

Chapter 16 The god within

To his yoga students Jeevah made it abundantly clear that, "Yoga is not a religion but a methodology that enables one to become god; it is above religion because it has been freed from religious trappings and rituals." For us in the West, this is a subtle distinction but nevertheless true. In stating that yoga was not a religion he is not denying it is spiritual; to the contrary it is the highest form of spirituality, the exact essence of spirituality. He would explain that yoga's methods are not aimed at earning merit in order to appease god, but rather to master oneself, to perfect oneself, thereby discovering the god within. Meditation is the method employed to find the god within, cultivating detachment of the true-self from the world.

I now realize that looking within to find god brings about a focus upon oneself, which inevitably leads to elevation of 'self'. Yoga justifies this focus on the self as the journey necessary to discover the true-self. This true-self is supposedly god within us, as distinct from the natural-self. The natural-self is to be diminished through cultivating detachment from worldly desires.

Yoga, whether Hatha yoga or Kundalini yoga, or any other form of yoga, treats 'self' as god. Self-realization is to find the god within, to unite with god, to become god.

The aim of meditation, practiced in eastern religion, is self-realization. This is achieved through an altered state of consciousness, derived through meditation. When self-realization is achieved, the person supposedly escapes the wheel of reincarnation and enters 'samadhi' or bliss.

In his book, "Death of a Guru", Rabindranath Maharaj, as a young Indian yogi, explains his feelings as he himself aspired to become a great yogi as his deceased father had been:

*"Although I did not yet consider myself to have fully achieved Self-realization, I felt that I was very close to jivanmukti, the highest ideal for man set forth in the Bagavad-Gita. To attain this deliverance from original ignorance while still in the body would assure me that I would never be reincarnated again, but would be reunited with Brahman, my true Self, forever. I was now convinced that this was the state my father had reached, and I sought the same liberation from the illusion of individual existence. I was the one and only Brahman, pure existence-consciousness-bliss; so it was to be expected that other people, recognizing the degree to which I had realized this loftiest ideal, should bow down and worship me. Indeed, seated before a mirror I worshiped myself. And why not? I was God. Krishna, in the precious and beautiful Bhagavad-Gita had promised this divine knowledge to the one who practiced yoga."*¹

However years later, the young guru had an encounter with the one true God, as he was about to bestow his blessing on a poor girl who offered him a few coins, for her a great sacrifice:

"I glanced at her offering of coins uncomfortably. Of course I had much to give her in exchange. Reaching out to touch her forehead in bestowal of my blessing, I was startled by a voice of unmistakable omnipotent authority: "You...are...not...God!"...My arm froze in mid-air. The words smote me like the slash of a cutlass felling the tall green cane. Instinctively I knew that the true God, the Creator of all, had spoken these words, and I began to tremble...I felt that I must fall at the holy feet of the true God and ask his forgiveness." 2

In Hindu yogic philosophy, self-effort is the means of salvation. This is in direct opposition to Biblical Christianity, where human effort will never help us to reach God. Salvation is through Jesus Christ alone. Salvation is only found by humbling ourselves to accept His forgiveness for sins, and by His grace alone can we be seen fit for heaven. Acknowledging only Jesus Christ as our Saviour, can save us.

For it is by grace are we saved through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8,9)

It is by the name of Jesus Christ...Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4: 10-12)

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ. (1 Timothy 2:5)

We can only really understand and come to know the true God through a divine revelation. How is this divine revelation possible? Only through seeking. Those who are seeking have taken the first step to finding the true God. However it is important not to give up the search until you have encountered the supernatural experience – a divine revelation of Jesus: not just a man, but God. Part of seeking is studying the Bible and praying.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." (Luke 11:9,10)

Yoga strives for idealism without fault; wanting to change the individual and the world to a higher selfless state; to banish greed and selfishness. This sounds like a noble ideal. It sounds selfless, and yet this whole philosophy is based on the 'goodness' of self; self is god; self can achieve great things without the help of the true God, the God of the Bible.

The Bible teaches the opposite: humility. This means being humble enough to admit that you are wrong, that you need forgiveness. Jesus Christ is the only one who can forgive. Unless we look to Him for forgiveness, He died for nothing. He is God.

My personal experience in yoga was one of continual striving for good. However I now see it as striving to serve self. What is the true motivation for good works? Our yoga school in particular was a model when it came to 'goodness'. It was idealistic, without fault, wanting to change the world to a higher selfless state. It aimed to banish greed and selfishness, yet the true God was not in it. All our striving was from humanistic effort. Unless a person is serving out of true love for God and willingness to serve Him alone, helping becomes self-centred. As yoga students we helped others because in so doing we helped ourselves. We dedicated ourselves to good works to promote our journey to self-realization, the sublimation of self. The focus was self; it was plainly selfishness and deceptively sold as altruism.

"There are only two religions: man is god, or God is God." (Frank Peretti)

'Man is god' is the religion of humanism. The belief that everything is god and god is everything is known as pantheism. In western yoga, humanism and pantheism merge. Stripping eastern yoga of its religious elements brings yoga into agreement with humanist thought, which predominates in the West. Secular humanism considers all forms of the supernatural as myth, and that the supernatural – that is, anything outside nature, does not exist. Humanism implies that nature is everything, and there is no supernatural. This is the humanist's 'world view'.³

A worldview is any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world, and man's relations to God and the world.⁴

Everyone has a worldview. *Not* to have one would be *not* to think. Our worldview serves as a basis for evaluation. We measure the facts, ideas or opinions around us against our own worldview. In order to formulate a correct worldview it is important to discern, to discriminate and to weigh up all things against truth.

A Biblical worldview is based on the following presuppositions:

- God created heaven and earth by His supernatural power
- Truth and non-truth; right and wrong, are spelt out clearly in the Bible
- Disobedience to God and the Bible is sin
- God is the final authority

A humanist worldview is based on these presuppositions:

- There is no God
- The world came into being of its own accord
- There are no absolutes.

- We should be free to choose our own values.
- *Self* is the final authority

Whichever worldview we choose, the choice is ours to make. However the choice we do make determines the kind of eternity we are destined for. Every man's destiny is in his own hands. Can there be a more profound decision?

End notes:

1. Maharaj, R. R., *Death of a Guru*, U.K 1978, p. 60
2. *Ibid*, p. 108
3. Noebel, D.A., *Understanding the Times*, U.S.A., 1996, p. 26
4. *Ibid*, p. 58