

Application of Yoga for Harmony & Peace

Dr. Shivom¹ & Dr. Sudhanshu Verma²

1. Assistant Professor, 2. Coordinator & Assistant Professor,
Dept. of Yogic Sciences, SHSS, Sharda University, Greater Noida (UP.)

Abstract

The present study aims to elaborate the need and importance of yoga for holistic transformation of human being. Yoga works on one's mind, body and soul.

Therefore, it is known as the universal art. If our mind, body and spirit are healthy, happy and harmonious, we can bring health and harmony to the society, nation and the globe. Yoga is universal in appeal and applicable to the world humanity irrespective of caste, creed, religion or nation. Today on global level we are witnessing several problems like terrorism, religious fanaticism, racial hatred, global warming etc. It is yoga which can give permanent solution to these global problems. There is the need of the moral, ethical and cultural refinement of the individual personality on a worldwide scale by spreading and practicing the ancient philosophy of yoga. The ancient philosophy of Yoga stated that one who practiced the limbs of Yoga patiently can bring a holistic change in their life and the society as well.

Keywords: Yoga; Universal; global; Social; Transformation; Harmony; Peace.

Introduction

Yoga is the ancient spiritual cultural heritage of India. It has come down from the traditions of saints, seers, sages and rishis for the individual, society, and the global humanity. It is the most magnificent gift of India to the humanity. Yoga was a divine souvenir revealed to the ancient sages so that mankind could have the opportunities to realize its celestial nature. Generally, the philosophy of yoga was passed by Gurus-Shishya cult. Through personal experiences, self-realized Yogis were able to guide genuine aspirants. It was slowly evolved and developed by the prehistoric and modern yogis during different periods.

In Vedic period Vedic Seers laid the establishment of Yoga with their widespread experiments. Self-realization is possible only through the union (Yoga)-this has been the worldwide message of Upanishads in that period. In the 6th century B.C. Lord Buddha's influence brought the ideals of meditation to the forefront. Credit goes to

Maharshi Patanjali for codifying Yoga through Yoga Sutra (approx 250 B.C.)

In the late 8th century Jagadguru Shankaracharya enlighten the light of Gyan Yoga. In the middle age's saints like Kabirdas, Jayasi, Tulsidas, Meerabai, Ravidas, Chaitanya Mahabrabhu etc. flowed the dissimilar streams of Yoga such as Yoga of Knowledge, Yoga of action and Yoga of devotion. In the medieval period Hath Yoga was evolved and became very popular. Guru Gorakshnath (Nav-nath & Chaurasi sidha), Swami Swatmarama, Gheranda Rishi, Srinivas Yogi were the great Hath Yogis. In modern phase enlightened yogis like Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Maharshi Aurobindo, Maharshi Raman, Swami Shivananda, Paramhansa Yogananda, Mahesh Yogi, Swami Ramdev, etc. made a noteworthy contribution to the development and heavenly tradition of Yoga. Today in the present century (21st) we are witnessing the

grand celebration of the International Day of Yoga on 21st of June.

The word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root word “Yuj”, which means –

Divadiganiya Yuj - ‘Samadhi’,

Rudhagniya Yuj - ‘to join’, ‘to yoke’, ‘to unite’,

Churadiganiya Yuj - ‘to balance’ mind and spirit;

thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; and harmony between human and nature. It is not about exercise but to determine the sense of oneness with oneself, the world and nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help in bettering our well-being. It is the integration of one’s words, thoughts and actions to make a sense of completeness. It is about exploring one’s inner world and becoming more conscious of the world around us. By the practice of Yoga, our consciousness expands as wide as the universe and far beyond. All the systems of Yoga had almost the same goal and purpose. There are different paths of yoga such as Raj, Hatha, Mantra, Laya, Gyan, Bhakti and Karma Yoga.

All above mentioned paths of Yoga lead to the same purpose of samadhi, self-realization or God-realization.

