

YOGA, A BRIEF ACCOUNT

It only is now toward the end I realize I can't define "Yoga." I'm reminded of a line from Chogyam Trungpa's (the *Kusulu's*) *Mudra*, which slim anthology was for a long while a true mainstay. As I draw it from the shelf its frayed cover falls off, the sure sign of a book well loved; and there drops out a poem in my hand, which I do not remember writing....

*The hatch of Vajrayana opened to shining rungs;
I longed to tarry mesmerized in Kriya
for my eyes thought they caught the pure Light--but--
Vam! Not real. Instead I was forced to a higher rung.
Long were my feet glued to it, eyes downcast to them:
distasteful knowledge! The end of every creation is
destruction.*

*But miracles of the Past mean more can come.
Look up! Another rung...and then, another....
Give it all up—
only only one more--.
Give it all up--
clinging is only temporary.*

*The placid ocean in permanent sight
an impervious bubble of circumstances
captures Ego. Now, what?
Glide up...
diffuse Mahamudra and see the portal of Ati.
Seeping joy of Intellect strains away
from the virtual projections, the mirror images....
Up! Up!...ah!--
Into perfected union of wisdom and insight?*

*But, ho! The ladder is disappearing....
Quickly—before it does—
reach, seize Ultimate Reality's goggles hanging there.
Look squarely, into the Dharma Kaya.*

It was a dim recall now, the way that I became immersed. I needed some review, and the line I sought was right on point: *You've studied without remembering anything when you*

really needed it! It's from a poem of Petrul Rinpoche, with which Chogyam Trungpa's *Mudra* begins; and I remember well now how I clung to the poem, memorizing it during the early years to a *mantra*. The writer addressed it to a friend, "Abrushi;" and when I substituted my name it spoke then directly to me: *Listen, Tosca, you miserable daydreaming fool. You remember how delusions confused you in the past? Watch out for delusions in the present, and don't lead a hypocritical life....*

I spent a great deal of time contemplating the word, *delusion*, the meaning of which I before would have said I knew. I find a dictionary definition handwritten in the margin: *misleading of the mind, deceptions/trickeries*. It calls to my mind the self-deception the nuns of de Paul, in my childhood religious indoctrination, stressed could keep one out of Heaven.

Looking up the Dictionary definition of "Yoga," I find:

“yoga \yo-ga\ *n.* [Skt. lit. yoking, fr. *yunakti* he yokes; akin to L. *jungere* to join – more at yoke]. **1** *cap* : a Hindu theistic philosophy teaching the suppression of all activity of body, mind and will in order that the self may realize its distinction from them and attain liberation **2** : a system of exercises for attaining bodily or mental control and well-being – **yogic** \-gik\ *adj.* *Often cap.*

Iyengar in *Light on Yoga* gives some detail on the foundations of Yoga philosophy:¹

The word Yoga is derived from the sanskrit root *yug* meaning to bind, attach and yoke.... Yoga is one of six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy collated, coordinated, and systemized by Patanjali in his classical work, *Yoga Sutras*, which consists of 185 terse aphorisms [concise statements of principle]. Patanjali describes Yoga as restraint of mental modifications or as suppression of the fluctuations of consciousness [sanskrit terms omitted here].

The *Kathopanishad* describes Yoga as steady control of the senses and mind.

The *Bhagavad Gita* also gives other explanations of the term *yoga* and lays stress upon Karma Yoga (Yoga by action). The sixth chapter of the *Bhagavad*

¹These quotations are synthesized from the text referenced in the Bibliography.

Gita...explains the meaning of Yoga as a deliverance from contact with pain and sorrow.”

There is not one but different paths for realization in the same system.

Page 21-22, 24.

Rammurti Mishra’s initial comments appealed to my desire *to do*, not ponder:

“...[T]he material on the eternal science of Yoga perhaps form[s] the greatest library on any single subject....but you are not interested in useless verbiage to waste your valuable time. You want to know ‘how.’

“Patanjali Yoga in its original form is free from these vagaries. Therefore, the name of the Patanjali Yoga is *Samkhya* Yoga. ...[It] does not recognize physics without metaphysics and, vice versa, metaphysics without physics. It is the missing link between the two sciences...knowledge through experience. It is the king of all Yogas; therefore it is called *Raja* Yoga. As mathematics is the root of all physical sciences, so the *samkhya* system is the root of metaphysical science.”

