Yoga and Reflexive Self-consciousness – a brief rationale

- excerpts from Reflexive Self-consciousness by Eugene Halliday

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Ch 1 - What is Yoga?

1. Yoga is the method and practice leading to the conscious union of the individual human being with the ultimate Source and origin of being.

2. It aims at the awakening of the egoic-self to the real Self through the process of **reflexive self-consciousness**, a state of transcendent Self-awareness which confers upon the beings who attain it certain powers of adequate response and capacities of stimulus assimilation.

3. Without reflexive self-consciousness one is identified with the content of consciousness, with the things of the world, with ideas of the mind, with the emotional states of the psyche.

4. The true Yogi, is the reflexively self-conscious man who has turned his consciousness away from the particulars of the world in order to become one with the principle of their being.

5. For this Yogi, freed from the fixated identification with a particular finite body, there is no "outside". All beings are **WITHIN** his consciousness. In leaving all things to return to his **true Self** he has discovered all things with himself in the Absolute from which he derived.

6. In losing his life he has found it. In letting go of a finite, limited life, he finds a greater life.

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Ch 2 - Why become conscious of our Source?

1. To become conscious of our Source is to become conscious of the source of all beings and all consciousness. It is to become consciousness itself, and reflexively self-consciously so.

2. To confine our consciousness to the considerations of the finite objects of our five special sense organs is unnecessarily to limit its scope. The sentient field is itself infinite. To concentrate consciousness fully upon a particular object within that field is to deprive oneself of the knowledge of what lies beyond that particular.

3. To rescue oneself from the self-imposed ignorance of the particularising consciousness one has only to remove the stress placed by consciousness upon the particular and replace it in its source.

4. The particularising tendency of the lower mind is a product of the over specialising activity of the five special sense organs, an over activity initially imposed on them by the external stimulus situation.

5. It does not need a great deal of thought to see that full concentration on a given finite thing deprives us of data beyond it.

6. The mind which merely sees separate particular things, and not their world context, is a mind deprived of universal concepts which could confer order upon his sense data.

7. All contents of consciousness are functions of power. To confine oneself to particular sense percepts is to deprive oneself of the energy contained in concepts of universal validity.

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Ch 3 - What is Reflexive Self-consciousness?

Let us share some of the rationale behind the process of Reflexive Self-consciousness from the teachings of Eugene Halliday.

1. If we look inside ourself in an attempt to see what we mean by the self, we discover that if we pursue our attempt to the end, that the self is not see-able in any objective sense. The self is consciousness itself, awareness, sentience.

2. **THE SELF IS THAT IN WHICH OBJECTS MAY APPEAR, BUT IT IS NOT ITSELF AN OBJECT**.

3. Consciousness is not an object, not a formed thing; it is that in which objects, things, forms and ideas appear.

4. Somehow, consciousness IS, yet is not so in any objective sense.

5. We know this to be so because we are **IMMEDIATELY** aware of our consciousness as soon as we turn to it.

6. We say **IMMEDIATELY** aware because our awareness of our awareness is not **MEDIATED** by anything other than itself.

7. When we are aware of some object through one or more of our **senses** our awareness is mediated through the **sense organ**. When we are aware of our awareness, this awareness is not mediated, we therefore say it is **IMMEDIATE**.

8. Whenever we use a sense organ to become aware of an object the sense organ in some degree **conditions** what we know. When we are aware of our awareness, our awareness is IMMEDIATE and therefore **UNCONDITIONED**.

9. TO BE UNCONDITIONED IS TO BE FREE.

10. Awareness of awareness is therefore free.

11. **Consciousness of consciousness is consciousness conscious of itself**.

12. THIS IS THE KEY TO REFLEXIVE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS.

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Ch 4 - Let us now look into the Yoga process.

1. The first great rule in Yoga says: **THE OBSERVER IS NOT THE OBSERVED**. What does this mean?

2. An **OBSERVER** is a **watcher**; the **OBSERVED** is what is **watched**.

3. The Observer is the **subject** who **sees**; the OBSERVED is the **object** which is **seen**.

4. The subject or Observer is the awareness, the consciousness, the sentience, the Self.

5. In order for an observation to occur there must be a watcher and a watched.

6. The watched, the observed, is a finite thing.

7. The watcher, the observer is not a finite thing though he may use a finite thing (the body) to watch or observe through.

8. The observer is not a thing, but that which watches the thing.

9. No one has at any time seen AS AN OBJECT the consciousness which sees the object. In theological terms we would say "No man has seen God at any time." In psychological terms we would say **consciousness as such never appears to itself as an OBJECT**.

10. Yet **in the reflexive self-conscious act, consciousness is aware of itself; but not as a finite, not as an object**.

11. We will repeat: The Observer is the subject who sees. The observed is the object which is seen. The subject is the awareness, the consciousness, the sentience. The object is a finited zone of formal motion within the subject, which stands as the subject's reference point in an act of cognition.

