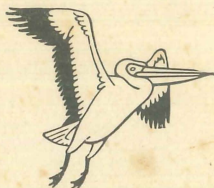


A PELICAN BOOK

2d edition
ERNEST WOOD *for Louis*

Yoga

An explanation of the
practices and philosophy of
Indian yoga, and how
they can be applied in
the West today



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ERNEST WOOD

YOGA

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CONTENTS

PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS	7
INTRODUCTION	9
1 The Why and the How of Yoga	11
2 The Goal of Yoga	21
3 The Ethics and Morality of Yoga	37
4 Yoga and the Intellect	58
5 The Breathing Practices of Yoga	80
6 The Postures of Yoga	106
7 Sense-control, Purifications, and other Practices	122
8 The Latent Body-Power of Yoga	140
9 The Journey and Goal of the Latent Power	159
10 Yoga and Vitality	174
11 The Use of Sounds in Yoga Practice	186
12 The Yoga of the <i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>	216
13 The Basic Philosophy of Yoga	235
Glossary of Sanskrit Words	249
Original Sanskrit Books and Treatises quoted	259
Books on Yoga in English	259
Index	263

that freedom, will find that he himself is free, and in that sense is the alone (*kevala*).

In the *Yoga Sūtras* the term freedom (*moksha*) is not used for this great attainment, or great experience, or great discovery; the word aloneness (*kaivalya*) is used, which is seen to mean independence when applied to God, and therefore must mean the same when applied to the perfect yogi. The dictionaries give 'oneness' also as a meaning of this word, and its relation to the word for 'one' (*eka*) confirms this rendering. The meaning of unity will be discussed in a later chapter, but here we may note that at least it implies entire non-antagonism towards the world, and entire non-conflict within the yogi's own mind.

A God such as we have defined cannot be thought of as someone *having* freedom, since that someone would have to be something of the nature of the things and beings who are not free. In this case there can be no 'owner and owned': the two must be one. Such a yogi also is free, because he sees that all things which have troubled or have pleased him are there with his full approval, because he understands their value and use for the removal of the error he has been making all his life in allowing himself to come into bondage to them. They are part of his yogic path. He is not unlike the successful Stoic, who could say that nothing happened contrary to his will. He is also in line with an enlightened Christian who might say that not a sparrow falls to the ground without that 'father'. He sees that whatever is is best for the present moment. Yet he is the last man to leave it as it is.

We have considered circumstances. Among them we have to include the body itself. To the yogi the body is an 'instrument'. It is a tool for the contact of his mind with the world. In his novitiate it is highly probable that for him the pleasures of the mind already rank much higher than the pleasures of the body. Since people have not usually an equal activity of thinking, feeling, and willing, there have arisen schools of yoga teaching which provide for the special types of mind, in which one or other of these three may predominate.

ate. Typical schools are the Vedānta, with knowledge as its chief part, aim, and method, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, with its 'welfare of the world' doctrine of goodness and devotion, and the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patanjali, in which the will is used to govern both mind and body. All these three typical schools of yoga are intended to lead to the same goal, but by different paths. All start at the periphery of everyday experience, and end in the same experience of unity.

As the student proceeds he finds that the mind also becomes an instrument – 'the inner instrument' – and the pleasures of the mind become decreasingly important, while the spiritual aim comes more and more into view. Then, just as before there was the realization that body and circumstances cannot help one on the yogic way, so now there is the realization that the mind cannot help. Then, however, the formula has again to be remembered: 'Enough is necessary.' Death of the mind will not help, any more than death of the body. The aspirant must be alive. The spirit speaks to the mind, however, and says: 'Having your mind on me, you shall come to my state beyond.'¹ Is there a suggestion here that the mind 'does the trick'? The appearance of such a thing is quite misleading. The idea is that all things of the body and senses, and all states and activities of the mind are merely phenomena, temporary playthings, just as a little girl playing with a doll gets nothing from the doll but awakens her own capacity by what she does in the course of the playing.

1. *Bhagavad Gītā*.

CHAPTER 2

THE GOAL OF YOGA

A VERY large number of people in Western lands have heard or read of *nirvāna*. This has become in fact a regular word of the English language, defined in dictionaries variously as the cessation of desire and craving, the annihilation of personality, the transcendence of all states of body and mind, a state of complete understanding or bliss. As the Sanskrit verb *nir-vā* means 'to blow out' (as, e.g., a candle), the emphasis is sometimes put upon annihilation, when it is overlooked that the philosophy of life in which nirvana is a technical term is specifically aiming at the removal of ignorance and craving.

In old Indian literature the word nirvana occurs mostly in the Buddhist books. The following is an extract from Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, which aims to present the life and teachings of Buddha as understood by a Southern Buddhist.

If he who liveth, learning whence woe springs,
Endureth patiently, striving to pay
His utmost debt for ancient evils done
In Love and Truth alway;

If making none to lack, he thoroughly purge
The lie and lust of self forth from his blood;
Suffering all meekly, rendering for offence
Nothing but grace and good;

If he shall day by day dwell merciful,
Holy and just and kind and true; and rend
Desire from where it clings with bleeding roots,
Till love of life have end:

He – dying – leaveth as the sum of him
A life-count closed, whose ills are dead and quit,
Whose good is quick and mighty, far and near,
So that fruits follow it.

YOGA

as well) will be unknown to us until we achieve the 'illumination' which Buddha himself achieved, which led to his saying:

I, Buddh, who wept with all my brothers' tears,
Whose heart was broken by a whole world's woe,
Laugh and am glad, for there is Liberty.
Ho! ye who suffer! know

Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compels,
None other holds you that ye live and die,
And whirl upon the wheel, and hug and kiss
Its spokes of agony,
Its tire of tears, its nave of nothingness.¹

In these words we find the former Gautama speaking of himself as Buddha, the enlightened.

Buddha, the title he now adopted, means 'enlightened'. It is understood that a Buddha is not a being who *has* enlightenment. We have to say that he *is* the light of enlightenment. Even with ourselves – men still on the way – we are not someone who has knowledge; we *are* the knowing, and indeed on close examination of ourselves, we find ourselves to be only 'knowing knowing knowing', as explained in my *Yoga Dictionary*.² This agrees, does it not, with the statement already quoted which declares it wrong to say that nirvana is to cease, or to live, and yet permits the expression 'lifeless, timeless bliss'?

All this is, of course, in accordance with the testimonies of many spiritual teachers and saints and sages in many lands who have spoken of the experience of unaccountable bliss and peace in the midst of ordinary scenes and affairs. It might be that lesser persons occasionally have an experience of an uplift which is nothing better than a nicer specimen of the same class of feelings that they had before – an answer, indeed, to their desire. Hence is the aspirant warned against *seeking* bliss. In the very seeking he has formulated to himself from his ignorance the nature of the bliss which can fulfil

1. *ibid.*, VIII.

2. Wood, Ernest, *Yoga Dictionary*.

THE GOAL OF YOGA

his desire, and thereby has shut himself out from the supernal new experience. That new experience will nevertheless be the result of his endeavours to lead the good and pure life in thought as well as deed, with mastery of the mind as well as the body inasmuch as, though he cannot *produce* the illumination in the manner in which he can produce material articles and even states of mind, he has 'removed the clouds' which obscure the face of the true sun.

Still, it must not be thought that the word nirvana is confined to Buddhist scriptures, or Buddhist philosophy and religion. In that most famous of all Hindu scriptures, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, believed by the Hindus to be much older than the teaching of Buddha, the word nirvana occurs several times:

Verses 24-6 in Chapter or Discourse v read:

He whose happiness is within, whose delight is within, and likewise whose light even is within – that yogi, being of the nature of Brahman, goes up into the nirvana of Brahman.

For those strivers who are disassociated from desire and anger, whose intelligence is controlled, whose (real) selves are known, near is the nirvana of Brahman.

Verses 71-2 in Discourse II read:

The man who lives without longing, having cast off desires, without possessiveness, without egotism – he attains peace. This is the Brahmic state. Having obtained this, one is not confused. Being established in this at the end of (one's) time, one reaches even the nirvana of Brahman.

