Partial Systems of Yoga

Jnana Yoga: The Yoga of Knowledge

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All existence is the existence of the One, the Eternal and Infinite, the beginning and middle and end, the source and substance and continent and support of all things. There is not and cannot be any other existence, anything that is other than or outside of or above or below or beyond or in any way separate from the existence of the one Eternal and Infinite. All that appears as finite, temporal, multiple and phenomenal is still in reality being of the being of the Infinite and the Eternal. Ekam evadvitiyam.

This is the first and abiding truth without which no other can be understood in the truth of things or put in its proper place in the integrality of the Whole. It is therefore the fundamental realisation at which the seeker of the Yoga must arrive.

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God is, is the first seed of Yoga. It is Tat Sat of the Vedanta. I am, is the second seed. It is So’ham of the Upanishads. God is infinite self-existence, self-conscious force of existence, self-diffused or self-concentrated delight of existence; I too am that infinite self-existence, self-consciousness, self-force, self-delight; this is the double third seed. It is Sachchidananda of the worldwide transcendental conclusion of all human thinking.

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Self-knowledge is the foundation of the complete Yoga. Affirm in yourselves self-knowledge.
Self-knowledge and knowledge of the Brahman is one; for I am He. Of this let there be no doubt in thy mind.

Self is twofold, essential and phenomenal, being & becoming[.]

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First be aware of thy inner self and spirit. Next be aware of that self and spirit one with thine in others.

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All Yoga starts from the perception that what we are now or rather what we perceive as ourselves and so call is only an ignorant partial and superficial formulation of our nature. It is not our whole self, it is not even our real self; it is a little representative personality put forward by the true and persistent being in us for the experience of this brief life; we not only have been in the past and can be in the future but we are much more than that in the present secret totality of our being and nature. Especially, there is a secret soul in us that is our true person; there is a secret self that is our true impersonal being and spirit. To unveil that soul and that self is one of the most important movements of Yoga[.]

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The sense of a greater or even of an ultimate Self need not be limited to a negative and empty wideness whose one character is to be without limitation or feature. The first extreme push of our recoil from what we now are or think ourselves to be may and does often at first carry us over into this annihilating experience. A negation of our present error, a release from our petty irksome aching bonds may seem to be the only thing worth having, the only thing true. The rest is infinity, freedom, peace. We feel an Infinity that needs nothing but its own infinite to fill it. We rejoice in a freedom of which any form, name or
description, any creative activity, any movement, any impulse
would be a disturbing denial and the beginning of a relapse into
the error of will and desire, the ignorance of the illusory finite.
To accept nothing but the bare bliss of infinity is the condition of
this peace. The mind escaping from itself denies all thought, all
form-making, all motion or play of any kind; for that would be a
grievous return to itself, a miserable imprisonment and renewed
hard-labour. The life released from the toil of labouring and
striving and living, demands only immobility and no more to
be, a sleep of force, the surety and rest of an immutable status.
The body accepts denial and dissolution, for to be dissolved is to
cease to breathe and suffer. A bodiless, lifeless, mindless infinite
breadth and supreme silence shows to us that we are in contact
with the Absolute.

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This method of extinction is imposed on our mind and our
mental ego, because all that is eternal, infinite, absolute is su-
perconscient to mind; mind and its ego cannot remain awake in
that greater consciousness, they must disappear. But if we can
change or evolve from mental into supramental beings, then the
superconscient becomes our normal consciousness. We can then
hope to wake in That and not fall asleep in it, to grow into it
and not abolish ourselves in it, to last in identity and not lose
ourselves in identity with the supreme Existence.

