

# What is Yoga?

## An Adventure in Consciousness

I HAVE FOUND THAT PEOPLE LACK A BASIC UNDERSTANDING about the goals, process, and techniques of Kundalini Yoga. They do not understand the core concept of yoga. Some people think yoga is a religion. Some people think it is physical exercise for vitality and health. Some people think it is a psychological system that develops the potential of the psyche. In reality, this is all based on misunderstanding. Yoga is essentially a relationship.

Consider the origin of the word "yoga." Yoga, as we in the West understand it, has come from the biblical word, *yoke*. This

originated from the root word in Sanskrit: *jugit*. They both mean "to join together," or "to unite." Yoga is the union of the individual's unit consciousness with the Infinite Consciousness. The definition of a yogi is a person who has totally leaned

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on the Supreme Consciousness, which is God, until he or she has merged the unit self with the Infinite Self. That is all it means.

### A TECHNOLOGY OF AWARENESS

Yoga is a technology of awareness. It starts with the universal human predicament that regardless of your individual level of experience and awareness, the underlying reality of every human mind is that it is both infinite and creative in potential. This unlimited potential is limited in practical action. Your possibilities meet with your actualities at the border of awareness. Awareness varies and gives you different choices and capacities. To break the unconscious limits, a person needs a technical know-how. That know-

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how is required to expand the caliber and capacity of the mental faculties, to bring about an equilibrium, to control the physical structure and to experience the Infinite Self.

The techniques of Kundalini Yoga form the owner's manual for human consciousness. Yoga explores your dimensions, depth, nature, and potential as a human being. In simple terms, that is all that yoga means.

Yoga is greatly needed. In our life today, each person must deeply understand why he is a human being and what it means

to be a human being. There is a lot of talk and philosophy about the inner Infinity and how to know about it. Remember that intellectual knowledge does not hold and sustain you. Knowledge only becomes real wisdom when you experience it with your own heart and Being. Only the experience in that wisdom—*gian*—can hold and support you. Just because you know about or believe something is true, does not mean you can act on it. But if you discover a truth and act on the path of that truth, and if you can find bliss, success, and fulfillment in yourself as a result, then no power on Earth can make you veer from that truth or do wrong. Once you have seen the joy of that truth and have enjoyed that beauty you are okay.

**Knowledge becomes wisdom when you experience it with your own heart and Being, when it becomes your personal experience.**

### DISCIPLINE & TRUE WISDOM

Students must understand this distinction. Knowledge becomes wisdom when it becomes your personal experience. Anything which can hold and support you is based in real wisdom. Some students say that knowing about the truth is all right. They say knowledge is good, but wisdom is not. They are afraid of the discipline and surrender required to attain true wisdom.

A guru can give you knowledge and techniques, but he cannot give you wisdom. This is where we normally err. We think that someone is a wise man. We believe we can make everything all right if we learn from him, serve him, and feel good about him. Yoga and wisdom never work that way.

He can give you technical skills, but acquiring wisdom depends on your own practice and discipline. The teacher and the student have an equally essential part to play in the drama of enlightenment. His part is to provide the knowledge and inspiration. Your equally essential part is to learn, practice, and experience!

Where can you start to learn who you are as a human being? What is the most basic knowledge that you can capture as your own inner wisdom? I want you to feel very happy and good. But I also want to give you a direct and honest overview and assessment of yourself as a basic human being who seeks happiness and a fulfilled life.

## THE THREEFOLD STRUCTURE OF THE HUMAN BEING

To begin the study of Kundalini Yoga, understand that you have a threefold structure: body, mind, and soul. Your essence has a vehicle to experience the universe and the Self, through these three facets of you. You must understand, have your own depth, and experience of each facet.

### The Body

The physical or gross body is the first facet you must master and understand as a human being. It is your vehicle to travel through this life. Your inner machinery is very complicated and subtle. It is not just the flesh and bone that you can see. It's a very well-designed and systematic system. It has glands, blood circulation, breathing apparatus, heartbeat pulsation, a brain, sensory apparatus, and a complex nervous system. All these systems combine and interweave with a structure of flesh and bone to constitute your physical system.

The physical vehicle is a functional system. It receives, processes, and accomplishes ongoing tasks. Every functional system,

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regardless of its composition, needs cleaning, needs care, and needs tuning regularly. The normal use of the system creates wear and misalignment. It also needs careful assessment of its capacity to act, its potential to respond to demands, and its possibility for endurance and longevity. These are the basics that you must learn to take care of first.

