



What is YOGA and the process of Reflexive Self-consciousness?

Yoga is the method and practice leading to the conscious union of the individual human being with the ultimate source and origin of his being.

It aims at the awakening of the egoic-self to the real Self through the process of reflexive self-consciousness, a state of transcendent Self-awareness which confers upon the beings who attain it certain powers of adequate response and capacities of stimulus assimilation.

Without reflexive self-consciousness one is identified with the content of consciousness, with the things of the world, with ideas of the mind, with the emotional states of the psyche.

The true Yogi, is the reflexively self-conscious man who has turned his consciousness away from the particulars of the world in order to become one with the principle of their being.

For this Yogi, freed from the fixated identification with a particular finite body, there is no "outside". All beings are WITHIN his consciousness. In leaving all things to return to his true Self he has discovered all things with himself in the Absolute from which he derived.

In losing his life he has found it.

Yoga, then, is the technique and practice for achieving in its final stage the process of reflexive self-consciousness.

The Value of Contemplation via Reflexive Self-consciousness

To practise Yoga with its aim of attaining reflexive self-consciousness is to change the whole quality of one's perception and conception of the world. It is to rescue oneself from identification with the object world and thus from slavery to the law governing that world. All freedom stands in this capacity.

Without this reflexive self-conscious freedom the word "freedom" itself is an illusion and action is merely reaction to stimuli from the world of things, the world of partials, the unwhole world of separativity and illusory

processes.

The ultimate source and origin of our being is sentient and conscious. A stream cannot rise higher than its highest point. The consciousness of man cannot rise higher than its own ultimate source, and in the generality has not yet reached so high.

To become conscious of our source is to become conscious of the source of all beings and all consciousness. It is to become consciousness itself, and reflexively self-consciously so.

To confine our consciousness to the considerations of the finite objects of our five special sense organs is unnecessarily to limit its scope. The sentient field is itself infinite. To concentrate consciousness fully upon a particular object within that field is to deprive oneself of the knowledge of what lies beyond that particular.

To rescue oneself from the self-imposed ignorance of the particularising consciousness one has only to remove the stress placed by consciousness upon the particular and replace it in its source.

The particularising tendency of the lower mind is a product of the over specialising activity of the five special sense organs, an over activity initially imposed on them by the external stimulus situation.

It does not need a great deal of thought to see that full concentration on a given finite thing deprives us of data beyond it.

The mind which merely sees separate particular things, and not their world context, is a mind deprived of universal concepts which could confer order upon his sense data.

All contents of consciousness are functions of power. To confine oneself to particular sense percepts is to deprive oneself of the energy contained in concepts of universal validity.

What is the SELF?

If we look inside ourselves in an attempt to see what we mean by the Self, we discover that if we pursue our attempt to the end, that the Self is not see-able in any objective sense. The Self is consciousness itself, awareness, sentience,

IT IS THAT IN WHICH OBJECTS MAY APPEAR, BUT IT IS NOT ITSELF AN OBJECT.

Consciousness is not an object, not a formed thing; it is that in which objects, things, forms and ideas appear.

Somehow, consciousness IS, yet is not so in any objective sense.

We know this to be so because we are IMMEDIATELY aware of our consciousness as soon as we turn to it.

We say IMMEDIATELY aware because our awareness of our awareness is not MEDIATED by anything other than itself.

When we are aware of some object through one or more of our senses our awareness is mediated through the sense organ. When we are aware of our awareness, this awareness is not mediated, we therefore say it is IMMEDIATE.

Whenever we use a sense organ to become aware of an object the sense organ in some degree conditions what we know. When we are aware of our awareness, our awareness is IMMEDIATE and therefore UNCONDITIONED.

TO BE UNCONDITIONED IS TO BE FREE.

Awareness of awareness is therefore free.

Consciousness of consciousness is consciousness conscious of itself.

THIS IS THE KEY TO REFLEXIVE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

The careful thinker, penetrating into his being to discover to what he refers when he uses the words "I myself" knows that the Self is a free-will consciousness, the ground and possibility and actuality of all being, yet itself transcendent of being. (The word "being" may properly be used only of what is circumscribed, and consciousness as such is not circumscribed and therefore not properly called a being.)

CONSCIOUSNESS and WILL are not two factually separable entities. They are two ASPECTS or PROPERTIES of the Absolute.

CONSCIOUSNESS is that aspect of the Absolute in which objects appear.

WILL is that aspect of the Absolute which initiates change within consciousness or its objects.

The Self referred to is not a body. It is sentient power itself. The Self in an act of reflexion returns to itself. Consciousness, which is not a body, but a KNOWER of the body, returns from the body to itself and thus rescues itself from identification with its objects.

If consciousness identifies with a material body it goes under the law governing material bodies. So with whatever else it identifies.

If consciousness identifies with serial ideational processes, it goes under the formal and logical laws governing those processes.

