

Who Is This Book For?

This book is meant above all for someone whose primary goal is to be completely liberated from illusion, united with one's true self, and totally open in one's heart to the true self of each other individual. It is also meant for someone whose primary goal is to be successful in life – more honest, healthy, creative, wealthy, and loving. Which of these two separate goals is one's primary one determines how one reads this book and how one approaches the practices it describes.

The approach of a reader who seeks a successful life is to learn selected techniques from the book and practice them until he or she becomes a master at using the will to focus the attention and channel the energy of life. The mental stillness and physical ability thus achieved allow such a master to fulfil his or her ethical desires in life. However, the mental stillness produced through this wilful approach is not complete. This is because the life energy, the power at the root of the mind and body, cannot be completely controlled by the will.

If one seeks total liberation, the liberated authors of the verses in *The Small Burning Lamp of Sun-Moon Yoga (The Hathayoga Pradipika)* teach that one's practice should consist of surrendering one's life to whatever it is that is absolute or ultimate. One may think of this Absolute in any number of ways, among them, Truth, God, and Love. In the practice of surrender to the Absolute, the life energy is released from the control of the will and given to the Absolute, allowing the fundamental constituents of the body and mind to be evolved. During this process, the techniques described in the book gradually unfold without the use of the will. Surrender to the Absolute eventually leads to a stillness of the life energy that is not dependent on the will; it is an evolved state. With that state comes complete mastery over the body, and absolute, timeless stillness of the mind. In the end, body, mind and soul are transformed into divinity. The true divine individual, your true self, is completely open to the divinity of others as they truly are.

Liberation does not mean reaching a state in which you feel free to do whatever you want. True liberation is freedom from the snare of false knowledge, the snare of thinking something is true that is not true and trying to live according to that false idea. For example, you may be living according to a false idea about yourself, perhaps that you are a body, a mind, a personality, or a soul or spirit located in time and space; or you may be living according to false ideas about others, God or ultimate principles. False knowledge, which is based on conscious observation, is incomplete. Only surrender to absolute reality reveals the

truth of what actually is. Liberation is directly knowing for yourself what ultimate reality is and being in union with that ultimate reality. Yoga means union. It is both the path to liberation and the destination.

Vashishtha, Lakulisha, Kaundinya, Goraksha and Atmarama, the authors of the verses contained in *The Small Burning Lamp of Sun-Moon Yoga*, illuminated the path of yoga. They explained how to attain the final divine state. But like other teachers of yoga who lived in ancient times, they couched their explanations in symbols. This tradition originated when teachers noticed that people who were not primarily seeking liberation misunderstood and misapplied the yogic teachings. So the teachers put their teachings into esoteric terms in such a way that those who wished could use the obvious outer meaning to live a good life and others could use the inner meaning to reach liberation. Thus there came to be inner and outer teachings of yogic techniques.

The drawback to teaching yoga through the use of esotericisms is that it contributes to the degeneration of the yogic teachings that occurs over time. The esotericisms employed are based on ways of thinking, analogies and stories current in the time of the original teacher, so after two or three generations, aspirants seeking liberation may fail to catch the hints being given. It may not even be generally recognized that esotericisms are present. Today almost all yoga teachers and books on yoga teach only the outer meanings, unaware of the inner meanings also intended by the liberated progenitors of the tradition of yoga.

Despite these difficulties, every 500 years or so, a very determined and surrendered practiser of yoga will break through to the deepest level of understanding of scripture. Yogacharya Kripalvananda is such a yogi. In this book, he shares his understanding of the inner teachings of ancient yogic scripture, putting those teachings into the framework of modern thought. To help modern aspirants on their long and difficult journey to the highest level of liberation, he reveals the secret of yoga in such a way that they can understand it. In this English translation, the translators and the editor have tried to extend that accessibility to western readers.

The esotericisms that are the hardest to penetrate are those that concern the life energy, called *prana* in Sanskrit, sometimes translated as 'the sexual energy'. Yogacharya Kripalvananda explains that the life energy that is referred to in *The Small Burning Lamp of Sun-Moon Yoga* is "the life energy of the life energy". He is alerting us to the fact that here the life energy is to be understood in a different way from the ways it is commonly understood, such as the regulator sexual response, circulation and respiration. Here the life energy means the divine energy underlying all the physical energies of the body, the divine power that is *associated* with sexual response, etc. In the yogic process, the process that leads to liberation, this life energy of the life energy must be

unsuppressed, purified, held in, taken from its original location in the root energy centre to the crown energy centre at the top of the head, and made a permanent resident there. However, because of the intensity of this divine life energy and because it is mixed with attachments, guilt due to misuse, and all sorts of other impurities, people misunderstand how it is to be used in the yogic process. Modern 'tantric' practices are an example of one type of misunderstanding and degeneration that can occur. It is the surrendered-to-God state that leads one to mastery of the sexual energy, which brings about the transformation of the body, mind and soul to the divine state and liberates the divine individual.

Sincere seekers of complete liberation practicing what they learn from this book are advised to reread it at least once every three months in order to compare their own experiences with the yogic experiences described. Although it is possible for aspirants to achieve complete liberation with this book as a guide, additional guidance from someone who is experienced in this approach can be very beneficial. Similarly, seekers of a successful life who are using the outer meaning as a guide in their wilful yogic practice can benefit from the guidance of someone experienced in practicing the wilful yogic techniques described.

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