

The Upper Triad Material

Topical Issue 6.6

Yoga

The Means to Union



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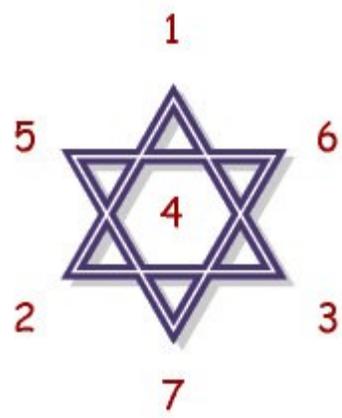
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Chapter 6.6

Yoga



The Means to Union

- Yoga is often considered in the context of Hinduism, but in a broader sense, yoga is more synthetic and does not rely on Hinduism (or any particular religious tradition) for its validity. Yoga by whatever name is simply the means or the practice of various or particular principles in seeking oneness or unification (e.g., personality purification, integration, and alignment with the soul). There are many forms and practices of yoga, some quite specialized and limited in scope (e.g., physical discipline for very particular purposes), some more general and broader in scope (e.g., yogamanas).
- The more inclusive forms of yoga are concerned with the relationship and ultimate union of mind (personality) and soul (spirit), while the more specialized forms and practices are generally preparatory in a particular aspect or dimension (e.g., emotional control). These more inclusive forms draw upon the relevant practices of the more specialized forms and demonstrate the synthesis that is yoga proper.

Yoga

Yoga is the practice of various or particular principles in seeking oneness or unification (e.g., personality purification, integration, and alignment with the soul). There are many forms and practices of yoga, some quite specialized and limited in scope (e.g., physical discipline for very particular purposes), some more general and broader in scope (e.g., yogamanas). The more inclusive forms are concerned with the relationship and ultimate union of mind (personality) and soul (spirit), while the more specialized forms and practices are generally preparatory in a particular aspect or dimension (e.g., emotional control). The more inclusive forms draw upon the relevant practices of the more specialized forms and demonstrate the synthesis that is yoga proper.

Every religion and every spiritual philosophy has its various forms and practices of yoga, whether or not acknowledged in yoga terminology. There are therefore many meanings and implications to yoga, but the Sanskrit word means simply (literally) union or conjunction. In India and elsewhere there are many formal schools and yoga disciplines, under various names. In India, traditionally (in the theosophical sense), there are six darshanas or yoga schools. In the Bhagavad Gita are described three (eighteen) forms of yoga.

In western occult tradition there is a yoga form for each plane of consciousness, each implying and conveying mastery upon that plane. As each plane (or sub-plane) is mastered, it is integrated thereby with lesser planes (sub-planes). Similarly and simultaneously, mastery of each plane (sub-plane) involves mastery of the corresponding level of the human being (e.g., mastery of the astral plane presupposes mastery of the astral body and the desire nature) (by means of purification and refinement (and integration from some higher level (e.g., the concrete mind in the case of mastery of the emotional nature))).

The higher (more proper) forms of yoga involve the practice of meditation as a means of discipline and application, and as a means of spiritual development (liberation) (release of higher forces as qualification of the lower) (expanding the depth and clarity of vision (realization) (understanding) (unification) (perception of truth)). The lesser (more specialized, coarser) yoga forms and practices can be

dangerous if not practiced properly (sensibly). Without spiritual motive and common sense (an intuitive sense of appreciation and balance), the lesser forms are limited in their potential to contribute to the evolutionary wave. The dangers come from the destructive effects of prematurely-released occult force manifesting through unprepared (relatively coarse) vehicles. A premature flaming forth of the inner fires can literally destroy the personality (body). The higher forms are much safer. The higher forms are more inclusive and therefore balanced and the higher forms incorporate safeguards and attract those who are relatively prepared. The higher, more general forms can however be applied along particular (specialized) lines but the overall spiritual nature and quality of training at that stage is generally sufficient to temper the occult forces (i.e., with understanding comes control).

The higher forms and yoga practices involve the tempering (qualification) of physical, emotional, and mental activity. In the resulting quiet (purified, refined state) comes (by degrees) understanding and power for self-control and self-mastery. In the final analysis, yoga is the path of self-realization and is quite synonymous with the spiritual path proper. But one cannot afford (spiritually) to be attached to the lesser forms of yoga. With proper (deeper, broader) spiritual motive, the lesser forms are seen as preparatory and lead to the higher forms (without such perception they become ends-in-themselves).

† Commentary No. 582

Yogamanas

Yogamanas is a generalized form of yoga involving principally the mind and the mental principle (manas), with the mastery of the mind and its nature (and therefore its domain) as its objective. Yogamanas requires that the candidate have a reasonably complete control of the physical and emotional (astral) nature (i.e., that all problems of temperament have been overcome) and that the candidate have a reasonably complete development of the mind. This presupposes the requisite levels of clarity (purification), the integration of the personality nature, and the sublimation of the sexual nature.

Although the means and methods (and names) of the various schools of yogamanas vary somewhat, the objectives and essential methods remain in common. The objectives are simply self-mastery and self-realization (and the implied realization of a path of service) (these objectives being purported by many various (preliminary) schools but achieved through only a few) (the delusions of false realizations being a major impediment). The essential (necessary) processes involved include the development of observational discipline (nature), the development of proper meditative discipline (abilities) and a contemplative nature, the cultivation of freedom from opinions of any kind and freedom from attachment to values (not to mention attachment per se), the cultivation of freedom from mundane absorption, and (ultimately) the achievement of freedom from thinking (i.e., self-realization implies buddhi and dependence upon the abstract mind and not the concrete mind and processes of thinking).

Yogamanas does not require a teacher (none of the advanced forms of yoga require teachers); in fact, a teacher (other than the soul) is of no practical use in any of the advanced disciplines, for the student must necessarily face and overcome the progressive (successive) deceptions and illusions of the mind (the not-self) alone. Of course the soul is by this time affiliated with a particular ashram on soul levels and the process of self-realization is viewed as part of a group context. The great awakening (of soul consciousness (of conscious recognition of soul consciousness)) is a direct consequence of cultivated humility, of overcoming the false mind (the ego) and its separativeness (independence).