The balance of the physical vehicle affects the rest of your capacity and experience. If you want to test the reality of this claim, just overeat consistently for a few days and you will understand. In New York I met a person whose case proved this. I asked him, "Why are you on welfare?" He said, "I can't hold myself together." It surprised me. He had intelligence, nervous capacity, and friends. His problem was that he overate. Every ten or fifteen days, he would get sick and go to the hospital. After he got out they would ask him to take precautions and not do it again. But he would immediately overeat, get sick, and go back in. It was a powerful cycle. Overeating destroyed the balance of his whole system. It blocked any other aspiration and goal he had. Overeat even one time and you upset your body.

The physical body is the basic temple in which you can deposit the treasure of happiness in life. When you are young you can play mischief with the physical body. But in old age the body has you paying for the playing. You cannot escape this fact. The body does

not forgive your actions, it only records the results of the actions.

You must schedule the body and calculate its use and maintenance on a scale that changes with age. Think to yourself,

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"Suppose I live 100 years. I have a plan for that. How should I carry this body, model 1949, or 1969? I want to live 100 years from that first year. How do I

care for that system?"

If you buy a car, you can expect that with regular service, oil changes, etc., it will get a certain mileage. But if you do not schedule regular maintenance, you will have to change cars after only two years. It doesn't work that way with the human body. You are not so fearless that after five or ten years you can say, "All right, I can change the human body, I can get into another." You have not become so mystically attuned to Universal Consciousness that you can do that. It is essential to make the best of what we have. This body is the only one you get.

In Kundalini Yoga, you study the human body in the light of yoga therapy. You must understand it and learn how you can make the best use of it. You must be able to keep it on the level of consciousness you choose, so that it can serve you better and better, without a lot of trouble. That's the maximum you can do.

### The Mind

The mind is the second facet in our human life. If the horizon of the mind in thought, understanding, tolerance, and patience is limited, and if the mind is not so beautifully functional that it can see the unseen, and understand the consequences of each action, then

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it is practically impossible to live a happy life. The mind guides your actions and emotions. If you do not have a good road map, you do not know where you are going. You are just driving without aim, choice, or control. That's what we do in life.

I would like to train you so that you can have a happy life around you. Actually, you must realize that everything depends on your mental outlook. The problem with your mind is that as you think, so you are. How can you develop this potent mental faculty to perceive everything correctly? If somebody is beautiful or ugly to you, it is a result of your mental evaluation. Somebody seems rich to you, even though he doesn't give you a penny. He is rich to you because of mental appraisal. You may imagine somebody is poor, even though he has a million dollars sitting right under his seat. You call him poor because of your own mind. All of your experience is filtered

through the creativity and appraisal of your mind. Happy and unhappy belong to your mind, not to the world.

Let me say this in the two languages of the mystic and the scientist. When you say, "I am a God-conscious person," it only means that you realize your mental capacity and ability. That is the real meaning. Everything you receive and have is through the capacity and creativity of your mind.

We always say, "When I pray, God will come." Have you ever understood what a prayer is? You create a vibratory effect, which goes into the infinite creativity around your psyche. The answer comes and is expressed in the energy of a job done. Then you say, "Well, prayer works." It is only your mind, which has the power to concentrate and to work with that beauty.

It is the mind, which can give you a perspective on your life. What is the aim of your life? Many of you do not ask this question. You are too busy just surviving. But without this question you will never experience living. The reflex answer to the question is, "Oh, everything is all right." What is all right? Nothing! Ask anybody. Everybody has twenty complaints about himself. Why? Where does the time go? Early in the morning, you go to the office and earn money. Saturday you have to pay your bills and buy groceries. If there's a long weekend you have to take care of your taxes. Three hundred and sixty-five days go like this. We are so involved in moment-to-moment tasks that we do not know any better about life. When we do not know any better, how's the better going to come?

We pass our years with such speed and anxiety that we do not know what maintains us, except the blessing of God's compassion. It is an enormous and very rare mental shock that can damage your mental energy. This functional structure of the human machine is so beautifully made by the Maker that it can recover from normal jerks and problems. Only when there is constant pressure and no relaxation, when there is no outlet, when there is constant boredom, or when there is a constant deficit in mental capacity, does it result in a shattered mind and the loss of happiness. Then you must get to a psychiatrist, a counselor, or a yogi. You depend on someone to redirect your energy and help you.

But I believe every person represents God. I do not believe you should be dependent and led around like a donkey by the nose by some wise man who puts a string in your nostrils, or who talks about God. You do not need preachers or leechers. What you need is the inner experience of God. But you have been brainwashed to misunderstand this idea. You think God is a guy who lives in the seventh sky at the head of Time watching you.

