

## A CHRISTIAN READING OF PATAÑJALI'S *YOGA-SŪTRA*

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### 1. Introduction

The classical text of yoga is *Yoga-sūtra* (YS) written by Patañjali in early Christian centuries. The theory and practice of yoga were certainly there even before him, who then systematically presented them. The book written in the form of short statements called *sūtras* has four parts entitled: *samaadhi*, *saadhana*, *vibhūti* and *kaivalya*. They deal respectively with the concentration of mind which is the trait of a yogi, the practices leading to it, the extraordinary endowments of a yogi, and the final state of liberation.

Derived from the root *yuj*, which means 'to yoke,' or 'to unite,' the word yoga means 'union.' It points to the end-result of the yoga practices: union or harmony with God, the fellow human beings and all the creatures, and indeed the whole universe. That obviously presupposes that the person is united within himself/herself enjoying perfect peace resulting from a clear conscience. Yoga is thus a state of being fully united and reconciled with God, the neighbour and the entire nature.

A yogi is a person of integrity between (i) the thoughts, words and deeds, (ii) the claim and reality, and (iii) the natural and the spiritual within oneself. He/she says what he/she means, and means what he/she says; he/she practises what he/she preaches, and preaches what he/she practises. His/her claims are in full agreement with the reality. Similarly there would be integrity between the natural and the spiritual in oneself. St Paul in his letter to the Galatians (5:16-22) says that in each one of us there are two sets of desires: those of the flesh and of the spirit. They are in effect what the catechism books treat as capital vices and virtues: pride - humility, greed - generosity, envy - charity, anger - patience, lust - modesty, gluttony - temperance and sloth - zeal.

The desires of the flesh or the capital vices are the disorientations of the human nature as a consequence of the original sin, and as such they

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have become the natural instincts in us. Even though the sin has been remedied by Jesus Christ's work of redemption, its consequences still remain. Inherited from the first parents, they are now built into our nature, and are, therefore, our inborn dispositions for which the Indian word is *vaasana*.

The yoga practices are mostly our efforts to correct the disorientations in the human nature and thus restore the union and harmony within ourselves, with God and the entire created world. The Christian explains the process further by referring to the work of the Spirit of God, which perhaps is taken for granted in the yoga system. The desires of the Spirit are the promptings of the Spirit within us to counter the desires of the flesh with the opposite virtues.

Thus as a matter of fact there are in each of us two mutually opposing forces: the natural instincts to be proud, greedy, etc., and the inspirations to be humble, charitable, etc. I must freely make a choice between them. However, St Paul in his letter to the Romans (8:1-17) warns of the consequences of the choice: being controlled by the natural instincts, I will die and be lost eternally, but being controlled by the desires of the Spirit, I will live and become a child of God. Obviously, therefore, I must choose to be controlled not by the natural instincts but by the inspirations of the Spirit.

What then about the natural instincts? Can they be destroyed totally? Should they be? First of all they being so deep-rooted and part of the nature, for one to be completely free of them is practically impossible. Secondly, each of them has something positive about it, and as such is a power gifted by God to the human nature, which should not be destroyed but properly used. For example, as a matter of self-respect I must be proud of being a child of God, a disciple of Jesus Christ, etc.; as St Paul says we must compete with one another in doing good, which is a positive application of the power of jealousy; there will be occasions to get angry without sinning (Eph 5:26), as Jesus himself did while correcting Peter and the people doing business in the temple. Lust in its positive form is the sexual power by means of which we are called to share in the creativity of God. Greed and gluttony are respectively the perversions of the human need to earn one's livelihood, and the appetite for food, which are necessary for a decent and healthy living. Sloth is the misuse of the ability to be at rest, a state of quiet and peace, which is a necessary ingredient of a balanced life, without which life would be dangerously hectic and reckless. Thus in short the natural instincts can neither be totally destroyed nor

should they be. In their absence in entirety one would cease to be human, indeed.

What is then required is to keep the natural instincts under control. Instead of being controlled by them one should control them. Still more accurately, bringing them under the control of the Spirit within oneself, one should be controlled by the Spirit. This is the meaning of being a spiritual person according to St Paul: he is a spirit-controlled person for whom the Greek expression is *pneumatikos*. In him the natural and the spiritual are not destroyed but creatively integrated into one another. This would be the picture of a Christian yogi.

This article seeks to establish the mutual complementariness of yoga experience and Christian mysticism. For it we study the first of the four parts (*paadas*) of Patañjali’s *Yoga-sūtra* in the light of Christian mysticism as presented in the writings of St John of the Cross.

## 2. Definition of Yoga

Patañjali opens the book with his definition of yoga, which confirms the above line of thinking. The definition is: *yogaś-citta-vṛtti-nirodhah*, which means, “Yoga [is] the control [*nirodhah*] of mental [*citta*] activities [*vṛtti*]” (YS 1:22).<sup>1</sup> A mental activity is anything that takes place in the mind such as thoughts, feelings, desires, memories, imaginations, passions, emotions, etc. They may be morally right or wrong, and logically correct or erroneous. None of them should occur or continue to be there without one’s knowledge and permission. For example, one should decide when to remember, what to remember, for how long and what purpose, etc. So complete has to be one’s control over the mind’s activities. Self-mastery and discipline is the watchword of a yogi.

Elaborating on the mental activities Patañjali says that they are five in number (YS 1:5-11):

1. logically correct thinking (*pramaana*) such as sense perception (*pratyaksha*), inference (*anumaana*) and verbal testimony (*aagama*);

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<sup>1</sup>*Yoga-sūtra* (YS) is so compact a text that even its traditional commentators are vague and confusing on various points. A modern work by the Spanish authors Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, however, has clarified many of the ambiguities in the text, which has been very helpful for us in the present study. Their book has been translated into English by K. D. Prithipaul, *The Yogasūtras of Patañjali on Concentration of Mind*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, Pvt. Ltd., 1991.

2. incorrect thinking (*viparyaya*) which is an illusion (*mithyaa*) in which the object is mistaken for something else, e.g., a rope is mistaken for a snake;

3. imagination (*vikalpa*) which may be expressed in words but with no corresponding object, e.g., a unicorn, a barren woman's son, etc., and dreams;

4. (dreamless) sleep [*nidraa*] in which no object is experienced, or rather the absence of object is experienced; and

5. memory (*smṛti*) in which objects experienced in the past are recalled.

