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*Insight
is
Everything*

*Ancient Wisdom
for Modern Humanity*

*An enlightening translation
and commentary on the
first two chapters of the
Yoga Sutra of Patanjali*

Volume 1 of 2



*Ekam Sat
vipra bahudha
vadanti*

*The Truth is one,
the wise speak about it
in many ways*

~ Rig Veda ~

*Satyan nasti
paro dharmaha*

*There is
no higher
spirituality
than the Truth*

~ Mahabharata ~

*Yoga karma
su kaushalam*

*Yoga
is skill
in action*

~ Bhagavad Gita ~

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***Rite
Gyanat
na Muktihi!***

***No Liberation
without Self Knowledge!***

~ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad ~



Maharishi Patanjali

Introduction

Food for the Soul

Just as our body needs food to function, so our soul needs her daily food in order to be happy. We provide our body with healthy and varied food every day, preferably from organic cultivation. We should do the same for our souls. Every day our soul longs for a good portion of wisdom, insight and love, preferably prepared on the basis of common sense. She really needs that!

But where do we find these old-fashioned “fare”?

Where can we find reliable and universal knowledge about life? Is spirituality compatible with common sense? Is there such a thing as a common basis for all religions? Who among us is sometimes not discouraged by the lack of clear, universal, non-sectarian knowledge about the nature of life?

And is there such a thing as a universal truth?

There is only *one* God, at least that has always been my understanding. Throughout my life I have searched for true, reliable, universal yet practical knowledge about life. I looked for it in the church, in the university, in the knowledge of “primitive” cultures, and I looked for it in astrology, yoga and meditation. When I now look back at this odyssey, I see that in all those areas I have found some valuable truths that have brought me closer to my goal. In particular, the ancient Vedic knowledge, preserved in India, has shown me that deeper truths can only be understood when our state of consciousness is relaxed and blissful. In order to have a comprehensive Insight into Reality, our consciousness must be free from any internal, psychological restrictions and afflictions.

Vedic Knowledge

One of the many branches of Vedic wisdom is the philosophy of Yoga. In India, only three textbooks are considered truly authentic texts about Yoga. These are:

- the Bhagavad Gita
- the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali and
- the Shiva Samhita.

For more than forty years I have been an admirer of the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali. I have come to understand it as a marvelous text that clearly and systematically reveals the nature and scope of human consciousness.

Over the centuries, the Yoga Sutra has been a source of inspiration for seekers in both east and west. Throughout this time, it has received a stamp of approval from the sages of each and every generation. It has become a very authoritative text.

In writing this new translation and a new commentary on the Yoga Sutra, I hope to show that spirituality is essentially very simple. I hope to show that spirituality is really just a matter of common sense!

The Philosophy of Yoga

My intention is to take a close look at this Vedic masterpiece and to penetrate it so deeply that its essence clearly comes to light. I chose Patanjali's text because it expresses itself very scientifically, systematically and universally. It clearly shows that the essence of what life is all about is, as it were, up for grabs.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutra is a universal science and technology of consciousness. It describes the nature and scope of our consciousness. And it gives clear directions for what we can do to unfold the full potential of our consciousness.

Patanjali details the kind of experiences that occur on the way to the ultimate goal – spiritual enlightenment and liberation. He describes in clear terms the end result of the full development of our consciousness; the highest possible state of human awareness, which we can call “unity consciousness”.

Limbs versus Stages

Patanjali calls his explanation “Ashtanga Yoga” – “The Eight Limbs of Yoga.” **Limbs is such a suitable term because everyone knows that they all develop at the same time.** You cannot cultivate your arm without your head having to evolve with it! Yet even here, on this simple point, a lack of common sense has struck mercilessly. To this day, almost every translation of the Yoga Sutra – and thus almost every yoga school in the world – speaks of eight *stages* of yoga that you must successively master as a student, instead of eight aspects of the wholeness of life, which all develop simultaneously as soon as you start practicing the philosophy of Yoga – the philosophy of Oneness.

This distortion of Patanjali's teachings has become fateful for many sincere seekers. They were told that they first had to master “step” one before they could continue with step two, three and so on. This has had

a confusing effect on candidate-yogis throughout the centuries! Yoga, which literally means unity or unification, is explained by most translations and commentaries as if it could only be achieved with an almost superhuman discipline. One should turn one's back on social life, forget about sex and personal love, and submit to an iron daily routine that requires a tremendous effort to be able to climb to "the higher forms of Yoga."

As a result, Patanjali's perfect description of how to develop one's consciousness effortlessly and naturally was transformed into a self-contradictory and therefore impractical teaching. The ultimate goal of Yoga – unity consciousness – has been (and still is) described as attainable only through an extremely complicated, mystical, occult and difficult path, which can only be accomplished by a select few who persevere. The goal is usually depicted as having a degree of difficulty comparable to becoming an astronaut! Although the popularity of Yoga is increasing worldwide, it still does not enjoy the good name it actually deserves. After all, it is not so long ago that Pope John Paul II banned Yoga!

