

Patanjali Week Celebration

an event celebrating YOGA
and the great compiler of the Yoga Sutras

SHRI MAHARISHI PATANJALI

An event that happens every year on his birthday
from 18th to 24th October 2011
BHOPAL – INDIA

by Emy Blesio (MM Yogacharya Pandit Gayatri Devi)

Why this event?

Yoga, its deep spirituality, its science ... It's a Humanity's heritage that, in my opinion, should not be restricted to few... and just for this reason, since 1998, I am organizing events in order to spread worldwide this deep discipline. And I would like to thank all those who are walking this path with me and are always next to me in this arduous task.

But there's a deeper reason behind this commitment by all of us: the awareness that nowadays the real essence of Yoga is being misrepresented and that it is being lost. Contamination begins in the West because the western mind struggles to follow a discipline as complex as the traditional yoga is, perhaps for reasons concerning lack of time, or low attention, business or some others that are unknown to me, but now it's spreading in the East, in Asia too, because of globalization.

In the past times, techniques inspired by the ancient Yoga discipline were invented, even if it has been taken into consideration only a thousandth part of it, only a fingernail. And so, various things as autogenic trainings (inspired to Chetana Kriya); stretching (inspired to Hatha- ena of Kshatriya), Yoga with instruments (cushions, cubes, spheres, balls ...) were born. All those creations have not been negative, but rather a help to open the Western minds to alternatives disciplines and to spread them, but, unfortunately, it has happened that, now, we have an exaggerated work on the so-called "*fusion*", that actually ends up to be "*confusion*".

It first, started with a part of Yoga, enlarging it to the paroxysm, and then mixed with some element of fashion making it a *Masala Yoga*, over the last years, many new lines were created, and other new ones constantly born, just for superficiality, or for business, and they are called Yoga, even if they have nothing similar or in common with Yoga, not even the nail described above, and this "newborn lines" are spreading a false, distorted, misrepresented message that, unfortunately, has reached, and influenced even the same place where authentic Yoga was born: India.

And we can observe a proliferation of an unlikely laughing yoga, (unlikely because in order to be therapeutic and with the aim to break internal blocks, a laugh must be out of control, and without discipline. Just the opposite of what yoga is, discipline and self-control. It would have been better to call it " laugh therapy", why to deface the term "yoga"?), and anti-gravity yoga (antigravity? In Yoga is called *Laghima* and, I assure you, does not use bands, ribbons or hammocks hanging from the ceiling), and so on ... Power Yoga, Yoga Pilates, until a complete degeneration with one of the latest creations invented by pseudo-expert people: the space-Yoga juice, so called just because in this space there were offered organic juices.

And, in the meanwhile, we're forgetting, more indeed, we know nothing about the

SACREDNESS OF YOGA.

My desire is to spread this discipline with the right value and importance transmitted by the sages of the past (Rishi), with the same energy and power. I would like that Yoga could improve the society, clean the thought, make it pure, and establish an awareness that leaves no room for intolerance, violence and wars. An awareness that teaches respect for all Creation.

RESPECT.

A word that, if it were understood and implemented, would solve the 99.99% of the problems of the planet.

Respect for the Earth (which is our Mother, that gives us life, that nourishes, protects, punishes us, supports our feet, and welcomes us in her womb at the end of the Breath), plants and flowers (they are our air, without plants there would be no life for us), animals, big and small ones (they are our brothers and sisters, without them there would be no life for us), and human beings, young and old, males and females, yes even women (we are all part of a great soul of a single immense Breath).

ALL CREATION must be respected.

But if I look at the manner Creation is treated (Planet, animals, vegetation, minerals, etc...), I can say that maybe we don't have very clear the concept of Respect for Creation.

Degeneration is around us, and certainly it doesn't honor the human being.

Degeneration, which can be seen also in those who, only superficially, follow the deep path of Yoga and in this manner disqualify, depreciate, degrade... damage it.

During a debate which followed my lecture in Italy, a lady confessed me her disappointment for the improper behavior of her guru that, eventually, led her to give up her Yoga practice. I gave her no advice, but simply I mentioned my own similar experience: at the beginning of my path in yoga, after several disappointments with people who were not very honest and clean on their path, disheartened, I decided to stop doing my practice. *If these are the results of Yoga...* I told to myself, and I devoted me only to a self analysis through the meditation. One day, I was climbing on a mountain trail, pensive, pondering on my spiritual path in crisis, when I suddenly came to a valley and meet a mountain man who was making honey. I decided to buy a jar of it for my little niece, but the man had only big jars of Honey, so I told him that for my needs that jar was too big. The old man, with a smile under his white mustache, reassured me: that honey, being a pure one, could have been kept for over ten years and more. It should have been enough to transfer it into several smaller jars and consume it one a time, so I put a whole kilo of honey in my backpack and when I headed for the exit of the hut, his voice reached me at the door: *"Be careful, however, to use clean small jars because even the purest honey, in dirty jars go bad."*

I froze in the doorway as if stroked by lightning. It had become quite clear: *It was not the Yoga that was dirty ... but the containers!*

From that moment I started to practice again, and now, after more than 40 years, I'm still practicing.... and... trying to avoid the "dirty containers".