Yogamanas is often referred to as the yoga of silence, since conservation (for proper application) is one of the major precepts (e.g., the conservation of speech, the conservation of sex force, the conservation of thinking, etc). A person who likes to talk is ill-prepared for spiritual work, let alone for yogamanas (and would necessarily be deferred). Many of the problems to be overcome through yogamanas are the solutions to previous stages and achievements (i.e., a preponderance of thinking as a means of rising above the astral nature becomes an impediment to overcoming the mental nature). Yogamanas does not involve knowledge per se, but, rather, involves mental processes that prepare the mind for realization and higher (more abstract) exercises which inhibit the ability of the mind to function independently. Thus the person who likes to think is

almost as ill-suited for yogamanas as one who likes feelings. More properly, one thinks as one needs to, with the preferred disposition being contemplative detachment (freedom from thinking).

Freedom from thinking is by far the most potent form of positive mental activity. In the realization of silence (the cultivation of yogamanas) come the energies and forces of the soul (which are the true energies and forces of the lifewave) and the very subtle conscious (albeit non-thought-provoking) recognition of the soul.

† Commentary No. 1113

Three Stages of Yoga

The spiritual path of more deliberate evolution in consciousness may be viewed in a number of different but complementary ways. One perspective focuses on the three formal stages (probationary path, path of discipleship, and path of initiation); another focuses on successive mastery of the various levels of consciousness (dense physical, etheric, emotional or astral, lower (concrete) mental (intellectual)). Yet another (practical) perspective (that of yoga) involves the three stages of physical, psychological, and spiritual development (mastery).

These are, in effect, the three stages of yoga, where yoga is perceived in the broader context (union and the process through which union is achieved). The first stage is the preliminary stage of physical discipline and purification (which also facilitates emotional refinement and self-control at that level). The second stage is the intermediate stage of psychological growth and refinement. And the third or highest stage is that of spiritual deepening leading to self-realization. One must necessarily have mastered the preliminaries (physical and emotional discipline and purification) before one can effectively progress through the intermediate stage, and likewise, one must necessarily have mastered the intermediate (tempering of the ego and the intellect) before one can effectively progress through the higher stage. To embark upon the "higher" work without the necessary prerequisites inevitably leads either to failure or delusion (through self-appeasement). One tends to quickly reach a plateau and be artificially contented, unless one has actually done the necessary work and is prepared (and determined) to go forward.

Many who perceive or embark upon the physical discipline of yoga fail to realize that it is just the first step along the way, that it is merely preliminary and necessary to further work. Until the physical body is conquered (mastered) (disciplined) it is virtually impossible to make progress on the next level (emotional). Yoga as a physical discipline is one of the various techniques for effectively mastering the physical body. In this sense, preliminary yoga involves both carefully structured exercise and properly cultivated diet, resulting in greater (optimal) physical health and (etheric) vitality. But this is not (properly) an end in itself, but simply facilitates emotional growth (tempering and refining the emotions) so that the student can progress to the intermediate stage.

The real challenge would seem to be at the intermediate levels, where the mind (intellect) (ego) (the personality as a whole) must be conquered and transcended. This is where yoga (and other (proper) techniques which are merely alternative forms of yoga by some other name) is (are) fully exercised. The human personality in its various aspects is (in practice, not so much in principle) rather complicated. The personality naturally resists any attempts at discipline, refinement, transcendence, etc., because it feels threatened (of losing itself in the process). But as yoga practice is applied properly (intelligently), the diverse elements (forces) of personality are progressively understood, tempered, and transcended.

Not all spiritual students must devote a great deal of time and attention to (physical) yoga practice in the current life. If one has previously made such an investment of time and energy, and has successfully mastered the physical and emotional domains, then it is relatively easy for such a student to recapitulate and move on to the next stage. But the work (physical-emotional-preliminary and psychological-intermediate) must be done at some point.

Section 6.61



Approaches to Yoga

- There are many approaches to yoga. Each is suited to a particular need and temperament. None are properly exclusive. All contribute to union with the divine life, through preparation and cultivation of the needed character and abilities.

Seven Schools of Yoga 1

Seven Schools of Yoga by Ernest Wood describes seven traditional approaches or paths and practices of yoga, incidentally demonstrating their correlation with the seven rays and the three rays. In this sense, the three major rays focus in consciousness and involve raja yoga in its general sense, and raja yoga (1), karma or buddhi yoga (2), and jnana yoga (3), respectively. Similarly, the four minor rays focus on form and involve hatha yoga in its general sense, and hatha yoga (4), kundalini or laya yoga (5), bhakti yoga (6), and mantra yoga (7), respectively.

Yoga implies union with the divine life and the path(s) leading to that union and self-mastery. The lower schools (hatha yoga) involve predominantly external or lower means and methods and are considered preparatory, while the higher schools (raja yoga) involve predominantly internal means and methods and are considered (relatively) more advanced. The lower schools involve methods that are valuable for some people in conditioning the form and overcoming the lower aspects of the coarse personality (e.g., in the sense of self-discipline and purification). However, the lower schools involve particular methods which are not well-suited to all forms and which are relatively dangerous for the untutored. Moreover, for one who is already self-disciplined and adhering to the preliminary discipline, the benefits of the lower practices are questionable. Indeed, those who are able to accomplish the preliminary discipline without resorting to hatha yoga in any of its forms are better off in the sense that they are not distracted by the focus on form (and personality) that is inherent in the lower practices.

