
Ancient Yoga and Modern Science is a nice slim volume on yoga philosophy and its relevance to modern living and science. In a short span of 100 pages, this volume covers good ground on various yogas and their multiple aspects. It clearly carries the imprint of the erudite personality of its author, T. R. Anantharaman, one of the best known metallurgists of India and a life-long practitioner of yoga.

The author clearly sets out the practical and spiritual goals of yoga: ‘In Yoga we are concerned with those aspects of Paravidiya (spirituality) and Aparavidiya (science) which have a direct bearing on human growth and evolution at different levels; the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Thus, in some way, particularly from the practical view point, yoga is even more important for our students than science and spirituality as such, because of its direct involvement in the integrated growth, total health and ultimate fulfilment of human being’. In support he quotes the Bhagavad Gita: ‘Adhyatma-vidya vidyanam (aham)’.

Indeed, one of the distinctive features of this volume is the chapter ‘On Yoga of Bhagavad Gita’. Although the Upanishads and Patanjali’s yoga sutras are authoritative accounts of yoga, they are not as accessible to the modern reader as the Bhagavad Gita. It is rarely emphasized in books on Yoga philosophy that even though the Gita (as the Song of God is briefly, affectionately and more commonly referred to) is a major work on Karma Yoga, it has given enough attention to other Yogas. Indeed, it gives all essentials of Dhyana Yoga in fair detail: who is fit to follow it, how to sit, breathe, concentrate one’s vision between the eyes, make the mind one pointed and practice meditation on the self to purify mind–intellect complex. And, of course, what distinguishes a self-realized yogi and sthita-prajna.

Chapter 6 gives ancient yoga in modern idiom. Referring to Yoga Sutras, Upanishads and the Gita, the author brings out aspects of Bahranga Yoga and Antanraga Yoga—the outer-physical and mental—and spiritual limbs of yoga practices and their effects. The early signs of the evolution of a yoga practitioner and more basic changes in later stages are clearly brought out. For example, the first signs of advancement in yoga are lightness of body, good physical and mental health, non-covetousness, clearness of complexion, pleasing voice, agreeable body odour and scantiness of excretions. The more advanced yogi becomes a sthita prajna (as defined in Gita) with definite attributes—beyond passion, fear and anger.

To describe the supramental state that a yogi attains to, the author extensively quotes Aurobindo, one of the most cerebral mystics of modern times: normal mental nature and thought are based on a consciousness of the finite, but supramental nature is in its very grain a consciousness and power of the infinite: hence arises our difficulty in understanding and describing supramental nature. He then quotes extensively from the Life Divine by Aurobindo to explicate the nature and levels of consciousness as experienced by Aurobindo himself. The phenomenon of shedding of veils—the so-called sheaths—to get a tangible view of the Ananda state is clearly delineated. The author refers to the experiences of the French mystic Teilhard de Chardin and compares them with those of Aurobindo and ones described in the Upanishads.

The scientific explanation and connection with yoga brought out in the book (to my understanding) are rather tenuous. There are some excellent analogies in the book such as from the field of metallurgy, the area of scientific specialization of the author, and nuclear science to describe evolution of consciousness. But these are analogies nevertheless, in the same spirit as given earlier by the sages; the latter referred to real life observations. The sterling progress that is now being made in this respect is by psychologists and physicists in the emerging area of consciousness to which the author refers rather briefly.

I have a couple of points of disagreement with the author. Jawahar Lal Nehru was a great humanist and a poet (remember his tryst with destiny) and, of course, a politician, but he can hardly be placed in the company of Vinoba Bhave or Gandhi. I do not find much discussion of Gandhi’s experiments with some
aspects of yoga—his devotional regimens, his periods of silence and his inner voices. Insistence on brahmacharya, a wide term which includes celibacy or sexual continence, the author avers, is not justified (p. 39). This may be a practical viewpoint in these permissive days, when celibacy is difficult to practise, but all the great men the author refers to (p. 40) who lived long following a yogic discipline were known for their puritanical ways. These include Maharsi Karve, M. Visvesvaraya, Bhagwan Das, C. Rajagopalachari and Moraji Desai.

What I sorely missed in the book was some personal experiences of the author in the realm of spirituality and anubhuti. Perhaps, in the true Indian tradition, he was not keen to let them be known.

A conspicuous absence in the book is the discussion of the philosophy of Ramana Maharshi, the sage who first attained realization and then propounded his ideas. He verified the Vedic teachings in the light of his own experiences.

Altogether, however, Ancient Yoga and Modern Science is an excellent addition to books on yoga written in a lucid style reflecting the professorial background of the author. It can serve a good introduction to yoga philosophy and practice. The foreword by D. P. Chattopadhyaya is entirely in consonance with the theme of the book. The book has been prepared elegantly in the series 'History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture'. It has a pleasing look and compares very well with the series on Indian philosophy published by State University of New York at Stony Brook. The reviewer recommends it to all those who are seeking answers to some of the perennial questions.

P. L. SACHDEV
Department of Mathematics,  
Indian Institute of Science,  
Bangalore 560 012, India

---

**ORISSA BIGYAN ACADEMY**

**SAMANTA CHANDRA SEKHAR AWARD FOR 1997**

(FOR ORIYA SCIENTISTS WORKING OUTSIDE ORISSA)

The Government of Orissa, Department of Science and Technology has instituted one Samanta Chandra Sekhar (SCS) Award to be given each year for outstanding research contributions, during the five years preceding the year of the award by Oriya Scientists, working outside the State of Orissa, in any area of (1) Physical Sciences, (2) Life Sciences, (3) Engineering and Technology. Persons to be eligible for consideration for this award (a) should be Oriya by birth or domicile, (b) should have passed at least one of the following examinations from any recognized Institution/Board/University in Orissa.

(i) Higher Secondary.
(ii) Graduate degree in any branch of Science, Engineering and Technology.
(iii) Post-Graduate degree in any branch of Science, Engineering and Technology.

The value of the award is Rs 15,000 (Rupees fifteen thousand only) and this is to be awarded through the Orissa Bigyan Academy. Nominations for this award for the year 1997 are invited from Heads of Research Institutions/Laboratories/Universities/Colleges/Heads of concerned P.G. Departments in Universities or Colleges in public or private sector, inside/outside the State of Orissa and from S.C.S. Award winners. Nominations from other responsible citizens/Government Departments may also be considered subject to their acceptance by the Executive Council of the Academy. Five copies of the duly filled-in nomination proforma, along with other particulars stated therein, are to be sent to the address mentioned at the bottom. The Secretary may please be contacted, either by post or in person for obtaining nomination proforma and other particulars. The last date for receiving nominations for this award is 18 August (Tuesday) 1998.

Secretary, Orissa Bigyan Academy, Type-4R/25, Unit-IX(F), Bhubaneswar 751 007. Phone: 412468

---