thus abandoned whatever he is, does or has to the Lord of all, the Lover and Helper of mankind, he dwells permanently in Him and becomes incapable of grief, disquiet or false excitement, — that is Yoga.

CWSA 13: 11

### **Remember and offer**

It is an error, we repeat, to think that spirituality is a thing divorced from life. “Abandon all” says the Isha Upanishad “*that thou mayst enjoy all*, neither covet any man’s possession. But verily *do thy deeds in this world* and wish to live thy hundred years; no other way is given thee than this to escape the bondage of thy acts.” It is an error to think that the heights of religion are above the struggles of this world. The recurrent cry of Sri Krishna to Arjuna insists on the struggle; “Fight and overthrow thy opponents!” “Remember me and fight!” “Give up all thy works to me with a heart full of spirituality, and free from craving, free from selfish claims, fight! let the fever of thy soul pass from thee.” It is an error to imagine that even when the religious man does not give up his ordinary activities, he yet becomes too sattwic, too saintly, too loving or too passionless for the rough work of the world. Nothing can be more extreme and uncompromising than the reply of the Gita in the opposite sense, “Whosoever has his temperament purged from egoism, whosoever suffers not his soul to receive the impress of the deed, though he slay the whole world yet he slays not and is not bound.” The Charioteer

of Kurukshetra driving the car of Arjuna over that field of ruin is the image and description of Karmayoga; for the body is the chariot and the senses are the horses of the driving and it is through the blood-stained and mire-sunk ways of the world that Sri Krishna pilots the soul of man to Vaicuntha.

*CWSA 13: 12*

### **Lines of karmayoga laid down in the Gita**

What then are the lines of Karmayoga laid down by the Gita? Its key principle, its spiritual method, can be summed up as the union of two largest and highest states or powers of consciousness, equality and oneness. The kernel of its method is an unreserved acceptance of the Divine in our life as in our inner self and spirit. An inner renunciation of personal desire leads to equality, accomplishes our total surrender to the Divine, supports a delivery from dividing ego which brings us oneness. But this must be a oneness in dynamic force and not only in static peace or inactive beatitude. The Gita promises us freedom for the spirit even in the midst of works and the full energies of Nature, if we accept subjection of our whole being to that which is higher than the separating and limiting ego. It proposes an integral dynamic activity founded on a still passivity; a largest possible action irrevocably based on an immobile calm is its secret, — free expression out of a supreme inward silence.

*CWSA 23:95*

### **Niskama karma**

In the field of action desire takes many forms, but the most powerful of all is the vital self's craving or seeking after the fruit of our works. The fruit we covet may be a reward of internal pleasure; it may be the accomplishment of some preferred idea or some cherished will or the satisfaction of the egoistic emotions, or else the pride of success of our highest hopes and ambitions. Or it may be an external reward, a recompense entirely material, —wealth, position, honour, victory, good fortune or any other fulfilment of vital or physical desire. But all alike are lures by which egoism holds us. Always these satisfactions

delude us with the sense of mastery and the idea of freedom, while really we are harnessed and guided or ridden and whipped by some gross or subtle, some noble or ignoble, figure of the blind Desire that drives the world. Therefore the first rule of action laid down by the Gita is to do the work that should be done without any desire for the fruit, *niṣkāma karma*.

CWSA 23: 102

### **Equality and renunciation of desire**

The test it lays down is an absolute equality of the mind and the heart to all results, to all reactions, to all happenings. If good fortune and ill fortune, if respect and insult, if reputation and obloquy, if victory and defeat, if pleasant event and sorrowful event leave us not only unshaken but untouched, free in the emotions, free in the nervous reactions, free in the mental view, not responding with the least disturbance or vibration in any spot of the nature, then we have the absolute liberation to which the Gita points us, but not otherwise. The tiniest reaction is a proof that the discipline is imperfect and that some part of us accepts ignorance and bondage as its law and clings still to the old nature.

\*

All action must be done in a more and more Godward and finally a God-possessed consciousness; our works must be a sacrifice to the Divine and in the end a surrender of all our being, mind, will, heart, sense, life and body to the One must make God-love and God-service our only motive. This transformation of the motive force and very character of works is indeed its master idea; it is the foundation of its unique synthesis of works, love and knowledge. In the end not desire, but the consciously felt will of the Eternal remains as the sole driver of our action and the sole originator of its initiative.

Equality, renunciation of all desire for the fruit of our works, action done as a sacrifice to the supreme Lord of our nature and of all nature, — these are the three first Godward approaches in the Gita's way of Karmayoga.