The higher schools (methods) do not require teachers nor do they involve potentially dangerous practices, but they do still require a measure of common sense on behalf of the personality, utilize the uplifted (and qualified) mind (primarily), and call upon the higher self rather than the ego or personality. Furthermore, a reasonably qualified aspirant need not rely on the hatha yoga that correlates to his or her personality ray, but, rather, should rely on one or another of the raja yogas utilizing particular techniques relating to his or her

rays. Or in other words, there are aspects of each of the seven yogas that can be effectively utilized by the serious (and reasonably qualified) student.

Raja yoga (1) is the yoga of Patanjali (and the first ray) and involves freedom (self-mastery) through will, first through the (preliminary) kriya yoga and then through the ashtanga or eight limbs of yoga practice. The object of kriya yoga is the weakening of the five afflictions (which are avidya (ignorance), asmita (egotism), raga (liking), dwesha (disliking), and abhinivesha (clinging to bodily life)). Once effectively weakened, the five afflictions can be more properly overcome in subsequent stages.

Karma or buddhi yoga (2) involves unity (self-mastery) through feeling. This yoga of the second ray involves love (buddhi) and work (karma), wisdom (buddhi) and duty (dharma). In this sense dharma means "where one stands," and this (in embracing this concept) implies that the disciple (spiritual student) has achieved some measure of spiritual poise, recognizes his or her place upon the path, and is content to do whatever is before one to do (and to work (perform service) with whatever measure of wisdom there is within the consciousness). Jnana yoga (3) involves unity through consideration (thought) (understanding) (the seeking of truth) and is the yoga of the third ray. In a sense, it is this jnana yoga that deals in its various ways with maya, glamour, and illusion and leads eventually to their successive overcoming.

† Commentary No. 838

Seven Schools of Yoga 2

Hatha yoga (4) proper involves the regulation of breathing (and in the higher sense leads to energy projection and qualification). Laya yoga (5) involves the chakras or energy centers and the force of kundalini (and in the higher sense leads to conscious working with various energies and their forces (and their transformation)). Bhakti yoga (6) involves love and the external aspect of divinity (God) [while buddhi yoga (2) involves love and the internal aspect of divinity (God)] and is, in the lower sense, the invocation or calling forth to God, and in the higher sense, the evocation of rapport with God (the soul) and the qualification of the lower self that that implies. Mantra yoga (7) involves the repetition or proper sounding of various mantras for self-qualification (and in the

higher sense forms the basis for occult work). In the lower sense, these hatha yogas and their methods can become ends in themselves, while in the higher sense, each contributes some methodology and practices of value to the raja yogi.

However, the raja yogi avoids the extremes of any of the hatha yogas. And the raja yogi puts the lower practices in the context of ways to facilitate the higher work without their becoming distractions (i.e., without the entanglement of the personality). Employing primarily one or another of the three raja yogas or rays (and associated internal focus and methods) and employing secondarily one or another (or both) of the other raja yogas (and specific practices of the four hatha yogas and their external methods as needed or appropriate), the raja yogi proceeds upon his or her own path (within the context of the one path). In this (higher) sense, yoga embraces both the individual path to self-mastery and the simultaneous entering into the pervasive divine life.

The real distinction between the higher yogas and the lower yogas is the reliance upon the soul in the former case and the reliance upon the personality in the latter case. Raja yoga involves the overcoming of the personality and the alignment of that personality with the overshadowing and indwelling soul or higher (divine) self. Hatha yoga initially involves a strengthening of the personality as it is integrated. Then hatha yoga involves gradually qualifying the personality (through intelligently focusing upon the personality). And finally, hatha yoga leads to the weakening of the personality (through the preliminary or kriya yoga) and the higher yogas. The various methods of hatha yoga may need to be applied over the course of many years or even (many) lifetimes, while by the time one has achieved some measure of success in the lower discipline, the raja yogas can be embraced more readily.

On the other hand, when one embraces the higher self and the spiritual path proper, one becomes the path and service dominates the quality and character of the individual dharma (which means that individual progress is subordinated to the work at hand). Individual progress then becomes more subjective and qualitative (and more or less incidental to the work) and yet (while not readily apparent to the senses) (and from a higher perspective) "progress" is thereby accelerated.

In the final analysis there are many paths within the one path, and each aspirant must necessarily find the preliminary path that is the more natural one for his or her own temperament. As the student develops and evolves over a number of lifetimes, the experience is broadened and deepened to include aspects of other paths, until, eventually, the disciple has achieved some measure of experience and ability on or with each of the seven rays and their various methods.

† Commentary No. 1195

Approaches to Yoga

All of the preliminary approaches to yoga involve schools and teachers of some kind or another, and are necessary, but as the student progresses through the various stages and levels of yoga practice, over the course of several (or many) lifetimes, the student must eventually and necessarily become more and more reliant on inner, higher guidance. The role of the various schools and teachers, is, properly, to facilitate preparation and to provide (proper) encouragement.

The intermediate and advanced stages of yoga practice rely on the preliminary work and are necessarily more difficult, and they are more a matter of the student learning the techniques based on inner experience rather than outer teachings. In the broader sense, yoga encompasses the physical disciplines that most people think of as yoga, the psychology of yoga which extends the practice from merely physical to a broader context, and finally a spiritual dimension that does not properly rely on (but does not preclude) any religious practice.

Yoga is very much more than it appears to be to most people, and there are many approaches, many traditions. A proper yoga school embraces all three dimensions. Its teachers take into consideration the character, temperament, and values of each student and adapt or tailor the process and techniques appropriately. The various racial forms are different in subtle ways as well as superficially, and so yoga techniques that are suitable for one racial form may not work as well for another. Much depends on the previous training and abilities of the student. For some, the physical discipline is very necessary as it lays a foundation for more serious work. But for others the physical discipline has already been achieved (in earlier stages) and the lessons incorporated so that

less physical approaches are needed. The physical emphasis produces strength on emotional and concrete mental levels as well, facilitating refinement on those levels and leading to integration and allowing subsequent alignment. But once one is past a certain point, the physical focus must necessarily pass below the threshold of consciousness. One does not then neglect the physical, but one simply emphasizes the emotional and concrete mental aspects (work).

