

## 45. The Yoga of Business

The title may startle the readers. The juxtaposition of the two words may seem queer. Generally in India, we associate Yoga with Sannyasis, with saffron robes, with retreating to forest, with doing miracles and so on. It would appear as if yoga can have nothing to do with business, which is entirely mundane, because yoga indicates other-worldliness and business indicates getting immersed in essentially practical, material things. But such a view is based upon an erroneous conception of what yoga stands for.

Yoga literally means union, and practically it means that which helps human soul to achieve union with the Over-Soul. In this view there cannot be anything inconsistent between yoga and business. God is the best businessman. He is the eternal Actor. Nothing in this manifested world is outside Him. According to the Gita, "having created this universe He lives and moves in His creation". If one seeks union with the Great Builder, he has to train himself to be like Him down here. All the slipshodness which one would expect from the erroneous view of yoga above referred to will disappear. If only we shall do everything as unto Him or to please Him or in a manner which will be, however faintly, similar to how He does things, all our actions down here will be characterized by striking orderliness, remarkable efficiency and amazing enthusiasm. That is why the Lord said in the Gita that Yoga is verily "skill in action".

The first essential thing in Yoga is to recognise that we cannot escape from this world. We have to be here and achieve the highest; and that is certainly possible. People have achieved it in the past, why should we not achieve now? It is not so much the magnitude of the thing that we do that counts, but *how* we do it. It is the attitude of mind which you apply to a piece of work which makes you a Yogi. The Bhagavad Gita is verily a gospel of action. It gives us a code of conduct which takes in its big sweep the extreme other-worldliness of India and the incessant physical activity of the West. A story is told that, when a Sannyasi could not learn his lessons in Yoga, he was directed to learn it from a butcher. A superficial thinker may think that a butcher's shop was the last place to learn Yoga. When Arjuna wanted to know the characteristic attributes of a Yogi, he asked the Lord, "What is he like? How does he speak, how does he sit, how does he walk?" and so on. The inference is obvious. We must be able to recognize a Yogi in all these things.

In India unfortunately the other-worldly tendency has been very strong for a long time. That might have been good once. Those times are past,

"New actions teach new duties;  
Time makes ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still and onward,  
Who would keep abreast of truth."

(Lowell)

This misguided idea of Yoga has been to some extent responsible for all that we have gone through during the last few centuries.

In the eyes of the Lord the spirit in which we serve counts much more than how the world applaude our action. If we do anything in the proper spirit it will make a beautiful offering to the Lord.

"A servant with his clause  
Makes drudgery divine,  
Who sweeps a room as for his laws  
Makes that small action fine."

A man cannot really do a big thing well who has not trained himself in doing small things well. And so it is best to start doing everything well, as unto the Lord, as an offering worthy to be accepted by the Lord. Inefficiency and carelessness are the greatest obstacles to Yoga.

Now it would be clear how Yoga has a place in business. Yoga itself is a real business. It involves taking oneself in hand seriously. It depends upon sustained, well-planned, one-pointed effort. To whatever matter a Yogi applies himself, he will give his whole mind to it, and will not allow slipshodness or carelessness to interfere with the performance of his work. If a butcher can be a Yogi, if King Janaka can be a great Yogi (quoted by Sri Krishna as an example), if a paraya labourer like Nanda, a weaver