The first use of the term Yoga as found in the Vedic literature [1] (i.e. Rigveda 5.5.81.1, Atharavaveda 6-91,1) specifies the union of the individual consciousness with universal consciousness or individual soul to supreme soul . [2] Yoga has been being performed since time immemorial but credit goes to Maharshi Patanjali for systematizing Yoga in the form of sutra, which is popularly known as the Yoga Sutra. There is no doubt that the ultimate goal of Yoga is self-realization but yoga at the same time it provides physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being as well.

The Yoga makes individual conscious of his own nature? And with this consciousness the whole world transforms. Swami Vivekananda clearly remarks that “as the reflection of the moon on the ocean is blurred by the waves, so is the reflection of the Soul or Atman, the true self, broken by the waves of mind.

Only when the ocean is motionless to mirror like calmness, can the reflection of the moon be seen, and only when the mind stuff, the Chitta (mana), is managed to extreme calmness [3], and that when the mind is entirely controlled, the seer is established in his own essential nature [4]. “Needless to say, that for a healthy and beautiful society, energetic and active human beings are necessary. Yoga is therefore applicable not only in the personal life but in the social and universal life as well. A human being is the smallest unit of the society therefore, when an individual is shaped with human values through the practice of Yoga, a society of truthful, tolerant, non-violent, honest and caring individuals begins to build from that very moment.

Role of Yoga in individual Transformation - Yoga employs a broader holistic approach that focuses on educating people a new way of life, a new way of thinking and way of being in the world. The role of Yoga for happy and healthy living has been acknowledged even by scientists all over the world. Yoga establishes harmony between body, mind and soul. An person who does not possess physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being is a danger for himself and the humanity as well. Today, the existing society is the over flooded with evil tendencies like aggression, dishonesty, selfishness, and countless morally wrong and brutal activities. Why? Because a human living in society is not physically, mentally, socially and spiritually healthy. He is deprived of ethical values. He lacks clarity and understanding to act. So, he is baffled

and puzzled. It is where yoga opens its door to help us in this situation. As the Shrimadbhagwadgita says, “Yogah Karmashu Kaushalam” (2/50) which implies that excellence in action is yoga. [5] Philosophers and other spiritual scholars propose the require to look within to observe our thoughts and actions. Let us discuss that why the eight steps of Raj Yoga are most constructive approach for individual transformation. In Raj Yoga eight steps have been illustrated by Patanjali. They are Yama, Niyama, Asana (postures), Pranayama (breathing practices), Pratyahara (control of senses), Dharna (penetration of mind), Dhyan (meditation) and Samadhi [6]. This pattern is very methodically starts with Yama and Niyama.

Yamas -

- a. Ahimsa or Non-violence
- b. Satya or Truthfulness
- c. Asteya or Non-stealing
- d. Brahmcharya or Celibacy
- e. Aparigraha or Non-possessiveness

[7].

Ahimsa or Non-violence: It means trying to be nonviolent towards all living being in thought, word and deed. It instruct us to be sensitive not only to the living beings but to the complete Nature or surroundings around us as well. On being firmly established in Ahimsa, there is abandonment of hostility in his vicinity. When sadhaka is established in Ahimsa, there widens a kind of magnetism around him that influences anyone who approaches.

Satya or Truthfulness: It means being true to yourself and others. It means being established in Satya and increasing accountability for our individual and combined actions.

Asteya or Honesty: Teaches that we be supposed to be fair in dealings. We should survive not on foul means but on fair means. Secondly if God has blessed us with poverty and we have enough tools to help others

beings. If not, it is just a stealing. We must realize the bliss that comes from sharing with others. Life is for Sharing, caring and giving.

Brahmacharya or Celibacy: It refers to self-regulation, or self-restraint. It is about increasing mastery of self. Veerya or semen creates vitality. It is the essence of life which finally changes itself into the form of energy. Thus, on being established in brahmacharya, the Yogi gains energy, vigor, vitality and courage, whereby he becomes free of the fear of death.