Most approaches to yoga utilize some physical discipline and meditation practice. Yoga is, ultimately, a matter of higher union and is common to both Eastern and Western traditions. Thus yoga practice involves various stages of preparation and leads to the techniques that enable one to go within without the encumbrances of worldly (ego) focus. Proper discipline without meditation is merely healthy but not necessarily progressively so. Meditation without discipline is likewise relatively ineffective. But discipline and meditation, properly balanced, with an understanding of the path (process) and goals, lead more effectively to the higher, deeper practices. In other words one can be involved in either or both discipline and meditation merely superficially, but real progress occurs where both are embraced, and neither are embraced superficially.

So. Depending on the framework, there may be a single approach (hatha yoga), three stages (physical, psychological, and spiritual), seven schools (raja, karma or buddhi, jnana, hatha, kundalini or laya, bhakti, and mantra yoga), or the three and eighteen (three times six) of the Bhagavad Gita. And there are, ultimately, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. In some sense these distinctions are helpful, in another they are entirely unnecessary.

Section 6.62



Aspects of Yoga

- There are many aspects of yoga, many philosophical ideas of spiritual import, and many practical considerations. These include advaita, ahamkara, the antahkarana, astavimoksa, the three gunas, kamarupa, sadguru, sangha, and svadharma.

Astavimoksa

According to one particular branch or aspect of metaphysical philosophy, there are eight stages of meditation leading to deliverance (astavimoksa). These stages of meditation are progressive, with each stage leading in turn to the next, over a course of (many) years or (several) lifetimes of meditative discipline and training. One might actually consider a given stage for quite some time before the intended realization of that stage is obtained. In subsequent incarnations, one generally recapitulates the earlier effort, beginning (proper) meditation in earnest at the nearest fulfilled stage.

According to this tradition (astavimoksa), the eight stages are (1) attachment to form, (2) detachment from form, (3) meditation on purity, (4) realization of infinity (boundless immateriality), (5) realization of wisdom (boundless knowledge), (6) realization of nothingness, (7) realization of being, and (8) realization of not being (beyond being). Each of the stages indicates a condition of bondage (distraction) (absorption) (limitation), the power (potential) and means to overcome or transcend that condition, and a conveyance (transference) to the next stage as the needed realization is achieved.

Attachment to form is an opportunity for the examination of form and the realization of its coarseness (impurity), leading (eventually) to detachment. Detachment is another opportunity for the examination of form and the (greater) realization of its coarseness. The first case (stage) might be considered the realization of attachment, while the second stage might be considered realization of coarseness proper leading to refinement and acceptance of form (in its place). These first two stages also illustrate the paradox of focusing the consciousness while attached to the object of focus, and the more subtle paradox of focusing (not focusing) the consciousness while not attached to the object of focus. The lifting of consciousness above identification with form leads naturally to the intended detachment, but these processes are not simple in practice. Detachment from form leads naturally to meditation on purity and the realization of desirelessness. Desirelessness permits proper vision and realization of the infinite (boundless) range of immaterial existence. Realization

of boundless immateriality leads to wisdom (boundless knowledge). Wisdom leads to the realization of nothingness.

From the realization of nothingness there follows a "realization of the state wherein there is neither thought nor absence of thought" (being) and (relatively) ultimately to a "realization of the state wherein the two aggregates, feeling and ideation, are entirely eliminated" (being beyond being). These stages of being and beyond being refer to levels of consciousness entirely beyond the normal (personality) consciousness (corresponding to buddhi and atma, respectively), while the realization of wisdom and the realization of nothingness correspond to utilization of abstract mind (manas) and intuition (buddhi) by the lower mind (or at least through the lower mind). The earlier meditation and realization relate to the integration of the personality and the alignment of the personality with the soul.

The eight stages (of meditation leading to realization) refer as well to the life and activity of the spiritual student, since upon the spiritual path the meditation work cannot be effectively separated from the personality consciousness (which is after all a necessary instrument) and the relationships (experience and expression) of that personality in the (objective) world of manifestation. Thus some element or aspect of service parallels each of the eight stages and is an ingredient in the intended realization.

† Commentary No. 789

Advaita

Advaita is the notion or perspective of non-dualism. It is the deeply ingrained (habitual) perspective of duality (separateness) that engenders separateness and separativeness and tends to sustain the grand illusion (of separation from God and of the relative separateness of the various lives). Advaita is a point-of-view that counters the grand illusion and encourages the realization of the truth (which is that all lives are one) and subsequent practical manifestation. Although the earth (evolutionary field) is subject to the fourth ray of harmony through conflict (which encourages the sense of dualism), one must overcome

that illusion with the realization that all conflict is internal and therefore eminently resolvable.

The natural illusion of separate existence (independence) is rooted in the materialism (material coarseness) (maya) of the body (form) and compounded by glamour (emotional bias) and (concrete mental) illusion. The principal human proponent of duality is the ego, which generally and naturally seeks to protect its own (apparently (but not truly) separate or independent) existence. Thus dualism is a matter of appearance, while advaita is a matter (quality) of truth. Dualism is manifested in the sense of separateness or distinctness that most human beings feel one from another and in the sense of separateness that most feel with regard to God (who is generally viewed as separate and greater). Dualism promotes the sense of differentiation (differentiatedness) and exclusion, while advaita promotes the sense of unity (integration) and inclusion. Advaita is the general solution to the ego and of all of the natural egoistic (selfish and self-centered) tendencies.

The concept of “looking out for oneself” is a notorious example of dualistic thinking and feeling. In the discrete perspective (dualism), cooperation and collaboration is engendered or rationalized by perceived mutual advantage, whereas in the integral perspective (advaita), cooperation and collaboration are not limited by self-interest but, rather, are engendered by a realization of inherent oneness. God lives through all lives. If one is living in harmony (oneness) with God, then one is living through all lives, and the distinction of each life being or having a separate existence is revealed as folly. Contrast is merely a perspective and conflict is inherently illusory (and both are overcome in advaita).

