

Yoga, A Pragmatic Philosophy (*darshana*); Mantras in Vedas

Yoga is not strictly for intellectual life. It must be fully assimilated—like food is by the body—to become an integral part of our mental being. This necessitates that our old concepts, ideas, thoughts, working methods, etc., must be intelligently modified to become more useful and fruitful. Even though Yoga and all its aspects cannot be understood from the outset, one should abstain from prejudice and notions that may bar comprehension. To accept Yoga may require courage along with a clear understanding, determination and a genuine motivation.

Yoga is often treated at the philosophical level. This is justified to some extent, but a person's mental perspectives alone are not generally large and powerful enough to affect significant and lasting improvements in life. Such life transformations require much struggle, strong determination and perseverance. Regularly practicing the discipline of Yoga, including persistent and regular physical exercise, will strengthen one's physical vigor and greatly improve the quality of one's life.

However, vigor itself is not the pinnacle of the expression of human life. The physical body is designed to serve as a sound, strong and permanently healthy foundation, so that one's mental life can emerge and bloom in a balanced, beautiful and harmonious manner. One must adopt suitable means for vitalizing and strengthening the physical body, not for the body's own sake, but so as to purify and harmonize it. Otherwise, one may expect to lead a narrow-minded life.

Intellectual education is a continual pouring of dead matter in our brain, exclusively clinging to others' thoughts. This is only the embryo of true mental life and not a real intellectual life. Unless one is able to reason and compare, observe, detect and infer quite independently, one's intellectual life will remain dull and weak. Even an intellectual life fully controlled by reasoning will prove insufficient and inadequate. There has to be much more in mental life.

As an example, the emotional aspect in mental life is often significantly reduced by age, sex, education, etc., is most often restricted to one's family, friends and close acquaintances, and is also influenced by environmental and physical conditions. This feeling aspect of one's existence may be broadened if one is able to touch the core of the matter, from where emotions go in different directions. It is here, at the source of the problem, where emotional expression can change, slowly but surely. This will give one a better expressiveness, unimaginable before, because the old limitations will disappear and something more generous, nobler and more beautiful will emerge.

Another face of mental life, often rudimentary and undeveloped, is the contemplative aspect. It would be useful for one to spend some time every day sitting quietly and alone, forgetting about one's surroundings, and remaining without projecting anywhere. This voluntary "shrinking" of oneself is the first step towards the expansion of the real Self, because projecting onto those for whom one has affection is no real expansion. It is only when one can develop into another dimension that there will be real growth, which does not mean a lack of affection for others. Inner expansion is not going against the rest. At a higher level, one will understand that one cannot really help anyone here on earth while remaining a prisoner of one's own limitations. It is only at a higher level that one will really be able to help one's neighbors. Then things will change quickly.

It is therefore wiser to find one's own powers deep within, to arouse them and thereby to help those with whom one is linked.

Philosophy and Darshana

Indian philosophical doctrines are not speculative *per se*. They are essentially based on spiritual realization and they point to a definite goal. The appellation "philosophy" to designate them has its origin in the West, something that is not without creating some confusion. In Sanskrit there is the term *darshana*, from the Sanskrit root *drish*, which literally means: "to see." But here seeing is not physical; it occurs with

"inner eyes." *Darshana* is the spiritual realization whose most adequate description seems to be found in the expression "inner seeing." Indian *darshana* differs thus from dialectic philosophies that argue on things pertaining to the sensory level. Instead, *darshana* aims at dealing with its background in an attempt to explicate what is generally not explainable. When spiritual experiences are firmly established and then brought down to the mind, there is a remembrance followed by an attempt to express the experiences in language, a transfer of spiritual experiences into intelligible linguistic forms for further transmission. However, it is not possible at the sensory level to duplicate a spiritual experience of certain phenomena, seeing that these belong to the experiential ultra-sensory, or spiritual field. To expose such an experience at the intellectual level to those who have not had the experience of that highly spiritual subject, those facts must be transferred into language. And the language used there is the highest form of existing language, since the combination of letters and the forming of words there are backed-up by the philosophical and spiritual experience that support it. In the technical "language" relating to spiritual experiences, the three *gunas*—*sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*—play a crucial role. The same applies to the 50 *matrikas*, the use of which may express higher truths that can hardly be grasped upon at the three levels (*kshipta*, *vikshipta*, *mudha*) of the intellect.

Such "philosophical" expositions and transfers are not easy to understand without being acquainted with higher levels of appreciation and understanding (*vikshipta*).

Mantras in the Vedas

To express such rarified thoughts, the ultra-sensory experiences must be conveyed via a mind that stands at the sensory level. The spiritual experience has to come down from a higher ultra-sensory level (being transferred by the help of memory), until it may finally be expressed and conveyed to an audience at both the higher and lower cognitive levels. The ultra-thought language is that of *mantra*, which in the yogic context mostly consists of monosyllabic or polysyllabic phonemes fully operating at the ultra-sensory level. There, mantras work as super-sensory and pre-sensory sound-patterns; when they are brought down to the sensory level, they take the shape of a most rarified language.

The four Vedas – Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda – and their interpretation (not their translation, which is merely a changing of one language into the other) arose after the mantras were brought down to intellectually intelligible levels. The first linguistic expressions stem from the mantra-derived Vedas, which reveal spiritual, ultra-thought-patterns. It is difficult to interpret the Vedas linguistically. Correct interpretations of the Vedas suppose that their hidden side be exposed as well, seeing that there is a clear distinction between mantras and plain language. These two stands at different levels, insofar as the mantric sound-patterns in realized mantras have no intelligible linguistic meaning likely to be transferred.

Ultra-thoughts retained by memory will lose something when being transferred into sensory thoughts, and still more is lost when they are conveyed into language leaving but little of their original value. Limitations cause contraction, and here the limitation is imposed by the narrow scope of the cognitive senses, unable as they are to grasp more than the familiar world of normal human experience.