

Yoga and Human Excellence

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Abstract

Yoga is an art of excellent living. The principles of Yoga help the practitioners to achieve higher aims of life. It is a lifestyle which regulates ones Thought – pattern, Character, and Behavior and it reflects into our attitude, personality and Designs. It is a total science of strengthening and improving the physical, mental, and spiritual state of being.

The present study aims to focus on the aspect of Yoga which leads the aspirants excel in every aspect of life; whether it is related to the physical aspect, intellectual aspect or spiritual aspect. How and why the practice of Yoga makes changes in the lifestyle, in the behavior and transforms the individual in a positive direction.

The first part of the study provides the basic information of Yoga and the other parts of the study discusses the Human Excellence. Post part of the study is the discussion about how the practice of Yoga excels our physical, mental and spiritual aspects of the practitioners. The overall study ends with the conclusion that practice of Yoga has an important role in human life as the individual practicing Yoga can achieve the excellence.

Key words: Yoga, Perfection and Excellence

Introduction:

The word ‘Yoga’ is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘yuj’ that indicates a unity, a harmony, a balance between internal and external consciousness. In other words, we can say that ‘yoga’ means union of atma and Parmatama (the soul and the God). According to Patanjali, yoga is “*Yogaschittavrittinirodhah*” i.e. withdrawal of sense organs from the worldly objects. Geeta defines yoga as the “evenness of temper”.

However, practically yoga is a science that deals with the health of the body and harmony of mind. Its ultimate objectives are ‘self-identification’ and ‘self-perfection’. The yoga sutras are also aimed to attain this.

Yoga is not only the physical postures, breathing exercises or concentrating for few minutes, what we understand

normally, it is a comprehensive and precisely live tuned process of uniting the individual consciousness with the omnipresent cosmic consciousness. Understanding the spiritual nature and philosophy of yoga is certainly more important than its gross applications. Yoga can be understood by the words given in Bhagvadgeeta as: *Yogah Karmashu Kaushalam*, i.e. perfection in action is Yoga.

*buddhiyuktojahaatohaubhesukrtadu
skrte /
tasmaadyogaayayujyasvayogahkar
masukaushalam//*

One who is endowed with the *samatvabuddhi*, sameness of mind, gives up both *punya* and *paapa* here, in this world. Therefore commit yourself to *karma-yoga*. Yoga is discrimination in action. With reference to the results of

your actions, there is sameness *samatva*, in your response. With reference to action itself, because there is a choice involved, a *karma yogi* always chooses to follow the rules of *dharma*, basic ethics and morality.

The yoga sutras have five rules namely *shaucha*, *santosha*, *tapas*, *swadhyaya* and *ishwarpranidhan*, which help us introspect and turn inward. When we turn inward and experience self-compassion, this naturally extends to others and ultimately helps us feel deeply grounded in life's meaning and purpose. Yoga is a way of communicating with the inner self, counteracting helplessness & weakness, increasing self-esteem and enhancing internal locus of control. What causes the good or bad results in his or her life, either in general or in a specific area such as health or academics. Locus of control was formulated within the framework of Rotter's "social learning theory of personality". The social learning theory

Yoga is a science which is a complete section to reform, transform and realize the self. It is a discipline of Universal Health, Happiness and Health. Not only this but Yogic scriptures are the tools to educate the people round the globe of self-knowledge on the one hand and understanding the value based life on the other because its messages are multifold to establish the relationship with everyone whether living or non-living things. Each and every word used in the Yogic works by Indian saints and sages is value oriented.

The Rishis Tradition is free from the dogmatic beliefs of the society because it has no barricades of religion or particular faith. They have tried to educate the people with various modes and means according to one choice and convenience.

