

YOGA FOR A WORLD IN TRANSITION.

PART II

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Sraddhalu and Swami Nityamuktananda Saraswati engaged with the most pressing question of this time. What could be a narrative for the 21st century that could lead to a different social bond that is not based on the exponential depletion and the exponential pollution of our habitat and how can yoga contribute to that?

It has become impossible to ignore the unparalleled challenges our species and because of us most other species are facing at the moment. The extra-ordinary question we are now facing is 'Are we going to make it as a species at all?'

The issue is that as a species we are operating with the same rivalling consciousness that has led to the collapse of civilizations before. For instance the collapse of the Roman Empire, the demise of the Incas and the Aztecs. Now we even face a challenge to our democracy itself; the most ingenious institution humanity has produced. Our democracy is in trouble because it is based on the assumption that one can still deal reasonably with unreasonable things. But, as we have seen, weakening political morals operate at the expense of this reasonableness. The discourse of the 20th century combined democracy and human rights with state sponsored education and health care and still we ended up with Trump. Why do the principles of democracy, science, open markets and accountable governance no longer hold as the firmest foundation of human progress? How can we find a firm ethical ground in a world that extends far beyond our horizons and is spinning completely out of human control via Artificial Intelligence and Biotechnology?

According to Sraddhalu, we are at a point of transition from one level of consciousness to the next. Our challenge is no longer about developing intelligence and reasonableness. That has been our work of the last several thousand years. Now we need something else. What is demanded today is a fundamental shift in consciousness and to the extent that we make that change, we will be able to manage the crisis. Science and reason no longer give us the tools to make the change that is needed, but yoga does. The philosophy and practice of yoga contains the knowledge that is required to protect humanity's future and to provide a more beautiful, more awake and more fulfilling life. What is required is that we develop and become familiar with a superior quality of perception because it is that which will help us navigate through life.

Sraddhalu explains that Yoga addresses rivalling consciousness by accepting its existence and developed systems that allow for the vast differences between individual people.

The Rishis of old were called 'seers' because they saw with the power of intuition. They saw how things worked and they formulated the systems and techniques that could accommodate the vast individual differences between humans. They accepted that human beings are so different from each other that they cannot work together. They understood that if a body of knowledge is meant to assist humanity to evolve, it should account for these differences. This body of knowledge has to have fundamental principles or powers that humanity can leverage to assist in this evolution.

The Rishis found three great impulses that are so deeply embedded in nature that we cannot help but follow them:

1. The impulse to act.
2. The impulse to desire; to want something.
3. The impulse to know.

All three impulses are interlinked and the whole of humanity shares these impulses. All three impulses are usually fused into a single movement but one of them dominates more. Some of us engage with thinking, some of us want to feel and follow the impulse and some of us just want to do what we have to do. There is a desire to know and the action follows.

Once we are more complete and rich in our development, all three will be developed. How can these impulses be leveraged to accelerate our evolution so that we can transcend rivaling consciousness and address the urgent measures our planet requires right now?

What is it that drives evolution and where is it that evolution is going to?

On a personal level, we could say 'I want to be a better artist' ...or 'I Want to realize my full potential'. Here Sraddhalu introduces an interesting challenge. What about fulfilling the potential of many lives? Why wait for that?

The character of evolution is developing four facets of our awareness.

1. We grow in intelligence
2. We grow in strength. Our capacity to influence the universe is increasing. Just think of our recent advances in biotechnology and artificial intelligence.
3. We are increasing our capacity to organise ourselves. We are now able to enter into a right relation with ourselves, each other and the environment. We are able to organise, to make things happen, to synchronise opportunities, organise resources on a global scale.
4. We are able to perfect what we do to the finest detail expressed in beauty of thought and feeling.

These four facets broaden the concept of the 'survival of the fittest' to include beauty and harmony. According to Sraddhalu there is no other way to explain that the universe is beautiful, otherwise the crude would dominate. These four facets are facets of divinity ... expressions of the divine Mother. As we ascend in consciousness, we experience all knowledge, all power, all harmony and all beauty. The universe always grows towards wisdom, strength, harmony and beauty. Our challenge is, if that is the case, how can we liberate our three impulses towards that? How do we turn the impulse for action towards the divine, towards the sacred? How can we train our actions towards this goal and purpose?

We follow a simple three step process.

1. Give up the expectation of result
2. Make the effort
3. Be grateful for the help received

Give up expectation of result

Our actions are towards a goal which may or may not work out. I want an outcome but the outcome is not always in my hands. The weather may change. What is in my hands, though, is my effort. So the first step is to give up what is not in my hands and so the results are consecrated to the divine. Sraddhalu explains that when he speaks of 'the divine' he means 'our own deepest awareness; that which transcends space and time. This is an interesting approach as **we don't have to change anything we do**. We only give up our expectation of the result and with that tension is dissipated. It is an interesting observation that much of our tension comes from our expectations. Because we expect this or that to happen we are tense. The moment we let go of that we can focus on what we have to do which produces a huge relief. Consequently, our effort improves because we do not waste energy expecting results. On the contrary, because the results are consecrated, we may feel ourselves uplifted in our effort. The divine is infusing the effort. We have all had experiences of this in small ways. We do not always know why something happens when it happens.

Make the effort

In the effort itself there is fulfilment. Each time we make the effort with full intention and awareness we feel an uplift. We call for help and begin to feel the joy that comes with it. We come to realize that it works best when we receive that help. We seem to experience a flow. Things seem to happen. As long as we do not interfere with it, it just flows through us. **We become the instrument or the incidental support for an action which is greater than us.** The exaggerated sense of self-importance begins to thin. A much larger freedom and awareness in action ensues. We become aware of our status of participant.

Be grateful for the help received

Because the divine is infusing the effort, we fill with gratitude. **In the effort itself, there is gratitude.**

Sraddhalu describes a fourth step which seems to happen all by itself when the other steps are practiced. **Our sense of awareness flows into that which flows and there is no sense of separation which is the ultimate fulfilment of yoga.**

The first three steps are natural and the first is easy. The impulse to action and our will power exaggerates our sense of self-importance. However these steps allow us to let go of our illusory personality and unites with our true being and our completeness. The lever which nature uses as an impulse to act and which might keep us in a petty groove of life, must be tuned to grow into a wider field of awareness, the liberation of our consciousness. The same goes for the other two levers, the impulse to desire, to want something, and the impulse to know. They also need to be tuned to a wider field of awareness for the liberation of our consciousness. In the next section Sraddhalu explains how to do this in practice and how the different systems of yoga contribute to bringing this about.

To be continued....