

JPJRS 13/2 ISSN 0972-33315, July 2010, 99-122.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4284134

Stable URL: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4284134>

# **Samadhi in Yoga: An Experience of Encounter with Deathlessness**

**Stephen Chundamthadam, S.J.**  
De Nobili College, Pune 411014.

**Abstract:** Yoga is based on the relationship of body, mind and soul. The regular practice of yoga makes the body healthy, the mind to overcome tensions, and helps a person to liberate oneself from desires, attachments, suffering and pain. Yoga helps to live a holistic life leading to liberation. Insights from yoga and Christian saints are integrated in the pilgrimage to the Absolute.

**Keywords:** Yoga, Patanjali, Sankhya, liberation, purusa, prakriti, holistic living, samadhi, discipline, energy.

## **1. Introduction**

It is a miracle that people in the modern world live healthy as they are, in spite of the adulterated food they eat, polluted water and air they drink and breathe, indiscriminate use of pesticides and manures, careless consumption of antibiotics, exposure to electro-magnetic vibrations and stress and tension in their life. Because of these unhealthy factors, the human body accumulates carcinogenic and chemical materials which will affect the *homeostasis i.e.*, the relative constancy of the body's internal environment and the functioning of the vital organs. The organs which are comparatively less utilized, like appendix, gallbladder, prostate, uterus, breasts, thyroid etc., have greater chance of accumulating harmful elements. The main reasons for sickness in the modern humans are unhealthy food habits and life style, lack of sufficient exercises and relaxation. Due to lack of exercise,

fresh blood supply to the vital organs will be reduced and as a result the harmful elements will get sedimented in those organs. Defective functioning of these organs will lead to sickness and ill health. Most of the precautionary and remedial measures lack a holistic approach to human health and well being, be it modern exercises, games, medicines or any other means. In such a situation people all over the world are realizing the value of yoga as a holistic exercise and as a spiritual discipline.

## **2. Yoga: An ancient way of liberation**

Some scholars are of the opinion that Yoga can be traced back to the Indus Valley civilization and the early Vedic religious traditions. Archaeological excavations had brought out seals and miniature statues in cross-legged and yogic postures from Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.<sup>1</sup> There were references on yoga practice and techniques of meditation in some of the ancient Upanishads,<sup>2</sup> which existed even before Patanjali.<sup>3</sup> Patanjali was influenced by the Sankhya principles of *purusa* and *prakrti*. *Purusa* is the ultimate principle and *prakrti* the subservient. The aim of Patanjala yoga was to liberate the *purusa* in each being through systematic and disciplined practice of yoga and meditation. In course of time yoga, because of the influence of the Vedanta philosophy, replaced *purusa* and *prakrti* with the terms *paramatma* and *jivatma* and presented yoga as a means to union between the two. The union between *paramatma* and *jivatma* is a mystical union.

Yoga is well-known as a holistic physical exercise for the health of the body and peace of the mind. Many practise yogic postures to get rid of back pain, complaints of arthritis, headache and neck pain or to maintain a good

and flexible physique. To some others yoga is a means to reduce mental tension and worries, and to assure sound sleep. Yet another group vigorously pursues the practice of yoga for greater vitality and satisfaction in sexual life. A small minority through the practice of *hatha* yoga adopts short cut methods to activate extraordinary powers (*siddhis*).

### 3. Benefits of the practice of yoga

The intimate relationship between body, mind and soul is the guiding principle of the Yoga philosophy. Regular practice of yoga ensures the healthy functioning of the different systems like digestive, respiratory, blood circulatory, glandular and skeletal systems in a person. Yoga makes the body slim, the face graceful, the voice clear, the eyes bright, eliminates diseases, transforms the sex energy, stimulates the gastric fire, and purifies the nerves (*nadis*).<sup>4</sup> Though the body wears away like an unbaked earthen pot immersed in the water, the practice of yoga can revitalize it.<sup>5</sup> The vital energy (*prana*) unites the body and soul of a person and enables him to have control over his senses. Our senses, through their contact with the external world, constantly feed innumerable data into our brain. Based on these data the mind creates tensions, desires, needs and images. Regular practice of yoga enables one to liberate oneself from desires, attachment to material possession, suffering and pain in this world. Yoga is successfully performed by the following six methods: effort, perseverance, courage, discriminative knowledge, abandoning public contact and determination.<sup>6</sup>

