

Yoga Explained 14

The Three Vehicles: Physical, Astral, and Causal

Dr. M.W. Lewis
Encinitas

Going on with our discussion “Yoga Explained,” last time we discussed the Feeling Aspect within each and every one of us, which can be augmented by the practice of yoga. Because, through yoga, we can attain the Presence of God, and in that Presence of God, as the Holy Vibration, is perhaps, the greatest factor for each one of us is His Love, or the Feeling which God utilizes as He observes the creation in which He utilized when he created all things.

And so, yoga can make more dynamic to our consciousness God’s Presence as Love. That’s a very important thing, because without feeling, this world, or any aspect of it, or any aspect of consciousness is practically nil, as far as having any real value. But as soon as feeling enters into a thing, and especially God’s Feeling as Love, then, that particular thing becomes vital and dynamic.

And so, let us never forget, as you’ll find all the saints point out, that God’s Love is Supreme. The Feeling Aspect of Consciousness, which God exercises in everything He has done, and is doing, and which, because we are made in His Image He has placed in our hearts, in a Natural condition. We do not have to go and find it; we just have to uncover it, so to speak. It is there, waiting for us.

And so, just to review a little bit about the Feeling Aspect, which is augmented through yoga, and which is attested to by many saints. One little paragraph or two from Brother Lawrence¹ whom you know practiced the Presence of God. When you do your yoga it will practice the Presence of God, if you keep at it; when you augment within yourselves the Feeling Aspect of your consciousness, or, I should say, Higher Consciousness, not just ordinary waking consciousness, but that consciousness which vibrates more in tune with God’s Feeling and Love.

So, Brother Lawrence has this to say about what we will attain – through yoga – we will practice the Presence of God. That is, if you, you utilize yoga to its highest degree. If you just utilize it to improve your body, and your mind, and

¹ Brother Lawrence, (c. 1614 - February 12, 1691), was a lay brother in a Carmelite monastery, who is today most commonly remembered for the closeness of his relationship to God as recorded in the classic Christian text, The Practice of the Presence of God.

such things, that's not "Salvation Yoga." But when you use the yoga to contact the Love of the Infinite, then it becomes "Salvation Yoga." Then it saves you from all suffering.

So, these words of Brother Lawrence are most appropriate, especially at this Easter time, perhaps. He says: "We have a God who is infinitely gracious and knows all about our wants...He will come to us in His own time, and when you least expect it. Thank Him for the favors He does you..."² if you meet your afflictions with fortitude and patience, thank Him for giving you these qualities.

About God coming in His own time, all true devotees will attest to that. We cannot seem to hurry Him. And then when you're just about discouraged to the limit, then He comes. But when He comes, of course, it's worth all the waiting.

Then he goes on: "We must serve and love God in a holy freedom."³ That is, without being compelled to do it, so to speak; but just, it must come from the freedom of your Soul. Then God is ready and willing, and does answer your prayer. "We must serve and love God in a holy freedom without trouble or disquiet, recalling the mind to God mildly." Because, if you get confused about calling your mind back to God, then you come out into this worldly living, then you're in a worse predicament than before. The way that the saints point these things out shows that they have traveled the path, because all true devotees find these things so. "It is necessary to put our whole trust in God, laying aside all other cares..."⁴

"Be not discouraged if you discover a natural repugnance in yourself to spiritual discipline,"⁵ (*Sic*) well, that's meditation with the highest spiritual discipline

² The Practice of the Presence of God and The Spiritual Maxims, Brother Lawrence, Dover Publications, Inc., "**Third Letter**: We have a God who is infinitely gracious and knows all our wants. I always thought that He would reduce you to extremity. He will come in His own time, and when you least expect Him. Hope in Him more than ever. Thank Him with me for the favors He does you, particularly for the fortitude and patience which He gives you in your afflictions. It is a plain mark of the care He takes of you. Comfort yourself with Him, and give thanks for all."

