

Heinz Grill

The Soul Dimension of Yoga

A practical foundation for a path of spiritual practice

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How to use this book

There are various ways in which a book about a spiritual discipline like yoga can be written. One of the most common ways is to pass on descriptions of the theme as information to the reader and to introduce exercises which the interested reader then practises by imitation. With this kind of conventional approach the information only circles around the object, tries to grasp it externally, analyses the desired ideal in intellectual terms and develops in this way a number of philosophically abstract conclusions or theological principles. Yet the essence of the authentic spirit lives only in the rarest of cases in these informative approaches to yoga.

The other way, which is like the opposite of the informative approach, is shaped by experience and describes the inner process directly in clear, allegorical and carefully chosen words. The word is then lively, has strength, colour, meaning and love. The depictions of the content and the pictures of the exercises no longer speak to the utilitarian intellect, but to the inner soul.

So there are listings of information about spiritual life and in contrast to this there are direct portrayals of the content of spiritual life.

This book is as regards content, like all other literature written by me, a direct description of the soul and spiritual worlds. These descriptions are not to be taken as mere information, nor as a kind of theology. They are lived portrayals of a reality which corresponds to the profound wisdoms of the cosmos and of world-creation. We therefore need to learn how to read this book for its content and need to refrain from the habit of just collecting information and practising the exercises with a kind of consumer attitude. Genuinely learning and studying this content is necessary for those who want to approach the soul and spiritual worlds. We will not really come closer to this text by merely collecting information.

The opening chapters are structured paragraph by paragraph into central, main thoughts. These main thoughts are noted in the contents list. In this way it is easier to comprehend the central, main thought which is

expressed and should be experienced and it is also easier to think it through independently.

Read only a few paragraphs, possibly only one single paragraph, or at most a chapter and then let the one central thought or thoughts resonate within your conscious memory. You will notice while reading that you often have to reread lines and commit them to memory by carefully thinking about them. The main thought cannot be understood by fast reading. Only by repeated, sensitive and concentrated looking and by independent reflection does the central thought come closer and gain its subtle expression. This discipline is like listening to a sound ringing in the distance, which only through paying close attention rings out in the inner ear and so can be heard in its full subtlety. In a similar way the thought comes closer out of the cosmic heights and begins to direct its sensitive radiation to your inner heart and mind. When you pay careful attention and commit the reading to memory, the sensitive wisdom and the subtle soul-mood contained in the words comes closer to your perception-life. You will notice while reading how the world of spirit and soul comes quite slowly towards you.

While reading these contents take care that you do not rashly evaluate, judge or criticise what you are reading. For the reading you must make yourself free of outer prejudices and bias, because otherwise you hinder the true inner building of judgement and the sensitive capacity to be receptive to the real message. Some critics maintain that people would become dependent, if they were not immediately critical and judgmental of what they were reading. What attitude is really present in such opinions? It implies that people nowadays should no longer be allowed to dedicate themselves to the texts of a spiritual message with intensity, true attentiveness and a veritable thirst for knowledge and insight. Only when we can dedicate ourselves in a real way to the content of the spiritual truths and develop the capacity for deeper judgement and wisdom can the inner life become free. This freedom lives both in this yoga and also in the whole kind of methodology, by which we approach these dimensions of the consciousness.





The Soul Dimension of Yoga

The word "yoga" comes from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, which means, "to connect". Yoga is a path which seeks connection with the inner worlds of wisdom and the creative forces, with the spiritual origin, with the inner self, *parātman*, and with the spiritual power of love. This active path of the spiritual mastery of life requires an organised discipline and a wise power of guidance from the individual soul, which forms a relationship with the universal, eternal laws. The individual soul, *jīva*, seeks its wise approach and connection to the universal whole or to the higher worlds. It longs to overcome all limiting, separating, petty and narrow ideas. It strives for a consciousness attuned and unified in the spirit, while also preserving a noticeable uniqueness in the individuality. This deep motive is rooted in every soul. (1)

The systems of yoga as they are laid down for example in the classical path of *rāja-yoga*, the so-called royal path of meditation, consist of various exercises which include both the body, the breath, the attitude to life and an associated development of concentration and meditation. The path with physical exercises is generally known as *hatha-yoga*, or sometimes as the more specific exercises of *kuṇḍalinī-yoga*. The chief paths of yoga are *bhakti-yoga*, the path of reverent devotion, *jñāna-yoga*, the path of the wise development of knowledge, and *karma-yoga*, the path of selfless service directed to a greater whole. In the following descriptions of the soul dimension of yoga, these main paths are integrated to a practical synthesis, for the soul through its very nature seeks from within the purity of devotion, the wisdom of knowledge, and the action of service without attachment. (2)

