

Yoga and Celibacy

I. *Yoga*

Yoga is known as *Brahmavidya* (knowledge of the supreme spirit). This great knowledge is ancient and extremely difficult to attain. For its accomplishment, many lifetimes are required. If it were evaluated objectively, it would be defined as the supreme religion, the global religion, the universal religion, the human religion or the eternal religion. It is true that India is the land of its origin, but the entire world has equal claim to it. For its accomplishment, the grace of a *guru* versed in *yoga* is necessary. This *yoga* is included in the six philosophies.

Two approaches are prominent in the world: that of knowledge and that of action. Thus *yoga*, too, can be of two types: *jnana yoga* (*yoga* of knowledge) and *karma yoga* (*yoga* of action). *Bhakti yoga* (*yoga* of devotion to God) is included in both *jnana* and *karma yoga*, because knowledge and action are useless without devotion.

There cannot be different types of *yoga*. But there are differences in the natures of different *sadhakas*, differences of background, differences of methods used for spiritual practice; differences in fitness for practice, and many other differences. For this reason, multiplicity may be seen in *yoga*. The meaning of *yoga* is *samadhi*.

As wakefulness, dream, and sleep are three states of mind, so also is *samadhi* a state of mind. This fourth state is not experienced by everyone; it can be experienced only by an advanced *yogi*. There are two intrinsic divisions of *yoga*: *sakama* (with desire) and *niskama* (without desire). *Sakama yoga* is known as 'social religion' or religion for the masses, and *niskama yoga* is known as 'individual religion' or the religion of liberation.

Among the various religions of the world, only the branch of social religion is available. But among Indian religions, both the above religions are available. This is the distinctive feature of Indian religions. By observance of social religion, the individual, the family, the society, and the nation are elevated. This religion is universally practicable.

Individual religion is the religion of enlightened persons only. The basis of social religion is individual religion. At different times, according to the prevailing circumstances of the society, external changes are made, but the basic principles remain the same.

II. Importance of Celibacy

In *yoga* terminology, non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possessiveness are called '*yamas*' (moral restraints) and purity, contentment, self-study, worship of God, and austerity are called '*niyamas*' (moral observances). Restraints and observances (*yama-niyama*) are the strong-hold of *yoga* or religion. Without them, the preservation of *yoga* or religion is impossible.

Wise *yogis* have described these restraints and observances as the great universal codes of conduct. The principles of these restraints and observances form the greatest part of social religion.

Celibacy is of prime importance in social religion. If it is abandoned and only the remaining codes of conduct are accepted, social religion will be dead and insentient. The character of the individual, the family, the society, and the nation is based on social religion.

In ancient India, four *ashramas* (orders or periods of religious life) were established. Three of these *ashramas* (the *ashrama* of the celibate student, the retired householder *sadhaka* and the ascetic) were carried on in the forest. Only the *ashrama* of the householder was practiced in the city. Besides the *ashramas* of the householder, in all other orders, celibacy was predominant. There were limitations in the life of the householder, too, by which partial celibacy was achieved.

By observing this arrangement, it is understood that in the building of character, there is no means equal to celibacy. The *yoga* in which there is no place for celibacy and yet is called *yoga* is mere ignorance. The antonym of the term '*bhoga*' is *yoga*, and the synonym of *yoga* is celibacy.

Among the *yoga* scriptures, there is an independent scripture named '*Bindu yoga*' (*yoga* of semen). Thus the importance of celibacy is easily seen. *Bhoga* is descent while *yoga* is ascent. There is ascent (sublimation) of semen in *yoga* and descent (ejaculation) of semen in *bhoga*. In spite of being a knowledgeable person, one who does not know the importance of celibacy is a fool.

Without celibacy, the personality of an individual does not develop in the least. *Maharishi Patanjali* has stated in his *Yoga Aphorisms*: "After becoming an *urdhvareta* (a *yogi* who has accomplished perpetual sublimation of semen) through *yoga*, a *yogi* becomes all-powerful. That *yogi* alone can realize the supreme truth. Since through celibacy the impossible becomes possible, the gain of fame, wealth, and other material things is assured to the celibate. At one place Lord *Siva* said to Goddess *Parvatiji*, "O *Parvati*, what is there on this earth which cannot be accomplished if one has control over his sexual fluid?" That is, all powers reside at the divine feet of the enlightened *urdhvareta*.

Only a *yogi*, through the practice of *yoga*, can become *urdhvareta*. The divinity of deities, too, is dependent on celibacy. "Deities have conquered death through the penance of celibacy". Where even death is overcome, what power do poor diseases have to enter the body of the *urdhvareta* saint?

