

SVĀTMARĀMA SHAKES PATAÑJALI'S HAND*

Children of yoga,

I am indeed pleased to see that the seed of yoga that I sowed in San Francisco in 1974 has grown very well. I see the zeal and interest you all have. The reception I received just now shows how delighted you all must be at having me here with you.

The yoga we practise is a noble and majestic subject, but sadly misinterpreted and misrepresented. It was this challenge that helped me to strive to prove the critics and detractors of yoga were wrong. Today's gathering proves that my work is going in the right direction and gaining momentum.

Many people practise yoga. However few have a clear picture of the value of this famous subject, so better I say a few words about it and use more time for the practical presentation.

According to the scriptures, *ha* means the "sun" – solar energy – and *tha* means the "moon" – lunar energy. These two energies function in us at physiological, psychological and mental levels. When these two energies unite and are wedded together, they become one. Thus the merged energies together become the divine energy which ignites the spiritual light in the practitioner of yoga. As these energies basically cleanse the nervous system of the *sādhaka*, one should not mistake of thinking that *hatha yoga* deals with the physical and physiological level only. It begins but does not end here. It takes one further than the known physical level. It brings the *sādhaka* to mental equilibrium as well as to spiritual contentment and delight.

Ha, the "sun", stands for the *ātman* or the Self. The sun or the Self never fade. The moon draws the energy from the sun to cool this planet of ours by reflecting the glory of the sun.

The rays of the sun cause the moon to shine and in turn the Earth is benefitted. The Earth maintains its environmental and atmospheric balance. In our body too we have this provision. Whatever exists in *Brahmāṇḍa* (Universe) exists in *Pinḍāṇḍa* (individual) too.

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The sun and moon both exist in us. The Self is the sun, and the consciousness is the moon. The consciousness draws the light from the Self and it is reflected on the entire human system. So consciousness or *citta* is dependent on the light of the Self. In turn our entire body is benefitted by the contact of sun and moon. Hence, *haṭha yoga* is the energy of the nervous system uniting consciousness and Self. The nervous system including the brain is a kind of bridge, or a link between the body and consciousness. *Haṭha yoga* is a means to strengthen this bridge. Thus the energy of the body and consciousness, which of course is *prakṛti*, is united with *puruṣa*. *Haṭha yoga* calls *puruṣa* (the *ātman*), as Shiva, and *prakṛti* as *śakti*. *Haṭha yoga* thereby brings the union of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. It is the union of Shiva and Shakti.

We human beings are covered with five sheaths, called *pañcakośa*. They are *annamaya*, *prāṇamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijñānamaya* and *ānandamaya kośa* (Table n. 4). These sheaths encase the indweller. *Prakṛti* ensheaths the *puruṣa* in us. They are the anatomical, physiological, mental, intellectual and blissful sheaths. They blend together, becoming one to dwell with the indweller, creating spiritual bliss.

In human beings *citta*, the consciousness, is the pinnacle of all the elements of nature (*prakṛti*). The consciousness has three components called mind, 'I'-ness or ego and intelligence. When the *citta* is pervaded with intelligence, it becomes illumined. When such enlightened intelligence is brought into contact with the fineness of the Self, it is known as the divine marriage of the *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, or the Self with the body. This is the teaching of *haṭha yoga*. Without knowing the depth of the subject, if we stigmatise *haṭha yoga* as physical yoga, then it shows nothing but the poverty of our intelligence. It is mere propaganda by those who are too unprepared to train their bodies and transform them into a holy shrine for the Self.

Often *haṭha yoga* is equated with *āsana* and the *āsana*-aspect is reduced or degraded to physical exercise. Let us see what Patañjali says about *āsana*, one of the eight petals of yoga.