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It is possible for the reason, the thinker in us to rest and cease
satisfied in this sole spiritual experience and to discard all others
on the ground that they are in the end illusory or of a mi-
nor phenomenal significance. The logical mind drives naturally
towards a pursuit of the abstract, towards pure essences, an
indefinable substratum of all experiences, a nameless X without
contents, an ineffable and featureless Absolute. Itself a creator
of definitions without which it cannot think but none of which
can give it any abiding sense of an ultimate, it escapes from itself with a sense of relief into the Indefinable. But if the mind finds its account in cessation and release, the other parts of our being have in this solution to be cast away from us or put to silence. The heart remains atrophied and unfulfilled; the will is baulked of its last dynamic significances. These too tend towards an absolute, the heart towards an absolute of ineffable Love and Bliss, the will towards an absolute of ineffable Power. And there is nothing to prove that the knowledge at which the reason arrives is alone true. There is no reason to suppose that the heart and will and the deeper soul within us have not too their own sufficient doors opening upon the Supreme, their key to the mystery of the Eternal.

Bhakti Yoga: The Yoga of Devotion

The integral Yoga of Devotion proceeds through seven stages each of which opens out from the one that precedes it:

Aspiration and self-consecration; devotion; adoration and worship; love; possession of the whole being and life by the Divine; joy of the Divine Love and the beauty and sweetness of the Divine; the absolute Bliss of the Absolute.

Faith is our first need; for without faith in the Divine, in the existence and the all-importance of the Divine Being there can be no reason to aspire or to consecrate, there can be no power in the aspiration or force behind the consecration.

Doubts do not matter, if the faith central and fundamental is there. Doubts may come, but they cannot prevail against [the rock] of faith in the centre of the being. The rock may be covered awhile by surges of doubt and despondency, but the rock will emerge firm and indestructible. Faith is of the heart, the inner heart where lives the psychic being. The outer heart is the seat of the vital being, the life personality. That like the mind may
believe and then lose its belief, doubt comes from the mind, the vital and the physical consciousness. [The greater the intensity] of the psychic fire, the less will be the power of doubt to soil and darken the mind, the life and the consciousness of the body.

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Three are the words that sum up the first state of the Yoga of devotion, faith, worship, obedience.
Three are the words that sum up the second state of the Yoga of devotion, adoration, delight, self-giving.
Three are the words that sum up the supreme state of the Yoga of devotion, love, ecstasy, surrender.

*

These are the seven ecstasies of Love —
The ecstasy of the body in the clasp of the Lover.
The ecstasy of the life consecrated and self-given to the Lord.
The ecstasy of the Mind made one in idea and [will] with the divine Consort.
The ecstasy of the supermind united with mind and body and enjoying the bliss of difference.
The ecstasy [of the] soul in the pure bliss of the Beatific.
The ecstasy of the spirit united in consciousness and force with the Universal.
The ecstasy of the pure being absolute and one with the Transcendent.

Karma Yoga: The Yoga of Works

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All spiritual paths lead to a higher consciousness and union with the Divine and among the many paths one of the greatest is the
Way of Works: it is as great as the Way of Bhakti or the Way of Knowledge.

Do not imagine that works are in their nature nothing but a bondage, they can be a powerful means towards liberation and divine perfection. All depends on the spirit in our works and their orientation towards the inner and the higher Light away from desire and ego.

Works are a bondage when they are done out of desire or for the sake of the ego, by a mind turned outwards, involved in the act and not detached and free, bound to the ignorance of this lower nature.

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To create the union of his soul with the Divine Presence and Power through a perfect surrender of the will in all his activities, is the high aspiration of the seeker on the Way of Works.

To put off like a worn-out disguise the ignorant consciousness and stumbling will that are ours in our present mind and life-force and to put on the light and knowledge, the purity and power, the tranquility and ecstasy of the divine Essence, the spiritual Nature that awaits us when we climb beyond mind, is the victory after which he reaches.

To make mind and heart and life and body conscious, changed and luminous moulds of this supramental Spirit, instruments of its light and power and works, vessels of its bliss and radiance, is the glory he assigns to his transfigured human members.

On one side a darkened mind and life, ignorant, suffering, spinning like a top whipped by Nature always in the same obscure and miserable rounds, on the other a soul touched by a ray from the hidden Truth, illumined, conscious, concentrated in a single unceasing effort towards its own and the world’s Highest, — this is the difference between man’s ordinary life and the way of the divine Yoga[.]

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It is not a mental or moral ideal to which is turned the seeker of the Way, but a truth of the spirit, the experience of a hidden Reality living and concrete, a Light, a Power, a Joy that surpasses the mental understanding and is beyond any merely mental experience.

