

On Basic Principles of Yoga

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Yoga is the name of the Teaching of the means of achieving spiritual perfection. Translated from Sanskrit, this word means "union", "merging", "becoming one". Implied is removal of one's personal separation, harmonious merging of individual with macro-ecosystem.

Yoga is a religious teaching. But separate chapters of yoga may be considered as "neutral" as referred to religion and can be used by atheists too. Such are, for example, hatha-yoga (a teaching of bringing one's body into harmonious state) a yoga (in the past known in the west and in our country rather in modifications, titled "autogenic training" or "psychic self-regulation").

Yoga includes a number of methodically independent parts: such as above mentioned hatha-yoga and raja-yoga, jnana-yoga ("yoga of wisdom", theoretical substantiation of the path of yoga), karma-yoga (ethical teaching, including among other notions about man's destiny and influences on it), bhakti-yoga (a higher, as compared to karma-yoga, stage of mastering ethics, emphasizing development of love), buddhi-yoga (teaching of perfecting consciousness). Sometimes separate authors also call the systems of outlook they expound, "yogas", as for example, agni-yoga of the Roerichs couple (in fact representing a manifest, a call to spiritual awakening) and so on.

The term "yoga" is inherent in Hinduism and integrated into the vocabulary of Buddhism. Sometimes, when a wide interpretation of the term is used, different ethical teachings, including the Teaching of Jesus Christ, are referred to as "yogas".

The basic literary source of yoga is the Indian Bhagavad-Gita, which was composed a few thousand years ago. But as well as the term "yoga", people who trod this path, had appeared long before the creation of the Bhagavad-Gita. As it was mentioned above, the goal of yoga is religious in nature. Through a prolonged evolution, yoga seeks the merging of individual human consciousness with the Creator's Consciousness. Attaining the Divine Perfection and merging with the Creator's Consciousness (God-Father, in Christian terminology) is called in the Bhagavad-Gita "the Supreme Abode". "Submerge your consciousness (buddhi) into Me (God) - truly you will then live in Me", - so Krishna formulates in the Bhagavad-Gita the final goal of the yogic seeker. But if you are still unable of doing it now, says He, practice preliminary meditations. And if the technique of meditations is difficult for you as yet, learn to perform everything that you do in your life not for your personal benefit, but devote these actions to God. In other words, first, do not think what you personally will get from it (Bhagavad-Gita, 12:9-10). In these simple words, briefly speaking, is the essence of the yogic path.

Now, let us consider who is capable of treading the yogic path and how far? Are there many among us who are able of working for the sake of others selflessly? And among those who are able, can also meditate? Meditation, as one of the leading masters of modern yoga Rajneesh formulated, is the "state of no-mind".

Before one is capable of practicing high forms of meditation, one must develop his intellect. After developing the intellect, the yogi learns how to master and govern the mind. Only then does the yogic consciousness begin to develop and mature while passing through the consecutive stages of buddhi-yoga. The first stage consists of an experience of Samadhi, which passes into a state of Nirvana, and after a "crystallization" of the Nirvana experience, the height of Nirvana is realized in a yogic merging with the God-Father. These stages cannot be mastered without preliminarily bringing one's body to the necessary level of perfection. And, apart from other considerations, advancement in the highest yoga is connected with the necessity of deep comprehension of the laws of spiritual growth.

Are there many of us who can at least formulate clearly what "mind" (manas) and "consciousness" (buddhi) are?

Those who are not trained in the subtle distinctions of these two terms often identify these absolutely different meanings. Consciousness composes the basic essence of man. And it is purposeful work intended for developing one's consciousness through yogic methods that allows separate people to realize the highest human possibilities in themselves.

Why separate people and who are they? They are those, firstly, who are able owing to a number of objective and subjective causes of making sense of all this; secondly, who had in themselves aspirations of self-perfection strong enough to renounce primitive "earthly" pleasures and brawls with other people and for many years made endless efforts and super-efforts in yoga's practice, and, thirdly, who endured a lot of ethical trials on this path.

In such a way we see that the highest yoga is not meant for everyone. Objective laws of man's development allow only those to direct their efforts towards intensive and conscious self-perfection who have overcome in themselves passion for such values as exquisite food, money, fame and so on. Only for that one who is ready to renounce selfish attitudes towards love, and who is ready to easily and naturally sacrifice one's interests for the sake of others - for such a one is the highest yoga.

