

YOGA

for Mind and Body



An online seminar at the United Lodge of Theosophists, London, UK

Saturday 6th March 2021

- 3 pm Introduction
- 3.05 First Talk **Raja Yoga: A Theosophical View**
Second Talk a) **The Eight Limbs, an Outline**
b) **Guidance on Hatha Yoga, Pranayama & Kundalini**
- 3.50 Group study of the handout with Q&A
- 4.55 20 minute break
- 5.15 Third Talk a) **Patanjali's Practices for Preparation for Meditation**
b) **Attention, Contemplation & Meditation (Union with the Divine)**
- 5.35 Group study of the handout with Q&A
- 6.10 Closing words, concludes at 6.15 pm
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First Talk

Raja Yoga: A Theosophical View

QUOTES FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

“**Raja-Yoga** (*Sk.*). The true system of developing psychic and spiritual powers and union with one’s *Higher Self* – or the Supreme Spirit, as the profane express it. The exercise, regulation and concentration of thought. Raja-Yoga is opposed to Hatha-Yoga, the physical or psycho-physiological training in asceticism.” *The Theosophical Glossary* p. 275, H. P. Blavatsky

“Theosophy is synonymous with *Gnana-Vidya*, and with the *Brahma-Vidya* of the Hindus, and again with the *Dzyan* of the trans-Himalayan adepts, the science of the *true* Raj-Yogas, who are much more accessible than one thinks. This science has many schools in the East. But its offshoots are still more numerous, each one having ended by separating itself from the parent stem, – the true Archaic Wisdom, – and varying in its form.” “The Beacon-Light of The Unknown” article, H. P. Blavatsky

“**Yoga** (*Sk.*). (1) One of the six Darshanas or schools of India; a school of philosophy founded by Patanjali, though the real Yoga doctrine, the one that is said to have helped to prepare the world for the preaching of Buddha, is attributed with good reasons to the more ancient sage Yâjñawalkya, the writer of the *Shatapatha Brâhmana*, of *Yajur Veda*, the *Brihad Âranyaka*, and other famous works. (2) The practice of meditation as a means of leading to spiritual liberation. Psycho-spiritual powers are obtained thereby, and induced ecstatic states lead to the clear and correct perception of the eternal truths, in both the visible and invisible universe.” *The Theosophical Glossary* p. 380-1, H. P. Blavatsky

“This system, evolved by long ages of practice . . . was not practised in India alone in the days of antiquity. The greatest philosophers of all countries sought to acquire these powers, and, certainly, behind the external ridiculous postures of the Yogins of to-day, lies concealed the profound wisdom of the archaic ages, one that included among other things a perfect knowledge of what are now termed physiology and psychology.” “The Yoga Philosophy,” article in *A Modern Panarion* p. 342, H. P. Blavatsky

“An unmistakable error . . . confounds the *Raja* with the *Hatha* Yogins, whereas the former have nothing to do with the physical training of the *Hatha* nor with any other of the innumerable sects who have now adopted the name and emblems of *Yogins*. . . . the true *Raja Yogins* who have no more to do with *Shiva* than with *Vishnu* or any other deity. . . . It is not that among the *Hatha* Yogins . . . there has never been a man worthy of being considered as a true Yogin. What we say, is simply this: the *Raja Yogin* trains but his mental and intellectual powers, leaving the physical alone, and making but little of the exercise of phenomena simply of a physical character. Hence it is the rarest thing in the world to find a real Yogi boasting of being one, or willing to exhibit such powers . . .” *Theosophical Articles and Notes* p. 116-7, HPB

Q. – Does God reveal himself by inspiration to a Yogi?

A. – Every man has his own ideas about “God.” So far as we have learned, the Yogi discovers his God in his inner self, his Atma. When he reaches that point he *is* inspired – by the union of himself with the Universal, Divine Principle – Parabrahman. With a personal God – a God who thinks, plots, rewards, punishes and repents – we are not acquainted. “Questions Answered about Yoga Vidya,” article in *A Modern Panarion* p. 358, H. P. Blavatsky

