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The Art and Science of Raja Yoga: Fourteen Steps to Higher Awareness

J. Donald Walters
Crystal Clarity Publishers (April 2002)
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Imagine being renowned worldwide as a lecturer, author, teacher, composer, singer, philosopher, artist, scientist, and businessman. The author embodies this renaissance description. Formally educated at Haverford College and Brown University, he is perhaps best known as the disciple of the revered yoga master, Paramhansa Yogananda, and as the founder and spiritual director of Ananda Village, a successful alternate-lifestyle community. He has composed more than 400 musical works, and is the author of more than eighty books.

In this volume of yoga study, Kriyananda supplies the reader with a complete fourteen-lesson home course. An audio CD is included with posture routines, a meditation lecture, and a guided meditation.

The fourteen lessons (i.e., The Paths of Yoga, or Affirmations) are organized into seven topics: philosophy, yoga postures, breathing, routine, healing, diet, and meditation. An understanding of raja yoga builds on each lesson or step. The term literally means “royal union,” and Kriyananda states that it is the “aim of this science to take the practitioner (or yogi) to an awareness, not only of the underlying unity of all things, but also of his own essential identity with this deeper reality.”

Besides philosophical truths, the reader will learn, through descriptions and images, the physical aspects of hatha yoga postures. Visualization techniques, healing methods, chakras, prayers, recipes, breathing exercises, and meditation are all taught.

The author succeeds in enlightening the Western mind and practice with the ancient Indian system of yoga. If the reader can comprehend energy (prana) as a “fundamental reality of physical matter” then the science of yoga makes perfect sense. Kriyananda’s gentle, but firm language (“to relax, think space at the points of strain”) keeps the various methods, paths, and philosophies interconnected for an individual spiritual training. This course acts as a lifetime guide in the “neutralization of the waves of feeling” and helps to harmonize the body, mind, and spirit.

The author includes an extensive index, overview of subject matter, suggestions for study, and other resources. Overall, the guide has an organized presentation and is written by a familiar, master’s voice. This book offers essential understanding and definition of an often generalized term—yoga.

AIMé MERIZON (August 16, 2002)

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