



## ***SADHANA – A Spiritual Path Through the Many Facets of Yoga***

*By Swami Durgananda*

Sadhana comes from the noun "Sadh", which means to exert. The one who practices or walks the path of Sadhana is called a Sadhaka. A Sadhaka is not bound by a specific yoga discipline but may follow any of the many different facets or views/aspects of yoga. Yoga means to yoke or bind the body and mind so that a deep harmony or balance exists within the seeker's physical and mental state of being. This state is strengthened by deep commitment and dedication, mixed with great faith. The end goal of Self Realisation or the attainment of mystical powers is then achieved in this lifetime.

Hatha yoga is one such discipline. Esoterically Ha and Tha represent the microcosmic sun (ha) and moon (tha) which relate the masculine and feminine aspects of the human body. It is practiced as a system of physical and mental exercises which include cleansing acts, breath control, locks (consisting of locking the body so that the breath is held within or without for periods of time, this is used mainly as a strengthening or cleansing routine) and hand gestures. All of which regulate the flow of energy in the form of breathing exercises purifying the inner and outer body. In the east, under the guidance of Hatha Gurus or Rishis, it is practiced primarily for power and strength in preparation for deeper yoga disciplines of the mind. In the west we find it superficially taught for health and wellbeing. Today the western practice is combined with aids for exercise or extreme heat which is a breakaway from the purist form, taught by Patanjali the ancient Rishi who developed Hatha for the preparation of Self Realisation. Eastern practitioners and purists use the asanas (postures) in the hours from dawn until eleven when the sun is rising and when it is believed that the energetic vibration of the cosmic life force known as prakriti is strongest.

Karma Yoga, the yoga of cause and effect is yet another pathway for the Sadhaka to follow. The followers of Karma yoga must perform good deeds without thinking or dwelling on the "fruits of their actions". This is not just being charitable so that one can be seen to do good works, helping the poor and distributing aid but a good Karma yogi must be at all times charitable, compassionate and caring beyond their own comforts. They must remember that they are sewing the seeds for the next life, the reward being less bad karma and eventually akarma, a physical life devoid of the effects of action and reaction. This type of Sadhana is easier for the householder or family person who does not want to leave their responsibilities. When a time of life is reached when they are able to lessen the responsibility of worldly life, they should renounce the world and strive for self realisation. Saints who spend their lives devoted to the poor and less fortunate are pure karma yogis.

Yantra yoga consists of signs and symbols, it is mainly practiced in Northern India and Tibet as is Tantric yoga. Tantric yoga raises energy through the mastery of the sexual masculine and feminine energies (yogi and yogini). This practise is often looked upon by disapproval by many mainstream schools of thought. Laya or Kundalini yoga is another type of Sadhana, which was, and still is, a closely guarded secret as it releases through asanas and kriyas (powerful movements) a release of the Kundalini.

The Kundalini is the life force of the soul or the subtle nerve force latent in the body. It lies dormant in a figure eight at the base of the spine but when aroused it commences to move along the center of the spine, moving through the energetic vortices called the chakras and resides in the crown energy center of the head and triggers Self Realisation (Samadhi). This approach can be dangerous and should be practiced with a proven master.

Raj yoga is said to be the king of yoga and is mainly taught to followers of a yoga lineage from Guru (spiritual teacher) to disciple. Many stories are told of the ancient King Janaka a karma yogi who as old age approached renounced his throne in favor of his son and renouncing the world retired to the forest ashram of his Guru to seek Self Realisation. Raj yoga incorporates the disciplines of Hatha yoga for the balance of body and mind. This also increases strength for endurance and has a calming effect so that the Sadhaka can sit for long hours in meditation retaining a healthy body and mind. They must then practise Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of love and devotion, not only to the teacher but also to the teachings and their chosen deity. When the time is right a Mantra is given to the aspirant. A Mantra consists of certain secret words which contain a vibration compatible to the aspirant. The Mantra also contains a vibration of the Guru which will ease the journey of the Sadhaka and quieten the mind to enable mastery of consciousness itself. During this time the Sadhaka will also be called upon to give service to the Guru and the Lineage in the form of Seva (selfless service), pure karma yoga.

The Sadhana will continue under the watchful and diligent care of the Guru until the time is reached when Jnana yoga is achieved. This yoga is the union of self by knowledge. Then in complete safety the Kundalini will rise and become established in the highest energetic center, the Sahasrara chakra, the cranial physic force center. Then the Sadhana is complete and the Sadhaka attains Self Realisation also known as Moksha, "The bliss that Passeth all understanding". "Sat-Chit-Ananda."

Swami Durgananda - Spiritual leader of Samata Yoga and gifted healer has been teaching yoga, meditation and philosophy around the world for over 40yrs. Swami has a profound understanding of the universe and the human condition through her articles and books she shares her knowledge with compassion and humour teaching us how to bring balance and harmony into our lives.

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