

# YOGA FOR YAHOO'S

## First Lecture – First Principles

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

It is my will to explain the subject of Yoga in clear language, without resort to jargon or the enunciation of fantastic hypotheses, in order that this great science may be thoroughly understood as of universal importance.

For, like all great things, it is simple; but, like all great things, it is masked by confused thinking; and, only too often, brought into contempt by the machinations of knavery.

(1) There is more nonsense talked and written about Yoga than about anything else in the world. Most of this nonsense, which is fostered by charlatans, is based upon the idea that there is something mysterious and Oriental about it. There isn't. Do not look to me for obelisks and odalisques<sup>1</sup>, Rahat Loucoum<sup>2</sup>, bul-buls<sup>3</sup>, or any other tinsel imagery of the Yoga-mongers. I am neat but not gaudy. There is nothing mysterious or Oriental about anything, as everybody knows who has spent a little time intelligently in the continents of Asia and Africa. I propose to invoke the most remote and elusive of all Gods to throw clear light upon the subject – the light of common sense.

(2) All phenomena of which we are aware take place in our own minds, and therefore the only thing we have to look at is the mind; which is a more constant quantity over all the species of humanity than is generally supposed. What appear to be radical differences, irreconcilable by argument, are usually found to be due to the obstinacy of habit produced by generations of systematic sectarian training.

(3) We must then begin the study of Yoga by looking at the meaning of the word. It means Union, from the same Sanskrit root as the Greek

word *Zeugma*, the Latin word *Jugum*, and the English word *yoke*. (*Yeug* – to join.<sup>4</sup>)

When a dancing girl is dedicated to the service of a temple there is a Yoga of her relations to celebrate. Yoga, in short, may be translated 'tea fight,' which doubtless accounts for the fact that all the students of Yoga in England do nothing but gossip over endless libations of Lyons' 1s. 2d.

(4) Yoga means Union.

In what sense are we to consider this? How is the word Yoga to imply a system of religious training or a description of religious experience?

You may note incidentally that the word Religion is really identifiable with Yoga. It means a binding together.<sup>5</sup>

(5) Yoga means Union.

What are the elements which are united or to be united when this word is used in its common sense of a practice widely spread in Hindustan whose object is the emancipation of the individual who studies and practises it from the less pleasing features of his life on this planet?

I say Hindustan, but I really mean anywhere on the earth; for research has shown that similar methods producing similar results are to be found in every country. The details vary, but the general structure is the same. Because all bodies, and so all minds, have identical Forms.

(6) Yoga means Union.

In the mind of a pious person, the inferiority complex which accounts for his piety compels him to interpret this emancipation as union with the gaseous vertebrate whom he has invented and called God. On the cloudy vapour of his fears his imagination has thrown a vast distorted shadow of himself, and he is duly terrified; and the more he cringes before it, the more the spectre seems to stoop to crush him. People with these ideas will never get to anywhere but Lunatic Asylums

1 A female slave or concubine in a harem.

2 "Turkish delight", a type of confection based on a gel of starch and sugar.

3 A songbird, taken to be the nightingale, often mentioned in Persian poetry.

4 Modern dictionaries give the Sanskrit as *yuga*.

5 "Religion" comes from Middle English religioun (< Old French *religion*) < Latin *religiōn-* (stem of *religiō*) conscientiousness, piety, equivalent to *relig(āre)* to tie, fasten (*re-* + *ligāre* to bind, tie; compare *ligament*) + *-iōn-*; compare *rely*.

and Churches.

It is because of this overwhelming miasma of fear that the whole subject of Yoga has become obscure. A perfectly simple problem has been complicated by the most abject ethical and superstitious nonsense. Yet all the time the truth is patent in the word itself.

(7) Yoga means Union.

We may now consider what Yoga really is. Let us go for a moment into the nature of consciousness with the tail of an eye on such sciences as mathematics, biology, and chemistry.

In mathematics the expression '*a*' plus '*b*' plus '*c*' is a triviality. Write '*a*' plus '*b*' plus '*c*' equals 0, and you obtain an equation from which the most glorious truths may be developed.

In biology the cell divides endlessly, but never becomes anything different; but if we unite cells of opposite qualities, male and female, we lay the foundations of a structure whose summit is unattainably fixed in the heavens of imagination.

