

THE WORLD'S OLDEST RELIGION

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QUESTION: Is Yoga really the World's oldest Spiritual system?

ANSWER: This may sound as an extraordinary claim to make yet, on reflection, it could hardly be otherwise. To begin with, there must have been a first Spiritual Path that existed before all the others. Most other paths are known to have had a historical and human founder. In other words, they were initiated by individuals who were born to human parents, lived and finally died. This applies to the founders of Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and many others.

Yoga, on the other hand, is known to have been revealed to the World by God, the Primal Lord (Adinatha, Shiva) Himself at the beginning of time. To discover the roots of Yoga we must, therefore, go beyond history, beyond measurable time, beyond even the Creation of the World.

All religions agree that, in the beginning, God alone existed and there was nothing else besides. At that stage, God must have been in a state of Absolute Oneness and Unity with Himself. Since Yoga is Unity, it represents an accurate description of that Original State. Consequently, it must be beyond dispute that Yoga stands in a relation of precedence or priority to all other faiths.

Moreover, Yoga is not only the World's first faith, it also permeates, inheres in and supports, the other faiths. How is that? It will be remembered that the Original State prior to Creation was one of Absolute Oneness and Unity. Unity then is the power that animates all true religions in the World. It is out of the desire to experience that Original Unity again, that all religions have come into being. Let us briefly review the fundamentals of some of the World's religious traditions. Judaism may be said to consist in adhering to the Law of Moses which was given to Mankind that man might live in Unity with God. Christianity may be said to be centred on the redeeming Power of God. Islam is based on submission to the Will of God. Buddhism is about escaping from suffering (which is caused by separation from God). And Hinduism aims at the immersion of the human Soul in God.

Now, none of this would be possible without Unity between man, Universe and God. Yoga, which is Unity, must therefore be admitted to be the driving force behind, as well as the means whereby fulfilment is found in, each and every one of the aforementioned traditions.

Finally, since Yoga is the Experience of Absolute Oneness and Unity with God to which experience all Creation must ultimately return, it becomes evident that Yoga is also the Highest Spirituality. We have thus established that Yoga is not only the first but also the last, there being nothing beyond or above it. Yoga is the final word on Spirituality and the final experience to which all religious effort ultimately leads. As Scripture says, "As the tracks of all beasts, both large and small, fit in the track of the Elephant, even so all Teachings are contained in the Teaching of Shiva. As the Abode of Snow (Himalaya) is among Mountains, as the Moon among the Stars, as the Sun among all things that shine, so this Teaching of Shiva is the Lord of all Teachings" (Shiva Rahasya 12:62-63).

THE PROOF

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We have so far analysed the issue from a purely logical and Spiritual perspective and we have shown that our conclusion is supported by Yogic scripture. We shall now demonstrate that it is also supported by the evidence of Western scriptures, so that the last clouds of doubt are dispelled from the seeker's mind. The Bible says: "This then is the message which we have heard of him (Christ), and declare unto you, that **God is Light**, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1,5). Now this teaching which is central to Christianity must be dated to pre-Christian times. All we have to establish is where it originated.

Writing not long after the composition of the Bible, St. Hippolytus of Rome informs us that, "there are some among the Indians who live a self-sufficient life, who abstain from eating living creatures and cooked food, and subsist on fruit. They say that **God is light**, not like the light one sees, nor like the Sun or fire, but like the Light of Knowledge whereby the secret mysteries of Nature are perceived by the wise" (Philosophumena XXI - The Brahmins). Yogic teachings had obviously penetrated the very heart of the Classical World.

As we know, these teachings were already established in India long before the rise of Christianity and other Western faiths. Says the Rig Veda: "In the beginning shined the **Source of Light**, the One Lord of all created beings" (X, 121:1). Lord Shiva, the God of Yoga, is known as **Light of the Universe** or **World-Illuminator(Loka Pradipaka)**. From the works of ancient European writers we know that the Egyptian City of Alexandria, which was an international centre of culture and learning in those times, was frequented by Indian sages. The Bible tells us that Jesus was taken to Egypt by his parents. Now he could hardly have avoided coming into contact with Yogic teachings, seeing that they were known as far away as Rome.

As the ancients said, **it is from the East that all light comes**. The Bible itself speaks of "wise men from the East". This fact finds confirmation even from some of the most unexpected quarters. Pope John Paul II himself, in his apostolic letter of 2 May 1995 declares: "The **Light of the East** has illumined the universal Church, from the moment when "a rising sun" appeared above us." Thus the Eastern origin of all faiths may be regarded as established beyond reasonable doubt. After all, even the Sun rises in the East. And we cannot deny what is patent fact.