CWSA 23:103, 104-05

**Sri Aurobindo**

# Tantra Yoga

## The right hand and the left hand path

We observe, first, that there still exists in India a remarkable Yogic system which is in its nature synthetical and starts from a great central principle of Nature, a great dynamic force of Nature; but it is a Yoga apart, not a synthesis of other schools. This system is the way of the Tantra. Owing to certain of its developments Tantra has fallen into discredit with those who are not Tantrics; and especially owing to the developments of its left-hand path, the *Vama Marga*, which not content with exceeding the duality of virtue and sin and instead of replacing them by spontaneous rightness of action seemed, sometimes, to make a method of self-indulgence, a method of unrestrained social immorality. Nevertheless, in its origin, Tantra was a great and puissant system founded upon ideas which were at least partially true. Even its twofold division into the right-hand and left-hand paths, *Dakshina Marga* and *Vama Marga*, started from a certain profound perception. In the ancient symbolic sense of the words *Dakshina* and *Vama*, it was the distinction between the way of Knowledge and the way of Ananda, — Nature in man liberating itself by right discrimination in power and practice of its own energies, elements and potentialities and Nature in man liberating itself by joyous acceptance in power and practice of its own energies, elements and potentialities. But in both paths there was in the end an obscuration of principles, a deformation of symbols and a fall.

CWSA 23:43

## Worship of the Shakti

If, however, we leave aside, here also, the actual methods and practices and seek for the central principle, we find, first, that Tantra expressly differentiates itself from the Vedic methods of Yoga. In a sense, all the schools we have hitherto examined are Vedantic in their principle; their force is in knowledge, their method is knowledge, though it is not always discernment by the intellect, but may be, instead, the knowledge of the heart expressed in love and faith or a knowledge in the will working out through action. In all of them the lord of the Yoga is the Purusha, the Conscious Soul that knows,

observes, attracts, governs. But in Tantra it is rather Prakriti, the Nature-Soul, the Energy, the Will-in-Power executive in the universe. It was by learning and applying the intimate secrets of this Will-in-Power, its method, its Tantra, that the Tantric Yogin pursued the aims of his discipline,— mastery, perfection, liberation, beatitude. Instead of drawing back from manifested Nature and its difficulties, he confronted them, seized and conquered. But in the end, as is the general tendency of Prakriti, Tantric Yoga largely lost its principle in its machinery and became a thing of formulae and occult mechanism still powerful when rightly used but fallen from the clarity of their original intention.

We have in this central Tantric conception one side of the truth, the worship of the Energy, the Shakti, as the sole effective force for all attainment. We get the other extreme in the Vedantic conception of the Shakti as a power of Illusion and in the search after the silent inactive Purusha as the means of liberation from the deceptions created by the active Energy. But in the integral conception the Conscious Soul is the Lord, the Nature-Soul is his executive Energy. Purusha is of the nature of Sat, the being of conscious self-existence pure and infinite; Shakti or Prakriti is of the nature of Chit, — it is power of the Purusha's self-conscious existence, pure and infinite. The relation of the two exists between the poles of rest and action. When the Energy is absorbed in the bliss of conscious self-existence, there is rest; when the Purusha pours itself out in the action of its Energy, there is action, creation and the enjoyment or Ananda of becoming. But if Ananda is the creator and begetter of all becoming, its method is Tapas or force of the Purusha's consciousness dwelling upon its own infinite potentiality in existence and producing from it truths of conception or real Ideas, *vijñāna*, which, proceeding from an omniscient and omnipotent Self-existence, have the surety of their own fulfilment and contain in themselves the nature and law of their own becoming in the terms of mind, life and matter. The eventual omnipotence of Tapas and the infallible fulfilment of the Idea are the very foundation of all Yoga. In man we render these terms by Will and Faith, — a will that is eventually self-effective because it is of the substance of Knowledge and a faith that is the reflex in the lower

consciousness of a Truth or real Idea yet unrealised in the manifestation. It is this self-certainty of the Idea which is meant by the Gita when it says, *yo yac-chraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ*, “whatever is a man’s faith or the sure Idea in him, that he becomes.” CWSA 23: 43-44

## Mantra and Japa

I have also come to realise that for this sadhana of the body, the mantra is essential. Sri Aurobindo gave none; he said that one should be able to do all the work without having to resort to external means. Had he reached the point where we are now, he would have seen that the purely psychological method is inadequate and that a japa is necessary, because only japa has a direct action on the body. So I had to find the method all alone, to find my mantra by myself. But now that things are ready, I have done ten years of work in a few months. That is the difficulty, it requires time ...

And I repeat my mantra constantly – when I am awake and even when I sleep. I say it even when I am getting dressed, when I eat, when I work, when I speak with others; it is there, just behind in the background, all the time, all the time.