### 4. Yoga means union and harmony

The word 'Yoga' comes from the Sanskrit root *Yuj*

which means to join, to yoke, to connect, to fasten, to harness, etc. In the sense of 'yoking' the term aims at bringing the senses under control. In a strictly spiritual sense the word means union and re-instatement. Union takes place in two levels; union between soul, mind and body in the empirical level and union between the individual self (*jiva*) and the Supreme Self (*Brahman*). This union leads to the experience of harmony within oneself; harmony with others including nature, earth, animals, birds, plants trees and everything in this universe and harmony with God. In order to attain the union one has to follow a spiritual path characterized by moral restraints, ethical disciplines and hygienic living. Yogic way of life helps a person to consolidate his physical potentialities and develop his mental and spiritual powers. This will lead to physiological harmony, mental poise and positive outlook in life. Practice of yoga has two aspects, that is, the physical and the spiritual. Yogic exercises will take care of all the systems in our body and keep the internal organs in good health. "The vital organs will retain their youthful vigour and efficiency. The body will become light and resilient with better neuro-muscular co-ordination and metabolic efficiency. With increased suppleness of body and mind, the senses also will work better."<sup>7</sup>

The spiritual aspect consists of practice of concentration and meditation leading to self realization. In the Bhagavad Gita yoga means integration of the personality. Integration requires total detachment from all desires. Among the four ways of liberation in the Indian traditions,<sup>8</sup> Yoga comes under *rajamarga* which is divided mainly into three; they are *mantrayoga*, *hathayoga* and *kundaliniyoga*. *Rajayoga* is also known as *astangayoga* or

*patanjalayoga.*

## **5. Yoga is a holistic way of living**

Yoga is presented in various ways, as a philosophical system allied with Sankhya, as a disciplined method of attaining beatific experience (*hathayoga*), as a technique of attaining extraordinary powers of the mind or body, (*kundaliniyoga*). We focus on the spiritual aspect of yoga through the harmonious growth of mind, body and soul which will eventually lead to the beatific (*kaivalya*) experience of God. Patanjali, in his *Yogasutra*, defined yoga as a science of ‘restraining the mental modifications’<sup>9</sup> in order to reach the deathless silence (*Samadhi*)<sup>10</sup>. In this process

To live entirely for God, to move towards him, with my “three” properly in balance, with my body playing its part, and my soul with all its lofty considerations withdrawing when required, so that the voice of the Almighty might be heard in my heart—this had become a kind of obsession with me.<sup>11</sup>

St. Benedict gives importance to silence in prayer life, “When the Work of God is finished, let all go out in deep silence, and let reverence for God be observed,”<sup>12</sup> “But Yoga also produces a more active, willing and generous disposition. It quickens the life of faith, the love of God and our neighbour. It sharpens our sense of duty and responsibility as men and, above all, as Christians.”<sup>13</sup>

Patanjali taught yoga as a holistic way of living leading to liberation (*mukti*)<sup>14</sup>. The process of liberation has to be started from the concrete life situation of each person. The first step is to accept oneself as one is with all the limitations and talents. These limitations can be of mind, body, speech or intellect. Through systematic and regular practice one can avoid the harmful and negative habits and

cultivate positive qualities in life. People addicted to smoking, alcohol, saying lies, insulting others, inflicting pain on others, stealing things etc., should eliminate such bad habits gradually. Cultivation of positive thinking and positive qualities is very important for one who practices yoga. Control over diet and a disciplined life style can greatly enhance the results. In order to maintain a healthy body, yoga suggests a number of physical postures (*asanas*). Proper practice of physical postures will assure a harmonious growth of different systems<sup>15</sup> in a human body.

## 6. The spirit-matter duality

In the Judeo-Christian tradition body, mind and the world are considered to be factors obstructing the salvation of souls. Hence the Christian approach had been to subject these obstructing factors to rigorous and cruel discipline for spiritual growth. Against this approach Origen, one of the Church Fathers, over and again stressed the importance of balance between *anima*, *animus* and *spiritus* as a necessary precondition for the growth from human image to the divine resemblance. Body, mind and spirit are united with each other hence salvation of the soul has to be effected through the proper care and integration of the other two factors i.e., body and mind.

In the Yoga tradition body, mind and spirit are united with each other through the vital energy (*prana*). Control over the vital energy can help a person to have control over one's senses. Our senses, through their contact with the external world, constantly feed innumerable data into our brain. Based on these data the mind creates desires, needs and images. The human mind is never at rest which like a drunken monkey, runs after desires. When one

desire is fulfilled, another arises; when the second one is fulfilled, a third one arises and it goes on unending, like the waves in the sea. Wealth, position in society, fame, sex etc., are unable to give lasting peace and happiness to a person. The best way to peace of mind is not to have any desire, but this is the most difficult thing. The rich young man who came to Jesus in search of liberation had plenty of wealth, but no peace of mind. He refused to give away his possessions, because he thought that his possessions would satisfy his desires and give him happiness. We have the wonderful examples of St. Francis Assisi, St. Ignatius, Mother Teresa, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ramana Maharshi and others who knew how to have control over their desires. Yoga philosophy underlines the intimate relationship between body, mind and soul. Practice of yoga enables one to liberate oneself from desires, attachment to material possession, suffering and pain in the world.