If consciousness identifies with emotional states it goes under the law governing emotional states. Whatever finite things or processes it identifies with, consciousness goes under the law governing those finites.

Only consciousness identified with itself, reflexive-self-consciousness, is free from the law of mechanical action-reaction processes governing all finites.

First Great Rule In Yoga

The first great rule in Yoga says :

THE OBSERVER IS NOT THE OBSERVED

What does this mean?

An OBSERVER is a watcher; the OBSERVED is what is watched.

The Observer is the subject who sees; the OBSERVED is the object which is seen. The subject or Observer is the awareness, the consciousness, the sentience, the Self.

An Observer is a watcher; the observed is what is watched.

In order for an observation to occur there must be a watcher and a watched,

The watched, the observed is a finite thing constituted of rotatory motion.

The watcher, the observer is not a finite thing though he may use a finite thing (the body) to watch or observe through.

The observer is not a thing, but that which watches the thing.

No one has at any time seen AS AN OBJECT the consciousness which sees the object. In theological terms we would say "No man has seen God at any time." In psychological terms we would say consciousness as such never appears to itself as an OBJECT.

Yet in the reflexive self-conscious act consciousness is aware of itself; but not as a finite, not as an object.

We will repeat: The Observer is the subject who sees. The observed is the object which is seen, The subject is the awareness, the consciousness, the sentience. The object is a finited zone of formal motion within the subject, which stands as the subject's reference point in an act of cognition.

Although we say that the Observer is not the Observed, we do not posit thereby a dualism of two different substances, for the Observed is merely a motion pattern in and of the Observer. The ultimate substance is sentient power. Its motions generated by its power constitute the objective content of its sentience, which brings us to our second important rule for the gaining of Reflexive self-consciousness.

Second Great Rule in Yoga

Our second important rule is this: AN OBSERVER KNOWS ONLY THE MODIFICATIONS OF THE OBSERVER.

Let us examine this.

When we are deprived of stimuli, whether external or internal to our organism, the content of our consciousness is reduced.

We can see that if we were totally deprived of all objective stimuli, consciousness would have no OBJECTIVE content whatever. Such a state of consciousness deprived of all objective content, we call UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

Unconsciousness is not what people ordinarily suppose it to be. It is simply consciousness with no objective content, that is, objectless sentience.

The OBSERVER is consciousness serving some object. But the object served is simply a form of motion within consciousness.

There are no objects of consciousness other than within consciousness, as MODIFICATIONS of it. Without modifications in consciousness there are no objects in it, and there is no objective consciousness. ALL OBJECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS, ALL THE THINGS OF THE WORLD, ALL IDEAS AND MENTAL STATES, ARE SIMPLY FORMS OF MOTION IN CONSCIOUSNESS.

Gaining Reflexive Self-Consciousness - Exercise

To gain reflexive self-consciousness a certain exercise must be practised, in principle continuously, in early practice probably intermittently. The exercise itself is simple. But this is not to say that it is, for man in his usual orientation, easy. The battle to overcome the inertia of man's established direction, his generally ego-centred attitude, will not be easily fought. Nor should it be. The prize is too high to be gained easily.

Here is the exercise:

When one is looking at some thing, or considering an idea or experience, a feeling or emotion, or performing any action, one must say to oneself:

"It is the Self which is consciousness itself which is looking at this thing (or considering this idea, etc.)"

"This Self I am. I return to the Self."

On saying, "It is the Self which is consciousness itself", one must make oneself aware that the Self is consciousness itself, awareness, sentience.

When saying, "looking at this thing", one must make oneself aware of a directional flow of attention from the consciousness to the thing.

On saying, "This Self I am: I return to the Self" one must focus oneself again on the consciousness and again become aware of a directional flow of attention but now from the thing back to the consciousness-self.

THIS BACK-FLOW OF CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE SELF IS WHAT WE MEAN BY REFLEXIVE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

Yoga aims at the freeing of the individual from the determination of ideas, feelings (liking and disliking) and actions. Consciousness undetermined by any of these three is free; in this state it can become aware of itself as pure consciousness,

Pure consciousness untouched by any modifications and aware only of itself always responds adequately in every situation.

If you are thinking of anything with dependence upon it, there is a motive of curiosity, or pleasure, or success, and although the thinking will help towards the satisfaction, you will still be in bondage.

To become reflexively self-conscious is to become freed from the tyranny of material activity. It is to rise above the level of conditioned reflexes, above the level of emotional blockages in repressed complexes. It is to become liberated from the mechanics of serial ideation processes. It is to become truly oneself and at one in intent and essence with the Self of all selves.

Reflexive Self-consciousness is the final stage in Yoga and in every meditational procedure. For a more complete rationale of the process of Samadhic Contemplation, see the essay *Reflexive Self-consciousness*.