

Yoga and the Sacred Fire: Self-Realization and Planetary Transformation By David Frawley

Yoga as a spiritual discipline first arose through the contemplation of world of nature, not merely as an external force but as a power of consciousness. The main principle behind all yogic thought is that the entire universe dwells within our own hearts and that in our true Self we are one with all beings. Intelligence is not merely a human phenomenon but is inherent in all existence that is one with consciousness. It is the very basis of existence.

Real Yoga is a methodology whereby we can restore our unity with the greater universe of awareness, not as a mere idea or feeling but as a deep internal fire that reflects the light of reality. Real Yoga takes us back to the central flame of the soul within us, called Agni in Sanskrit, which is the inner light that moves with us, gives us life, and energizes us throughout our every incarnation. Agni is the power of true feeling and knowing behind the mind and senses, of which most of what we know or do is only a reflection or a shadow.

It was out of this sense of the sacred fire that the original practice of Yoga arose, such as we find in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* of ancient India and their emphasis on the sacred fire. Such Yoga was a cultivation of inner fires through asana, pranayama, mantra and meditation, turning our whole being into a flame reaching out to the infinite. Yet a similar recognition of the Divine as the indwelling fire is found in many traditions and is a common insight among indigenous and native people worldwide. It is well known to all those who still live in nature and are open to the sacred nature of all life. All of us can sense it if we look into a fire with a receptive mind, letting the outer fire mirror the inner fire of our soul.

However, modern Yoga has moved away from its organic and spiritual roots and has often gotten reduced to little more than an exercise system. It has not made an inner contact with the true energies of consciousness necessary to set the real yogic process in motion, which is a transformation of our entire being. This prevents Yoga from having its full impact in aiding both individual and collective evolution. To develop Yoga in the true sense requires returning to its original flame in our higher Self, not just as an inspiration but as a practical alchemy of body, mind and heart through the cosmic fire.

Ayurvedic medicine, the medicine of Yoga, similarly emphasizes the balancing of our inner fires as the key to health, longevity and happiness, physically and mentally. It bases physical health on the right management of our digestive fire, through which we can digest food properly, develop our tissues in the optimal manner, and sustain our immune system. It bases psychological health on the fire of the mind or intelligence that allows us to digest experiences and impressions to sustain an optimal level for both our logical and feeling functions. The management of our inner fires contains the key to our well-being relative to all aspects of our nature, body, mind and spirit. Ayurveda provides us many tools for balancing these fires with foods, herbs, oils, bodywork and its special detoxification scheme of Pancha karma.

Yet this inner fire is not just a matter of personal practice or the pursuit of Self-realization on an individual level. It is the key to the planetary transformation that we need to survive as a species and to protect our planet today. Real Yoga provides us with an ecological vision of the unity of life and consciousness with all of existence, animate and inanimate. The yogic methodology is one of the integration of self and nature, mind and body, world and God, the many and the One. This is precisely the inner vision and practical approach that we need now, when the very fabric of natural living for all creatures is under siege.

The Earth is not just a material globe or even a living being but is a formation of Divine consciousness – a Goddess as it were – arising out of an inner spiritual flame deep within her core. We live in a world pervaded by the forces of light and consciousness, which we can communicate with in many ways, if we but open to their presence and their grace. Calling upon these cosmic powers through the power of our own meditation is a good way to bring humanity back into harmony with the universe. But we must additionally build our personal life-styles and a new sacred culture, which is a culture based not on consumption and consumerism but one based upon the spiritual quest.

The world is a sacred vessel, in which the sacred flame of awareness burns with love, wisdom and joy. To recognize this is to return to a life of reverence, prayer and meditation. Such a life may not be outwardly dramatic or exciting, but inwardly has more depth, meaning and endurance. It can afford us a peace and happiness that is far more than anything that can be bought or acquired on the outside.

The book, *Yoga and the Sacred Fire*, is not just a journey back into a primal vision of creation but an attempt to project that original vision forward into a truly planetary age. It begins with a Vedic vision but as developed by modern Yogis like Sri Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi, who show how this can be embodied in our lives today. Yet however we may look upon or call upon that sacred fire, it is the core power that must return to in order to really go forward as a species. We need to develop a new sacred fire, both outwardly and inwardly, both individually and collectively, to meet the challenge that is coming upon us from all sides. If our lives embody that flame, then we can change our world and change ourselves.

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