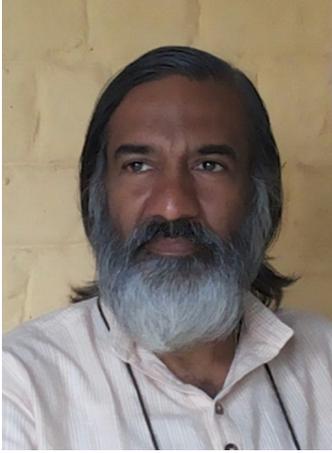




Inner-work Through Yoga

By Raghu Ananthanarayanan



Raghu Ananthanarayanan

Co-Founder Quinergy Leadership Academy Pvt Ltd

Co-Founder Ritambhara Ashram

Co-Founder Sumedhas Academy For Human Context

Co-Founder FLAME TAO Knoware Pvt Ltd

Contact e-mails: raghu@totallyalignedorganization.com; raghu.tao@gmail.com



Inner-work Through Yoga

Prof Pulin Garg had an abiding interest in the Shastras. When ISISD was started, the interpretation of the Shastras was an important part of the theory of process work. I was studying Yoga in the traditional manner with Yogacharya Krishnamacharya and his son T.K.V.Desikachar at this time. Pulin and I had long discussions with Shri. Desikachar on the basic tenets of process work and the Yoga Sutra. We selected 60+ sutras that focus on the processes of perception, meaning making and self-reflectivity. After having a brief discussion on each, we embarked on a long-term process of decoding the meaning of these sutras in relationship to process work. This paper will take a few of these sutras to elaborate upon and show the parallels between the Yoga Sutra and Inner Work.

We have defined the idea of self; the processes (*avidya*) by which the Self (*draShta*) gets veiled by the self (*asmita*); the practices that lead to insight (*viveka khyAti*) into the nature of *avidya*; the practices that enable one to shed *avidya* and *asmita* and gain a clear unclouded mind. The processes in yoga are very convergent with the practice of process work.



Inner Work Through Yoga

Opening remarks

Prof Pulin Garg had an abiding interest in the Shastras. My relationship with him centered around his deep interest in the Yoga Sutras. From the first encounter I had with him in Agra, when ISISD was started, the interpretation of the Shastras was the bedrock of our dialogues. It started with my challenging him on the meaning of “*vyavasAyatmika buddhi*”, a word that occurs in the Bhagavad Gita but originates in Sankhya.

Very soon after this lab, Pulin and Jitendra Parikh came to Chennai and stayed with Sashi and I for about 6 weeks. Pulin and I had long discussions with Shri. Desikachar on the basic tenets of process work and the Yoga Sutra. We selected 60+ sutras that focus on the processes of perception, meaning making and self-reflectivity. After having a brief discussion on each, we embarked on a long-term process of decoding the meaning of these sutras in relationship to process work. This paper will take a few of these sutras to elaborate upon and show the parallels between the Yoga Sutra and Inner Work.

I prepared a manuscript called “Inner Work Through Yoga”. Both Pulin and Shri. Desikachar went through the work and approved it. However, several changes in the context meant that the book was not published. Pulin put together his point of view in the “Aphorisms on Process Work”. Vipin Garg and I spent about two weeks in Ahmedabad working on the Aphorisms.

My work has focused more and more narrowly on an understanding of these sutras in depth. I conducted an R&C Dialogue in Sumedhas on “Inner Work Through Yoga”. The gist of this is available in a series of videos.



What is Inner Work?

I have translated the term '*svAdhyAya*' from the *Yoga Sutras* into "Inner Work". A related idea in the *sutras* is "*antaranga sAdhana*" - diligent practice / exercise of the inner faculties.

This concept is best illustrated through the story of Brighu and Varuni.

This story speaks about how the boy works with and within himself to come up with questions and their resolutions. Brighu approaches the father Varuni with a question and is asked to contemplate. The son returns with the answer, Varuni affirms the insights of Brighu. The discovery is not complete, so Brighu returns with the next question, Varuni commends him on the question and says "do *tapasya*, it is through *tapas* that you will find the answer". The process repeats till all the questions are exhausted. *tapas* is the intense enquiry into ones own inner processes.

The first world that Brighu explores is the world of material processes – the '*annamaya kosha*' – the 'I' encompassing instinctive action and driven by trust.

The second world is the world of biological processes (as in autonomous system) – the '*pranamaya kosha*' – the 'I' encompassing survival related action and a drive for power.

The third world is the world of mental processes – the '*manomaya kosha*'. The 'I' comprising knowledge of time and consequence and driven by conformity.

The fourth world is the world of insight – the '*vignanamaya kosha*' – the 'I' that seeks to go beyond the confines of the known driven by curiosity and affection for the other.



The fifth is the world of rapture – the ‘*anandamaya kosha*’ – the ‘I’ of creative unfolding in rhythm with the order of the universe.