## **7. Matter and spirit: One composite principle in the yoga philosophy**

The dualistic realism of Samkhya<sup>16</sup> philosophy admits only two ultimate realities that are *purusa* and *prakrti*. *Purusa* is an intelligent principle whose very essence is consciousness. *Prakrti*, which is a non-intelligent principle, is the ultimate cause of this universe. Yoga accepts the epistemology and metaphysics of Sankhya with its twenty-five principles and presents God as the highest object of contemplation. The Sankhya metaphysics of *purusa* and *prakrti* is the foundation for Yoga philosophy and practice.

“We have created the myth of the dying yogin as a narrative strategy for incorporating the *siddhis*, thus Patanjali the philosopher and the conceptualization of the *Yogsutra* emerge

from an encounter between a Samkhya philosopher and a virtuous practitioner.”<sup>17</sup>

*Purusa* in association with *Prakrti* is the cause of this universe. *Purusa* left to itself is insentient and inactive. But in association with *prakrti*, *purusa* gets enslaved in each living being. *Purusa* in each living being longs for liberation but finds it difficult to break out of the control of *prakrti*.

The Sankhya philosophy accepts the bondedness of the soul and the emancipation is possible through obtaining the right knowledge. In order to have the right knowledge Sankhya turns towards Yoga. Yoga philosophy provides a systematic and well developed set of physical and mental exercises for the purification of mind and intellect leading to the liberation of the soul. The metaphysical foundation provided by the Sankhya philosophy presupposes four foundational assumptions. 1. The universe is the result of the interaction between two fundamental principles *i.e.*, *purusa* and *prakrti*. 2. *Prakrti* (matter) manifests itself under three distinctive aspects *i.e.*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. 3. *Purusa* associated with *prakrti* gives rise to bondage of endless transmigrations. 4. There is a practical discipline which will enable a soul to disengage itself from the bondage which is elaborated in the science of Yoga.

## **8. Yoga is the science of mental discipline**

Patanjali defines yoga as restraint of mental modifications *chittavrttinirodhah*. Yoga is the control of the thought-waves in the mind (YS1.2). *Citta* consists of three components, that is *manas* (the recording faculty), *buddhi* (the discriminative faculty) and the *ahamkara* (the ego-sense). A seeker (*sadhaka*) has to gain control over these three factors and harmonize them through the



practice of yoga. According to the *Yoga Sutra*, Yoga can be defined as “a suspension of the modifications of the thinking principle which is obtainable through different methods such as controlling the vital breath and steady pose, both of which are intimately connected with the mind.”<sup>18</sup> Yoga is a science, which raises the capacity of the human mind to respond to higher vibrations and to perceive, catch and assimilate the infinite Conscious movements going on around us in the universe. According to the Bhagavad Gita, yoga is the breaking of contact with pain. Yoga is sameness and indifference (*BG* 11.48); Yoga is skill in works (*BG* 11.50). Yoga is seeing God in all things and all things in God, (*BG* 6.29). Zaehner defined Yoga as a process, which results in integration.

Thus, the crux of Patanjali’s intuition is the association of dualism and disintegration with the yogin’s silence and behaviour. Immersion in meditation, disassociation from the world, indifference to violence and pain, disregard for hunger and thirst, reported experiences of invisibility and levitation, unusual powers of memory, apparently close contacts with animals and so forth, have all been associated with the vision of disintegration and Samkhya metaphysics. In the history of philosophy and ideas of classical India, Patanjali’s interpretation of yogic silence has come to be the most authoritative and viable. And yet, though integrative and particularly stimulating in its approach to the quality and meaning of (“post-disintegration”) silence, his *Yogasutra* is another scholarly attempt to overcome stark otherness in the figure of the lonely, inaccessible yogin.<sup>19</sup>

Patanjali integrated the Samkhya metaphysics into Yoga meditation on the dualism of *purusha* (pure Subjectivity) and *prakrti* (objectivity), meditation on the human being and the material world.

