

Heinz Grill
The Spiritualising of the Body

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An artistic and spiritual
path with yoga

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The cosmic prayer (pull-out)

The flower-garden

“The work of yoga students who dedicate themselves to the content given here, should be like the activity of a gardener. Gardeners water the seedlings and plants, and they have pleasure in their abundant blooming and flourishing. But they themselves have not produced the growth, they have only watered the beds, cared for them, pulled out the weeds and kept damage at bay. It is the light of the sun out of the great etheric source, which produces the flourishing and blooming, and it is a divine light from His intangible grace. Gardeners do not use the light themselves, as their caring for the flower garden is utterly devoted to the soil of the earth, and they take their hands and make space for the plants to prevent them crowding each other. The light is that infinite source, which the gardeners recognise and whose life-preserving and life-giving characteristics they know, and since they know this for the flowers entrusted to their care, this same light works in the silence of their souls. But it is still much more even than a source of light, it is the high mystery of creation and it is growth in its all-encompassing infiniteness. The gardeners trust in the growth that has entered into creation and work from within, out of this creation in its own rhythm. They do not lose heart when hail beats down or rain floods the beds, for they know in their confidence in what they do, that everything will bloom and flourish when the summer months come. So between their hours of work they have patience and leisure, which makes their lives simpler and calmer. Their pleasure in the flower-garden is selflessly founded in the knowledge: God the Lord has given growth, He has given it for the flowers and He has given it for the gardener. Wisdom now allows this one light to work in meditation, like the light works in nature over the flower-garden.”



Padmāsana, lotus sitting position

Religion, sacrifice and yoga

The life, in which the sanctity and religion of a nation is founded, exists in the innermost, in its faith and in its soul. The religious life forms the innermost foundation for self-becoming and self-realisation and bears in its seed of purity the highest efforts for perfection and spiritual maturity. In this seed virtues like humility and attentiveness develop and the fundamental quality of activity grows, as well as that pure joy of which the saints speak.

The soul is that mysterious, intangible dimension, which is born of light and warmth and is connected with devotion to God. As a result of the outbreak of the more materialistic, taking thoughts and goal-orientation which marks our Western culture to such an extent, it appears as though the initiated and holy life is completely lost from the consciousness, and misery and hopelessness draw ever closer. The unbearable poverty which is visible in people's hearts points to this relationship and this abuse of the holy life of immortality.

While this development into a materialistic culture grows and grows, a yearning call for spirituality is, however, born in the innermost of the heart. So people are no longer satisfied with a religious system or with invented religious forms, but seek much more for a practical reforming of faith. Thus the great paths of meditation as well as yoga came to us from Eastern culture, since these strive much more for the practical realisation and self-becoming of an innermost individuation of the soul. This broadening tendency, through this new potential which the Eastern paths teach, brings on the one hand an abundant richness with useful meaning but it also brings no less great a weight of conflict to the native Christian tradition.

The Christian religion, which is the super-sensory treasure of the spiritual world and is upheld by grace and salvation, is very difficult to unite with the Eastern concepts of self-knowledge, self-devotion and self-realisation. With the innermost, yearning wish for new spiritual paths, which a Christianity mainly bound to the church-system cannot provide, the great danger arises that the sublime quality of holy grace finds too much expression in a still materialistically-oriented mentality which is only differently shaped. The temptation of a

misunderstood kind of self-redemption arises, in which the body and the subjective well-being are too strongly emphasised and the immortal salvation of the soul in its profound, existent sense drifts yet further into oblivion. Through a physically and mentally-fixed, wilful grasping, the religion of grace and redemption can all too easily slide into a human, subjective dimension.

Yoga, which has become known here in the form of various physical exercises, was in India, its land of origin, bound into a great philosophical, spiritual and ethical system. With the fascination and longing, which the Western consciousness kindled for the Eastern path of yoga, a path which springs from quite another cultural style, the development inevitably had to occur in which too great an emphasis was placed on the scientific and technical dimension of yoga. Above all, it was the different physical exercises and methods of meditation, which were taken on as a potential and aid for spirituality. As a result of the great difference in the mental consciousness, the spirituality, which was so difficult to grasp with its predominating expansiveness, could not be taken on in the right sense. Spirituality and its magnificent system of self-becoming and yoga-realisation in a tolerant, comprehensive and lived religion, which has arisen through living experience, is on the one hand fascinating for Westerners, but at the same time so alien, that they have had to interpret the physical exercises in a quite different sense for themselves. So yoga here is more a method introduced into the habitual, dialectical way of thinking, in which we achieve a better well-being, a mental and physical stability as well as an initial form of concentration and contemplation. But precisely with this taking-over of Eastern methods and physical exercises, that great difficulty, which already characterises our Western culture on all levels, seems to grow even stronger: the materialistic attitude which strives for gain and success, the possessive orientation and basic way of thinking, which is greedy for knowledge, and the mentality which strives more for physical and psychological experiences. It characterises the mental and vital condition of Europeans so deeply, that they cannot give real space to the yoga of pure reverence, of infinite sacrifice and of ceaseless search for the highest mysteries.

