

What's at the Heart of Yoga?



“Uniting the soul with Spirit is Yoga — reunion with that great Happiness everyone is seeking. Isn't this a wonderful definition? In the ever new Bliss of Spirit you are convinced that the joy you feel is greater than any other happiness, and nothing can get you down.”

— Paramahansa Yogananda

Meditation has been at the heart of India's philosophy of Yoga since ancient times. Its purpose can be found in the literal meaning of the word *yoga*: “union”—of our individual consciousness or soul with the infinite, eternal Bliss, or Spirit.

To achieve this union with the blissful consciousness of Spirit—and thus free ourselves from all forms of suffering—requires the patient practice of meditation by following a time-tested and systematic process. That is, we need to apply a science.

Raja (“royal”) Yoga is that complete science of God-realization—the step-by-step methods of meditation and right action prescribed in the scriptures of yoga, which have been handed down for millennia as the essential practices of India's *Sanatana Dharma* (“Eternal Religion”). It is this timeless and universal science of yoga which underlies the esoteric teachings at the heart of all true religions.

The Self-Realization Fellowship Raja Yoga teachings outline a way of life leading to perfect unfoldment in body, mind, and soul, based on the foundation of Kriya Yoga, which includes the *pranayama* (life-force control) technique mentioned but not explicated by Bhagavan Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita and the sage Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras*. Lost to humanity at large for many centuries, Kriya Yoga was revived for the modern age by a line of renowned yoga masters: Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Paramahansa Yogananda.

Paramahansa Yogananda was chosen by his venerable line of gurus to bring the science of Kriya Yoga to the West and disseminate it worldwide; and it was for this purpose that he

Kriya Yoga to the west and disseminate it worldwide; and it was for this purpose that he established Self-Realization Fellowship in 1920.

Central to the balanced Kriya Yoga path is the daily practice of the scientific meditation techniques taught by Paramahansa Yogananda in the *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons*. By practicing meditation we learn how to still the restlessness of the body and mind, so we can experience lasting peace, love, wisdom, and joy as the very nature of our being—no matter what is happening in the world around us.

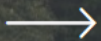
“Meditate more. You do not know how wonderful it is. It is much greater to meditate than to spend hours seeking money or human love or anything else that you can think of. The more you meditate, and the more your mind stays centered in the spiritual state during activity, the more you will be able to smile. I am always there now, in that bliss-consciousness of God. Nothing affects me; whether I am alone or with people, that joy of the Lord is always there. I have retained my smile—but to win it permanently was hard work! The same smiles are there within you; the same joy and bliss of the soul is there. You don't have to acquire them, but rather regain them.”

– Paramahansa Yogananda

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