And verse 15, Discourse VI, reads:

The yogi, with mind controlled, always meditating thus on the Self (*ātmā*), arrives at my state, nirvanic ultimate, which is peace.

Here, however, we have a qualification of the word nirvana, in the term 'the Nirvana of Brahman'.

This calls for inspection of the ideas attached to Brahman in this Scripture.

That the *Bhagavad Gītā* is the great scripture of yoga in the eyes of the Hindu people is testified by the 'headings' which

both matter and mind, having 'dependent origination' as the Buddhists describe it, are not of the nature of the Beyond. The Beyond is, in fact, frequently alluded to as 'That' in Hindu scriptures, in contradistinction to 'This', which contains both body and mind.

The word for Beyond (*para*) could also be translated as 'other than'. In both cases we have to beware of the ascription of any relativity between 'That' and 'This'. The Beyond has no relation whatever to 'This', for the simple reason that the beyondness of it takes it outside the sphere of any relativity or comparison whatsoever.

It is for this reason that the ascription of 'emptiness' or 'voidness' (terms used in some schools of thought) are quite invalid if applied to the Beyond, as the ultimate pair of opposites – presence and absence, fullness and emptiness, facts and space – are both transcended.

The 'That' or the Beyond therefore cannot be 'higher' than the two, also cannot be 'above', and thus *not being in a series* cannot again be transcended with a *regressus infinitus*.

The word 'reality' is probably the best term to name that Beyond, for if we ask ourselves what it is that both being and non-being, or both presence and absence, have in common, we can only say 'reality'. Reality is a good word for this, as it is the same as 'royalty'. Royalty is properly conceived as above the law – something beyond the categories of being and non-being, in this case.

God, also, is quite a good word, *if we remember* that it means this reality or fundamental Independence. The word can then be for us a word of discovery, not a word of definition. In science we have words of definition, but here we have a word with which to give *direction* to the mind, a word which is like a boat, such as Columbus used when he set out to discover something that he did not know.

Now that we have defined the goal of yoga as the discovery of the indefinable, we have to ask two more questions:

How can man, with either mind or body, make that discovery?

THE GOAL OF YOGA

his books, particularly *The Glorious Presence*, when we consider a system or group of mutually dependent articles – a group of planets, for example. In such a group, named, let us say, A to Z, any one of them is dependent upon the other twenty-five. They are all pulling it and pushing it all the time so that in the final balance of A, whether in the pose of rest or that of motion, it is what it is and does what it does under the power of those other twenty-five.

But here comes the important point and the hub of the mystery: that one named A is one of the twenty-five pushers and pullers in relation to any other one (B to Z). Therefore *everything and everyone has a share of the original power*, in all relational respects.

Can we become conscious of that power, and be aware of it, not merely of the pushings and pullings to which we are responding constantly? The yogi says we can, or at least he can, and when he discovers it he has found peace. Power is always peace – it is the machinery that makes the fuss.

This knowing of independence is an illumination and a mystery. What does the water-lily plant know of the sunshine and air, and of its own flowering in that ambience? Yet, while still in the root in the mud and while still in the stem in the water it displays the impulse by which it takes itself to that goal. It is true – what the poets feel – that in standing and in walking and even in lying down we in some degree float, to the extent of our share of the original power. The apple that falls to the ground also lifts the earth. This is true of the mind as well as the body. Without that independence there would be no response, no knowing, for at base there is no such thing as the completely passive reception of modifications in consciousness.

This independence is *the Self*. To know this as the Self is the goal of the yogi. This Self cannot but be of the same nature as the original power. In the *Bhagavad Gītā* it is precisely expressed as such:

A share of myself, having become an eternal living being in the world of living beings, attracts the sense-organs, of which mind is the sixth, which are situated in Nature.

This is definitely, by definition, a school of Buddhist meditation, though it derives not from any verbal teachings or instructions given by Buddha, but from 'a special transmission (by Buddha) outside the Scriptures, with no dependence on words and letters'. It is related that on a certain occasion a flower was presented to Buddha with a request to state the *Dharma*. Buddha simply held up the golden flower and gazed at it in silence. One of the disciples, the Venerable Mahakasyapa, caught the idea (no, we must not call it that!) which could not be spoken, nor even thought, and was transported with joy. That radiance then became transmissible from one to another, as one candle lights another – in this case if the other is ready for it. But the radiance is everywhere, and so the method of *Zen* postulates an endeavour and promises an achievement attainable by the 'meditation' with no mind, which is no-mind. This is achieved, according to some of its teachers, by means of mind-baffling statements (*koans*) to be tackled by the aspirants in meditation, or by startling non-logical assertive questions (*mondos*) to which the disciple must instantaneously respond. These are problems which life sets us all the time, so the disciple must at all times and in all circumstances face everything with this beyond-the-mind faculty if we may be pardoned for so or in any way describing or alluding to it. It is indescribable, and there is no distinction between knower and known (no such duality). Even subject-self is overcome. The resulting experience or condition is called *satori*. It conforms to Buddha's teaching that the last of the 'fetters' to go is Ignorance or Error, the conceiving of oneself as anything conceivable.

It is thus seen that the 'goal' is the same for all, whether Yogis, Vedantins, Christians, Zenists. To this list we should add the Sufis, with their stages of awakening, purification, illumination, and union or identification, which is achieved by completely self-forgetting devotional love, so that it could be said that when the union is gained the man is not lost and yet only God goes on.

Still, as we have already said, the majority of aspirants are

Ford. When being interviewed by a news reporter he happened to remark that he never made a mistake. The reporter, surprised, asked for an explanation, and was told, 'Of course, I have done many things ignorantly and sometimes without sufficient thought, but I learned from those actions, and would not have learned otherwise, so they were not fundamentally mistakes.'

In India there is also a definite doctrine of 'fate' with regard to events which is expounded in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. There the teacher says:

Learn from me the five lines of causation (which appear) in the achievement of every action, as stated in the concluding portion of the *sāṅkhya* (philosophy): (1) The site for it; (2) the doer of it; (3) the different kinds of instruments used in it; (4) the various different kinds of functions (or motions) employed; and (5) the divinity (or fate). Whatever action a man undertakes – whether in the right way or in the wrong way – these five are the causes of it.¹

It may not occur to the reader at first glance, but the fifth of these reasons always comes in. The average Hindu is therefore in accord with the statement of Robert Burns, that 'the best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley'. More than that, we may always expect an unseen (*adrishta*) element to come in, which may in fact upset a good plan or, on the other hand, bring a bad one to a successful conclusion.

Such unseen and incalculable elements are 'those which arrive without effort' (*prāptas*). The Western person is often annoyed when something 'accidental' spoils his work or his plans. The Oriental expects it, or at least is not surprised by it, and so accepts it without anger or resentment. He attributes it to the unseen, which, being beyond mind – beyond the most perfect planning – is of the *deva* nature, or the gods, but still within the field of causation, the result of some karma, or action previously done.

Whether it is an adverse 'accident' (i.e. unseen factor) or a propitious one, still the yogi is pleased (*santushta*) with

1. *ibid.*, xviii, 13-15.

Those people who inflict upon themselves fierce austerity (*ghora tapas*) ... unintelligent ... suppressing the groups of (small) beings in their bodies, and me (the spirit) also established within the body – know them as having demoniac resolves.¹

This is confirmed by a description of the foods that are good and are liked by the people whose taste is pure, as 'those which increase vitality, bodily harmony, strength, health, pleasure, and gratification, and are juicy, oily, firm, and heartening'².

The *Yoga Sūtras* are also very clear on this point – that austerity (*tapas*) does not mean injury to the body.

From *tapas*, with the decline of impurity, come the powers (or perfections; *siddhis*) of the body and the organs (of sense and action), and: 'Excellence of the body consists of correct form, beauty, strength, and very firm well-knitness'.³

The last word (*vajra-sanhananatwa*) though usually regarded as referring to hardness, could also mean 'great energy', for *vajra* means 'thunderbolt' as well as 'diamond', and *sanhananatwa* means 'mightiness' or 'powerfulness'.