So for students, who tread the path of yoga, it is a very important requirement that they develop the insights and the right consideration for the inner connections of religion and self-realisation. What is divine grace and what is the eternal self of which yoga speaks? The super-sensory blossom of the spiritual

dimension cannot be reached through yoga with physical exercises alone, or linked with a particular method of meditation. It is precisely Western thinking, coloured by scientific methods, which tends quite particularly to the insidious misapprehension of believing that a redemption or complete liberation is possible out of the body, through exercises and direct application of the will. Western dialectical thinking tends towards formulating a technical and physical concept, which is totally founded on the greatest possible health and the greatest possible achievement, and so could give an invented substitute for the eternal salvation of the soul after death. But it is exactly in this dialectical thinking and this still very passive taking-over of far-Eastern thoughts and profound, intense exercises that the ever-recurring danger lies which can lead to various mistakes. The goal which the East pursued with yoga has been coloured by thousands of years of varied experience and tradition, which has incorporated the super-sensory view and the religious feeling of the wise and the initiated, and it was always a high ideal, free of materialism, which stood at the heart of worship and seeking. This high ideal of the East can barely be even approximated in the West, and so it must inevitably lead to a certain contradiction, if yoga exercises are taken over and practised within the Western mentality. A feeling of self-esteem and identification with the body increases to a certain extent with the exercises. Specific certainties are to be gained for the mental life with yoga, especially with the physical-exercises, and people create for themselves many structures and models, which are apparently meant to balance the inner mood of the soul. A truly vast dimension of development is connected with yoga, but at the same time an immeasurably great thorn-bush of temptation springs forth in this field. Western consciousness tends to the assumption that it can solve the great human, existential problem of being with the help of exercises, religious concepts and schematic models.

The way in which those practising dedicate themselves to the individual *āsana* shows in a visual way their inner goal-orientation and integration of body and soul. It shows peace in its picture, it reveals knowledge, it expresses whether willingness for sacrifice is present or lacking, and it gives a subtle impression of the respect present for the divine omnipotence. So for example *āsana*, the physical exercises of *hatha-yoga*, can describe a very fearful and cautious kind of exertion and endurance, as we see in most courses, but they can also express a kind of fixed severity and strong disciplining of the body, as we also sometimes find. These different, still really unuseable forms, may surely gain a new

orientation in a way of practice, which is on the one hand very active, animated, demanding and refreshing and at the same time also leads to a reduction of vital energies, outer presentation, pure physical affirmation and dominance. This new, aesthetic and very demanding dimension is justified through lived religion, which does not elevate physical well-being to the primary goal, but strives for the highest union in worship and devotion to the highest ideal.

For the practice of yoga the main emphasis will be less on technical perfection; it is rather faith and purity in the soul, which leads to appreciation of the lasting dimension. Faith, which in all religions forms the foundation for lived experience, becomes deeper. The depth develops into the understanding in further contemplation that the body indeed represents the access point and the object of practice, but it does not develop in its significance any self-existing reality of its own and furthermore it takes no primary credit for the initial, healing effect. It would seem contradictory, if healing were to be indicated out of the body through exercises, for it is truly the spirit from its transcendence, which kindles the various movements and is expressed with its diverse healing-force through the body.

The spirit is the source, the consciousness makes the connection and the body is that dimension through which this movement is expressed from the higher world. There would certainly be no rational reason for such intense and difficult *āsana* being learnt and practised, if they were to be interpreted exclusively from a health-conscious motive and generally from a very physically-oriented perspective. The advanced *āsana* require lengthy and careful work; they similarly challenge the mental, perceptual and wilful mind to increased dedication, which means extensive work and sacrifice. The *āsana*, practised with increased dynamic tension and aesthetic expression, in which the silent transcendence of the eternal spirit harmoniously penetrates the physical, visible life, are a comprehensive *sādhana*; they are a spiritual exercise. The practice takes on the meaning of an art on the one hand and also the magnificent joy of a devoted act of sacrifice, like a gift from the individual field of the ego. Students are not looking to improve their health, their well-being, or a certain self-esteem; they do their utmost to dedicate their personality to the practice for the sake of a greater goal.

With this joyful *sādhana* in creative work, students who are searching, cross the borders of the attached world of a purely organ-related mentality to a

dimension which gradually opens to them in their worship and reverence to the descending grace. They no longer hold onto worldly security, but dedicate themselves with their whole being to those challenging tasks which spiritual life demands of them. They become free of the trifling compulsions of striving for optimum health and they enjoy the bountiful dimensions, which are revealed to them through the art of movement. In this sense of bold sacrifice and devotion in the pure and free light of religious deepening, the significant sentence of the Gospels comes to mind: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." (Luke 9, 24.)

There can be many different interests and reasons for the practice of advanced *āsana*. Some practise out of gratitude to their teacher and others for the sake of art and aesthetics, some out of the sense of reciprocity and the feeling of mutual respect and others again practise out of innermost love and attraction to the hidden spirit, to the soul which lives in the *āsana*. For everyone, it is an act of sacrifice of their personal life. The care and patience, the overcoming of feelings of tiredness and reluctance towards the effort of repeated work and the perseverance in holding uncomfortable yoga-poses guides the spirit into a silent vastness and this is revealed at some time in a descending richness. Into this richness will that spirit, which is consecrated to sacrifice and service with the *āsana*, now be born.

Just as sacrifice led in the ancient rituals to fertility and rain and just as sacrifice today contributes to reciprocity and to developing and caring for the community, so the sacrifice of the *āsana* leads to that sublime crossing of the limits over the threshold of attachment, towards religious, living experience and an opening of the spiritual dimension takes place.