



Yoga and Spirituality

The first question we have to ask is what is spirituality anyway?

How do we know what it might be?

And even if we knew what it is, is it important?

Our existence could be understood as dominated by the experience and limitations of the nervous system. The evolved mammalian brain views the world from a place of looking for difference, seeing dichotomy and creating polarity. The sensory inputs are highly limited and the cerebral filters on those inputs tight, so the brain is in receipt of fractional amounts of filtered information about its home, the universe.

Of course the information is good enough to survive and thrive as a species, so far anyway. The basic mammalian survival instincts, including seeking after pleasure and running from pain and utter indifference to anything that seems to offer neither threat nor benefit constitutes the basic operating framework of our separate nervous system.

Yogic philosophies suggest that it is also possible to have a broader identity that just this obsession with our own separate nervous system experience. Our rigidly invested belief in our own individuated identity, boundaries, separateness and our massive attachment to that experience of separation constitutes our self construct.

Yogasara changes our view, from the view of self-construct to one of broader connection and engagement. Yogasara changes our living experience from one of toxic separation to one of joyous celebratory indivisibility. It is this process of transformation into connection and the journey into the lived experience of indivisibility that has historically been called 'spirituality'. Yogasara creates this lived experience, starting with the body and gradually working deeper and deeper.

Whilst understanding, appreciating and valuing models and systems of liberation from whatever method, school, system or religion, we seek and ultimately know through our personal experience vivid connection as the source. Whilst appreciating texts, scriptures words and formulas attempting to point towards this broader reality, we are really concerned with the direct existential grasp of reality 'as it is'.

Many have the idea that to seek 'God' or enlightenment one has to run away to mountaintops and lonely places away from the mass of humanity, one has to give up wine and love making, give up song and dance, become a celibate monk or nun and only then can we fathom the divine. Some may well find what they seek this way, however like the poet Kabir states, or even Reg Presley's song sung by Wet Wet Wet reminds us, we know that "Love is all around- everywhere I go, I feel it in my fingers, I feel it in my toes". We all deeply know this, we also know that like a fish in water we cannot not be 'in' 'what is' the transcendent and immanent reality, we are this reality. We all also know that we cannot not be that which is; because if we weren't then it wouldn't be either, and it is.

Radikal Freedom - Yoga as realisation

Yogasara helps us to find ways to uncover our conditioning and release our true nature, hence the need for awareness practices that assist that process. There is no requirement to travel anywhere to develop 'spiritually', except that is into your being. There is ultimately nowhere else to go, every thing can be done here and now because that is also all there is. There is no need to go anywhere to find truth or oneself or reality as if they were somewhere else. It is all available right here, right now.

The awareness practices that help us to remember truth are uniquely applied for each individual. As we make our journey into deeper connection we use our teachers as technical guides and loving but dangerous friends on the path to help us to discover our way. Real teachers are dangerous friends because they make visible the strategies of our self construct and we then have to leave behind the pieces of our ego as we dive deeper.

If we become dependent on our teachers or fall into worshipping them then we have momentarily stumbled in helping to emancipate ourselves, we pick up the pieces of shattered ego and move on thanking the teacher for providing us with the opportunity to pay attention to our transference and projection. The real teacher will not allow such strategies as transference and projection to ruffle their sublime state, free of self-constructing needs they merely lovingly reflect the antics of our insecurity so that we can grow.

Many seekers want a discarnate, disembodied spirit divorced from earthly reality, perhaps even as an escape from the discomfort of reality. For many people such a vision of spirituality can be very tempting and the ego strategy of passionate craving drives us to seek the pure and perfect spirit free of all earthly content. Eventually finding such visions and seeking are dead ends, simply projections onto what is by the craving mind. These mind created trips are maybe temporarily useful, however in truth for the real development of the human being we seek freedom from all our fabricated mind trips.

To find Radikal Freedom we need to develop our understandings of our mind and heart (and their intimate relationship). If our mind with its conditionings sees reality through a particular filter, influenced perhaps by the conditioned dreams of our hearts, it is our responsibility to cultivate awareness and take the courageous step of letting go of that filter. Having let go we can begin to see life and death in all its raw and beautiful reality.

We are incarnated (literally in the meat) and like Eckhart Tolle states in *The Power of Now*, the only gateway we have to the transpersonal understandings of what spirit as connection really is, is our physical body and our heart.

Yogasara gives us earth contact, full conscious grounding and the incarnate freedom to begin the journey into the realm of spirit as connection whilst being fully present in the here and now. Yogasara gives us the root and the route to successfully explore the internal realms of connection, cognition, emotion and sensation and to fully understand the intimate relationship of all these so we become 'body-heart-mind-cosmic connection' rather than body and separate feeling mind. For it is only when we are whole as 'body-heart-mind-cosmic connection' that we can make the journey and arrive at the destination of Radikal Freedom.

