

EGOISM - Asmita

I would like to seize this letter to emphasize on the wisdom of the **Yoga Sutras of Patanjali**. Patanjali's work is one of the most important sources of **Classical Yoga Scripture** and most of the Yoga school in the East as well as in the West base the teaching on Patanjali.

The sutras were written approximately two thousand years ago. They are incomparable regarding their clarity and systematic outline of yogic science and as such they form a fundamental part of primary yogic literature.

The focus of the **Yoga Sutras** lies on the realization of **Purusa** (the Seer, the Self or the Soul) through the transcendental state of **Meditation** known as **Samadhi**.

In Patanjali's second chapter called **Sadhana Pada** (chapter on spiritual practice) he describes the five **Kleshas** (afflictions or limitations), that bind us, make us suffer and keep us trapped in the illusion of separateness.

Here follows a short elucidation and interpretation of the affliction of **Egoism**, in Sankrit called **Asmita**, which is also called **Ahamkara** (I-Maker) in the **Samkhya** philosophy.

Patanjali II – 6

dr̥g darsana sakyor eka atmata iva asmita

Egoism is the identification, as it were, of the powers of the Seer (Purusa) with that of the instrument of seeing (Body-Mind)

Translation: M.G. Satchidananda

Asmita, often translated as **I-am-ness**, is a **false perception** of who one is really. We identify with our body, thoughts, body sensations and feelings, without the realization that all these appearances do not contain a real, abiding substance. But **we can only BE that which IS**, and not that which is continually changing. We can't hold on to something that is bound to consistently change every moment.

So as long as our understanding and **Vision** of **True Self** is not purified, we are living in a **Dream Reality** of I or Me, as well as in a **Dream Perception** of You or the World.

We believe and say "I am the body" and "I am this feeling" as well as "I am hungry. I am sick." or "I am sad. I am angry." From an enlightened point of view this is the limitation of Asmita, a misconception, an **Illusion** which results in **Egoism** and self-centeredness. This misconception does not allow us to discriminate "I am sick" from "The body is sick" or rather from "I am conscious that the body is sick."

The greater the degree of this **Egoism**, in other words, the greater the identification with the body, the emotions and the thoughts, the greater will be the limitation, the misery and the pain that is experienced.

This sutra encourages us to eradicate the affliction of Egoism through **Seeing in the original way**. Which is seeing the body and mind as impersonal tools, which support perception and experience but do not constitute our **True Identity**.

In this way we “wear” a certain body, think certain thoughts and feel certain feelings, just as we would put on clothes and take them off again. We do not lose anything when we retire after a long work-day and take off our clothes before rest. On the contrary, it might be a pleasant and enjoyable feeling of liberation.

The same happens when we meditate. One who practices **Meditation** learns to take off thoughts (to dis-identify from them) and to let go of the idea of “I am the body”. One therefore gradually becomes liberated from the limitation of egoism.

Using again the analogy of clothing: One realizes that one is different from the clothes, one knows that they merely fulfill a certain purpose, but that the actual body – the **True Self** – is not influenced by the choice of clothes.

As the first result of **Avidya** (Ignorance), which is not knowing who we are or not knowing who we are not, Egoism is the root of all our emotional and psychological disturbances. If **Avidya** is our root cause of misery, then **Asmita** is the first symptom, our first defect and the base of all others.

Nowadays, when a great part of humanity is obviously and without doubt interested and ready to not only treat symptoms but to eradicate them through removal of the root cause, we must learn to listen to the **Blissful**, to the **Self-Realized**, to the **Enlightened**, we must start to honor their wisdom and realizations with a scientific mindset, our open hearts and discipline to follow their steps.

If we do that, peace is possible. Because only through peaceful individuals will global peace be accomplished.

Within the application of the **Wisdom Teachings**, lies our possibility of freedom. The great war, everybody is so much afraid of, already is taking place within each and every one of us. There is no reason to fear. Let us drop our weapons (illusions) and peacefully strive for the Highest Truth.

In Love
Christian