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The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

with commentary

by [Swami Venkatesananda](#)

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Foreword

Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji was closely associated with Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, and he was a veritable personal assistant to Sri Gurudev. Swami Venkatesananda turned out enormous work every day by attending to correspondence, by writing articles and commentaries, which were all a kind of masterpiece in themselves. Right from the beginning we both were intimate friends and we used to discuss common topics in a humorous way, of which method of speaking Swami

Venkatesananda was a master. He would always be smiling and cut jokes even when we were discussing serious subjects like the famous Yoga Vasistha that we used to read together after the lunch hour every day. This is a sort of background of my intimacy with Swami Venkatesananda. He liked me very much and I too liked him equally.

He was a prolific writer and could write on any subject. The present occasion for me to write these few words is in connection with a series of lectures he delivered on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, all of which were systematically edited by a devotee called Swami Lakshmi Ananda from Perth, Australia. I have gone through the manuscript of this book and find that it is excellent.

Here I would like to add that there is a much neglected sutra of Patanjali to which commentators have been paying scant attention, and even when they were attempting to say something on this sutra it was sketchy and lacked depth. This sutra: *bahir akalpita vrittir maha videha tatah prakasha varana kayah* occurs in the third chapter of the Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali (III. 43): This is, in my opinion, the quintessence of the meditational technique described by Patanjali, by which we are introduced to the very heart of the matter so pithily and crisply. This sutra makes out that there are two ways of the functioning of the mind, one in the form of a thought of an external object and another as a total and comprehensive operation in which the object in meditation becomes inseparable from its thought. Usually such an exercise is not humanly possible. Who can think in such a way that the object enters the mind itself and the object becomes the thought and the thought becomes the object. This is a staggering suggestion given by the sutra that the entire world can enter into the process of thinking. If the universe enters the mind and the mind enters the universe, this exercise is said to lead to immediate liberation.

Sutra 1.17 in the system of Patanjali refers actually to a series of meditations in an ascending order, first on the physical universe, then the subtle universe of potentials called tanmatras, the cosmic complex known as space and time and the cosmic Self sense leading to a bliss born of pure consciousness. Though the sutra refers only to vitarka, vichara, ananda and asmita, they are further capable of categorisation as involved in space-time consciousness or not involved in space-time consciousness. These stages are intricate and cannot be understood by merely a study of books.

Swami Venkatesananda has succeeded very commendably in expounding Sage Patanjali's Sutras in a lucid manner, and I recommend this book to every seeker of Truth, who ardently pursues the Yoga System of Patanjali.

Swami Krishnananda
April 22nd 1998

*The Divine Life Society,
Shivanandanagar,
Uttar Pradesh,
India.*

Preface

Swami Venkatesananda *lived* the spirit of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. He gave several series of talks on this subject in Australia, South Africa, Germany, Canada, etc., which have inspired many to take up the practice of Raja Yoga.

His New Interpretative Translation of the Yoga Sutras, "ENLIGHTENED LIVING" (published by the Chiltern Yoga Trust of South Africa in 1975) is regarded as a springboard to the understanding of the Sutras. It has been incorporated in this present publication.

Swami Venkatesananda spoke equally to both men and women, and his use of the masculine pronouns 'he' and 'him' does not exclude the feminine. It is, in fact, shorthand for 'human being'! He did not feel it necessary to distinguish between male and female, and the editor has continued the tradition in this publication.

In this book, 'yoga' has been recognised as a word in common usage, and as such has not been italicised.

Introduction to 'Enlightened Living'

There are many spiritually elevated people in the world, but not many levitating yogis: and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali Maharshi are meant to elevate the spirit of every man, not to teach him how to levitate. This is clearly the gospel of enlightened living, neither an escape from life nor a hallucinatory 'light'. The attempt in this little book has been to expose that gospel, to avoid technicalities, and to relate the whole yoga philosophy to the ordinary and simple daily life of everyone.

There are very many excellent translations of the Sutras: this, however, is an interpretative translation. There are several scholarly and erudite commentaries, too: this is definitely not one of them. This book is not meant for the research scholar but for one who is in search of truth which shall free him from self-ignorance.

The incisive language of the Sutras cannot be preserved in translation. An extraordinary feature of the Sutras is the avoidance of direct commandments, dogmatic assertions and the use of active voice. Whereas every effort has been made to retain the structure of the text, in a few cases (for example, in Sutra I. 49) slight changes have had to be made to sustain the easy flow of thought. (The words which represent the translation of the text are underlined.)