Similar facts occur in chemistry. The atom by itself has few constant qualities, none of them particularly significant; but as soon as an element combines with the object of its hunger we get not only the ecstatic production of light, heat, and so forth, but a more complex structure having few or none of the qualities of its elements, but capable of further combination into complexities of astonishing sublimity. All these combinations, these unions, are Yoga.

(8) Yoga means Union.

How are we to apply this word to the phenomena of mind?

What is the first characteristic of everything in thought? How did it come to be a thought at all? Only by making a distinction between it and the rest of the world.

The first proposition, the type of all propositions, is: *S* is *P*.

There must be two things – different things – whose relation forms knowledge.

Yoga is first of all the union of the subject and

the object of consciousness: of the seer with the thing seen.

(9) Now, there is nothing strange or wonderful about all this.

The study of the principles of Yoga is very useful to the average man, if only to make him think about the nature of the world as he supposes that he knows it.

Let us consider a piece of cheese. We say that this has certain qualities, shape, structure, colour, solidity, weight, taste, smell, consistency and the rest; but investigation has shown that this is all illusory. Where are these qualities? Not in the cheese, for different observers give quite different accounts of it. Not in ourselves, for we do not perceive them in the absence of the cheese. All 'material things,' all impressions, are phantoms.

In reality the cheese is nothing but a series of electric charges. Even the most fundamental quality of all, mass, has been found not to exist. The same is true of the matter in our brains which is partly responsible for these perceptions. What then are these qualities of which we are all so sure? They would not exist without our brains; they would not exist without the cheese. They are the results of the union, that is of the Yoga, of the seer and the seen, of subject and object in consciousness as the philosophical phrase goes. They have no material existence; they are only names given to the ecstatic results of this particular form of Yoga.

(10) I think that nothing can be more helpful to the student of Yoga than to get the above proposition firmly established in his subconscious mind. About nine-tenths of the trouble in understanding the subject is all this ballyhoo about Yoga being mysterious and Oriental. The principles of Yoga, and the spiritual results of Yoga, are demonstrated in every conscious and unconscious happening. This is that which is written in '*The Book of the Law*' – Love is the law, love under will – for Love is the instinct to unite, and the act of uniting. But this cannot be done indiscriminately, it must be done 'under will,' that is, in accordance with the nature of the particular units concerned. Hydrogen has

no love for Hydrogen; it is not the nature, or the 'true Will' of Hydrogen to seek to unite with a molecule of its own kind. Add Hydrogen to Hydrogen: nothing happens to its quality: it is only its quantity that changes. It rather seeks to enlarge its experience of its possibilities by union with atoms of opposite character, such as Oxygen; with this it combines (with an explosion of light, heat, and sound) to form water. The result is entirely different from either of the component elements, and has another kind of 'true Will,' such as to unite (with similar disengagement of light and heat) with Potassium, while the resulting 'caustic Potash' has in its turn a totally new series of qualities, with still another 'true Will' of its own; that is, to unite explosively with acids. And so on.

(11) It may seem to some of you that these explanations have rather knocked the bottom out of Yoga; that I have reduced it to the category of common things. That was my object. There is no sense in being frightened of Yoga, awed by Yoga, muddled and mystified by Yoga, or enthusiastic over Yoga. If we are to make any progress in its study, we need clear heads and the impersonal scientific attitude. It is especially important not to bedevil ourselves with Oriental jargon. We may have to use a few Sanskrit words; but that is only because they have no English equivalents; and any attempt to translate them burdens us with the connotations of the existing English words which we employ. However, these words are very few; and, if the definitions which I propose to give you are carefully studied, they should present no difficulty.

(12) Having now understood that Yoga is the essence of all phenomena whatsoever, we may ask what is the special meaning of the word in respect of our proposed investigation, since the process and the results are familiar to every one of us; so familiar indeed that there is actually nothing else at all of which we have any knowledge. It *is* knowledge.

What is it we are going to study, and why should we study it?

(13) The answer is very simple.

All this Yoga that we know and practice, this

Yoga that produced these ecstatic results that we call phenomena, includes among its spiritual emanations a good deal of unpleasantness. The more we study this universe produced by our Yoga, the more we collect and synthesize our experience, the nearer we get to a perception of what the Buddha declared to be characteristic of all component things:

Sorrow, Change, and Absence of any permanent principle. We constantly approach his enunciation of the first two 'Noble Truths,' as he called them. 'Everything is Sorrow'; and 'The cause of Sorrow is Desire.' By the word 'Desire' he meant exactly what is meant by 'Love' in 'The Book of the Law' which I quoted a few moments ago. 'Desire' is the need of every unit to extend its experience by combining with its opposite.

