

*Sheba Blake Publishing*

# INTRODUCTION TO YOGA

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**ANNIE BESANT**

*An Introduction to Yoga*

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# *Foreward*

These lectures [FN#1: Delivered at the 32nd Anniversary of the Theosophical Society held at Benares, on Dec. 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th, 1907.] are intended to give an outline of Yoga, in order to prepare the student to take up, for practical purposes, the Yoga sutras of Patanjali, the chief treatise on Yoga. I have on hand, with my friend Bhagavan Das as collaborateur, a translation of these Sutras, with Vyasa's commentary, and a further commentary and elucidation written in the light of Theosophy.[FN#2: These have never been finished or printed.] To prepare the student for the mastering of that more difficult task, these lectures were designed; hence the many references to Patanjali. They may, however, also serve to give to the ordinary lay reader some idea of the Science of sciences, and perhaps to allure a few towards its study.

Annie Besant

## One

# *The Nature of Yoga*



In this first discourse we shall concern ourselves with the gaining of a general idea of the subject of Yoga, seeking its place in nature, its own character, its object in human evolution.

### *THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE*

Let us, first of all, ask ourselves, looking at the world around us, what it is that the history of the world signifies. When we read history, what does the history tell us? It seems to be a moving panorama of people and events, but it is really only a dance of shadows; the people are shadows, not realities, the kings and statesmen, the ministers and armies; and the events— the battles and revolutions, the rises and falls of states —are the most shadowlike dance of all. Even if the historian tries to go deeper, if he deals with economic conditions, with social organisations, with the study of the tendencies of the currents of thought, even then he is in the midst of shadows, the illusory shadows cast by unseen realities. This world is full of forms that are illusory, and the values are all wrong, the proportions are out of focus. The things which a man of the world thinks valuable, a spiritual man must cast aside as worthless. The

diamonds of the world, with their glare and glitter in the rays of the outside sun, are mere fragments of broken glass to the man of knowledge. The crown of the king, the sceptre of the emperor, the triumph of earthly power, are less than nothing to the man who has had one glimpse of the majesty of the Self. What is, then, real? What is truly valuable? Our answer will be very different from the answer given by the man of the world.

“The universe exists for the sake of the Self.” Not for what the outer world can give, not for control over the objects of desire, not for the sake even of beauty or pleasure, does the Great Architect plan and build His worlds. He has filled them with objects, beautiful and pleasure-giving. The great arch of the sky above, the mountains with snow-clad peaks, the valleys soft with verdure and fragrant with blossoms, the oceans with their vast depths, their surface now calm as a lake, now tossing in fury— they all exist, not for the objects themselves, but for their value to the Self. Not for themselves because they are anything in themselves but that the purpose of the Self may be served, and His manifestations made possible.

The world, with all its beauty, its happiness and suffering, its joys and pains” is planned with the utmost ingenuity, in order that the powers of the Self may be shown forth in manifestation. From the fire-mist to the LOGOS, all exist for the sake of the Self. The lowest grain of dust, the mightiest deva in his heavenly regions, the plant that grows out of sight in the nook of a mountain, the star that shines aloft over us—all these exist in order that the fragments of the one Self, embodied in countless forms, may realize their own identity, and manifest the powers of the Self through the matter that envelops them.

There is but one Self in the lowliest dust and the loftiest deva. “Mamamsaha”—“My portion,” a portion of My Self,” says Sri Krishna, are all