Anyone who translates a text which is in the Sanskrit language is confronted by two difficulties: (a) not all languages have concise words or phrases which accurately convey the exact sense in which the Sanskrit word is used in the text; and (b) the Sanskrit word itself has a number of meanings, and it is easier to choose the correct meaning when the word is used in a structurally complete prose or verse, than when it occurs in the Sutras. From a cursory glance at the very many available translations of the Sutras it is easy to see that each one has translated some Sutras differently, without being unfaithful to the text.

Some translators, eager to build a 'philosophical system' on the foundation of the Sutras have treated some words in the text as proper names of specific philosophical categories. Such a treatment inevitably limits the understanding of the purport of the text. The text itself seems to use two or more words to refer to a single factor: for example, *samadhi* and *samapattih* are used synonymously. There is a danger of regarding words as names: for then they create forms or images which perpetuate ignorance while creating an illusion of knowledge. This pitfall has been avoided in this book, and the actual meaning of the words has been sought, regardless of how the 'philosophical system' has classified them. When this is done, it is discovered that there is a continuous and smooth flow in the sequence of the Sutras. (Where the text clearly warrants another meaning, such an alternative meaning has also been given: examples are II. 30, II. 36 and IV. 31).

The gospel of yoga suggests not a withdrawal nor an escape from the world but the abandonment of the mental conditioning which creates a division between the 'me' and 'the world' (including the world of psychological experiences). Meditation is the vigorous search for the true identity, of the 'me', not a psychic jugglery nor a technique for deep relaxation. Seen from this angle, the fundamental categories of yoga (*citta*, and *nirodha* - vide I. 2), take on a character completely different to the one that prevails in the minds of most practicers of yoga: it is hard to translate *citta and vritti*, and the student has to discover the meaning in himself as Patanjali's message saturates his whole being. *Nirodha* does not imply suppression, restraint or control in the usual (and brutal) connotations of those words, but a vigilantly watchful understanding of the movements of thought in the mind—which is stillness of a different kind.

The reader will not fail to notice that the teachings of yoga are universal and that they do not interfere with one's religious faith or occupation or life-style. Everyone who lives is entitled to enlightenment which instantly transforms every-day life into enlightened living.

Acknowledgements

This book was compiled and edited from the many talks given by Swami Venkatesananda on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Both published talks and audio tapes were used. If any errors are found in the editing, the fault is the editor's!

The Chiltern Yoga Trust (Australia) wishes to express its gratitude to all who made this publication possible, in particular to the following:

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We pay homage to:

Patanjali Maharshi who centuries ago propounded the magnificent science contained in his Yoga Sutras.

Our beloved guru, Swami Venkatesananda, who enlightened our lives with his love, humour and wisdom, and his brilliant and inspiring teaching of Raja Yoga.

Our grateful thanks to all.

Swami Lakshmi Ananda

Introduction

No-one knows anything about Patanjali, the author of the Yoga Sutras. There is as much guesswork as evidence. Some say he was a grammarian, and some say he was a great yogi. In any case, the text ascribed to him is called Yoga Sutras.

Sutras are terse expressions which are almost totally unintelligible and allow for any number of interpretations. They are not well laid out, well planned essays on yoga, but ungrammatical expressions. Sometimes either the subject, object or predicate is missing. (Maybe they were the notes kept by the students, or which the master himself had prepared.) Therefore to understand the Sutras it becomes necessary to have a commentator, otherwise the uninitiated will find them difficult to understand.

If you pick up any standard English-Sanskrit dictionary and look up the word 'yoga', you will find a whole page full of meanings. Therefore when a great master gives brief notes, using words like yoga, *citta and vritti*, we are as far from understanding the meaning as any other student is, or was. However, I prefer to look at all these things without a commentary.

A commentary on any book is already polluted, because it passes through the brain of the author. So if one is a serious student of yoga, wanting to understand things without being prejudiced by what others

have said or thought about it, one should go straight to the text of Yoga Sutras, buy a Sanskrit-English dictionary and try out combinations and computations of words. (You might even discover extraordinary meanings to these Yoga Sutras—which is a very nice thing to do, for a research scholar!)

If you are not prepared to do this you are dependent upon some commentary or other, and any commentary is as good or as bad as any other; all have been produced by well-meaning, well-intentioned people (like the current commentator).

Why Raja Yoga?

