

**A Series of Lessons
in
Gnani Yoga
(The Yoga of Wisdom)**

Yogi Ramacharaka

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**THIS BOOK GIVES
THE HIGHEST YOGI
TEACHINGS
REGARDING THE
ABSOLUTE
AND ITS
MANIFESTATIONS**

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The first lesson: THE ONE

The Yogi Philosophy may be divided into several great branches, or fields. What is known as "Hatha Yoga" deals with the physical body and its control; its welfare; its health; its preservation; its laws, etc. What is known as "Raja Yoga" deals with the Mind; its control; its development; its unfoldment, etc. What is known as "Bhakti Yoga" deals with the Love of the Absolute - God. What is known as "Gnani Yoga" deals with the scientific and intellectual knowing of the great questions regarding Life and what lies back of Life - the Riddle of the Universe.

Each branch of Yoga is but a path leading toward the one end - unfoldment, development, and growth. He who wishes first to develop, control and strengthen his physical body so as to render it a fit instrument of the Higher Self, follows the path of "Hatha Yoga." He who would develop his will-power and mental faculties, unfolding the inner senses, and latent powers, follows the path of "Raja Yoga." He who wishes to develop by "knowing" - by studying the fundamental principles, and the wonderful truths underlying Life, follows the path of "Gnani Yoga." And he who wishes to grow into a union with the One Life by the influence of Love, he follows the path of "Bhakti Yoga."

But it must not be supposed that the student must ally himself to only a single one of these paths to power. In fact, very few do. The majority prefer to gain a rounded knowledge, and acquaint themselves with the principles of the several branches, learning something of each, giving preference of course to those branches that appeal to them more strongly, this attraction being the indication of need, or requirement, and, therefore, being the hand pointing out the path.

It is well for everyone to know something of "Hatha Yoga," in order that the body may be purified, strengthened, and kept in health in order to become a more fitting instrument of the Higher Self. It is well that each one should know something of "Raja Yoga," that he may understand the training and control of the mind, and the use of the Will. It is well that everyone should learn the wisdom of "Gnani Yoga," that he may realize the wonderful truths underlying life - the science of Being. And, most assuredly ever one should know something of Bhakti Yoga, that he may understand the great teachings regarding the Love underlying all life.

We have written a work on "Hatha Yoga," and a course on "Raja Yoga" which is now in book form. We have told you something regarding "Gnani Yoga" in our Fourteen Lessons, and also in our Advanced Course. We have written something regarding "Bhakti Yoga" in our Advanced Course, and, we hope, have taught it also all through our other lessons, for we fail to see how one can teach or study any of the branches of Yoga without being filled with a sense of Love and Union with the Source of all Life. To know the Giver of Life, is to love him, and the more we know of him, the more love will we manifest.

In this course of lessons, of which this is the first, we shall take up the subject of "Gnani Yoga" - the Yoga of Wisdom, and will endeavor to make plain some of its most important and highest teachings. And, we trust that in so doing, we shall be able to awaken in you a still higher realization of your relationship with the One, and a corresponding Love for that in which you live, and move and have your being. We ask for your loving sympathy and cooperation in our task.

Let us begin by a consideration of what has been called the "Questions of Questions" - the question: "What is Reality?" To understand the question we have but to take a look around us and view the visible world. We see great masses of something that science has called "matter."

We see in operation a wonderful something called "force" or "energy" in its countless forms of manifestations. We see things that we call "forms of life," varying in manifestation from the tiny speck of slime that we call the Moneron, up to that form that we call Man.

But study this world of manifestations by means of science and research - and such study is of greatest value - still we must find ourselves brought to a point where we cannot progress further. Matter melts into mystery - Force resolves itself into something else - the secret of living-forms subtly elude us - and mind is seen as but the manifestation of something even finer. But in losing these things of appearance and manifestation, we find ourselves brought up face to face with a Something Else that we see must underlie all these varying forms, shapes and manifestations. And that Something Else, we call Reality, because it is Real, Permanent, Enduring. And although men may differ, dispute, wrangle, and quarrel about this Reality, still there is one point upon which they must agree, and that is that Reality is One - that underlying all forms and manifestations there must be a One Reality from which all things flow. And this inquiry into this One Reality is indeed the Question of Questions of the Universe.

The highest reason of Man - as well as his deepest intuition - has always recognized that this Reality or Underlying Being must be but *ONE*, of which all Nature is but varying degrees of manifestation, emanation, or expression. All have recognized that Life is a stream flowing from One great fount, the nature and name of which is unknown - some have said unknowable. Differ as men do about theories regarding the nature of his one, they all agree that it can be but One. It is only when men begin to name and analyze this One, that confusion results.

Let us see what men have thought and said about this One - it may help us to understand the nature of the problem.