Advaita is inherently consistent with the notion of karma and even clarifies and broadens the sense of dharma. Karma is both individual and collective, but essentially wholly interdependent. The karma of one is part of the karma of all. The good (or evil) that one does (and the consequent learning or realization (progress in consciousness)) affects all, since one is inherently part of the collective consciousness and karma. The spiritual student (one of dharma) serves the collective cause (not of humanity or of any special interest group, but of God) (that collective cause being evolution in consciousness).

Noble activities (e.g., service to humanity) are fundamentally consequences of advaita. The pursuit of self-interest is generally spiritually and collectively counterproductive. Noble (relatively selfless) pursuits are generally much more effective (spiritually and collectively). In helping others (via encouragement rather than imposition) one is helping oneself in the sense that one is part of the collective whole (God). But one is never helping oneself (in this sense) exclusively or at the expense of others. Motive is crucial to proper dharma in the sense that service must be sincere and selflessly motivated to be true service and therefore in fulfillment of dharma.

† Commentary No. 830

Svadharmā

Svadharmā is defined as one's own dharma, or the law of one's being. In the most proper sense it is the will of the soul as it qualifies the purpose and associated responsibility of the personality (incarnation). In the lower sense it is the conscious relative understanding of the mind (personality) with respect to that qualification. Thus one's understanding may not be entirely consistent with the actual expectation of the soul.

Responsibility (dharma) begins with karma, as one is ever responsible for (facing) the consequences of one's actions (feelings) (thoughts). When one approaches the (spiritual) path and to the extent that one [the soul] embraces (is embraced by) the path, then one's dharma begins to overshadow one's karma (not only by virtue of one's attention being focussed more upon the path but by virtue of relative karmic fulfillment (i.e., one must be relatively free from karma (karmic complications and/or distractions)) in order to properly approach the path and function effectively thereupon). As one's mind and personality begin to function within the framework of the soul's qualification, one is naturally drawn more and more into one's own spiritual work (svadharmā) [which is simply one's role in the group dharma].

Those (the bulk of humanity) who are neither upon nor approaching the path have no svadharmā. Their lives are determined almost entirely by a combination of karma and self-will (in the lower, self-centered sense and in its various forms (e.g., desire)). One can still be noble and involved in worthwhile

activities, but without the induced sanction of the overshadowing (indwelling) soul, these activities, however noble, are nonetheless preliminary (preparatory) and without svadharma. On the other hand, a false svadharma can emerge from the stronger personality (ego) that becomes (superficially) self-consciously a law unto itself. This false svadharma must ultimately be tempered (eliminated) by humility and the realization of one's proper place in the evolutionary scheme. Independent activity, however apparently noble, simply does not contribute to the fulfillment of dharma.

Physically isolated or otherwise, anyone upon the path or approaching the path in response to the call of the soul can begin to participate in the group dharma to the extent of one's abilities and awareness (conscious and unconscious understanding). As the mind (personality) achieves some measure of rapport with the soul, the awareness and realization of svadharma is induced (enhanced). Each has a role to play, albeit no one has a critical role to play but all are essential nonetheless. As that rapport (insight) improves so can one participate more consciously in the dharma of the path and in svadharma.

The real contribution of svadharma to the waking-consciousness of the spiritual aspirant and disciple is a sense of appropriateness in activity (service). Svadharma provides the underlying motivational qualification for one's spiritual activities and temperament. Svadharma provides guidance as to what is needed, what is appropriate, and what is not, for oneself (not for others) and for all of the waking life and consciousness. In a sense, svadharma is a combination of dharma and conscience, of the active manifestation of the love-wisdom of the soul as perceived by the mind and heart of the responsive personality. It is a measure of one's true achievement (upon the path), as svadharma indicates the standards that one (the soul) expects of the lower self, in practice (spiritual discipline (quality) (character) (temperament)) and service. It thereby provides a conscious incentive to live in accordance with that higher expectation and quality (dharma).

Ahamkara 1

Ahamkara in the lower sense is the so-called “one enemy” that must be eventually overcome by all who would successfully tread the spiritual path. Ahamkara refers to the sense of “I” and “me” and “mine” and is the principal sustaining power for separateness (duality) and separateness. Some of the keys to overcoming this illusion are brotherhood and detachment.

The concept of brotherhood (the one soul of humanity) (the unity of all life) is relatively easy to accept, but relatively difficult to actually embrace and to put into practice. Practically all of the human experience to date has fostered a sense of separateness, one from another, and all of man’s normal sense-perception processes support that unconscious sense of individuality and separateness. Consequently, the human lower self (personality) has developed a sense of independent self-existence and tends to cling to that sense at all costs. Consideration of the concept of brotherhood is a necessary first step, and embracing the concept in practice is a necessary second step (e.g., through unconditional kindness, benevolence, etc.), but even embracing brotherhood in practice does not suffice for overcoming the illusion (ahamkara in this lower sense).

The concept of detachment is also relatively easy to accept in principle, but relatively difficult to embrace in practice. Detachment implies effective non-attachment to material things, effective non-attachment (non-distraction) to (by) sense-impressions (desire) (feelings) (sensations), effective non-concern for status and other egoic considerations (e.g., attribution), etc. The effective combination of brotherhood and detachment, in practice, is even more relatively difficult, as one must (effectively) have (practice) compassion (brotherhood) and consideration (respect) while remaining undisturbed (spiritually poised) and detached (unentangled in personal energies (glamour)). But even this, while necessary, does not suffice.

What does suffice, in addition to these practical considerations (brotherhood and detachment in intelligent practice) is the attainment of the state or condition in consciousness in which there is no sense of personal or individual

(separated) existence or any sense of ownership. This state cannot be achieved or attained without considerable spiritual growth and qualification, nor without considerable expansion of one's focus of consciousness to embrace the "flow" of life as it courses through all of humanity and all of life. It is not that the individuality is suppressed in any sense, but that the individuality is not englamoured by his or her sense of (lower) selfness and that that individuality is clearly overshadowed by a sense of participation in a flow greater than that selfness.