Radikal Freedom - Yoga as realisation

Carl Jung said he would rather be whole than good. Paradoxically it is only the whole who can be good. Those who seek to be 'good' and have not first dealt with their shadows merely wreak chaos and destruction in the name of goodness. We do not awaken through plotting 'good' deeds and using our 'goodness' as an ego reference point. We cannot think our way to awakening, hence the limitation of models, schemes, plans, maps and formulas. We do not become enlightened through imagining visions, images or beings of light. We can only engage in the enlightening process by seeing our own shadows and allowing the light of the Essence to shine through it. The awareness thus created, when it is followed by hopelessness and surrender leads to acceptance.

This hopelessness is simply letting go of the delusion that 'we' can change, that the 'I' can change itself. The 'I' can't change itself, it can only carry out activities that give the illusion of change. It creates illusions of change through lifestyle alterations, adjusting beliefs, becoming spiritual and so on. These are just tricks, delusions. Starting to wearing beads or orange garments, getting particularly bendy, sitting making spiritual noises, all these are tricks that require surrender after surrender as they are dropped as the irrelevance they are.

Acceptance can however become love. When we accept the truth of our own desperate situation and have some kindness towards the truth of our dilemma, some appreciation of the deeper drive behind all these futile strategies, maybe then real transformation can happen as loving compassion flows from our deep natural essence, our original goodness and liberates our heart.

So long as happiness, good, change, love or even enlightenment are goals for which we strive; which are placed somewhere in the future, then we create a duality between us in the present and the goal we seek in the future. So long as we strive for this goal it eludes us. The more this 'good' is placed outside of us the more we have to study it, analyze it, create maps and models, plans and schemes of how to attain it. The more we get involved in abstractions, divergent opinions and confusion. The more this 'good' (read enlightenment, love, happiness or whatever else) is objectively analyzed and subjected to discursive thought, the more it is treated as something to be attained by special virtuous techniques. In this way it becomes less real, less attainable and disappears further into the imagined distance.

Of course to remedy this we have then to try harder, do more techniques, cut off some part of being that is in the way (How about eliminating desire? Many seekers try to cut this off, except of course desire for the now unattainable good!) So as we concentrate more on the means or the techniques to attain this 'good' so the end becomes more remote, so we work harder and the means become more and more elaborate. As the means become ever more elaborate so we have to devote our lives to studying the means, which of course become ever more elaborate as we continue to study so that our life is eaten up in ever involved contemplation of the complexities of the process of supposed liberation.

Now all our time and energy is in devotion to the systematic means of practicing useless techniques which go nowhere creates as Thomas Merton says "nothing but organized despair". As Shakyamuni Buddha is reported to have said "There is no way to happiness, there is no way to peace, there is no Way to love... happiness, peace and love is the Way" or as St. Augustine said "Love and do what you will".

Radikal Freedom - Yoga as realisation

We cannot accumulate merit or virtue, certainly not as a conscious act, it is then only creating some ego ideal (I am a nice person!). The Bhagavad Gita points out the illusion of grasping the fruits of actions in its exposition on karma yoga. It is the Zen of doing nothing of no action that is Yogasara. Giving up the illusion of the actor, the doer. Just allowing. Allowing the nameless Tao, Bodhicitta, the Essence, the Mystery the source of all form, action, goodness and love to shine through us as it needs. We can't do it, it is not our doing, it does.

When we allow and become more in harmony with this 'Essence' then the wisdom as to how to act and when to act makes itself clear, seen, felt and heard. We act then not out of conscious striving, towards 'egoic aggrandizement' or self conscious mode of deliberation but out of spontaneous 'natural goodness'. This is the spiritual path to do nothing at all about?

Eckhart Tolle says:

“Your outer journey may contain a million steps; your inner journey has only one; the step you are taking right now. As you become more aware of this step, you may realize that it contains within itself all the other steps as well as the destination. This one step becomes transformed then into an expression of perfection, an act of great beauty and quality. It will have taken you into Being, and the light of Being will shine through it.”

As soon as you engage in trying as doer, of course you lose it! One can perhaps just steadily allow awareness to grow. In developing awareness we can more clearly see and hear and feel the strategies of ego to sustain its dominance. Actually it is the moments of awareness, moment-by-moment glimpses that free us. As soon as we do anything with the awareness we are once again sucked into the game.

Awareness practices are really opportunities to remember our deeper essence, opportunities to step into the stream of awareness. With awareness ego, the self-construct is first of all useful, it helps us to negotiate around the world, to survive, it is useful like a car is useful, it gets us around. Secondly, in the light of awareness, transparent like jewels the referencing strategies held lightly become like jewels of consciousness adorning being.

If we take the self-construct reference points seriously, if we believe in them as a fundamental part of us, we become a fundamentalist. The best thing to do with the self-construct is to love it to bits, have compassion for its fear filled strategies, see it for what it is, take it out for a drive, understand how it works and with love, laugh at the antics as it repeatedly tries to drive. The essence of yoga is the cessation of the identification with the fluctuating vortices of thinking-feeling stuff, whereupon, with life energy withdrawn they slowly fade. Yogasara is really everything we do, all our relationships, all our communications, every breath that we breathe in and out and above all who we are.

Have fun, play, explore, breathe well. Be happy and find the root of happiness, be loved and loving and find the root of love, be joyful and find the root of joy, be well and find the root of well-being, be radically free and find the root of radikal freedom.

Blessings Be and Much Love ... Christopher Gladwell