

Discourses/Articles

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YOGA AND THE NEED FOR A GURU

Visitor: I wish to study yoga.

Swamiji: Why do you want to study Yoga?

Visitor: I want to know what I am. I sit with my eyes closed trying to find out what I am.

Swamiji: How did this question arise in your mind? There must be something in your mind which is prompting this question. Why do you want to know yourself?

Visitor: Because I am not satisfied that I know myself.

Swamiji: Not satisfied? Why? Are you not happy?

Visitor: Sometimes I feel unhappy, but generally, quite happy.

Swamiji: Note down what makes you unhappy.

Visitor: I am not able to follow my own way of thinking; I am not in my own path.

Swamiji: Why do you feel so? Are you sure your way is right? If you are not sure, then why do you wish to change? There are different ways of thinking. How to judge which one is correct? If each one is correct in his own world and cannot harmonise his way of thinking with another, find out what the reason is.

That the world of one's own is different from that of the other is what results in war. Is your unhappiness caused by the necessity of following the law? Actually, appreciation of the law is happiness. That is the first thing. Secondly, because you don't want to agree to another's opinions, you feel unhappy. This is wrong; this is selfishness. Thirdly, happiness is a result of agreeing to the law and thus avoiding trouble. Philosophical thinking brings about understanding. We must direct the mind to understand the law. Education is the capacity to understand. Philosophy is not for writing for the examinations. It is an education in the art of life itself, and not any compartmental knowledge. Philosophy means comprehensive thinking. You need not follow Plato or Kant, though you can take their help to the extent you find them helpful. A wider vision and sympathy should be the result of philosophical thinking. All these need to be studied under a competent guide for a protracted period of time, just like in a university where the courses are chalked out systematically.

Because the subject here is more difficult, there is a great necessity for such a systematic course and a guide. Yoga is not one singled-out subject. It is fundamental, your existence itself. Understanding of the subject depends on the level one is at. The different qualities of different people are due to the fact that they are at different levels of understanding. It is not enough to meet one of your own level. You have to meet one who is at a higher level, so that you can progress. As human beings, we generally act alike. But we think differently in particularised details. Since yoga deals with the fundamentals of one's existence, there is a need to harmonise by adjusting oneself to all the levels one meets with. That amount of adjustment is necessary which is needed for harmony, especially in such things as the differences of outlook, the mind, the aim, etc. of the individual.

When a person thinks rationally, there are also, side by side, feelings of personality. A man of understanding is also a man of feeling. It is in consideration of this that the great tradition of the Guru-disciple system of education had been planned with great wisdom by our ancients. But in modern times, we are trying to overstep this wise and necessary Guru-disciple tradition. The modern ideals of independence are the cause behind the impetuosity of the severance from guidance. Self-dependence plays the key role in the misplaced idea that a Guru is dispensable. I repeat: you require a guide.

Visitor: If one ponders over spiritual problems, one becomes depressed.

Swamiji: Thinking becomes depressing because you don't understand the subject you are thinking of; and if you have not understood what you are reading, you feel even more so. A medicine it meant to alleviate and not to aggravate the illness. If this happens, it means it is a wrong medicine. The disease has not been properly diagnosed and a suitable prescription has not been given. Three things are necessary for yoga:

- (1) Continuous study under a guide.
- (2) Contemplation of what has been studied.
- (3) Meditation on what has been understood. Contemplation is lighter in depth than meditation.

In meditation you become the object of your meditation and, therefore, have gone much deeper into your own personality and the relationship to the object of meditation.

Visitor: When I am in doubt, another doubt and yet another doubt comes. How to clear the doubt?

Swamiji: It is best to remove the first doubt as soon as it comes, before another doubt crops up. How will you remove it?

Visitor: By study?

Swamiji: Yes, and by frankly placing yourself under your Guru. A Guru need not be only a spiritual Guru. Anyone who helps you to understand things better is your Guru.

Visitor: What is grace? Is there any particular type of yoga which can bring this?

Swamiji: Effort from outside, you may say, is grace. Effort from within the individual is effort; but the one cannot exist without the other. That is, they follow one another. Do not speak of the yogas as either effort or grace. It is their transcendental finality. In the ultimate view of all the different types of yoga which these state, Einstein or the Upanishads or the Bhagavadgita say the same thing. One state is supposed to enter into another. This is something which the mind, with its capacity to think only in a three-dimensional pattern, cannot transcend at this stage. The mind, even if forced, is not fully prepared to enter into the fourth dimensional consciousness, and it can even go berserk - mad. This fourth dimension - this transcendental state - is like the fourth state of sleep, known as *turia*, which is difficult to comprehend, though a sense of understanding of it may exist. It is said that the shadow is a second dimensional concept of the third dimensional physical body. In the same sense, in a continued sense, the body is the third dimensional concept of the fourth dimensional Brahman. The point is not what happens as philosophers like Aurobindo or Radhakrishnan discusses it in their books. It is the reaching to it that is the point, and this is the finally transcended consciousness, or the fourth dimension.