

## **Yoga – A Pragmatic Philosophy**

The significance of Yoga is not well understood in the West. It has a philosophical background, but much depends on what we understand by philosophy. For here, it is not merely an intellectual study of a subject, though the intellectual aspect also plays an important role. The term philosophy is here used as an equivalent to the Sanskrit-word *darshana*, literally meaning, "to see". And this means the realisation of the Truth. However, that realisation is not a mere intellectual recognition of something considering that our intellect can never go beyond the sensory level.

Beyond it lies an aspect of mind, by which the Truth is realized which cannot be done at the sensory level. But it can be brought down to our sensory level. Here we can only see by the help of our eyes, and in the same way this mechanism applies with the other four senses: hearing, touching, tasting, smelling.

But all these sensory phenomena are restricted by external physical organs and by the senses operating through them. So all our viewpoints at this level show the mind's limitation. For behind the perception phenomena lies the purely mental phenomenon, which modifies the perception factors.

But *darshana*, which operates at the extra-sensory, super-sensory and pre-sensory levels, is the realisation of something without the help of any physical organs. When Truth is realized in this way, without the help of the senses, it is first for an expression, a communication to others, or as a recollection that it comes down to the sensory level; and so the individual only knows it all via memory - *smriti*, and the whole becomes then a *vritti*, or the moulding of the objective consciousness into a particular pattern, whenever any image of the cosmic world is reflected in the objective aspect

of consciousness. So a *vritti* is any image shining in the objective aspect of consciousness.

And consciousness is awareness, but of what? It is intimately related to what is to be known, for it cannot exist unless there is a knower. One who knows is then the subject, or I-principle, which is sometimes vague, sometimes predominant. So the I-consciousness, that who knows, is the subjective consciousness. But it is restricted, for when there is something in the I, making it feel and know, that knowing is not served from within to get to know but the I, as the knower, projects beyond its boundary. What is to be known is then the object. So I, as the subject, projecting beyond its boundary line as subjective consciousness goes towards what is to be known - that is the objective consciousness. Thus our consciousness is always twofold: as I-consciousness, and as the rest, or object.

But when the object is not known via the sensory, i.e. when the sensory is not used, this is the realisation of the object and the whole process is then different there, by the help of the power developed from within. For the I is then saturated with power, and thus knows. At the sensory level we can only know by utilizing our senses. The cosmic world we experience is the outcome of the functioning of our five senses in cooperation with each other.

Therefore, we don't know at all the real form of the cosmic world, since we only know it through the senses perceiving it as if through coloured glasses, modified by them. So the action of the senses modifies the objective world, and we take it as it is.

As most of us use the same methods, we reach about the same results in knowing the cosmic world, which is a mixture of the five senses while the forms we perceive, are just as we see them. But when we begin to experience the cosmic world from the levels beyond the sensory level, we can say that there real *darshana* starts – a realisation that is not dependant on the senses, but on the mind itself. When that realisation is brought down to the sensory level, and expressed as considered by the intellectual aspect

of the mind, that is philosophy. Therefore it is usually noticed, that when higher thought-forms are given a sensory shape, many who are not able to think in a deeper inner way, consider it mere talking: they can't grasp it. Yoga is then when this inner, higher realisation is given a sensory shape. Yoga becomes philosophy, when it is brought down to the sensory plane, above which it is the science of realisation, not gained by the help of the senses, but by direct apprehension. That is important. So we have two forms of knowing:

- 1) Knowing of the sensory things, which are perceived by the senses,
- 2) Knowing of that which cannot be perceived by the senses.

The sensory knowing is always restricted. We see for instance a thing through our eyes, but when it is placed at a great distance, the eyes can't grasp it, as if it has disappeared, though it is still there. That is so, because of the limitation of our sight. Sensory restrictions here are thus threefold:

- 1) The space-phenomenon measured by distance,
- 2) The size of the object - for if it gets too small, it can no longer be seen
- 3) Obstruction: if something is between us and the object we can't see it, though it is there.