These are the five mental activities over which the yogi should gain complete mastery. The consideration obviously is not about their moral worth or logical validity. Irrespective of whether they are good or bad, valid or false, they should all be under one's control. The word *vṛtti* translated so far as 'an activity,' can also mean an active state or mood of mind. The mental activities are each a particular active state or mood of mind. That the mind is active means that it keeps moving from state to state, mood to mood. This is the mind's instability or fluctuation, which should be controlled or even stopped (*nirodha*) so that the stillness of mind is attained. This is yoga. Having attained such mastery, the yogi may at will engage the mind in any activity of his choice. Or, at deeper levels of reality at which the reality itself is increasingly stiller, the mind's need to move or take on changing states or moods, too, becomes less and less, and finally at the deepest level where the Absolute Reality – the immutable, the eternally present – is encountered, the mind also becomes absolutely and eternally still; indeed it realizes the absolute stillness (*samaadhi*).

We may recall the *Maandūkya* Upanishad's analysis of mind into (i) the waking state (*jaagarita*) in which there occurs correct or incorrect thinking as well as imaginations and memories, (ii) dream state (*svapna*) in which there appear images which may not have corresponding objects in reality, (iii) dreamless, sound sleep (*sushupti*) in which there is total absence of all objects; and (iv) the fourth state (*caturtha* or *turiya*) in which there is presumably absolute stillness of mind in union with the Absolute. In the waking state the mind as well as the senses are active and aware of the external, outside objects, while in the dream state the senses are inactive whereas the mind is active and aware of the mental objects. In sound sleep the mind, too, is inactive and unaware of all objects except itself. Its self-awareness is evidenced by the fact that one coming out of such a state recalls having enjoyed a sound sleep. In *turiya* (*caturtha*) the

mind having become one with the Absolute loses even the self-awareness! To use St Augustine’s words, ‘the heart that is created for God, having found rest in him, ceases to be restless.’ No wonder that the mystic’s / yogi’s statements sound like monism!

The mind having attained the state of stillness in which it, though fully conscious, is devoid of all activities, the person comes to be in his/her real form. Patañjali’s own words: *tadaa-dṛṣhtuh-svarūpe-[a] vasthanam*, which means: “Then [*tadaa*] [there is] the seer’s [*dṛṣhtuh*] posturing [*avasthaanam*] in [his/her] own form [*svarūpe*]” (YS 1:3). The ‘seer’ obviously means the *purusha* mentioned in the saamkhya system of philosophy that is taken for granted in the yoga tradition. *Purusha* is the spirit in the human being as opposed to the nature (*prakṛti*) consisting of mind (*citta*) and body (*śariira*). *Purusha* is the same as *aatmaa* in the other Indian systems, and *pneuma* in Greek thought. Thus the human being is a composite of *purusha* (*aatmaa* / *dṛṣhtaa*) *citta* and *śariira* corresponding to *pneuma* (spirit) *psyche* (mind) and *soma* (*sarx*, body). This is St Paul’s understanding of human being, when he said: “May your spirit, soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thes 5:23).

### 3. Human Person

An important difference between the saamkhya (Indian) and Christian understandings of human person should be kept in mind. In the former the human person refers to human’s spiritual part called *purusha* (*aatmaa*), and, therefore, its association with the psycho-physical complex (*prakṛti*) is considered to be accidental and even a misfortune. In the yogic state of the stillness of mind the *purusha* realizes its identity (*sva-rūpa*) as an entity independent of the psycho-physical complex, and further in the final state of liberation it gets even literally separated from the latter, and regains its absolute un-relatedness (*kaivalya*, which literally means aloneness). But in the Christian view the human person includes not only the spirit (*pneuma* = *purusha* = *aatmaa*), but also the mind (*psyche/citta*) and the body (*soma* / *sarx* = *śariira*, the elemental body). The yoga practices from the Indian point of view are seen as means of making the best of the psycho-physical complex as long as the spirit has to carry it as a necessary evil till the *samsaara* (the cycle of birth and death) comes to an end, giving way to the state of *kaivalya*. This latter state of the final liberation which is the same as *moksha* or *mukti*, consists in the spirit’s freedom from the burden of the body-mind complex. Jettisoning the latter

the spirit realizes *kaivalya*. Indeed, it parts company with the *prakṛti* for good! The unholy alliance ends!

But in Christianity the story is quite different. The human person is a being whose constituents are the spirit (*pneuma* = *purusha*), mind (*psyche* = *citta*) and the body (*soma* / *sarx* = *śarīra*), so that in the absence of any one of them there is no human person. In an individual they are created for each other, and even death cannot separate them. There is no question of the mind-body factors being abandoned. Even during the period between death and the final judgment, when the body is buried and disintegrated, the spirit is believed to retain its essential relation with it. Then in the final state of liberation the three constituents – spirit, mind and body – remain part of the single human person. The resurrection of the body as an integral part of the human person with the spirit to live eternally in glory with God and his angels is indeed an essential part of the Christian creed. In the present state of existence, as a result of the original sin, there is in them a rebellion against the Spirit, which in fact is the disorientation of the whole person. This rebellion or disorientation is to be corrected before one would be fit for the final liberation, which is variously described as the beatific vision, the union with God, the state of being saved once and for all, or even as the mystical marriage between the human and the Divine. Yoga practices would certainly be among the effective means of subduing the rebellion and correcting the disorientation. Thus they can very well be integrated into the Christian asceticism. As a matter of fact with regard to the practicalities of spiritual life there is much in common between the Christian and yogic traditions. For a successful spiritual life things that one should do and avoid, are obviously almost the same in both the traditions. The theological perspectives and explanations of course are different. Even so in many details the Christian positions happen to be either completing the yogic teachings or bringing out their deeper implications. It is also possible that the yoga text may yield new meanings in the light of Christian faith. In the process of interpreting the yoga text the Christian disciple is likely to ignore or question some of the traditional meanings, which for others may understandably appear to be a case of doing violence and injustice to the texts. But if the process continues in a spirit of religious dialogue, in the course of time there shall certainly be a very creative synthesis of the two traditions, in which neither of them would lose anything but gain immensely with the result that there would be yoga not only within the individuals but also between them and in their society as a whole: the emergence of an integrated and united community of

people living in harmony and union of hearts and minds. This, for example, would be the wonderful experience if we would study with sympathy and patience side by side the yoga text, on the one hand, and the writings of Christian mystics like Sts John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila, on the other.

#### 4. Practical Principles

How to gain the ability to control or even stop the mental activities? Before going into the details of the issue, the text right away mentions two principles which may be considered the basic rules of yogic life and practice: *abhyaasa-vairaagyaabhyaam-tannirodhah*, which means “Their [mental activities’] control or stopping [*nirodhah*] [is gained] by means of exercise [*abhyaasa*] and detachment [*vairaagyaa*]” (YS 1:12).

