



A Series of Lessons in Raja Yoga

By *Yogi Ramacharaka*

a. k. a. William Walker Atkinison (December 5, 1862 – November 22, 1932)

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A Series of Lessons in Raja-Yoga is an in-depth yet practical guide to the concepts and practices used in yoga to achieve significant improvements in mental functioning leading to an elevated comprehension of reality and a higher spiritual awareness. It was originally published in monthly installments between October 1905 and September 1906 and received an enthusiastic and popular reception. Each lesson contains a wealth of material for study. Many students of the book find value in re-reading the lessons at intervals to discover material overlooked during previous readings. The book is especially helpful in distinguishing the self from the ego and finding higher levels of spiritual consciousness.

According to scholar Jason Birch, “Raja yoga” is a term with a variety of meanings that depend on the context. It is sometimes referred to as “royal yoga”, “royal union”, “classical yoga”, and “astanga yoga”. In Sanskrit texts it refers to the goal of yoga – Samadhi, a state of meditative consciousness - and not the means of attaining it. 19th Century Swami Vivekananda, who introduced much of America to yoga in the 1890’s, equated raja yoga with the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the most authoritative work on the subject.

William Walker Atkinison (December 5, 1862 – November 22, 1932) was an American attorney, publisher, writer and a leader of the New Thought movement. Although he is largely forgotten, he wrote over 100 books under his name and a variety of pseudonyms; many have been continuously in print since the early 1900’s. He was born in Baltimore, married at age 26, and pursued a successful business and legal career until suffering a complete breakdown in the late 1880’s. He found healing and vitality through the emerging discipline of New Thought, and started writing about it. He moved to Chicago, a center of the New Thought movement, and became editor and publisher of *Suggestion*, *New Thought*, and *Advanced Thought* magazines. He then teamed up with publisher Sydney Flower to publish most his books under various imprints of the Psychic Research and New Thought Publishing Company. He wrote 13 books on yoga and Indian philosophy using the pseudonym Yogi Ramacharaka, taking the name from a spiritual teacher who lived from 1799 until the late 19th century. Other pseudonyms include Theron Q. Dumont and Swami Panchadasi.

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