Aparigraha or Non-possessiveness: It stands for non-accumulation of worldly things or nonpossessiveness. It means giving up the tendency of accumulating things of enjoyment. It means we don't take more than we need.

Niyamas -

- a. Shauch or Cleanliness
- b. Santosh or Contentment
- c. Tapa or Austerity
- d. Swadhyay or Study of self
- e. Ishwas – Pranidhan or Devotion to God [8].

Saucha or Cleanliness: It stands for cleanliness, purity of thought, word and deed. When the mind is purified or when mental cleanliness is practiced, one becomes fit to practice joyfulness, attentiveness and sense control, and because of mental purity, sadhaka (one) is able to see the vision of one's self.

Santosh or Contentment: Santosha stands for contentment. We should build up a sense of inner abundance, recognizing that the real bliss lies not in luxuries but in simple living and high thinking. We should therefore embrace plainness and avoid discontentment. Unexcelled joy comes from the practice of contentment.

Tapa or Austerity: It stands for penance or austerity. By practicing Austerities or doing Tapa, impurities of body and mind are destroyed and there comes excellence in the body and sense organs. Our life is very valuable so we should live a life and for this valuable life we should master our body and mind.

Swadhyaya or Study of self: It stands for study of self. It is not about reading books, magazine or newspaper. Rather it is about studying oneself (own). We should continuously go through yogic and vedantic scriptures for our self-evolution and observation. By observation, union with the desired deity is brought about. We should always contemplate on who am I? This is Swadhyaya.

Ishwarapranidhana or Devotion to God: It refers to surrender of self to God. We should surrender our soul to supreme soul or consciousness. Success in trance draw closer s by complete surrender to God.

Yama gives a beautiful path to the development of a disciplined society. Yama is basically concerned with the social behavior of an individual person. It emphasizes the social code of conduct for an individual or human being, whereas Niyama highlights the personal code of conduct for an human being. Today individuals violating personal and social code of conduct are engaged in different self-centered behaviors. They are chiefly concerned with their own selfish ends and have nothing to do with personal and social values. They are not able to assume beyond their selfish ends. The outcome is what we are witnessing everywhere in society as social diseases and social evils like dishonesty, offense (crime), cheating, violence, terrorism, sexual and other harassments etc. our media are overflowed with such kind of news. The

application of Yama and Niyama can play a most important role in eliminating these social evils.

They can lead to enthusiasm and assurance for decisions to devote oneself for the welfare of the individual and society both. Maharshi Patanjali has illustrated Yama as the great global vows as they are not limited either by creed, class, time or circumstances. They (Yama and Niyama) are the guiding principle for how we act together with the outer world. Yama and Niyama help us lead a pious, peaceful, pure and mindful life. Each one of these Yamas and Niyama's can transform us deeply, as we observe through great figures like Mahatma Budhha, Mahaveer and Mahatma Gandhi etc. guided by nonviolence (ahimsa), truth (satya), and love brought most important change in society. They constructed their lives around the Yama and Niyama, that foundation not only renovated their lives but also continues to touch the lives of millions long after they have left the world.

Asana or Postures -

According to Patanjali, "asana means a state of being in which sadhaka can remain physically and mentally steady, calm and comfortable."

"Sthirsukham asanam." (PYS- 2/46)

Asanas are specific body postures which unlock the channels of energy. Practice of asana positively influences our body, mind, life force (pranic energy) as well as our intelligence. Through the excellence of asanas there comes the capability of bearing the pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, joy and sadness etc.

"Tato dwandwanbhighatah." (PYS- 2/48)

When these opposites cease to have any impact on the body and mind, they no longer make the mind playful and therefore mind becomes calm, peaceful and relaxed. In Raja Yoga asanas are performed developing the practitioner's or sadhaka's ability to sit

happily in the same position for long time, as is essential at some stage in meditation.

Pranayama or Breathing Practices-

The word pranayama is consists of two root words: prana and ayama. Prana means vital energy, pranic energy or life force. It is the force which is more fine than environmental air or oxygen. Ayama means expansion or extension of the dimension of prana. Thus, the word pranayama means extension or expansion of the dimension of prana, according to Patanjali.