In fact, there are a few who have already transcended the limitation of space and time and can see the past, present, and

future without this tiny intellect. These persons are called seers or saints and they have a scientifically devised method of finding truth that can satisfy the intellect, although their knowledge is above it. Looking deceptively simple, their method is very difficult for untrained and impure minds. They use the same dissipated rays of the mind that the majority of mankind uses for external observation and feeling, and focus them on the dark inner recesses of the heart, in turn, the one-pointed rays of the mind illumine the dark corners of the unknown.<sup>20</sup>

## **9. Deepening of silence through the different stages of Yoga**

Sages and thinkers in the Indian tradition spent time in solitude trying to unravel the mysteries of the world, life, death and the Ultimate principle. In the Upanisadic period thinkers were mostly concerned about ‘being’; whereas Sankhya and Yoga the allied systems, tried to understand the mystery of existence in a complementary approach. The former analyzed reality based on the two fundamental principles *purusha* and *prakrtii*, while the latter provided a practical system through which the Ultimate reality could be realized. Patanjali had systematized the practice of yoga in eight stages in a progressive order. Forbearance, observance, posture, regulation of breath, withdrawal of senses, concentration, contemplation or meditation and bliss are the eight-fold stages of Yoga.<sup>21</sup>

### **9.1 Freedom from the negative tendencies**

As a preparation for the practice of yoga one has to abstain from harming others, from falsehood, from theft, from incontinence, and from greed. (YS 2.30) A person deeply rooted in non-harming (*ahimsa*) in thoughts, words and actions will be friendly (*meta*) and compassionate (*karuna*) towards every creatures. Animals and other

creatures will cease to feel enmity in the presence of such a person (YS 2.35). Jesus told his disciples, 'you shall not kill, and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment' (Mt.5:21). He continued, 'Love your enemies, pray for them who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven' (Mt. 5:43-45). Jainism teaches non-violence as one of the most important principles. A life guided by non-violence will be the remedy for most of the problems of cruelty, exploitation and violence in the world today.

Truthfulness in life will lead one to inner freedom and to God. One of the most important insights of Mahatma Gandhi was that Truth is God and God is Truth. Jesus' life was to reveal the truth to others, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8: 32). Speak the truth and live in righteousness is the traditional Indian wisdom. People confirmed in truthfulness (*satya*), will receive the fruits of actions.<sup>22</sup> The consumerist world-view, which controls our life and interpersonal relationship, reduces persons to mere commodities for personal gains. The level of happiness and satisfaction in life seems to depend on material possession which will encourage a person to acquire more and more wealth. When a person is confirmed in abstinence from theft, all jewels come to him.<sup>23</sup> Thou shall not steal; one of the Ten Commandments in Christianity reminds us of the importance of non-stealing in the process of becoming perfect.

The conservation of the vital energy is important for the balanced progress in spiritual life. *Brahmacarya* means to live, move and have our being in Brahman (God), one who is rooted in *brahmacarya* gets the conservation of the highest energy.<sup>24</sup> St. Paul underlines this idea when he

says “In Him, we live, move, and have our being.” (Acts 17:28) One can keep celibacy irrespective of the state of life. According to the *Sandilyopanisad*, *brahmacarya* is giving up or renouncing sex action at all places and in all states of consciousness, namely conscious state, dream state and sleep.<sup>25</sup> Control over the senses, food, talk, sleep, discipline in life, regular physical exercises, proper breathing and meditation will help one to preserve the vital energy. Remember the words of Jesus, “I say to you, that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart’ (Mt. 5.27).

Most of the time we are pre-occupied with the existential struggle and greed for more, hence our minds are restless and distracted. When a person is totally devoid of greed, there arises the knowledge of how we exist and why.<sup>26</sup> Everyone in this world is led by desires, ambitions and frustrations. Most of us live in a state of inequilibrium of mind *i.e.*, in disharmony. One who has overcome this state of mind will enjoy lasting peace and harmony.

Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, nor about your body what shall you put on. Is not life more than food and body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet, your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? (Mt. 6:25-26).

Lord Krishna reminded Arjuna, “Father, mother, creator and grandfather of the world am I. I bring to those people who worship me with undivided devotion, ever controlled, the assurance of blessedness.” (*B. G* 9:17-22). The first stage of the practice of yoga enables a person to be totally detached from the worldly attractions and desires.<sup>27</sup> Detachment from the desires, actions and their

results is the basic requirement for the liberative *sadhana*; thereafter one can proceed to the next stage of yoga i.e. the positive observances.

## 9.2 Cultivation of the positive qualities

Discipline in life is the next stage in the progress in yoga (YS, 2.32). One who is able to find satisfaction with limited facilities, resources, food, dress etc, will be a content and happy person (YS 2.42). The greedy mind ends in grief and misery. Practice of yoga and meditation are to be performed in a clean and neat place with a concentrated mind. (B. G. 6. 11, 13). Human body, in the Christian tradition is considered as the temple of God; hence we have to keep it clean and healthy; so too the surroundings. As a result of mortification and discipline impurities are removed and the body and mind get special powers. Through self discipline and austere life one can burn up impurities in body, mind and word, this process is known as *tapas*. *Tapas* comes from the root '*tap*,' means to burn, suffer pain or be consumed by heat (YS 2.43). Through the practice of austerity the seeker develops strength in body, mind and character, and she/he attains courage and integrity. Repent, the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Mt.4:17; unless you repent, you will all likewise perish, (Lk 13: 3,5). Reading and studying the sacred scriptures (YS 2.44) will enable a person to be in constant remembrance of the lord. *Brahmavit Brahmavaivabhavati* – One who knows Brahman becomes Brahman. Constant remembrance of the Lord will help a person to discern the will of the Lord and fulfill it. One has to love the Lord God, with the whole heart, with the whole soul, with all our strength and with all our mind, (Deut 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Lk 10:27) and experience the presence of God in every

