

YOGA FOR YAHOO'S

Second Lecture - Yama

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

Stars and placental amniotes!¹ And ye inhabitants of the ten thousand worlds! The conclusion of our researches last week was that the ultimate Yoga which gives emancipation, which destroys the sense of separateness which is the root of Desire, is to be made by the concentration of every element of one's being, and annihilating it by intimate combustion with the universe itself.

I might here note, in parenthesis, that one of the difficulties of doing this is that all the elements of the Yogi increase in every way exactly as he progresses, and by reason of that progress. However, it is no use crossing our bridges until we come to them, and we shall find that by laying down serious scientific principles based on universal experience they will serve us faithfully through every stage of the journey.

2. When I first undertook the investigation of Yoga, I was fortunately equipped with a very sound training in the fundamental principles of modern science. I saw immediately that if we were to put any common sense into the business (science is nothing but instructed common sense), the first thing to do was to make a comparative study of the different systems of mysticism. It was immediately apparent that the results all over the world were identical. They were masked by sectarian theories. The methods all over the world were identical; this was masked by religious prejudice and local custom. But in their quiddity² – identical! This simple principle proved quite sufficient to disentangle the subject from the extraordinary complexities which have confused its expression.

1 An animal whose embryo develops in an amnion and chorion and has an allantois; a mammal, bird, or reptile. (*Amnion*: the innermost membrane that encloses the embryo of a mammal, bird, or reptile. *Chorion*: the outermost membrane that ... etc. *Allantois*: the fetal membrane lying below the chorion in many vertebrates, formed as an outgrowth of the embryo's gut.)

2 The inherent nature or essence of someone or something.

3. When it came to the point of preparing a simple analysis of the matter, the question arose: what terms shall we use? The mysticisms of Europe are hopelessly muddled; the theories have entirely overlaid the methods. The Chinese system is perhaps the most sublime and the most simple; but, unless one is born a Chinese, the symbols are of really unclimbable difficulty. The Buddhist system is in some ways the most complete, but it is also the most recondite.³ The words are excessive in length and difficult to commit to memory; and generally speaking, one cannot see the wood for the trees. But from the Indian system, overloaded though it is by accretions of every kind, it is comparatively easy to extract a method which is free from unnecessary and undesirable implications, and to make an interpretation of it intelligible to, and acceptable by, European minds. It is this system, and this interpretation of it, which I propose to put before you.

4. The great classic of Sanskrit literature is the Aphorisms of Patanjali.⁴ He is at least mercifully brief, and not more than ninety or ninety-five percent of what he writes can be dismissed as the ravings of a disordered mind. What remains is twenty-four carat gold. I now proceed to bestow it.

5. It is said that Yoga has eight limbs. Why limbs I do not know. But I have found it convenient to accept this classification, and we can cover the ground very satisfactorily by classing our remarks under these eight headings.

6. These headings are: –

1. Yama.
2. Niyama.
3. Asana.
4. Pranayama.
5. Pratyahara.
6. Dharana.
7. Dhyana.
8. Samadhi.

3 Little known; abstruse. From a French word meaning "hidden".

4 A PDF edition of this is available at Thelemistas: see http://thelemistas.org/PDF/Patanjali_Yoga_Aphorisms.pdf

Any attempt to translate these words will mire us in a hopeless quag⁵ of misunderstanding. What we can do is to deal with each one in turn, giving at the outset some sort of definition or description which will enable us to get a fairly complete idea of what is meant. I shall accordingly begin with an account of Yama.

Attend! Perpend! Transcend!

7. Yama is the easiest of the eight limbs of Yoga to define, and corresponds pretty closely to our word 'control.' When I tell you that some have translated it 'morality', you will shrink appalled and aghast at this revelation of the brainless baseness of humanity.

The word 'control' is here not very different from the word 'inhibition' as used by biologists. A primary cell, such as the amoeba, is in one sense completely free, in another completely passive. All parts of it are alike. Any part of its surface can ingest its food. If you cut it in half, the only result is that you have two perfect amoebae instead of one. How far is this condition removed in the evolutionary scale from trunk murders!⁶

Organisms developed by specialising their component structures have not achieved this so much by an acquisition of new powers, as by a restriction of part of the general powers. Thus, a Harley Street⁷ specialist is simply an ordinary doctor who says: 'I won't go out and attend to a sick person; I won't, I won't, I won't.'

