

RĀJA YOGA

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(Editor's Note: By Rāja Yoga, it should not be understood that Patañjali Yoga aphorisms, which have somehow come to be regarded as of Rāja Yoga, are dealt with here. Real Rāja Yoga is Adhyātma Yoga, as Śuddhas understand it, of which Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā is an elaborate treatise. The quintessence of Rāja Yoga practices, according to Śuddhas, are Bhāvana, Prāṇāyāma, and Dhyāna. Each of these has a significance quite different from that which is generally known. For instance, Prāṇāyāma has absolutely nothing to do with breathing exercises, which are only very incidental; this article is based on the above three of far-reaching significances – Editor (Sri Janardana).

The word **Yoga** has been variously defined and interpreted. Patañjali says that **Yoga** is the control of one's **Citta Vṛtti**—mental or emotional modifications. Yājñawalkya would have it as the control over the senses, while there are others who interpret it to mean the functioning of the **Manas** (mind) and the **Indriyas** (sense organs) in the **Mahat** plane.

In the Śuddha teachings, "**Yoga**" means **Sambandha** or contact.

In every human being, **Jñāna** is the most important, as this is the sole cause of both **Pravṛtti** and **Nivṛtti**. While the **Ātman** is always associated with **Jñāna**, **Prakṛti** is considered inert. **Ātman** and **Jñāna** are inseparable and "**Yoga**" consists in *Ātmaswarūpeṇa Saha Prajñayā Sambandhaḥ*—contact of the Self with **Prajñā**.

"**Rāja**" comes from the root "**Rāj**" to shine, and since the **Paramātman** is omnipresent, He is known as **Rāja**, and **Rāja Yoga** consists in **Yoga** or **Sambandha** with "**Rāja**" the **Paramātman**.

The path to attain this **Rāja Yoga** is like a flight of steps, one leading on to the other.

The Preliminary Path: Bijakṣharas and Initiation

The practice of **Yoga** in the Śuddha School begins with the aid of **Bijakṣharas**. **Sound** is the characteristic note of **Ākāśa**, the particles of which constitute the **Ātmic** vesture. By the proper pronouncement of the **Bijakṣharas**, the **Ātmic** vesture is set in vibration. When the **Ātmic** consciousness is raised, it begins to function successively in **Miśra Prakṛti**, **Kevala Prakṛti**, and **Śuddha Prakṛti**—i.e., matter in increasing degrees of fineness. While the first is a combination or mixture of all elements, the last is where the **Ātman** is seen in its own inherent form.

The experiences of the aspirant start with what is known as **Bhūta Darśana**—i.e., he is able to visualize full water courses and oceans, mountains rich with forests, hurricanes, strange and weird shapes, etc.

When this stage is reached, the aspirant has **Guru Upadeśa**. The **Upadeśa** comes from within. This is signified by the statements in the **Bhagavad Gītā: *Dadāmi Buddhi Yogam Tam*** (I give them the yoga of understanding) and ***Nāśayāmy Ātmabhāvastho Jñāna Dīpena Bhāsvatā*** (I destroy, dwelling in their heart, the darkness born of ignorance by the shining lamp of knowledge). When this **Vidyā Upadeśa** is had, the disciple has all his external consciousness turned inwards and enters the state of **Ānandaparavaśya** from whence he attains the supreme **Samādhi**, the object of true **Rāja Yoga**.

The goal of all human aspiration and efforts is the attainment of that supreme state of consciousness whereby, being capable of realizing the **Self** or **Ātman** in him, he is able to understand, perceive, and thoroughly grasp the most profound of all truths, that creation—manifest and unmanifest—is **Brahman** itself, and everything, being of its nature, is essential.

Śuddha Dharma Maṇḍalam

Various are the paths ordained; still more various are the systems of philosophy propounded, which mark the struggles of the human soul in its search for this eternal truth. Of these, the direct, straight, and the shortest is that of **Śuddha Dharma Maṇḍalam**, the esoteric organization that exists for the study of **Brahman** the **Absolute**. This is an ancient organization and has been for some time immemorial training aspirants for the realization of this goal. It is based upon the essential truths of human conduct and existence, and as such is the life principle of all religions. All other religions are but outgrowths on this main stock as could be seen by a deep study of any one of it in the light of **Śuddha Dharma** principles.