*Abhyaasa* and *vairaagya* (exercise and detachment) are thus the two principles the yogi should keep as basic rules. *Abhyaasa* is the same as what the Buddhists call *vyaayaama*, both the words meaning “exercise,” an act that is done repeatedly, regularly and continually (YS 1: 13-14). Yogic practices no matter whether they are bodily, mental or spiritual should be done repeatedly, regularly and continually. It may be a simple body posture (*asana*) or a practice of mindfulness or an act of worship: do it again and again regularly and perseveringly. It should be a matter of determination and will-power, which is itself a yogic practice. Only a strong willed person of determination can be a yogi. Nothing should make him/her stop or interrupt the practices he/she has started. It is a matter of habit-formation by doing the same thing repeatedly, regularly and continually. For example, if one has decided to practise the concentration of mind, for it one must fix the place, the object, the time and its duration. Having fixed them, one should not change them at all except for really very serious reasons. Silly matters like a little fatigue, sleepiness, laziness, an ordinary sickness, some pain, etc., should not make one give up the practice. Initially the success may not be much, and it may be a long time before positive results start appearing. Be patient and have perseverance. “Patient endurance attains all things!” rightly says St Theresa of Avila.

The second principle is *vairaagya*, which means detachment (YS 1: 15-16). Concentration of mind is the yogi’s enduring achievement, and all his/her practices are in view of it. For it a necessary condition is the detachment of heart from all things. Things that distract the mind are those to which one is attached. However, attachment may be positive or negative. Things that I passionately love are objects of attachment

positively so that my thoughts are uncontrollably about them: even if I don't want, I cannot but think of them! Equally if I have an enemy who may have hurt me very badly, he/she can become an object of attachment negatively, so that my mind in spite of myself would keep entertaining feelings of hatred and revenge towards him/her. Attachment, positive as well as negative, is thus a mental state of slavery to the object concerned, which must be done away with, so that one comes to enjoy the inner freedom with the result that one can fix the mind where one decides, not where it is attached to positively or negatively. Thus *vairaagya* is itself yoga: the control of mental activities. But one should have it to some extent even as one starts the yoga practices through which it develops until it reaches full maturity and stability.

### 5. Virtues and Powers

The observance of the two rules of *abhyaasa* and *vairaagya* has to be accompanied by the practice of the following virtues and powers:

1. *śradhaa* - faith and trust in the yoga teachings and practices
2. *viirya* - vigour of mind and body
3. *smṛti* - power of recollection
4. *samaadhi* - concentration of mind
5. *prajñaa* - awareness, consciousness, mindfulness (YS 1:20).

How quickly one attains the restraint of mental activities will depend on one's fervour (*samvega*) in *abhyaasa* and *vairaagya*, and the practice of the virtues mentioned above. For one whose fervour is intense (*tiivra*), the mental restraint is close at hand (YS 1.21). But the intensity may be mild (*mṛdu*) or moderate (*madhya*) or high (*adhi*), and correspondingly the realization of mental restraint also will be at a slow or average or fast pace (YS 1:22).

All these taken together make it clear that yoga, and for that matter spiritual life, is a matter of personal determination and commitment. It requires on the part of the candidate a strong will, deep sense of discipline, mental alertness, perseverance and personal efforts. It is not for the half-hearted, lazy, easy going and undisciplined persons.

### 6. Worship of God

The text then introduces a new dimension of yogic life. So far it was all about one's own being and behaviour. Now reference is made to God, presenting his worship as a means of realizing the yogic goal: *iisvara-pranidhaanatvaad-vaa*, which means "Or by the worship of the Lord" (YS 1:23). The conjunction "or" indicates that "the worship of the Lord" is



intended as an alternative. Generally it is understood as an alternative to all that has been said so far about the practice of yoga by means of *abhyaasa* and *vairaagya* accompanied by the cultivation of the virtues which in turn is accelerated or facilitated by the candidate’s fervour in different degrees. All these being a little too technical implying expertise on the part of the aspirant, the simple people may feel discouraged. For them indeed is “the worship of the Lord” suggested as an alternative. Lord (*iīśvara*) obviously refers to the personal God, who being all powerful and compassionate will lead the devotee to the realization of the mental restraint.

There may be other commentators who consider the worship of God not as an alternative, but as complementary to the practice of *abhyaasa*, *vairaagya*, etc. In general, therefore, the impression is that in the yoga system and practice the worship of God is given only an optional or secondary place, and hardly understood as a necessary and indispensable factor. All the same one should not rule out the possibility that yoga in its original inspiration might be taking it for granted that the yogi is necessarily a devotee of God without whose grace the human efforts are no avail.

In the Christian tradition, however, God’s place in spiritual life, and, therefore, in Christian yoga, too, can never be optional or secondary but absolutely necessary and primary. “Without me you can do nothing,” said Jesus Christ. Spiritual life is led by the human person in partnership with God, whose role is decisive and indispensable. God’s grace and human efforts work hand in hand, faith is translated into good works, and good works are done in a spirit of faith! Therefore, even as one practises yoga employing the means of *abhyaasa*, *vairaagya*, etc., one should necessarily be a devotee of God, worshiping him in a spirit of unconditional surrender with hope in his unfailing grace. One’s faith in God will make the yoga practice fruitful whereas the same practice will make one more and more open to God’s grace!

Concerning the concept of God, there is much in common between Christian and yoga views. By calling him “Lord” (*iīśvara*) the yoga tradition admits that he is a personal being. He is a *purusha* (spirit), but unlike the individual spirits he is untouched (*aparaamṛshṭa*) by impurities (*kleśa*), deeds (*karma*) and their consequences (*vipaaka* and *aaśaya*), and, therefore, he is unique (*viśeśha*): *kleśa-karma-vipaaka-aiśvarya-aparaamṛshṭa purusha-viśeśah iīśvarah* (YS 1:24). Hence he is called *purushottama*, the Supreme Person. Further, he is the inexhaustible source of all knowledge: *tatra niratiśayam sarva-jñā-bijam* (YS 1:25), and being

a trans-historical person he is the *guru* of even the ancestors: *purveśhaam-  
api guruḥ kaalena-anavachedaat* (YS 1:26). His name is *aum*, otherwise  
called *pranava* (YS 1:27).