III. Aim of Celibacy

Lord *Krsna* stated in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "*Partha*, I am the eternal seed of all individual souls. That is, I myself am the supreme truth (Brahma), everybody's soul, semen, and the cause of the entire universe. That is why the sages practiced the exceedingly difficult worship of celibacy."

The true importance of semen is known only to a *yogi*. That is why the great *yogi Goraksanatha*, chanting in praise of semen, has said, "As a fair lady grieves due to

separation from her beloved, so does an ascetic grieve due to his separation from his semen". Eminent *yogic* scriptures say, "As long as there is death there is birth, and as long as there is birth there is death." Birth is inevitable; one has no power to stop it. But there is a possibility of restricting death.

Ancient *yoga* science has proved that the cause of death is the descent of *bindu* (semen) and the source of immortality is the sublimation (ascent) of semen. If death is one end to life, eternity should be the other. If there is a cause of death, a human being may possess an ability to eradicate that cause. When a machine stops due to some defect, a mechanic can reactivate it. Similarly, if the body machine ceases due to some defect, a perfect *yogi* can reactivate it.

Svetasvatar Upanisad is extremely ancient. In it, it is said, "Disease, old age, and death cannot enter the body of a *yogi* who has attained the body purified by *yoga* fire". On achieving *sabija samadhi*, the *yogi* acquires the divine body purified by *yogic* fire. This divine body itself is the external manifestation of a true *yogi*.

IV. The Form of Celibacy and its Two-Fold Practice:

Sage *Vyasaji* in *Yogadarshana* has defined celibacy in this way, "To abandon the pleasure gained through the sexual organs by restraint is defined as celibacy". The restraint of the sexual organs is defined as *nishkam karma yoga* (yoga of action without expectation of fruits). It is also known as *Brahmavidya* (knowledge of the supreme spirit). Through its performance, the *yogi* becomes *urdhvareta*. This knowledge is esoteric, ancient, and the source of all knowledge. After it is attained, nothing remains to be known.

Thousands of *sadhakas*, aware of the importance of celibacy, attempt to practice it, but they are unable to maintain the celibacy necessary for the attainment of *Brahmavidya* (knowledge of the supreme spirit truth). That is why in scripture it is said, "Celibacy alone is the supreme penance. Of course, other penances are also penances, but they are all inferior. That *urdhvareta* saint who has done penance over the restraint of the sexual organ is not a human being but a god."

A. Celibacy of a *Brahmachari*

In our body, there are two types of glands: endocrine and exocrine. The secretion of the ductless endocrine glands is absorbed by the lymphatics and veins. In this manner, the secretion absorbed by the blood is distributed to the entire body. In the second type of gland, the secretion of the ductal exocrine glands is distributed to different parts of the body. During childhood the testes of a boy and ovaries of a girl secrete these fluids as they are absorbed by the blood.

On the advent of youth, the sexual energy in the bodies of young men and women becomes active and agitates them. Finally, there is discharge. Once there is discharge, the path of decent is opened up for ever. To carry out the formidable task of restraining and sublimating this energy is as difficult as making a river flow back to its source high in the mountains.

To be a celibate is one thing, and to become *urdhvareta* is another. The celibacy of a celibate student, a retired householder *sadhaka* and an ascetic is ordinary celibacy, but the *yogi's* celibacy is extraordinary. Those practicing ordinary celibacy seek refuge in ordinary (willful) *yoga* with *yama* and *niyama*. The *yogi*, practicing extraordinary celibacy, seeks refuge in *sahaja yoga* (spontaneous *yoga*) also with *yama* and *niyama*.

Some very important rules for practicing celibacy: One should not have lustful thoughts about the opposite sex, nor should one enter into discussions about him or her because these discussions agitate the mind. One should not amuse oneself with him or her. One should not talk with him or her in solitude. One should not want to use him or her for sexual purposes or possesses him or her in a sexual way. One should not engage in sexual intercourse.

B. Scientific Methods for the Preservation of Celibacy for the Common *Sadhaka*.

(1.) Yoga Technique

If for any reason there is a thought of sexual desire, the eyes should be fixed between the eyebrows. This will pacify this undesired awakening. With the strengthening of *apana vayu*, the sexual organ awakens and the mind becomes troubled. As the mind is absorbed into this passion, the *apana vayu* and the sexual organ become unrestrained. In this situation, one should seek refuge in *prana* in order to restrain the momentum of *apana*.