living being (Sp. Ex. 235,236). Such a person will see God in all things and all things in God, (BG 6: 29,30; *Isa. Up.* 6,7).

### 9.3 Physical culture

Physical postures are many in the yoga tradition and very often practice of yoga is wrongly identified with the practice of *asanas*. The practice of asana implies two things – the place and the way one sits. The place should be clean and of reasonable height (BG 6.11); the way one sits should be straight and relaxed (BG 6.13 ; YS 2.49,50). Patanjali in his *Yogasutra* gives three definitions for the physical posture: posture which is firm and comfortable; mild effort and meditation on the endless; thence no assaults from the pairs of the opposites.<sup>28</sup> The practice of asana should be steady (*sthira*), causes least painful sensation (*sukham*) and has to lead one to the meditation (*dhyana*) on the infinite. These three characteristics make the practice of asana distinct from other physical exercises. The first three steps are for training the physical body so that the body will be fit enough to go through the succeeding stages. One has to abandon the negative aspects of one's personality and cultivate the positive qualities in life. The regular practice of asanas will keep the body healthy and flexible so that one can proceed to the next stage *i.e.*, training in *pranayama*.

### 9.4 Preservation of the vital energy

Patanjali used the term *prana* which means breath, in three places in the *Yogasutras* 1.34, 2.29, 2.49. In all these three places *pranayama* means only breath.<sup>29</sup> In Hathayoga texts the word *prana* is used to indicate 'a subtle psychic force'. Patanjali presented only four kinds

of *pranayama* in his *Yogasutra*. Later Svatmarama in his famous work *Hathayogapradipika*, brought out eight kinds of pranayamas. V. G. Rele's *The Mysterious Kundalini* is an insightful attempt in the field of Pranayama. But most of these insights are based on speculations. Rajendra Nath Seal in his work *The Positive Sciences of The Ancient Hindus* attempted a scientific interpretation of pranayama. But he lacks experimental support for his conclusions. Through the regular practice of *pranayama*, one can ensure the continuous dissemination of the vital energy throughout the body and develop extraordinary powers. Control over the breath is important for the progress in concentration and meditation.

## 9.5 Mental discipline

The systematic practice of *pranayama* will help a person to withdraw the senses from the sense objects and gradually to empty the mind; when the mind is withdrawn from sense objects, sense organs also withdraw from objects,<sup>30</sup> thus leading one to concentration. Concentration is holding the mind within a centre of spiritual consciousness in the body whereby the external and the internal worlds converge into one. Concentration is associated with the seven psychic centres situated in the spinal cord.<sup>31</sup> Breathing, stilling the mind and concentration help to strengthen the astral body.

## 9.6 Emptying of the Intellect

A seeker who starts the meditation after going through the previous stages will come across various experiences like hearing sounds, seeing strange visions or colours, encountering images of saints or sages. These experiences whether positive or negative should not deter one from

continuing with the regular meditation. Silence, both external and internal, is important for the progress in meditation because it is in silence that we are able to listen to God. Silence is the language of the heart and in silence one communicates with other human beings, animals, creatures and with the nature. In the ordinary life situations our mind and senses are preoccupied with many things, as a result the deeper self is not attuned to the Supreme Self. When we withdraw our senses and still our mind and our brain, consciousness will become alert and active to receive the higher vibrations that are around us. Meditation enables a person to experience peace, tranquility and happiness and these experiences can be communicated with other people, and other beings. The very sight of a person well advanced in meditation is capable of bringing in peace and happiness in the mind of others. Meditation is an unbroken flow of thought toward the object of concentration.<sup>32</sup> Constant practice of meditation enables a person to transcend both the physical and astral body and be in the realm of causal body. In this state of existence (Samadhi) the spirit is not controlled either by the ego or by the physical body or mind, but by the atma.

