



PERSONALITY INTEGRATION IN RAJA YOGA

by Swami Jyotirmayananda

Raja Yoga, meaning “Royal Yoga,” concerns the profound study of the mind and the mystical psychology based upon ancient Yoga philosophy. According to Raja Yoga, each person has unlimited potential, endless possibilities. It is the profound and scientific technique set forth in Raja Yoga that enables one to progress far beyond their expectations. Raja Yoga covers many topics. Here we will only touch upon a few basic ones.

The purpose of Yoga philosophy is to remove pain, but this pain cannot be removed unless the mind and its way of thinking is changed. Raja Yoga presents some simple practices and techniques that, when followed, very effectively change the mental makeup. Here it should be understood that you are not asked to believe in anything—no concept of God is imposed upon you, nor a way of worship or faith. Raja Yoga is simply based on a very psychological and broad picture that no one—whether athiest, theist, religious, or non-religious—wants to suffer from pain. By following the techniques set forth in Raja Yoga, that pain is very effectively overcome.

THE EIGHT STEPS OF RAJA YOGA

The basic structure of Raja Yoga is laid out in eight steps. The first five are external. That is, they are performed by the body. The last three are

internal, or more mental in nature. The first two steps are known as the Restraints and Observances (*Yamas* and *Niyamas*), which lay down an ethical foundation for the practice of Yoga. They are similar to the Ten Commandments in the Bible. There are five Restraints and five Observances, which are briefly enumerated as follows.

The First Step: The Yamas (Restraints)

The first Restraint is Nonviolence (*Ahimsa*). This is the basic virtue of Yoga ethics and supercedes all others in importance. It is practiced by not hurting anyone in thought, word or action, and implies a feeling of universal love towards all life and an understanding that one life flows through all. Whoever hurts anyone, hurts himself. It is on that philosophical basis that we practice non-violence—the insight that all living beings are essentially one.

It is easy to react to abusive attack. If someone shouts at you, you shout back louder. If someone slaps you, you proudly slap him back harder. But the person, in turn, only builds more bitterness towards you and the cycle continues. It is more difficult and much more heroic to restrain violent inclinations towards others.

The second great *Yama* is Truthfulness (*Satyam*), which implies many things. It implies being truthful to oneself through sincerity. Self-sincerity is very important, for it does not allow

you to rationalize your errors. It allows you to see them as they are, so you can correct them. The second implication of truthfulness is that of being outwardly truthful, speaking the truth. But note, this is conditioned by the law of non-violence. If the truth is going to hurt someone, then don't speak it. Say nothing. Your intention behind speaking the truth should be to help people by persuading them to be better, not bitter.

The third Restraint is *Brahmacharya*, which generally is interpreted as celibacy. The implication of sublimating the sex energy has far-reaching effects in the study of Yoga. The simple understanding is that the mind runs after food, drink and sex only when it does not have a better dimension, a lofty perspective of universal love and higher ideals. If the mind has not been presented with that higher ideal, it gravitates to repetitive experiences of food, drink and sex. That process continues endlessly without any substantial satisfaction, creating more and more craving.

Brahmacharya does not imply an unthinking withdrawal of sex life, but rather an intelligent handling of it. Those who are advanced do not need a sex life. Those who are less advanced enter a householder's life and follow a regulated sex involvement with the perspective of rising beyond sex-consciousness in order to attain higher ideals and goals. But those who lack this insight deplete their mental energy. Their life becomes a never-ending and unsatisfying circle of running from one hollow pleasure to another.

These first three Restraints are the most important and are fundamental to progress in Yoga. The fourth Restraint is Non-stealing (*Asteya*), implying freedom from desiring, misappropriating or taking the possessions of others.

Non-covetousness (*Aparigraha*), the fifth Restraint, is practiced by living simply and

possessing little. Instead of hoarding objects, live a life of utter simplicity. The fewer the possessions, the easier it is for the mind to enjoy an atmosphere of peace. Travel through life with as little cumbersome baggage as possible.

The Second Step: Niyamas (Observances)

Next we will briefly mention the ethical Observances (*Niyamas*) to be promoted in life according to Raja Yoga. The first, Purity (*Shauch*) refers both to physical and mental purity. Keeping the body clean and healthy by following hygienic laws and pure diet is the practice of external purity. Keeping the mind free from jealousy, hatred, anger, and other negative sentiments is the practice of internal purity.