“Tasminsati

*shwasprashwasyorgativichchedah
pranayamah.”* (PYS- 2/49)

It utilizes breathing to influence the flow of prana in the energy channels of the pranayama kosha. The techniques of pranayama offer the technique whereby the vital force can be regulated and activated in order to go beyond one's normal boundaries and achieve a higher state of vital energy. The practice of Pranayama helps us release tensions and develop a calm state of mind. It also balances our nervous system and encourages innovative thinking. According to Maharshi Patanjali pranayama helps in uncovering true knowledge from the darkness of ignorance. Thereby covering of light disappears [9]. The fitness of the mind for concentration develops through pranayama [10].

Pratyahara or Withdrawal of Senses -

Pratyahara means withdrawal of the senses from sensual objects or things. Through the practice of pratyahara i.e. withdrawal of the senses from sensual objects, there is the highest mastery over the senses (sensual organs) [11].

Dharana or Concentration -

It means concentration. Dharana helps us develop and extend our powers of concentration [12].

Dhyan or Meditation -

Uninterrupted stream of consciousness is called Dhyan or Meditation [13]. It enables our minds to become calm, peaceful and relaxed.

Samadhi or Salvation -

Samadhi stands for ecstasy. That state becomes Samadhi when there is the complete absorption of the individual soul with the supreme or universal soul [14]. Samadhi is the state in which all the seeds of impressions of present and past deeds inherent in the mind are completely wiped out. And thus, the waves of the mind are thoroughly destroyed and then the seer is established in his true own nature that is truth and consciousness. Thus, the Raja Yoga offers an integral approach for the expansion of consciousness finally paving the way for Self-realization.

Transformed individual, the core of social and global transformation -

The human being and society are supplementary together. Without healthy persons, the healthy society is not possible. The healthy and transformed person in turn, will construct healthy society without any discrimination of caste, creed, colors or nation etc. Therefore, the desirable personal and moral values help to purify themselves and to renovate society. The person or individual is constantly occupied in examining one's values. One always bears in mind that moral or ethical values bring integrity, contentment and peace; while immoral or unethical values bring conflicts, confusion, miseries and misfortunes. One comes to know that one can choose one's values for a blissful living. Right actions stem out of proper understanding and adoption of right ethical values. Therefore, the relevance of yoga for social well-being and transformation is the need of the hour. When the sun of yoga will shine over the

sphere of the world and society today, the social evils, all the immoral and inhuman actions will disappear, and the nightmare of a peaceful, wealthy, and transformed society will be fulfilled. Yoga, indeed, immerses a individual into the essence of Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram and Sat-Chita-Ananda (Truth-Bliss-Consciousness) and therefore, the society having such personalities is like a paradise on the earth. That is why all the enlightened yogis like Maharshi Aurobindo Ghosh, Raman Maharshi, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Shyamacharan Lahidi and, Swami Shivananda etc gave importance to the worldwide application of yoga and initiated a renaissance among the common masses to wipe out personal and social evils and to create heavenly environment on the globe.

Yoga is for humanity -

Yoga works on individual's body, mind and spirit (soul). Therefore, it is known as the universal art. When our body, mind and soul are Happy, healthy and harmonious, we will bring happiness, health and harmony to the world-not by withdrawing from the world but by being a healthy living part of humanity. Therefore, yoga is for the humanity and whole world. Individual suffering is the same. Whether we are from different religion - Hindus, Muslims, Sikh, Christians, Jews or others or whether we are from different country - Indian, Italians, Japanese, Chinese or Americans etc. We all are the humans. Each person needs physical, Mental, social and spiritual wellbeing for a peaceful, flourishing and blissful life. And yoga in fact, serves this goal successfully. Afflictions of the human body and mind are the same. Diseases and sufferings know no caste, religion or nation, and yoga is provided us to cure those diseases. Patanjali explained yoga as 'Sarvavhauma', that

means Universal or global. Maharshi Patanjali in Yogasutra says:

"Jatidesh kala samayana vachchhinnah sarvbhauma mahavratam." (PYS- 2/31)

Which implies that "when practiced globally without exception due to birth, place, time and conditions they (Yamas and Niyama) become great disciplines." [15] It is proposed that, Yama and Niyama should be practiced globally without exception. There should be no alteration due to differences in birth, time, place and conditions. Thus, yoga is a Universal or Global culture, or it has Universal appeal? Just as it works on the every dimension of the human being, so it is meant for the development of the whole of mankind on the physical, mental, social and spiritual levels. It is yoga which can give everlasting results to these global or universal problems.

Dr. H.R. Nagendra argues -

"Yoga is a science of holistic living. It is Universal in its approach and applicable to all human beings irrespective of sex, age, caste, creed or religion. Anyone who wants to raise himself from the lowest level to the highest level of human achievement can take to yoga" [16]. One who rises above all narrow mindedness and loves mankind and looks at the whole world like family from the depth of his heart Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (Panchatantra 5.38) [17] – is a yogi and a real spiritualist. Geographically and nationally we may be different from each other, but we all are humans, we are all one and are the children of one and the same God. Therefore, from the point of view of being God's children, we are all brothers and sisters. This is what yoga teaches us [18].

Swami Ramdev stated-

"All persons in the world want peace and happiness. All the nations of the world agree on this point that peace should be established in the world. Is there a path

which can lead to the social and global peace and harmony? Is there a way to achieve complete happiness, peace and bliss in life? This is the path of Ashtanga Yoga propounded by the great sage Patanjali. This is not a creed, belief or sect; it is a complete method of living life. If the people all over the world are really serious about it that peace must be established in the world, its only solution is- observance of Astanga yoga. It is only through eight-limbed (ashtanga) yoga that personal and social harmony, physical health, mental peace and spiritual bliss can be realized” [19].

Maharshi Aurobindo says -

“The yoga we practice is not for ourselves alone, its aim is to work out the will of the divine in the world, to effect a spiritual transformation and to bring down a divine nature and a divine life into the mental, vital and physical nature and life of humanity. Its object is not personal mukti or liberation, although mukti is necessary condition of the yoga, but the liberation and transformation of the whole human being” [20].

Swami Shivananda remarks -

“Today in this age of atomic armament, racial hatred, intolerance and distrust, the moral, ethical and cultural refinement of the individual personality upon a world-wide scale is to be realized first and foremost. For, the prime and fundamental unit of all wider groups like class, race, nation and human society the world over is the individual man. This is not an impossible proposition, for the divine exists in all beings and it is an integral part of every individual consciousness. The method to draw it out is right and true yoga or spiritual education” [21].

Conclusion -

For the transformation of humanity and the world; there must be the transformation of the individual first, since the individual is the basic component of the world, the formation of a transformed society starts with the transformed human beings. The individual and society are complementary together. Without healthy and purified individuals, the transformation of society is impossible. In Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra the Astanga Yoga (eight limbs of yoga) has been described. In this particular yoga, Yama is basically concerned with the social discipline of a human being which underlines the social code of conduct for an individual whereas Niyama underlines the personal code of conduct for an human being. Today individual violating personal and social code of conduct are involved in various harmful activities as a result of which the society is over flooded with social evils like corruption, crime, cheating, violence, harassment and rape etc. the application of the Ashtangic path of Raj Yoga can play a major role in curbing these communal evils, thereby paving the way for the healthy and harmonious society i.e. the transformation of society. Thus, considering a worldwide application of yoga we can say that yoga is the need of the day. Thus, yoga and spirituality having potentials for universal or global transformation can play a pivotal role in constructing the person, family, society, nation and the world more cultured, civilized, sophisticated and enlightened. It should not degenerate into something barbaric or monstrous, but should endorse moral values and ethics, in order that the world we live in could be transformed into a better place.

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