(14) It is easy enough to construct the whole series of arguments which lead up to the first 'Noble Truth.'

Every operation of Love is the satisfaction of a bitter hunger, but the appetite only grows fiercer by satisfaction; so that we can say with the Preacher: 'He that increaseth knowledge increaseth Sorrow.' The root of all this sorrow is in the sense of insufficiency; the need to unite, to lose oneself in the beloved object, is the manifest proof of this fact, and it is clear also that the satisfaction produces only a temporary relief, because the process expands indefinitely. The thirst increases with drinking. The only complete satisfaction conceivable would be the Yoga of the atom with the entire universe. This fact is easily perceived, and has been constantly expressed in the mystical philosophies of the West; the only goal is 'Union with God.' Of course, we only use the word 'God' because we have been brought up in superstition, and the higher philosophers both in the East and in the West have preferred to speak of union with the All or with the Absolute. More superstitions!

(15) Very well, then, there is no difficulty at all; since every thought in our being, every cell in our bodies, every electron and proton of our atoms, is nothing but Yoga and the result of Yoga. All we have to do to obtain emancipation, satisfaction, everything we want is to perform

this universal and inevitable operation upon the Absolute itself. Some of the more sophisticated members of my audience may possibly be thinking that there is a catch in it somewhere. They are perfectly right.

(16) The snag is simply this. Every element of which we are composed is indeed constantly occupied in the satisfaction of its particular needs by its own particular Yoga; but for that very reason it is completely obsessed by its own function, which it must naturally consider as the Be-All and End-All of its existence. For instance, if you take a glass tube open at both ends and put it over a bee on the windowpane it will continue beating against the window to the point of exhaustion and death, instead of escaping through the tube. We must not confuse the necessary automatic functioning of any of our elements with the true Will which is the proper orbit of any star. A human being only acts as a unit at all because of countless generations of training. Evolutionary processes have set up a higher order of Yogic action by which we have managed to subordinate what we consider particular interests to what we consider the general welfare. We are communities; and our well-being depends upon the wisdom of our Councils, and the discipline with which their decisions are enforced. The more complicated we are, the higher we are in the scale of evolution, the more complex and difficult is the task of legislation and of maintaining order.

(17) In highly civilised communities like our own (*loud laughter*), the individual is constantly being attacked by conflicting interests and necessities; his individuality is constantly being assailed by the impact of other people; and in a very large number of cases he is unable to stand up to the strain. 'Schizophrenia,' which is a lovely word, and may or may not be found in your dictionary, is an exceedingly common complaint. It means the splitting up of the mind. In extreme cases we get the phenomena of multiple personality, Jekyll and Hyde, only more so. At the best, when a man says 'I' he refers only to a transitory phenomenon. His 'I' changes as he utters the word. But – philosophy apart – it is rarer and rarer to find a man with a mind of his

own and a will of his own, even in this modified sense.

(18) I want you therefore to see the nature of the obstacles to union with the Absolute. For one thing, the Yoga which we constantly practice has not invariable results; there is a question of attention, of investigation, of reflexion. I propose to deal in a future instruction with the modifications of our perception thus caused, for they are of great importance to our science of Yoga. For example, the classical case of the two men lost in a thick wood at night. One says to the other: 'That dog barking is not a grasshopper; it is the creaking of a cart.' Or again, 'He thought he saw a banker's clerk descending from a bus. He looked again, and saw it was a hippopotamus.'

Everyone who has done any scientific investigation knows painfully how every observation must be corrected again and again. The need of Yoga is so bitter that it blinds us. We are constantly tempted to see and hear what we want to see and hear.

(19) It is therefore incumbent upon us, if we wish to make the universal and final Yoga with the Absolute, to master every element of our being, to protect it against all civil and external war, to intensify every faculty to the utmost, to train ourselves in knowledge and power to the utmost; so that at the proper moment we may be in perfect condition to fling ourselves up into the furnace of ecstasy which flames from the abyss of annihilation.

Love is the law, love under will.