A "new" Paradigm of Reality

By translating and commenting on the Yoga Sutra, I want to show that while life is infinitely complex on the outside, it is absolutely simple on the inside! On the surface, life consists only of differences. But in the depth, we all participate in the same universal process called life. If only we can think, perceive and feel deeply enough, we will unanimously realize that we all are *essentially* equal. My essence is identical to your essence. In essence, we are all one!

According to the ancient Vedic wisdom, everything that exists and everything that lives, is made from one and the same non-material substance called conscious-ness.

How do the ancient Vedic texts, including Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, define the concept of consciousness?

According to the Vedic paradigm (a beautiful word for frame of reference, overarching theoretical framework or world view), consciousness is simply the ultimate reality; it is the essence of all that exists. **Vedic philosophy speaks of consciousness as the non-material substance of which everything and everyone is made.** This means, among other things, that consciousness is primary and the soul-mind-body system is secondary.

It is consciousness that makes us live, think, speak and act. It is consciousness through which we are aware of ourselves, the world and the universe. It is consciousness with which we have created philosophies, religions, sciences and arts. One might wonder whose consciousness I am actually talking about. The answer is: *our* consciousness! Our common consciousness.

According to the Vedic view, there is only one consciousness in the entire universe, and that is the consciousness from which we have all emerged, which gives us life and of which we are literally the embodiment.

Many will need some time to get used to the far reaching consequences that this Vedic paradigm will have on their current worldview.

Ordinarily one does not see consciousness as absolute, omnipresent, eternal and immortal, and as the source of all that exists. Who nowadays regards consciousness as the source of creation and that it has the complete knowledge within itself that created this entire universe? Modern physics comes to our aid by confirming this ancient understanding of the essence of creation. The old materialistic worldview is beginning to show cracks and in fact can no longer be maintained in the light of modern discoveries in quantum mechanics.

It looks like humanity is awakening and that more and more people are spontaneously recognizing the Consciousness Paradigm of reality as an expression of simple, eternal and universal truth.

This all-encompassing truth can be realized and experienced by a human being through the effortless and natural techniques handed down to us by the ancient Vedic seers and yogis. By using the practical and scientific knowledge of consciousness, contained in Vedic textbooks such as Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, we can expand and unfold our own consciousness.

As a result, we will be increasingly able to utilize our innate potential. By acquiring this comprehensive, experience-based knowledge, we spontaneously begin to recognize that we are the embodiment or manifestation of consciousness. Since our soul-mind-body system is an integrated part of creation – and as such is nothing special – we automatically come to understand that not only *our* soul-mind-body system is the product of consciousness, but also that of all other human beings and in fact the entire creation is a manifestation of consciousness.

This all-encompassing view of reality, this universal point of view, is the essence of what I would call the paradigm of the new millennium. **The great Copernican revolution of this millennium will be humanity's understanding that all material creation is the manifestation of a single omnipresent, universal substrate, which we can best describe as consciousness.** The ultimate reality, about which we have told each other stories in churches, temples and mosques for a few thousand years, in the form of parables and poetic religious representations, turns out in this new and more enlightened millennium to be nothing other than that one universal, absolute and eternal consciousness!

Over the centuries, numerous names have been given to this intuitively understood and sensed omnipresent consciousness. Often with a poetic feeling and religious respect. Usually the ultimate reality is described in terms of analogies and allegorical representations. You probably know them: an old man with a beard, a man with his son seated on a throne, a woman with eight arms, a man with four heads, a half man/half woman, an old man with a raised finger, a merciful woman with a blessing gesture, a man meditating on a mountain, a woman sitting on a tiger, the light of light, the light of countless suns, et cetera. All these

images are the expression of the human imagination that wants to represent a certain spiritual truth in a relatable form.

Consciousness is like an Ocean

The best analogy I have encountered so far regarding the universal consciousness underlying all phenomena, is that of the wave and the ocean. All relative manifestations are like a wave on an ocean. All you see is the temporary expression of an eternal ocean of consciousness. **Whether a wave is large or small, whether it has foam on its top or not, whether it moves fast or slow, whether it moves east or west, it is essentially nothing but water.** Through and through water.

A human being can also be compared to a temporary wave on the eternal ocean. Although in some ways we are a special kind of wave. A human being differs from many other waves in that he or she has the ability to reflect on his or her own origin. A human being has the potential to become aware of his or her origin – of his or her essence!