The yoga described in the Yoga Sutras is called Raja Yoga in the sense that it is scientific, both rational and emotional together, and involves our total life without dissecting it. So whatever be your station in life you must be able to practise this yoga, otherwise it is not Raja Yoga.

Raja means royal, and there are two suggestions why this particular path or method could be called royal in comparison with others. One suggestion is that it is fit only for kings. We need a bold understanding, a courageous, adventurous spirit. If you do not have that spirit, but want to beg, "God please give me this, God please give me that," don't touch Raja Yoga. It is fit only for royal sages. Another suggestion is that it is the royal road; you go straight, you don't beat about the bush. Instead of analysing all the factors that may be related to the problem, instead of cutting down the branches and dealing with the trunk, you go straight to the root of the problem itself. All problems have a single source. Patanjali assures us that the bondage does not lie outside, it is in you; pain does not lie outside, but is in you; pleasure does not lie outside, but is in you.

What is Yoga?

The name Raja Yoga does not occur in the Yoga Sutras, only the word 'yoga' does. In actual fact, there is no Raja Yoga—it is either yoga or no yoga. Because the word 'yoga' means harmony, union, coming together or meeting, if we create divisions in the name of yoga none of these things *are* yoga. Yoga is where you and I meet. What does not bring about this harmony is not yoga. Therefore, even though we have prestigiously called it Raja Yoga, the author himself does not claim that.

The very nature of the Scripture is such that it is almost ridiculous to talk about it in an impersonal way; to be useful it has to be a dialogue between two people. The enquiry has to arise in the heart of the seeker; and then in the dialogue the seeker ascends step by step, with the help of the guide. If it is commented on—either in writing or in a talk—it seems to lose a certain intimacy, a certain inspiring, heartwarming characteristic that the text possesses.

Sometimes this little book seems to have no meaning at all: and sometimes it hits me like a bolt from the blue. Patanjali says that when you are sick or when the mind is absolutely dull it has no meaning, it is just a piece of paper; but when the mind has been jolted out of its dullness and is awake and alert, every time you read this you will gain a new meaning, because there is something new happening within you. Only then has this any meaning at all.

The words themselves are just loosely strung. If you pick up half a dozen translations you will be shocked to see that all of them differ from one another. Even contradictory meanings have been derived from the same expressions. But that's not serious, because the Sutras allow (and are capable of) being twisted and turned like that of the famous Delphic Oracle, "*The Greeks the Romans shall conquer*". Confusing, ambiguous: who is going to conquer whom? That is exactly the nature of the Sutras, and depending on your own inner maturity you derive your own meaning from them.

This Scripture is a closed book, useless and probably dangerous, if one has not arrived at a clear understanding of the foundations. I mention the word dangerous (against my own better judgement). Danger arises from the fact that the Scripture gives a technique for concentration and meditation which can be practised by anyone at all, whether he is spiritually awake or not, stupid, dull, vicious or good. It also hints at the truth that if you are able to meditate deeply and become one with the object of your meditation you will come to know it in essence. My guru used to say that that is the principle used in great discoveries by scientists, and great achievements by artists. (A man who has painted a

glorious portrait has actually entered into or become one with the object of the subject he has chosen, and therefore he has been able to produce such an enthralling painting.) The Scripture also says that in this manner you can acquire all sorts of psychic powers—thought reading, telepathy, E.S.P., etc. There is no harm, but one who enters into that by-way may never come back to the spiritual path again. He becomes so terribly involved with psychic phenomena that he is not interested in spiritual fruit at all. So, to the unqualified person taking up the practice or study of Raja Yoga there is this little danger.

The Qualifications of a Student

What are the qualifications then? The qualified student must have arrived at the fundamental cognition that there is this ignorance which makes him forget that everything in the world is changing and impermanent, that everything that is born must die, that everything that has been created must be destroyed. This ignorance is the root of sorrow—but the student must arrive at this himself, he cannot get it from somebody else.

The Teaching

The teaching points out that there is this Cosmic Being or Cosmic Consciousness, which has mysteriously been disrupted or fractured by an ego sense which says, "This is 'I' and therefore that is 'you'." From this division flows the interminable stream of worry, anxiety, fear and hate. How do you find an end to this stream? By realising you *are* the stream. When this happens, the menace has ceased.

Why is this yoga or doctrine expounded at all? To point out in utter simplicity that all our problems arise from non-understanding of the very simple truth that whatever there is, is an indivisible whole. If this understanding arises, all problems are dissolved immediately.