### 7. *Naama-japa*

“The worship of the Lord” (*iīśvara-pranidhaana*) is said to consist of the repetition of *aum* and in the reflection upon its meaning (*taj-japas-tadartha-bhaavanam* (YS 1:28). In effect it would mean the repetition of God’s name (*naama-japa*) while meditating on its meaning. “Name” stands for the person with all his/her characteristics. Therefore, the meditative repetition of God’s name would be the same as the raising of one’s mind to him in adoration, thanksgiving, repentance and intercession. It is an act of love for and trust in God. It is *śaranaagati* or *prapatti*, which are the technical words used in *bhakti* literature to describe the unconditional self-surrender of the devotee at the feet of the Lord. The Christian counterpart of this kind of the worship of God is the “Jesus prayer” in the oriental tradition. It is to repeat with single-minded devotion the prayer: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Its almost uninterrupted repetition in rhythm with the heart-beat will eventually make it part of one’s own system so that even as one would be engaged in many other duties, the heart would continue to repeat it. Hence it is also called “prayer of the heart.”

In the context of yoga spirituality, Hindu as well as Christian, the repetition of the Lord’s name would work in two ways: on the one hand, fascinated and over-powered by the Lord, one spontaneously becomes detached (*viraagi*) which enhances the stopping of mental activities, the mental restraint. *Bhagavad-giita’s* (BG) instruction in this regard is worth quoting (BG 2: 59):

One can keep the sense-objects out  
by closing the senses against them.  
But one’s desire for them will persist!  
However, having had a vision of the Absolute,  
one loses even the desire for them.

On the other hand, the Lord, pleased with the devotee’s self-surrender through *naama-japa*, grants him/her all the necessary graces to realise the yogic goal, and makes up for the human frailties and inabilities. Again BG (18:66) says:

Giving up all your [concern about]  
what to do or not to do,

take refuge in me [the Lord] alone.  
I shall liberate you from all sins;  
do not worry!

## 8. Obstacles

Patañjali also deals with the obstacles (*antaraaya*) in the yogic path which one should carefully ward off, overcome and avoid. The worship of God by way of the repetition and mediation of the Lord’s name is a powerful means to get rid of them and reach the destination of the journey (YS 1:29). Nine such obstacles are mentioned (YS 1:30):

1. *vyaadhi* - any kind of disease affecting the body, the senses and the mind
2. *styāna* - inertia or lack of interest in the practice of yoga
3. *samśaya* - doubt or indecision about one’s own ability to practise yoga, and its effectiveness
4. *pramāda* - wrong, erroneous understanding and way of practising yoga
5. *aalasya* - laziness, lethargy, indolence or sloth caused by obesity and lack of motivation
6. *avirati* - attachment to sense objects, craving of the mind to appropriate them
7. *bhraanti-darśana* - illusions about the yoga practices and means
8. *alabdha-bhūmikatva* - lack of initiative or clarity with regard to the goal of yoga practices
9. *anavasthitatva* - inconstancy of mind, in-definitiveness of thinking

These obstacles variously called as *antaraaya*, *vighna* or *yoga-pratipakshi* are mental dissipations (*citta-vikshepa* = mental distractions or dispersions) of one kind or another. These obviously refer more to the bodily and mental disorders and inabilities than to moral evils. That means, bodily and mental health and fitness are necessary requirements for the realization of the yogic goal. These disorders of mind and body causing mental dispersions (*citta-vikshepa*) obstruct the concentration of mind which certainly is most basic to yoga as mental restraint.

The next *sūtra* (YS 1:31) enumerates four other obstacles that are concomitant of the above mentioned mental dispersions:

1. *duhkha* - suffering, pain in body or mind

2. *daur-manasya* - mental unease, despondency, dejection, depression, sulkiness, despair or distress caused by mental or extra-mental factors such as non-realization of a desire, sickness, etc.

3. *anga-mejayatva* - corporal agitation, unsteadiness of limbs, tremor of body, restlessness or nervousness, due to bodily or nervous weakness or some mental disorders

4. *śvaasa-praśvaasa* - unhealthy way of breathing in and out not according to the rule of *praanaayaama* due to some physical or mental disorders.

They necessarily accompany one or another of the obstacles mentioned in the previous *sūtra*, and are themselves disorders causing mental dispersions, and thus contribute to obstruct the yogic process of mental control.

## 9. Remedy against the Obstacles

All the obstacles should be avoided or overcome. The effective means prescribed for it in general is the practice of the concentration of mind. *Tat-pratishedhaartham-eka-tattva-abhyaasah*: “In order to remedy the obstacles one should practise concentration of mind on a single point” (YS 1:32). The worship of God in the form of the meditative repetition of his name is already one such practice with its twofold benefits: the healing grace of God and increased concentration of mind. But Patañjali has also mentioned a few other objects or ways of concentration which may be alternatively used to gain the stability of mind:

1. Prolonged engagement (*pravṛtti*) of the mind on an object, physical or mental. It may be an object directly perceived by the senses or recalled by memory. Continued mindfulness of it effects the stability (*sthiti*) of mind (YS 1:35).

2. A prolonged experience (*pravṛtti*) that is free of pain (*viśoka*) and luminous (*jyotishmati*). *Rajas* and *tamas* are respectively sources of pain and darkness, while *sattva* makes the limbs of the body light (*laghu*), the intellect / mind (*budhi*) lucid (*prakaāśa*), and the senses quiet (*prasanna*). When *sattva* predominates it subdues *rajas* and *tamas* and it stands in its own essence of joy (*priiti*) and illumination (*prakaāśa*). Thus the experience under reference should be of *sattva* nature. It may be the experience of *aananda* (bliss) or *asmita* (self-awareness) (YS 1:36).

3. Prolonged engagement (*pravṛtti*) of the mind on a being devoid of passion, e.g., a sage: the yogi absorbing (*uparakta*) himself/herself in the

sage assumes his/her form. Hence in addition to the psychic effect of concentration there is also the moral influence (YS 1:37).

4. Concentration on the experience of dreams and deep sleep (*svapna-nidraa-jñāana*). It does not mean that one is recollecting and concentrating on the past experiences of dream and sleep. Instead, even in the waking state one can create, without the intervention of senses, a mental image similar to that experienced in a dream, and produce an intellectual or emotional void or vacuity similar to that in deep sleep, and fix the mind on it (YS 1:38).

5. Meditation (*dhyaan*) on any object of one’s choice (*yathaa-abhimata*) (YS 1:39).

Thus, in short, one should attain the stability of mind by concentrating it uninterruptedly on one point which may be God’s name, a physical or mental object, or a saintly person, or even an induced experience. This list is not exhaustive as is clear from the statement that one may meditate on any object of one’s choice. The conclusion then is that the mind has a limitless scope so as to conceive and concentrate on any object, no matter whether it is an extremely small one (*anu*) or an extremely big one (*mahaa-mahat*). The mind’s mastery (*vaśikaara*) would consist in the realization of this potential so that it can at will attend to one or another object of its choice (YS 1:40).