Page xii.

Mishra also stated:

“[T]here are many books on Yoga being sold in the market today. Many of these books are supposed to be instructive as textbooks to teach you ‘How to go into the state of *samadhi* and how to attain enlightenment and perfection.’ Most of these books...do not ‘teach you how,’ because they present a great number of useless theories, dogmas and various other window dressings.”

Page xxii.

The very brief glossary that follows strictly is intended to allow a reader simply to follow “*Journey’s*” text,² and in no way is itself a ‘guide.’ It merely offers some of Yoga’s terminology, upon which much has been expounded, as well as cautions as to practices.

Akasa: Primordial nature, pervasive substratum.... Its most subtle manifestation is in the prenuclear state of matter.... *Mishra*, page 196.

Asanas (postures): The third of the eight procedures [stages] which comprise Yoga. In *Raja Yoga*, the term means any comfortable position for meditation.

Loc cit.; giving internal references.

Atman: Divine soul...dormant...but able to be manifested to its fullest in man by the practice of meditation. *Loc. Cit.*

² An as-yet-unpublished autobiography to which this is a separate appendix.

Aum: Like the Latin word ‘Omne’, the Sanskrit word ‘Aum’ means ‘all’ and conveys concepts of ‘Omniscience’, ‘Omnipresence’, and ‘Omnipotence’. *Iyengar*, page 314.

That sound in the human range of pronunciation chosen to represent the true sound of *anahat(a) nad(a)* [see *Nadam*], or *Brahman* as manifested by the *nad* sound. [Mishra discusses representations of its three syllables.] [Sometimes found as “Om.”] *Mishra*, pages 203, 205.

Bhakti: Complete devotion to and love for all beings because of the divine principle perceived in them through meditation. *Ibid*, page 197; giving internal references.

Brahman: The eternal, omnipresent, omniscient principle the realization of which is the goal of meditation. It is sometimes called Ultimate Reality because, although all is dependent upon it for existence, it is without relation, independent. *Loc. cit.*; giving internal references.

Cakras[/Chakras/Cakram]: Seven subtle centers for consciousness symbolized in the human body in the areas of the (1) spine, (2) lumbar region, (3) solar plexus, (4) heart, (5) throat, (6) thalamus, and (7) cerebral cortex. *Ibid*, page 198; giving internal references.

Cittam: A technical term which means “seat of consciousness” and as such includes the conscious, subconscious, and superconscious minds. Yoga gives knowledge and control of the first two facets of *cittam* so that the third...may manifest. *Loc. cit.*

Dharana: The sixth procedure of the eight-fold system of *Raja* Yoga. It consists of fixation upon the object of meditation and, as such, is the beginning of internal stages. *Loc. cit.*

Concentration or complete attention. *Iyengar*, page 317.

Dhyana: The seventh procedure, intermediate internal process where the power of attention becomes so fixed on the object of meditation that other thoughts do not enter the mind at the time. *Mishra*, page 199.
The seventh stage. *Iyengar*, page 317.

Eight-fold Yoga “Limbs:” *Yama*, first; *niyama*, second; *asana*, third; *pranayama*, fourth; *pratyahara*, fifth; *darana*, sixth; *dhyana*, seventh; *samadhi*, eighth.

“Eight sets of practices which together comprise the science of Yoga. *Yama* and *niyama*, the first two steps, comprise the ethical foundation of Yoga; *asana*, *pranayam[a]*, and *pratyahara* comprise means of physical preparation for the final internal practices of *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*. *Op cit.*, page 199.

Gunas: Three cosmic principles of which the entire material universe is composed in varying proportions. (1) *SatoSatva/Sattva guna* manifests as life, light, strength, courage, freshness, resolution, good moral qualities, and, in the nuclear sphere, the proton. (2) *Rajo guna* is characterized by activity and the electron. (3) The characteristics of *Tamo guna* are sleep, dullness, decay and the neutron. *Mishra*, pages 199, 207.

Guna, a quality, an ingredient or constituent of nature. *Sattva guna*, the illuminating, pure and good quality of everything in nature; *Rajo*, quality of mobility or activity; *Tamo*, quality of darkness or ignorance. *Iyengar*, pages 328, 326, 329.

Guru: *gu*=darkness, *ru*=light; a teacher who transmits knowledge, removes darkness and brings enlightenment. *Ibid*, page 30.

