...And now, Yoga

By Sadhguru, Isha Foundation

Patanjali defined yoga as Chitta Vritti Nirodha, which literally means that if you still the modifications and activity of the mind, you are in yoga. Everything has become one in your consciousness.

We may be pursuing many things in our lives and going through processes that we call achievements, but to go beyond the modifications of the mind is the most fundamental, and at the same time the highest achievement one can attain, because this releases a human being from what he is seeking—from what is within and what is outside—from everything. If only he stills his mind, he becomes an ultimate possibility. The mind becomes a plain mirror, not a wavy mirror. A wavy mirror will distort one’s whole perception of life. At least if you don’t look at it, you may have some idea how you are, but if you look at it every day, it will give you a completely distorted vision of everything.

Right now, most human beings are using their mind only between their memory and imagination. Memory and imagination are not two separate things. Memory is accumulated past; imagination is an exaggerated version of that. If you bring your mind to a state where you are neither contaminated by memory nor deluded by imagination, then it is a truly intelligent, penetrative mind; it sees everything there is to see—life and its source. For the survival process, your memory and imagination are good enough, but if you want to explore other dimensions of life, then memory and imagination are not sufficient because they are only a recycling of your past. Once you recycle your past, there is a pattern to your life, and it is an unbreakable pattern if your mind is just engaged in memory and imagination. Once you are trapped by a pattern, it does not matter who created the pattern, it is a kind of slavery. Essentially, realizing that one is trapped in psychological realities and missing out on the existential experience of the grandeur of Creation is the first step towards liberation.

This is the reason why, of all the beautiful ways in which it could be expressed, Patanjali chose the description Chitta Vritti Nirodha for yoga—a technology which can take you towards your liberation or realization. The whole science of yoga is extrapolated in the form of various kinds of sutras. Around two hundred sutras make up the whole body of yogic knowledge. Patanjali did not invent yoga, he assimilated it into a system, which is why he is known as the “father of modern yoga.” It was already there in various forms, and he put it down into formulæ called sutras, which are recognized as a tremendous document about life. It is unbelievable that one human being could have had this much understanding about life. The vastness of his understanding is simply incredible.

Today’s scholars argue that this is not one man’s work, that many people must have worked to make this happen because it is so big, it cannot fit into one man’s intellect. It is one man’s work. Patanjali is probably one of the greatest intellects ever on this planet.

The Yoga Sutras are probably the greatest document on life, and also the most uninteresting book on the planet. Patanjali wrote it this way intentionally, because these are formulæ to open up life—neither literature nor philosophy. And his mastery over language was such that he wrote it in the form of formulæ, so that no scholar would ever be interested in it. It is most uninteresting, but if one sutra becomes a reality within you, it will explode you into a completely new dimension of experience. If you read one and make it true in your life, that’s all. You don’t have to read all the sutras.

Patanjali starts the Yoga Sutras in a very strange way. The first sutra is “...and now, yoga.” That half a sentence is one chapter. It is a very strange way to start a book of that dimension. Intellectually, it does not make any sense, but experientially what it is saying is: “If you still believe that building a new house, or finding a new wife, or getting your daughter married will settle your life, it is not yet time for yoga. But, if you have seen money, power, wealth and pleasure, if you have tasted everything in your life and realized that nothing is going to work in the real sense and fulfill you ultimately, then it is time for yoga.”

All the nonsense that the whole world is involved in, Patanjali just brushes it aside with half a sentence. This is why the first sutra is “...and now, yoga.” That means, you know nothing works and you do not have a clue about what the hell this is. The pain of ignorance is tearing you apart. Now, yoga. Now there is a way to know.

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