

Transforming personality through eight steps of Raj yoga

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Abstract

The present research paper is aimed to assess the role and application of yoga particularly the role of Astanga yoga which we have in Maharshi Patanjali'syogasutra. A person is the reflection of Manas, Buddhi, Chitta and Ahankar. They are known as mind, intellect, chitta and ego. All these together builds the core of the human personality. In other words they creates the inner being of the individual. The result reveal, that the practice of Astanga yoga plays a pivotal role in transforming The inner being of the individual, there by transforming The personality of an individual. In Patanjali's Yoga Darshan (yoga philosophy) the Astanga Yoga (eight fold path of yoga)has been described. In Astanga Yoga, Yama is basically concerned with the social discipline of an individual which underlines the social code of conduct for an individual whereas Niyama underlines the personal code of conduct for an individual. Today persons violating personal and social code of conduct are involved in various antisocial activities as a result of which the society is over flooded with social evils like corruption, crime, cheating, violence, rape etc. the application of Yama and Niyama can play a major role in curbingthese social evils, thereby paving the way for the healthy and harmonious society i.e. the transformation of society.

Key words: *yoga, yoga Darshan, Astanga Yoga, Yama and Niyama* , personality, inner being.,

Introduction

Raja yoga refers to the system of yoga that is described in the yoga sutras of Maharshipatanjali.

In this ancient text Maharshipatanjali describes eight stages of yoga which are known collectively as Raja yoga.

Maharshipatanjali in his yoga sutra 2 -29 says that yama, niyama, Asana, pranayama, pratyahara, Dharna, Dhyan and Samadhi are the steps of Astanga yoga. Patanjali's yoga is known as Raja yoga. In his yoga sutra 1.2. Patanjalisuys: Yoga is the inhibition of the modifications of the mind. yoga is the cessation of mental fluctuations. Swami Vivekananda says: The science of Raja yoga proposes to lay down beforehumanity a practical and scientifically worked out method for reaching the truth.

Yoga is the ancient cultural heritage of India. It has come down from the traditions of saints, seers, sages and Rishis for the individual, society, and the whole humanity. The oldest use of the word yoga: as found in the Vedicliterature (i.e.Rigveda114, 9Atharavaveda 6-91,) indicates the union of the individual consciousness with universal consciousness. As the saying goes : when the ocean was churned out by the deities and demons by using the Sumeru mountain as the churning rod in the process the nector came out and it was kept in a jar popularly known as the, ' Amritkalash" . Likewise yoga has been being practiced since time immemorial but credit goes to Maharshipatanjali for systematizing and keeping the nector of yoga in the form of sutra in a jar popularly known as the yoga sutra. No doubt, the ultimate goal of yoga is self-realization but yoga at the same time paves the way for physical, mental and social well being as well. While yoga gives

immense benefits to the body, mind and spirit of the individual, society gets transformed into a healthy, harmonious, peaceful, prosperous and blissful society. The yoga makes one aware of his own true nature: who we are? And with this awareness the whole world changes. Swami Vivekananda very clearly remarks that "as the reflection of the moon on the sea is broken or blurred by the waves, so is the reflection of the Atman, the true self, broken by the mental waves. Only when the sea is stilled to mirror like calmness, can the reflection of the moon be seen, and only when the mind stuff, the chitta, is controlled to absolute calmness (through the practice of yoga, as patanjali says yoga is the inhibition of mental waves), is the self to be recognized.

There are various streams of yoga to achieve this goal. One of them is Astanga Yoga or Rajyoga. In Astanga yoga as the name indicates, the eight-fold steps have been described. They are: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharma, Dhyana and Samadhi. This yoga very scientifically begins with the emphasis on values through Yama and Niyama. Yama: non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, non-possessiveness, and Niyama: cleanliness, contentment, austerity, self-study and devotion to God—actually forms the basis for a healthy human being and a healthy society. Yama give a momentum to the development of a disciplined society. Niyama determine the individual accomplishment. It should never be thought that restraints like non-violence have no role to play in an individual's progress. Eventually, individual's acceptance will be akin to acceptance by the entire society.

The Yama and Niyama, in fact, constitute the foundation for one's thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and fortunes. Yama is basically concerned with the social behavior of an individual. It underlines the social code of conduct for an individual, whereas Niyama underlines the personal code of conduct for an individual. Today persons violating personal and social code of conduct are involved in various self-centred behaviors. They are

basically concerned with his own selfish ends and have nothing to do with personal and social values.

Explaining the application of Yama and Niyama in personality Transformation

The Yamas as described in patanjali's yogasutra are only five, which are also known as the great universal vows or the Saryabhaumamaharratas, because they are not limited by either, class, creed, time or circumstances. They are the guidelines for how we interact with the outer world, the social disciplines to guides in our relationships with other. They are non – violence, truthfulness, non – stealing, celibacy and non – possessiveness.