Aspirants on the path of **Yoga** can attain fruition of their efforts only along the path laid down by the **Śuddha** school, and they will discover that whatever be the path they are pursuing, they must ultimately, either directly or otherwise, proceed along the path of **Śuddha** ere they could attain their goal. Just as various roads in a place can but lead only to the gates of a temple from which there is only one path leading to the **Sanctum Sanctorum**, so is the path of **Śuddha Dharma**.

The Supreme Lord, **Bhagavān Śrī Nārāyaṇa**, the Almighty Being in charge of the governance of the Globe, out of His Divine compassion for those who, in need of proper guidance, are probing about in the quest of this mystery of mysteries, having willed that the existence of this esoteric organization should be revealed to such as are ardent, has caused it to be announced to the public, and the late Dr. (Sir) S. Subramanier was extremely blessed when the choice of the **Elders** of the **Śuddha Dharma Maṇḍalam** fell on him to proclaim the existence of this Ancient Esoteric School.

When a person is desirous of entering this school to follow its teachings, he is received in it and is made to undergo various forms of **Initiations** by means of which the **Elders** enable him to raise his consciousness gradually, so that it may ultimately be brought to the level as to be all-pervading. These **Initiations** are of various kinds, some being preliminary and others more advanced. There are many others which are more specialized while there are a very few highest forms which are solely individual. When a member is admitted in, the **Elders** determine what must be the type of the **Initiation** to be bestowed and in what manner. It is absolutely necessary that the preliminary initiation is undergone and further initiations depend upon individual progress. Whatever be the form of initiation, it consists in the transference of a sort of **Tejas** or power into the aspirant to be assimilated by him to aid him in his endeavors. What the nature of the **Tejas** is, or of power of what measure and intensity, depends upon individual merit, of which **Elders** are sole Judges.

The preliminary initiations may be roughly divided into two kinds. The first is where the disciple is in the immediate presence of his initiator and the other when the disciple is unable, for some reasons, to be present in the presence of the initiating authority, but is desirous of being initiated at his place of residence. Whichever be the form of initiation, in essence and spirit, both are the same. Further progress is assured and the rapidity depends upon the individual will and exertions.

Probation and Temperaments

Before proceeding to consider in detail the various forms of further initiations etc., it has to be definitely borne in mind that what is described is only the ordinary normal course of events. In individual cases, it is likely to be modified and this depends upon one's progress of which the **Elders** are always aware. No one can, as a matter of right, claim to be advanced or delayed. He is beholden to the dictates of the **Elders** who have always at heart the ultimate goal of each aspirant.

After the preliminary initiation, the disciple is, as it were, on probation for a minimum period of three and a half years. During this period, the aspirant must have advanced to a stage when he has gained complete mastery over his desires as far as they are sensual. Based upon the intensity of these desires, the temperaments of individuals are divided into three groups, which are technically known as **Bhi**, **Bhīta**, and **Bhīṣhma**.

- In the first group, or that which is known as **Bhi**, a person, being persuaded by all forms of desires, does actively exert himself to gratify them. In his desire for the achievement of sensual gratification, he even creates the surroundings and circumstances conducive to its consummation.
- The person of the **Bhīta** type is more passive inasmuch as he would revel in sensual pleasures provided an opportunity occurs. He is not over anxious and consequently he does not actively exert himself or interest himself in their quest. However, when he comes across them he revels to the utmost. Though there is an apparent distinction

between these two types in the matter of the extent of slaving of one's mind to his senses, the **Bhi** being an abject slave, still, on a close study, it will be found that the nature of the pleasures which the senses are mad after, and the mind likes to dwell on, are all **Prākṛtic**—i.e., worldly and hence material.