“Meditation . . . in Patanjali’s Aphorisms will be found all needful rules and particularity. If these are studied and not forgotten, then practice must give results. . . . No strange and complicated directions are needed. All we have to do is to try and to keep on trying.” “Meditation, Concentration, Will,” an article by William Q. Judge

Second Talk

- a) **The Eight Limbs, an Outline, and**
- b) **Guidance on Hatha Yoga, Pranayama & Kundalini**

QUOTES FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

The Eight Limbs are:

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|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Forbearance (Yamas) | 2. Religious Observances (Niyamas) | 3. Postures (Asanas) |
| 4. Suppression of the breath (Pranayama) | 5. Restraint (Pratyahara) | |
| 6. Attention (Dharana) | 7. Contemplation (Dhyana) | 8. Meditation (Samadhi) |

The last three limbs will be covered in the 3rd talk.

Hatha-Yoga is a practical mortification of the body by means of which certain powers are developed. It consists in the assumption of certain postures that aid the work, and certain kinds of breathing that bring on changes in the system, together with other devices (...) These risks consist in this, that while an undirected person is doing according to the rules of Hatha-Yoga, he arouses about him influences that do him harm...

(...) being attracted to Hatha-Yoga by the novelty of it, and by the apparent pay that it offers in visible physical results, they begin without knowledge of the difficulty, and stopping after a period of trial they bring down upon themselves consequences that are wholly undesirable. The greatest objection to it, however, is that it pertains to the material and semi-material man, roughly speaking, to the body, and what is gained through it is lost at death.

The Bhagavad-Gita refers to this and describes what happens in these words: "All of these, indeed, being versed in sacrifice, have their sins destroyed by these sacrifices. But he alone reaches union with the Supreme being who eats of the ambrosia left from a sacrifice." This means that the Hatha-Yoga practice represents the mere sacrifice itself, whereas the other kind is the ambrosia arising from the sacrifice, or "the perfection of spiritual cultivation," and that leads to Nirvana. The means for attaining the "perfection of spiritual cultivation" are found in Raj-Yoga, or, as we shall term it for the present, Culture of Concentration. [Culture of Concentration, William Q. Judge](#)

When he hath renounced all intentions and is devoid of attachment to action in regard to objects of sense, then he is called one who hath ascended to meditation. He should raise the self by the Self; let him not suffer the Self to be lowered; for Self is the friend of self, and in like manner, self is its own enemy. [...] The man who hath spiritual knowledge and discernment, who standeth upon the pinnacle, and hath subdued the senses, to whom gold and stone are the same, is said to be devoted. And he is esteemed among all who, whether amongst his friends and companions, in the midst of enemies or those who stand aloof or remain neutral, with those who love and those who hate, and in the company of sinners or the righteous, is of equal mind." [The Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 4, p. 44-5](#)

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On Raja & Hatha Yoga Râja-Yoga (*Sk.*). The true system of developing psychic and spiritual powers and union with one's *Higher Self*... The exercise, regulation and concentration of thought. Raja-Yoga is opposed to Hatha-Yoga, the physical or psycho-physiological training in asceticism. [Theosophical Glossary, HPB](#)

The Hâtha (the lower yoga) so called was and still is *discountenanced by the Arhats*. It is injurious to the health and alone can never develop into Raj Yoga. [The Secret Doctrine 1:96, HPB](#)

Hatha Yoga (*Sk.*). The lower form of Yoga practice; one which uses physical means for purposes of spiritual self-development. The opposite of *Raja Yoga* [Glossary, \[see also Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, p. viii & ix\]](#)

I strongly advise you to give up all yoga practices, which in almost all cases have disastrous results unless guided by a competent teacher. The concussions and explosions in your head are evidences that you are

in no fit condition to try yoga practices, for these effects result from lesions of the brain, i.e., from the bursting of the very minute brain cells. *Letters That Have Helped Me* p. 115, W. Q. Judge

On Patanjali Read Patanjali's *Yoga Philosophy*; but with *caution*, for it is very apt to mislead, being written in symbolic language. *Answers to correspondence in Lucifer Magazine, April 1888, H. P. Blavatsky*

He who would know more, let him study *Vedanta* and Patanjali's *Yoga Philosophy* – *esoterically*.