Enough has been said to show that austerity (*tapas*) does not mean mortification, and must mean body-conditioning, with great firmness of will, avoiding all bodily indulgence and insisting upon that quantity and kind of food, exercise, and rest which one believes to be best for the body. This is, of course, good common sense also, leading to greater bodily health, pleasure, and happiness than can be obtained by thoughtlessness or weak indulgence.

To show that this attitude is not merely that of the *rāja-yoga* school, and of philosophic schools such as the *Bhagavad Gītā* represents, we will quote also from that most authoritative of *hatha-yoga* works, the *Hathayoga Pradīpikā*: 'Over-eating; effortful exertion; idle chatter; hard vows; needing to be with people; restlessness – by these six yoga is ruined.'⁴

Finally, that there may be no doubt whatsoever in this important matter, we will quote that most abstract of all philosophers, Shankarāchārya, he who over two thousand

1. *ibid.*, xvii, 5, 6. 2. *ibid.*, xvii, 8. 3. *Yoga Sūtras*, ii, 43; iii, 45.
4. *Hathayoga Pradīpikā*, i, 15.

THE ETHICS AND MORALITY OF YOGA

years ago – according to orthodox belief – made India ring with the One Reality (*advaita*) doctrine:

Seat or posture is only that in which contemplation of Brahman can be comfortable and continuous; that should be adopted, not others which interfere with comfort.

Straightness of limbs occurs when there is resting in harmony with Brahman, not if there is only straightness like a dried-up tree.

Having achieved knowledge-sight, one sees the world as composed of Brahman – that kind of seeing is the highest, not the gazing in front of the nose. Or when there is the cessation of (the distinction of) seer, seeing, and seen, there is the *Steadiness of Vision*.¹

Coming now to the fourth of the five Observances, Self-study (*swādhyāya*), we will briefly say that it means there should be some daily study bearing upon the nature of oneself – not merely study of outward or objective things. There is plenty of difference of opinion about what study this implies. Many maintain that it must refer to the study of one's own scriptures, one's own religion; but the general attitude of the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy which pervades the *Yoga Sūtras* should discount this view. It is true that *swa* does not mean 'self', but as a prefix means 'one's own' (e.g. *swa-karma* means an action done by oneself; *swakula* means one's own family; *swadesha* means one's own country). We shall probably rightly take the meaning to be the study of what really concerns oneself – on the principle that 'the proper study of mankind is man', the study of one's own being and nature, as distinguished from the study of external things, which is usually pursued for some gain to the bodily life.

Finally, we come to the fifth of the Observances, attentiveness to God (*Īshwara pranidhāna*).

It is really problematical how one should regard the idea of God as ruler (*Īshwara*) in the *Yoga Sūtras*. Usually the first tendency is to think that one should feel devotion to the Founder or the Basis of all known being – both matter and

1. *Aparokshānubhūti* (Direct Experience), by Shankarāchārya, verses 115 and 116, translated in Wood, Ernest, *The Glorious Presence*.

life. But to be grateful to God as Ruler is one thing, and to regard God as the model or archetype of one's own future state of being is another. The latter is the formulation in the meditative portion of the *Yoga Sūtras* – a matter already dealt with in our Chapter 2. The yogi must become unaffected by troubles – of which ignorance is the chief and the source of all – or by works and their effects outside or inside.¹

In the meantime, however, he is to remember that this *Īshwara* is not an independent being withdrawn into himself by the possession of complete free will. It is the Master or Ruler of all who or which have not attained the same, and the ruler for their good, that is, the supreme Teacher. The implication of this combination of a supreme ruler and teacher is that no one can escape the benevolent lessons of life even for a moment, and therefore devotion is perfectly in order. The hand of God is in every event, and the constancy of it gives it the aspect of Law, even the 'laws of Nature'.

To receive all experience in the devotional spirit, knowing that the fruitage of the lesson comes after the experience, not before it, nor even during it, includes at once great faith and great love of God. We might conceivably – might we not? – have found ourselves in a perfectly hellish state of life in which there was only endless torment, disorder, and chance. How grand it is to be under this Rule, such that even the mind cannot fundamentally stray, and cannot miss the benefit even of its own errors. What grandness, what joy, to be under this rule, and even more to feel and understand that some day we shall be part of the ruling, not of the ruled, when our life will not be only permeated by the joy of the understanding of the Law as now, but will itself be the glory of the being of it.

Thus comes in 'Attentiveness to God', which is the acceptance of all experience without resentment or antagonism, not merely seeing the good in everything, but seeing the God in everything, which puts our emotions as

1. *Yoga Sūtras*, i, 23, 24, already quoted.

THE ETHICS AND MORALITY OF YOGA

well as our understanding right. Such is the 'love of God' when that teachership is known.

The *Sūtras*, continuing their definition of God, further explain:

In That is the ultimate source of all knowledge.

That same was the Teacher of the ancients, not being limited by time.

Of That the expressor is the sacred syllable (*Om*).

There should be repetition of this, with pondering upon its meaning.¹

These ethical and moral heights which are thus taught as the very beginning of the yoga path are announced not merely as leading to inward benefit. Their effects are stated to permeate the external living also. The benefits (which as they arise again contain new lessons) which the good receive – and what nonsense is this modern pose of being ashamed of goodness! – are announced in definite order, according to the list of ten, the two fives. These are briefly stated, so it is necessary for the student to interpret them, amplify them, and apply them to his own life by his own thought, and then, in due course, realize their magic.

When non-injury is accomplished, there will be abandonment of animosity in his presence.

When non-lying is accomplished, the results of actions become subservient to him.

When non-theft is accomplished, all jewels approach him.

When non-sensuality is accomplished, vigour is obtained.

When non-greed is accomplished, there arises perception of the method of births.

From (external) cleanliness arises protectiveness of the body and detachment from others.

And then, when there is mind-cleanliness, come (in order) high-mindedness, attentiveness (or one-pointedness), mastery of the senses, and fitness for the vision of the self.

From Contentment comes the obtaining of the highest form of pleasure.

From Body-conditioning, with the decline of impurity, come the powers of the body and the senses.

1. *ibid.*, i, 25-8.

tation'; he is meditating. The well-known fact that the mind improves or grows by exercise applies here. In the early days of the practice of meditation the student often finds his mind very dull. It does not bring forth many thoughts. But as the practice proceeds it will be found that the mind becomes active and brings forth a veritable fountain of thoughts. Even so, on a given subject, or object of thought, the fountain will come to the end of its resources. If then the intention (the will, the concentration) still goes on (now being in a void of thinking) there will be intuition or illumination. Something quite new, not seen or thought of before, will arise. It will at the same time bring delight, for there is an enrichment of consciousness.

It is not that one's consciousness is enriched by a new thought, or enhanced by an accumulation of thoughts (like the stamp collection of a philatelist). It is rather an awakening or a growth of conscious being and power. All the objects of perception and thought are thus very much like a little girl's doll. The doll does not do anything; the child does everything. The child awakens and enhances its own being. The doll only provides a ground for the concentration and meditation, which the little girl is unconsciously doing when she plays with it. Her mother would be far from pleased if she saw that the girl was only accumulating dolls, and not growing into a woman.

It is not desirable that the girl when playing with the doll should think of this process or its results. She should not be saying to herself, 'I am playing with this doll in order to grow into a mother.' What conception of mother-love can the child have before it is developed? The child is having pleasure only, but that prepares the ground for the awakening of love. Prior to that awakening, the child's thought, if so directed, could only lead to a wrong picture – quite likely to egotism and self-satisfaction, of which mother-love is quite the reverse.

The good teacher of meditation tells the student not to think of the results of his practices. In entering upon a meditation he *must not* predetermine the results, for the

reason that he is going to arrive at something which he does not previously know. These meditations must be undertaken *without desire*, if one would have the newness of life. This is the setting aside of 'the *old man*' and the opening of the door to 'newness of life'.