It has to be taken for granted in the beginning that there is a state of consciousness which is accessible to all of us, in which there is neither contradiction, confusion, conflict nor distress, but in which there is great joy, bliss and peace: and that state of consciousness is reached through meditation, through yoga—which is the understanding of the modifications of the mind. We need to mention this at this stage for two reasons:

1. You must have an idea of the door through which to run when there is a threat. You have to know that there *is* a possibility; and when a crisis arises in your life, instead of becoming frustrated you know how to go deeper within yourself. If you learn the technique when there are no problems it will stand you in good stead when the need arises.
2. Life *is* problems—without problems there is no life! Having come into this problematical existence it is like trying to untie a tangle. When you try to untangle a knot you find you are making more knots, so you get fed up and leave it. We take our problems for granted. Most people in day-to-day living do not notice them because they are not aware that there is a thing called 'peace of mind', an existence called 'being unconditioned'.

So the object, or goal, of yoga (if it can be regarded as such) is to discover the absence of what we have misunderstood to be the individual personality. One has to discover for oneself that it is not there. If I sit here and think, "I do not exist," it seems that I am denying this truth—as, for instance, when somebody says, "I think God does not exist," he believes in God very much more than some people in the church do! Similarly, one may say, "I think there is an individual soul, an ego." Another might say, "The ego does not exist." Both of them assume something.

As long as you regard yourself as a personality which is more important than the totality, problems will continue to exist. When you think you are very important, then you are denying the existence of the one indivisible being of which we are all cells. That is the problem with our life.

If you are miserable it is only because you think you are only this body, this personality—which is not the truth. Swami Sivananda once remarked during a rather disappointing event when someone had cheated, "You feel unhappy only because you think you are Swami So-and-so and that the other person is totally different from you. If this division disappears, you realise that the cheater and the

cheated are both limbs of the same being, and you don't feel unhappy about it." There is a beautiful saying in Tamil, "*If accidentally your own finger pokes your eye, will you cut your finger off?*" He represents the finger and you represent the eye. Both of you belong to the same organism.

We feel miserable because of this division or fragmentation that has arisen in us. It is from this fragmentation that all our problems arise. How can this be overcome or solved except by realising the indivisibility of the being?

It is no use denying the existence of the ego—we have to see its non-existence for ourselves. When that is seen the quality of our life changes dramatically, totally, without our wishing or praying for it, and without the use of what we are accustomed to call 'will-power'. The moment you realise that the cup of milk in your hand only looks like milk, but is really poison, do you have to use your will-power to drop it? No! When somebody says, "Oh, look out, it is poison," the cup immediately drops from your hand!

With such spontaneity life will change if one is able to discover for oneself that what exists is the river of consciousness. In this, whirlpools dance around, come together and pass again and again; certain molecules stick together and they look like this or that figure; and some of these molecules dance themselves apart from one another, and don't form at all. This change is continually taking place—there is nothing static in this universe. We are all part of the cosmic drama that is going on, the cosmic river that is flowing. One who discovers this is free.

If the inner intelligence is wide awake life flows smoothly, without any problems. This awakened intelligence fills and penetrates every aspect of our life—right from our physical postures, our breathing, our relationship with one another, our conduct in this world, our attitude to this world and to other beings, and to physiological and psychological experiences. If all these can provoke or trigger self-knowledge or self-understanding, then in the light of that the arising of problems can be completely and totally avoided. Life becomes quite simple and smooth, however complex it might look in the eyes of others.

I am not saying, "And therefore you should lead a natural sort of life and walk about naked." Your life may appear to be complicated in the eyes of others, but within yourself you are so peaceful and so alert that in your own intelligence there is no problem. It is a terribly immature attitude to think that the practice of yoga is possible only if you alter your environment, shut yourself off, lose all family ties, renounce everything and live a life of poverty, etc. All that is just immature nonsense, because attachment is not *there*, it is in you. A person who professes to have no family ties may have cosmic worries! What is meant is Self-knowledge, self-awareness—not selfishness.

In the first three chapters of the Yoga Sutras a number of methods are given to enable us to overcome the problem of fragmentation. If you have seen a mirage as a mirage, you have realised the truth. If you saw it as water, there is error. It is when you see it as water that you start running after it. If you see it as a mirage you don't run after it. When the whole totality is immediately realised or understood to be the sole reality, then the fragment is restored to its place. Then everything exists except the problem. Nothing disappears except the error—the erroneous perception of water. The mirage, as such, does not disappear! That is precisely what happens to an enlightened person.