Human excellence

Human excellence is about being an excellent human being, a divine human, a

true human being, a perfect human being and an integral human being. It is those human qualities that make a person outstanding, exceptional, superior, or, in one word, the best of one's kind in any field of human activities. Frequently, it is synonymously used with the word virtue, narrowly meaning moral excellence. It is thus being the best we can be in every situation. It is doing the best we can do in every endeavor. This has been defined in the same way in the Bhagvad Gita-2/50 by Lord Krishna: Yoga is excellence in action (*Yogah Karmashu Kaushalam*).

An excellent man is like a flower bloomed fully and freely in a specific spiritual climate. Needless to say that life is a struggle; life is a great battle full of so many challenges. And it is equally true that a fully bloomed and excellent being alone can boldly and bravely fight this battle and overcome the challenges of life. Such a person alone can enjoy the pleasures of life.

Excellence does not mean the intellectual knowledge but it is an intuitional knowledge. If one wants to excel in life he or she has to honor the values which are dormant inside invisible cavities of mind and brain. Such values neither taught nor brought but they are caught and to be carried out during the whole life. Aphorisms of Patanjali are the philosophical results of the Practices whereas the Hath yogic scriptures are the styles and methods of the practices to understand the biomechanics of the physical frame to find out the ways and means to boost the excellent nature of the personality. For that purpose Patanjali speaks about the ethics of *Abhyasa* as under:

Satu

*dirghkaalanairantaryasatkarasevitodridha
bhumih (PYS: 1\14)*

Meaning thereby that such practice when endowed with uninterrupted and true with devotional attitude for a long time has certainly firm foundations to walk on the path of progress.

It is further to add that Human is the superior creatures by the God. It is we whose roles and responsibilities towards all the living beings and Nature are also first and foremost. Man has a brain and the power of judgment and so we should be a judicious behavior is expected from a person who honors the ethics of the life.

Sri Bhagavad-Gita also explains the State of Human Excellence through the adaptation of spiritual qualities a note of which is reiterated hereunder:

*Tejahkshamaadhritishshauchamadrohonaat
imaanitaa;
Bhavantisampadamdaiveemabhijaataswab
haarata.*

Commented vide verse 3 of Chapter XVI that the brilliance, patience, resolution, purity absence of malice and self esteem are the virtues of a person who has attained the divine wealth.

Brilliance (*Teja*) denotes mental and physical radiance. Mental brilliance indicates intelligence and quickness of mind to use it correctly and successfully; and the physical brilliance is the cluster and glow on the face reflecting the purity of heart and majesty of calmness this quality is present in a person of divinity. If a wicked and evil person comes to the influence of such a person, he also becomes calm, quite and submissive.

Patience (*Kshma*) is a quality of tolerance without any complaint which disagreeable. When a sage realizes the presence of God in good or bad, he develops the supreme patience and this is state of Excellence.

Resolution (*Dhriti*) is a state of firmness to reach the destination. The obstacles and hindrances comes in the way of excel growth are looked after with success.

Purity (*Saucha*) means the mental and physical purity and then the body is regarded as a temple of worship and ready to the journey on the spiritual path and reach the goal before leaving the body.

Absence of Malice (*Adroha*) is total absence of desire to inflict injury or to see others suffer. Malicious persons inflict pain by words and deeds and seeing others suffer, but sanely person is totally devoid of such quality.

Absence of Self esteem (*Natimanita*) is a complete absence of desires which are of self importance, fame and honor. It is also known and humbleness and simultaneously feels uncomfortable when praised or honored. He is above all appreciations and honors and sees everything as part of

God and also fills the qualities that everyone is born equal, dies equal, cannot swell with felicitations.

Thus, these are the qualities of a person who has attained the purity of mind and heart and realizes the self. Opposite to it the hypocrisy, pride, arrogance, anger, harshness and ignorance are the traits of a demonic person (Sri Bhagavad-Gita Verse 4 Chap.XVI).

Quote herebelow:-

*Dambhodarpobhimanascakrodhahparusya
mevaca
Ajnanamcabhijatasyparthasampadamasu
rim*

However, nothing more could be explained theoretically because being purely a practical intuitional knowledge there is no other way to reach the highest state of

Excellence but it is sure whosoever adopt the yogic way of life will reach to noble personality.