³ *Ibid*, **Sixth Letter**, 2nd Paragraph, "I do not say we must put any violent constraint upon ourselves. No, we must serve God in a holy freedom. We must work faithfully without trouble or disquiet, recalling our mind to God mildly and with tranquility as often as we find it wandering from Him. It is, however, necessary to put our whole trust in God. We must lay aside all other cares and even some forms of devotion, though very good in themselves, yet such as one often engages in routinely. Those devotions are only means to attain to the end."

⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵ *Ibid*, 5th Paragraph, "Be not discouraged by the repugnance which you may find in it from nature. You must sacrifice yourself. At first, one often thinks it a waste of time. But you must go on and resolve to persevere in it until death, notwithstanding all the difficulties that may occur."

when it's done to achieve the presence of God. And don't be alarmed when it's difficult for you and you even dislike it. Then he goes on to say: "At the first, one often thinks that it is lost time. But go on...resolve to persevere...until death, notwithstanding all the difficulties" and setbacks, "that may occur."⁶ (*Sic*) That has to be the attitude. As Master used to put it: Like a dying man wants to live; like a drowning man wants to be saved. That's the attitude we must have in persevering to find the Presence of God through yoga.

"He requires so little of us; a little remembrance from time to time, a little adoration. Sometimes, to pray for His grace, sometimes to offer Him our suffering, and sometimes to return Him thanks for the favors He has given us so liberally and still gives...The least little remembrance will always be acceptable to Him."⁷ (*Sic*)

Master always said: "God's like a little child. He's afraid to interrupt." So that's what His Nature is, and how we should become like Him; there is no question. "You need not cry very loud, He is nearer to us than we are aware of."⁸ And in these words of one great saint, we find a description of the Feeling Aspect of God, which is within us, pointed out in a most beautiful way. And that Feeling Aspect is the Presence of God. I mean, when the Feeling Aspect is uncovered to its fullest extent, it is the Presence of God. Yoga will take you into that Presence.

And so, going on now this evening with a few more points about yoga; the Soul, as we took up the last time we took this particular lesson up, is encased in three vehicles, so to speak, three...Master used to describe it as the, the salt water in the innermost of three bottles, one inside of another, floating in the ocean. First you break the outer bottle, and then you break the second bottle, and finally, you break the third or most interior bottle, and then, the water, which represents the Soul in that body mixes with the Ocean of Spirit. That's just what we do, and that's just what yoga will help us do; to remove these three encasements, and they are certainly encasements.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, **Seventh Letter**, 1st Paragraph, "...He requires no great matters of us; a little remembrance of Him from time to time, a little adoration. Sometimes to pray for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, and sometimes to return Him thanks for the favors He has given you, and still gives you in the midst of your troubles. Console yourself with Him the oftenest you can. Lift up your heart to Him at your meals and when you are in company. The least little remembrance will always be pleasing to Him."

⁸ Ibid, 2nd Paragraph, "You need not cry very loud. He is nearer to us than we are aware. We do not always have to be in church to be with God. We may make an oratory of our heart so we can, from time to time, retire to converse with Him in meekness, humility, and love. Every one is capable of such familiar conversation with God; some more, some less. He knows what we can do."

And so, if we do that, if we follow yoga, we'll be able to supersede – is a pretty good word, “supersede” – these three variations of God's Consciousness within us as the Body, the Physical Body, the Astral Body, finally, the Causal Body, allowing the Soul, which is imprisoned in those three bodies to merge freely in the Ocean of Spirit. And that's what we attempt to do. I mean those who really use yoga for its greatest good, or its maximum advantage. It's to attain Salvation; to get out of this cage, so to speak, into the freedom of God's Presence.

So all things, all things, including these three vehicles of which I have spoken, are different variations of God's Consciousness, that's all. Just like in this existence here, we see vibrations which we can see with the eye; there are vibrations passing by us which we cannot see – the same with hearing; the same with feeling. And so, everything is a variation of God's Consciousness vibrating at different rates of vibration, producing Gross, or the Electronic Body, finally the Causal Body. When those are removed, then the Consciousness is free to merge in the Ocean of God's Presence.