One must therefore rise above the pettiness of the lower self and entirely overcome the sense of (separateness in) time and space. Identification with one's own individuality precludes this ascension. Identification with one's higher self in the sense that that self participates in the one soul (life) certainly helps, but one must also project as part of that greater life into and through all other lives, i.e., to actually sense the livingness through others without any sense that those others are others. In order to do this (properly) one has to let go of one's own ideas and see things in the broadest possible context. Any sense of (individual) selfness terminates and/or precludes this "higher" experience. In short, one progresses from individuality through participation to being. In so doing one does not lose one's individuality but one goes above and beyond it.

† Commentary No. 881

Ahamkara 2

While ahamkara in the lower sense refers to the "I-ness" of the personality or ego, that sense of separateness and self-centeredness that must be ultimately dissolved or overcome as the focus of consciousness is shifted to the higher self, ahamkara in the higher sense refers to the "I-ness" of the individuality or soul, which is a very different sense altogether.

This higher sense of individuality is very, very subtle. It is not so much a matter of individuality as it is a dim sense of individuality within a much stronger sense of collective consciousness or being. This higher individuality is not separate nor is it separative. It conveys no sense of separateness nor expresses any separativeness. It is a non-self-centered rapport with all souls as

one soul, without completely losing the sense of individual distinction, but that distinction becomes more and more subtle as the soul progresses. The higher sense of individuality conveys no real or apparent "sense" of individuality.

This "I-ness" of the soul is the product of nirvana, that sense of losing oneself in the plenum of the all (nothingness in the fullest sense). It is the identification of the individual soul with the one life and the direct participation in that one life as it thrills through all lives everywhere. Such a soul (consciousness) knows no distinction between itself and the lives through which it lives. Even where that expression is localized in consciousness (i.e., directed to or through particular lives), the distinction between oneself and those through whom one is working is very subtle indeed. Although one is thereby conscious of being those through whom one is working, those through whom one is working are not thereby necessarily conscious of the one nor of any distinction within the one.

This participation in consciousness is a matter of rapport between souls (within the one soul), and may be expressed through the corresponding personalities, but it does not constitute any imposition upon those corresponding personalities because the respective souls are participating willingly and responsively in the process (even if the lower expression is oblivious). If one works on personality levels, and merely projects one's selfness upon or through another, however sincerely, that is imposition and a grave transgression of occult propriety (law). But if one works on soul levels, there is no possibility of imposition.

Within the oneness of the soul, one is linked to and through all lives within (and to some extent beyond) the planetary scheme. One can project one's focus of consciousness (more properly, being) to any life or group of lives, at will, and perceive the experience of that life or group of lives, without regard to spatial or temporal limitations. One simply participates consciously and willingly (localized or otherwise) within the framework of the flow of that one life. In this sense, one is God, as one lives through God to an extent comparable to that God living through oneself. One is nonetheless subordinated to the God-life without "feeling" subordinated, because one is participating therein as God. But there is therein no "sense" of self either, nor any sense of individuality except in the most subtle sense of peripheral awareness of what one is (was) or from where one comes (came). Where there arises even a glimmer of (expression of) separateness or selfness (individuality), there is an immediate loss of the

higher consciousness (connection) and reversion to the lower consciousness (personality) (ego). One thereby learns how to achieve (allow) and maintain (sustain) the (awareness of) higher rapport or ahamkara.

† Commentary No. 901

Antahkarana

The personality or lower self (on physical, emotional, and concrete mental levels) is ever linked to the soul or higher self (on abstract mental, intuitional (buddhic), and atmic levels). But for virtually all of humanity, that link is indirect in the sense that the waking consciousness has no conscious awareness or responsiveness to the soul and in the sense that the soul is therefore not concerned with the personality life (except in the general, assimilative sense). Consequently, the “presence” of higher life is only dimly and indirectly (unconsciously) perceived by the vast majority of humanity and virtually all of humanity live and work in this world asleep to the higher nature and the reality of God.

Those who approach the spiritual path and thereby begin to discover the higher reality for themselves embark upon the way with increased responsibilities and new-found objectives. One of the objectives of the aspirant or spiritual student is to build the antahkarana. The antahkarana is “the path or bridge between the higher and lower minds, between the higher self and the personality. This is built by the aspirant himself of mental matter. It is built out of the awareness of and response to higher spiritual energies.” The disciple is, then, in this sense, one who has developed this bridge in consciousness and in whom there is a direct flow of quality (consciousness) between the soul and the higher (more responsive) aspects of the personality.

The antahkarana is built almost indirectly and incidentally, as the aspirant focuses attention on the path and associated activities (service and self-development). As the student overcomes the materialism and egoism of the personality, as he or she refines the personality and integrates its aspects into a single, responsive whole, the antahkarana is naturally evoked into being and begins to serve as a channel for the higher qualification. The soul remains

unconcerned with the personality as a personality, but is increasingly “present” in the sense of more direct qualification. As the antahkarana is built, the student undergoes a natural transformation and acceleration of nature (character, temperament, and values) and associated activities.

The antahkarana is not only a link within oneself, between the higher and lower aspects of the person. The antahkarana is also a bridge between the personal individuality (waking consciousness of the personality) and humanity and all of life, by virtue of the fact of the unity of the soul on its level (i.e., the individuality of the soul is simply an apparent (not particularly real) localization in a broader consciousness).