The ideals created by the mind are constructions in the air that have no sufficient foundation in our vital and physical nature; therefore they can change a side of our mind and colour a part of our actions, but they cannot transform our lives, cannot find here their physical body. Ideals touch and pass, mankind remains the same; after religions, ideals, moralities without end we keep always the same ignorant and imperfect human nature.

Moral rules and ideals are a harness for the ignorant soul, bridle and bit for the passions, reins that compel it to an assigned road, yoke and poles and traces that bind it to be faithful to the burden it carries. Morality checks and controls but does not purify or change the vital nature.

In ethics there is an artificial shaping of the mind's surfaces, but no spiritual freedom, no satisfying perfection of the whole dynamic nature.

The mind's ideals like the life's seekings are at once absolute each in its own demand and in conflict with one another; neither mind nor life knows the means either of their complete or their harmonised fulfilment. The mind labours through the centuries but human nature remains faithful to its imperfections and man's life amid its changes always the same.

Beyond mind on spiritual and supramental levels dwells the Presence, the Truth, the Power, the Bliss that can alone deliver us from these illusions, display the Light of which our ideals are tarnished disguises and impose the harmony that shall at once transfigure and reconcile all the parts of our nature.

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The first secret of Yoga is to get back behind the mind to the spirit, behind the surface emotional movements to the soul,—
behind the life to the universal force that builds these outward shapes and movements, — behind matter to the eternal Existence that puts on the robe of the body.

The second secret of Yoga is to open these discovered powers to their own supreme Truth above matter, above life, above the mind. This Truth, secret in the Superconscient, has four gradations or movements of its power, infinite supermind or Gnosis, infinite Bliss, Ananda, infinite Consciousness and Power, Chit-Tapas, infinite Being — Sat-Chid-Ananda.

The third secret of Yoga is, once arisen beyond mind, to bring down the power [sentence not completed]

The progressive surrender of our ignorant personal will and its merger into a greater divine or on the highest summits greatest supreme Will is the whole secret of Karma Yoga. To bring about the conditions in which alone this vast and happy identity becomes possible and to work out the lines we must follow to their end if we are to reach it, is all the deeper purpose of this discipline. The first condition is the elimination of personal vital desire, for if desire intervenes, all harmony with the supreme Divine Will becomes impossible. Even if we receive it, we shall disfigure its working and distort its dynamic impulse. To give up all desire, all insistence upon fruit and reward and success must be renounced from our will and all vital attachment to the work itself excised from our nature; for attachment makes it our own and no longer the Godhead’s. The elimination of egoism is the second condition, not only of the rajasic and tamasic egoisms that twine around desire, but of the sattwic egoism that takes refuge in the idea of the I as the worker.

The ordinary consciousness of man cannot accept this difficult renunciation or, if it accepts it, cannot achieve this tremendous change. The human mind is too ignorant, narrow and chained to its own limited movements, the human life-instincts too blind, selfish, obscure, shut up in their own earth-bound pursuits and
satisfactions, the human body too clumsy and hampering a ma-

machine. There is here no freedom, no large and infinite room, no 

willing and happy plasticity for the greater play of the Divine 
in Nature. A certain half-seeing and imperfect subordination of 
the personal will to an ill-understood greater Will and Power, 
a stumbling and occasional intuition or at best a brilliant light-

ninglike intimation of its commands and impulsions, a confused, 
clouted and often grossly distorted execution of the little one 
seizes of a divine Mandate seems to be the uttermost that the 
human consciousness as it is at its best seems able to accomplish. 
Only by a growth into a greater superhuman and supramental 
consciousness whose very nature is to be attuned to the Divine 
can we achieve the true and supreme Karma Yoga.