And so, in creation God first created things in His Consciousness; “In the beginning God created heaven and earth...and they were without form and void.”⁹ (*Sic*) Then He created the next realm, of Energy; “And God said, Let there be light:¹⁰” And finally, He produced this creation, by His Will; all different vibrations of His Own Consciousness. That's the Microcosm with the Physical Universe, the Astral Universe, and the Causal Universe, in that is the Microcosm, and we are that; made in the Image of God. The Physical Body, the Astral Body, or the Electronic Body, and finally the Causal Body; if we remove those coverings, then our consciousness, which is a ray of God's Consciousness, merges freely in Spirit. Yoga will help you to remove these different vehicles, without question of a doubt.

And so, you, or your Soul, are His Consciousness, only you do not realize it. Well, it's difficult to realize it, we're so encased! Like the bird in the cage. And when we get out, open the door of the cage, Master used to say, “the bird doesn't wanna go out.” We're satisfied with the cage. So we're satisfied, until, we suffer so much we're willing to get out of it and find the next two bodies, and remove them, and attain freedom. When you do this, when, through yoga, you

⁹ Genesis 1:1-2, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

¹⁰ Genesis 1:3, “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”

transcend the Physical Body, the Astral Body, and the Causal Body, then, you attain Union, or the Soul unites with Spirit.

Every night in sleep the Soul unites with Spirit. Every night in sleep we supersede the Physical Body. You can prove that because you don't remember whether you are Mr. Jones or Mrs. Jones or who you are when you sleep. When you wake up you realize that you had superseded the Physical Body. Now, you can do that consciously by the practice of yoga. As you practice yoga you supersede the Physical Body. The next two bodies become dynamic to your consciousness – the Astral Body; finally, the Causal Body. And then as you supersede those, one by one, you realize, consciously, what the Soul is. And that's, that's why we're here. To realize that we are made in the Image of God; we are not this body; we are not the Astral Body – Electronic Body; we are not the Causal Body. We are the Spirit which has produced those three bodies.

And so, the first vehicle is the Physical Body. Just a word or two about it; the Physical Body, you are familiar with it, as the 16 Elements, which you can easily look up in the Anatomy or the Chemistry book and find out what they are. But that's not all, in the Physical Body. They have, we have in the Physical Body the different systems – the circulatory system, respiratory system, nervous system, assimilation – all those things. But, not only is the Physical Body made up of these 16 Elements, but all these different systems, of which I have spoken – muscular system – all those systems have a corresponding part in the Electronic Body. Otherwise, how could they move? Or, how could they operate intelligently, unless, behind them, or these systems, were the Electronic part of us, the Astral part, the Spiritual part, if you want to call it that? And behind the Astral, or the Body of Energy, we find the Body of Thought, which has produced these things.

And so realize, that behind this outward Physical Body, in the Astral Body, are corresponding parts, so to speak, or are those hidden or noumenal parts, which have produced this Physical Body. That we must understand about this Physical Body. But, in every cell of the Physical Body, one thing we must not forget, in every cell of the Physical Body is God's Omniscience. Otherwise, how could the red blood corpuscles have just that one function and carry it out perfectly, or any other cell in the body with its different particular functions? How does that happen? Because God's Intelligence is in even the most minute part of matter, to the greatest part, as the sun and the universes, and galaxies and such things; God's Intelligence is in there. So, in this Physical Body do not think it is just inert matter. It is not, because in it is God's Vibration of His Great Omnipresence.

Now, so much tonight, perhaps, for the Physical Body, the first encasement. We could go on and describe it, but it's not necessary. We're trying to be rid of it. We're trying to supersede it, and see the underlying encasements which prevent us from feeling and knowing the Presence of God. That's why we're trying. We're trying so that we will not be inhibited from realizing God's Presence within us as these saints have. I have spoken of Brother Lawrence, as all liberated Souls can do; as all Souls upon whom the Grace of God falls can do. The Grace of God is Supreme. Otherwise, we would not be here in this place, except, somehow. His Grace is drawing us here. That's the lesson to learn. Of course, we have to remember, the three encasements. The main thing to remember is that by the Grace of God you can supersede them and know His Presence – the Presence of God.