Modern Idealism, Worse Than Materialism by H. P. Blavatsky

[On popular Hatha Yoga] A distinction is made between Patanjali's system of Ananas & Pranayama and Hatha Yoga, whether for health and exercise or later for psychic effects. Although many people's experience of modern Hatha Yoga may not (yet) be disruptive, *much care should be exercised*. *The Editors.]*

On Postures (Asanas) “The posture assumed by a Yogee must be steady and pleasant.” In his note on this, W. Q. Judge says, “For the clearing up of the mind of the student it is to be observed that the “postures” laid down in various systems of “Yoga” are *not absolutely essential* to the successful pursuit of the practice of concentration and attainment of its ultimate fruits.” *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, Book II, Aphorism 46*

Who among the many thousands of members does *lead the life*? Shall anyone say because... he studies the *Bhagavad-Gita* or the “Yoga philosophy” *upside down*, that he is a theosophist *according to the Masters' hearts*? As it is not the cowl that makes the monk, so, no long hair with a poetical vacancy on the brow are sufficient to make of one a faithful follower of *divine* Wisdom. *The Theosophical Mahatmas* by H. P. Blavatsky

On Pranayama The Life-winds are the various modes of out-breathing and in-breathing, changing thereby the polarity of the body and states of consciousness. It is Yoga practice, but beware of taking the exoteric works on Yoga literally. They all require a key. *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge* p. 141 by H. P. Blavatsky

... the utmost that can come [of Pranayama] are some psychic powers of a trifling nature which most often are misused by unbalanced minds. The followers of the Inner Path have therefore eschewed this as dangerous and undesirable. . . . this misadventure generally ends in theomania¹ if not in insanity...

“Pranayama” article in *The Theosophical Movement, April 1940*

On one who had harmed themselves psychically: “...his own self-painted adeptship is entirely imaginary, he has nevertheless, by the injudicious practice of *pranayam*, developed in himself to some extent mediumship – is tainted for life with it. He has opened wide the door to influences from the wrong quarter, and is, henceforth almost impervious to those from the right.” *A letter from Mahatma K.H.*

On the Chakras (Centres) I advise you to discontinue concentration on the vital centres,² which again may prove dangerous... [You have some] power of concentration,³ and the greatest help will now come to you from concentration upon the Higher Self, and aspiration toward the Higher Self... concentrate your mind upon that [eg a phrase in the Gita or other text] and meditate upon it, *you will find much good result from it*, and there is no danger in such concentration. *Letters That Have Helped Me* p. 115, W. Q. Judge

And just as one may injure his body by ignorantly using drugs or physical practices, so can the finer currents and nerves of the inner man be thrown out of adjustment if one in... ignorance attempts, un instructed, to deal with them. *Replanting Diseases for Future Use, W. Q. Judge*

On Kundalini Arousing the Kundalini and forcing it up to the Brahmarandhra (the crown of the head) and thus acquiring the power of walking on water and of prophecy, do not constitute a spiritual man—such is not fit to be a Chela. *The Doctrine of the Bhagavad Gita, p. 20* by Bhavani Shankar

“[Kundalini] is one of the mystic ‘Yogi powers’. It is Buddhi considered as an active instead of a passive principle.” Thus the electro-spiritual force called Kundalini is the result of the spiritual development of man and has nothing to do with physical and mechanical processes. *ibid, 19*

¹ Theomania is the delusion of feeling ‘one is God’ or ‘chosen by God’. *Online Dictionary*.

² Compare this to the practice recommended by Swami Vivekananda: “Slowly fill the lungs with breath through the Ida, the left nostril, and at the same time concentrate the mind on the nerve current. You are, as it were, sending the nerve current down the spinal column...” Such unwise experiments are very often injurious and lead to mental imbalance etc.