Now what is true of cells is true of all already potentially specialised organs. Muscular power is based upon the rigidity of bones, and upon the refusal of joints to allow any movement in any but the appointed directions. The more solid the fulcrum, the more efficient the lever. The same remark applies to moral issues. These issues are in themselves perfectly simple; but they have

been completely overlaid by the sinister activities of priests and lawyers.

There is no question of right or wrong in any abstract sense about any of these problems. It is absurd to say that it is 'right' for chlorine to combine enthusiastically with hydrogen,⁸ and only in a very surly way with oxygen.⁹ It is not virtuous of a hydra to be hermaphrodite, or contumacious¹⁰ on the part of an elbow not to move freely in all directions. Anybody who knows what his job is has only one duty, which is to get that job done. Anyone who possesses a function has only one duty to that function, to arrange for its free fulfilment.

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

8. We shall not be surprised therefore if we find that the perfectly simple term Yama (or Control) has been bedevilled out of all sense by the mistaken and malignant ingenuity of the pious Hindu. He has interpreted the word 'control' as meaning compliance with certain fixed proscriptions. There are quite a lot of prohibitions grouped under the heading of Yama, which are perhaps quite necessary for the kind of people contemplated by the Teacher, but they have been senselessly elevated into universal rules. Everyone is familiar with the prohibition of pork as an article of diet by Jews and Mohammedans. This has nothing to do with Yama, or abstract righteousness. It was due to the fact that pork in eastern countries was infected with the trichina; which killed people who ate pork improperly cooked.¹¹ It was no good telling the savages that fact. Any way, they would only have broken the hygienic command when greed overcame them. The advice had to be made a universal rule, and supported with the authority of a religious sanction. They had not the brains to believe in trichinosis; but they were afraid of

5 A marsh or boggy place.

6 Two unrelated murders linked to Brighton, England in 1934. In both, the dismembered body of a murdered woman was placed in a trunk.

7 A street in the City of Westminster in London, England which has been noted since the 19th century for its large number of private [specialists in medicine and surgery](#).

8 That would be "hydrogen chloride", HCl, which when it gets wet forms hydrochloric acid.

9 ... And when it does, you get, among other things, chlorine monoxide. The chemical reaction of Cl + O₃ (ozone) forms ClO + O₂, and depletes the ozone layer.

10 Stubbornly or willfully disobedient to authority.

11 There are other theories accounting for this. See Marvin Harris, *The Sacred Cow and the Abominable Pig*.

Jehovah and Jehannum¹². Just so, under the grouping of Yama we learn that the aspiring Yogi must become 'fixed in the non-receiving of gifts,' which means that if anyone offers you a cigarette or a drink of water, you must reject his insidious advances in the most Victorian manner. It is such nonsense as this which brings the science of Yoga into contempt. But it isn't nonsense if you consider the class of people for whom the injunction was promulgated; for, as we will be shown later, preliminary to the concentration of the mind is the control of the mind, which means the calm of the mind, and the Hindu mind is so constituted that if you offer a man the most trifling object, the incident is a landmark in his life. It upsets him completely for years.

In the East, an absolutely automatic and thoughtless act of kindness to a native is liable to attach him to you, body and soul, for the rest of his life. In other words, it is going to upset him; and as a budding Yogi he has got to refuse it. But even the refusal is going to upset him quite a lot; and therefore he has got to become 'fixed' in refusal; that is to say, he has got to erect by means of habitual refusal a psychological barrier so strong that he can really dismiss the temptation without a quiver, or a quaver, or even a demisemiquaver¹³ of thought. I am sure you will see that an absolute rule is necessary to obtain this result. It is obviously impossible for him to try to draw the line between what he may receive and what he may not; he is merely involved in a Socratic dilemma; whereas if he goes to the other end of the line and accepts everything, his mind is equally upset by the burden of the responsibility of dealing with the things he has accepted. However, all these considerations do not apply to the average European mind. If someone gives me 200,000 pounds sterling, I automatically fail to notice it. It is a normal circumstance of life. Test me!

12 Or "Jahannam". This is the Arabic Language equivalent to Hell. The term comes from the Hebrew Gehinnom, originally the name of a valley outside Jerusalem.

13 In music, a "thirty-second note", 1/32 the length of a "quaver", or "whole note": what you or I would call "a really short note."

9. There are a great many other injunctions, all of which have to be examined independently in order to find whether they apply to Yoga in general, and to the particular advantage of any given student. We are to exclude especially all those considerations based on fantastic theories of the universe, or on the accidents of race or climate.