And so, tonight, so much for the Physical Body, the first encasement. We will not study it too much, because I think we all are pretty familiar with it. Sometimes we've had enough of it. And sufficient to say, I think most of us have proved, in meditation, that we can supersede it. Whenever you sit, as you do Thursday nights, or any of our meetings, or in your homes, and you are not conscious of time nor space you have superseded this Physical Body.

Now a few references about the Physical Body, I gave you one, or rather there's one part I didn't mean to speak about. These different systems, of which I have spoken – the nervous systems, respiratory systems, circulatory system, excretory system – they all have corresponding parts in the Astral Body. One reference that comes to my mind, in St. John the 7th Chapter the 38th Verse; it speaks about: "...In their belly shall run rivers of living waters."¹¹ (*Sic*) Those livers of riving...rivers of living waters refers to the Pranic Currents which take care of our digestion, assimilation, excretion, and so forth. Those are found in the Astral Body, of which we will take up next time.

Just remember, that if you take care of your Physical Body, it has an Astral counterpart, and they all effect one another; just like the mental side effects the body, which you are familiar with. Also, the Astral Body affects the Physical. And we must realize, and take care of this Physical Body, which is the only vehicle we will have to know God with. So, we cannot treat it too lightly.

¹¹ St. John 7:38, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Now, the first Bible reference is the one in Genesis, which I have given you, showing that God created heaven and earth, first, in thought. "...they were without form and void." So that shows to us that there is a Causal Universe – Macrocosm. And so, we being made in the Image of God, also have a Causal Body within us, we are the Microcosm. And that is one of the bodies we have to supersede.

Now, in Corinthians, Corinthians, 15th Chapter, 40th, 44th, and 46th Verse; this has to do, now, with these coverings of which we have been discussing. We read, first in the 40th, there are different bodies: "...celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial:" and it says: "...but the glory of the celestial is one thing, and the glory of the physical is another.¹²" (*Sic*) We see different people with a wonderful physique, but when you see the Astral Body, that physique is nothing. And when you see the Kingdom of God behind the three coverings, this other is nothing. We cannot appreciate it at all.

And so, we have these coverings, so to speak. Now in the 43rd, 44th Chapter; the Soul "...is sown a natural body..." this Physical Body is from Nature, "...it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.¹³" There we have evidence that we these encasements which we have to supersede.

And finally, the 46th Verse: "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual." We have to supersede this Physical Body to attain those which come afterwards. You cannot jump right into the other. It's impossible. We have to step-by-step; I think it was Ramakrishna, the great Indian saint, spoke about that, when he said that, all steps have to be completed on the way back home to God. We have to understand, this Physical Body superseded; then, the Astral Body, or Electronic Body; then, the Causal Body, finally.

So there we have the evidence of these three bodies, and, also, we have the evidence that the Physical Body came first, from Nature, and then the Soul was placed in it, and we have to supersede these different bodies.

Also, in Malachi we have a reference, which might interest you, in the 4th Chapter, 2nd Verse: "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of

¹² I Corinthians 15:40, "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another."

¹³ I Corinthians 15:44, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

righteousness arise with healing in his wings...¹⁴ Those who fear the name of God are those who give time to yoga, and meditation, and contacting the Presence of God within. They fear, not God in the ordinary sense; but they, they fear that they lose Him. They fear that His Grace will not come. That's legitimate fear, because God is the One; He's up to His, His Whim, so to speak – as Brother Lawrence said, in His own good time He will come. But those, those, as it points out, “But unto you that fear my name...” That is, those that fear so that they keep at it – yoga – and keep in the Presence of God, unto them will rise, when they have superseded these three vehicles, “...the Sun of righteousness...,” the Great Eternal Spiritual Sun, “...with healing in his wings...”