So, it's important to be "pure containers" for ourselves but also for others, and Yoga (the real one, as was codified by Patanjali) could do this miracle.

To demonstrate what I'm saying, let's try to make a digression on the eight steps encoded by Maharishi Patanjali ... go on to analyze the **AshtangaYoga**.

ASHTANGA YOGA consists of eight levels to reach self-realization, not a style but a systematic compilation or codification of classical yoga, later called Raja Yoga (royal yoga), and of which the wise Patanjali is the reference point, by suggesting the best route to achieve self-realization and liberation (moksha) from rebirth's circle.

In the beginning transmitted orally from Guru to chela (initiation), reserved to the men only, was then brought to the attention of those who wanted to follow it. In short, a text of very useful "*Instructions*" for the improvement of the human being. So I summarize, in a few lines, these eight important steps.

The first two steps consist of the so-called moral discipline (even if it goes beyond social morality), which includes the five rules Yama (harmonizing the interpersonal relationships) and the five observances Niyama (harmonizing the relationship with oneself).

In the first step, the **Yama**, the practitioner should, therefore, with respect mentioned earlier, abstain from offending the so-called animate and inanimate creatures in respect of all Creation (**Ahimsa**); be truthful, coherent and non-offensive (**Satya**); should refrain from taking what does not belong to you (**Asteya**); have self-control on passions and emotions (**Brahmacharya**); and not take more than necessary (**Aparigraha**).

The second step concerns the **Niyama**, suggesting a correct approach to compliance with oneself, that is: to maintain purity and cleanliness of body, the spirit and the surrounding environment, to show respect for the planet Earth, its soil, keep it clean as deserves a sacred thing (**Saucha**); feel satisfied and happy with what one have and not wanting more (**Samtoshha**); try with perseverance, power and decision (to test own limitations) to achieve the self-realization (**Tapas**); devote to research, knowledge and deeper study of the deep Self (**Svadhyaya**); and, finally, to meditate and focus on the Principle, the Origin, to develop intuition and surrendering to the One (**Ishvara-Pranidhana**).

The third step concerns **Asana**, the psycho-physical postures. Asana means seat, throne, comfortable posture, therefore, the practice of these positions involve natural wellness and harmony, because "*Yoga that hurts is a Yoga that is not properly done*".

The fourth step contemplates the use of **Pranayama** (breath control), which is a basic function, very important; life begins with an inhalation and ends with an exhalation. The breath control allows acquisition of awareness, clarity, develops intuition and allows to bring attention to the present: here and now.

The fifth step: Pratyahara corresponds to retirement of the senses, the withdrawal of consciousness and the senses from outside to inside, an absorption that leads to the next step.

The sixth step provides for concentration: **Dharana** allows the mind to focus on one object excluding all others. This eliminates distractions in a condensation of attention, leading to a higher spiritual level.

In the seventh step you come to **Dhyana**, which is mistranslated as meditation, but the more appropriate term should be "contemplation" (because is the workings of the mind that should be removed), which is divided into other levels. In Gheranda Samhita is divided into three parts. The first part is called concrete, coarse (*Sthula*), the second is called brighter (*Jyotis*), and the third subtle (*Sukshma*).

Dhyana is a natural consequence of the **eighth step, Samadhi**, which is the supreme ecstasy, the immersion into the Whole. The non-separation. When the two become ONE. Obviously, this stage has several levels. Patanjali says that there are two: the conscious (Samprajnata) and unconscious (Asamprajnata). These are then subdivided into others. In fact, everyone can experience his own personal Samadhi.

However, I would like to point out that the path does not strictly follow these steps. A level cannot be dissociated from the other, but they interpenetrate, and everyone could twist the above list.

... And, all this, is not a "*style of yoga*" but a "*way of life*", a "*lifestyle*".

So, summarizing, I would like to say that Yoga is Yoga, tested by a minimum of 6000 years and for thus we believe in its great potential established over the millennia, and we have seen the results. All questionable attributes that are arrogated and assigned are just unfounded rumors.

Here, all of this is one of the reasons we want to organize events such as Patanjali Week Celebration in Bhopal, India, and many other events like the Festival of India: the West meets East "MitalIndia", the International Congress of Yoga & Ayurveda and the symposium of Spirituality "Rays of a Unique Light", every year we organize in cooperation with people who understand the meaning and importance of spreading the culture and science of the Yoga tradition, because ...

... As a cut tree, without roots, cannot give flowers and fruits, becoming sterile, so yoga without its origins becomes distorted and cannot produce fruit and ends up as a sterile dry thing.

... Well, we would like to give back to Yoga its roots.

Hari Om Tat Sat

Emy Blesio



**"Save knowledge!
Knowledge will save us!"**