Contentment (*Santosh*) is the second *Niyama*. It implies keeping the mind free from desire for the objects of the world. If this is done, the mind will remain without agitation in all situations of life.

Third is Austerity (*Tapas*). This is the practice of developing physical and mental endurance in different circumstances of life. Remain unaffected and balanced amidst life's varying conditions.

Fourth is the study of elevating literature (*Swadhyaya*) and sharing the knowledge of great men, especially in the field of philosophy and spirituality. Study elevating texts such as the Upanishads, the Gita, the Bible, the Koran and others with an open mind and profound interest.

Fifth is Surrender to God (*Ishwarpranidhana*). God is the Supreme Reality behind the entirety of existence, and surrender implies an understanding that the world is ruled by a Divine Plan. Therefore, do your best, but do not become upset if your action does not bring the expected

result. You must always realize there is a principle behind the world that knows better than you. Let yourself be handled by the Divine Plan. Feel you are a traveler in a train—you needn't carry a bundle on your head. Relaxing and letting the train carry it for you is the practice of surrender.



The Third Step: Asana (Physical Poses)

Following these first two steps, the *Yamas* and *Niyamas*, comes the third aspect of Raja Yoga, called *Asana* or physical pose. Under *Asana* comes the entire Yoga of physical exercise, more commonly known as Hatha Yoga. The purpose of Hatha Yoga is multi-aspected and is meant to maintain a high level of physical health with a minimum of effort. It is also meant to prepare the body to remain in one pose, a meditative pose, without any discomfort for a long duration of time, so that the mind can easily flow towards lofty states of awareness. In most cases, however, those who do not practice Hatha Yoga expend so much time and energy on their bodies that they hardly have time for anything else in life.

The Fourth Step: Pranayama (Control of Vital Energy)

After *Asana* comes *Pranayama*, control of the vital energy. In the normal study of health and vitality, people concern themselves with food, nutrition and vitamins. *Pranayama* concerns itself with the subtler forms of energy called *Prana*, which is directly related to the mind. If your mind is happy, a positive form of energy enters the body, and your entire system feels rejuvenated. This is independent of food. On the other hand, if your mind is depressed, that flow of energy is withdrawn, and you feel dull and lethargic. Further, it is this subtle energy that governs the law of food and its assimilation. If *Prana* (vital energy) is lacking, then in spite of

all the good and nutritious food a person eats, there will be no effect.

The cultivation of vitalizing *Prana*, called *Pranayama*, takes the form of subtle breathing exercises. The method of breathing and controlling the breath is a very powerful technique in Yoga. By regulating and controlling the breathing mechanism, one is able to absorb cosmic vital energy. In *Pranayama*, therefore, lies a great secret for vitality, health and youth.

The Fifth Step: Pratyahara (Withdrawal of the Senses)

The fifth step, Withdrawal of the Senses (*Pratyahara*), implies a general ability to maintain a concentrated state of mind in the midst of many distractions. Specifically, it implies being able to actually withdraw the senses during a meditative state of mind. In spite of much noise, no sound is heard. If you study the lives of great and successful men, you will see this quality. In India, Mahatma Gandhi, a great politician and Saint, had this ability to withdraw his mind from all external distractions or conflicts and remain relaxed at any time and at any place.

Without *Pratyahara*, the external world is condemned: "The world is noisy. What am I to do? Let me go somewhere else where I can be quiet and peaceful." However, when you develop *Pratyahara*, you can find internal quietude anywhere and utilize your mind anytime for whatever lofty purpose you desire.



These preceding five steps are called the external means to Yoga. Important and effective as they are, they are not yet the intensive part of Raja Yoga. The final three steps, the internal means, constitute the intensive part. Concentration (*Dharana*) is the practice of one-pointedness of the mind. This leads to Meditation

(*Dhyana*), which in turn merges into the eighth and final step, Superconsciousness or *Samadhi*.

The Sixth Step: Dharana (Concentration)

Concentration is the focusing of the mind on one object. Place before yourself any particular object—a candle flame, the moon, a flower if you like. It can be looked at with the eyes or imagined with the mind. Concentrate on it, keeping the mind free of all other thoughts. This is a simple technique, but must be practiced in order to perfect. However, as soon as the practice is taken up, you will discover immense potential unfolding from within. It is only through the lack of concentration that so much energy and so many problems arise. But through a concentrated mind, work that normally takes six hours to complete can be done in two hours or even less. Further, all work is done much more qualitatively, precisely, and with less exhaustion.