It must not be inferred that people who do not practice yoga lose their time in vain. No, besides the benefits that many of them give to society with their work, they also develop in themselves those skills and habits that will be needful for them in the future, when they will "grow" in their psychogenesis to manifestation of the irrepressible need of devoting themselves to the understanding of yoga. And then yoga will provide them an opportunity to perform a "breakthrough" in their personal evolution.

The foundation of yoga is ethics. The basic principle of yoga's ethics is Love in the highest sense of this word. The word "love" denotes attraction, and aspiration towards union. And that which divides along any of the common features of division-national, religious, etc. - is to love and yoga a place to evoke kinship and union. (Let

us pay attention, incidentally, that meanings of the words "love" and "yoga" are quite close).

Those schools which, using diverse systems of training, have as a basis of their world outlook ethical principles based on something other than love, are not entitled to call themselves schools of yoga.

Love is the basis and pivot of spiritual development. But it is far from easy to master it. To attain to true Love most of us require long strenuous work over ourselves. Consider such an example: a vast majority of people of this country who were subjected to perverted ideological "treatment" over the period of decades now find themselves capable of grasping the notion of love only as that of sexual passion and sex itself. "Love" as selfish sexual passion is not representative of the highest summit of yogic union. True love, although often misrepresented in contemporary and traditional forms of media, embraces the total self- physical, mental, and spiritual. Additionally, yogic love by its very nature implies union with the cosmos and God.

In Hindu yoga the tenet of Love is termed "bhakti". For the first time it was formulated in the Bhagavad Gita where Krishna expounds fundamentals of yoga to His disciple Arjuna. In particular, Krishna promises more successful advancement to those beginners in yoga, who develop in themselves love to the concrete Divine Teacher - in contrast to those who worship the "non-manifested" (Ch.12).

It is "only Love (in a seeker)" (11:54) that is capable of achieving the final Goal.

Let us consider in detail the meaning of these lovely poetic words. Let us think why Krishna devotes so much attention in His religious teachings to the necessity to learn how to love. Krishna's conception of love is integral in nature for he says that love ought to be directed to the "pure fragrance of the earth" rather than merely towards the Creator.

The answer is the following: there is little value in love that is purely "from mind." Such intellectual love is good only as a precondition for developing true love- a heartfelt and emotional form of love. And how is it possible to develop emotional love? Krishna suggests one achieves this through admiration, getting touched, attuned, and changed by what is best that exists around us in nature and in people.

Jesus also proclaimed that love of humankind is a necessary prerequisite for the formation of love of God. His whole Teaching set forth in the New Testament is filled with indications of how to do this.

So the basis of yoga is Love. One must develop it in oneself by all possible means - through communication with people, communion with nature, through the arts, studying ethical principles, fighting with one's own vices and so on. A fine additional method which accelerates the development of love is the use of special techniques of work which develops the emotional sphere of consciousness. It must be noted, however, that such techniques do not guarantee stable progress in development of the highest spiritual features if a practitioner lacks strong aspiration for acquiring them and also if he or she does not supplement the practice of the mentioned exercises with the transformation of his whole existence.

High rates of advancement along the path of spiritual development in yoga may be possible only in the case of the complex employment of various methods and techniques. This implies intellectual work- the expansion of knowledge, ethical self-analysis, aspiration to understand one's path and the paths of other people with the aim of helping them and so on, transformation and development of one's emotional sphere, preparatory and auxiliary exercises of the body, and finally, work with consciousness itself. It is also desirable to purposefully use everyday activity (including professional work) in combination with specific methods of yoga training. The rate of a disciple's advancement directly depends on the quantity of the techniques combined. The pivot of the whole discipleship is ethical behavior based on the principle of Love; this pivot gets enveloped with fruits of other practical methods. Among the latter ones, first emphasized is the development of the body and bioenergetic structures of the organism (chakras, meridians), and on higher planes and stages - the work with consciousness. Efficient development of consciousness is possible only with the help of buddhi-yoga techniques.

Each successive stage of yogic study is conquered by considerably fewer students than the previous one. The highest stages of yoga are accessible only to a few out of thousands who started the practice. It is not possible to quickly satisfy even the strongest aspiration to Perfection: advancement consists of "ups" and "downs". The latter are necessary for consolidation of new stages, for accumulation of power for mastering new "ups", for intellectual understanding of the parts of one's Path, and for resolution of arising ethical problems. Periods between "ups" may last from days to years and much more with different students. Attempts to artificially accelerate the process of a student's development by teaching him new techniques of training usually yields negative results. One should always keep in mind another important principle of teaching yoga: a student must be absolutely free to leave the teacher, the latter has no any right to compel a student to continue the study, attracting him towards himself even in thoughts.

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