For instance, in the time of the late Maharajah of Kashmir, mahsir¹⁴ fishing was forbidden throughout his territory; because, when a child, he had been leaning over the parapet of a bridge over the Jhilam at Srinagar, and inadvertently opened his mouth, so that a mahsir was able to swallow his soul. It would never have done for a Sahib – a Mlecha!¹⁵ – to catch that mahsir. This story is really typical of 90% of the precepts usually enumerated under the heading Yama. The rest are for the most part based on local and climatic conditions, and they may or may not be applicable to your own case. And, on the other hand, there are all sorts of good rules which have never occurred to a teacher of Yoga; because those teachers never conceived the condition in which many people live today. It never occurred to the Buddha or Patanjali or Mansur el-Hallaj to advise his pupils not to practise in a flat with a wireless set next door.

The result of all this is that all of you who are worth your salt will be absolutely delighted when I tell you to scrap all the rules and discover your own. Sir Richard Burton said: 'He noblest lives and noblest dies, who makes and keeps his self-made laws.'

10. This is, of course, what every man of science has to do in every experiment. This is what constitutes an experiment. The other kind of man has only bad habits. When you explore a new country, you don't know what the conditions are going to be; and you have to master those conditions by the method of trial and error. We start to penetrate the stratosphere; and we have to modify our machines in all sorts of ways which

14 Or "mahseer", a fish of the genera *Tor*, *Neolissochilus*, and *Naziritor* in the family *Cyprinidae* (carps), *Tor* being the most common.

15 "Mleccha" means "non-Vedic", "barbarian" - the Hindu equivalent of a Jewish "shiksa".

were not altogether foreseen. I wish to thunder forth once more that no questions of right or wrong enter into our problems. But in the stratosphere it is 'right' for a man to be shut up in a pressure-resisting suit electrically heated, with an oxygen supply, whereas it would be 'wrong' for him to wear it if he were running the three miles in the summer sports in the Tanezrouft.¹⁶

This is the pit into which all the great religious teachers have hitherto fallen, and I am sure you are all looking hungrily at me in the hope of seeing me do likewise. But no! There is one principle which carries us through all conflicts concerning conduct, because it is perfectly rigid and perfectly elastic: – 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.'

So: it is not the least use to come and pester me about it.

Perfect mastery of the violin in six easy lessons by correspondence!

Should I have the heart to deny you? But Yama is different.

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. *That* is Yama.

Your object is to perform Yoga. Your True Will is to attain the consummation of marriage with the universe, and your ethical code must constantly be adapted precisely to the conditions of your experiment. Even when you have discovered what your code is, you will have to modify it as you progress; 'remould it nearer to the heart's desire' – Omar Khayyam. Just so, in a Himalayan expedition your rule of daily life in the valleys of Sikkim or the Upper Indus will have to be changed when you get to the glacier. But it is possible to indicate (in general terms expressed with the greatest caution) the 'sort' of thing that is likely to be bad for you. Anything that weakens the body, that exhausts, disturbs or inflames the mind is deprecable.¹⁷ You are pretty sure to find as you progress that there are some conditions that cannot be eliminated at all in your particular

circumstances; and then you have to find a way of dealing with these so that they make a minimum of trouble. And you will find that you cannot conquer the obstacle of Yama, and dismiss it from your mind once and for all. Conditions favourable for the beginner may become an intolerable nuisance to the adept, while, on the other hand, things which matter very little in the beginning become most serious obstacles later on.

Another point is that quite unsuspected problems arise in the course of the training. The whole question of the sub-conscious mind can be dismissed almost as a joke by the average man as he goes about his daily business; it becomes a very real trouble when you discover that the tranquillity of the mind is being disturbed by a type of thought whose existence had previously been unsuspected, and whose source is unimaginable.

Then again there is no perfection of materials; there will always be errors and weaknesses, and the man who wins through is the man who manages to carry on with a defective engine. The actual strain of the work develops the defects; and it is a matter of great nicety of judgment to be able to deal with the changing conditions of life. It will be seen that the formula – 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law' has nothing to do with 'Do as you please.'

It is much more difficult to comply with the Law of Thelema than to follow out slavishly a set of dead regulations. Almost the only point of emancipation, in the sense of relief from a burden, is just the difference between Life and Death.

To obey a set of rules is to shift the whole responsibility of conduct on to some superannuated Bodhisattva¹⁸, who would resent you bitterly if he could see you, and tick you off in no uncertain terms for being such a fool as to think you could dodge the difficulties of research

16 One of the most desolate parts of the Sahara desert. It is situated along the borders among Algeria, Niger and Mali, west of the Hoggar mountains.

17 "Deprecate" means "to express earnest disapproval of."

