



Yoga Is the Answer

by Swami Jyotirmayananda

MANY PEOPLE THINK of a Yogi as someone who sits alone in a distant cave somewhere in the Himalayas, completely unconcerned with the problems of the world. But this is not at all the case. True, Yoga does urge people to become detached. But detachment as promoted in Yoga does not mean being apathetic to the world. Rather, it means that you become a master of the objects, in the sense that you do not depend upon them.

Such detachment will only affect those actions that are founded on illusion. Therefore, abandonment of those actions will not affect what is good in society, but will encourage and promote actions that are exceedingly helpful for society in various ways.

Further, a life of simplicity is enjoined by Yoga philosophy. But what is needed is not so much simplicity in the physical world, but mental simplicity—a mind devoid of complexes and ego-

centricities. External simplicity is good, but not an end in itself. When it is considered as an end, one is far from the realization of the stupendous Self.

Therefore, it is not necessary to give up material goods and live in a deprived manner in order to adopt the Yogic views of spiritual life. In fact, that would be a perversion of the Yogic teachings, for spirit and matter are expressions of the same Universal Self. To be spiritual, it is not necessary to abandon matter, nor is it possible to do so. But to abandon materialism implies shifting one's values from a lesser manifestation of the Self (senses and impure mind) and installing them in a higher manifestation—pure reason.

Yoga is not a self-centered pursuit, nor does it encourage escapism. Yoga teaches the art of dynamic activity with a balanced mind. The real call is for spiritual aspiration. It must become perpetual, lifting one above the world-process at all times. This is the ideal. The intense urge to

run away from home and responsibilities must be sublimated into a process of mental renunciation by which you live like a lotus blossom in the waters of the world, untouched by worldliness.

There are two courses open for a spiritual seeker: One is to confront the day-to-day realities, and adopt a course of action that purifies the heart; and the other is to renounce the day-to-day activities, and abide in the solitude of the Himalayas, or in the *ashramas* of Gurus. But it is imperative to understand that what seems to be a perspective of constant meditation may develop into a form of perpetual dullness. It is therefore better to adjust to the day-to-day activities of life in order to promote the deeper movement within the soul. A course of action is far superior to a perspective of dullness and inactivity.

On the other hand, when the heart is purified, and the personality is highly integrated, a Yogi may devote his entire life and energy to discovering the mysteries of the soul. He may require complete seclusion. He is like a research scholar in a field of science. Even while living in seclusion, relatively cut off from society, his discoveries reach out to the world, and become the basis of all that is good and beautiful.



YOGA AND VIOLENCE

Often immature people run away from confrontations with other people saying that they are

practicing non-violence and don't want to hurt anyone. This is based upon another common misconception of Yoga. It is all too easy for a person to adopt a philosophical explanation when he does not want to do something. It is a way to conceal one's weak effort in the garb of glittering philosophy. When you hear the argument, you might find it perfect in every way. But if you analyze it, you will see that it is only an expression of cowardice, an expression of selfishness.

Every form of integration of life and personality gives rise to a kind of battle in life. This is a battle against the persistent negative, passive aspects of life in order to allow the higher aspects and higher forms of energy to manifest. A Yogi is a hero in every aspect of this battle.

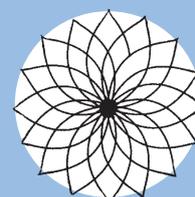
Now with this background, let us approach the topic of war and violence. War is an expression of violence that continues to operate in human hearts. As long as the mind is unprepared, it is impossible to abolish military force altogether.

However, the true remedy for war lies in promoting the principles of non-violence based upon the understanding of the unity of life. The duty of leaders should be to understand the idealism of Mahatma Gandhi, and to promote this in every educational system so that people might begin to live to promote peace.

War is a projection of the sickness of mind that exists in individuals. While external war may not be averted, a Sage lives to promote love and harmony. Thus by his example he shows the need



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for the power of non-violence towards the development of world peace. In this movement, the most important obstacles to peace are the feelings of fear, depression, grief, discouragement and fatigue.

An enlightened person has discovered the universal stream of life. He has no room for hatred and violence in his heart. He recognizes war as a sickness caused by ignorance of the fact that all beings are rooted in one Supreme Self.



YOGA AND POLITICS

The field of politics is a very important area in which the world's problems must be tackled. There is no doubt that if the world's political leaders are enlightened by the Yogic teachings, they will be able to promote peace and happiness among mankind. They will be able to find means and methods of mutual agreement and diminish the expression of violence and greed.