Hatha: force or determined effort.

Hatha Yoga: Opposing distinction is not so, as sometimes made between Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* as dealing with spiritual discipline, and Svamimarama's *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, solely with physical discipline; *Hatha Yoga* and *Raja Yoga* complement each other and form a single approach to Liberation. *Ibid*, page 24.

A system of Yoga developed later than *Raja Yoga*, in which the various parts of the body [are] employed to effect control of the mind.

Mishra, page 200; giving internal references.

Ida and Pingala: Yogic terminology respectively for the parasympathetic (ascending) and sympathetic (descending) tracts of the autonomic nervous system.

Parisariya nadi mandalam: Term for the peripheral nervous system which connects the central nervous system with bodily tissues. *Ibid*, pages 101, 200, 204.

Isvara: "That conscious principle governing the entire physical universe." *Ibid*, page 200.
"The Supreme Being, God." *Iyengar*, page 319.

Karma: (1) Cause and effect operating inexorably throughout the material universe; (2) Yogic discipline in which one does all work and action unselfishly.

Mishra, page 200; with internal references.

Kundalini sakti: The so-called "coiled power" of the central nervous system [the "Susumna"]. *Ibid*, page 201.

Latent energy in the lowest nerve center. *Iyengar*, page 322.

Mantras/Mantram: Strong suggestions which anyone may give to his or her mind by repetition. *Op cit.*; gives internal references.

A sacred thought or a prayer. *Iyengar*, page 323.

Nadam[*/anahat(a) (nad(a))*]: Sound manifestation of the highest psychic energy (*prana*) which may be heard in one form within the human body where it manifests at first close to the right ear.

Primary state, *vaikhari*, may manifest over time in differing sounds, all of which may be meditated upon, e.g. *ghanta nadam*, ringing of a bell; *megha nadam*, roll of thunder at a distance; *mridamga*, sound of bass or kettle drum; *venu nadam*, sound of a flute.

In a semi-advanced stage of *nad* meditation, *madhyama*--electromagnetic pulsation/magnetic sensations--may be perceived within the body.

Mishra, pages 195, 199, 201, 202, 209; giving internal references.

Nada: Inner mystical sound.

Iyengar, page 324.

Nadis: Nerve channels through which nervous energy passes through the human body, of which there are estimated 72,000. Junctions of the *nadis* are known as *chakras* or fly-wheels which regulate the body mechanism.

Ibid, pages 90, 316.

Niyamas: Five observances performed continually: physical and internal purity, contentment with one's material state, austerity, study and self-surrender. *Mishra*, page 203.

The second stage of Yoga mentioned by Patanjali. *Niyama's* five rules listed by Patanjali: purity, contentment, ardour or austerity, study of the Self, dedication to the 'Lord.'

Iyengar, page 324, 38.

Ojas: Hormonal energy which may be developed by the practice of Yoga. Such development brings increased health, longer life, mental power and control of nervous system. There are two kinds of *ojas*: *para ojas*, which supplies the heart...and *apara ojas*, which circulates constantly through the blood vessels to nourish the entire body, to heal mental and physical diseases.

Mishra, pages 203, 104.

Om: *See Aum.*

Prakriti: Cosmic matter or substance. "Nature; the original source of the material world, consisting of three qualities [*gunas*], etc."

Iyengar, pages 325-6, 329.

The most subtle form of nature according to the *Samkhya*, which, when in combination with Consciousness, produces the infinite universe of names and forms; characterized by the three *gunas*.

Mishra, page 204.

Prajna: Individual consciousness or intelligence as contrasted with universal intelligence, or *isvara*. It also may mean wisdom or intuition.

Loc. cit.; gives internal references.

Intelligence, wisdom.

Iyengar, page 325.

Prana: The sum total of all energy which resides within the universe, both the unmanifested nuclear state and in the manifested states [and travels the *kundalini* paths and tributaries].

Mishra, page 204; gives internal references.

Breath, respiration, life, vitality, wind, energy, strength. It also connotes the soul.

Iyengar, pge 326.

Pranayama: The fourth of the eight [procedures, sub-] systems—various breathing exercises for gradual "control of prana" and transferring the breathing function to the internal metabolism.

Mishra, page 204, gives internal references; *Iyengar*, page 45.