The *Yoga Sūtra* defines *āsana* and its effects in three aphorisms (Y.S, II.46-48). The first is, *Sthira sukham āsanam* (Y.S, II.46). Steady and comfortable posture is an *āsana*. Its effect is to take one beyond the disturbances of duality. We are caught up in our own comfort and joy, and consequently fail to open our eyes. We do not see what Patañjali meant when he defined the *āsana*. He wanted each one to derive not only steadiness and comfort, but also unity in body, consciousness and self from the practice of *āsana*: *Tataḥ dvandvāḥ anabhighātaḥ* (Y.S, II.48). Here Patañjali says that *āsana* makes one not only experience an undisturbed, non-dual state, but at the same time indicates the wealth that the yogi gains through its practice. According to him, the wealth of the yogi is beauty and charm in body, grace in approach, compactness, elephantine strength, impenetrable willpower, loveliness in mind and liveliness in mental attitude,

firm as a diamond and soft as a petal.¹ Many of you will have read these aphorisms hundreds of times without noticing the implication of the value of *āsana* as he deals with them.

The *Haṭhayoga Pradīpika*, on the other hand, explains that the body is inert and cannot work on its own, but that its functions depend on the senses and the mind. The mind, being vibrant, moves fast. *Haṭha yoga* guides each practitioner to take the inert body to the level of the vibrant mind. By intensifying the practice, awareness, the power of attention and the intelligence increase for further interpenetration, which in turn develops the potential of the cells throughout the body and the mind to reach the level of the serenity of the Self.²

Does not this definition of *āsana* from the *Haṭhayoga Pradīpika* convey the same meaning as Patañjali's three aphorisms? It is important that you go through the text, otherwise you can only believe what others say and be misled. *Haṭha yoga* texts say, use the body as a springboard to unveil the coverings of the Self, so that the Self shines in a pure naked mind. That naked mind is nothing but absolute consciousness. If coal is covered by ash, we have the illusion that it is only ash, but the moment you touch the ash, your fingers get burnt. Similarly the practice of yoga makes the intelligence like a live wire, so that impediments, fluctuations or changes (*vṛtti*) are noticed by the consciousness, which carries the message to its master, the Self. Then the master directs and guides the consciousness on how to counteract the disturbances by practical means. This is the technique of yoga.

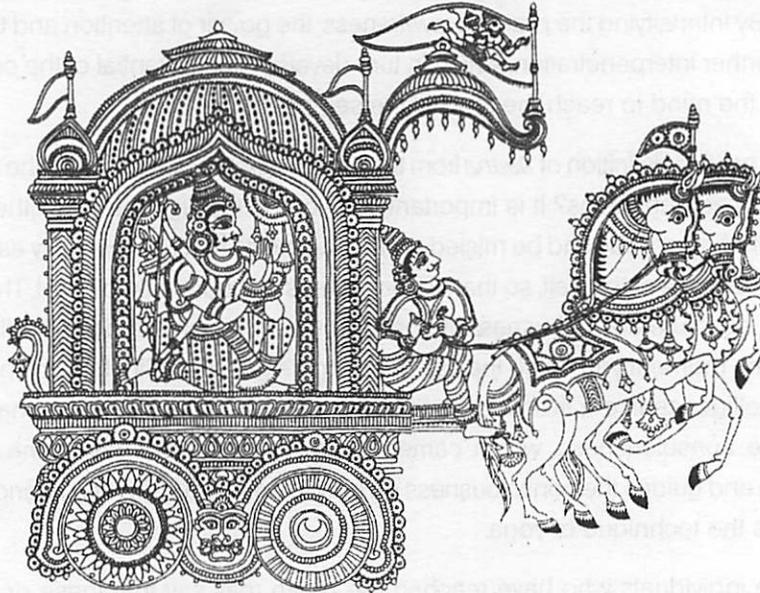
Some individuals who have reached the zenith may say that these practices are not essential but we are not all so blessed as they are. We have to be prepared to work from scratch. You and I are in the same boat, facing sorrow, despair and disease. We have to cross these bridges of sorrow and illness one by one to reach the last bridge, the space between the intelligence and Self, and cross over that bridge so that the intelligence and the Self commune with each other and become a single instrument. Thus the impediments and disturbances are counteracted, and the pure, uncontaminated intelligence and the Self remain in harmony with each other. Patañjali calls this communion "exalted intelligence" (*vivekaja jñānam*). When this exalted intelligence reaches the culminating point, the *prakṛti* unites with *puruṣa* and both become one.

