

## YOGA FOR A WORLD IN TRANSITION.

### PART IV

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**“The fact that you aspire to something however impossible is in itself the promise that you will attain it because it is already there and that is why you aspire to it.”**

Sraddhalu defines yoga, the science of consciousness, as ‘**conscious accelerated evolution**’. In the final section of his talk he explains how this can be achieved. His talk was reassuring in this era of super powerful quantum computers, artificial intelligence, machine learning and deep learning. He demonstrated how we can use our creative potential, the chemistry of circumstances, impressions, emotions, and human contact to awaken.

In the previous sections Sraddhalu identified the three specialised systems of yoga (Karma yoga, Bakti Yoga and Jana Yoga) which use man’s innate impulses to act, to desire and to know. These impulses must be developed in order to awaken to the ultimate reality and thereby accelerate our evolution. Awakening involves the awakening of internal powers of perception beyond the five senses by awakening the inner senses, and grades of awareness with the corresponding powers of cognition. Sraddhalu illustrated how also Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga contribute to this awakening through a practice of purification, intention, concentration and awareness to prepare the body consciousness for the opening of the chakras. He emphasized that all these specialised systems of yoga complement each other.

Sraddhalu then identified the main stumbling block in these practices. These practices are driven by personal **effort**. The prime driver of the effort in all these systems of yoga is you and Sraddhalu observes that within the demands of our present society, there is a limit to the amount of effort one can make. We can take heart however. There is a practice of yoga that supports our capacity for conscious accelerated evolution which does not rely on our capacity or effort. It calls upon a higher power to do what we cannot do. It is the practice of conscious self-surrender known as **Tantra. The sole principle is surrender.**

Sraddhalu illustrated the notion of effortlessness with a story from Greek mythology. Hercules had twelve tasks to accomplish. The fifth task was to clean the Augean stables of dung in one day which was impossible and why the task was set in the first place. Rather than relying on his own strength, Hercules redirects the water of a nearby river to run through the stables and the river cleans the stables.

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 personal effort cannot do. This practice relies primarily upon calling for help but the help is only effective if one fulfils the condition of receptivity and self-surrender. This aspect of self-surrender is the most critical aspect/element.

The basic practices involve the invoking of the divine mother, opening and offering yourself as a child, putting yourself in an alignment with trust, **invoking her energy into you to work the transformation of your nature**. It does not require us to give up any other practice of yoga. If our temperament resonates with Bakti yoga or hatha yoga or any other of the yoga's, we continue the practice and let the practice take form in our life. The practice of self-surrender complements our existing practices.

According to the tantric teaching, just above our head is divine consciousness. There exist different levels of awareness that we are not conscious of but they are conscious of us. Sraddhalu compares this consciousness to a child who is not conscious that his mother is watching over him but the mother is conscious of her child. Sraddhalu explains that just like a child relying on his mother, we are required to call on the divine mother who holds the entire universe in her arms. She is in every atom. She is the strength in our muscles. She is the intelligence in our brain, she is the love in our heart. There is nothing more intimate than that. She is right there.

This practice requires that we put ourselves in alignment to receive the help so that it can work for us and through us effectively. What does that require? **It requires conscious aspiration and intent**. The nature of our effort consists in the rejection/removal of the tendencies that are contrary or interfere with this conscious aspiration of this conscious self-surrender. The help is always there but it depends on our conscious self-surrender to be effective. Sraddhalu makes the analogy with drowning. If you are drowning and someone stretches out an arm and says here grab, you can refuse and try to get out by your own energy or you can grab the arm and let the other pull. That is a very different relationship. We can open up and allow the divine energy, Shakti or super-consciousness, to work through us to produce the change that is required. We do not have to make the effort to change ourselves. If we experience anger, we offer the experience of anger and say '*You take care of it. You are smart, you free me from this.*'

We do not think like that normally. Our neo-liberal society teaches us that we have to do it ourselves. If I have a problem, it is my problem and I have to make the effort to solve it. However here, Sraddhalu makes a very important observation. He says that innate in our being is the capacity to look for help. For instance, if we are sick we go to the doctor for help. If we are mentally exhausted, we go to a therapist. Something in us is trying to look for help.

The question is, where do you find the part in you that wants to surrender? Who is the person who wants to change? Who is this 'me' who wants to change, who wants to be free of burdens? Sraddhalu explains that if we introspect we will find that our personality is made up of different layers but that there is something in the centre around which we unify. That centre is our conscious aspiration. There is something in the centre of our being that is yearning, that is aspiring. All our highest ideals come from there.