12. Although we say that the Observer is not the Observed, we do not posit thereby a dualism of two different substances, for the Observed is merely a motion pattern in and of the Observer. The ultimate substance is sentient power – the Shiva Shakti of Hindu Yoga. Its motions generated by its power constitute the objective content of its sentience, which brings us to our second important rule for the gaining of Reflexive self-consciousness and Yoga.

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Ch 5 - Our second important rule of Yoga is:

1. **AN OBSERVER KNOWS ONLY THE MODIFICATIONS OF THE OBSERVER**. Let us examine this.

2. When we are deprived of stimuli, whether external or internal to our organism, the content of our consciousness is reduced.

3. We can see that if we were totally deprived of all objective stimuli, consciousness would have no OBJECTIVE content whatever.

4. Such a state of consciousness deprived of all objective content, we call UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

5. Unconsciousness is not what people ordinarily suppose it to be.

6. It is simply consciousness with no objective content, that is, objectless sentience.

7. **The OBSERVER is consciousness serving some object**. But **the object served is simply a form of motion within consciousness**.

8. **There are no objects of consciousness other than within consciousness, as MODIFICATIONS of it**.

9. **Without modifications in consciousness there are no objects in it, and there is no objective consciousness**.

10. **ALL OBJECTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS, ALL THE THINGS OF THE WORLD, ALL IDEAS AND MENTAL STATES, ARE SIMPLY FORMS OF MOTION IN CONSCIOUSNESS**.

11. What then is the cause of **LIMITATION** in consciousness?

12. We will say that when consciousness "**IDENTIFIES**" with a finite zone within consciousness itself, then it is limited to that finite zone. In this case, the apparently limited Observer, the consciousness in a living body, identified with that body, is limited only by its own act of **IDENTIFICATION**,

13. **IDENTIFICATION** for all practical purposes **confines consciousness to the zone of identification**.

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Ch 6 - What is IDENTIFICATION?

1. It is simply **EMOTIONAL CHARGE on a consciousness content**.

2. If we view a thing with no emotional charge whatever, if we remove from ourselves all feeling-orientation in relation to an object we are not identified with it.

3. What happens if we remove the emotional charge on a content of consciousness? The object becomes for us just a shape, a form with no value. **Value belongs not to objects themselves, but to the will. Values are will stresses**.

4. **Value** is the stress placed by **act of will** upon an object or consciousness content. Even the division of values into intrinsic and extrinsic is itself an act of will. By "intrinsic" we mean "its inherent physical properties", by "extrinsic" its "sentimental value".

5. Because **value rests in will**, **value can be created or destroyed by act of will**.

6. **To value is to stress by will. To de-value is to remove such stress**.

7. Ordinarily we do not take notice of the identification process which ties our consciousness to our body. We simply **FALL into identification**. This process of **FALLING** into identification is so **subtle**, so intimately mixed with **desire**, that we hardly ever stop to consider the nature of it.

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Ch 7 – Pleasure, Pain, Identification and Assimilation

1. Where **the observer's body** (note, we do not say the observer himself, that is consciousness itself) is presented with a stimulus which it can easily assimilate, a degree of **pleasure** is experienced by the identified consciousness. Where the stimulus energy comes in **too fast** or at **too great intensity** for it to be assimilated a degree of **pain** is experienced.

2. Whether a stimulus causes pleasure or pain to the identified consciousness depends upon the body's capacity to **assimilate** the stimulus.

3. Everything in the experience of **PLEASURE** and **PAIN** depends upon the **identification** of consciousness with a body.

4. Bodies are **limited zones of cyclic motion**. As limited circumscribed zones, their **energy absorption capacity** is also **limited**.

5. Stimuli entering bodies are constituted of quantities of motion. Motion considered as operating or working within a closed system is called **ENERGY**.

6. Finite bodies can assimilate only finite amounts of energy presented at a certain **rate** and **intensity**, and in a certain **pattern**.

7. Bodies are motion systems characterised in specific ways. If stimuli of the right type are presented at the right rate, that is, put in over a certain length of time, a body may assimilate their motion. If the incoming stimuli is in any way wrongly presented, either in formal type, rate or intensity, the body may fail to assimilate it. Such failure implies the disturbance of the body's equilibrium or its possible destruction.

8. **At times of the disturbance or destruction of a body, consciousness identified with it SUFFERS AS IF IT WERE ITSELF DISTURBED OR DESTROYED**.

9. How are we to avoid and escape the disturbing or destructive effects of excessive stimulus motions on bodies? The answer is short:

10. By **NON - IDENTIFICATION**.

11. By **understanding** and **practising** our first Great Rule of Yoga

12. "**THE OBSERVER IS NOT THE OBSERVED**".

13. **This is the beginning, the means, and the end of the Yoga process**. Reflexive Self-consciousness **leads the individual into total self-determination and freedom**, Reflexive self-consciousness is the means and the end to the attainment of Yoga.

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Ch 8 – For What Purpose is it necessary to break identification?