Kṣetra is *prakṛti* or the field or the body. *Kṣetrajñā* is the knower of the field, the *ātman* or *puruṣa* or the Self. You may have read in *Light on Yoga*³ the analogy of the chariot and the charioteer. The body is the chariot. The senses are the horses. The *ātman* is the charioteer. This

¹ *Rūpa lāvanya bala vajra samhananatvāni kāyasampat* (Y.S., III.47).

³ See H.Y.P., I.17, *Jyotsnā* (Brahmananda's commentary), Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai. Published by Harper Collins, London.

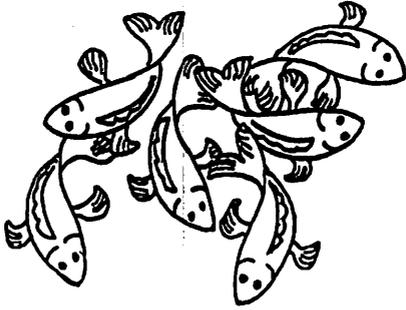
chariot has to be maintained like your car: you send it for servicing and lubrication so that when you drive, it runs smoothly. Similarly, yoga keeps the body healthy so that the senses are ready and move with smoothness for the journey towards Self-realisation. In order to build this strength in the mind and consciousness, the yogic steps of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* are given.



This is the background for us to start yoga from first principles, i.e.; cleansing the body, clearing the dust inside it that is in our way of thinking, acting and comportment. By practice, the external attributes of Self are cleansed and the mind is made free to send messages to the intelligence. The intelligence communicates with the Self and the Self in turn guides us to act in a right way. When the practice of yoga becomes internal, we use the body and the mind as complementary and supplementary instruments of the Self. When mind, intelligence, ego and consciousness are yoked together to move in unison, the experience of oneness or equipoise is felt within us.

However when the internal journey begins, the intricacy of the yogic method is understood more deeply and clearly. We humans are time-bound. We lose sight of eternity as time ensnares us. Art is eternal, not bound by time. But when you and I sit here and discuss, time is involved. As time gets involved, we lose sight of eternity. No philosopher has explained time as beautifully as Patañjali. Time is the movement of moments. The movement of moments rolls on like a wheel and the moments move constantly like spokes of the wheel. This movement of spokes of

moments is time as past, present and future. If you do not get enticed or disturbed and do not get caught by the movement of moments, and give your attention to observing the moment only, then you experience the virgin state of timelessness¹.



The mind is like a fish in water which is constantly moving. Motion and movement are its inherent nature. It tosses on the movements of the moments. Every present and future moment turns into a past moment. The mind is carried off on the rushing stream of moments and does not remain in the single, still and present moment. When intelligence reaches the exalted state, then the turbulent *citta* is silenced. Only then does one

understand moments and live constantly in the purity of the moment. When the moment changes into movement, the present is forgotten and mind becomes sullied by past thoughts and future planning. In order to see through the mentally created construct of time, we need to be pure. We need to be unpoluted. The practice of yoga brings this purification in ourselves – in our *prakṛti* from the outer sheath to the inner sheath. The exalted yogi teaches one how to observe and live in the *āsana*, or even when one is walking, how one has to live in the moment. Such a person would definitely be a highly sensitive intelligent human being. The practice of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* can lead us to this lofty condition.

