

most rapidly. This is an important principle that is at the core of the AYP approach – using a broad integrated system of effective practices, having the option of working through as many limbs as possible in a self-directed way, at our own speed.

In this way the focus of spiritual development moves naturally from external institutions and teachers to the place where the transformation and spiritual experience are actually occurring, within each person. This is the rightful destiny of all people, and it is time for each of us to claim it as our own. The sooner we do, the sooner we will be on our way.

It has long been thought that spiritual wisdom is most relevant when it is ancient, coming through mysterious preceptors, and somehow divorced from our present reality. The truth is that spiritual knowledge is totally ancient and totally modern – totally human in the here and now, and capable of coming alive within every one of us. This is why in the *AYP writings*, we often say, “The guru is in you.”

Yoga and the Human Nervous System

While yoga is a fascinating subject to read about, ponder and discuss, the real benefits come from direct application of its methods. Yoga is regarded to be a philosophy in India, and this is really a misnomer. It is much more than that. Yoga is a system of methods designed to promote the natural process of human spiritual transformation on the individual level.

In modern times, yoga is often thought to mean physical postures, *asanas*, which is but one of the

eight limbs. A quick review of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* reveals that yoga covers a much broader field than postures, encompassing multiple tools that take advantage of multiple capabilities for transformation inherent within the human nervous system.

Yoga means *union* – union of the inner and outer qualities of life. This is more than a philosophy. It is a living reality, cultivated through a variety of methods applied systematically on a daily basis. All the limbs of yoga are connected within us.

In fact, all of yoga is a product of the human nervous system. Not the other way around, as we sometimes may tend to think. What has for so long been regarded to be an external knowledge is actually an internal knowledge that is far more accessible to us than is commonly believed. As soon as we understand that our spiritual possibilities are an internal process rather than an external one, then a profound shift in our development will begin to happen. On the individual level the shift can be quite rapid. And it can encompass an entire society as radiant energy goes out, leading to a rise in intuitive understanding and increased use of spiritual practices among the people. In this way, all of humankind can be uplifted.

It took a while for people to believe that the world is round instead of flat, and that the sun is the center of the solar system instead of the earth. It took some proof. Then almost everyone believed, and the rush was on to derive the benefits of the new knowledge, the new paradigm.

Now it is time for us to come to grips with the fact that the human nervous system is the center of all spiritual experience and of all divine bliss. That is your nervous system, the one you are sitting in right now. The doorway to the infinite is that close within us. The sooner we get used to the idea that each of us is a direct gateway to the divine, the better it will be for everyone. As with the acceptance of any knowledge, it takes some proof. In this case, the proof is in each of us. We don't have to rely on others for proof for very long. Open a few doors here and there by doing some effective yoga practices and we will soon see what we are. Then the rush will be on to open it all up. A new paradigm is born!

What are the benefits of the knowledge of yoga and its effective application? It is a natural transformation to a higher functioning of our nervous system that brings us more peace, creativity, energy and good health in daily living. We find ourselves to be more at *One* with the world, and more able to move within it in ways that benefit both ourselves and others. Fear and suffering become much less, no matter how much turmoil there may be in outer life. We become at *One* with the infinite ocean of life upon which all events in time and space are but waves upon the surface. The changes of life continue to come and go like the waves. Within, we remain steady, just as the depths of the ocean are. This is the fruit of yoga – not an idea, belief or philosophy, but a state of being, a living experience.

Nothing is new, you know. Our ancient ancestors heard of these things. Much of it was written down,

and there have always been wise people who taught methods for living the truth residing within everyone. But communications were poor, life was often perilous, and people lived in so much fear and superstition. It is different now. We can find almost any information we want. There are so many doors of knowledge opening to everyone. The old wisdom is becoming new again, and expanding in its practical utilization. The human nervous system has not changed over the centuries. It has been waiting patiently, like a treasure chest longing to be opened. It is time.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, written centuries ago, is one of the greatest scriptures of all time. Not only does it tell us what we are, but it also tells us how the doors of the nervous system can be opened. It clearly describes the relationships between the natural principles of purification and opening that exist within us.

In the *AYP Enlightenment Series*, we have been traveling through the eight limbs in an order that expedites human spiritual transformation in ways that also take into account the maintenance of comfort and safety. Keep in mind that Patanjali was describing the inner workings of the human nervous system. The nervous system is what it is, and no one defines how it works. We can only do our best to describe it, understand its underlying principles, find the control levers to open it, and use them to our best advantage in the times we live in.

Once we know the practices of yoga, and can apply them in an effective integrated way, the rest is

automatic. The primary purpose of intellectual understanding of spiritual matters (the dissection of processes into named elements/limbs) is to develop the means and confidence in what we are doing so we will be motivated to continue daily practices. Other than for that purpose, we don't need to know much about the inner workings. It is all going on out of sight. Like the engine in a car, it is under the hood. We just press on the gas pedal and away we go. It is that simple. So simple that many have missed it for thousands of years. It is time for everyone to be informed about what we all have – this human nervous system, this gateway to the divine that can be easily opened if we know where the simple controls are.

Yoga has been called a *science* before, often by traditionalists attempting to appeal to the modern mind as they promote inflexible by-rote methods. Yoga can be a real science if it becomes attuned to natural phenomena and the optimization of causes and effects in practice. This involves taking preserved knowledge, like the *Yoga Sutras*, and building on it with practical applications geared toward results rather than adherence to fixed approaches. The forward march of applied knowledge is a function of practices and the resulting experiences in the present, and making adjustments as necessary to achieve maximum progress with comfort and safety.

Real yoga science is interested in reliable results that anyone can produce using the most efficient methods, and is always looking for better ways to

utilize natural principles operating in the nervous system to open to the infinite within.

Let's now look more closely at our inherent spiritual capabilities, and how the practices of yoga can be systematically used to awaken them.