Each inner space calls for a different way of working with oneself and a different level of commitment to oneself, a different level of energy mobilisation.

What are the key insights one can get from the Yoga Sutra?

The Yoga Sutra is replete with insights about the individual psyche and its immense potentials. We will look at a few ideas to get a sense of its relevance to process work.

avidya kshetram

Sutra 2.4 - *Avidya ksetram-uttaresam prasupta-tanu-vicchinna-udaranam*

Ignorance or misapprehension is the field in which the roots of other kleshas reside. They are either in a dormant seed like state or nascent sprouted state or distinctly developed stage.

The mind according to Yoga consists of three layers. The deepest is called *buddhi*, the next layer is called *ahamkara* and the most superficial is called *manas*. Most of us live in the superficial layer of *manas* and therefore experience the world as concrete and filled with discrete and separate objects. Our sense of self i.e., our identity comes from our identifications, and at this level our identity is derived from relationships with the object world. Other people are part of this object world that causes *raga* or craving and *dvesha* or aversion. The identity is therefore not only constructed in a concrete way but also imbued with the tension of *duhkha*. This *duhkha* is caused by the craving for pleasure and yearning for what is not as well as the aversion to pain and having what one does not want. When one is looking at oneself and the world from the level of *manas*, one is not aware of the way in which one is grasping and holding on to the past as if it is enduring and as a consequence constantly reinforcing our constructed sense of self. This complex is called the *avidya kshetram*, and the



conditioned ideas of self and the world are like seeds embedded in the soil of *avidya*. This ground and the seeds lie in the deep recesses of ones mind and can lie latent for long periods of time. They manifest when the external conditions evoke them.

duHkha nivAraNa

Sutra 2.11 – *dhyAna-heyAstad-vrttayaH*

Through *dhyAna* one burns the seeds of *avidya*

When these seeds get evoked or provoked into acting up they engulf the person from within, and the whole psyche-soma is in a different state. To end the potency of these seeds one needs to do *dhyAna* on the whole process of the seed growing into a tree and becoming dormant again, but with reinforcement to its power. The de-potentising of the seeds is the ending of *duHkha* i.e., *duHkha nivAraNa*.

This is where the YS sutra differs from what we often see in process work. *dhyAna* is deep subtle observation, and one has to develop a mind capable of this observation. This is a silent process, and the only help a person can offer is by being a *vEtarAgaviShayam*. A *vEtarAgaviShayam* could be seen as the ideal facilitator. The *vEtarAgaviShayam* is a mind that reflects the other perfectly because it has cleansed itself of all potential to be disturbed by *rAga* and *dveshaH*. It is a mind capable of “listening with a listening where the other becomes what he(she) is meant to be” (in the words of Carl Rogers when he speaks about a mind that is anchored in TAO). The yoga Sutra is very clear that this *dhyAna* is a state beyond words, and has the power to burn the seeds that create *avidya*. It uses the term *dagdha bEjam*. Any attempt to transform the psyche that is not anchored in *dhyAna* is called *karmajam karma* and is at best a temporary deformation of one’s *svadharm*.



antaranga sAdhana

Sutra 3.7 - trayam-antarangam pUrvebhyaH

This process of samyama (dhAraNA, dhyAna, samAdhi) is more inward, compared to the earlier.

What is the inner journey? One has to let go the grasping and clinging to the superficial world i.e., the world that seems to consist of separate, distinct objects called the *vishesha* level of the manifestation of *prakrti*. This grasping is powered by desires and aversions and a fear of death, which is a fear of letting go of one's constructed identity called *asmita*. The Yoga Sutra offers many methods to discover how one's *antaranga* inner faculties are used so that one locates oneself in the subtler levels of mind. This is the central practice of yoga- discovering the space of *shAntam* within from which the subtler levels of the self become visible is the keystone of *antaranga sAdhana*.

vyvasAyatmika buddhi

Sutra 2.19 - visheSha-avisheSha-lingamAtra-alingAni guna-parvAni

The unfolding of the *guNa*-s is in stages. They are distinct, not distinct, discoverable, and non discoverable. The *manas* is that activity of the mind (*chitta*) that apprehends the world of distinct manifestation; the *ahamkAra* is that activity of the mind that creates the sense of self; *buddhi* is pure awareness and acts at the level of the discoverable.