There is not in this advice to meditate the assumption that the aspirant is aiming at great things. The trouble with us is that we do not know anything well, or well enough, or we are far from knowing it as it is. What do we know, for example, of strength, or love, or courage, or the wing of a butterfly? The crudity of the average mind is almost incredible. 'Meditate on the strength of the elephant,' says the yogi, and then you will get a better conception of strength – not a definition of strength, but an experience of strength in the mind. All things have qualities. To see those qualities well is to have them in the mind. The relaxedness and the alertness of the cat can be ours not by mental formulation and definition, but by contemplation. All things are qualities, and we can be one with a group of those, in one act of direct perception.

The Practice of Meditation. The teacher of concentration often tells his students simply to go on trying to keep the attention upon one thing, and bring it back whenever it wanders, until at last it obeys, like a 'broken-in' horse, and concentration then becomes a habit. This is not the best way; it lacks psychological subtlety.

Let it be noticed, first of all, that the mind has a habit of drifting – picture follows picture on a line of least resistance, or a line of habit, and this is mostly habit of the emotions, of desires and aversions born of past pleasures and pains. Thus if one says 'cow', the succession of so-called thoughts may be 'milk – baby – cot – furniture store – Stenton's – San Francisco – Golden Gate Bridge – iron-foundry – fire – forest fire-fleeing animals – running – Olympic games –' and so on, over the hills and far away.

The second thing to notice is that we have the power to stop this flow, and often do so. For example, in the series given, we might stop at the bridge and begin to go over the

picture of the bridge. We might even start wondering about its material, its design, and indeed many things. The exercise of this power is concentration.

In concentration the same picture is attended to in successive moments. Some people ensure this by the repetition of a word. But when the power of concentration is established there should be no need of such repetition. It should be enough that you have decided to attend to the idea of the bridge. Further, such attention may be actual. Disregarding for the time being all the rest of the scenery, you may decide to look at the bridge more carefully than before. From this comes the term concentration. You are bringing your diffused attention to a focus on a comparatively small thing. Then, of course, you will see it better than ever you did before. All the same, actual visualization in meditation is not necessary; people differ very much in this respect, and it is not important.

This can be done with small things also, such as a bit of colour or a sound, by giving exclusive attention to it. Near me on the table there is a kitchen towel with a pattern of red squares, or rather with red lines leaving white squares. That red colour is pleasing, and as I attend to it closely I find that I see the redness of the red better than I have seen red before. The same would also apply to notes on the musical scale. If we have not acquired some precision in observing these or hearing them carefully at some time in the past there will surely be some deficiency in our ability to appreciate music, and probably we shall like only that 'music' which is thrust at us blaringly and crudely – something that compels our attention. Some things compel our attention, some attract it, but in yoga we aim to have voluntary attention, so that we may properly awaken or grow, and properly reproduce things on the screen of imagination for the purposes of thought.

Another important thing to notice is that for concentration you do not need force or tension. Calm looking is best. It is just bad habit which makes us think that intensity helps. In practice, it is found to be quite the reverse. Atten-

think about a tail, but return to the centre, as before. Continue. You may get twenty or thirty arrow-words. Continue. There will be some waiting and searching, but continue. You may get forty or fifty words. Continue; and do not give up until at least five minutes after no more words come.

In this way you acquire concentration without thinking about concentration. After several practices your mind learns to keep to a subject when previously directed to do so, instead of wandering and dissipating its energies. There arises a *mood of return* to the centre. After a little while you can put this mood on like a garment. You have found the feel of it, and now a small act of will sets it in operation, just as you walk and go somewhere definite as the result of a small act of will. You do not need to think of concentration, but can swing your mind round to things and thoughts, or from one to another, with great and calm definiteness. You can then use this for all kinds of mental work – reading, studying, writing, lecturing, teaching, etc.

In yoga practice, however, this concentration is used as a step to the further practices of meditation and contemplation. These are functions, something that you do, not static conditions and states. Even contemplation (*samādhi*) is something that you *do*, though it is not thinking, and you do not think about it when you are doing it, once you have acquired it.

In the practice with the sheet of paper, let us notice the difference between concentration and meditation. After you have completed your concentration you possess a sheet of paper with many arrow-words on it. For the elementary exercises of meditation lay this completed sheet on the table, note the first arrow-word, for example, milk. Do not forget it or put it out of mind, as you did in the elementary concentration practice, but slide your eye back to the cow, carrying the idea of milk with you, and then *think*. Think all you can about the relations between the milk and the cow. When this is finished (and only you can judge as to when this is, but let the judgement not be motivated by impatience or the desire to get it done and done with), turn to the next arrow-

manipulate inside itself (in imagination) thousands of facts, and similarly it is incredible to the mind-self (pictured, as it is, as one of those facts) that consciousness can be enjoyed without it. The truth is that 'I' is not then eliminated, but is revealed to itself as no object. That is what our 'I' always is, but the mind clothes it in thought, and looks at it from the outside.

There are certain conditions which go against this attainment. In his *Vedānta Sāra* (Essence of Vedānta), Sadānanda Swāmi has called them the four enemies of *samādhi*: a sleepy heart, attachment to anything but Brahman, human passions, and a confused mind.

One must not here, in the chapter on mind-process, go into the full discussion of Self or I.

In the standard descriptions of *samādhi*, or contemplation, two kinds are usually mentioned, and described as:

- (1) with consciousness of an object (*samprajñāta*), and
- (2) without consciousness of an object (*asamprajñāta*).

The former of these two is an earlier stage of attainment than the latter. Still, it is not only a step on the way to the latter. It is definitely a platform of conscious living, and has a definite ability of its own. While the latter is concerned with meditation about what is beyond subject and object, the former is concerned with things known in the world. In the course of this perceptive form of meditation and *samādhi* there are two stages:

- (a) Inspectional (*vitarka*), and
- (b) Investigational (*vichāra*).

The inspectional is concerned with objective things as known in time and space, and therefore often described as dense or gross. The object of this state is to get a clear image in consciousness of the object chosen for meditation at any given time.

The investigational is intended to find out the subtle characters or abstract natures of such things, that is, the characteristics and qualities of them which are not visible to the senses. This requires much thought about categories or classes of the objects, and their constants behind time

When the intuition has come, in any degree, there is a sense of delight which sustains the condition. This is *ānanda* and is an experience of the state of mind in connexion with the object. And next comes sense of being, not merely of knowing but of being the knower (*asmitā*), a conscious ability of self-government, over which one's thoughts and feelings cannot prevail. This is coming near the mountain top or peak (*kūtaśtha*). We could call them respectively the enjoyment of knowing and the enjoyment of the sense of power of knowing, or self-enhancement.

In the investigational and non-investigational meditation and contemplation the seed (*bīja*) will lead to some intuition with respect to the subtle matters under consideration, and to great growth of the mind, even to its complete maturity.

Beyond these four stages there is the contemplation without the idea of subject and object, of the seer and the seen (*asamprajñāta samādhi*). In this the student has to become conscious of the spirit (*puruṣa*). Before this he has been concerned with observing the world or the mind, or both. It becomes necessary to realize that the body is not conscious, but we are conscious of the body, also that the mind is not conscious but we are conscious of the mind. A first glimpse of this can be gained from the following occurrence:

One day a teacher of meditation (*guru*) told one of his pupils to walk to the far end of the room and back and sit down. Then he asked:

'What were you doing just now? Were you walking?'

The pupil went over his action mentally, and observed everything that he had done, and then replied:

'I was not walking. I was watching the body walk.'

Next the teacher held up a flower and asked him to meditate upon it for a few minutes. After this had been done the teacher questioned:

'What were you doing just now? Were you meditating?'

After due observation and reflection the pupil answered:

'I was not meditating. I was watching the mind meditate.'

In this manner the pupil acquired a sudden discrimina-

tion between the self and the mind. He had a momentary release from the thought of himself as mind.