Approaches which involve the body have become widespread here in the West. People in the West have learnt to value physical exercises almost more for their health benefit than for their spiritual meaning. The term "yoga", however, includes far more than the methodical practice of physical exercises in order to reach a certain outer goal in life. Yoga itself is much more an inner, growing, conscious attitude of the soul. Essentially in its precise sense it is the step of the mature consciousness, developed after lengthy experience, towards the progressive, spiritual and universal

development of a certain wisdom and love which corresponds to the higher worlds. Through a prolonged path of experience, with various steps of confrontation combined with the right discipline of concentration and consciousness, with an effort for clear thinking, purified feeling and determined action, the individual gains the power of guidance over life, which is generally known as "yoga". Yoga is therefore not limited to a few physical exercises, nor is it a method to be practised in isolation from life. It is a purposeful attitude of the consciousness intent on spiritual individuation, which we first need to learn for the sake of true human self-respect and aspiration. (3)

*Tadā yogam avāpsyasi*¹, the attitude of guidance and mastery of the consciousness, will only be reached after lengthy practice, perseverance and experience. In its true sense, yoga is rare. But in an expanded sense the concepts of yoga can serve for all paths which strive for spiritual development, both Eastern and Western. (4)

For religious efforts which lead to moral purification, to freedom from attachment, to developing an encompassing love for others and to a deep awareness and understanding of the truth, the development of an active attitude of the consciousness is necessary. This attitude need not be pursued by outer compulsion, imposed rules and belief-systems, but by inwardly wanting those feelings and sentiments of life which carry an ethos of purity and spiritual value. Yoga lives in faint traces in the East as well as in the West, in Christian as well as in other alternative circles, but it only lives in truly ignorant attempts and has not been sufficiently developed. The knowledge of the spiritual worlds has been lost. (5)

However, the methodical way of practice which has its origin predominantly in the East should not be adopted without compromise by us in the West, as there are differences in the heart of both mentalities which can cause misunderstandings when taking on a path. The Western world needs new interpretations for the practice of the physical exercises of *haṭha-yoga* and the various concentration and meditation exercises of *rāja-yoga*. The interpretations need to be attuned to the soul and to the soul-development of the occidental consciousness and made accessible to personal

1 Bhagavad Gita, II/53 "Then you will reach yoga"

experience. There would in fact be a great deal of misunderstanding, if the sentiments of the oriental consciousness were to find their way without careful reattunement and reformulation into the occident, where there is more emphasis on individuation. In my comments on the soul dimension of yoga I give particular importance to these exact formulations and new sentiments, which are in contrast to those of classical yoga. (6)

The way of practice should not lead predominantly to a special, mystical experience or to an exclusive, fast enlightenment but to developing and encouraging the soul-life and to overcoming egotistical and dependent patterns of behaviour, and it leads life to an altruistic and freer perspective. The soul seeks its centre and its fulfilment in the worlds of higher soul-existence and in the fulfilling love of a transcendent reality. It should see these higher worlds according to the laws of the higher worlds and recognise the uselessness of its egotistical desire. (7)

What dimension does the soul encompass? What is the soul? Where does it live, how does it live and what power is inherent in it? The soul is feminine in its nature, while the spirit is considered as masculine. Within the elementary trinity of body, soul and spirit, the soul occupies the connecting position midway between above and below. The body belongs to the earthly world, to the so-called sensory sphere or to the manifest world of matter. The spirit, on the other hand, is not the intellect. The spirit is far more the dimension of self-awareness, which is represented by the existence of the thought. Because there is a sphere of thought and because the human individuality can become aware of these thoughts through its own viewing, thinking and experiencing consciousness, the existence of the spirit can immediately be recognised. Experiencing the spirit, however, is a deep process of becoming aware, which should not be confused with intellectual or emotional characteristics. Both intellectuality and emotional feelings are only an outermost imprint of a far deeper spiritual process in human existence. (8)

In more ancient cultures, yoga and its various contemplative exercises would not have been possible without a careful ascetism and a certain retreat from life. In the West too, realisation of deep, mystical, Christian experiences was unthinkable without renouncing the world. But the consciousness has changed through the centuries and if people nowadays

were to withdraw into a monastery, an ashram or into solitude, they would be unable to find their way to the contented feelings of soul-unity and above all to a synthesis of the spirit and the world. They would be more exposed to feelings of pain, abandonment and loneliness and would be unable to experience the precious connection to a harmonious, communal life within society. A yoga that develops in a meaningful way in the West should not go hand in hand with significant outer changes, with a retreat from life and severe, ascetic exercises. Life should remain as before, and those who live in families or are married should stay rooted in their community. It is not from outside-in that life becomes transformed in an enriching way, but it is from within that the entire situation in communal, social and outer existence is ultimately changed, from a deeper soul-experience, which finds its way by suitable forms into the outer aspects of life. The path is a progressive development of the self, which goes hand in hand with real, authentic experiences and penetrates life to a sensible and reasonable degree. (9)