This refuge in *prana* may be attained by fixing the eyes between the eyebrows. On attaining this refuge, the *apana* is weakened and the awakening of the sexual organ is subdued. Frequent concentration of the eyes between the eyebrows alters the momentum of the *vayu* and due to this change in momentum; the direction of the mind is also altered.

Just as one may stop the turning of the wheel of a machine by pressing a switch, so the activated sexual urge of the body-machine may be restrained by fixing the eyes between the eyebrows frequently. This urge will invariably be restrained by this *yogic* technique. To abstemious *sadhakas*, this technique is a divine treasure.

(2.) Ordinary Techniques

(a) If there is a thought of sexual desire in the mind, it can be pacified simply by drinking a glass of cold water and engaging the mind in good thoughts.

(b) At that time the sex drive is restrained by fixing the mind on the idea of a mother, sister, daughter, deity, or holy idol of revered *Sadguru*. However, it is to be kept in mind here that this device will succeed only if there is extreme reverence for the person one has in mind.

(c) By abandoning solitude, too, sexual desire may be subdued.

(d) At that time a fine stream of cold water should be poured on the sexual organ after urination. This will interfere with the sexual thoughts in the mind and replace them with new thoughts. Thus the sexual desire will be weakened and destroyed.

(e) A bath of cold water will also quieten the sexual desire.

(f) By standing in waist deep water or sitting in a tub filled with cold water, one may destroy sexual desire.

(g) By performing fifteen to twenty *anuloma-viloma pranayamas* along with the recitation of the *Guru mantra*, one may also pacify this desire. Instead of *anuloma-viloma*, *bhastrika pranayama* may be practiced. In *anuloma-viloma*, the energy of the incantation is increased, thus the mind is strengthened and is not dominated by sexual desire.

(h) By studying Holy Scriptures, praying to the Lord, and chanting *mantra*, the sexual desire is destroyed.

C. Celibacy of the *Urdhvareta Yoga*

Without being an *urdhvareta*, the knowledge of the supreme truth (*Brahma jnana*) cannot be attained. Hence *Sri Bhagavan* has said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, '*Kaunteya!* Unsatisfied desire is the restless foe of the *jnani*. *Brahma jnana* is concealed by it.' (Chapter 3, verse 39).

As an astonishing energy is generated by the steam in a machine, similarly an extraordinary energy is generated by sublimating the sexual fluid in the body. As a result of this process, the *yogi* acquires the divine body. The stage of *yoga* during which the *yogi* acquires divine body is defined by the scriptures as *sarupya mukti*; emancipation during which the seeker acquires the sought after form. After attaining that liberation, i.e. after transcending that stage, the *yogi* attains *sarstya mukti* in the fourth stage of *yoga*. In *sarupya mukti*, the *yogi* achieves a form identical with that of *Sri Hari* (the Lord) and in *sarstya mukti*, he achieves all the powers of the Lord. In this manner, the *yogi* resembles the Lord. This fourth stage of liberation is the pinnacle of *samkhya yoga*, *niskama karma yoga*, and *bhakti yoga*.

Lord *Siva* and Lord *Krsna* are not *bhogas*. They are *urdhvareta yogis*. They are the first propounders of *Brahmavidya* (knowledge of the supreme truth). What the *sadhaka* should do first of all to become an *urdhvareta* is shown by *Sri Krishna* in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Thus O *Bharatsrestha!* First restrain the senses and decisively abandon this evil lust which destroys knowledge and realization." (Chapter 3, verse 41).

Now He depicts the device by which this passion should be dispelled, "O *Mahabaho!* In this way, consider this unconquerable enemy mightier than the intellect; abandon it by restraining *Atman* with *Atman*."

In order to dispel desire, *Bhagavan* has directed *Arjuna* to restrain *Atman* with *Atman*. This is an esoteric *yoga* practice. Here I interpret the term *Atman* as *sukra* (semen). In Sanskrit the term *Atman* has many meanings. Among these are 'vital element' and 'essential element'. *Sukra* is both a life element and an essential element. Thus these terms can be used in the place of *Atman*. This is also related to the dispelling of passion. The second term *Atman* is used for the purified mind.

To restrain *Atman* with *Atman* is to restrain the discharge of semen by the purified mind. The description of this method is as follows. In comparison to the battle of the *Mahabharata*, the battle of sensual passion is extremely formidable. In *Niskama karma yoga* (*yoga* of rewardless acts) the *sadhaka* has to produce semen in his testes through *siddhasana* and sublimate it. Semen is produced in the testes when there appears a powerful awakening in the penis.