The keys to the building of the antahkarana are intelligent (higher) aspiration, meditation, and service. The lower (devotional) aspiration builds the foundation for the antahkarana, but the antahkarana per se cannot be built without the higher (integrated) aspiration to provide the causal flow (momentum), without intelligent meditation to stabilize and qualify the whole (lower) self, and genuine service to evoke (warrant) the interest of the soul. The antahkarana is first and foremost a bridge of consciousness for energy conveyance, as the soul begins to more directly qualify the personality as an instrument for sharing the higher energy. This is all part of the evolutionary process, as encouragement for humanity is conveyed primarily through those spiritual workers who are able to respond more or less consciously to that higher qualification and actually radiate the love and light of the higher self on lower (concrete mental and emotional) levels. Thus the antahkarana is the bridge of light and love (and life in the higher sense).

Sadguru

“The sadguru is the teacher or guru within. Any sense of an external guru is, if true, principally a reflection of one’s inner guru.” Many insist that a guru is necessary to one’s spiritual development or unfoldment, that one cannot either safely or effectively embrace the ancient wisdom or spiritual practice without such an advisor. However, this notion is an indication of the first (more historical) stage or phase of spiritual approach where reliance upon a teacher may be necessary in order for the student to develop right focus.

An (external) teacher may be helpful or appropriate in a number of ways, particularly where the student lacks sufficient will (or discrimination) or lacks the inner resources to proceed effectively, and particularly in the absence of widespread availability of philosophical (spiritual) (theosophical) materials. But there are also dangers inherent in external teacher relationships, e.g., in the student’s lack of discrimination with regard to selection or acceptance of a teacher, in the student’s reliance on the external teacher at the expense of reliance on the divinity within, in the potential undermining of the student’s ability to think for oneself, etc. Also there is the factor of glamour, which often colors the whole process. Yet even so, there are times and circumstances in which some measure of reliance upon an external teacher is appropriate.

More properly, in the esoteric philosophy (in the second and third stages of spiritual approach), there is no reliance on external teachers or gurus, although all whom we meet upon the path are considered to be teachers en passant (i.e., non-authoritative teachers from whom or with whom there is potential learning, yet ever with self-responsibility). With the widespread availability of the basic and intermediate teachings and with an emerging sense of discretion (discrimination) and self-reliance, it is more appropriate for most people upon the path to look inwardly for (impersonal) guidance, from the soul and conscience rather than from external teachers or through reliance on the (superficial) intellect.

In the second stage there is a natural and emerging self-reliance in the lower sense of reliance on one’s personal (lower, superficially independent) resources

(ego, intellect, mind, personality), while in the third stage there is a more natural self-reliance in the higher sense of humility and subordination to the (wisdom and quality of the) soul, as the strength of personality (ego) (mind) (intellect) yields to the greater strength (depth and breadth) (impersonality) (wisdom and quality) of the higher self. The student must learn to make his own decisions and accept responsibility for the consequences. Ultimately, one must learn to accept the inner authority as the only authority. Sadguru is the light of the soul as embraced by the mind and heart of the personality. It is the conscience or reservoir of assimilated experience (knowledge, understanding, wisdom) that resides on causal (soul) levels (atma-buddhi-manas). It is the voice of the silence, the quality of (higher) consciousness that speaks without sound or thought or words. "There is no authority higher than Truth."

And yet, there is great difficulty in beginning (learning) to listen to the God-voice within (and learning to discern that God-voice from the pretenses of the ego-intellect). Therefore intelligent association with other spiritual students and teachers can be quite helpful in the sense of the continual reminding of oneself of one's (higher) self. In this sense, sadguru emerges in the context of sangha (spiritual community) which leads in turn to sadguru.

† Commentary No. 927

Sangha

Sangha refers to the community and companionship of people on the spiritual path. In earlier cycles sangha was an important means of conveyance of knowledge concerning the path and its associated disciplines. Now that much of the basic and intermediate "knowledge" is widely available through published media, sangha is more so a means of encouragement for understanding and wisdom and for awakening from the sleep (absorption) of the waking-consciousness (i.e., from personality-centeredness).

The problem is, in part, a matter of the inherent limitations of the intellect in passing from knowledge through understanding to wisdom. One can learn from the various "teachings" and one can grow (understand) to some extent from the various spiritual practices, but to do so "on one's own" is a more difficult

undertaking (yet, if successful, brings subsequently greater results) than to do so in the context of a spiritual community. On the other hand, living in an isolated spiritual community does not address the need of the spiritual student to work within humanity and to develop and grow in the context of the world (i.e., self-mastery cannot be achieved in isolation, but only in the context of the stress of the world) (e.g., the ability to meditate effectively in an environment of isolated peacefulness does not prepare the student for meditation under more difficult circumstances (until one can meditate effectively in the most difficult of circumstances (maintaining one's spiritual poise at all times), then one has not really mastered one's circumstances)).

Consequently, sangha is more properly viewed in terms of a community of encouragement within the broader community of worldly distraction (and service). The student should continue to live in one's place in the world (in accordance with one's karma and dharma), all the while practicing the spiritual discipline, yet periodically (as often as daily) withdrawing from the world into the encouragement of the spiritual community (and the greater encouragement of the soul). In this way the student serves as an expression (extension) of the higher forces (quality) within humanity, yet "enjoys" continual renewal.

A proper spiritual community offers the continual if not continuous encouragement for awakening, responsiveness to the higher self, and spiritual adherence (practice) (service). On the other hand, being merely associated with a spiritual community in which everyone is asleep in waking-consciousness affords no real encouragement for awakening (i.e., personality-centered communities, however sincerely and spiritually motivated (incidentally useful), from the higher perspective (of being awake) merely foster continued personality-centeredness). A proper spiritual community involves continual "pressure" toward awakening (and toward sustaining the members in their awakened state) (i.e., fellowship with people who are "awake" is a continual encouragement toward one's own awakening (of course, one still needs to be responsive)).

Physical proximity, while it may be convenient and while it strengthens the "form" of encouragement, is not entirely necessary to sangha. The community of the path is more properly viewed as a collective consciousness of all upon the way (and the telepathic rapport of one's own particular affiliation (group) within

the overall consciousness of the path). Consequently, one can draw encouragement from one's subjective association at any (all) time(s). The key is self-remembering and the extent to which the spiritual community helps to evoke that awareness.