Now he became fit for the practice of the super-conscious (*asamprajñāta*) or seedless (*nirbīja*) *samādhi*. He would now set his mind to think of the unthinkable – God; the Absolute; Consciousness; Self; Reality. Can he think of what is beyond matter and its varieties, beyond mind and its categories or classes? The mind says, 'No'; yet he has had the experience in the moment of discrimination (*viveka*).

The pupil did not know it before, but he has had the experience. He will now set himself the seemingly impossible task. He will tell his mind to think on God, Truth, Reality, Self, Consciousness, the Absolute.... There is no gas for this ballooning; nothing on earth or in the mind can help him. He must make no comparisons or contrasts, no definitions, no categories. He must use his own jet-power to ride over all these things. In his practice he can use words (1) to keep other thoughts out of the picture, and (2) to act as boats for the voyage of discovery. These are not words of definition, but words of discovery.

He will find that he has to perform this feat by an act (or acts) of being. He will know the being, because the being has its own knowing, which is direct, without any intermediate or mediating thing or thought. This act of being is sustained by his will. He has set his face towards the *fulfilment* of the will. After all, all his doing and having in the past has only been operated to serve his experience of being. We do not fundamentally want *to have* and *to do*; we only want *to be*, and we use the having and doing for that purpose. Further, our will to be is not content with anything; it seeks its goal beyond the irksome limits of having and doing. Man will not be really happy until he is consciously one with God, and shares the freedom of that one Reality.

There in the will is indeed another seed, but it is the seed not of anything in the world or in the mind, but of the Beyond which alone accounts for the 'here'. The will never changes; it always points to that true North. The mind is of the mud of earth, except in this one fact. Therein is that

spark of original power and being, even in the midst of the mind and the body. Man cannot master other things, because all have the right to master themselves; but man can master himself and be without fear. He can learn that all things serve him and he them, and that nothing in his life happens contrary to his will, which is so little known by the rest of his mind, which yet can come to know and thus enter that glorious service, and will come to know this through the *asamprajñāta samādhi*. 'Man is the mirror of the universe', it has been said. Yes, and in this point of joyous vision and service the mirror of God and his freedom, reality, truth, self, and all. Thus he will find God here, even in the mind, and be able to say from experience, 'He who cannot find God here cannot find him anywhere'.

In some of the preceding paragraphs I have mentioned meditation and contemplation together. The reason for this is that concentration, meditation, and contemplation form a sequence, always together. The act or practice begins with concentration, which then continues inside or behind the meditation. It goes on with meditation and then continues in or behind the contemplation, which remains within its scope.

Still, nothing goes on forever, and the upward way is like a stair, not an inclined plane. Each stair or platform prepares for the next. In childhood we develop mostly our bodies and senses. Later, when these are mature and have practically stopped growing we develop especially our emotions. Later still, our thoughts, and at last some synthetic wisdom. Therein lies the doctrine of the archetypes. It would not do for our bodies to grow a hundred feet tall; the leverages would be wrong, say the biologists. Yet there is some degree that can be called perfect body. When it reaches that, it stops. So also with emotions and mind. The archetype is not a blueprint, a prototype, but a limit. It is not perfection in the abstract.

We can have perfect dog, perfect cat, perfect cow, and then if the life is to go on, it must inhabit something else. So, when the mind is matured by experience or meditation,

it is logical and natural that something new should manifest, or that a spark of newness which was always there should now become a flame which, with its light and power, will create and govern the new scene.

It is very important that the student should not feel discouraged. For one thing, he should remember that whatever meditation is done in periods allotted to it, or in spare minutes of opportunity, leaves its permanent gain. It is like physical exercise in this respect; ten minutes in the morning will result in better health and strength all day.

It will help if the student remembers that meditation is not a condition in which one is, but is a function which one is performing. Compare it with walking; walking is not a condition which you are in, but is a function you are performing. The same applies also to such matters as breathing and digesting, but in this case the function has become a habit or has been handed over to the physical dynamic habit mechanism.

This remark applies to all the three 'inner' limbs (*angas*) of yoga, named concentration (*dhāranā*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and contemplation (*samādhi*), which are numbers 6, 7, and 8 in the series of eight limbs. All the 'limbs' are something that you *do*, not something that you *are*. Because these three are operations of the mind, not of the body, they are described as 'inner limbs' (*antaranga*): 'The three are inner compared with the previous (limbs).'¹

At this point it is also explained that there is a name for all three, taken together as one operation: 'The three in oneness are poise (*sanyama*).'²

1. *ibid.*, iii, 7.

2. *ibid.*, iii, 4. The word *sanyama* has been translated by some as 'restraint', so it becomes necessary for me to explain my translation of it as poise. If the word *yama* means to restrain or hold back, as it does in the five Abstentions, and the same with *ni* in *niyama* means to hold steady (the verb *niyam* is, in fact, used for the binding up of the long hair), the *sanyama* (the prefix *san* meaning 'together') can easily be understood as 'holding together'. Such an idea is not to be confused with checking, still less with check-mating or stoppage. It does, however, involve a unified poise with reference to the object or idea at a given time under review

The expression 'three in one' indicates that there is a combined action. In practice one begins with concentration (selection of an object), continues with meditation (the fullest possible comprehension of the object), and proceeds to contemplation. The three constitute one operation. To plunge into *samādhi* without previously selecting an object for it is contrary to yoga practice, and could result in a negative condition of mind.

The practice of the mind-poise (*sanyama*) on various selected objects and ideas usually follows a course beginning with simple concrete objects, through complex concrete, simple abstract, complex abstract, the mind processes, and finally the Looker or Self itself (*drashtā*, *purusha*, *ātman*). This does not mean that there is to be a laborious sequence every time. After a while concentration becomes very swift – almost momentary – and meditation, or the review of relevancies, almost equally so in a well-known subject. These two stages may be described as respectively 'grip' and 'grasp'.

Many students feel discouraged when they should not. They should not think of results, but do the work when opportunity offers. Celebrated is the case of Arjuna, the disciple of Shri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The teacher

or treatment. It involves, as poise always does, whether in poetry or in the dance, an elimination of irrelevancies. Poise is dynamic – something quite different from pose, which is static.

While on the subject of words in the *Yoga Sūtras* involving the conception of some kind of restraint, it may be well to look at the word 'control' (*nirodha*) as appearing in 'Yoga is control (*nirodha*) of the ideas (*vr̥ttis*; literally "whirlpools") in the mind (*chitta*)' (*Yoga Sūtras*, i, 2). The control of ideas and of idea-impulses involved in this general definition of yoga practice cannot mean mere stoppage or suppression. The definitions of concentration, meditation, and contemplation, already given in this chapter, preclude such a supposition. It is true that thoughts and thinking come to an end and are replaced by direct vision, but this is after meditation, not before it, and the practice involves control, not suppression. Even in *samādhi* there are objects of attention, ending with the mind-poise on discrimination – knowledge (*viveka-khyāti*) which results in the 'looker' (*drashtā*; consciousness) residing in his own state, which is independence (*kaivalya*).

(*guru*) tells the pupil (*shishya*) to make his thinking mind (*manas*) one-pointed (*ekāgra*) and then proceed with his yoga for the purification of himself.¹ 'Whenever,' he says, 'the unsteady mind wanders off, then, having held it firm, let him bring it, controlled, under the Self.'²

This was to be done little by little, said Shri Krishna. Arjuna, however, did not view the task hopefully. He exclaimed, 'The mind (*manas*) is very restless, O Krishna, impetuous, powerful, and firm. I think it is as hard to control as the wind.' The teacher's reply was definite and simple: 'Undoubtedly the mind (*manas*) is restless and hard to control, but it is held by practice (*abhyāsa*) and uncolouredness (*vairāgya*).'³

The word 'uncolouredness' may seem rather uncouth, but it well expresses the idea, that one must not let one's emotions be coloured by the various things and ideas which come up. Some have translated this word as 'dispassion', 'indifference', 'non-attachment', etc., but 'uncolouredness' is absolutely literal. The student should notice that anxiety and the feelings of difficulty and of hankering for success are colouring the feelings and the mind, and so he should think of what he is doing, not of results. Then success will accrue.