- On the other hand, in the **Bhīṣhma** temperament of mind, one would find a hankering after some object or purpose, which, in essence, is something very difficult to achieve and is beyond the ordinary course of human conduct and existence. An ardent desire to do, possess, or achieve something that is wonderful, stunning, terrible, or epoch-making, is the common characteristic of this temperament. The son of Śāntanu was subsequently known as **Bhīṣhma** because of the terrible vow not to claim the throne in his own right and to prevent any chance of any lineal descendant of his putting forth such a claim, he took a fresh oath of not marrying at all. Such is the characteristic of the **Bhīṣhma** temperament. While it has to be recognized that this type is superior to the other two inasmuch as the mind is not hankering after objects sensual, hence fleeting, still it has to be noted it is subject to be swayed by the influence of emotions.

During the probationary period, the aspirant is expected to get his mind under perfect control so that he is not subject to any of the above-mentioned three temperaments. When the mind is under one's sway—i.e., when the mind controls the senses and not the senses the mind—the disciple is given a fresh course of training wherein he is made fit for the practice of **Rāja Yoga**. **Rāja Yoga** discipline means that discipline or course of practice, which makes possible the "Yoga" (i.e., **Sāmīpya** or vicinity) with the **Rāja** or the **Ātman**. Hence, **Rāja Yoga** means that system of training which makes one capable of realizing the **Ātman** in him.

Aspirants of Rāja Yoga Proper

The aspirants to **Rāja Yoga** proper are divided into two classes known as the **Niyata** and **Aniyata**.

- **Niyata** group comprises those who from birth have not had, by deed, word, or even thought, any inclination for the gratification of their sexual passions.
- While **Aniyatas** are those who are leading a married life or who had at one time of their present existence lead such a life.

It has to be clearly understood that while a ban is not laid on sexual indulgence, it is insisted that it is confined solely within the limits of marriage, and **Elders** thoroughly condemn those who gratify themselves outside the prescribed limits; and invariably such lapses serve as hindrances to spiritual development. On the other hand, if such relationships continue after starting the discipline, the aspirant has a definite set back and he thus jeopardizes all his interests, physical, material, and spiritual. Conversely, it is true that it conduces to rapid progress if the aspirant gradually abstains until he reaches a stage of total abstention.

Mātrkā Yoga and Kuṇḍalī Yoga

This form of **Yoga** is the first of a course of training to **Rāja Yoga** proper. It serves as an exercise for actual yogic practice and trains one's efforts in the proper channels.

1. Mātrkā Yoga

Mātrkā Yoga is that form of **Yoga** practiced by the proper pronunciation and meditation on the various **Mātrkā**s or letters. This training is known as *Pūrvāṅga Vyāyāma* or the preliminary exercise. The whole course is spread over a period of seven years, though in individual cases it often happens that this period is either extended or shortened.

The Sanskrit alphabet consists of sixteen vowels beginning with "Āa" and thirty-six consonants beginning with "Ka". In yogic literature, each one of these various letters has a definite form and significance and **Mātrkā Yoga** consists in meditating on the **Ātman** or the **Self-Existent** in one, ascribing to it those particular characteristics pertaining to the letter meditated upon. Generally, the course of **Yoga** starts with the letter "Ka" and proceeds on to the last consonant "jña". The Consonants are dealt with singly (separately) at the first instance and later on, conjunct forms are also used as per instructions given when occasions arise. Finally, when all the series of Consonants, both single and conjunct are finished, the aspirant is asked to meditate on the Vowels. The Vowels are known as *Jīvākṣharas*, and being simple sounds, they cause excessive vibrations which react strongly on the **Ātman** or the **Life-Principle**.

Just as each person has a particular individual name to which alone he responds to when addressed or by which he is definitely identified from others, so has every individual **Ātman** its own particular letter which is known as its *Ekākṣhara*. The constant intonation (**Japa**) of the **Ekākṣhara** serves to rouse one's consciousness and correlate it with that of the **Ātman** and thus be able to realize it.