### **10. Clarity of Mind: *Citta-Prasaada***

While discussing the objects of concentration Patañjali digressed to deal with the required clarity of mind (*citta-prasaada*) (YS 1:33), generally called ‘purity of mind’ (*citta-suddhi*) with a moral implication. It is a matter of the management of feelings and passions resulting in emotional maturity which facilitates the practice of concentration and correct thinking. All these in turn will contribute to the attainment of the mental stability (*stithi*), and the person becomes steady-minded (*sthita-prajña*) which is the *Bhagavad-giita*’s description of a yogi.

In view of the clarity of mind the first thing one should do is to develop attitudes of friendliness (*maitri*), compassion (*karunaa*), joy (*muditaa*), and disregard (*upekshaa*) respectively towards well-being (*sukha*), suffering (*duhkha*), merit (*punya*) and demerit (*apunya*). The friendliness towards well-being would mean a positive attitude towards one’s own and others’ well-being in body, mind and spirit. *Sukha* (well-being) means all that goes for the total well-being of the person. In its fullness it refers to the finally liberated state of existence called *moksha* or

*mukti*. It may be recalled that in Buddhism *sukha* is the experience rid of all sorts of bodily, mental and spiritual suffering (*duhkha*), which is the same as *nirvaana*. Thus *sukha* being the ultimate goal of life, it is obvious that one should have a positive attitude towards it, be friendly with it or even fall in love with it.

Compassion (*karunaa*) towards suffering similarly means one's disapproval of one's own as well as others' present state of suffering, and the preparedness to redeem oneself and others from it. Suffering (*duhkha*), the opposite of *sukha*, includes all that accounts for the state of bondage (*bandha, samsaara*): it is all sorts of illness affecting the human person in body, mind and spirit, as is clear from the Buddhist use of the term as a comprehensive description of the unredeemed state of existence. Compassion towards suffering then means not only one's sorrow for it but also the readiness to undo it altogether. One should start with compassion for one's own state of suffering, and then for that of others including the sub-human beings, indeed.

Joy (*mudita*) towards merits means the sense of satisfaction about one's and others' good works and virtues. To be a virtuous person with good works is already an essential part of yogic life, and the resultant contentment is necessary for mental concentration and stability.

Disregard (*upekshaa*) towards demerits means, on the one hand, the disapproval of one's own as well as others' evil deeds and vices, and, on the other, the moral courage not to despair at the thought of the past sins and failures, and to be resolved to make up for them. The word *upekshaa*, which we have translated as 'disregard' can also mean 'giving up,' or 'renunciation,' or 'indifference,' or 'un-affectedness.' So in the present context it has both the senses: giving up or renunciation of the past evil deeds and vices, and then maintaining a sort of indifference towards or un-affectedness by the disgraceful state of affairs resulting from them, be firmly resolved to mend one's ways and to advance in the yogic path of life. Even in the case of the evil doings of others one should denounce them and help those people to correct and resolutely follow the righteous path.

Thus the practice of *maitri* (friendliness), *karunaa* (compassion), *mudita* (joy) and *upekshaa* (disregard) refers more to the attitudes the yogi should maintain in view of the clarity and serenity of mind. Indeed, they are not presented immediately as moral virtues. But the moral aspect which in the Christian tradition is vitally important, is not ruled out. Once

these yogic attitudes are realized, it would be a natural step forward to exercise them with spiritual and religious motives.

### **11. Breath-Control: *Praanaayaama***

Still another means for the clarity of mind is the control of breathing called *praanaayaama*. As presented in this context it consists in the breathing out (*pracchardana*) and retention (*vidhaarana*) of vital air (*praana*) (YS 1:34). But in YS 2:43-53 and the texts of *haṭha-yoga* it is described in more detail. In effect it is the wilful control of the breathing process. One should have control of the volume of the air absorbed, and the number and the duration of inspirations (*puuraka*), expirations (*recaka*) and retention (*kumbhaka*); it is thus a matter of regulated breathing which by practice becomes easy, spontaneous and rhythmic. The yogi can make the rhythm of breathing slower and slower, and the volume of air absorbed lesser and lesser till extreme limits are reached. It is equally important that one concentrates the mind on the process of respiration. The practice of *praanaayaama*, in view of the dangers involved, should be learned under a competent guide.

It is common that by means of *praanaayaama* one goes to what is known as yogic sleep (*yoga-nidra*), a way of relaxation: there one goes to deep sleep for a determined time, when and where one decides, and comes out of it refreshed and relaxed. It is further claimed that by reducing the intake of air to the bare minimum one can go into a coma like state and remain buried underground for a long time, comparable to the hibernation of certain animals, with the lowest rate of cardiac contractions and little need for oxygen! Such extraordinary phenomena apart, it is a basic assumption of the yoga system that there is a mutual relation and influence of the mind and breathing process. The mind and air in the body are so interrelated that the conditions of the one depend on and influence those of the other: when the mind is disturbed, the air also is disturbed and vice versa, whereas when the mind is quiet, the air also is quiet and vice versa, says the yoga texts like *Haṭha-yoga-pradiipika*, II. 2, and *Yoga-śāstra* 1 and 2. That the mental activities and states exert and influence the breathing is easily seen from the experiences of anger and fear accelerating and disturbing the breathing. It is also true, although not so readily verifiable, that the breathing process influences the mental activities and states. The medical experiments on breath-control and mental concentration are said to support this statement.

According to Patañjali's commentator Bhoja, *praanaayaama*, arresting the activity of senses and the flow of ideas, makes it easy for the mind to concentrate. The dynamics seems to be that as the breathing becomes regular, free and smooth, the blood circulation, too, is rendered uniform and unobstructed, with the result that the muscles and nerves are relaxed, which in turn facilitates the mental concentration. Anyone having done at least a ten-day course of the Buddhist style of meditation called *vipassana* will easily see the point at issue. There one is made to forget all the concerns of life along with the tensions and worries, which makes the mind easily concentrated on some emotionally neutral object, which in turn makes one feel relaxed and clear minded! For example, concentrate the mind on the respiration, being aware of the touch of the air on the nostrils as it goes in and out. Very soon the breathing becomes regular and effortless, and correspondingly the body becomes relaxed, which makes the mental concentration still easier and deeper, too.

