

On Basic Principles of Yoga

(lecture)

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Yoga is the name of the Teaching of the means of achieving spiritual Perfection. Translated from Sanskrit this word means "union", "merging", "becoming one". Implied is removal of one's personal separation, harmonious merging of individual with macro-system.

Yoga is a religious teaching. But separate chapters of yoga may be considered as "neutral" as referred to religion and can be used by atheists too. Such are, for example, hatha-yoga (a teaching of bringing one's body into harmonious state) a yoga (in the past known in the west and in our country rather in modifications, titled "autogenic training" or "psychic self-regulation").

Yoga includes a number of methodically independent parts: such as above mentioned hatha-yoga and raja-yoga, jnana-yoga ("yoga of wisdom", theoretical substantiation of the path of yoga), karma-yoga (ethical teaching, including among other notions about man's destiny and influences on it), bhakti-yoga (a higher, as compared to karma-yoga, stage of mastering ethics, emphasizing development of love), buddhi-yoga (teaching of perfecting consciousness). Sometimes separate authors also call the systems of outlook they expound, "yogas", as for example, agni-yoga of the Roerichs couple (in fact representing a manifest, a call to spiritual awakening) and so on.

The term "yoga" is inherent in Hinduism at most, it also was included into the vocabulary of Buddhism. Sometimes, when a wide interpretation of the term is used, different ethical teachings, including the Teaching of Jesus Christ, are referred "yogas".

The basic literary source of yoga is Indian Bhagavad-Gita, composed a few thousand years ago. But as well as the term "yoga", people who trod this path, had appeared long before creation of Bhagavad-Gita. As it was mentioned above, the goal of the yoga teaching is religious. It consists of achieving by the individual human consciousness that went through preliminary prolonged evolution, with the Creator's Consciousness. The Divine Perfection and merging with the Creator's Consciousness (God-Father, in Christian terminology) is called in Bhagavad-Gita, in particular, the achieving "the Supreme Abode". "Submerge your consciousness (buddhi) into Me (God) - truly you will then live in Me", - so Krishna formulates in Bhagavad-Gita the final goal of seeker. But if you are still unable of doing it now, says He, practice preliminary meditations. And if the technique of meditations is difficult for you as yet, learn to perform everything that you do in your life not for your personal benefit, but devote these actions to God. (In other words, first, do not think what you personally will get from it) (Bhagavad-Gita, 12:9-10). In these simple words, briefly speaking, is the essence of yoga path.

Now let us consider who are capable of treading it and how far? Are there many among us who are able of working for the sake of others selflessly? And among those who are able, can also meditate? Meditation, as one of the leading masters of modern yoga Rajneesh formulated, is the "state of no-mind".

That is before one is capable of practicing high forms of meditation, one must develop his intellect, then learn to control it whereas only that one who, possessing developed

mind, can govern it - only that one acquires possibility to develop his consciousness purposefully, passing through consecutive stages of buddhi-yoga: Samadhi, first achievement of Nirvana, "crystallization", then the height of Nirvana consisting of merging with the God-Father. These stages can not be mastered without preliminarily bringing one's body to the necessary level of perfection. And, apart from other considerations, advancement in the highest yoga is connected with the necessity of deep comprehension of laws of spiritual growth.

Are there many of us who can at least formulate clearly what "mind". ("manas" in Bhagavad-Gita) and "consciousness" (buddhi) are?

Incompetent people often identify these absolutely different meanings. Consciousness composes the basic essence of man. And it is purposeful work intended for developing one's consciousness through yoga methods that allows separate people to realize the highest human possibilities in themselves.

Why - separate people and who are they? They are those, firstly, who are able owing to a number of objective and subjective causes of making sense of all this; secondly, who had in themselves aspiration to self-perfection strong enough to renounce primitive "earthly" pleasures and brawls with other people and for many years made endless efforts and super-efforts in yoga's practice, and, thirdly, who endured a lot of ethical trials on this path.

In such a way we see that the highest yoga is not meant for everyone. Objective laws of man's development allow only those to direct their efforts towards intensive and conscious self-perfection, who have overcome in themselves passion for such values as exquisite food, money, fame and so on. Only for that one who is ready to renounce selfish attitude towards love, who is ready to easily and naturally sacrifice one's interests for other's sake - for such a one is the highest yoga.

It must not be inferred that people who do not practice yoga lose their time in vain. No, beside that benefit that many of them give to society with their work, in the process they develop in themselves those skills and habits that will be needful for them in the future, when they will "grow" in their psychogenesis to manifestation of irrepressible need of devoting themselves to studying yoga. And then yoga will provide them an opportunity to perform a "breakthrough" in their personal evolution.

The foundation of yoga is ethics. the basic principle of ethics is Love in the highest sense of this word. The word "love" denotes attraction, aspiration to union. And that which divides along any of features - national, religious etc. - is to love and yoga. (Let us pay attention, incidentally, that meanings of the words "love" and "yoga" are quite close).

