

Inculcating Good Values and Positive Mental Health through Yoga Education: A Theoretical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The division of Indian schools of philosophy is mainly based on two prime subjects. These are -a) Philosophy directly influenced with the riches of the ancient Vedas (Orthodox or Aastika) b) Philosophy based on the new emerging independent context, does not involving the Vedas (Heterodox or Nastika). Yoga Philosophy belongs to one such class of orthodox philosophy. Even if Rishi Patanjali is a well-known personality as the founder of yoga philosophy, yet in its original sense, yoga philosophy is known to be a functional cause of Samkhya Philosophy. Although the existence of the Almighty is not acknowledged in Samkhya Philosophy, yet the existence of God as well as that of Purusha (Self) and Prakriti is well appreciated in yoga philosophy. Increment of moral values are given the maximum importance in yoga philosophy. According to this philosophy self-actualisation is farthest goal of life. The journey in this way of life to reach this goal is attained by dint of yoga philosophy. The yogis who follow this way of life or practice such intense yoga can reach the epitome of life and attain samadhi. This paper deals with the extent to which yoga education has helped individual to attain moral values and humanism besides the far-reaching effects on how yoga education is equally significant in contributing in maintaining a good physical and mental health of an individual.

Keywords: Yoga Education; Values; Mental Health; Personality; Self-realization

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, two different views of human civilisation are observed. One is characterized by unprecedented violence, oppression, crimes, terrorism, internal wars, conflicts, quarrels, injustice, malice among people and days stricken with COVID 19 pandemic amidst human civilisation is progressively dynamic even when vice, scandals and immorality takes the forefront. On the other end, there is another group of spiritually uplifted people whose ultimate goal is to peace the mind, body and soul. These groups of people are engaged in searching for oneness in existence of one's soul. They keep themselves aloof from all material aspects of the world and aims to achieve "self- realisation" so as to overcome all sorts of sufferings leading to the state of ultimate freedom (Moksha). They are believers of leading a "simple living high thinking" way of life. One who leads such a holistic life and aims to attain salvation is called a Yogi and achieves freedom by an ancient harmonious, disciplined practice "Yoga Sadhana". Chanting of Hari-Om and practice of meditation is another distinguished feature of the Yogis.



A child or an adolescent, unlike an adult is not able to maturely decide which of these two ways of life should be entertained. Not having a developed way of viewing a harmonious lifestyle, children are most likely to get influenced by their surrounding environment, lessons from their elders, and the ongoing incidents in their daily lives. As a result, the children are more likely to develop habits from what they usually experience. Thus, in order to save the lives of the future generations from the negative consequences of the unhealthy evils of the society, Yoga education has to be provided to the children from an early age.

It is true that Yoga education is included in many schools as a part of their curriculum in higher education. Today, mental health and peace of mind is been equally prioritised to physical health. But it should not only be confined in syllabi, but it should also be practiced religiously in normal day-to-day life. The practicability of Yoga should be increased. The more the practice of Yoga, the more we will head towards a peaceful and healthy life. Thus, by increased practice of yoga, a healthy and a world filled with values can be accomplished.

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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Yoga Education: According to Pantanjali’s Yogasutra, “*Chitta Vritti Nirodhah*” (Yoga is a lifestyle process of controlling mind).

According to Kathoupanished, - Stable and balanced state of body, mind and intellect.

Values: According to psychologist J.W. Alport, “Values are central systems of psycho-physical disposition capable of making a larger portion of environment functionally equivalent to the individual and generalizing in him appropriate type of adaptive and expressive behaviours.”

According to educationist John Dewey, “To value means primarily to prize, to esteem, to appraise, to estimate.”

Mental Health: According to Karl Meninger, “Mental Health is not just efficiency or contentment or complacent abiding by the rules. It is just adjusting process that involves a maximum of effectiveness and happiness.” (1957)

Personality: According to behaviourist J.B. Watson, “Personality is the sum of activities that can be discovered by actual observations over a long enough period of time to give reliable information. (1930)”

Self-Realization: In Hinduism, Self-realization (*atmabodha*) is knowledge of witness consciousness, the true self which is separate from delusion and identification with mental and material phenomena.

In Jainism self-realization is one of the major pre-requisites to attain ultimate enlightenment and liberation (*Moksha*). Self-realization means peeling away fabricate layers of one’s own personality to understand the true self and hence the true nature of reality.