## 12. *Samaadhi* Stage by Stage

We may recall the initial statement that yoga is the restraint (*nirodha*) of mental activities (*citta-vṛtti*). The yogic process culminates in the restraint of all mental activities (*sarva-nirodha*) resulting in the realization of one's genuine state of existence (*sva-ruupe-[a]vasthaanam*). However, it happens not all at once, but step by step. For example YS 1:17 mentions *samprajñāata-nirodha*, restraint accompanied by knowledge of a gross or subtle object, a sentiment of joy (*ānanda*), or an awareness of oneself (*asmitā*). At this stage all the mental activities having stopped, there remains just an act of reflection (*vitarka*) on a gross object, or an act of analytical knowledge (*vicaara*) of a subtle object, or a joyous feeling or an act of self-awareness. Again, YS 1:18 speaks of another kind of *samprajñāata-nirodha* in which the mind makes an effort (*abhyāsa*) to withdraw from the knowledge of the above mentioned objects, too, although the effort may not yet be fully successful. It may be that there are also other kinds of *samprajñāata-nirodha*. Obviously then the suggestion is that the last stage where all the mental activities cease (*sarva-nirodha*), can aptly be described as *asamprajñāata-nirodha*, although this expression does not appear in the text.

## 13. Concentration: *Samaapatti*

As the mental restraint increases step by step, correspondingly there will be also deeper and deeper concentration of mind which is called *samaapatti*. This latter term is explained in YS 1: 41: "Its [mind's]



activities being weakened (*kshiina-vṛtti*), the [mind] gets fixed on either the knowing subject or the act of knowing or the known object, and is coloured by it.” Here the word ‘coloured’ (*añjanataa*) according to Tola means “the fact that the consciousness... is, so to say, absorbed in the object or, in other words, that the object invades, and takes possession of, the entire field of consciousness.”<sup>2</sup>

*Samaapatti* may be either *sa-vitarka* or *nir-vitarka* (YS 1: 42-43). The word *vitarka* means reasoning or discursive thinking, and, therefore, the two kinds of *samaapatti* are distinguished on the basis of its being accompanied or not by some reasoning or discursive thinking. In either case, the mind concentrates on a gross object. In the *savitarka* form of concentration the mind is discursively engaged with certain concepts (*vikalpa*) or words (*śabda*) or things (*artha*) or knowledge (*jñāana*) related to the object concerned.

In the *nir-vitarka* stage of concentration also the mind is fixed on a gross object, but is free of any reasoning or discursive thinking. In it the mind does engage in thinking about concepts, words, things and knowledge related to the object. There the latter shines (*nirbhaasa*) merely as an object (*artha-maatra*) devoid of its own particular forms. “The *artha* subsists, and it reaches the mind of the yogin, without any word, concept, or normal act of *jñāana* or *vikalpa*, completely alone and nude. There only remains the object *in se* and the yogin in front of it. Anything else has disappeared.”<sup>3</sup>

As different from the concentration on a gross object, there is that on a subtle object (YS 1:44). We may remember that in the *saamkhya* system of philosophy on which is the yoga system based, the gross elements (*mahaa-bhūta*) include earth, water, fire (or light), air and space. They are the sense-objects and as such are tangible, visible, audible, etc. All other evolutes of *prakṛti* and the *prakṛti* itself are subtle elements: the *tanmaatras*, *indriyas*, *aham*, *budhi* (or *mahat*) and *prakṛti* (YS 1:45).

Concentration on a subtle element also is of two types: *sa-vicaara* and *nir-vicaara*, with and without analytical thinking (*vicaara*).

The four kinds of concentration (*samaapatti*) (*sa-vitarka*, *nir-vitarka*, *sa-vicaara* and *nir-vicaara*) are described as *samaadhi* with seed (*sa-biija*) (YS 1:46). Derived from the root *dhaa* (= to put, place) prefixed with *sam+aa* (= together), the word *samaadhi*, refers to “putting together” (concentration) of all mental powers on one object. Hence, *samaadhi* is

<sup>2</sup>Tola & Dragonetti, *The Yogasūtras of Patañjali on Concentration of Mind*, 150.

<sup>3</sup>Tola & Dragonetti, *The Yogasūtras of Patañjali on Concentration of Mind*, 164.

another word for the concentration of mind. All those four *samaapattis*, therefore, are *samaadhi* although they do not cover the entire range of it as will be presently made clear. *Samaadhi* in the form of any of those *samaapattis* is said to be with seed (*biija*), having in itself “the seed or potentialities (*samskaara*) of new mental activities (*vyrtti*), which necessarily have to actualize themselves, and, therefore, constitute factors of bondage.”<sup>4</sup>

#### 14. Intuitive Knowledge: Yogic *Prajñaa*

Coming back to the *nir-vicaara-samaapatti* (concentration on a subtle object without any analytical thinking) Patañjali says that in its transparency (*vaiśaaradya*) there is inner (*aadhyaatma*) quietude (*prasaada* = calmness, tranquillity, composure, serenity or clearness) (YS 1:47). At this stage of concentration there arises the intuitive knowledge (*prajñaa*) bearing the full truth (*ṛtam-bharaa*) about the object (YS 1: 48). That means, at this stage the mind being able to concentrate on the object without discursive reasoning or analytical thinking, there arises the intuitive knowledge of the object: the mind without going through the usual discursive steps of knowing, all at once knows “the object as it really is, with the integrity of all the elements which compose it, in all the richness of its reality, in its un-confoundable individuality” (Tola, 177). This is what YS 1: 41 describes as “the coloration of the mind by the object” (*tadañjanataa*): A clear crystal placed before a coloured object, is coloured by the latter and becomes a coloured crystal in which the colour and crystal appear as a single reality, although they are still different things. Similarly in yogic *prajñaa* the mind becomes “coloured” by the object in the sense “that the consciousness... is, so to say, absorbed in the object or, in other words, that the object invades and takes possession of, the entire field of consciousness” (Tola, 150).