The Seventh Step: Dhyana (Meditation)

As concentration is pursued and perfected, it spontaneously flows into meditation. If the practice of concentration becomes intensive, it becomes meditation, the difference being that meditation is a concentrated state of mind that continues to flow spontaneously. In concentration, effort is needed. In meditation, the one-pointed state of mind flows on without interruption.

The Eighth Step: Samadhi (Superconsciousness)

When meditation is perfected, you rise beyond limited consciousness and are led to the transcendental horizons of inner life. This is called *Samadhi* or Superconsciousness. In that experience, you are no longer aware of your

body or individuality. In meditation you feel, “I am here. I am meditating, and my meditation is good. It feels wonderful!” But *Samadhi* is like plunging into a stream of immense joy, so much so that you lose all awareness of yourself. In this state, only pure bliss and peace exists, and everything else recedes into the insignificant distance.

So, there are three internal means taught in Raja Yoga: Concentration, Meditation and *Samadhi*. Through their perfection, you attain the ultimate goal of Yoga, union with the Absolute. These last three stages are also collectively termed *Samyama*, and if they are practiced with a certain mental objective, various powers are attained—unimaginable powers. (See *Yoga Secrets of Psychic Powers* by Swami Jyotirmayananda.)

However, it must be understood that the mind is not a concrete object, and therefore, cannot be molded to realize these higher objectives in a day or two. It takes immense patience and persistent practice, but progress is definite.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR NATURE AND YOUR MOODS

Another essential aspect of Raja Yoga is an understanding of the three modes of nature (the *gunas*) and the way they operate in the human personality. The three *gunas* operate in all levels of creation—material and mental. They are inertia or dullness (*tamas*), restlessness or externalization (*rajas*), and purity or harmony (*sattwa*).

Raja Yoga philosophy envisions the whole universe as composed of these three. Like a magnet, there is a positive pole that attracts, a negative pole that repels, and a balancing point where both poles are neutralized. So too, in creation there is a principle that creates repulsion—*tamas*, a principle that creates attachment—*rajas*, and a principle that harmonizes both—*sattwa*. In

the project of integrating the personality, each of these modes needs to be well understood, controlled, shaped and unfolded.

There is a vast storehouse of locked-up creative energy within every human being. Note, in the world, how some people who seem to function in harmony suddenly, due to some circumstance, flare up in raging and uncontrolled anger. Imagine the potential creativity if such energy could be expressed with control. The study and understanding of the three *gunas* is this art.

Tamas or inertia keeps this energy locked-up, expressed in the personality as laziness, dullness, an attitude of pessimism and a sense of procrastination. When *tamas* increases in the personality, you feel you can do nothing. But when this inertia is sublimated, you suddenly become aware of such vast resources lying within that you don't know what to do. You become restless. You become as sensitive as a person who has been cured from paralysis and suddenly, feeling a sensation in his limbs, becomes excited.

This is *rajas* or restlessness. It is characterized by immense energy and vitality and may manifest in the development of a great many ideas and talents. It can be a confounding experience to suddenly have so many ideas simultaneously crowd your mind and not be able to pursue any one of them for lack of concentration. However, if *rajas* is not controlled, it leads to the development of selfishness, greed, infatuation, hypocrisy and vanity.

Yoga trains you to sublimate *tamas* into *rajas*, and then to channel *rajas* into *sattwa*, through which immense creativity and progress can be cultivated. *Sattwa* is the state of mind in which harmony, joyousness, expansion and contentment flow in abundance. As practice and study continue, one can understand and control these modes of nature for sure progress in personality integration.



FROM SWAMIJI'S KITCHEN

BLISS BALLS

(Created for Gurudev by Kalyani Devi)

- 1 cup walnuts
- 1 cup dried mandarin oranges
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- Zest of one navel orange
- 2 Tablespoons agave nectar
- 1 to 1&1/4 cups mini semi-sweet chocolate chips

In a food processor, chop nuts coarsely. Add dried fruit and 1/2 the orange zest. Chop again until everything is chopped evenly. Taste and add rest of zest if you want a stronger orange flavor.

Add about 2 Tablespoons of agave, just enough to make the mixture hold together.

Remove mixture from processor and place in a bowl. Add chocolate chips. Roll into balls.

Place on cookie sheet covered with parchment paper. Refrigerate till firm, for an hour or so. Then place in air tight container in refrigerator.

Recipe makes about 40 balls