1. The God Shiva willed to fold up the universe of things into His third eye. The other gods willed otherwise. They created for him to disturb his concentration a beautiful woman named Maya (which means cosmic illusion, or the "affirmation of substantial activity").

2. They succeeded; for the universe manifestly exists and Shiva wanders blindly through the world to the end of its cycle.

3. Yet Yogis think highly of Shiva, because at least he knew that **value rests in the will**, and that **the being who can centre himself in himself, centre consciousness in consciousness, instead of in its objects, can absorb the whole of creation into his centre and thus break the dependence of consciousness on its object, and regain original freedom.**

4. The consciousness which is released from identification with particular objects is not deprived of them. When consciousness no longer identifies itself with objects, they still persist as functions of the absolute motion, but they are seen simply as forms within consciousness having no power to determine the direction in which new stresses may appear. New stresses ordinarily depend on the previous stress-patterns in the objects with which consciousness has identified.

5. At the reflexive self-conscious level, **consciousness is a catalyst** able to initiate action without itself being in any way determined by it.

6. Consciousness is therefore not to be released from identification with objects in order to annihilate all objects and stand in nothingness. That would be to inhibit the power of consciousness to act as a catalytic formative agent or creative intelligence.

7. Consciousness is to be released from object-identification with objects in order to be able to **return to itself**. It is to be released from identification with particulars in order to be able to grasp the **universal** which confers order upon them.

8. Then it is to release itself from identification with the universal in order to return to its own **absoluteness** which contains all things in its own pure motion. "**Seek first the kingdom of heaven, and all else will be added to you**."

9. Heaven consists in the equilibration of all motion. Identification with particular objects destroys this equilibration.

10. The disequilibrated man cannot act freely; for he is **inclined** to follow one course rather than another, and this inclination is bondage.

11. **To incline is to take the first step to the fall into identification and slavery**.

12. The bound man is a slave to that which binds him. It matters little what binds him if he is bound, whether he is bound by iron chains in a dungeon, or by ambition and the lust for wealth and power in the world, or by what he miscalls "love" for a woman in a dream setting, or by concepts of service to impossible nationalist or political causes. Bondage is bondage, whatsoever form it takes.

13. Yoga then is the freeing of consciousness from bondage, via Reflexive Self-consciousness.

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Ch 9 – HOW THEN ARE WE TO BREAK IDENTIFICATION?

1. How are we to attain Reflexive Self-consciousness?

2. To break object-identification we must do four things.
    1. We must see that the object-identified state is a false one. a state which falsely represents consciousness, the subject, as identical with its content, the object.

2. Next we must make clear to ourselves that by allowing ourselves to act by inclination we reduce our action level to that of Pavlov's dogs, the mechanical reflex level.
3. Thirdly we must see that such mechanically determined responses are incompatible with freedom and human dignity.
4. Finally, we must withdraw our will from the experience records and from the pleasure-pain aspects of the content of consciousness, and turn it back upon itself.

3. This withdrawal of the will from the objects of consciousness and centring of consciousness in itself, the turning back to itself, from the object, of consciousness and will, is the act of reflexive self-consciousness. So important is this for human evolution and to the attainment of freedom and the power to produce an adequate response in every conceivable situation, that if its full import were grasped, the whole effort of humanity would be directed towards its attainment.

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Ch 10 – EXERCISE to gain Reflexive Self-consciousness.

1. To gain reflexive self-consciousness a certain exercise must be practised, in principle continuously, in early practice probably intermittently. The exercise itself is simple. But this is not to say that it is, for man in his usual orientation, easy. The battle to overcome the inertia of man's established direction, his generally ego-centred attitude, will not be easily fought. Nor should it be. The prize is too high to be gained easily.

2. Here is the exercise:

3. When one is looking at some thing, or considering an idea or experience, a feeling or emotion, or performing any action, one must say to oneself:

4. "**It is the Self which is consciousness itself which is looking at this thing (or considering this idea, etc.) This Self I am. I return to the Self.**"

5. On saying, "It is the Self which is consciousness itself", one must make oneself aware that the Self is consciousness itself, awareness, sentience.

6. When saying, "looking at this thing", one must make oneself aware of a directional flow of attention from the consciousness to the thing.

7. On saying, "This Self I am I return to the Self", one must focus oneself again on the consciousness and again become aware of a directional flow of attention, but now from the thing back to the consciousness-self.

8. THIS BACK-FLOW OF CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE SELF IS WHAT WE MEAN BY REFLEXIVE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

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Yoga aims at the freeing of the individual from the determination of ideas, desires and feelings (liking and disliking) and actions. Consciousness undetermined by any of these three is free; in this state it can become aware of itself as pure consciousness.

Pure consciousness untouched by any modifications and aware only of itself always responds adequately in every situation.

If you are thinking of anything with dependence upon it, there is a motive of curiosity, or pleasure of success, and although the thinking will help towards the satisfaction, you will still be in bondage.

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