Knowledge got through an act of hearing or inference also may be classed as *prajñaa* in so far as it brings a vivid awareness of the object concerned. But this *prajñaa* is different in character from that realized in the concentration on a subtle object without any discursive process. In the latter instance – we have named it yogic *prajñaa* – a particular (*viśeṣha*) subtle object itself with all its constituents is directly presented to the mind, while in the act of hearing or inference it is a universal or general information or idea that is presented to the mind (YS 1:49). When I hear someone say: “It is raining on the mountain,” it is just an information that

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<sup>4</sup>Tola & Dragonetti, *The Yogasūtras of Patañjali on Concentration of Mind*, 170.

occurs to the mind, not the particular object itself. Similarly, when seeing the smoke I infer the presence of fire, the mind through the premises arrives at the idea of the presence of fire, but the fire itself is not directly presented to the mind. For this reason, the *prajñāa* got through hearing or inference is not *ṛtam-bharaa*: it does not bear the full truth about the object with all its particularities and constituents; it presents the object only in a general and vague manner.<sup>5</sup>

### **15. The Unconscious and *Samskaara***

The next *sūtra* (YS 1:50) speaks of a decisive role played by the yogic *prajñāa*: it prevents the arising of all other *samskaaras*. This latter word in all the Indian religious and philosophical systems refers to the disposition of the unconscious caused by the past experiences or deeds (*karma*). Every deed, physical or mental, is said to leave an impression on the mind, which remaining in the unconscious subsequently makes the individual behave this way or that. Such impressions left in the unconscious by the past *karmas*, are also called *bijjas*, seeds of habits, character or personality traits. Sometimes called *vaasanas*, meaning inborn tendencies or dispositions, they are responsible for one’s personal ways of behaviour and responses. Thus one’s present and future are conditioned by the past *karma*. Therefore, only by controlling or restraining or even stopping the *samskaaras*, genuine changes in the personal ways of behaviour and personality traits can be effected. Hence the restraint (*nirodha*) of mental activities, which the yoga practices aim at, is much more than merely checking them from the outside, but is a process of bringing their root-causes (*bijjas*) under control. It is a matter of uncovering the unconscious and taking control of the otherwise blind forces in it. In this process the mind becomes so enlightened that there would be no more an unconscious realm in it, nor any blind power or compulsions. When, therefore, the yogic process is completed, there would be no more *samskaaras* or *vaasanas* or *bijjas* left in the mind. The yogi being a fully enlightened person his/her deeds (*karmas*) have no more blind, and, therefore, binding motives, such as selfishness (pride), envy, anger, lust, gluttony, greed and laziness, and they do not generate any more *samskaara* or *vaasana* or *bijja*. The yogi’s deeds are *nish-kaama*, and he/she has realized the *nir-bijja* state of mind called *nir-bijja-samaadhi*.

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<sup>5</sup>Tola and Dragonetti, *The Yogasūtras of Patañjali on Concentration of Mind*, 179.

## 16. End of *Samskaaras*

That the yogic *prajñaa* stops all other *samskaaras* may be explained as follows: at this stage the mind remains totally absorbed in a single subtle object. All other mental activities being totally restrained, they do not any more generate *samskaaras*. But this one activity called yogic *prajñaa* will continue to leave its impressions (*samskaaras*) on the mind, and to that extent the mind continues to have a kind of blind spot, an unconscious region, however small it may be. The *samskaara* of yogic *prajñaa* will by force continue to give rise to new acts of *prajñaa*, leaving the yogi not yet fully free and enlightened. A slight bondage remains! To rend it asunder the *prajñaa* should stop leaving any impression on the mind, and for it the *prajñaa* itself should stop to be an activity! And that is what the last *sūtra* of the first chapter of the book (YS 1:51) states: when this *samskaara* of yogic *prajñaa* also is restrained, there occurs the restraint of all mental activities (*sarva-nirodha*) including yogic *prajñaa* as an activity, resulting in *nir-biija-samaadhi* (i.e., *samaadhi* without *biija*, concentration which does not give rise to impulses to any further mental activity).

Here it is important that the yogic *prajñaa* as such does not stop, but only its compulsion to leave an impression on the mind which subsequently would necessarily result in an activity. That means, the *prajñaa* at this stage is purified of the said compulsion, rendering the mind itself spotless, fully enlightened and free; it is then a mass of consciousness, motionless and still, or an uniform flow of awareness. In it things, gross as well as subtle, material as well as spiritual, physical as well as mental, are intuited not as objects (= opposed) to the knowing subject, but as identified with the latter, the subject-object distinction having disappeared for all practical purposes, as the clear crystal placed before a coloured object becomes a coloured crystal as if the colour and crystal have become one reality.

## 17. The Cloud of Unknowing

However, this *sūtra* does not mention what exactly is the factor that frees the *prajñaa* of the compulsion to leave its *samskaara* on the mind. Patañjali leaves that question open for the reader to answer. Tola's interpretation is as follows: initially the yogic process of mental restraint and concentration is a wilful one on the part of the yogi. Gradually his/her will stops having any participation or influence in the process, which then becomes self-directed to the predetermined goal, the absolute restraint, the *samaadhi* without *biija*. "The process has become an unconscious,

automatic and autonomous process, similar to the process of the deepening of normal sleep and self-hypnotic sleep, with which... the yoga has many points in common.”<sup>6</sup>

The Christian interpretation, however, would be different. What is at issue is basically a process of the mind becoming more and more freed of compulsions (i.e., the disorientations resulting from the original sin), and enlightened, leading to the mystical / yogic experience of union with the Absolute. From the very beginning of the process, it is a project jointly accomplished by God and the human being, the latter’s role gradually decreasing and the former’s increasing. In the final stage of the process when there occurs mystical union or the contemplative knowledge or the yogic experience, the human partner becomes totally passive, while the whole work is done by God. That means what Patañjali leaves unexplained and what Tola describes as “an unconscious, automatic and autonomous process,” is, in the Christian interpretation, the role played by God, his supernatural intervention –“Ah, the sheer grace!” in the words of St John of the Cross (*The Ascent of Mount Carmel / Dark Night*, 1).<sup>7</sup> There is the God’s awakening in the devotee’s being, who passively experiences it. This is powerfully presented by St John of the Cross in the last stanza of *The Living Flame of Love*:

How gently and lovingly  
You wake in my heart,  
Where in secret you dwell alone;  
And in your sweet breathing,  
Filled with good and glory,  
How tenderly you swell my heart with love!

In Tola’s view, when the total restraint is attained not only the *prajñaa*’s *samskaara* but also the *prajñaa* itself disappears, leaving an “absolute voidness” in the mind. Describing it as “the deep calm, the profound silence,” he identifies it with what St John of the Cross calls “*ceño todo*,” the cessation of all things. We beg to differ from Tola in that the *prajñaa* as intuition or immediate, non-discursive knowledge of things cannot disappear, for the clear and direct knowledge of things is an essential dimension of yogic or mystical experience. The point then is that the knowledge of things previously was an activity disturbing the calm, the

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<sup>6</sup>Tola & Dragonetti, *The Yogasūtras of Patañjali on Concentration of Mind*, 161.