³ “The power of concentration” is Limbs 6, 7 & 8 of Patanjali, Attention, Contemplation and Meditation (or Union, Samadhi).

Third Talk

- a) **Patanjali's Practices for Preparation for Meditation**
 b) **Attention, Contemplation & Meditation (Union with the Divine)**

QUOTES FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

For mind is like a mirror; it gathers dust while it reflects. It needs the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom to brush away the dust of our illusions. Seek, O Beginner, to blend thy Mind and Soul.

Be humble, if though would'st attain to Wisdom. Be humbler still, when Wisdom thou hast mastered.

The Voice of the Silence p. 26, 38 (1889 edition) translated by HPB from the *Book of the Golden Precepts*

In order to understand the system expounded in this book it is also necessary to admit the existence of soul, and the comparative unimportance of the body in which it dwells. For Patanjali holds that Nature exists for the soul's sake, taking it for granted that the student believes in the existence of soul. Hence he does not go into proof of that which in his day was admitted on every hand. And, as he lays down that the real experiencer and knower is the soul and not the mind, it follows that the Mind, designated either as "internal organ," or "thinking principle," while higher and more subtle than the body, is yet only an instrument used by the Soul in gaining experience, just in the same way as an astronomer uses his telescope for acquiring information respecting the heavens. But the Mind is a most important factor in the pursuit of concentration; one indeed without which concentration cannot be obtained, and therefore we see in the first book that to this subject Patanjali devotes attention. He shows that the mind is, as he terms it, "modified" by any object or subject brought before it, or to which it is directed. This may be well illustrated by quoting a passage from the commentator, who says: "The internal organ is there" – in the *Vedanta Paribhasha* – "compared to water in respect of its readiness to adapt itself to the form of whatever mould it may enter. *Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms* Preface, p. xi, William Q. Judge

15. Dispassion is the having overcome one's desires.

That is – the attainment of a state of being in which the consciousness is unaffected by passions, desires, and ambitions, which aid in causing modifications of the mind. . . .

17. There is a meditation of the kind called "that in which there is distinct cognition," and which is of a four-fold character because of Argumentation, Deliberation, Beatitude, Egoism. . . .

23. The state of abstract meditation may be attained by profound devotedness toward the Supreme Spirit considered in its comprehensible manifestation as *Ishwara*.

33. Through the practicing of Benevolence, Tenderness, Complacency, and Disregard for objects of happiness, grief, virtue, and vice, the mind becomes purified.

The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali Book I, p. 6-7, 10, 13, William Q. Judge

The system postulates that *Ishwara*, the spirit in man, is untouched by troubles, works, fruits of works, or desires, and when a firm position is assumed with the end in view of reaching union with spirit through concentration, He comes to the aid of the lower self and raises it gradually to higher planes.

The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali Preface, p. xv, William Q. Judge

Raja Yoga is a complete integrated system for transforming the conditioned animal-man into a god. It is a process which, if faithfully pursued, will gradually bring about a spiritual metamorphosis in the human being. Patanjali's Raja Yoga system is also known as Ashtanga Yoga.

The name "Eight Limbs" comes from the Sanskrit term Ashtanga, and refers to the eight limbs of yoga: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. These eight limbs form a sequence from the outer to the inner.

These eight steps basically act as guidelines on how to live a meaningful and purposeful life. They serve as a prescription for moral and ethical conduct and self-discipline; they direct attention towards one's [physical, mental, and moral] health; and they help us to acknowledge the spiritual aspects of our nature.

from a popular yoga website (but which also promotes pranayama.)

APPENDIX 1

On Postures and Regulating the Breath

B.M. - In both Europe and America, I have met a good many Theosophists who enquire into and appear to dabble in practical applications of the directions found in some of our literature, in the "Upanishads" and in a little book by on Sabapathi Swamy, respecting psychic development, by means of postures, regulating the breath and the like. What can be said upon this?