18 In this spelling, this means "enlightened" (bodhi) "existence" (sattva). Traditionally, a bodhisattva is someone who, motivated by great compassion, has generated bodhicitta, a spontaneous wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

by the aid of a set of conventions which have little or nothing to do with actual conditions.

Formidable indeed are the obstacles we have created by the simple process of destroying our fetters. The analogy of the conquest of the air holds excellently well. The things that worry the pedestrian worry us not at all; but to control a new element your Yama must be that biological principle of adaptation to the new conditions, adjustment of the faculties to those conditions, and consequent success in those conditions, which were enunciated in respect of planetary evolution by Herbert Spencer¹⁹ and now generalised to cover all modes of being by the Law of Thelema.

But now let me begin to unleash my indignation. My job—the establishment of the Law of Thelema—is a most discouraging job. It is the rarest thing to find anyone who has any ideas at all on the subject of liberty. Because the Law of Thelema is the law of liberty, everybody's particular hair stands on end like the quills of the fretful porpentine;²⁰ they scream like an uprooted mandrake,²¹ and flee in terror from the accursed spot. Because: the exercise of liberty means that you have to think for yourself, and the natural inertia of mankind wants religion and ethics ready-made. However ridiculous or shameful a theory or practice is, they would rather comply than examine it. Sometimes it is hook-swinging²² or Sati,²³ sometimes consubstantiation²⁴ or supra-

lapsarianism;²⁵ they do not mind what they are brought up in, as long as they are well brought up. They do not want to be bothered about it. The Old School Tie²⁶ wins through. They never suspect the meaning of the pattern on the tie: the Broad Arrow.²⁷

You remember Dr. Alexandre Manette in 'A Tale of Two Cities.'

He had been imprisoned for many years in the Bastille, and to save himself from going mad had obtained permission to make shoes. When he was released, he disliked it. He had to be approached with the utmost precaution; he fell into an agony of fear if his door was left unlocked; he cobbled away in a frenzy of anxiety lest the shoes should not be finished in time—the shoes that nobody wanted. Charles Dickens lived at a time and in a country such that this state of mind appeared abnormal and even deplorable, but today it is a characteristic of 95 per cent of the people of England. Subjects that were freely discussed under Queen Victoria are now absolutely taboo; because everyone knows subconsciously that to touch them, however gently, is to risk precipitating the catastrophe of their dry-rot.

There are not going to be many Yogis in England, because there will not be more than a very few indeed who will have the courage to tackle even this first of the eight limbs of Yoga: Yama.

the bread and wine.

25 **Lapsarianism** is the set of Calvinist doctrines describing the theoretical order of God's decree (in his mind, before Creation), in particular concerning the order of his decree for the fall of man and reprobation. **Supralapsarianism** is the view that God's decrees of election and reprobation logically *preceded* the decree of the fall.

26 Here, Crowley uses this metaphor in an aberrant sense. "Old School Tie" refers to what we would call the "old boys' network". It means specifically the practice of wearing the tie of one's school, as a means of being recognized (and thus helped) by others.

27 This is a guess on my part, but here I think Crowley intends the Broad Arrow symbolism to refer to the fact that in the Australian colonies, it was used to mark government property – particularly prisoners' clothing. However, I've also seen one source report it as a synonym for the fleur-de-lis.

19 An English philosopher (1820 – 1903) who developed an all-embracing conception of evolution as the progressive development of the physical world, biological organisms, the human mind, and human culture and societies.

20 An antique synonym for "porcupine". See *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene V.

21 A hallucinogenic plant of the mandrake family, whose root resembles a human figure. Long used in magic, it supposedly screams when uprooted. Sometimes it is also said that the scream kills whoever hears it.

22 A propitiatory or sacrificial rite in which a person is suspended above ground by hooks through their back and swung about.

23 Also called **suttee**, a religious funeral practice in which a recently widowed woman immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre.

24 A theological doctrine holding that during the Christian sacrament, the fundamental substance of the body and blood of Christ are present alongside the substance of

I do not think that anything will save the country: unless through war and revolution, when those who wish to survive will have to think and act for themselves according to their desperate needs, and not by some rotten yard-stick of convention. Why, even the skill of the workman has almost decayed within a generation! Forty years ago there were very few jobs that a man could not do with a jack-knife and a woman with a hair-pin; today you have to have a separate gadget for every trivial task.

If you want to become Yogis, you will have to get a move on.

Lege! Judica! Tace!²⁸

Love is the law, love under will.

28 Read! Judge! Be silent!