These restrictions operate in all sensory phenomena. The capacity of the senses can be increased by using different apparatus such as microscope, glasses etc. to enhance the sensory power. But where even the most hypersensitive apparatus fails to show something, the object is extra-sensory. There are many things that can never be known through the senses, which here are our only means of getting to know. If, for instance, we take the smell experience, this can only be reached by the smell-sense. And yet there are certain smell-factors that can never be experienced by our sense of smell and are therefore are sensorily non-existing and we say then, that they do not exist at all. But at a certain mental level, at the super-

sensory level they can actually be experienced. So, we have to differentiate between our ordinary and this super-sensory level. And then we have the direct apprehension of the mind, which is *darshana*, or realisation, which can't be reached, unless we elevate to that level, and then give the thing sensory shape on coming back from *darshana*. The whole may be considered simple and yet, to be understandable requires much explanation and an intellectual expression, too. What has been realized above the sensory level is philosophy, while the ordinary things, depending on sensory perception, can be explained more easily.

But Yoga is a realized Truth, and for the benefit of those unable to raise themselves to those higher levels, great Yoga teachers have given, and are still giving an intellectual shape to it, known as the philosophy of Yoga. In it, we find two main points: the recognition of experiences beyond the sensory level, and the recognition of the sensory experiences that are to be moulded into a pattern by the help of which we then can go beyond the sensory level, for the realisation of a truth, which is more rarefied than it ever can be here.

Yoga is not mainstream philosophy and, therefore, its background needs plenty of explanation by contrast to ordinary philosophy where the philosophers are no more than worldly people, lacking any personal realization and characterized often by a large display of intellectual curiosity, and verbosity. In Yoga there is an inner, hidden Truth and its realisation is able to make us function, and live in a much better way than otherwise. It is that spiritual realisation that helps us towards a more harmonious and better mode of living, and make us to understand life in a more lucid way.

Are we then to strive for this, only to get more enjoyment out of life? Or is it because of our having grown tired of the experiences and failures, we feel disgusted of it all? The recognition of what we have, here and now of, of pleasure and pain, matters not so much. But that, which lies behind it, does it all the more.

Yoga does not help to discard the sensory with its rationale, but to use it in a better way. At the starting-point we stand in the physical anyhow and therefore the sensory aspect of our life, matters as well. Yoga teaches, that we can make a much better adjustment here, at the sensory level, and as a result make it possible for the sensory phenomena not to be a hindrance to higher acquisitions and opportunities. Yoga is the connecting link between the sensory and the beyond. So, the subject of Hatha Yoga is the science, by the help of which we can mould our body, senses and mind into a pattern which will help us to go beyond the sensory, and realize a higher Truth and power.

The spiritual is not unknown to religious and pious people. But many people think that spirituality goes against all forms of enjoyment. Yet, the spiritual has stages both of a material and a non-material kind. So, it starts here. Unless we are spiritually awakened, what possibility do we actually have to show ourselves much different from animals?

The contents of human life and thinking as we usually know them are not enough. For in them, we can see a mind that is constantly, at every single moment losing its powers by unceasing oscillations, a power that is oozing out and result in a distracted state. Much physical energy is wasted and we can't do as we want, or could do if we were able to conserve that energy. So, the awakening to our Self is the first thing. This will then make us see that we possess, dormant, a store of mental power, though ignoring it. Because of lack of self-confidence, many do not even believe that such immense powers actually exist there. So, the first stage of spirituality is to learn to believe in, and recognize the powers lying in us, ready to be awakened. The real spiritual life starts at this point. For the spiritual is as real as we are: It exists as we do exist, however we may overlook too busy as we are with outer things, to the point of even ignoring and believe what lies within us.

Yoga gives us a more complete education. By outer learning and knowing we

acquire a lot of things, but the knowing of ourselves is not included therein. This is simply an unbalanced type of education. That is why Yoga says:

*"Rise, awaken from sleep and seek a teacher to instruct you, so that you can get to know who you are, for that is what is really needed"*. The rest must of course also be learned, but this is essential as it makes the greatest difference. For then, we can develop our power of control over the body, our nerves and our whole life, both theoretically and practically, if we only have enough patience and determination.