W. Q. Judge: These attempts at practical Yoga – as it is called are most dangerous, and in addition presumptuous and foolish. It is well understood in the right circles in India, that the directions found in many of the *Upanishads* should never be practiced except under the following conditions:

(a) a complete knowledge of all, and of the consequences, with a knowledge of the correctives to be applied when changes take place; and

(b) the possession of a thoroughly competent guide to point out errors, to restrain endeavor and to indicate danger, as well as to cure troubles that ensue.

Yet in the face of all this, and of repeated warnings, there are those who will foolhardily begin the practices in complete ignorance. They do not even pursue the ethical regulations that accompany all the other, such as the doing away with all vices, bad habits, uncharitable thoughts and so on; but go in for the practices, merely in the hope of procuring psychic powers. It is time it were stopped, and time that those who give out this literature looked into what they give out to a grasping and stiff-necked generation.

That damage has been wrought both to the Society and some of its members cannot be contested, in face of actual experience in all parts of both countries. It is well known that these postures, even when ignorantly used, bring on physiological changes in the body, with great nervous derangements. Further than that the enquiring public is frightened off from our movement by the ill-balanced view of Theosophy and of the Society which these dabblers promulgate. Let us halt before it is too late. Let us give out the ethical and philosophical doctrines for the promulgation of which the Theosophical Society was founded. Thus alone can we accomplish our mission, which is to the world at large and not for the benefit of a few cranky investigators in a field that can only be safely trodden by the thoroughly prepared, the fully armed and the deeply experienced man who has a sound mind and high, pure aspirations, joined with a sound body.

The Vahan, 1st January 1892, W. Q. Judge

APPENDIX 2

The Types of Yoga

The Yoga system is divided into two principal parts— Hatha and Raja Yoga. There are many minor divisions which can be brought under either of these heads. Hatha Yoga was promoted and practised by Matsendra Nath and Goraksh Nath and their followers, and by many sects of ascetics in this country (India). This system deals principally with the physiological part of man with a view to establish his health and train his will. The processes prescribed to arrive at this end are so difficult that only a few resolute souls go through all the stages of its practice, while many have failed and died in the attempt. It is therefore strongly denounced by all the philosophers. The most illustrious Sankarâchârya has remarked in his treatise called Aparokshanubhuti that ‘the system of Hatha Yoga was intended for those whose worldly desires are not pacified or uprooted.’ He has strongly spoken elsewhere against this practice.

On the other hand, the Raja Yogis try to control the mind itself by following the rules laid down by the greatest of adepts. [Bombay edition Patanjali’s Aphorisms, August 1885, Col. H. S. Olcott.]

Patanjali's rules compel the student not only to acquire a right knowledge of what is and what is not real, but also to practice all virtues, and while results in the way of psychic development are not so immediately seen as in the case of the successful practitioner of Hatha Yoga, it is infinitely safer and is certainly spiritual, which Hatha Yoga is not. In Patanjali's Aphorisms there is some slight allusion to the practices of Hatha Yoga, such as "postures," each of which is more difficult than those preceding, and "retention of the breath," but he distinctly says that mortification and other practices are either for the purpose of extenuating certain mental afflictions or for the more easy attainment of concentration of mind.

In Hatha Yoga practice, on the contrary, the result is psychic development at the delay or expense of the spiritual nature. These last named practices and results may allure the Western student, but from our knowledge of inherent racial difficulties there is not much fear that many will persist in them.

This book is meant for sincere students, and especially for those who have some glimmering of what Krishna meant, when in *Bhagavad-Gita* he said, that after a while spiritual knowledge grows up within and illuminates with its rays all subjects and objects. Students of the mere forms of Sanskrit who look for new renderings or laborious attempts at altering the meaning of words and sentences will find nothing between these covers.

Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, Preface vii-ix, W. Q. Judge

Links <https://www.theosophy-ult.org.uk/articles/on-the-best-approach-to-kundalini>

www.theosophy~ult.org.uk