

The Awakening of the Self

In Yoga, all instructions are imparted intellectually. However, these instructions are meant to be put into practice in a way adapted to each individual case.

Yoga has its own philosophy, carefully explicated for spiritual purposes, but it also includes practical issues. One cannot entirely ignore the material world in which one lives, but one may very well form a notion of spirituality while living a material life. It is wrong to imagine that one is not influenced by and attached to life's material aspects, or to think that everything can be achieved through the spiritual. Mental faculties cannot be used independently of the body and brain. One must accept the material aspect of existence, but this does not mean that it must be the whole of one's life. Yet one cannot afford to ignore or forget this very important aspect of existence. As long as one has not developed a real and complete mastery of certain internal faculties (which are inseparably linked to spiritual development), one will never conceive a life without its material aspect.

The modern trend of thinking on human spiritual development has become a complicated process. It is not easy to carefully study, observe and to draw valid conclusions about this subject. There are those who feel concerned about spiritual things and those who do not. Most people feel no intense desire or any particular need for spiritual development. In general, ordinary thoughts are too weak to exercise any true cultivation of spirituality. Most people are content with only vague notions about it. However, there are always a few people who are truly interested in following a spiritual path to

gain an actual experience of spiritual Truth. In order to do this, one has to first learn about and familiarize oneself with what the spiritual actually is; it is essential.

Although no one is ever formally taught to do so, all human beings initially perceive basic emotions and thoughts related to the mundane as real. This is a mistaken perception, but one can gradually learn to recognize and develop increased propensities towards discrimination between the real and the unreal, and how to manage and control emotions and thoughts so that, when real spiritual awakening occurs, nothing will be there to drown or stop it. One may eventually be drawn to find spirituality both inside and outside. Until that is the case, there will be no genuine development of spirituality, while artificially created spirituality will ultimately prove to be of no use.

Love

Yoga is the repository of useful lessons, even in a life devoid of true spirituality. Take for example the notions of "love" and "God", or that of "to love God."

God is in everyone. If one could really see it as being so, one would naturally love everyone. But most often this remains merely inculcated theory, and affection is much more directed towards those dear ones who are family, friends, etc., rather than for that God Who is said to be in heaven. It will be so until the day when one actually feels God in oneself, closer than any artificial connections could ever bring one, until thinking of God finally will mean thinking of oneself. God must therefore be found within before one may truly see Him in others.

The human body is a complicated organism. One does not think of oneself

as the body, but rather there is a sense that one owns one's body. Take for example a finger. Even though one is attached to it, uses it, thinks of it, etc., one is not essentially the same as the finger. In actuality, each individual is nothing but I-ness. However, as soon as one tries to reduce oneself to that I-ness, one finds that the reduction process is not easy. This is because even when one intellectually knows that the body is not the essential part of one's being, the body is nonetheless constantly there when one makes use of mind and consciousness.

The field of human consciousness includes two predominating factors:

1) I-ness as the central entity; and 2) everything that revolves around I-ness and with which the I is in relation to and contact with by way of projections (which are subject to changes or even deletion). So, if one wants to reduce oneself to the I-ness, the main objective will be to reach the Self and thereby suppress the mental projections along with the disappearance of the whole field when the I becomes isolated. One will then have realized I-ness and the ability to see what is beyond its borders. The impediments to the realization of the I in this process are all kinds of images that constantly emerge in the field of objective consciousness. This is a strong bondage to break. It cannot be accomplished by force, but only by the proper application of knowledge, understanding and determination.

This involves a long process of self-reductionist "restriction," by eliminating everything that is external to the causal factor without allowing the cause to have any impact. The whole process is briefly referred to as Yoga; Patanjali describes it aphoristically as "*Yoga citta vritti nirodha*", i.e. a restriction effected by way of reduction. This mental process we call "concentration."

As bondages cannot be cut off, the body should be treated properly. It is useless to ignore the physical aspect of one's existence, neglecting the body and its relationship to the environment. It is better to use it rightly. Yoga

avails of many things, although its main objective always remains the attainment of the ultimate spiritual goal. The spiritual lies precisely in this process of reduction with physical purification at its background. This is a fact which deserves one's whole attention, lest the cultivation of a spiritual life (and even the mundane physical life) prove very difficult.

One must undertake the correct method that aims at cultivating the harmonious balance of body, mind and Self. A balance of only the physical and intellectual is not enough. One must include adequate considerations of the I, the mental and the physical, as ever prescribed in the practice of Yoga.

The many processes and techniques of the vast Yoga reservoir must be modified according to individual needs. The Yoga philosophy is not merely theoretical knowledge; it has a practical dimension. To be fruitful in one's life, Yoga has to be learned and put into practice; it will be useful only if it is properly adjusted. Its practice must be undertaken earnestly, lest the result prove dissatisfying. Here, the do-it factor is crucial. Everything one hears and learns about Yoga presupposes a correct application. In order to achieve the balance of the I-ness, the mind and the body, one must affect an actual implementation of the theory.

Human life expresses a large range of intellectual patterns, yet it is not necessary to have an in-depth knowledge of all of them. Daily life offers a sufficient number of experiences in different areas of practical knowledge. Some people will always strive to delve into it, but of key importance is the organization and priority of whatever knowledge one already has--how to understand it and put it into practice, intelligently and philosophically.

Neither must one neglect one's emotional nature and its opposites: love and hate, liking and disliking, passion and indifference, etc. Unless this is rightly

addressed, it will remain difficult for one to deal with. The actualization of the emotional should take place in the right way, so that the rise of emotions and their expression is carried out properly.

Too often, emotions are repressed and they just reappear again and again, creating a constant internal struggle that absorbs and dissipates one's energies instead of directing them to useful purposes. The emotional aspect of human existence is so deep, so tenacious, that such struggles can last indefinitely. It is not easy to control and direct the emotional flow, even in the presence of one's highest aspirations.

Despite all perceived failures and apparent hopelessness, there remain so many powers and possibilities dormant within one, waiting to be disclosed and used. For that, however, an inner awakening of the Self is necessary. This is not unusual; every human being possesses enough internal resources to accomplish this. But as long as such awakening has not taken place, one will not even be aware of it in the continuous search for happiness outside oneself. The inner awakening of the Self is a means to unveil the rich possibilities carried within, to release all slumbering faculties that are just waiting to be expressed.

With the creation of the right conditions within, one becomes quite a different being. Today, one may think too often of one's weaknesses and the negative aspects of life! One must turn instead to life's positive sides, not only in terms of social achievement but also towards what is possible on the inside.