### **9.7 The experience of deathless silence (*Samadhi*)**

The practice of yoga is a pilgrimage towards the foundation of our very existence.<sup>33</sup> In meditation, the true nature of the object shines forth, undistorted by the mind of the perceiver. Absorbed in meditation, the seeker sees God within himself and all things in God. In the final stage, the spirit is totally liberated and has transcended all barriers of physical, astral and causal bodies. In the liberated stage the individual spirit merges with the



Universal Spirit *i.e.*, the Pure Consciousness.<sup>34</sup> Liberation is the awareness of one's own real nature, "Yesterday I lived bewildered, in illusion. But now I am awake, Flawless and serene, beyond the world... Now I have given up The body and the world, I have a special gift. I see the infinite Self."<sup>35</sup>

## **10. Extraordinary powers: A hindrance to spiritual progress**

Extraordinary feats of *siddhas* and yogis are common in Indian tradition. Most of them are stories or myths which are not empirically verified. But it is possible to attain superhuman powers through rigorous and disciplined practice of yogic techniques. Ramakrishna exhorted his disciples to avoid any kind of miraculous powers like filth.<sup>36</sup> Ramana Maharshi was of the opinion that one should not accept thaumaturgic powers etc., even when directly offered to one, for they are like ropes to tether a beast and will sooner or later drag one down.<sup>37</sup> "On the one hand, the 'powers' are inevitably acquired in the course of initiation, and, for that very reason, constitute valuable indications of the monk's spiritual progress, on the other hand, they are doubly dangerous, since they tempt the monk with a vain 'magical mastery of the world' and, in addition, are likely to cause confusion in the minds of unbelievers."<sup>38</sup> A. Danielou perceives greater danger in acquiring extraordinary powers, "These attainments are the greatest obstacles of the adept in his journey towards reintegration. Nature herself, in a final effort to keep the adept within her bonds yields him magic powers, if he uses them for any worldly end; he is apt to fall back into the arms of worldly enjoyments. All true seekers, therefore, are careful to perform miracles except

in very special circumstances.”<sup>39</sup>

## 11. Conclusion

Happiness and pleasure are the guiding principles in the life of most of the people and they adopt various methods to attain this end. The different means they employ be it consumerism, achievements in life, drug induced pleasure, material prosperity, recognition and fame, rigorous physical discipline or religious experience, give only ephemeral happiness. In this kind of a reckless life, many lose the harmony between mind, body and spirit. A harmonious development of the human person and lasting peace and happiness elude modern humans. The science of yoga takes the human person as a unified whole in synthesizing body, mind and spirit into one composite reality and ensure lasting peace and happiness.

Patanjali taught yoga as a means to spiritual liberation. This spiritual liberation has to be started from the concrete life situation of each person. The first step is to accept oneself as she/he is with all her/his limitations and talents. These limitations can be of mind, body, speech or intellect. Acceptance of one's own negative qualities necessarily leads one to avoid the harmful and negative habits and to cultivate positive qualities in life. People addicted to smoking, alcohol, saying lie, insulting others, inflicting pain on others, stealing things etc., should eliminate such bad habits gradually. Cultivation of positive thinking and positive qualities is very important for the one who practices yoga. Control over diet and a disciplined life style can greatly enhance the results. In order to maintain a healthy body, yoga suggests a number of physical postures (*asanas*). Proper practice of physical postures will assure a harmonious growth of different

systems in a human body.

Yoga philosophy underlines the intimate relationship between body, mind and soul. Body and soul are united with each other through the vital energy (*prana*). Control over the vital energy can help a person to have control over one's senses. Our senses, through their contact with the external world, constantly feed innumerable data in to our brain. Based on these data the mind creates desires, needs and images. The human mind is never at rest. Like a drunken monkey, mind runs after desires. When one desire is fulfilled, another arises; when the second one is fulfilled, a third one arises and it goes on unending, like waves in the sea. Wealth, position in society, fame, sex etc are unable to give lasting happiness to a person. The best way to peace of mind is not to have any desire, but this is the most difficult thing. The rich young man who came to Jesus in search of eternal life had plenty of wealth, but had no peace of mind. He refused to forsake his possessions; because he thought that his possessions would satisfy his desires and give him happiness. Practice of yoga enables one to liberate oneself from desires, attachment to material possession, suffering and pain in this world. Through the practice of yoga and meditation one withdraws the senses and looks into oneself; into the dark corners of one's own deeper self. Practice of yoga is a pilgrimage to the Absolute through integrating the faculties of body, mind and spirit. Gradually the experience of dualism and separation disappears and a state of bliss (*kaivalya anubhava*) ushers in. Thus a yogi remains in union with the Supreme Being, and at the same time remains united with earth, nature, animals and fellow human beings.

