

The Grace of Sweet Surrender

Thu, 08/07/2014 - 07:53 -- admin



Patanjali's Yoga S?tra-s (YS)I-23

??vara (Source)-pranidh?n?dva (OR continuously and completely offer yourself to)

OR (-va) you can continuously (*pra-*) and completely (*-ni-*) offer (*-dh?n?*) yourself to the Source (*??vara*) of all That Is

As the fruit ripens on the trees around me on Cortes Island, Canada, where I am completing my yearly two-month retreat, we too arrive at the fifth and final pathway to that state of Heart called Yoga ? sweet surrender. Sometimes this ripening process takes its own sweet time. Like nature, it cannot be rushed. Surrender arrives when we are ready to drop to our feet and let go like a fruit finally drops to the roots (*pranidh?n?*) of its Tree of Knowledge (*??vara*) with perfect timing. It is not in our control, but an act of Grace.

The Five Pathways to Yoga [1]

1. *Abhy?sa* [2] ? By practicing ? (Yoga S?tra-s) YS I, 12-16
2. *Vair?gya* [3] ? By detaching - YS I, 12-16
3. *Bhavapratyayo* [4] ? By birth (naturally born in a state of Yoga) ? YS I, 19
4. *?raddh?* [5] ? By trusting our Heart - YS I, 20-22 **OR**
5. *??vara pranidh?n?* - By surrendering to Source of all Wisdom - YS I, 23 with 24-29

Grace and Effort: The Two Wheels of Transformation

While effort (*prayatnam*) is needed for pathways 1-4 [6], only Grace (*anugrahan*) is necessary for this fifth pathway. Surrender (*prapatti/saranagati/pranidh?n?*) to Source by whatever name or form we prefer, only arises with the admission that we can?t do it on our own anymore, that we need help from some power greater than ourselves, or that we choose Truth over illusion, deciding to wake up to what is Real. Any form of surrender works, be it with a personal deity or Truth, itself!

By Grace we Surrender and Finally Let Go

Sweet Surrender only happens when the fruit of our life experience is ripe to fall of its own accord - when its fruit is sweet enough to fall effortlessly to the ground of our Being. The process cannot be forced. We can?t let go (*Vair?gya* [3]) until the lesson has been learnt. It is only through Grace, that unquantifiable aspect of Life, that we somehow let go and let be when the time is exactly right. It is only through Grace that one day, we wake up and are ready to accept our lives as they stand before us. It is only through Grace that we accept what IS and ISn?t with equanimity and radical acceptance of the way things really are despite all efforts to change their course.

In this S?tra, the self-reliant jnani yogi (contemplative) of pathways 1-4 [6] becomes a bhakti yogi (a mystic) through the Grace of sweet surrender. She offers her head to her Heart and finally lets go (*Vair?gya* [3]) of what she thought she had wanted, now accepting what IS instead. The fruit finally falls off the vine to the ground of her Being. She falls into the rapture of a mystical awakening: singing, dancing, and crying out the many names of the Divine with whom she now unites.

?iva Meets Patanjali

***Maha M?ityunjaya Mah?mantra? Tryambakam yaj?mahe
Sugandhim pu??i vardhanam Urv?rukamiva bandhan?n
Mrtyor muk??ya m??m?t?t***

We meditate upon ?iva (the Transformer), the three-eyed one (*tryambakam*), the Lord (*yaj?mahe*), fragrant (*sugandhim*) and nourishing (*pu??i*) the growth (*vardhanam*) of all, so that as a ripened squash (*urv?rukamiva*) is liberated (*bandhan?n*) from bondage to its vine, ?iva may liberate us (*muk??ya*) from death (*mrtyor*) for the sake of immortality (*m??m?t?t*).

This great Vedic health mantra has inspired my interpretation of this *Yoga S?tra* because it says only when we have fully ripened from our life experience, will be become liberated from the death of suffering. The goal of chanting this mantra is to spiritually "ripen" so that we can be free from our bondage to all things that keep us from spiritual freedom.

My Personal Mantra

Standing firmly with gratitude, on the other side of some intense life lessons on letting go, my personal mantra/affirmation for 2014 has been, "May I accept both what is given and not given with perfect equanimity?". May I also accept what I can and cannot emotionally let go of in this moment, even when I intellectually understand that it is no longer serving me and have tried my best to move on. May Grace help me accept the spiritual ripening process just as it is, as I patiently await the fruit of Wisdom to drop to my feet with perfect timing.

The Gift of Grace

Although I certainly have much more spiritual ripening to experience, this year, I have finally felt the breakthrough of the breakdown of some very old stuff deep within. Through some intense unhinging life experiences, I was forced to go very deep within and clear away some deep seated patterns that had been holding me back. More to come, as I transform step by step [7], but the Joy and Presence that have been gifted me this year are profound motivators to keep going deeper, clearing space for more and more Joy (?nanda)!

Yoga S?tra Questions

What do you desperately want to let go of but are simply not able to despite all efforts? Can you accept your present attachment as a necessary part of your life lesson, trusting that you will naturally let go of it when the time is right? If you are a theist, can you ask for help from Source, using any name or form of your choosing? If you are not a theist, can you ask your noble Heart to show you things as they are, accepting that Truth with Grace rather than resistance?

What's Next

This exploration of *??vara pranidh?n?* will continue over the next many months to come through further examining *Yoga S?tra-s I, 23-29*. We will consider whether surrendering to the Source of all Wisdom is a choice for a Yogi or not, while discovering who *??vara* is as well as how to call upon that Wisdom through our continuous practice of Yoga.

Yoga Sutra [8]

1-23 [9]



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Links

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