An arbitrary wave that learns to look inwards, and forgets for a moment its outer shape and its outer activities, automatically comes to the conclusion that it consists entirely of water, regardless of its size, direction, speed, etc. When it looks inside, it sees nothing but an unfathomable mass of water! Then it knows – maybe for the first time – *“Wow, I am the expression of an unfathomably deep and endless ocean. When I settle down again there will be no problem, I will become one with my essence – the unlimited ocean!”*

You can imagine how enthusiastic this wave will be because of this discovery. When he comes out from his reflective state, and looks around and sees his brother and sister waves rolling around him, he spontaneously realizes that all of them also consist only of water: “All of my fellow waves are the temporary, natural and playful expression of the same ocean, which is also my being, my essence!” **Thus he comes to the conclusion that he is essentially one with all his fellow waves, wherever they move on the limitless ocean.**

The outer differences and the differences in functions, which until recently dominated his perception, are now seen and understood in terms of the ocean as a whole. The external differences in form and function are now seen for what they are: superficial, temporary appearances that no longer dominate and therefore overshadow the insight into the essential unity. Deep in his heart, the wave knows: *“I am essentially one with the ocean!”* What a wonderful realization, what a broadening of awareness. Moreover, the wave knows: *“In essence, my brothers and sisters are also one with the ocean, whether they know it or not.”* The wave has become “enlightened”, as it is called in many spiritual traditions.

And as soon as he gets the opportunity, he whispers to his neighbor’s wave: *“Hey amigo, look inside ... turn your attention inside for a moment and tell me what you see!”* The neighbor accepts his suggestion and carries out the same natural and simple experiment, and turns his attention inwards. Inevitably, he too comes to the discovery that he is nothing but water. And from this simple and obvious fact he will conclude that he is *essentially* one with his neighbor. Luckily, waves are playful and curious by nature and learn from each other the habit of taking an occasional “dive” inside.

This happy message spreads spontaneously like wildfire all over the ocean and, in no time, every wave knows that it is essentially more than just a temporary wave ... every wave knows itself to be one with the ocean and – as a consequence – one with all its fellow waves. In this way, the ocean becomes a united, happy and pacifistic ocean. Until recently, out of ignorance of their common nature and essence, the waves were fighting each other. Now they are learning to live and let live. Whereas they used to be conditioned to a **“fight or flight”** reaction pattern, now they learn to enjoy a **“stay and play”** reaction pattern.

Common sense started to prevail over ignorance.

Every wave enjoys the simple but profound realization which is so often referred to in Vedic texts: *“Aham Brahmasmi”* – “I am the totality”,

everything I see is an expression of my infinite nature. Everything I see ... is a part of my unbounded Self!

Dear reader, the above analogy contains the whole nature, scope and purpose of life and therefore also of the Yoga philosophy. If you continue to cherish this analogy in your heart – which does not require any effort at all, but comes by itself as soon as you have understood its beauty and deep meaning – then you are on the highway to unity consciousness.

Living from Wholeness

You can now close the book and perhaps pass it on to your neighbor. Maybe he or she too will see the beauty of this analogy. Then you are together on the highway to unity consciousness, and maybe you will be an inspiration to each other. If you have read and understood the above analogy, you have already achieved the goal for which you took up this book ... *Congratulations!*

You don't have to do anything else. You don't even have to read this book. Simply relax. Enjoy life! You're free! **Slowly but surely get used to the fact that you are essentially one with all that exists.** You found the key! You passed the Yoga Initiation Exam. The light of unlimited consciousness shines brightly in your mind. You have reached the goal of your incarnations. Enjoy it and live your life as you wish, follow your bliss and are aware of your inherent perfection.

But wait a moment; you're also free to enjoy the little waves of the ocean that are described in the rest of this book! **Once you have a vision of the whole – and are able to stay in this awareness – it is a great joy to take a closer look at the constituent parts that make up the whole.** When we have identified ourselves with the whole – and we did this spontaneously by understanding the analogy of the wave and the ocean – then the study of each part of the whole will be a feast of recognition. How great is the joy of the ocean to see its essence expressed in each and every individual wave!

How great will be *your* joy when you see your essence expressed in each of Patanjali's 195 sutras!

You see how simple unity consciousness is! It is already structured in your consciousness before even getting acquainted with the Yoga Sutra. If Patanjali could see you now – and there is much to say that he can – then he would be very happy with you. Indeed, it will be a feast of recognition for you when you see your essence confirmed in each of the sutras. **You will know that you have found a healthy source of nutrition for your soul.**

By playing with Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, you will notice that you spontaneously receive insights that for thousands of years were considered to be very hard to get! **Unity consciousness – the awareness of the essential unity of all existence – is the only natural and relaxed state of consciousness. No wonder nobody ever achieved it when striving for it with effort!** “It is just a matter of Knowing”, as my good mother used to say. If one does not *know* how to get to the moon, it is impossible to make it happen. If one *does* have insight into the mechanisms involved, then it is just a matter of pressing a button that brings the rocket in the right direction and everything goes along by itself.

Knowledge equals Organizing Ability

That's why I say: **“Insight is everything!”** I sincerely hope that you feel and understand how cosmic this slogan is and that you, like me, can enjoy the eternal and universally applicable wisdom expressed in Patanjali's concise aphorisms!

“Insight is everything” implies, among other things, that insight is much more essential than willpower when it comes to making our lives on earth more ideal. Insight into our own essence should be at the basis of all our actions.

Once the insight into the true nature of our consciousness is established at the source of our thoughts and feelings, we will automatically start to