For everyone the practice of yoga has to begin from the very first step of the ladder. Naturally one has to face a lot of ups and downs in the practice. Some trees are healthy; they give fruits earlier than one anticipates. Some trees grow very healthy but bear no fruit. Some seeds take ten or fifteen years to sprout. Some sprout in two or three days. Therefore nobody can decide when the seed of yoga will sprout in one and when the tree of yoga will give fruit. (Plate n. 4)

You have begun well. Now lots of dedicated pupils are there with teachers to guide them. I feel and say, "Where there is dedication, the method always grows in the right direction". As a dedicated pupil of yoga, doubt should not arise in your mind. So let there be no misconception about *hatha yoga* and *rāja yoga* being separate and different.

¹ See *Light on the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, Harper Collins, London.

Let me once again return to Patañjali. All of you know that yoga means *citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ*. This is the second *sūtra*, but how many think about what the first *sūtra* conveys? It says, *Atha Yogānuśāsanam*. All translators say, “Now the exposition of yoga”. *Anuśāsanam* is not “exposition”. *Śāsanam* is a code of conduct for human beings, something that has to be followed. Is it just an exposition? Or is it an exposition on the code of conduct? So, the very first *sūtra* of Patañjali involves *abhyāsa* – practice. What is practice? It is a code of behaviour. He speaks of practice (*abhyāsa*) in the first *sūtra* and restraint and detachment (*vairāgya*) in the next, while in the third, he describes the zenith of *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*.

Practice is imbued with codes of conduct in the form of *yama* and *niyama*, which Patañjali explains later. He speaks of renunciation in the very beginning of the first chapter because the people of his time were capable of observing restraint. Hence the concept appears early in the text as *abhyāsa vairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ* (*Y.S.*, I.12), practice and renunciation restrain the movements of consciousness. His introduction of restraint in the first chapter is meant for the enlightened ones, known as *uttamābhyāsi* (intensively intense practitioners), or those who have the seed of yoga in their hearts. Through intense practice, their intrinsic genius rapidly germinates and grows to the highest level.

The fourth *sūtra* of the first chapter says that the self is drawn by mind to sweet waves of pleasure and fluctuating mood. Patañjali does not want the *sādhaka* to be caught in the web of thought, but to cut his way to freedom. That is why *abhyāsa* (practice) and *vairāgya* (renunciation) were dealt with so early in the text for those who are intensely intense.

Knowing that it is not possible for all to keep the self away from the net of the mind, Patañjali has divided the practice into four stages according to the level of the *sādhaka* known as *mṛdu*, *madhya*, *adhimātra* and *tīvra* (mild, middle, intense and intensely intense). In the first chapter he is speaking for the intensely intense *sādhaka* and not for the other levels.

The second chapter is for the mild, the average and the intense students. There he begins, with *tapasḥ svādhyāya īśvarapraṇidhānāni kriyāyogaḥ* (*Y.S.*, II.1), which means, practice with zeal, study to know about the Self, and devotion towards God. For an average intellect, this yoga filled with action is easier than jumping straight into renunciation. In *tapas*, *karma* is involved. *Tapas* builds up cleanliness of the body, of the senses and mind. Only when the mind is cleansed is the *sādhaka* able to understand something about the Self; so *svādhyāya*, or study of the Self, begins externally as acquired knowledge (*jñāna*). If *tapas* is action, *svādhyāya* is knowledge. *Karma* leads towards *jñāna*. When knowledge dawns, we understand the functions of the inner self. When this understanding becomes ripe and exalted, the time has come to learn to surrender everything, including ourselves, to God (*īśvara praṇidhāna*). This is *bhakti*.

We use the expression “surrender to God”. Patañjali explains who is a fit person to surrender. A person who has perfected his body, senses, mind, and whose intelligence is utterly clear and exalted; only that person is able to surrender to God. Where *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti* meet, that is *kriyāyoga* or the foundation of *aṣṭadaḷa yoga*.