The maximum **Siddhi** or perfection of the **Mātrkā Yoga** consists in acquiring the capacity to be able to concentrate and attune oneself with one's **Ātmic** consciousness immediately one sits meditating on one's **Ekākṣhara**. When the aspirant likewise attains **Siddhi** in his **Ekākṣhara Dhyāna**, he is able to visualize the object meditated upon. It is seen by him as an effulgent body of the size of his thumb and in physical appearance an exact miniature duplicate of himself. This stage marks perfection of **Mātrkā Yoga** and the disciple has qualified himself for the next stage, which is known as **Kuṇḍalī Yoga**, which forms the latter part of the *Vyāyāma* or preliminary training for the practice of **Rāja Yoga**.

2. Kuṇḍalī Yoga

Kuṇḍalī Yoga consists in the practice of that form of discipline which vitalizes the **Kuṇḍalī Śakti** in man. This **Śakti** is a mighty but latent power in man and is often diagrammatically expressed in the form of a snake lying coiled with its head hanging down. It is situated in the vertebral column in or about the region of the **Coccyx**. This practice aims at enlivening (stimulating) this **Śakti** and by a continuous, steady, and sustained endeavor the sphere of its

existence widens and it is then, in common parlance (idiom), said to move till it reaches the top of the head.

Between the region where it lies dormant and the top of the head, when one achieves the summation of the practice, there are a few regions or stages, which mark successive periods of advancement. These stages are six in number and are technically known as **Cakras**. Beginning with one at the base of the vertebral column, with a second one near about it, they are in order at the region of the navel, of the heart, throat, forehead, and the top of the head. These six are known as **Ṣaḍādhāras**—i.e., main stages or supports. They are in order named as **Mūlādhāra**, **Svādhiṣṭhāna**, **Maṇipūra**, **Anāhata**, **Viśuddhi**, and **Ājñā**.

Each one of them is a center of power and when the sphere of activity of the **Kuṇḍalinī** extends to them in succession, at each one of the stages, the aspirant attains definite corresponding results. As and when the **Kuṇḍali Yoga** is practiced at the various centers, particular **Bijaṣaras** are used.

The Five Kośas and Their Corresponding Experiences

The individual self, which is a fragment of the Supreme Self, when it descends into matter, encloses itself in five **Kośas** or vestures. These, in order of density, are known as "**Annamaya**," "**Prāṇamaya**," "**Manomaya**," "**Vijñānamaya**," and "**Ānandamaya**" **Kośas**; the first named being the outermost and at the same time the densest, composed, as it is, of physical matter. The individual self occupying these **Kośas** bears distinct names depending on the **Kośa** in which it is functioning, and it is successively known as **Akṣhara**, **Jīva**, **Ātma**, **Paramātma (Turīya)**, and **Puruṣa (Turīyātīta)**. The **Upaniṣhads** speak of them as "**Viśvan**," "**Taijasan**," "**Prājñan**," "**Turīyan**," and "**Pañcaman**" (**Puruṣa**). The region where these different aspects of the Self are located are the **Ādhāras** mentioned earlier.

The completion of the **Kuṇḍali Yoga** in each of the various centers is marked by the acquisition of definite **Siddhis**.

- When one's consciousness is withdrawn from **Annamaya Kośa**, he gets over the feelings of hunger, thirst, and other functions of the sensory organs.
- There is restrained breathing when the **Prajñā** or consciousness is shifted from the **Prāṇamaya Kośa**.
- When the consciousness moves from the **Manomaya Kośa**, there is an absolute cessation of all mental activity, as the **Manas** is the seat of **Saṅkalpa** (resolve).
- When the consciousness is withdrawn into **Vijñānamaya Kośa**, the aspirant is able to realize the **Omnipresence** and the **All-pervading** nature of **Brahman**.

It is not possible for ordinary persons to reach beyond, though those who are celibates from birth may have a glimpse of the experiences of **Vijñānamaya Kośa**. It has to be definitely understood that all the experiences or **Siddhis** are incidental and not the end itself.

The Three Forms of Dhyāna (Meditation)

Before proceeding to understand the method of the practice of **Rāja Yoga** properly, it is well to understand what meditation is and how it is performed. **Dhyāna** or meditation as formulated by the **Śuddha** School is of three kinds, namely **Saguṇa**, **Nirguṇa**, and **Śuddha**.