Understand the word "God." There are three basic letters in the word "God": G-O-D. These letters stand for the generating

principle, the organizing principle, and the destroying principle. What I have done is taken the first letter from each of these three words and combined them together to make the word "God." God is the generating principle that is within you and which per-

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vades the Creation. It is Infinity to Infinity in relationship to the total creativity. Through its changing, everything happens.

When you become a God-conscious individual, you have the power of mental infinity. It's a great help if you find some person who can stand by you and let you go through that experience. You can get knowledge from anybody, it will always yield a beautiful bounty. You can work on any level, but you have to train yourself to be wise and effective through your own experience.

Remember, you have three aspects. You have the lower self, the gross or physical self; you have the central self, which is known as the existing self; and you have the higher Self, which is a powerful, sophisticated, and delicate Self. When you give the mind the regular experience of an infinite horizon, you maintain it at the level and caliber of a basic human being.

### **The Soul & Spirit**

The third facet in the human being is the soul, the spirit. As no lamp can burn without a combustible fuel, so no life can exist without a relationship to the spirit in it. Spirit has many meanings, tones and facets. If there is a central thread in it, it is the general flow of the cosmic energy. In Catholicism we call that flow God. In yoga we call that flow Cosmic Energy. The two meanings and the One Reality are exactly the same.

You have to understand your relationship with that Infinite Energy. You must learn how you can tune in to accomplish your own purpose. You can have a healthy, happy, holy, wholesome life, a fulfilled life, a beautiful life. You can experience in yourself the deep contentment of existence. You should be so confirmed in this contentment that if you had to quit this planet you could just say, "Thank you," and feel grateful.

We often misunderstand or deny our basic spiritual nature in our social habits and communication. We are first of all people of spirit and faith. Our first impulse is faith. Our greatest capacity is faith. Our innocence and intuition act from faith, yet we have lost the normal experience of the inner Infinity.

I want to touch on a controversial point. Whatever religion you follow, that belief, tradition, and practice is meant to guide you to experience your true origin, which is Infinity. The religion should get rid of your self-belittlement and limitation. It should



inspire and lift you to your full human capacity. Instead of this result, you usually learn prejudice; you learn how to divide humanity; and you learn to love and hate based on belonging to certain thoughts, feelings, or practices. This mis-education has done more

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harm to humanity than all the good acts the religions were intended to do.

We have lost touch with the roots of religion: the spiritual impulse and identity in our heart. We do not even understand the basic concept in the word "religion." That term comes from the Latin *religio*. It means "to look back at your origin." And what is your origin? Spirit! And what is your end? Spirit! So what are you fighting about? What is the great debate? When you experience your origin as a reality, you are happy. Be constant under all circumstances and relate to one thing—you are a part of Infinity and always lean on that power—then you'll never be unhappy.

Happiness and mastery of the spiritual facet of the human life is a simple and direct practice. The problem is that we have never trained our minds to know our origin as Infinity. Instead we have hidden under rituals. All these churches, temples, and synagogues, all the places of worship, were meant to create group consciousness. Spiritual awakening starts with individual consciousness, then progresses to group consciousness. When group

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consciousness is established, and you care for others, then you progress to Universal Consciousness. Religious places were designed so that all the people who believe in some way could join together

to praise the Lord and feel elevated. That was the original purpose. Now people come there to fight elections and to argue about who should control the synagogue or church. Or it has become a forum for some minister to speak, entertain, and dump his distinctive fervor. It has become a regular mechanized ritual—a systematic system within the system.

Take care of the spiritual facet of your life by joining with others to experience and elevate your self, the group, and the universe. In most places, the original purpose and practice to gather and experience the group elevation of consciousness has been forgotten, diluted, or simply gone. With that facet of our life neglected and undeveloped, we have become confused. When a person does not develop the strength of the individual consciousness toward group consciousness, he cannot attain the final experience of the Universal Consciousness. Barriers will always exist, which keep a

person limited. The development of group consciousness into the experience of Infinity is the bridge to Universal Consciousness. It releases the Unlimited Self and fulfills the spiritual longing.

## **GROWTH WITH YOGA**

Kundalini means awareness. Awareness is the active interaction of you as a finite individual identity with you as an infinite potential identity. This dormant energy of awareness is in you. Kundalini Yoga is the supreme technology to awaken that awareness and take you into your original Self. Normally, this awareness, kundalini, is sleeping in you.

You experience your own capacity and reality in a limited way. That awareness can be awakened and expanded. It can be extended to Infinity and yet, you remain you!