Therefore, a Yogi is not a better Yogi if he abstains from politics. On the other hand, he is surely a better Yogi if he is not blinded by political ambitions, and by the love of power and fame. There were great men like Mahatma Gandhi for whom politics was an effective means for self-purification and Enlightenment. Such men have shown the way.



YOGA AND ECOLOGY

Another major problem that the world confronts today is the ecological crisis. Yoga promotes the perception of harmony and beauty in the world and promotes beauty and harmony through an integrated personality. Therefore, it is easy to understand that a Yogi will project his inner perception of beauty and harmony in all his activities. Ecology relates to the harmony of plants, animals, humans and their surroundings. Therefore, a per-

son pursuing the path of Yoga will automatically promote a better environment.

At a higher level, a Yogi perceives that God is the Soul of Nature. All functions of Nature are guided by the wisdom of God. When an aspirant transcends his mind through intuitional realization, he sees God and Nature as a Divine System helping him move on to higher levels of experience and spiritual revelation.

Therefore, Yoga takes care of the basic facts of life through the realization of the unity of all beings in the Self; through the resultant control of the mind and senses in the light of a reason that glimpses the ideal of unity and universality; and through freedom from selfishness, greed, and pride. When men adopt higher ideals in their lives, when they actually achieve integration and perfection within themselves, then they will promote a joyous progress in all fields of life, whether political, social, economic, cultural or religious.



EXPERIENCE GOD'S GRACE AND PAIN IS GONE

Some ask, "If God exists, why is there so much pain in life? Yoga's answer is simple and scientific. Pain is experienced when the mind is linked to the body. If the mind is turned away from the body, pain is transcended. In the Yogic system, one understands the influence of mind over body. By promoting mental health, one infuses higher levels of energy and vitality into the physical body. Nevertheless, if the physical body develops a painful condition, a Yogi is in a position to endure and transcend it.

The sun exists as the bounteous source of energy and light. But those who keep their windows shut and choose to live in dampness are not able to receive the advantages of the sun. In the same way, those who have developed ego-centricity and who are constantly confined to the limits of

their selfishness are unable to receive the bounteous Grace of God. Sufferings and miseries in life are born of ignorance and they are dispelled by Wisdom.



CHANGE THE MIND AND THE WORLD CHANGES

What is important is the mental attitude of the Yogi during his outward manifestations. It should be an attitude that promotes peace and harmony in the world, and glorifies everything that it encounters. The term “Self” in Yoga refers to the Universal Reality. The ocean has no conflict with its waves. In the same way, there is no conflict between devotion to the Self and being a contributing member of society. Rather, true contribution to society depends upon the enrichment of life through Self-realization.

In other words one must constantly remember that this world is not heading anywhere. Each one of us experiences a world based upon their mental structures and karmic fructifications. While one person sees the world as a bright prospect for future joys, another sees it as a dark night with howling gloom. The world is a projection of the Self through the prism of the mind. Change the mind, and the world changes. Overcome the mind, and the world is overcome. Transcend the mind, and the world dissolves in the radiance of God.



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FROM SWAMIJI'S KITCHEN

Divine Poha (Flattened Rice)

- **1 cup thick poha, soaked for 10 minutes prior to cooking**
- **1 chopped onion**
- **1 diced potato**
- **½ packet frozen mixed vegetables**
- **Juice of ½ lemon**
- **2 tablespoons ghee (clarified butter)**
- **Chopped cilantro leaves (dhania/coriander)**
- **1 pinch mustard seeds**
- **1 pinch cumin seeds (jeera)**
- **1 pinch asofoetida (hing)**
- **½ tsp turmeric powder (haldi)**
- **½ tsp dhania (coriander) powder**
- **½ tsp garam masala**
- **1 tablespoon chaat masala**

- 1. In a pan, heat ghee, add asofoetida (hing), mustard seeds, and cumin seeds, and wait until they sputter.**
- 2. Add onion. Cook until it is light brown in color. Then add potato and mixed vegetables. Then add turmeric powder, dhania powder, and garam masala. Cook for 5 minutes on low heat.**
- 3. Add soaked poha. Cook for 10 more minutes.**
- 4. Add the lemon juice.**
- 5. Add chaat masala and chopped cilantro leaves.**
- 6. Enjoy! Serves 4**