The materialist claims that this one is a something called Matter - self-existent - eternal - infinite - containing within itself the potentiality of Matter, Energy and Mind. Another school, closely allied to the materialists, claim that this One is a something called Energy, of which Matter and Mind are but modes of motion. The Idealists claim that the One is a something called Mind, and that Matter and Force are but ideas in that One Mind. Theologians claim that this One is a something called a personal God, to whom they attribute certain qualities, characteristics, etc., the same varying with their creeds and dogmas. The Naturistic school claims that this One is a something called Nature, which is constantly manifesting itself in countless forms. The occultists, in their varying schools, Oriental and Occidental, have taught that the One was a Being whose Life constituted the life of all living forms.

All philosophies, all science, all religions, inform us that this world of shapes, forms and names is but a phenomenal or shadow world - a show-world - back of which rests Reality, called by some name of the teacher. But remember this, all philosophy that counts is based upon some form of monism - Oneness - whether the concept be a known or unknown god; an unknown or unknowable principle; a substance; an Energy, or Spirit. There is but One - there can be but One - such is the inevitable conclusion of the highest human reason, intuition or faith.

And, likewise, the same reason informs us that this One Life must permeate all apparent forms of life, and that all apparent material forms, forces, energies, and principles must be emanations from that One, and, consequently "of" it. It may be objected to, that the creeds teaching a personal god do not so hold, for they teach that their God is the creator of the Universe, which he has set aside from himself as a workman sets aside his workmanship. But this objection avails naught, for where could such a creator obtain the material for his universe, except from himself; and where the energy, except from the same source; and where the Life, unless from his One Life. So in the end, it is seen that there must be but One - not two, even if we prefer the terms God and his Universe, for even in this case the Universe must have

proceeded from God, and can only live, and move and act, and think, by virtue of his Essence permeating it.

In passing by the conceptions of the various thinkers, we are struck by the fact that the various schools seem to manifest a one-sidedness in their theories, seeing only that which fits in with their theories, and ignoring the rest. The Materialist talks about Infinite and Eternal Matter, although the latest scientific investigations have shown us Matter fading into Nothingness - the Eternal Atom being split into countless particles called Corpuscles or Electrons, which at the last seem to be nothing but a unit of Electricity, tied up in a "knot in the Ether" - although just what the Ether is, Science does not dare to guess. And Energy, also seems to be unthinkable except as operating through matter, and always seems to be acting under the operation of Laws - and Laws without a Law giver, and a Law giver without mind or something higher than Mind, is unthinkable. And Mind, as we know it, seems to be bound up with matter and energy in a wonderful combination, and is seen to be subject to laws outside of itself, and to be varying, inconstant, and changeable, which attributes cannot be conceived of as belonging to the Absolute. Mind as we know it, as well as Matter and Energy, is held by the highest occult teachers to be but an appearance and a relativity of something far more fundamental and enduring, and we are compelled to fall back upon that old term which wise men have used in order to describe that Something Else that lies back of, and under, Matter, Energy and Mind - and that word is "Spirit."

We cannot tell just what is meant by the word "Spirit," for we have nothing with which to describe it. But we can think of it as meaning the "essence" of Life and Being - the Reality underlying Universal Life.

Of course no name can be given to this One, that will fitly describe it. But we have used the term "The Absolute" in our previous lessons, and consider it advisable to continue its use, although the student may substitute any other name that appeals to him more strongly. We do not use the word God (except occasionally in order to bring out a shade of meaning) not because we object to it, but because by doing so we would run the risk of identifying The Absolute with some idea of a personal god with certain theological attributes. Nor does the word "Principle" appeal to us, for it seems to imply a cold, unfeeling, abstract thing, while we conceive the Absolute Spirit or Being to be a warm, vital, living, acting, feeling Reality. We do not use the word Nature, which many prefer, because of its materialistic meaning to the minds of many, although the word is very dear to us when referring to the outward manifestation of the Absolute Life.

Of the real nature of The Absolute, of course, we can know practically nothing, because it transcends all human experience and Man has nothing with which he can measure the Infinite. Spinoza was right when he said that "to define God is to deny him," for any attempt to define, is, of course an attempt to limit or make finite the Infinite. To define a thing is to identify it with something else - and where is the something else with which to identify the Infinite? The Absolute cannot be described in terms of the Relative. It is not Something, although it contains within itself the reality underlying Everything. It cannot be said to have the qualities of any of its apparently separated parts, for it is the ALL. It is all that really IS.

It is beyond Matter, Force, or Mind as we know it, and yet these things emanate from it, and must be within its nature. For what is in the manifested must be in the manifestor - no stream can rise higher than its source - the effect cannot be greater than the cause - you cannot get something out of nothing.

But it is hard for the human mind to take hold of That which is beyond its experience - many philosophers consider it impossible - and so we must think of the Absolute in the concepts and terms of its highest manifestation. We find Mind higher in the scale than Matter or Energy,