This transformation is only possible after certain steps of a 
divine ascent have been mastered and to climb these steps is the 
object of the Yoga of Works as it is conceived by the Gita. The 

extirpation of desire, a wide and calm equality of the mind, the 
life soul and the spirit, annihilation of the ego, an inner quietude 
and expulsion or transcendence of ordinary Nature, the Nature 
of the three gunas and a total surrender to the Supreme are the 

successive steps of this preliminary change. Only after all this 
has been done, can we live securely in an infinite consciousness 
not bound like our mental human nature. And only then can we 
receive the Light, know perfectly the will of the Supreme, attune 
all our movements to the rhythm of its Truth and execute per-

fectly from moment to moment its imperative commandments. 
Till then there is no firm achievement, but only an endeavour, 
seeking and aspiration, all the stress and struggle of a great 
and uncertain spiritual adventure. Only when these things are 
accomplished is there for the dynamic parts of our nature the 
beginning of a divine security in its acts and a transcendent 
peace.

Desire is always sinning against the Truth; it thins it and prevents 
it from taking body. Desire does not eternalise descending Truth;
it disintegrates, makes temporal, minimises and soon or at last abandons from dissatisfaction (vairagya) its maimed creation.

To do works in a close union and deep communion with the Divine in us, the Universal around us and the Transcendent above us, not to be shut up any longer in the imprisoned and separative human mind, the slave of its ignorant dictates and narrow suggestions, this is Karmayoga.

To work in obedience to a divine command, an eternal Will, a transcendent and universal impulsion, not to run under the whips of ego and need and passion and desire, and not to be goaded by the pricks of mental and vital and physical preference, but to be moved by God only, by the highest Truth only, this is Karmayoga.

To live and act no longer in human ignorance, but in divine Knowledge, conscious of individual nature and universal forces and responsive to a transcendent governance, this is Karmayoga.

To live, be and act in a divine, illimitable and luminous universal consciousness open to that which is more than universal, no longer to grope and stumble in the old narrowness and darkness, this is Karmayoga.

Whosoever is weary of the littlenesses that are, whosoever is enamoured of the divine greatnesses that shall be, whosoever has any glimpse of the Supreme within him or above him or around him let him hear the call, let him follow the path. The way is difficult, the labour heavy and arduous and long, but its reward is habitation in an unimaginable glory, a fathomless felicity, a happy and endless vastness.

Find the Guide secret within you or housed in an earthly body, hearken to his voice and follow always the way that he points. At the end is the Light that fails not, the Truth that deceives not, the Power that neither strays nor stumbles, the wide freedom, the ineffable Beatitude.

The heavens beyond are great and wonderful, but greater
and more wonderful are the heavens within you. It is these Edens that await the divine worker.

A peace and bliss inconceivable to the pleasure-bound and pain-racked mind, and immeasurable by the limited capacities of our present bodily sense, is the reward of the seeker’s insistent self-discipline, his painful struggle, his untiring endeavour.

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At first a consecration, then a surrender and subordination of our human personal will, then its merger in a greater divine or greatest supreme Will is the central secret and core of intention of the Karmayoga. But this cannot be entirely done by our mental consciousness in its little human boundaries. Our Yoga must help us to leave it and enter into a greater consciousness enlightened by a truer radiance of knowledge, armed with a mightier unerring strength, open to that vaster delight in which are drowned for ever our petty human pain and pleasure. Still even what can be done within the limits of our human consciousness brings a great liberation.

But even to do that little is not easy to the physical mind of man, even when his higher mind and will consent and demand it. There is something in us wedded to ignorance, eternally in revolt against all surrender, attached to its own blind activity, its own freedom of will, a “freedom” that rattles its hundred chains at every step; — but to that element in us even that seems a divine music. And our human mind will invent a hundred good reasons against any such surrender to something not ourselves or even to our highest Self, — unless that be nothing more than a magnified reflection of our ego; for then it will be willing enough to surrender. And even our highest spiritual achievement on the mental plane is tainted and limited, when it is not distorted, by this ever unredeemed element in our nature.
Our only safety is to push on beyond the mind to a Truth-consciousness with a larger dynamic light in it that is ever free by its inherent knowledge and illumined power from these pettinesses and this egoistic darkness. For in this supramental consciousness is the Truth and there we meet it and its Master. The supermind is the primal creative and organic instrument of the Supreme Will, the Will that is free from error because eternal, one and infinite.