

## YOGA FOR A WORLD IN TRANSITION

### PART III

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Both Sraddhalu and Swami engaged in a decisive manner with the most pressing questions of our time, the nature of the present and the responsibility of the yoga practitioner in this world in transition. In this time where some of our leaders openly engage in aggressive and divisive attitudes, we need global intelligent co-operation to face the challenges that besiege our civilization today.

What is the purpose of our lives? It is a question that many people deal with. The most important goal of our lives is to awaken. Awakening is the purpose of humanity. It does not have to do with what you do, but with what you are. It has to do with a state of consciousness, with Being. It is the basis for real success. But what does awakening actually mean? Sraddhalu defined yoga as '**conscious accelerated evolution**' and explains how this can be achieved.

We need to upgrade our biological existence through the awakening of internal powers of perception beyond the five physical senses to gain access to a space where a deeper knowledge, a deeper power of cognition is always present. *Innate to our humanity is a power of knowing which is not rational.* It has nothing to do with desires or emotions. It does not rationalize, it just knows. It is a superior quality of perception that comes with a certainty and we must learn to become familiar with it because it is that which will help us navigate through life and inform our choices. When that higher knowing awakens, we do not only know that it is right, we know *why* it is right. It is the state of the supra-rational. It is the power of intuition.

In order to gain access to this state, we need to make use of the impulses so deeply imbedded in our human nature that we cannot help but follow them. These inherent impulses must be developed to accelerate our evolution.

1. **The impulse to act** must be turned to grow into a wider field of awareness, beyond our sense of self-importance and reliance on exaggerated notions of will power, towards the divine as the one being or power that flows through the whole cosmos and draws the whole cosmos into oneness.
2. **The impulse to desire**, to want something, must be turned into the wider field of awareness that it is love which sustains the universe. Sraddhalu calls this the heart's lever. The heart's lever teaches us to connect, to give, to receive and to love. We become aware that we feel most satisfied and complete when we express love. He jokes that if a person expresses a love for us but we do not feel it, the other person is a pest. The love we give fulfils us because it is the love which we receive from the source which flows through us. It nourishes us as it nourishes the one who it may touch if they accept it. **The love that you give is the love you receive is the love of the divine which is always pouring love because love is the only relation the source can have with the whole manifestation.** It is the most fulfilling feeling to let this love flow through us. In this way the heart learns to love in the midst of all relations, also the difficult ones. The whole of life is suffused with divinity. Nothing changes externally but everything is changed anyway. Unity, harmony and love is the basis of Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti has no English equivalent. Sacred

devotion would be the closest translation or interpretation. Bhakti yoga is the yoga of the heart. It is the practice of cultivating love.

3. **The impulse to know** is the analytic aspect of mind which allows us to judge; some things are better, some are worse. This ability to compare must be turned into discerning what is permanent and what is transitory. The waves of the ocean are transitory but the ocean is permanent. Science is a form of Jana Yoga, it looks for that which is more permanent. It looks for the deeper reality which would be more lasting. When we ask that question with regard to our relationships, which relationships are more permanent? Why do I feel closer to some people and not to others? Why do I hate that person persistently? The hatred is as much an attraction as the love. Both are versions of bonds that create ties. What is it that binds us to the person that I hate or the person that I love? What is lasting and what is disappearing? In this way we learn to perceive that which is divine in all things. Underlying all things is this one energy. All forms are waves transiting on the surface. Essentially the mind focussed on the divine brings closeness and awakening awareness. One holds that perception while transitory things pass. We begin to feel the permanence underlying all things. You begin to relate to that. This practice leads to the thinning of the ego and the merging into the cosmic reality that which was you always. ***You do not try to become something else, you remove the coverings that bind you.*** The whole approach of the process of yoga is not to change anything except one's subjective attitude. This practice allows us to merge into cosmic unity. **This is Jana yoga.**

These three systems allow us to put into practice in daily life a whole culture of conscious development in order to awaken to our divine potential.

## **HATHA YOGA**

Separate from these three yogic systems are two extra specialised systems which are not easy to practice in life. The first of these is Hatha Yoga. Hatha Yoga as a system goes well beyond asanas and pranayama. The purpose of hatha yoga is to awaken the chakras. We use yoga for health reasons, body forms etc, healing, rejuvenation. However the purpose of hatha yoga is the opening of the chakras. It is not safe to prematurely open a chakra. Hatha yoga prepares us for a safe awakening. The method used goes primarily through the body because the body is the one thing that we can control most directly. We cannot easily control the mind. The positions of the asanas are so designed that they activate every single part of your body, but not just the physical body. Hatha yoga recognizes that the physical body is the image of the energy body and the energy body is the image of the subtle mental body. These are deeply linked so that when you effect either one of them it affects the other two. So when we stretch the gross body, when we put it into certain positions that put certain centres under pressure, it is triggering the other two bodies. By the conscious process of triggering every single centre and holding it in a certain alignment of intention, we centre these three bodies. This practice leads to the health of the physical body and ultimately to the awakening of the higher levels of consciousness.

When we practice yoga, we go well beyond the mind into the higher ranges of consciousness. Some people may have spontaneous deep spiritual experiences. Even though the technique of Hatha Yoga allows for the opening of these energy centres, it may not necessarily be the most practical system of awakening because of the amount of hours it takes to practice and the amount of hours it takes to live your life normally. This is especially the case when the advanced stages of awakening kundalini

are achieved. Hatha Yoga is a specialised system which may not be compatible with normal life even though it does give access to spiritual awakening.

## **RAJA YOGA**

Raja Yoga is based on the premise that the mind is what makes 'you' you. The body can change but your thoughts are you. We are our thoughts. The raja yoga system is the practice of redirecting our thoughts and mind. It uses the power of concentration to access higher states of consciousness. As you go through the various stages of purification through the yamas and niyamas, using a select set of asanas and pranayama, it uses the direct focus of intention, concentration and awareness, (dhyana, dharana and Samadhi) to get to and be open to the higher states of consciousness. It is still a demanding practice.

The final point that Sraddhalu wants to emphasize is that the prime driver of the effort in all these systems of yoga is you. There is a limit to the amount of effort one can make.

In the next section Sraddhalu explains that there is a system complementing all these systems. It is a system that does not rely on your capacity or effort. **It is the practice of conscious self-surrender known as Tantra.** In the West the word 'tantra' has connotations with practices that enhance sexual experiences. However Sraddhalu explains that Tantra is the practice of the surrender to the feminine aspect of the divine mother representing power and love. It calls upon a higher power to do what you cannot do. In the next section Sraddhalu describes this practice.

To be continued ...