A further anxiety is next shown by Arjuna. He asks what happens if the aspirant falls away from his purpose, or fails to attain success. Krishna replies that after death he will live in the inner worlds according to his merit, for a long time, and then: 'He who fell from yoga is born (again) in a pure and fortunate house. Or he even comes into a family of wise yogis, though a birth such as this is very hard to obtain in this world. There he obtains the *buddhic* attainments of his previous incarnations, and thence he again strives for full accomplishment.'⁴

A description of the psychic powers available to man, and appearing occasionally among the yogis of India and also quite often in spiritualist and psychic research circles in the West, will find its most appropriate place in this book in

1. *Bhagavad Gītā*, vi, 12.

2. *ibid.*, vi, 26.

3. *ibid.*, vi, 35.

4. *ibid.*, vi, 40-3.

Lordship (*ishatwā*). Control of the energies of Nature, at will.

Self-control (*vashitwā*). Self-command and freedom from being influenced, at will.

Desire-control (*kāmasayita*). The stopping of all desires, at will.

These are interpreted in detail in various ways, subjective and objective, by various yogis, *gurus*, and writers.¹

Before leaving this topic, it seems desirable to reiterate that the *rāja-yogī* is aiming at the experience of inward illumination beyond all sensation. He is aiming not to be governed by impulses of any kind from outside, however relatively superior. He aims at the mountain-top (*kūtaśtha*) not to 'rest' on any object (*ālambana*).

A symbol frequently used to emphasize this point is that of the lotus plant. It rises from the mud, grows through the water, and flowers in the air and sunshine. That stem growing upward through the water (when it would be so much easier to lie along the ground at the bottom) knows nothing of the flowering that is to be. Yet it responds to an *inner* impulse. So the *rāja-yogī* obeys an inner impulse, not presuming to state to himself what the flowering will be like. The simile of the grub and the butterfly is also used to illustrate the aim of the *rāja-yogī*. The seeker of psychic powers, on the other hand, is still under the fascination of known things, and is only asking for them to be enhanced. As St Paul puts it, the proper aim is newness of life and the setting aside of the *old* man.

*

1. The lists differ. In my *Yoga Dictionary* I have given heaviness (*garimā*) instead of desire-control, but here I have allowed heaviness to be assumed along with lightness. In my *Glorious Presence* I have simplified them into unlimited smallness, largeness, lightness, heaviness, vision, movement, creativeness, and control.

CHAPTER 5

THE BREATHING PRACTICES OF YOGA

IN the foregoing chapters we have considered what may be called the spiritual or ultimate aim of yoga, then the ethical and moral principles, and then the intellectual. We come now to study the teachings of yoga concerning the body.

These are given in Patanjali's list as of three kinds – the limbs (*angas*) of yoga dealing with (a) posture (*āsana*), (b) with breathing (*prāṇāyāma*), and (c) with control of the senses (*pratyāhāra*).

The practice of *prāṇāyāma* can be described as voluntary control of inbreathing, outbreathing, and holding the breath. This is done chiefly for the setting up of a new condition of breathing intended to become habitual after sufficient voluntary practice. In this connexion it is found that the transition from effort to habit is accompanied by a feeling in the mind (which we may call a mood), growing and becoming definite in the course of the process, whereby later on at any time when one finds that the breathing has reverted to a bad or undesired habit one may remember the feel of the mood, and with an almost imperceptible act of will, re-establish the new habit.

The growth of this 'mood' implies that while the outer actions are being practised the inner 'power' is being cultivated. This is quite analogous to what takes place when a swimmer approaches the water; by a very slight remembering of the mood of the mind during swimming he instantly adapts a complex system of physical reflexes to the act of swimming. There is a story about a lady who fell off a pleasure steamer. She was a good swimmer, but on this occasion she thrashed about and showed every sign of being about to drown until suddenly she became quite calm and was seen to be swimming steadily towards the boat. On

THE BREATHING PRACTICES OF YOGA

being asked afterwards, she explained that she was confused and did not know what had happened until suddenly she regained her wits and exclaimed to herself, 'Why! I am in the water,' and then she swam.

A second purpose of the practice of *prānāyāma* is to develop a few techniques which may be used (and also may become temporary habits connected with moods) on special occasions. Just as our breathing changes during exertion, so it can change when there is a fall or rise of temperature affecting the body, or with change of atmospheric pressure or of humidity. In this category comes what has sometimes been called 'the healing breath' to be used when one needs a pick-me-up. This is the 1:4:2 technique described later in this chapter.

A third purpose of *prānāyāma* practice is to acquire the ability to set up and keep in motion during meditation a quieter kind of breathing than is usual during our active operations, as has already been explained. This breathing will supply the oxygen needed by the brain and body during the great quietness required for successful meditation. The reader will probably remember that in our chapter on 'Yoga and the Intellect' we have emphasized the necessity for 'attention without tension' in our description of how to meditate. Thus the breathing desirable during meditation is somewhat similar to that during sleep, in which the movement is slower and deeper and quieter than during ordinary wakeful activity. This condition should be practised, so that the yogi may know the feel of the mood of it, and be able to set it going at the beginning of his periods of meditation.

Posture is described before breathing in Patanjali's *Sūtras*. A mode of sitting suitable for meditation having been established, he says, the next consideration is regulation of the breathing. In this book I am putting breathing practices before postures, as it is intended for the West, where breathing exercises can be done by all regardless of particular postures.

Correct breathing is important. It is merely a commonplace to say that the average modern sedentarily-occupied

person would do well for the sake of his or her future health and happiness to perform a few exercises to benefit the less used muscles. This applies particularly to the muscles of the chest, the abdomen, the neck, and the eyes. In the present chapter we are especially concerned with exercises in breathing – a matter which the teacher of elocution or of singing also finds necessary.

We may remember at the outset that the object of yoga exercises is never to produce athleticism, but only balance and healthy economy in the body. A discipline is needed for this. Some opponents of yoga have said that they prefer naturalness to discipline, overlooking the fact that people have become very unnatural, and that the so-called naturalness is only habit in any case. There are some people who consider it natural to do many things which are nothing better than bad habits of action, thought, and emotion. Taste-enjoyments – to take an example – are often acquired. In the yogi the aim in external living is wise orderliness, intelligence in all things, including breathing, and this in its turn is regarded as only a jumping-off place for the achievement of a new, additional, spiritual wisdom to be arrived at through intuition (*pratibhā*). This sort of naturalness is seen in the treatment of breathing by Patanjali.

In the *Yoga Sūtras* very little is said about the details of breathing. It prescribes that posture or sitting should be steady and pleasurable, with a minimum of disturbance. We next see that Patanjali had the same attitude towards breathing. With regard to physical conditions he only wanted such as would conduce to successful meditation. His yoga is *rāja-yoga* – the term *rājā* (king) implying self-mastery, mind over body and will over mind.

Other schools there were and are which have one or other of two different ends in view – the good health of the body and the awakening of the body's latent powers. These are classed together as *hatha-yoga*. *Ha* and *tha* are taken usually to refer to the 'sun and moon breaths', though by a few there is the interpretation of it as 'the forceful yoga', from the word *hatha*, which means a stroke or blow (verb *han* to 'strike').

breathing habit, however, these troubles cease, and, as Patanjali puts it, 'The covering of the light is diminished.'¹ Or we could translate it as 'the obscuration of the clearness is diminished'. Patanjali adds, 'and there is fitness of the mind (*manas*) for concentration'.²

There is also another kind of importance of good breathing during meditation. It prevents the mind from injuring the body. If the body is at all in a state of strain or tenseness, which could be due to disordered breathing or inversely could be a cause of disordered breathing, it will become worn down by the meditation, whereas rightly it should be rested and refreshed. It is for this reason that one often hears the quotation, 'There is no *rāja* without *hatha*', the assumption being that everyone needs some correction in the matters of sitting and breathing. The idea then is, as the great Shankarāchārya said, that *hatha-yoga* is only intended for those who need to be purged of impurities.³ This is emphasized in the *Hathayoga Pradīpikā*, where it says that the various practices of *hatha-yoga* have their ending when they result in *rāja-yoga*.⁴

Patanjali gives no inkling as to his own views on this point. Probably he considered that this may quite legitimately differ in different persons, according to their constitutions and past habits. The *hatha-yogis*, however, very strongly recommend the practice of allowing a certain period of time (e.g. two seconds) for inbreathing (*pūraka*), four times that long for pausing with the breath inside (*kumbhaka*) and twice the time of inbreathing for breathing out (*rechaka*).