The soul is the central link in our human existence. It is to a certain extent the connecting link between the manifest body and the unmanifest spirit. The soul encompasses both the consciousness and the subconsciousness. But the soul must not be called a feeling, a feeling apparatus or a subliminal wanting. The soul itself is far more the light aspect in the inner realm, which is precisely attuned to the cosmos. A part of the cosmos exists within human existence as soul. (10)

The soul receives impulses from the physical existence as well as influences and stimuli from the thought-life and so from the spirit. For all exercises, particularly the physical ones but also all concentration and meditation exercises, the soul should be attuned to a higher spirit. It is not the sense-attached, bodily-involved consciousness which should motivate the practice of yoga. Very specific thoughts which are formed from a spiritual truth-consciousness should accompany the practice of yoga. In simple terminology we speak of an influence which streams from above down into the soul, which enriches the soul-structure within, with spirit or with a transcendent reality. In our current time it is of utmost necessity for the way of practice that the path goes from above to below, or from the more subtle realm to the more coarse, from the unmanifest to the realm of experience and finally to the manifest realm. Like the sun which shines onto

the earth, the inner spirit of humanity should shine onto matter and this should become conscious. (11)

Conditions today are generally marked by the principle of using, utilising, consuming and seeking advantage. This principle of taking and using we succinctly call "materialistic". It comes from an illusory consciousness which says something like: by acquiring a lot, we may become richer. Although this principle has a certain validity for the physical circumstances of life, these thoughts and maxims should not be applied to the inner world of the soul. In the soul-world a principle operates which is more the reverse of materialism. The maxim says something like: "Whatever we do for another person, whatever we give or give away for the greater good, that is our true self." The wise men and seers of old expressed this maxim as *tat tvam asi*, "You are That". This maxim of the soul-world not only depicts a moral law, but points far more to a law which exists in the innermost of life and encompasses the true soul-nature of the human being. In their souls people are in no sense what they can acquire for themselves in earthly existence, they are far more what they invest in life, what they do for social existence and what they give in truth for others. The soul lives in the receptivity of giving and not in the receptivity of earthly taking. (12)

A path which goes from below upwards, in other words from the physical worlds and also from the maxims of the earthly world, from the thinking of materialistic consumerism or from the emotions of the body, cannot really lead to the inner, true soul-basis of existence. In the yoga described here, great value is placed on this distinction, so that the yoga does not fall into a supposed consciousness while following the principles of the material world. Most of the contemporary Western schools of yoga have removed all spirituality from their way of practice by excluding the previous asceticism and strictness of yoga and by applying to their practice forms of yoga philosophy which have been theoretically misunderstood. Partial, unsatisfactory mystical experiences which have no connection to the whole of life are the result of these newer approaches to the practice of yoga in the West. The various physical exercises, the concentration and meditation exercises are formed and permeated with spiritual elements here and practised as such for the first time in the West. This activity of forming the exercises from a spiritual insight into their essential nature, from actual, known experience and from forms of consciousness attuned

to the identity of the soul-life, this is what the Soul Dimension of Yoga describes. (13)

This Soul Dimension of Yoga is new in terms of philosophy and the experience of contemporary culture. Its practice, method and interpretation have not been derived from previously known paths and yet they lead directly into the sensitive, sacred realm of *bhakti*-, *jñāna*- and *karma-yoga*. The content of this ensouled yoga has been tested through broad, spiritual research and through the precision of spiritual science. The discipline of ensouling yoga brings moral improvement to the whole of life, insights into life's connections, a more stable strength in health and mental and emotional wellbeing and opens a path to practitioners for the mastery and guidance of their lives. A high, inner self-respect is expressed in this yoga. People can discover the spiritual worlds and in the face of the high truths their souls increase in inner self-confidence and self-respect. But once again it should be emphasised that yoga is not a matter to be organised, something done like any other work. This activity is far more a discipline of the consciousness, which is formed from the spirit, from refined thoughts of truth and sentiments of truth and brings an unerring, consistent and stabilising guidance into life. *Tadā yogam avāpsyasi*, yoga must first be reached. The form of mastery of the consciousness represents a training for life and begins with the study of thoughts and perceptions, which are ultimately expressed from above downwards, from the spiritual basis of existence via the soul into earthly life. The soul is experienced in the consciousness when the soul itself recognises the thoughts, perceptions and actions in the light of a spiritual awareness of the truth. (14)