† Commentary No. 1114

Three Gunas and Ego

The ego is an artificial entity produced by immersion of the human being in the material worlds, compounded by delusion of the senses and identification of manifesting consciousness with the (merely apparent) separateness of the human personality. It can function only at the personality levels (physical-emotional-mental) and is incapable of transcending the limitations implied by manifestation in these lower worlds. It serves a purpose, facilitating experience and expression for the relatively undeveloped, but for the student to pass successfully from the psychological stage to the spiritual stage, the ego must be progressively tempered and eventually dissolved.

But the nature of ego varies considerably according to the evolutionary circumstances (progress in consciousness) of the student. Being of the material worlds, the ego is subject to the three gunas, being comprised of these three elements, in varying degrees, and reflecting (embracing) (exhibiting) the quality of consciousness thus far achieved. All three gunas are therefore present, but one or another of the gunas may actually dominate the conditioning (ego) of the personality. Thus egos may be distinctly sattvic, rajasic, or tamasic (or less distinctly so in some cases).

Tamas is a matter of inertia, of illusion, ignorance, the lower passions, indolence, delusion, malice, selfishness, coarseness, etc. Tamasic ego is predominantly selfish and self-centered, unable (or unwilling) to appreciate the needs or interests of other people. The independence of the tamasic ego is profound (delusion). The tamasic ego is substantially separative, yet lacking the awareness of its own nature. Tamasic egoism is based in the material nature (predominantly physical and emotional). While tamasic egoism is coarse and strong, it is not "intelligent" enough to actively resist the inexorable force

of evolution. Thus one progresses from tamas to rajas very gradually but largely uneventfully (unconsciously).

Rajas is a matter of activity, of earthly and sensual pursuits, of mundane knowledge, arrogance, attachment, ambition, competition, likes and dislikes, etc. Rajasic ego may or may not be selfish, but it tends to be self-centered. Most of the personality and psychological development occurs through rajas. The independence (delusion) of the rajasic ego is considerable but less substantial than tamas. Rajasic ego is moderately self-absorbed but more aware and more able to deal with concepts of life and consciousness. Rajasic egoism is based also in the material nature, but is predominantly emotional and mental (intellectual). Rajasic egoism is not as coarse as tamasic egoism, but it is potentially much stronger, and more potent by virtue of its "intelligence" (all of what is commonly referred to as intelligence is artificial). Thus rajasic egoism can (and generally does) actively undermine the progress in consciousness in order to preserve itself and its position of influence.

Sattva is a matter of harmony, of radiance, of higher and more noble pursuits, illumination, insight, peace, dispassion, growth in the sense of deepening, understanding, goodness, humility, love, truthfulness, moderation, etc. Sattvic ego is substantially less self-centered than the others, but still clinging, in its subtle ways, to a sense of its own existence. Yet the sattvic ego is able to begin to consider the possibility of its own artificial nature, and therefore, eventually, the sattvic ego is able to cooperate in its own moderation and dissolution. Sattvic egoism is based in the more refined material nature and is predominantly intellectual (but potentially somewhat responsive to the intuitive (higher, transpersonal) nature).

Kamarupa

Kamarupa is the desire body, otherwise known (variously) as the astral body or the emotional body. Desire (kama) per se is part of the lower (animal) nature and derives from the development of the (material) desire body during the animal stage (just prior to becoming human) and its indulgence during the human stage. For the issue of kamarupa (the emotional body) (and subsequently for the desire mind), the question is does one live through the personality consciousness (physically, etherically, emotionally, and mentally) or is one entangled in the elemental experience of the vehicles. One can live at the animal level (for a while), or one can become (truly) human.

Kamarupa is a vehicle of (lower, personality) consciousness, intended to afford a means of experiencing and expressing on emotional levels, ultimately transcending the animal nature (desire) through purification, qualification, and refinement such that the astral body reflects only the highest, most subtle of the emotions. The problem of kamarupa is that for most people the desire body has become the master of lower consciousness rather than the servant (vehicle for self-expression). While most people (who are emotionally polarized) think that they live through their body (bodies) (physical, etheric, emotional, and mental) and that their emotional experience is a matter of self-expression, what is often actually the case is that the astral body has an artificial life of its own and lives for the person.

This condition (emotional abdication) is okay, for most people, as it still affords emotional experience, but it also gives more power to the emotional body which makes it more difficult for the spiritual student to integrate the lower vehicles (physical, etheric, emotional, and concrete mental) into a single, coherent personality (which is a prerequisite for alignment and transcending the ego). In growing, spiritually, the student needs to temper the emotions, refining the desire body so that it serves as a vehicle for experience and expression of the student, rather than functioning largely independently. This is accomplished, gradually, through the practice of detachment, through meditation, and through moderation.

But the astral body (kamarupa) does have a life of its own, artificial in its composite (aggregate) sense, but very real in the sense of its elemental life and consciousness. The human being lives (experiences and expresses) through its bodies or vehicles of consciousness, but each of those bodies has its own needs and evolutionary (more properly involutionary) concerns. In this sense, the human being must become the master of these vehicles, and for most people (approaching the path) that means focus on kamarupa. One learns to respect and appreciate the bodies, working to maintain them in health, without being entangled in their inherent (lower) nature.

The problem of kamarupa is primarily one of unconscious identification and abdication in (passive) unawareness. Most people (who are emopols) identify with their emotions and feelings, unconsciously, and this gives kamarupa tremendous power over the (human) waking-consciousness. As one learns to recognize this identification, and as one gradually re-identifies with something more real (the soul) or more pertinent (the personality as a whole), one naturally tempers the emotional body and gains stability and coherence at the astral (emotional) level. In a very dramatic sense, personal and spiritual growth is a process of almost continual (progressive) re-identification. But it is also a process of increasing and deepening awareness, involving both self-mastery (mastery of the lower self) and (eventually) personality transcendence.