For you and me, he has given the name *aṣṭāṅga yoga*, so that we may easily understand and then climb the ladder, step by step, of *yama-niyama-āsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇā-dhyāna-samādhi*. As a common principle, all ancient Indian philosophers begin from the top and then come down to the bottom; whereas today writers start from the bottom and take one towards the essence of the subject.

Patañjali comes to the base in the second chapter and shows different ways for an average person to understand the subject. He begins the second chapter by explaining what one has to do, what one has to observe, and how one has to reflect and live. He connects the first *sūtra* of the first chapter, *anūsāsanam*, with *yama (karmendriya vṛtti stambhana)* and *niyama (jñānendriya vṛtti stambhana)*, since one has to bring stability and control in the organs of action and senses of perception respectively, before bringing restraint in one's behaviour. *Yama* and *niyama* teach us the ways of building our behavioural patterns, *anūsāsanam*.

Āsana cultures our sinews, fibres and tendons and brings sensitivity of intelligence in these. Though I often defined it as *snāyuvṛtti nirodha* (restraint of the fluctuations of the cells), or more precisely as *snāyuvṛtti sthīratā* (to bring a state of firmness to the cells) and *snāyuvṛtti samādhāna* (to bring the equipoise to the cells), its more appropriate definition would be *śānta snāyuvṛtti pariṇāma* (transformation towards tranquillity of the cells). *Snāyu* stands for the sinews, the cellular and the nervous systems. The practice of *āsana* keeps them in a state of concord.

Then comes *prāṇāyāma*. *Prāṇāyāma* is *prāṇa vṛtti stambhana*¹. The vital energy is controlled, stabilised, sustained and retained before it is restrained. It prevents the vital energy from dissipating and deviating unnecessarily. By this the system retains power and vigour.

Through *yama* and *niyama* the mind is indirectly stilled, whereas in *pratyāhāra* it is brought under direct control. Hence in *pratyāhāra*, *śānta manovṛtti pariṇāma*² takes place. We must always be on guard that our senses do not entice our mind into the pastures of pleasure, but that it remains in a pacified state.

¹ And more precisely *samādhāna prāṇavṛtti pariṇāma* (transformation towards equipoise through calming the fluctuation of energy).

² Transformation towards tranquillity of mind.

After mastery in these aspects of yoga, Patañjali says, “mind (*manas*) is now fit for concentration, *dhāraṇā*”. Here, he uses the word *manas* since it is a constituent of *citta*. *Pratyāhāra* transforms the mind for concentration. Focussing the mind (*dhāraṇā*) on a given subject or a given thought, frees the mind from fluctuations, modifications and modulations, and puts an end to its wanderings. When the mind is stabilised by the practice of *dhāraṇā*, then comes *dhyāna*.

In *dhyāna* or meditation, not only is the intelligence kept stable, sharp and dynamic, both inside and outside, from inner to outer and outer to inner, but also the *aharṅkāra* (the impostor of the Self) is reduced to insignificance. Prolonged continuation of this non-egoistic state is *samādhi*. In *samādhi*, the *aharṅkāra* dissolves, as does the *citta*, because the *sādhaka* loses the feedback from their accessories. As they are silent, so the consciousness becomes silent. In this state of silence, the consciousness loses its identity and the Self shines in an absolute state. This is the end of yoga. The search for the Self culminates.

Patañjali says that the search and the feeling of the Self fade out and disappear. *Ātma bhāva bhāvanā nivr̥ttiḥ* (Y.S, IV.25). There is no place for I, Me and Mine. The barriers are removed, the Self shines, and there is no room for separateness. The conceptions of “I am different from this”, “I am different from that”, vanish. One hears that body is different, mind is different and Self is different. When the feeling of the Self or *ātma-bhāva* does not exist, where is the body, where is the mind, where is the goal? The soul and the goal become one. It may take several years of persistent, patient and persevering yogic practice. We may have to wait for years, or for the next life or lives to come, to live in the state of oneness of body, mind and soul.