Communication

When you and I become one in a mystic way 'communication' happens. This happens very often between lovers, mother and child or very close friends. We have all communicated like this with someone or other—but we think it is accidental. We are strangers to this communication, because we neglect those few occasions, and they slip through our fingers. For instance, when a boy looks at a girl and smiles there is communication taking place, telepathy taking place—a fantastic thing going on there! We don't take any notice of it, we have codified and pigeon-holed all this. We are all looking for mental telepathy, but we have completely neglected the study of natural phenomena. We are running after something which looks like natural phenomena.

In this world sometimes counterfeit things have greater value than the original. Here is a nice story to illustrate this:

It is said that a wandering yogi and his disciple were having a discussion, during the course of which the master said, "In this world nobody cares for the genuine article—everybody runs after the imitation". The disciple said, "Sorry, for this once I don't agree with you." The Master didn't argue, because no-one helps another by argument.

They continued their wandering and came to a village, outside of which there was a small hut with a banner in front: "Come and see a man grunt like a pig. Two rupee entrance fee". About a hundred people had paid this two rupees. As soon as the room was full a man entered through the back door, went onto the stage, and grunted like a pig. "Oh, marvellous!" Everybody clapped and then walked out. Two rupees gone! The Master and his disciple also saw the entertainment, and the Master made up his mind to teach his disciple in a very practical way.

When on their wanderings they came back again to the same village, he hired the hut and put up a little banner: "The grunting of a pig—the truth. Admission two rupees". Some young men gathered round the hut. The banner seemed to be mysterious! What does it mean? They thought, "We had lovely entertainment last week There may be some more entertainment this time." A few of them bought the two rupee tickets and went in to see if they should all go in. The holy man entered through the back door, leading a real pig. He went onto the stage and twisted its tail—it grunted, as pigs always grunt. The twelve people who were there said, "Oh, is that all! What is so great in it?" They walked away and told all the others, "Don't go in. It is only a pig."

So a man grunting like a pig is worth something; a pig grunting like itself is worth nothing! The truth is worth nothing; an imitation is worth a lot. Nobody wants to be a yogi, people want to *see* a yogi. Here again, one can only *be*.

The truth cannot be conveyed, it can only be communicated when you and I drop our individual personalities and become one. Otherwise we are merely conveyors, just conveying junk—usually secondhand stuff. Communication takes place when we are both on the same level of consciousness. I am at the same level of consciousness as you are when *my* shoe pinches exactly where *yours* does. Then I will be able to understand what you are talking about, then it is possible to communicate.

The great Masters communicated their teachings by waiting for the proper disciple to come in the proper spirit, approach the Master with the proper attitude and ask the right question in the right way. The disciples listened and then practised, listened and practised, to arrive at the same wavelength, the same experience where communication may happen. They had to live the life of a yogi, to be yogis all the time. Then the floodgate of knowledge or wisdom was opened—maybe by a look, a word or a smile. *Then* those words became meanings, because communication was taking place. That is the reason why these terse Sutras or aphorisms were meaningful to those first class students who were ready and looking for it. They didn't want to learn, they wanted to *be*. If you want to *be* a yogi, you can be taught yoga. But if you want to know what yoga is all about, no-one can teach or communicate anything to you, they can only convey. (There is a famous saying in one of the Indian languages, "A donkey may convey a load of sandalwood, but it doesn't know its fragrance")

Conveying

Conveying is useless and sometimes harmful, because when I convey an idea we are not on the same wavelength; but yet you hear those words and the words have different meanings to you. The original idea or object is completely lost. It is only then that problems arise.

We cannot solve a problem before it arises, in anticipation. For instance a little girl of ten cannot understand what labour pain means. You can explain with all your scientific knowledge, but it still means nothing. And therefore when yoga is explained thus, "Your ego will merge into Cosmic Consciousness," you are worried. You think, "I'll get lost, and who wants to get lost? I want to be my miserable self for all time to come. Oh, will my husband still be my husband?" You are trapped in your own utter silliness, because there is no communication. You don't understand the meaning of these words, you only hear what the words sound like.

The Sanskrit word for 'meaning' is *artha*. *What is the meaning, the artha of the word God? The dictionary says: "Supreme Consciousness; Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient. God occurs in*

Genesis Chapter I, verse 2. In this context it means this, in that context it means something else." Just words! Where is the meaning, the *artha*—not paraphrasing one word with another word, or finding more words for one word. What is the *artha*, and is it real to you? If it is not, all this is useless.