## **Bibliography**

- Swami Prabhavananda, *Patanjali Yogasutras*, Ramakrishna Matt, Madras: 1953.
- Svatmaramaswami, *Hathayoga Pradipika*, tr. by Srinivasa Iyengar, Theosophical Publishing House, Madras: 1949.
- Geranda Swami, *Gerandasamhita*, tr. by Chandra Vasu, Theosophical Publishing House, Madras: 1933.
- Danielou A. *Yoga: The Method of Re-Integration*, University Books, New York: 1955.
- Dasgupta S. N. *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion*, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi: 1998.
- Eliade M. *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, Princeton/Bollingen, New Jersey: 1973.
- Feuerstein G. *The Essence of Yoga*, Grove Press, New York: 1976.
- Iyengar B.K.S *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Aquarian Press, London: 1993.
- Mehta R. *Yoga: The Art of Integration*, Theosophical Publishing House, 1975.
- Nitya Chaitanya Yati, *Pranayama Harmonization of the Vital Energies*, Narayana Gurukula, Srinivasapuram: 1979.
- Paramahansa Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles: 1983.
- Sivananda Swami, *Lectures on Yoga and Vedanta*, Divine Life Society, Shivanandanagar: 1984.
- Sivananda Swami, *Yoga Samhita*, Divine Life Society, Shivanandanagar: 1984.

Shankardevananda Saraswati, *The Effects of Yoga on Hypertension*, Bihar School of Yoga, Munger: 1984.

Vivekananda Swami, *Raja Yoga*, Brentano's, New York: 1920.

Vishnudevanda Swami, *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga*, Pocket Books, New York: 1960.

Yogeswar, *Simple Yoga and Therapy*, Yoga Centre, Madras: 1986.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ramdas Lamb, "Raja Yoga, Asceticism, and the Ramananda Sampraday," in *Theory and Practice of Yoga*, ed., by Knut A. Jacobsen, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi: 2008 p. 317-18.

<sup>2</sup> The *Katha*, *Swetaswtara*, *Taittiriya*, *Maitrayani*, *Yogakundali*, *Darsana* and *Sandilya Upanisads* are considered to be older than the time of Patanjali.

<sup>3</sup> Patanjali who is believed to have lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BCE is not the founder of the system but he systematized the different traditions of yoga that already existed before him. His system of yoga is also known as *astangayoga* because it was developed in eight stages.

<sup>4</sup> *Vapuh krsatvam vadane prasannata nadaspudatvam nayane sunirmale; Arogata bindujayoagnihdeepanam nadivisudhih hadasiddhilakshanam. Hathayogapradipika* II, 78.

*Asanam vijitam yena jitam tena jagattrayam*, He who masters the asanas conquers the world. *Trisikhibrahmanopanishad, Mantrabhaga* 52.

*Yuva vrddhoativrddho va vyadhito dhurbaloapi va; Abhyasat siddhimapnoti sarvayogsatandritah* *Hathayogapradipika* 1.64; He who untiringly practices Yoga in all its aspects attains success even if he is young, old, decrepit, diseased or weak.

<sup>5</sup> *Amakumbha ivambhsto jiryamanah sada ghadah / Yoganalena samdahya ghasuddhim samacareth; Gheranda Samhita* 1. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Hathayogapradipika* 1.16

<sup>7</sup> *Simple Yoga and Therapy*, Yogeswar, Yoga Centre, Madras 1986, p

---

3.

<sup>8</sup> Indian philosophy presents four ways of liberation: they are the way of devotion (*bhaktimarga*), the way of action (*karmamarga*), the way of knowledge (*jnanamarga*) and the way of systematic and disciplined life (*rajamarga*).

<sup>9</sup> *Yogascittavrttinirodhah*, *Yogasutra* 1.2.

<sup>10</sup> Patanjali refers to two kinds of *Samadhi* in his *Yogasutra*, *Samadhi* with consciousness (*Yogsutra* IV.28) and *Samadhi* without consciousness (*Yogasutra* IV.33). *Samadhi* is the result of devotion to God, *Yogsutra* II.45

<sup>11</sup> J.M. Dechanet, *Christian Yoga*, Burns & Oates, London: 1966 p. 2

<sup>12</sup> *Rule of St Benedict*, Ch. 52 tr., and edited by Abbot Justin McCann, Burns & Oates, London: 1952.

<sup>13</sup> Dechanet, *Christian Yoga*, p.26.

<sup>14</sup> *Yogasutra*, IV.33

<sup>15</sup> The harmonious functioning of the digestive system, respiratory system, blood circulatory system, skeletal system etc., is very important for the health of a person.

<sup>16</sup> Sankhya, one of the systems of philosophy in India is usually allied with Yoga. Sankhya presents its philosophy based on the two fundamental principles i.e., *Purusha* and *prakrti*, of which the former is the intelligent principle and the latter the material principle.