The words *pūraka*, *kumbhaka*, and *rechaka* mean respectively 'filling', 'pot-like', and 'expelling', as already explained. The value of reciting these words and using their syllables for the count of three, twelve, and six is that the student's mind is kept on the ideas of inbreathing, holding, and outbreathing, whereas the counting of numbers or the reciting of other meaningful words takes part of the attention away

1. *ibid.*, ii, 52.

2. *ibid.*, ii, 53.

3. *Aparokshānubhūti*, 144.

4. *Hathayoga Pradīpikā*, i, 67.

For most modern people the books now printed in large numbers are the *gurus*. Indeed, near the beginning of many standard classical works on yoga one finds the statement that an aspirant should seek a *guru*, but this is followed immediately by an account of what the *guru* will advise, and what he will teach. The *Gheranda Sanhitā* opens with an account of an aspirant's approaching Gheranda, and asking to be taught the *ghatastha-yoga*.

Ghatastha-yoga meant the yoga of the physical body, since *ghata* means a pot or vessel, and this body is the pot or vessel in which we keep our tools for living, such as the sense organs and the action organs. Incidentally, the student must take care not to think of the body as a vessel in which he is *confined*, since it is constantly asserted that a man can be free of it or free in it whenever he wills to be so, if he *really* desires to live by his own will and not yield to the lures of pleasure and pride which enslave him to the world.

As soon as asked, Gheranda replied in some generally instructive verses, and then proceeded to an extensive description of seven exercises pertaining to the requested yoga;

Good, good, O great-armed¹, this which thou hast asked. I will tell it to thee, my child. Attend to it with great care.

There is no trap like illusion, no greater strength than yoga, no greater friend than knowledge, no greater enemy than pride (or, the desire to be pleased with oneself).

Just as sciences may be learned by practice of the letters of the alphabet (in the beginning), so realization of the Truth (*tattwa*; the Thatness) is obtained by means of yoga.

According to (their) good and bad deeds the bodies (*ghatas*) of living beings are obtained. Action arises through the body. Thus rotates the body-mechanism.

Up and down goes the body-mechanism, just as from the power of the bulls (in the case of water being drawn from wells). Just like that, from the power of action (karma) the living beings rotate through births and deaths.

Like an unbaked (earthen) pot put into water, the body constantly is growing old. One arrives at excellence (lit. purity) of body, having baked it in the fire of yoga.

1. A compliment.

THE BREATHING PRACTICES OF YOGA

The seven accomplishments for the body are purity, firmness, solidity, steadiness, lightness, sensitiveness, and undefiledness.¹

In the next two verses, Gheranda lists the seven accomplishments, of which *prāṇāyāma* is the fifth – that which gives rise to lightness.²

The reader may very rightly ask: Why all this preoccupation with the body, if the aim is to reach independence with reference to the body even while using it, and at last to reach ultimate living without it, in some other conditions which we may tentatively call spiritual?

The answer is that the body is to become the means to this freedom or independence. Suicide would be of no help. In Western parlance, the soul grows by doing the job of making bodily life a success, which is not done by negatively enjoying pleasures, but is rather like the work of an artist who is intent upon producing a perfect picture, but is really (without thinking of it – and probably it is best that he should not think of it) producing a perfect artist. Not that there will be no pleasures while performing this task – far from it, for with a body improved by yoga practice there will be the constant pleasure of health, felt as such, and in the use of the senses.

Some people say that there is a great deal of selfishness involved in this attention to one's own body, when the time could be spent in being helpful to others. The necessity for such helpfulness, however, arises mostly from the absence of such care on the part of the persons needing to be helped, and it would often do them much more good to see someone physically enjoying the benefits of right living. Besides, too many good people themselves become in due

1. *Gheranda Saṁhitā*, i, 3–9.

2. The other six are:

- (1) Six actions, leading to purity.
- (2) Posture (*āsana*), leading to firmness.
- (3) Exercise (*mudrā*), leading to solidity.
- (4) Sense-withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*), leading to steadiness.
- (6) Meditation (*dhyāna*), leading to sensitiveness.
- (7) Contemplation (*saṁādhi*) leading to undefiledness.

course a burden to others because of neglect of themselves.

The recommendation of the *Bhagavad Gītā* that people should carry on their own respective social functions perfectly well represents the yogic attitude to our collective living, and at the same time indicates the road to that awakening of inner character and ability which will lift the future races of humanity. All human problems, both individual and social, have to be dealt with from the inside, always remembering that the pictures perish but the artist goes on.

This idea, that our works perish but we go on, and the improvement of the work involves the improvement of the worker, is one of the revolutionary ideas which the yoga philosophy brings to the West, which is so intent upon outward success or gain. Whenever there is trying there is the real success. The Western saying 'It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all', could be paralleled with 'It is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all'. The reason for this is that there can be no failure in the yogic sense, as long as there is trying. Also to this must be added: the inward gain is carried forward to the future as greater ability, and so leads later on even to the comparatively despised outward success.

What, then, it is often asked, should be advised for beginners who have done no breathing exercises before? Probably some breathing connected with activity, on the principle that it is not good to do two new things at once.

One student was advised to go for half an hour's smart walk early morning, breathing in for eight paces and then out for eight paces. Testing this afterwards with the seconds hand of a clock he found that his count of eight usually occupied five seconds. He also found that he felt and was better in health than before. No doubt his entire breathing habit was improved.

While walking he was breathing deeply, quite instinctively, but suppose the same count had been followed while he was very quietly sitting or lying down, which he actually did later in the morning each day. He then soon found that he

THE BREATHING PRACTICES OF YOGA

would need less 'filling' than when walking. Therefore his exercises while sitting came to consist of a slower intake of his normal amount of air, and not the filling of the lungs to capacity, as when walking briskly. In the two cases he was learning different lessons of breathing.

The result of such practice should be that after a while the student could switch from one to the other by a slight act of will, and the process of breathing then established would carry on in that manner without attention until changed by circumstances or by a change in the will or intention. It is to be remembered that the will is the 'carry-on' function of the mind, and can operate 'as set', so 'Now is the occasion for quiet breathing' or 'Now is the occasion for full breathing' would be obeyed until the order or command was changed.

Some such preliminary exercises are recommended for let us say two weeks or a month to all who are proposing to try some regular *hatha-yoga* breathing practices. Then the chest muscles will have been awakened from sluggishness to activity – a change in pleasurableness, fundamentally – and to responsiveness to the mind, though not yet, perhaps, to wise or intelligent rhythm. It is worth noting in this matter that the transition is ultimately to be from laziness to wisdom, which is intelligent orderliness, not to excited activity. This follows the triple training which the yoga system applies to almost every discipline – the triple course beginning in sluggishness (*tamas*), going on to activity, even restlessness (*rajas*), and ending in orderliness (*sattwa*).