Can one convey the meaning? If I try to convey the meaning of the word 'yoga', you will take it in another sense. For instance, someone started telling me that the only difference between yoga and gymnastics is that in yoga there is breathing! Does it mean that in gymnastics you don't breathe at all? That is an example of conveying.

Communication

In communication this misunderstanding does not take place, because in communication the two become one. They are on the same wavelength and the meaning is transmitted from heart to heart. This is of course the best way to learn yoga and to study the Yoga Sutras.

The next best way is to study as many commentaries as you can get hold of, but all the time watching within yourself, "Is this true, is this real? Does my whole being accept this, approve this, see this as a fact?" If not, then it is not true to you at that stage. You can read it again and again, but you must be honest enough to admit that it is not true to you *now*. You cannot accept it, you cannot reject it. You would be a hypocrite if you accepted it as true, you would be a fool if you rejected it as untrue. It is there, and you are studying it. It appears to be not quite real. Maybe you need more maturity, maybe the teacher is saying something which communicates nothing to you yet, because you have not risen to his state of consciousness. You must study again. Maybe you have missed some of the lessons that life is teaching you. You must watch life again a little more closely and carefully.

"All human relationships depend upon some gratification or other. This applies in the reverse too." When you hear this statement, first you think, "What is meant by this? Does it mean that there is no love between husband and wife? Is the person who said this so cruel, so cold and calculating?" It doesn't appeal to you—you think he is mad. But, keep it somewhere in your mind and begin to watch life a bit more closely. You have had a few experiences which seem to corroborate these statements more than your belief. This is interesting. You are firm in your beliefs—this is black and this is white—but he says that between black and white there is a lot of grey. It doesn't appeal to you, it doesn't seem real or plausible, but you keep it there—neither accepting, nor rejecting—until you come to that same wavelength. Up till then it is merely conveying, it means nothing what-so-ever to you.

All the yoga that we are talking about is utterly meaningless, until one day you come to the same experience that is described there. That is the meaning, the stuff, the reality of the words, not the dictionary meaning. In an instant it occurs to you, "Hah, *that* is the truth." At that moment it is no longer a truth that has been conveyed to you by So-and-so, but a truth which you have discovered for yourself, within yourself, through your own experience.

It is only to that limited extent that a study of texts like the Yoga Sutras may be of some relevance to us and to our lives. Depending on your own inner maturity, you derive your own meaning from it.

The Scripture is a closed book, useless and probably dangerous, if one has not arrived at a clear understanding of the foundations. Have you come face to face with the fundamental truth: that ignorance, egoity, likes, dislikes and clinging to life are the roots of sorrow? You must have arrived at this position by a very clear observation of life as it *is*, where you can quite clearly see that both attachment and aversion (love as opposed to hate) create misery in your life. This you cannot get from a book. If you think, "Patanjali says that attachment is bad, therefore I will not be attached," it is borrowed knowledge. You can be told for ten days that there is sorrow, disease and suffering in your life, that there is sorrow in birth and sorrow in death. If you say, "Is that so? But this chocolate cake is very good. Why does he say everything is sorrow?" your own mind has not arrived at this position. It inwardly rebels. So that there is sorrow, misery and suffering in your life has to be seen by you; it cannot be infused into you by somebody else.

The state of perfection (if there is a state like that) or the culmination of yoga (if yoga has a goal) is said to be the state that is natural, something that *is* all the time. If it is regarded as a goal, please remember it is returning to the source, where the beginning and the end become one—360 degrees and

0 degrees. When these two become one, that is yoga, oneness. But these are merely words.

* * * * *

There is one more consideration before you go on to study the Sutras. Is it a technique to be practised in your daily life? Does it demand exertion, effort? Or is it something (as the Zen practitioners might say) which spontaneously arises in you without effort, technique, or trouble? Again, neither/nor.

It is neither a technique (a method involving effort) nor an accidental happening (where you lie down on your couch, and as you are about to fall asleep...!!). There is a middle way where you neither sleep, nor are you awake; you are neither exerting, nor are you totally relaxed. (Where wakefulness meets slumber, where day meets night and where night meets day are times regarded as auspicious for meditation and for prayers. Where the two meet, you cannot say it is either day or night.) But the beauty is that it is neither this nor that: neither exertion, nor total relaxation.