- **Saguṇa Dhyāna** consists in the meditation of the Supreme Self as appearing in some particular form, which appeals most to the aspirant. This consists in the aspirant visualizing the Supreme Self in the region of his heart, to be of the desired form, then with some effect locating it in the region between the eyebrows, meditate on it, when he has thus exercised himself for some time he will be able, without the least effort, to call up that image in that region.
- In the **Nirguṇa** form of meditation the Supreme Self is meditated upon in the form of the size of a thumb, a miniature of his own self.
- Whereas in the **Śuddha** form the visual power of the eye is directed inwards.

Through a course of discipline and conduct, it would be comparatively easy for one to enter into a state of **Samādhi** involuntarily and without the least effort. This form of **Samādhi** is known as **Avyavasthita Samādhi**. When the disciple is able to experience this form of **Samādhi**, he will be able to visualize in the region of Concentration, a full-blown flower facing him. This stage is known as **Puṣhpodaya**—i.e., the appearance of a flower.

Ātma Yoga and Attainment

Ātma Yoga is the most easy of achievement when the disciple sits down to meditate with the lofty conception that all creation, animate and inanimate, with all its attendant circumstances, is in essence but the form of the Supreme **Brahman**.

Functioning in one vesture, when the aspirant realizes that the **Bhāvana** has become steady, he can transfer his consciousness to the **Kośa** one above. As the disciple sits for meditation with proper **Bhāvana**, and when he can visualize during meditation a number of sparks (like fireflies) coming flocking from all directions and merging into one big beam of light, then it is a sign that the **Bhāvana** is getting steady in that vesture.

The **Japa** of the various **Gāyatrīs** taught to the aspirant helps the fixing of the **Bhāvana**. By **Japa**, the particles of matter that go to make the vestures are set in vibration and motion, and when these resettle, such of those that are likely to retard progress drop away.

When the disciple starts the **Ātma Yoga**, he begins by fixing his consciousness in the first region (**Annamaya Kośa**) and meditates in the manner prescribed. It is here that the **Puṣhpodaya** literally takes place. As he advances, he is able to understand a great deal of things for himself. His experiences are varied and it is possible for when his consciousness is functioning in the **Annamaya Kośa** to have a survey of three of his previous births and also a glimpse of the future of his present and three future ones. The forms he appeared in or is to appear pass as a moving

picture in his mental vision. The perfection of **Ātma Yoga** in **Annamaya Kośa** consists in his being able to visualize a figure of the Supreme Self.

The next course consists in functioning in **Manomaya Kośa**. While **Samādhi** occurs at this time, the disciple is able to perceive easily his tripping, if any, on his path of evolution, and how far he has swerved away from the path he had been pursuing on the occasions of former existences. He is thus enabled to pick up the thread from where he let it go. On reaching this stage, he could find himself exactly at a place where he had stopped and that the cumulative efforts of his past endeavors would then come to his aid and would of themselves force him towards further advancement. It is of this advancement that the Lord said in the **Gītā: Pūrvābhyaśena Kaunteya Hriyetā Avaso'pi saḥ** (By the force of his former practice, he is carried forward even against his will).

The disciple is then initiated into a fresh **Ekākṣhara**, which pertains to the Self in him in relation to the Supreme Self; and this helps him to get into easy communion. **Śabda-Brahmādi Vartate** (transcends **Śabda Brahman**) occurring in the **Gītā** refers to the state of consciousness whereby the disciple is able to realize the Supreme **Brahman** by means of this **Bījakṣhara**. During this state of consciousness, the disciple is in constant touch with the **Mahātmas** and **Elders**.

The maximum, which an ordinary aspirant could further hope to achieve, is a glimpse of the consciousness beyond (**Vijñānamaya Kośa**). He cannot, except under very extraordinary circumstances, raise his consciousness to function in the **Ānandamaya Kośa**. The various experiences in the **Vijñānamaya Kośa** and the lines of further advancement are all secrets, which the disciple would be directly initiated in when he comes in direct contact with **Mahātmas**.

AUM NAMO NĀRĀYAṆĀYA.