The student may now wish to try some of the *hatha-yoga* special breathings and there is no reason why he should not do so in strict moderation, without any emotion, without any tension, and without ever drawing upon his adrenal reserves. If he disobeys these four rules he will have trouble. I know that some people follow 'courses' in which each exercise is preceded by a 'pep talk' and great expectations are engendered and excitement whipped up, and I know also that quite standard exercises done in those conditions have resulted in trouble.

the chin, cheeks, and temples, and finally the scalp. This exercise is best done on a definitely firm ground, so that one has to go as limp as possible so as to have maximum contact with the floor, thereby reducing the pressure of the weight on the hard points where the bones are nearest to the surface. At the same time one should relax the emotions and thoughts, in order to get the best effect. Some teachers prescribe a little time to be given to this exercise after every course of yoga gymnastics. The refreshment derived from it is very great. These three relaxations – of body, emotions, and thought – should be done before going to sleep. The disadvantage of a soft bed is that on it a person may go to sleep without relaxing. On a hard bed relaxation is compulsory.

Relaxation plays a great part in yoga technique. In the *shavāsana* one can perhaps learn it as completely as possible. But the general idea is that when one part of the body is being used, the other parts should be relaxed as much as may be practicable. One form of relaxation is often neglected, that of the face, which should certainly be performed along with general relaxation before going to sleep. It can best be learnt while standing up. Lean the upper part of the body a little forward with the hands on the slightly bent knees. Then loll the head forward, relaxing all the muscles of the face and shaking it with little jerks (not too much) so as to feel the effects in the jaw, nose, cheeks, temples, etc.

2. *Pashchimottanāsana* – the drawing-back posture

Lie down with the legs stretched straight out together, without bending the knees. Then sit up without moving the legs, and continue the movement forward to take hold of the toes or to touch the insteps. This should be done without any jerking, and the head should continue to bend forward and downward until the forehead touches the knees, or the face is between the knees. This position should be held for only a few seconds at first, but later on may extend to minutes.

SENSE-CONTROL, PURIFICATIONS, PRACTICES

not. Ten years still later only three wealthy ones were left, but there were still eighty-four of the others! Puzzle: find the men who are healthy, wealthy, and wise!

The young Vedāntist wants to prepare himself for an increase of the spark of spiritual understanding. At once he finds himself confronted by a programme of self-improvement set out in definite terms:

(1) Control of mind.

(2) Control of body.

(3) Renunciation of superstition and dependence – the idea that his advance can be helped or impeded by others – and therefore the cessation of resentment and antagonism.

(4) Acceptance of the idea that he must endure what comes and make the most of it without complaining, even to himself.

(5) The acquisition of confidence in the laws of life under which he finds himself, and also in himself.

(6) Cultivation of steadiness in the pursuit of these goals.¹

It is prescribed that the six attainments must be preceded by the awakening of discrimination (*viveka*) and the use of uncolouredness (*vairāgya*), and followed by a great desire for freedom.

It is considered that these are the qualities of character needed by men in order to make their entire lives – even down to their material lives – lives of the spirit which is at the heart of man, the spirit whose flowering will be his fulfilment. These Vedāntists believe that the individual man can do it, and begin the work here and now.

It is only when these four qualifications (counting the six accomplishments as one) are to a reasonable extent acquired that the pupil of Vedānta is regarded as fit or competent (*adhikārī*) to proceed with the real knowledge-yoga (*jñāna-yoga*) of Vedānta. The procedure is then three-fold. First there is listening (*shravana*) to the teachings – which includes reading, of course. Next comes thinking about

1. From the *Viveka Chūdāmani*, by Shankarāchārya, verses 22–6, and subsequent explanations. The whole work contains 580 verses. Also listed in *Atmanātma Viveka* and other works by the same famous philosopher.

them (*manana*). Thirdly comes meditation (*nididhyāsana*) upon them, which includes the triple process of concentration, meditation, and contemplation given in the yoga system.

In general, in yogic circles much meditation is recommended. In this connexion it is a good plan when preparing to read on a particular topic to pause and think of all that one knows about it before actually starting to read, and again to pause before putting the book away and consider what new information or idea or experience has been gained, and how it fits in with what one knew before. This method is very beneficial for awakening the mind into a proper state of inquiry at the beginning, and leaving it in a proper state of coordination at the end. If this method of reading calls for will-power, that also is good, for thus the will also gets its exercise and awakening.

The yogis have their bodily exercises and sittings (*āsanas*), breathings (*prāṇāyāmas*), and control of the sense (*pratyāhara*). The *hatha-yogis* have also a variety of purifications, exercises (*mudrās*), and controls (*bandhas*). Control of the senses, and these purifications, etc., may well be grouped together to form our present chapter.

Clearly the persons having the yogi temperament would say, if asked, 'We are not satisfied with ourselves. Indeed we are much more dissatisfied with ourselves than with the world. We feel that we need much more to get away from the defects of ourselves than from our environment. The thoughtless think that the troubles of the world are to be avoided and escaped from as much as possible, but we say it is ourselves we must avoid and escape from. We know that we have three sources of trouble in life – from Nature, from other men, and from ourselves. We emphasize the last of these three, which is the most ignored by people in general.'

As soon as a person of any religion catches a glimpse of the Beyond or the Divine – even if only represented in high ideals – he begins to long for more of it, to think of it, to imagine it, and to represent it by the outward reminder of ritual words and actions. He even goes to the length of

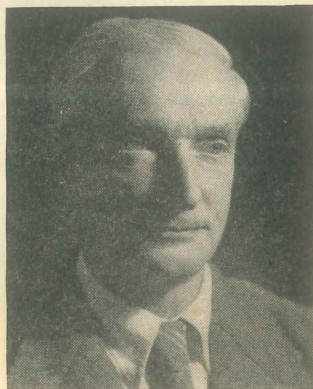
hoping and imagining that words and ritual actions will help him to have more of this Beyond or Divine. But it is only when he realizes that it is not the outside world, or other people, but himself who is the source of his trouble, that he begins to become a real yogi.

When he has that realization and looks at himself – at his physical habits and ways of living, his thoughts about others and about himself, things which are revealed to him when he pays proper attention to what he is doing (just analogous to what a man does when in walking he feels the foot as well as the ground, and the feeling of the ground makes him feel the foot better) – he is shocked and disgusted at what he finds in himself every now and then.

Therefore it is that universally or in all religions the second natural step, following upon the perceiving of the existence of the divine (named *viveka* – discrimination – among the Hindus, and *manodwāravajjana* – the opening of the doors of the mind – among the Buddhists) is purification. The contrast is so terrible that this is the natural consequence. And then – to run ahead a little – the third stage, intuition and illumination, becomes possible, and indeed natural. But now in this chapter we are concerned with purification. And since ‘trouble from ourselves’ arises from both body and mind, both these things are to be dealt with.

The neatest statement about the purifications practised by the *hatha-yogīs* has been made in the *Gheranda Sanhitā*, where it says:

Purification (*shodana*) is by means of six kinds of action:
 By means of posture (*āsana*) strength (*dridhatā*) comes about;
 By means of exercise (*mudrā*), steadiness (*sthiratā*);
 By means of withholding the senses (*pratyāhāra*), bodily calmness (*dhīratā*);
 By ordering the breath (*prāṇāyāma*), lightness (*lāghava*);
 By meditation (*dhyāna*), vision of oneself (*pratyakṣam ātmanah*);
 By contemplation (*samādhi*), unstainedness (*nirlipta*), and even freedom (*mukti*);
 Undoubtedly (*na saṁśayah*).¹



Ernest Wood, born in 1883 in Manchester, early took an interest in science and philosophy, and received his advanced education at the Manchester College of Technology, gaining firsts in Physics, Chemistry, and Geology. As a young man he went to India and took up in 1910 the post of Headmaster of a Congress High School, preparing students for the University of Madras. After that he became managing secretary of a group of thirty-seven schools and colleges, and was also Principal and President of the Sind National College and the Madanapalle College, of the Universities of Bombay and Madras. All along he was deeply interested in the Yoga and Vedanta philosophies of India, and learned to read them in the original Sanskrit language, while associating closely with scholars and yogis. During his long residence in India Professor Wood wrote many books on education, psychology, and Indian philosophy, besides making a number of translations. He is now President and Dean of the American Academy of Asian Studies, a graduate school in San Francisco.