When it is a middle path between these two it demands constant attention. Those of you who practise yoga postures might have discovered this already. If you are too strenuous in your exertion you are not able to pay attention to what is happening to the body. If you are like a jellyfish, there is no posture at all. The intelligent practice of postures demands attention. Attention arises only when there is no tension, but where there is total, inner awareness.

In yoga meditation, does this awareness follow a sequence of the practice of methods, or does it happen spontaneously? Is there a technique to it, or is there no technique to it? Neither of these positions is valid.

How do we solve this problem? Is the problem solved just like that, or do we have to strive? The question is: "Is enlightenment (the final solution of this problem) instantaneous or gradual?" If we ask this question: "Is death instantaneous or gradual?" what would be the answer? That death takes place just instantaneously (I'm not talking about death in a motorcar accident, but normal lying in bed and dying) or that it is a gradual process? It is probably both, or either, or neither—it depends on what you are looking for.

If we define the word 'death' as the cessation of life, it is again subject to all sorts of interpretations. Does the cessation of life mean cessation of the heart, or the breath, or some brain cells? If that is what is meant, then it does take place instantaneously, because till that moment you are still alive, you are not dead—however deceptive that may be. You may be completely paralysed or in a deep coma, but until the doctor comes and says, "This man is dead," you are not dead. You are alive till that last moment. Therefore we may say that death is instantaneous. But we also say, "Oh, he has been dying for the last two years." That means he has had one serious illness after another—first he lost his hearing, then his sight, then his teeth, then his mind, etc.—a long drawn out death; which is also true. Now you are whole, with all your senses in good shape and working order. If one of these things conks out, you are that much dead, if your arms are paralysed, that means you are that much dead. If we look at the whole thing in this manner, we can say that death is also a gradual process.

In the case of enlightenment too, one can look at this phenomenon (it one can categorise it as such) as an instantaneous process, as a long drawn-out gradual process or graded enlightenment; but it is good to realise that till the last step is taken, the enlightenment is not complete and not certain. There is still a shadow of doubt. As long as this shadow of doubt lasts, it is not really enlightenment. There is a glimpse of this light shining through a veil—you may think that the veil may be thin, or dark, blue or white, but there is still the veil. Through that veil you are able to see a little of the truth.

If you have had this view it is possible for you to proceed towards enlightenment. There is no sense in foolishly asserting 'either or'—if *this* is true, that is wrong, if *that* is true, this is wrong. Once again you get into this conflict and difference of opinion, and lose sight of truth.

How do we come face to face with this realisation that this perpetual, beginningless and endless flow *alone* is Truth? Every second the ego is asserting itself.

Those people who would like a shortcut to enlightenment, are looking for trouble. When we look for a

method or a practice which will firmly establish us in this enlightenment so that we don't hereafter fall into error, that is trouble already. If in this fast-moving, eternally dynamic, ever-changing universe you want to be rooted, firm and unmoving, you might as well be a statue—at least to human vision. There is nothing unmoving in this universe. If you are part of this cosmic stream you must expect to be met by an unexpected turn of events at every stage. You don't know what is coming.

The purpose of enlightenment is to enable you to flow along with every challenge as it comes, meet the most unexpected events and then not lose your head. When in the light of your own enlightenment you are able to see, it is not a problem; because when you are able to see there is no fear or confusion anymore. Day after day the light is still shining, and when a new problem crops up you will look at it and see the solution—because the problem carries its solution on its own shoulders!

Enlightenment enables us to flow along this stream of consciousness without experiencing grief, confusion, doubt, because the light removes only the grief confusion and doubt. Life goes on exactly as it has been. Your most prosaic actions become yoga, and they create no problem at all.

The enlightened person is one who is never shocked. He has reached this stage of not being shocked by being constantly alert, vigilant, awake, and therefore constantly illumined, not because he is supposed to be rooted in some form of psychic power. That is what yoga demands of us. That is what yoga promises us.

So enlightenment is set up as the goal, and this goal has to be realised, not thought about. You cannot sit here and hypnotise yourself by repeatedly observing, "I am the immortal Consciousness." That is only thought! It was thought that created all this nuisance, and thinking about it only brings in one more thought!

There is a famous Zen doctrine: "First there was a tree. When I looked at it, it became the world. As I went on analysing it, I reached enlightenment. Then it became a tree again." When you take things for granted, you act and react mechanically, instinctively. When you understand its nature and truth, then the tree remains the tree and you remain you, but in the meantime a tremendous radical change has taken place. The husband remains a husband, the wife a wife. Suddenly there is no longer that guardedness, possessiveness and jealousy—the haunting problem-makers.