<sup>7</sup>For the writings of St John of the Cross we are following Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodrigues, O.C.D., trans., *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, Trivandrum: Carmel Publishing Centre, 1996.

silence; but in the yogic or mystical experience it is no more an activity, and the things are known not as things opposed (objects) to the knowing subject, but as one with the latter. The subject-object distinction is lost in the experience of oneness. It is like God knowing everything in himself. For him knowledge does not involve any activity, nor are the things known as opposed or different from himself. The yogi or mystic enjoys such a state of consciousness so that his/her statements or claims about it may sometimes sound monistic.

The full stanza (*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, 8), in which St John of the Cross mentions “*cešo todo*,” at once makes the Christian position clear:

I abandoned and forgot myself,  
Laying my face on my Beloved,  
All things ceased [*cešo todo*];  
I went out from myself  
Leaving my cares  
Forgotten among the lilies.

Here the mystic’s relentless efforts to purify the senses through the mortification of sense-appetites, the intellect through faith, the memory through hope, and the will through love, are very much part of his/her loving search for the Beloved. These efforts and search come to an end as he/she comes to be definitively united to him, when the latter communicates himself and his mysteries to his/her spirit directly, not through the natural faculties of senses and reason. (This could be what Patañjali calls the yogic *prajñaa*). There the human being abandons and forgets himself/herself, laying the face on the Beloved. The other side of this experience is that all other things than the Beloved cease to have any disturbing effect on him/her. It is as if for him/her they have ceased to exist. Totally undisturbed by them and free of all cares, his/her mind can now remain fully fixed on him, absorbed in him. The “*cešo todo*” thus points to the cessation of all disturbances from things in the state of one’s union with the Beloved. What is missing or taken for granted in yoga then is the reference to God – the Beloved – as the motive and goal of the process. As a result, while the yoga practice would appear as a human project for the realization of life called total restraint or concentration without seeds (*nir-biija-samaadhi*), the Christian mysticism is a jointly undertaken project of God and the human being for their becoming inseparably united to one another on a personal level of love.

However, the mutual complementariness of these two traditions is beyond dispute: while regarding the human’s role in the project they have much in common, the Christian mystic has much to contribute to the yogic understanding of God’s role in it. He/she may do so, on the one hand, by supplying what is lacking in the yoga practice, and, on the other, by making explicit what is already implied in the latter. While appreciating and endorsing much of the yoga practices, the Christian mystics would add that it being a matter of one’s relation of love with God, the latter’s role in it is crucial, for his is the initiative and vital force in it; in its final stage he plays the active role while the human being is a passive recipient. On the theoretical level, too, questions such as what constitutes the state of bondage, etc., are differently answered, although at a deeper level the same answers may very well be mutually complementary and explanatory rather than negating.

### **18. The Glory of Body**

Another point of difference, and may be of complementariness as well, that has already been hinted at, is regarding the human body. In the Christian faith the human person is a composite of spirit, mind and body, all the three of them being integral to one another. But in the *saamkhya-yoga* view the spirit (*purusha*) accidentally and sadly happens to be associated with the body-mind complex called *prakṛti*. Hence the ultimate aim of yoga practice is to dissociate and thus to liberate the *purusha* from the *prakṛiti* so that in the state of aloneness (*kaivalya*), the former regains its own form (*sva-ruupe-[a]vasthaanam*), literally parting company with the latter.

However, in the advanced states of yoga practice that precede the realization of *kaivalya* (*sarva-nirodha* / *nir-biija-samaadhi*), the yogi is said to experience almost full control of the mind and body, and be able even to manipulate them to his/her advantage. It is at this stage that he/she displays all imaginable kinds of super-human powers (*vibhūthi*) of mind and body, described extensively in YS 3. But Patañjali warns him/her against falling into the temptation of stopping short at this state of attainment. Instead he/she should maintain an attitude of detachment (*vairaagya*) towards those powers, and single-mindedly advance further to the point of total restraint / seedless concentration / *kaivalya* (YS 3: 51), where the body-mind complex is altogether given up! *Kaivalya* is also called *apavarga*, which literally means ‘abandonment’ (of *prakṛti*). The *prakṛti* thus has no share in the final state of liberation.

In the Christian tradition the understanding is obviously different. There the human person is a single being consisting of spirit and body, which St John of the Cross describes respectively as the spiritual and the sensory parts. To the former then belong the faculties of intellect, memory and will, and to the latter the interior as well as exterior senses. The composite nature of the human being is to remain eternally. However, as we have already explained in the early part of the article, at present the human nature is characterised by the disorientations, which St John of the Cross describes as rebelliousness caused by the original sin. This constitutes the unredeemed state of existence, comparable to the state of *samsaara* in the Indian terminology. The entire human nature, its sensory as well as spiritual parts alike, is affected by the disorientations, and stands in need of redemption. The ascetical practices – the yoga practices – are meant to correct the disorientations, and thus to purify the entire person of them. The end-result of the process, however, is not merely that the human person, in the sensory and spiritual parts, is freed of the disorientations, but also that he/she is positively conformed and united to the Absolute Being, which St John of the Cross and almost all other Christian mystics say is the spiritual marriage between the human and the Divine. The former experiences the glory and bliss of this union not only in the spirit but also in the body. The rebelliousness of the human nature, expressed in the disorientations, gives way to a glorious and blissful act of free and loving self-surrender to the Beloved. This experience in both the spirit and body begins already here on earth, and culminates hereafter in the state of resurrection. This is beautifully sung by St John of Cross in the last stanza of *The Spiritual Canticle*:

No one looked at me  
Nor did Aminadab;  
The siege was still;  
And the cavalry,  
At the sight of the waters, descended.

The saint's own commentary on these lines is as follows: In the state of spiritual marriage, which takes place in the present world, the bride is so detached and withdrawn from all the created things that none of them any more distracts or disturbs her. Aminadab, the devil, being conquered and put to flight, no longer appears before her. "The siege" is the collective name for the passions and appetites; of them the former are now well ordered and directed toward God, and the latter are mortified. The cavalry, namely the sensory part, with all its strength, faculties, and appetites is in



harmony with the spirit, and its rebelliousness brought into subjection. The interior as well as exterior senses are so purified and conformed to the spiritual part that they discontinue their natural operations and become recollected, and thereby share in and enjoy, in their own fashion, “the waters,” namely, the spiritual grandeurs which God communicates in the inwardness of the spirit. The bride then takes the freedom of pleading with the Beloved to transfer her from the spiritual marriage here on earth to the glorious marriage in the eternal world of the resurrected.