The concept of a *vyvasAyatmika buddhi* is based on Sankhya and is a central idea in the Bhagavad Gita also. The "normal" level of self awareness is the activity of the *manas*: being anxious about the future, planning, grasping external objects and so on; when the mind becomes more quiet and anchored, one can become aware of the process by which one



creates identifications, this is a subtler level of the mind called *ahamkAra*; at the buddhi level, the mind is very subtle and is capable of pure awareness and insight; the mind cannot become aware of the most subtle level of existence since this level has no signifiers whatsoever. The various stages of psyche's journey are described and clear milestones described in the Yoga Sutra: the mind that operates at the level of *manas* is a *vyutthitha chittam*. This mind is unsteady. For example when the psyche lets go of anxiety, it also stops grasping the sensory world and locates itself in the *ahamkAra*- the primal process of creating the "I" out of "non-I", I-making as it were, it enters a healing cycle. This psyche has the ability to have lucid dreams This is a *samAhita chittam*. This mind is balanced, it is in a state of *shAntam*. When it becomes even subtler, it lets go of all sense of self, and becomes extraordinarily sensitive, extremely penetrative and insightful. This is a *ekAgrata chittam*. When this level of subtlety is reached, the *ahamkAra* and *manas* get aligned with the buddhi, all processes of perception are perfectly streamlined and all trace of self dissolves. When the three levels of the psyche namely the *manas* (the most superficial planning mind) the *ahamkAra* (the I-Maker) and *buddhi* (subtle lumious awareness) are perfectly aligned one has attained *vyavasAyatmika buddhi*. This psyche is compared to a shaft of highly collimated light and the power of this light burns the seeds of *avidya*.

itihAsa-purANa

Listening from this location within requires work at the level of body, emotions, thoughts and meta structures of meaning making. This inner journey is taken alone, and this journey to the inner most core is arduous. The use of *itihAsa-purANa* (the epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata) enables one to have some sense of what it takes. All the *itihAsa-purANa* speak about the light and the shadow archetypes, they speak about the masculine and the feminine, they speak about various archetypal figures that play out the inner drama. The psyche



becomes innocent of all hurt and absorbs the various archetypal energies into a core of *shAntam*.

Process work and the Yoga Sutra

I think process work stops short at the first step of having an insight into the meaning making processes; it does not dissolve the meaning maker into a state of *shAntam*. Therefore, while *dhyAna* is possible in a process setting, its importance is not recognized, it is covered over with process observations or questions to ponder over. The Yoga Sutra would see this as the first step of movement into a depth of silent, balanced deep awareness and attentiveness to the subtlest processes of the psyche. In the yogic process, one observes the psyche, its structure, nature and movement from a state of *shAntam*. This is called *sAkshi bhAva*. This observation throws light on how the self is created, how identifications are formed, how it forms relationships and most importantly how it creates *rAga* and *dveSha* (craving and aversion). The observation is the action, it dissolves the anchors of self (*vAsana*), and therefore the ground of *avidya*.

Pulin and I drew some principles that would be useful in a process work context by having intense dialogues on the ideas from the Yoga Sutra and other Yogic texts:

1. The various conditioning factors from conception including factors of heredity up to birth create in the new born child a very fundamental tone (or colour or flavour) in his psyche and soma, this is called *prArabdha karma*.
2. The particular experiences of the child through stages of growth create new impressions and get coloured by the *vAsana* at birth.



3. These impressions and *vAsana* form the basic patterns of body and mind through which *prAna* flows.
4. Specific experiences do not leave behind unique *samskAra* or *vAsana*. They gravitate towards basic patterns already imprinted in the person and reinforce them.
5. In its deeper aspects these patterns and impressions are like potentials, or tendencies, the basic range of colours in a palette. They slowly crystallise into a set of habitual patterns in which they unfold and act. These patterns are the repertoire of the person. The more the person repeats these patterns, the more entrenched he / she gets and the more strongly they limit a person's vision, understanding, choices at action, perception and patterns of using the body.
6. When these patterns meet the present situation, they may emerge as action that is in response to the outside. But, the flow of action and the paths through which the inner energies touch the outside are determined by the *samskara* and *vAsana*.
7. These *samskAra* and *vAsana* hold and contain a large amount of *prAna* in them in the form of propensities, emotional patterns and habits of body use.
8. They are experienced in their *udAra* (full-blown) form and stay dormant in the *prasupta* (seed-like), latent form.
9. In the *udara* (full blown), form they encompass the whole person and leave little room for self- reflection. They block out the possibility of fresh, new, experiencing and understanding of the world.
10. Enabling the psyche to cleanse itself of all the *samskAra* and *vAsana* is the ending of all processes of compulsivity, suppression, repression and distortion. It is the process by which one discovers one's real identity i.e., *svadharmā*.

Concluding remarks



After a detailed and exhaustive description of the ground of misperception and the seeds that reside in this ground i.e., the cause of *duHkha*, the Yoga sutras offer practices that can end the causes of suffocation and suffering.

The analogy of water that flows along deeply grooved channels is used to help one understand the nature of the yogic practice. The potential for an insightful, integrative and healthy living process lies within the person. This potential is covered over by the negative ground. The positive processes do not have to be imported or grafted or forced upon the person. Insight into the negative processes leading to their attenuation is the path of yoga. The psyche becomes luminescent, perceives the world as it is on the one hand and realizes Consciousness on the other hand.

Yoga recognizes that a set of external practices do not bring about lasting change. However they are necessary scaffolding for a more inward practice where the seeds of misapprehension lie.

Yoga is Inner Work!