

[Yoga: The Path to God](#)

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FROM THE VEDAS

Yoga: The Path to God

Devotion, meditation and knowledge are all one in the Vedas

The Svetasvatara Upanishad is mankind's oldest exposition of yoga, which in these verses means meditation. The Rishi speaks in theistic terms, revealing the religious nature of the Vedas. It is important to note in this context that the root of the word religion is religare meaning "to tie back " to God. Similarly, yoga means "to yoke " the lower mind with the Higher Mind. Here these two are one: the Rishi's exhortation to know God and his unveiling of the practice of meditation are inextricably integrated. We are sure he would be aghast at the modern obfuscation, unfortunately repeated even by many Hindus, that says, "Hinduism is not a religion." These few verses and subsequent chapters make it simple and clear: Hinduism is indeed religion, and yoga is its highest form of worship.

May Savitri (the Sun), at the commencement of yoga, join our minds and other organs to the Supreme Self so that we may attain the Knowledge of Reality. May He also support the body, the highest material entity, through the powers of the Deities who control the senses.

Having received the blessings of the divine Sun, and with minds joined to the Supreme Self, we exert ourselves, to the best of our power, toward meditation, by which we shall attain Heaven (Brahman).

May the Sun bestow favor upon the senses and the mind by joining them with the Self, so that the senses may be directed toward the Blissful Brahman and may reveal, by means of Knowledge, the mighty and radiant Brahman.

It is the duty of those brahmins who fix their minds and senses on the Supreme Self to utter such lofty invocations to the divine Sun, omnipresent, mighty and omniscient. For He, all witnessing and nondual, is the dispenser of sacrifices.

O senses, and O Deities who favor them! Through salutations I unite myself with the eternal Brahman, your source. Let this prayer sung by me, who follows the right path of the Sun, go forth in all directions. May the sons of the Immortal, who occupy celestial positions, hear it!

Where Fire is kindled by rubbing, where the air is controlled, and where Soma is greatly revealed, there the perfect mind is produced. Serve the eternal Brahman with the blessings of the Sun, the cause of the universe. Be absorbed, through samadhi, in the eternal Brahman. Thus your work will not bind you.

The wise man should hold his body steady, with the three [upper] parts erect, turn his senses, with the help of the mind, toward the heart, and by means of the raft of Brahman cross the fearful torrents of the world.

The yogi of well-regulated endeavors should control the pranas; when they are quieted, he should breathe out through the nostrils. Then let him undistractedly restrain his mind, as a charioteer restrains his vicious horses.

Let yoga be practiced within a cave protected from the high wind, or a place which is level, pure and free from pebbles, gravel and fire, undisturbed by the noise of water [public wells] or of market-booths, and which is delightful to the mind and not offensive to the eye.

When yoga is practiced, the forms which appear first and which gradually manifest Brahman are those of snow-flakes, smoke, sun, wind, fire, fire-flies, lightning, crystal and the moon.

When earth, water, fire, air and akasha arise, that is to say, when the five attributes

of the elements mentioned in the books on yoga become manifest, then the yogi's body become purified by the fire of yoga and he is free from illness, old age and death.

The precursors of perfection in yoga, they say, are lightness and healthiness of the body, absence of desire, clear complexion, pleasantness of voice, sweet odor and slight excretions.

As gold covered by earth shines bright after it has been purified, so also the yogi, realizing the truth of Atman, becomes one [with the nondual Atman], attains the goal and is free from grief.

And when the yogi beholds the real nature of Brahman, through the Knowledge of the Self, radiant as a lamp, then, having known the unborn and immutable Lord, who is untouched by ignorance and its effects, he is freed from all fetters.

He indeed, the Lord, who pervades all regions, was the first to be born, and it is He who dwells in the womb [of the universe]. It is He, again, who is born [as a child], and He will be born in the future. He stands behind all persons, and His face is everywhere.

The self-luminous Lord, who is in fire, who is in water, who has entered into the whole world, who is in plants, who is in trees--to that Lord let there be adoration! Yea, let there be adoration!

Svetasvatara Upanishad II. 1-17
Translation by Swami Nikhilananda

Swami Nikhilananda (1895-1973) was founder and spiritual leader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York from 1933 to his Mahasamadhi in

1973. His four-volume Upanishad translation was completed in 1959.

The Vedas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, sruti, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1,200 bce), Bible New Testament (100 ce), Koran (630 ce) or Zend Avesta (600 bce). Four in number, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, the Vedas include over 100,000 verses. Oldest portions may date back as far as 6,000 bce.