An important center of concentration during *pranayama* is the medulla oblongata because it contains the center which controls respiration.

Mishra, page 201.

Rhythmic control of breath. The fourth stage of yoga.

Iyengar, page 326.

"In breathing exercises, with every expiration in succession, impurities of the body are removed through the lungs, skin, and kidneys, and with every inspiration in succession, universal energy, life and light of knowledge are drawn into the body through the

lungs and skin.” “Energy of the sun operates freely in the body...the inner light continually increases until it reaches full freedom or salvation.” *Mishra*, page 133.

Pratyahara: The fifth procedure, withdrawal of consciousness from contact with the senses and turning it inward for concentration. *Ibid*, page 205; gives internal references.

Withdrawal and emancipation of the mind from the domination of the senses and sensual objects. The fifth stage of yoga. *Iyengar*, page 326.

Purusa[/purusha]: A *Samkhya* term designating pure Consciousness undefiled and unlimited by contact with *prakriti* or matter. *Mishra*, page 205.

Samadhi: For Yoga...that state, of which there are various grades, in which the individual mind, freed for a time from all material limits...gains enlightenment. *Loc. cit.*

Where there is a feeling of unutterable joy and peace. *Iyengar*, page 327.

Samkhya: The philosophic basis of the Yoga system; *i.e.* that system of classification of the states of mind and spirit which evolved from and is continually reverified by yoga practice. *Mishra*, page 206.

Susumna[/Sushumna]: The central nervous system, of which the principal part is the spinal cord. *Ibid*, page 208; gives internal references.

The main channel situated inside the spinal column. *Iyengar*, page 329.

[*See also*, Ida, Pingala, Nadis.]

Tatvamasi[/Tat twam asi]: The foremost of the great Vedic suggestions. It means literally “That art thou.” *Mishra*, page 208.

The realization of the real nature of man as being part of the divine; “That thou art.” *Iyengar*, page 330.

[Also heard as “Thou art that.”]

Third eye [“*divya dristi*”]: Located in the sixth *cakram* [cakra/chakra/“*anja*”], between the eyebrows, the seat of intuition. *Mishra*, page 199; gives internal references.

Vedanta: Direct knowledge of supreme consciousness...[which] although formulated into a philosophy...must be realized through practice. *Ibid*, page 209.

Yama: The first limb [of the eight-fold procedures of the Yoga system], its ethical disciplines being non-violence, truth, non-stealing, continence and non-coveting (universal moral commandments). *Iyengar*, pages 23, 33.

Five vows [governors of behavior]—noninjury, renunciation of untruth in life, nonstealing, continence, and noncovetousness—observed by aspirants after Yoga.

Mishra, page 210; gives internal references.

Yama also is the name of the god of death. *Iyengar*, page 333.

Yoga: That scientific system for transforming the weak, untrained, material mind of a human individual into the eternal, omnipotent, blissful mind of supreme, universal consciousness [giving page references in the text for its related religion, eight systems, aims of, physical endurance necessary for, training body, 'psychic' powers as byproducts of, and foundation of ethical and moral life]. *Mishra, page 210.*

Yoganidra: State of complete bodily relaxation and magnetization...awake, yet calm and free of all distraction. *Loc. cit.*

Yoga psychology: That system of mental analysis which has been formulated through centuries as the result of insight received and repeatedly vivified by yoga practice. A major premise of this system is that the chief property of mind is identification of itself with the objects of its contact. *Loc cit.*

From my practice, I can say that benefits to posture and flexibility through *asanas* definitely are evident; but unexpected 'psychological' effects can be experienced unwittingly. It is not known, for example, to what extent intensive practice/procedures may stimulate body and mind to yield neurological and physiological effects in both reception and perception of existence.

Lastly--while I have experienced periods of deep meditation that I admit are blissful--and believe my self and my work have benefited greatly from hatha practice, meditation and autosuggestion--I am far from achieving *prajna* and *sila* (intuitively wise, individually intelligent consciousness, manifesting in character and moral *perfection*), or apprehending the meanings of *turiya* (complete absorption of the mind in Brahman) and *nirvanam* (the final state of complete absorption in Brahman; the ultimate state of complete liberation³). I feel, perhaps, more in line with Gerald Heard, who spoke of the goal of "Perfection," but of "Completion" as unattainable in human living form.

[Bibliography follows]

³ Preceding definitions from *Mishra*.

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