The little sun is found here [at the Christ Center]. The Microcosmic sun of righteousness is the Spiritual Eye. The wings refer to the “...dove descending from heaven.¹⁵” The two wings of the Spiritual Eye: the outer ring of gold and the inner ring of vibrating Christ Consciousness. There's healing in that sufficient to every need that we have. So this verse in Malachi is a wonderful verse, reassuring, pointing out that within us is a miniature of the Sun of righteousness. And if you go through that Single Eye, you will see this Sun of righteousness, the Macrocosmic Sun of righteousness, of which was spoken of in Malachi.

Just to show you that that is so, according to the Hindu Scriptures, from the Autobiography, which is the epitome of the Hindu Scriptures and the Vedic teachings; on page, those who'd like to read in your Autobiography, page 278 and 279.¹⁶ What do we read? We read this: “He who knows himself as the omnipresent Spirit is subject no longer to the rigidities of a body in time and space. Their imprisoning ‘rings-pass-not’,” those are the three bodily encasements, “have yielded to the solvent: *I am He*.¹⁷” I am He, Blessed Spirit, I am He. The most beautiful writing in the Autobiography.

Now, through yoga you can feel that and know that. And also, just on the next page – remember this is the Microcosmic sun of righteousness right in God. So,

¹⁴ Malachi 4:2, “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.”

¹⁵ St. John 1:32, “And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.”

¹⁶ Autobiography of a Yogi, by Paramhansa Yogananda, 1946 First Release. These pages are from the 1952 Revision.

¹⁷ Ibid, 1946 Release, Chapter 30, “He who knows himself as the omnipresent Spirit is subject no longer to the rigidities of a body in time and space. Their imprisoning “rings-pass-not” have yielded to the solvent: ‘I am He.’”

we read: “Long concentration on the liberating spiritual eye has enabled the yogi to destroy all delusions concerning matter and its gravitational weight; thenceforth he sees the universe as an essentially undifferentiated mass of light.” Passing through the little Microcosmic Spiritual Eye, he sees the Great Sun of righteousness spread all over – a mass of undifferentiated light. So we have wonderful references tonight in the Autobiography.

In the Bhagavad Gita,¹⁸ I notice a reference from the 13th Discourse the 32nd Line, which I’ve copied down here, showing the Great Presence of God permeating all things, including our body and our Astral Body and the Causal Body. There we read: “As the omnipresent either is not affected, by reason of its subtlety, so seated everywhere in the body the Self is not affected.” Sometimes, when you are so attached to the body, and pain racks you, you wonder where the Soul is. It’s there. If you could contact it, you wouldn’t feel any pain at all. But we have to earn that. We have to supersede these bodily vehicles.

And finally, the last reference, which I thought you would be interested in hearing, because it expands our consciousness from the little study of the body and these little bodily vehicles, and the Astral Body, and Causal Body to the Great Presence of God itself. Guru Nanak has this to say: “But they alone sing unto Thee, O, Lord, whom Thou lovedst; Thy bhakta, Thy devotee, soaked in Divine Love, merged in Thy grace.”

There you have the key to the final liberation, or the final calling of God. “But they alone sing unto Thee, O, Lord, whom Thou lovedst...” You see, it comes from God, don’t you? His Grace is Supreme. “...Thy bhakta; Thy devotee, soaked in Divine Love, merged in Thy grace.” The most beautiful passage – from Indians, not from Americans. He, “He alone is true for ever and ever.” That is, God Alone is. “...The True Lord of the True Name...” the True Consciousness in the Holy Vibration – yoga will give you contact with that Holy Vibration. “He who made this creation is, and shall ever be. Never to go, nor be made to go. He who made this nature of assorted hues, diverse aspects, and various species looketh after what he created as greatly as is His greatness.”

So we have nothing, nothing to fear, except give God a chance. Give God a chance to prove His Presence within us through yoga. That’s our duty, and that’s our opportunity, if we will take it.

¹⁸ The Bhagavad Gita or The Lord’s Song, translated by Dr. Annie Besant, 1939.

Next time, we will go on and pick up the second encasement, of the Astral, or Body of Energy.