Somewhere inside us is already something that is what we want to become.

This is a very important idea and it is the centre of our yoga practice. You can conceive of true love as an ideal because some part within you knows it. If you did not know what it is like, you could not hope for it. The very fact that you dream of something is because some part of you knows it. **The fact that you aspire to something, however impossible, is in itself the promise that you will attain it because it is already there and that is why you aspire to it.** The journey of life is only the uncovering, discovering, unveiling, drawing out, manifesting of that which already is. This is the centre, the origin, the focal point, the reference point of your life's yoga journey. What you are seeking to realise is already there. That which you aspire to is already there in your deepest

essence. It is that which you will become. Now the word yoga takes on a new meaning. It is me with my potential, of me with me. I become that which is my divine core. It is like the seed in which the whole tree is waiting. The fact of the seed is the reality of the tree to be unveiled. A seed of an Oaktree will never be an apple tree. What the seed needs is already within it. The power to grow, the knowledge of how to grow, the knowledge of how to deal with every circumstance is all there. You do not need anything from outside because what we need is already there. So we make this the centre of the whole journey of life, of yoga, across lives. It is also that part that carries all the knowledge of our past incarnations and the experiences of our growth across those incarnations. It carries within it not only all of the past but also the potential of the future. We only need to realize it. To be able to become conscious to a degree, to put our thoughts and emotions and actions in alignment with it, is our starting point. The more we are able to do this, the more it begins to lead and the easier the rest of the journey becomes. In this type of transition where the whole world is going through the most extremes of opposites, of the most confusing, challenging circumstances, this is the seed within us which knows at each moment exactly what is necessary. In the practice of yoga therefore the first priority is to become increasingly conscious of this presence that is me, that is the true me and to put our thoughts, emotions and actions in alignment with it.

How does this work in practice?

Sraddhalu proposes an exercise in two phases. The first phase is the practice of introspection and the second phase is the surrender to the divine for purification.

Every time you have to make a decision, every time you are going to do something, stop for a moment. Every time you experience strong emotions and thoughts associated with it, explore them but do not decide yet. Do your analysis, do your discussion, and when everything is done, set it all aside. Become really quiet. Because this exists in a space that does not want any excitation. It just wants to be. We have to stop the activity of becoming. We have to become very still and quiet. You go back to rest in your deepest core. In that state of complete stillness and rest, you remain conscious of what it is you want to know and feel and gently there is a moment of awakening, feeling, showing, revealing. If you stay in that space/this poise, it will give you specific insights and knowledge. It prepares and links you with your intuition and it can lead you all the way to these higher states of awareness. Our first responsibility is to become conscious of this and to align yourself. It is what is called centring ourselves.

The second phase is putting our lives in relation to the divine in the form of self-giving and asking for help. It involves simply knowing that the divine help is always there whether we ask for help or not. We build the relationship with the universe and that which is beyond the universe consciously. What form it takes is not important. It is a sacred presence without gender or form that fills the universe and is always there.

This sacred presence can be felt in any moment and in any thing. It fills everything. It is self-giving in love, in self-surrender and is helping all the time. The practice is to become conscious of this sacred filling of the whole universe. In this way our work of awakening our consciousness will be enormously accelerated.

## **INTEGRAL YOGA – THE WORK OF SRI AUROBINDU**

Integral Yoga combines two principles.

1. Everything is workable for the attainment of self-realization

2. It uses the principle of higher knowledge – the supra-rational to help the process of self-realization.

It is called Integral Yoga because it takes up everything in life and turns it to higher consciousness. It uses both the divine presence and the presence above and around. Every form of yoga, philosophy or any teaching draws upon some combination of these.

Once you understand these principles they will merge into a particular combination unique to you in alignment with your stage of life. Forms change. The underlying principles remain always the same. It makes for a broad framework which has a clear structure but is fluid in its implementation. This is the broad framework that Sri Aurobindu gave us. It is what is called Integral Yoga. The framework includes the whole of humanity, every human type. It uses the fundamental powers within us. The realisation of the divine includes all aspects of the divine experience. 'The divine is love' is one tradition, 'the divine is power and strength' is another tradition, 'the divine is transcending all forms, is the absolute' is again a different type of religion. The divine is all these. It is one and includes all.

In the next session Sraddhalu elaborates on the notion of transmission versus teaching and the notion of the sacred and he gives very specific guidelines for yoga teachers.

To be continued ...

Marlene French Mullen