<sup>17</sup> Yohanan Grinshpon, *Silence Unheard-Deathly Otherness in Patanjala-Yoga*, State University of New York Press, Albany 2002 p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Swami Vishnudevananda, *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga*, Pocket Books, New York. 1960 p. 13

<sup>19</sup> Yohanan Grinshpon, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> Swami Vishnudevananda, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharna, dhyana, samadhi*, are the eight different stages, *Yogasutra* 2.29.

<sup>22</sup> *satya pratistayam, kriya phalasrayatvam*, *Yogasutra* 2.36

- 
- <sup>23</sup> *asteya pratistayam sarvaratnopasthanam*,. *Yogastura* 2.37.
- <sup>24</sup> *brahmacarya pratistayam virya labhah*, *Yogasutra* 2.38.
- <sup>25</sup> Yogacharya Sundaram, *Raja Yoga*, 1975. p.68.
- <sup>26</sup> *aparigrahasathairye janmakathntha sambodhaha*, *Yogasutra* 2.39.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ihamutradiphalabhogaviragah*, detachment from the result of actions which one may get in this world or in the world yet to come, is the first stage in the Vedanta scheme of spiritual progress.
- <sup>28</sup> *sthiraasukhamasanam* YS 2.46; *prayathna saithilyananta samapattibhyam* YS 2.47; *Tato dvandvanabhigatah* YS 2.48.
- <sup>29</sup> *Pranayama* means pause in the movement of breath, Swami Kuvalayanda, 1972 p. 37. *Tasmin sati svasaprasvasayorgativicedah Pranayama*, *Yogasutras* 2.49,1.34, after accomplishing this one goes to *pranayama*, the cutting of the course of inhalation and exhalation.
- <sup>30</sup> This is known as *dharana*, *svavishayasamprayoge cittasvarupanukara ivendriyanam pratyaharah*, *pratyahara tatah parama vasyatendriyanam*, Y.S.2. 54. There after complete mastery over senses. Y S 2. 55. *desabandascittasya dharana*, *Yogasutras* 3.1
- <sup>31</sup> *Muladhara*, *Swadhistana*, *Manipura*, *Anahata*, *Vishudha*, *Anjna*, *Sahasrara* are the seven nerves centres (*cakras*) in the spinal code
- <sup>32</sup> *tatrapratyayaikatanata dhyanam*, *Yogasutras* 3.2. *cittavrttiyavarthanam dhyanam*, Y.S. *dhi ayate iti dhyanam* Panini, *aviccinnathailadharavat dhyanam upasanam*, are some of the definitions given for *dhyana* in the Indian tradition.
- <sup>33</sup> *tadevarthamatranirbhasam svarupasunyamiva samadhihi*, *Yogasutras* 3.3
- <sup>34</sup> *Samadhi* is of two kinds: *samadhi* with empirical consciousness (*savikalpasmadhi* or *samprjnatasamadhi*) and *samadhi* without empirical consciousness (*Nirvikalpasamadhi* or *asamprajnatasamadhi*).
- <sup>35</sup> *The Heart of Awareness*, a translation by Thomas Byrom of the *Astavakra Gita* a classical work by an unknown author in the advaita tradition. p. 6, Shambhala, Boston & Shaftesbury, 1990.
-

---

<sup>36</sup> *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1920 p. 201.

<sup>37</sup> A Osborn, *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*, p. 153.

<sup>38</sup> M. Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 1973 p. 177.

<sup>39</sup> A. Danielou, *Yoga: the Method of Re-Integration*, 1949 p.137.



# **The Priest and Politics: A Critical Examination of Some Common Assumptions**

**P.T.Mathew, S.J.**

Regional Theology Centre, Sameeksha, Kalady.

E-mail: matpampa@gmail.com

**Abstract:** There are doubts in the minds of people about the role of priests in politics. Among the reasons being the confusion between governance for the common good, and narrow party politics; and the role of one who has renounced the world. Clarifications are provided about the role of lay persons and of the clergy in politics. Priests as leaders of their faith community have a legitimate role with regard to politics. Official Church documents are quoted in support of the position taken by the author.

**Keywords:** Priests, politics, elections, pastoral letters, community leadership, social mission, conscience formation.

## **1. Introduction**

As elections approach, controversy about the priests interfering in politics also arises. Politics is still regarded as the sacred territory of professional politicians, scrupulously guarded by them irrespective of the colour of their flag. Comments and remarks that often appear in the news media are indicative of the outlook: "Priests stepping into politics is dangerous to the secular fabric of our nation", "It will reinforce the communal forces operative in our society", "Let the priests and bishops confine themselves to their proper field, viz. the spiritual field". The context of these comments is that of some priests/bishops making public statements on 'non-Church'