Infinity is your basic origin and identity. The difference in your expanded state is that there is nothing lacking. The process of growth through Kundalini Yoga is a natural unfolding of your own nature. The blocks to that growth are your attachments to the familiarity of the past, and your fear of the expanded Self.

Your basic human structure is your threefold nature and the relationship of the finite coiled awareness to your infinite uncoiled awareness. This is the fundamental framework through which we have to function and experience life. Do you like it? Are you willing to agree to all this? Let's focus on this structure and its operation. As you practice Kundalini Yoga you will grow. Like a snake you will need to shed old skins to be more of who you are. You will need to examine certain attitudes, behaviors, and emotional

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habits. You will gain new perspectives, capacities, and habits that can support your expanded awareness.

There are several common challenges a student must confront. Your mind must be developed, artistic, and self-controlled. It must gain a neutrality that lets you encounter and enjoy the constant change that is life. You must mature the mind and your attitude to ride on those waves of life and enjoy it. After all, what is life? It is a wave. The light must follow the night as night must follow the day. Sunshine must follow the clouds, and clouds must follow the sunshine. This constant change is the natural design of nature. But you feel you are really something special. You learn as a child that you are an exception, and you want to control everything. You want sunshine all the time! If you are in the sun all the time, then the nose gets

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burned, and the eyes can't see. No one can live in this world with sunshine all the time. No person can live in darkness all the time—they will get depressed and sick. The real beauty of experience and life is based on this constant variation of light and dark, up and down. To have happiness all the time is very boring. You can't live that way. Your sensory organs cannot smell, see, hear, or feel anything without a change or contrast. You need a little push and pull to just feel where you are and where you should be.

### **LIFE IS LIKE A WAVE**

This life is nothing but a vibration. It is a path that vibrates up and down like a wave. What do we want out of it? What should we desire? Desire a mind which is neutral, which understands the wave, and which gives you intelligence and grace. You all know about surfing? When there are heavy tides and great waves some people love to go surfing. They enjoy it. Other people are fearful and run away. If a person has a neutral, sensitive mind, when he must experience a bad time, he can sit down and say, "Oh, God! Wonderful!! What do you want? A bad time? I don't care." That person will communicate, talk, and feel the challenge is fun. He's not upset. He knows this night will pass, and there will be a warm day. He knows he will have a lot of fun, so he preserves his energy for that time. He keeps himself centered, whole, and

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together. When the time changes so he can expand, he applies all his energy. He enjoys it all the way. That neutral and sophisticated quality of mind has to be developed, trained, created, experienced, tooled, and fitted into all the grooves of

habits and action. Once you accomplish this, any success in life is possible. Without this training nothing is possible, except your fate and your old subconscious patterns. An important part of Kundalini Yoga is to develop the Neutral Mind and its capacity for intelligence, endurance, and integrity.

### **UNINTENTIONAL & INTENTIONAL SICKNESS**

Good health is another challenge. We all want to have good health. Without good health it is difficult to work on projects in your self. Many people feel we get sick because we lack information and do not know better. My feeling about sickness is very different. I don't believe anybody wants to be unhealthy. But I also believe that we sometimes bring sickness on consciously and intentionally. We allow ourselves to get sick even when we know how to avoid it, because we think something else is more important.

There are two types of sicknesses: intentional and unintentional. Unintentional sickness is the main pain in our modern soci-

ety. I have a lot of compassion for that. We do not know how to eat; we do not know how to digest; we do not know how to live; we do not know how to take care of this body. We have not been trained in the basic care and functioning of our human apparatus. We do not know how to pay attention to and to maintain our glands and our nervous system to function on optimal levels. We do not know how to check daily for the inner balance of elimination, absorption, rest, and activity. We do not know the interrelation of the body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Our unawareness is great. That lack of sensitivity, knowledge, and training makes us sick. This is especially true in this polluted environment and in this society which emphasizes drugs, short-term crisis thinking, and which ignores the inner dimensions of the person.

Intentional sickness is when we know our actions or lack of action will lead to sickness, but we continue to do it. I get into intentional sickness often. Do you think a man of my awareness who didn't sleep for eighteen days does not know I'm going to get into trouble? From the day I put myself on the plane until I returned today, I didn't get the chance to sleep. I had a specific, important mission that I had to accomplish. The schedule was heavy: from one meeting to another, discussion after discussion. I wanted to share the technology and psychology of yoga to combat the use of drugs and the wasting of young lives.