Yoga and Human Excellence

According to Samkhya, the three *gunas* produce feelings of pleasure, pain and dejection. Feelings are experienced by the *antahkarana* (the manifest mind), not by the self. In the Yoga Sutras (2:24) it is said that *avidya*, i.e. false knowledge, is the cause of the self's experience of pleasure and pain. It is the recollection of pleasure experienced on a former occasion that leads to attachment towards objects. Samkhya elucidates three kinds of pain: (i) *adhyatmikadukha* - bodily pain and mental pain caused by emotion and passion, (ii) *adhibhautikadukha* - pain caused by beasts, reptiles, human beings, etc., and (iii) *adhidaivikadukha* - pain due to natural calamities.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras also identify three kinds of pain: (i) *parinamadukha* - pain due to change, (ii) *tapa dukha* - pain due to anxiety, and (iii) *samskaradukha* - pain due to past impressions. Patanjali states that the causes of pain are the *kleshas* (afflictions) inside our very being at the subconscious level. The whole spectrum of emotion manifests due to the presence of the *kleshas*. The *kleshas* are *avidya* (ignorance), *asmita* (I-feeling), *raga* (liking), *dvesha* (repulsion) and *abhinivesha* (fear of death).

Emotions are generated because a trifling incident or insult is magnified. *Avidya* is considered to be the source of the other *kleshas* and the main culprit in causing emotional upheaval. In other words, emotions which arise due to affliction are traced to delusion regarding the real nature of the self. The five *kleshas* are the building blocks or the substrata of the collective unconscious. Any emotional state can be traced back to one of the five *kleshas*. So the root matrix of these *kleshas* is *avidya*, which results in identification

with the world of name, form, idea and time. As the principle of duality starts to prevail, the true nature of the self is forgotten and the individual becomes fully involved with the transient world, which again leads to attraction, repulsion and finally fear of losing the self-identity (which here is conditioned by the external world), i.e. fear of death. The *kleshas* generate violence in thought, speech and deed and are abetted by greed, anger and delusion, causing endless pain to oneself and to others.

To cope with this state of mind and body Patanjali recommends practices from raja yoga, *jnana* yoga, karma yoga and bhakti yoga, and a way of leading one's life. Many physical and mental states which create obstacles in the path of yoga arise due to the mental and physical symptoms of emotional conditions. These obstacles, which include disease, dullness, doubt, procrastination, laziness, craving, errors of perception, instability, pain, depression, irregular breathing, etc., need to be removed in order to progress on the path of yoga. According to Patanjali they can be removed by one-pointedness, or by cultivating friendliness, compassion, gladness and indifference for the happy, the miserable, the virtuous and the wicked respectively. In this way the mind becomes purified and peaceful. For this to happen an attitude of *vairagya* (non-attachment) needs to prevail.

It has been the experience of the great saints and seers that all the different yogic techniques or practices are effective when the environment, both internal and external, is supportive. Observance of a disciplined lifestyle, as in the ashram, harmonizes the aspirant's energy and sublimates it by facilitating the process of *pratyahara*. The daily ashram routine is tailored in such a way as to make the whole process of transformation spontaneous and permanent. In the Bhagavad Gita (6:17) it is said, "Yoga becomes the destroyer of pain and misery

for one who is moderate in eating and recreation, whose engagement in action is balanced and whose sleeping and waking is balanced."

Conclusion:

Yoga is equilibrium between body, mind and spirit. Yoga is a great tool in making an overactive mind. It makes us be still and be free from self-imposed restrictions. Yoga when practiced properly quiets the

mind and develops peace and tranquility to our mind and body. Practice of Yoga enhances our skills and excellence. In whatever professions we are we can give our best performance if we are skilled and excellent. No doubt Yoga endows us with excellence as it enhances our concentration, capability and commitment to beautifully perform our duties. It helps us cultivate human excellence.

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