According to the yagnavalkasamhita, non – violence is the awareness and practice of non – violence in thought, speech, and action. It advocates the practices of compassion, Love, understanding, patience, self – Love, and worthiness. Patanjali describes truthfulness as "To be harmony with mind, word and action to conduct speech and mind according to truth, to express through speech and to retain it in the intellect what has been seen, understood or heard. A perfectly truthful person is he who expresses in his speech exactly what he thinks in his mind and in the end, acts according to it. Non – stealing or asteya upholds forgoing the unauthorized possession of thought, speech and action. Asteya stands against covetousness and envy. It inspires to progress beyond base cravings. celibacy is believed to be a behavior, which brings man nearer to the Divine. The state of non – possessiveness is attained when one remains totally detached from sensual pleasures of all kinds. The Niyamas are about self – regulation helping us maintain a positive environment to grow. Such implies both external as well as internal purity. In the words of sage Manu, water purifies the body, truthfulness the mind, true knowledge the intellect and the soul is purified by knowledge and austerity. It advocates the practices of intellectual purity, purity of speech and of the body. Santosha or contentment means not

desiring more than what he has earned by his honest means. Contentment involves the practice of gratitude and joyfulness maintaining calm at all costs. Austerity is the way to remove the dirt's and weaknesses of the body and mind. Thus it involves both physical and mental austerity. Self – study or swadhyaya is self education which consists of scriptural studies and study of the self. Ishwarpranidhan refers to surrender on self to God; as the offering of all actions performed either by intellect, speech or body – to the Almighty God.

The Impact of Raja Yoga on Physical, Mental and Spiritual aspects of Personality:

The Yama and Niyamas help in managing our energy in an integrative manner. They help us view ourselves with compassion and awareness. It teaches us not to avoid personal, social and moral code of conduct. In short they help us to lead a conscious Life. They are about being honest with the true self and this in turn paves the way for the beginning of the refinement and transformation of the personality.

The regular practice of yogasanas has an immense amount of therapeutic value. Besides various physiological benefits, they positively affect our minds, our Life force as well as our creative intelligence. Asanas harmonize our pranic ability and mental energy flow by clearing any blockages in the subtle body leading to mental equilibrium and calmness.

The practice of pranayama the correct breathing technique helps to manipulate our energies. Pranayama is a technique, which re – educates our breathing process, helps us to release tensions and develop a relaxed state of mind. It also balances our nervous system and encourages creative thinking.

Acc. to M. Patanjali'syogasutra, pranayama helps in unveiling true knowledge from the darkness of ignorance. Pratyahara is essential for achieving the three stages of dharna, dhyana

and Samadhi. Dharna involves developing and extending our powers of concentration. This consists of various ways of directing and controlling our attention and mind – fixing skills, such as concentrating on the Chakras or turning inwards. Dhyana :It is a state of mind, a delicate state of awareness. This state proceeds the final state of Rajayoga, that is Samadhi. Samadhi is total absorption. It is the state of complete communion with the true self and merging with the object of concentration. It is the state of Nirviga Samadhi where each seed of earthly impressions have been erased. Thus by undergoing through all these eight steps the individual consciousness undergoes different stages of refinement.

Conclusion:

A raja yogi ascends the yogic ladder through the eight steps and he gets ethical training in the beginning to purify himself by the practice of yama and Niyama. Then he steadies his posture. Then he practices pranayama to steady his mind and purify the Nadis. Then by the practice of pratyahara, Dharna, Dhyana he gets Samadhi.

Thus Raja yoga provides an integral eightfold approach or eight limbs for the development of consciousness finally paving the way for his self realization, i.e. The integral development of human personality. What yoga does..... Yoga establishes harmony between mind, body and soul. A person who does not possess physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being is a danger for himself and society as well. Today, the current society is the over flooded with evil tendencies like violence, corruption, selfishness, and countless immoral and inhuman activities. Why? Because a person living in society is not mentally, socially and spiritually healthy. He is deprived of moral values. He lacks clarity, and understanding to act. So he is baffled and confused. It is where yoga opens its door to

help us. As the Gita 2-50 says: “yogahkarmashukaushalam“ which implies that skill in action lies in yoga or the excellence in action is yoga. Yoga has been evolved for the achievement of the ultimate goal of life that is Self-realization

One comes to know that one can choose one’s values for a blissful life. Accountable and right actions stem out of proper understanding and adoption of right values. Therefore the application of yoga for personal well being and self transformation

is the need of the hour. When the sun of yoga will shine over the horizon of the world and society today, the social evils, all the immoral and inhuman behavior will disappear and the dream of a peaceful, prosperous, blissful and transformed society will be fulfilled. Yoga, indeed, immerses a person into the essence of Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram and Sat-chita-Ananda (Truth-Bliss and Consciousness) and therefore, the society having such persons is like a heaven on the earth.

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