The Vedantins also give a beautiful and simple explanation. A man entered a house, something touched his foot and he jumped up, shouting, "Snake!" When the light was switched on he saw it was only some rubber. When the lights were switched off he saw the snake again, exactly as he saw it the first time; but this time he was not afraid. That is the whole thing in a nut shell. It is not as if once you become a yogi some kind of light will come out of you. I have lived with Swami Sivananda, one of the greatest yogis, and I can say that all that I saw was a very beautiful human being! I have seen him shaken by some events, but in his case there is the recognition that it is rubber and not snake. It looks like a snake. That, no-one is going to alter.

So enlightenment is an inner awareness that suddenly transforms and transmutes your whole being, without interfering with the appearance. You still play your role in life and everything goes on normally. Perhaps only *then* it is normal, before it was sub-normal! All this is within reach of all of us at all times. But, unfortunately, we have never really been aware of the beautiful mystery of which we are made.

Footnote to 'Enlightened Living'

To illustrate the translator's unique position, six important words that occur in the text are given below with a complete list of their meanings as found in a medium-sized dictionary:

cittam:

1. Observing. attending. 2. (a) Thought, thinking, attention; (b) desire, intention, aim. 3. The mind. 4. The heart (considered as the seat of intellect). 5. Reason, intellect, reasoning faculty.

nirodha:

1. Confinement, locking up, imprisonment. 2. Enclosing, covering up. 3. Restraint, check, suppression, control. 4. Hindrance, obstruction, opposition. 5. Hurting, punishing, injuring. 6. Annihilation, complete destruction. 7. Aversion, dislike. 8. Disappointment, frustration of hopes (in dramatic language). 9. (With the Buddhists) Suppression of pain.

pranidhana:

1. Applying, employing, application, use. 2. Great effort, energy. 3. Profound religious meditation, abstract contemplation. 4. Respectful behaviour towards. 5. Renunciation of the fruit of actions. 6. Entrance, access. 7. (With Buddhists) A prayer, an entreaty.

pratyaya

1. Conviction, settled belief. 2. Trust, reliance, faith, confidence. 3. Conception, idea, notion, opinion. 4. Surety, certainty. 5. Knowledge, experience, cognition. 6. A cause, ground, means of action. 7. Celebrity, fame, renown. 8. A termination, an affix or suffix. 9. An oath. 10. A dependant. 11. A usage, practice. 12. A hole. 13. Intellect, understanding. 14. An assistant or associate. 15. An epithet of Vishnu. 16. (With Buddhists) A co-operating cause. 17. An instrument, a means of agency. 18. Religious contemplation. 19. A householder who keeps a sacred fire.

samadhi:

1. Collecting, composing, concentrating. 2. Profound or abstract meditation, concentration of mind on one object, perfect absorption of thought into the one object of meditation, i.e., the Supreme Spirit (the 8th and last stage of Yoga). 3. Intentness, concentration (in general), fixing of thoughts. 4. Penance, religious obligation, devotion (to penance) 5. Bringing together, concentration, combination, collection. 6. Reconciliation, settling or composing differences. 7. Silence. 8. Agreement, assent, promise. 9. Requit. 10. Completion, accomplishment. 11. Perseverance in extreme difficulties. 12. Attempting impossibilities. 13. Laying up corn (in times of famine), storing grain. 14. A tomb. 15. The joint of the neck; a particular position of the neck. 16. (In rhetoric) A figure of speech. 17. One of the ten gunas or merits of style. 18. A religious vow or self-imposed restraint. 19. Support, upholding.

vritti:

1. Being, existence. 2. Abiding, remaining, attitude, being in a particular state. 3. State, condition. 4. Action, movement, function, operation. 5. Course, method. 6. Conduct, behaviour, course of conduct, mode of action. 7. Profession, occupation, business, employment, mode of leading life. 8. Livelihood, maintenance, means of subsistence or livelihood. 9. Wages, hire. 10. Cause of activity. 11. Respectful treatment. 12. Commentary Gloss, exposition. 13. Revolving, turning round. 14. The circumference of a wheel or circle. 15. A complex formation requiring resolution or explanation. 16. The power or force of a word by which it expresses, indicates or suggests a meaning; general character or force of a word. 17. Style in composition. 18. Customary allowance. 19. Manner of thinking.

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