In fact, you can immediately see the difference between those who have a mantra and those who don’t. With those who have no mantra, even if they have a strong habit of meditation or concentration, something around them remains hazy and vague. Whereas the japa imparts to those who practice it a kind of precision, a kind of solidity: an armature. They become galvanised, as it were.

*The Mother: Conversations with disciple, May 19, 1959*

I understand why certain tantrics advise saying the japa in the heart center. When one applies a certain enthusiasm, when each word is said with a warmth of aspiration, then everything changes. I could feel this difference in myself, in my own japa....

One is the all-powerful japa; the other, an almost ordinary japa ... There is a difference in the inner attitude. Perhaps for the japa to become true, a kind of joy, an elation, a warmth of enthusiasm has to be added – but especially joy. Then everything changes.

*The Mother: Conversations with disciple, Oct 6, 1959*

# Purna Yoga

## The Yoga of Divine Life upon Earth

The Yoga we practise is not for ourselves alone, but for the Divine; its aim is to work out the will of the Divine in the world, to effect a spiritual transformation and to bring down a divine nature and a divine life into the mental, vital and physical nature and life of humanity. Its object is not personal Mukti, although Mukti is a necessary condition of the yoga, but the liberation and transformation of the human being. It is not personal Ananda, but the bringing down of the divine Ananda — Christ's kingdom of heaven, our Satyayuga — upon the earth. Of *mokṣa* we have no personal need; for the soul is *nityamukta* and bondage is an illusion. We play at being bound, we are not really bound. We can be free when God wills; for he, our supreme Self, is the master of the game, and without his grace and permission no soul can leave the game.

CWSA 13: 71

Small is his work, even if he succeeds, who labours for his own salvation or the salvation of a few; infinitely great is his, even if he fail or succeed only partially or for a season, who lives only to bring about peace of soul, joy, purity and perfection among all mankind.

CWSA 13: 91

There are many Yogas, many spiritual disciplines, paths towards liberation and perfection, Godward ways of the spirit. Each has its separate aim, its peculiar approach to the One Reality, its separate method, its helpful philosophy and its practice. The integral Yoga takes up all of them in their essence and tries to arrive at a unification (in essence, not in detail) of all these aims, methods, approaches; it stands for an all-embracing philosophy and practice.

CWSA 12: 356

The aim of the ordinary Yoga is to liberate the soul from Nature or, perhaps sometimes, to liberate the soul in Nature.



Our aim is to liberate both soul and nature into the Divine.

CWSA 12: 367

The first word of the supramental Yoga is surrender; its last word also is surrender. It is by a will to give oneself to the eternal Divine, for lifting into the divine consciousness, for perfection, for transformation, that the Yoga begins; it is in the entire giving that it culminates; for it is only when the self-giving is complete that there comes the finality of the Yoga, the entire taking up into the supramental Divine, the perfection of the being, the transformation of the nature.

CWSA 12: 367

Our Yoga is a Yoga of transformation, but a transformation of the whole consciousness and the whole nature from the top to the bottom, from its hidden inward parts to its most tangible external movements. It is neither an ethical change nor a religious conversion, neither sainthood nor ascetic control, neither a sublimation nor a suppression of the life and vital movements that we envisage, nor is it either a glorification or a coercive control or rejection of the physical existence. What is envisaged is a change from a lesser to a greater, from a lower to a higher, from a surface to a deeper consciousness — indeed to the largest, highest, deepest possible and a total change and revolution of the whole being in its stuff and mass and every detail into that yet unrealised diviner nature of existence.

CWSA 12: 371

**Sri Aurobindo**

*By remaining psychically open to the Mother, all that is necessary for work or Sadhana develops progressively, that is one of the chif secrets, the central secret of the Sadhana.*

*The Mother, Vol 25: 121*



*Each time that we have made a decisive step in our spiritual progress, the invisible enemies of the Divine always try to take their revenge, and when they cannot injure the soul they strike the body. But all their efforts are in vain and will finally be defeated, for the Divine Grace is with us.*

*CWM 15: 20*

**The Mother**

*Our Gratitude and consecration to the  
Mother and Sri Aurobindo*

**Sri Aurobindo Society, Nairobi Centre, Kenya**



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**Picture on the Cover:**

*The soul of man soars as the Bird, the Hansa, past the shining firmaments of physical and mental consciousness, climbs as the traveller and fighter beyond earth of body and heaven of mind by the ascending path of the Truth to find this Godhead waiting for us, leaning down to us from the secrecy of the highest supreme where it is seated in the triple divine Principle and the source of the Beatitude.*

cwsa 15: 371

**Sri Aurobindo**