Even though the hours were long, I have trained myself consciously and subconsciously to do *sadhana* in the early hours of the morning. I could not skip that foundation and practice.

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I said, "All right. Do not turn anyone away who is in pain or in need." My highest priority was to provide service. I was aware that I was getting sick intentionally. The body can only go to a certain extent. I chose the sickness and the extra

efforts to recover from the sickness. This is an example of intentional sickness.

### **YOGA & GOOD HEALTH**

Kundalini Yoga teaches you the techniques and awareness to stay healthy. You gain a strong immune system, vital glands, a strong nervous system, good circulation, and an awareness of the impact of your habits. This foundation gives you energy and lets you deal with the mental and spiritual facets of your life.

### **CALMING THE MIND**

To utilize yoga in its totality, you have to know what living is, what a relationship is, and what values this life can give. If you know

what you want, then you can find it. Through meditation, you can calm the mind and develop your intuition to recognize what is real and important to you. Without knowledge, are you going to close your eyes and just start walking? Where will you go? You have to know your direction and monitor yourself each step of the way. Your inner compass must tell you your location in relation to your goal. Life has its own innate organization, which you can sense with intuition and intelligence.

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Some people become intellectual instead of intelligent. They argue endlessly with themselves and others and end with questions and doubt. Analysis is good but not if it leads to paralysis in action over

important choices that are known clearly to your heart and soul. That only leads to intellectual insecurity and inaction.

Kundalini Yoga develops your relationship to your mental potential. You learn to use the clarity of the neutral, intuitive, comprehensive mind. You sharpen the intellect and do not use it to create self-doubt or insecurity. You act with grace and commitment from your heart.

## **GETTING OUT OF INSECURITY**

Each student of yoga must confront the mental attitude of insecurity and doubt. Actually, there are two mental styles we can use to go through life. In one style, we act as if everybody were saints until proven thieves. In the other style, we act as if everybody were thieves until proven saints. Which style of life your mind uses depends on the strength and balance of your nervous system. People who live the first style walk through every wave of life with an even attitude. If you ask them, "How are you doing?" they reply, "I am fine." If there are certain dangers they might encounter they say, "I don't care. No danger is going to bite me."

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People who live by the second style are completely different. If you tell them, "The road is clear. It has been checked. It is beautiful," they will say, "I don't believe it. I can't walk further."

This powerful insecurity can create problems and disrupt happiness. The roots of the insecurity often run deep into the core of the elemental personality of a person's consciousness. Meditation, Kundalini Yoga, and White Tantric Yoga all work to disentangle the threads of insecurity from the layers of the subconscious. When these are removed you can deal with things as they actually are rather than as your fears portray them.

In every mental state, the subconscious plays a major role which we are not aware of. We say, "I know my past." Actually, there is no such thing as "my past." That past is only the experience you have in your subconscious mind. You become attached to it, and this prevents you from moving forward in your life. In Kundalini Yoga, we fry this subconscious mind; we make toast out of it and eat it. We have a technical know-how to approach this

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subconscious mind. If you do not clean it out, it sits behind your conscious mind and does mischief. It sits in the back and can spoil the image of human life by repeating experiences which are already in the past, but

which are recorded in that subconscious mind. The subconscious mind must be taken care of and trained with Kundalini Yoga to be an aid in life.

## **THE GAME OF SELF-BELITTLEMENT**

I want to touch on one more pattern that you must confront. We often hold a feeling that we are very limited and inadequate. This is our self-belittlement. A person thinks, "Oh, I, a poor humble self, can't do this. I am a very miserable excuse for a human." We play this game very well. There are three primary ways we play it: to get sympathy from people; to get recognized; and sometimes we play it so real that we actually feel it and are fooled by it. We all do it. It's just a matter of degree. The impact of that play is to

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limit your activity to realize the full capacity of your mental potential and energy. You must transcend and transform your subconscious habit of self-belittlement if you are to expand and experience that your mind has an

infinite horizon. There's actually no end to it.

It is at that horizon of Infinity that we all meet as human beings. Understand this today: there are no two people who are alike. They are different physically, mentally, and historically. They share only one real similarity: The inflow of Infinity can be equalized to the output of Infinity. We can alter and regulate that inner balance of the finite in relation to the unlimited potential. That capacity and quality is the only thing in us which counts. Through that mechanism, which is in the basic structure of our inner nature, we can reach the state of Infinity, bliss, liberation, of *jivan mukht*. Use any of the hundreds of words for that experience of Infinity lived. You can call it anything, it doesn't matter. But it is real, accessible, and an important part of the fulfillment of our human nature and experience.