When *apana vayu* forcibly attracts the semen on the inferior path, the unperturbed *sadhaka* has to execute the exceedingly formidable task of elevating *apana vayu* with the help of *prana vayu*. This task can be carried out only through a *yoga* device and the grace of the *guru*. When the true form of *niskama karma yoga* was not understood, the *Vama Marga* (the left handed path) prevailed in the Buddhist religion and in the *Siva*, *Vaisnava* and *Shakta* branches of *Sanatana Dharma*.

Thus, after the purification of each *nadi* in the body, the body becomes steady and perfectly straight naturally. Then the stage of *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses) terminates and the stage of *dharana* (contemplation) begins. In this stage, the external senses cooperate with *dhyana* and do not create any sort of hindrance. Due to this, restraint of the mind becomes easy. In other words, after the steadying of the senses the mind introverts naturally because the cause of the extroversion of the mind is the wavering of the senses. The restraint of the senses is accomplished with the help of *prana* and mind, thus with the eradication of the vacillation of the senses there pervades a steadiness in *prana* and mind both. Only after the accomplishment of this stage does *samkhya yoga* begin from the *ajna chakra*. By *niskama karma yoga*, the *muladhara chakra*, *svadhistana chakra*, *manipura chakra*, *anahata chakra*, *vishuddha chakra*, and the *brahma granthi*, *vishnu granthi* and *rudra granthi* are pierced.

Since these *chakras* are situated within the boundaries of the organs of action (*karmendriyas*), this is called the field of *niskama karma yoga*. After the penetration of the inferior *chakras* and *granthis*, the process of piercing the *ajna chakra* and *sahasradala chakra* begin. These *chakras* are situated within the boundaries of the perceptive senses (*jnanendriya*). This is known as the field of *jnana yoga* or *samkhya yoga*.

Now *Sri Bhagavan* depicts the deserving *sadhaka* who attains this extremely esoteric and most eminent *Brahmavidya*: 'Seeking my refuge, one who strives 'to relinquish old age and death realizes this *Brahma*, perfect spiritual knowledge and complete actions."

This verse is worthy of intense contemplation. It means that only a *yogi* who becomes *urdhvareta* and attains divine body is liberated from old age, death, and the bondage of worldly life. Only such a *yogi* is a real perceiver of truth and an enlightened person. In this verse the term 'old age' is of great importance. One who is free from death is also free from birth. Thus it is inappropriate here to accept the term 'birth-death' instead of 'old age-death.' To be freed from old age and death is to attain a divine body purified by *yogic* fire.

During the period when the *yogi* reaches the stage of attaining divine body, *citta* is purified. The common sign of the accomplishment of *nirbija* (without the seed of desire) *samadhi* is the divine body. That *samadhi* is accomplished only when extreme non-attachment arises in the *yogi's* inner self constituted of *citta* (mindstuff), *buddhi* (intellect), *mana* (mind), and *ahankara* (ego). Thus it is clear that such a *yogi* feels no desire for a mortal or immortal body. If he has such interest or desire we cannot say that extreme non-attachment has been generated in his inner self. Such a *yogi* cannot accomplish *nirbija samadhi*. The *yogi* desiring liberation does not meditate for the acquisition of *siddhis* (miraculous powers); he is desirous only of liberation and that, too, disappears after the generation of this extreme non-attachment. Thereafter, becoming desireless and dauntless, he performs *sadhana*. This is the science of *yoga*.

In theory, even the Indian *Tantras* accept the possibility of divine body, and even the Buddhist *Tantras* give importance to the principle of divine body. There are three great principles of Buddhism, which occur in stages: *sila* (chastity), *samadhi*, and *prajna* (knowledge). The first two stages mean the purification of the body as well as the mind. As a result of the first two stages, *prajna* is attained.

The chronological order of these stages is: intellect arises from chastity and *samadhi*. Until the body is perfectly purified, the ability to retain the intellect or absolute knowledge is not attained. Pure knowledge can manifest only in a pure body. Physical purification occurs through chastity and the purification of *citta* (mind stuff) occurs through *samadhi*. Only when *rajas* and *tamas* (restlessness and inertia) are attenuated through *kriya yoga* and *sattvaguna* (purity) is greatly strengthened is *citta* purified. In the 18th chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, *rtambharaprajna* (omniscience) is described as *sattvica buddhi* (pure or sublime intellect). Looking at it from this angle, the terms *nadi shuddhi* and *citta shuddhi* are synonymous. *Sri Krsna* advises his beloved disciple thus "The *yogi* is deemed superior to the ascetic and the philosopher; he is also greater than the ritualist. Therefore be a *yogi*, O *Arjuna* !" To be a *yogi* is to be *urdhvareta*.