Those schools which, using diverse systems of training, have as a basis of their world outlook other ethical principles, are not entitled to call themselves schools of yoga - at least because of discrepancy of their essence and the term "yoga" be called occult, sporting etc. schools, but not yogic ones.

Love is the basis and pivot of spiritual development. But it is far from easy to master it. To attain to true Love most of us require long strenuous work over ourselves. Consider such an example: a vast majority of people of this country who were subjected to perverted ideological "treatment" over the period of decades now find themselves capable of grasping the notion of love only as that of sexual passion and sex itself. "Love" as selfish sexual passion with "lawful" (in social opinion) right of jealousy and crimes related to it had been nurtured in school years as early as on examples of literary "classical works". While the concept of the highest spiritual Love was trampled upon along with other attributes of religion.

In Hindu yoga the tenet of Love is termed "bhakti". For the first time it was formulated in Bhagavad Gita where Krishna expounds fundamentals of yoga to His disciple Arjuna. In particular, Krishna promises more successful advancement to those beginners in yoga, who develop in themselves love to concrete Divine Teacher - in contrast to those who worships to the "non-manifested" (Ch.12).

It is "only Love (in a seeker)" (11:54) that is capable of achieving the final Goal.

Let us consider in detail the meaning of these lovely poetic words. Let us think why Krishna devotes so much attention in His religious Teaching to the necessity to learn to love, for example, "pure fragrance of the earth" instead of directing whole attention to the Creator?

The answer is the following. There is little value in love, so to say, "from mind" (that is, for example, I know that this is manifestation of love and love is a virtue so I shall do this way). Such - intellectual - love is good only as a precondition for developing true love - emotional one. And how is it possible to develop emotional love? And so Krishna suggests one achieves this through admiration, getting touched, attuned, emotional emergence with that best that exists around us in nature and in people.

Another one of the greatest Teachers in the history of mankind - a founder of Christianity Jesus - spoke of the same, proclaiming love for man to be a necessary prerequisite for formation of love for God. His whole Teaching set forth in the New Testament is filled with indications of how to do this.

So the basis of yoga is Love. One must develop it in oneself by all possible means - through communication with people and nature through the arts, studying ethical principles, fighting with one's own vices and so on. A fine additional method which accelerates the development of love is the use of special techniques of work with reflexogeneous zones of emotional sphere. It must be noted, however, that such techniques do not guarantee stable progress in development of the highest spiritual features if a practitioner lacks strong aspiration for acquiring them and also if he does not supplement the practice of the mentioned exercises with the transformation of his whole existence.

High rate of advancement along the path of spiritual development in yoga may be possible only in the case of the complex employment of methods. This implies intellectual work (expansion of knowledge, ethical self-analysis, aspiration to understand one's path and path of other people with the aim of helping them and so on, transformation and development of one's emotional sphere, preparatory and auxiliary exercises with body, work with consciousness. It is also desirable to purposefully use everyday activity (including professional one) in combination with specific methods of yoga training. The rate of a disciple's advancement directly depends on the quantity of the techniques combined. The pivot of the whole discipleship is ethics based on the principle of Love; this pivot gets enveloped with fruits of other practical methods. Among the latter ones, first emphasized is the development of the body and bioenergetic structures of the organism (chakras, meridians), and on higher and the highest stages - the work with consciousness. Efficient development of consciousness is possible only with the help of buddhi-yoga techniques.

Over the whole period of teaching a teacher must be quite watchful to the ability of each student to fully grasp that which he does in the process of his practice. This is not less essential than control over possible appearance of such quite incompatible with spiritual development as arrogance, self-admiration, intolerance. Utterly significant during transfer from one stage to another is the so called "intellectual qualification" whereas excessive portion of knowledge at the given moment may turn out to be a burden beyond a student

power. Students' own teaching activity when they share the knowledge of the stages they have passed allows them to consolidate that what they have mastered and promotes their achievement of maturity.

Each successive stage of study is conquered by considerably lesser quantity of students than the previous one. The highest stages of yoga are accessible only to a few out of thousands who started the practice. It is not possible to quickly satisfy even the strongest aspiration to Perfection: advancement consists as if of "ups" and "downs". The latter are necessary for consolidation of new stages, for accumulation of power for mastering new "ups", for intellectual understanding of the parts of one's Path, for resolution of arising ethical problems. Periods between "ups" may last from days to years and much more with different students. Attempts to artificially accelerate the process of a student's development by teaching him new techniques of training always yield negative results. One should always keep in mind another most important principle of teaching yoga: a student must be absolutely free to leave the teacher, the latter has no any right to compel a student to continue the study, attracting him towards himself even in thoughts.

And the last rule: specific methods of the highest stages of yoga must not be spread and revealed to unprepared students to avoid, among other things, their incorrect use. One should take into account usual tendency of people to do things of prestige as well as to read books from the end.



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