HISTORY OF YOGA

It is believed that the practice of Yoga has begun with the dawn of civilization. In the days of yore, the science of yoga came into existence. It is the religions or belief system that concludes the first Adi-yogi or Adi-guru is Lord Shiva. It is said that thousands of years ago on the banks of the lake Kantisarovar in the Himalayas, Lord Shiva, the Adi yogi emptied his



profound knowledge into the legendary Saptarshis or 'seven sages'. These seven sages namely- *Atri, Bharadvaga, Gautama Maharishi, Jamadagni, Kashyapa, Vasistha, Vishwamitra*, carried away these powerful yogic signs to different parts of the world including Asia, The Middle East, Northern Africa, and South America.

In the end of the year 1800 and in the early 1900, the Yoga gurus started travelling to the western countries and naturally, influenced the western people with their thoughts and attracted them towards Yogic practices making them their followers. It all started in 1893 when Swami Vivekananda mentioned about religious convention in his famous speech in the Chicago Vishva Dharma Sammelan. In the 1920's and 1930's, Hatha Yoga started making its way through the efforts of many esteemed religious personalities including T. Krishnamacharya and Swami Sivananda. In 1924, Krishnamacharya first established the Hatha Yoga in Mysore (Karnataka). Sivananda established "Divine life society" in the banks of the Ganga in 1936. Krishnamacharya appointed three of his disciples- B.K.S. Iyenger, T.K.V. Desikachar and Pattabhi Jois as his heirs who further extended his religious ideals. Sivananda wrote almost over 200 books on yoga based on his principles and ideals and established many Yogic institutions worldwide. In this way, the practice of Yoga spread all over the world and gained its popularity.

MEANING OF YOGA

The Etymological origin of the word 'Yoga' is from the Sanskrit word "Yuj" meaning 'to join'. As the meaning of its name suggests, the word Yoga practically means an Equilibrium state of the mind and body or simply, a balance between the body and the soul.

To be more comprehensive, Yoga is an amalgamation of the soul of oneself with an infinite omnipresent energy. Maharishi Patanjali is the founder of the Yoga philosophy. As per the doctrines of Patanjali, a part of the Ashtanga Yoga is Niyama. The god is believed to be worshipped and meditated by Niyama. One is believed to surrender himself to the Almighty by Niyama. Although Patanjali had acknowledged the value of the almighty in Yoga Sadhana, he did not pay much attention in this regard. However, yoga philosophers accepted pragmatic as well as theoretical importance of Almighty later on Patanjali. Similarly, Adi Shankaracharya, according to his principle of Advaita Vedanta (Unqualified Monism), classified it as 'Sagun Brahma' and 'Nirgun Brahma'.

According to Patanjali's Yogasutra, "Yoga is a lifestyle process of controlling mind."

According to India's Yogaguru Swami Vivekananda, "It is a means of compressing one's evolution into a single life or a few months or even a few hours of one's bodily existence."

THE SCHOOLS OF YOGA

The practice of Yoga sadhana can be of various types. Important divisions in the ones which awaken Self-realisation and Self-consciousness are -

1. Gyana yoga
2. Bhakti Yoga
3. Karma yoga
4. Raja Yoga
5. Hatha Yoga
6. Kundalini Yoga



7. Tantrik Yoga

Swami Vivekananda has talked of Bhakti, Karma, Philosophical awareness, and control of mind based on the four streams of Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Gyan Yoga, and Raja yoga.

- **Karma Yoga:** Karma Yoga says that a happy life has to be led by dint of one's honest deeds.
- **Bhakti Yoga:** In Bhakti Yoga, The Almighty is to be revered by practicing Yoga Sadhana.
- **Gyana Yoga:** The complete realisation of the meaning of life has to be learnt by means of Self-development. The chief objective of Gyan Yoga is to procure Brahma Gyana by practicing Yoga.
- **Raja Yoga:** In it, one should control one's mind by Yoga sadhana. Raja Yoga was first narrated in Patanjali's Yogasutra. Ashtangik Yoga is also a part of Raja Yoga.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF YOGA

- The practice of Yoga helps to maintain a sound mind and soul. It maintains a co-ordination between the mind and soul.
- In order to practice higher levels in Yoga (Pranayama, Dhyana, Dharana, Samadhi), it is important to have a good physical efficiency and firm concentration. Yoga prepares the mind to reach the extreme levels of Yoga.
- Yoga enhances will power.
- Yoga increases perseverance in adolescent students.
- Yoga helps in an all-round personality development in a human being.
- Yoga plays an integral part in achieving self-realisation of one's own self.
- Yoga helps in reducing a man's greed for enjoying the joys and pleasures of the worldly means and teaches one to be satisfied in a simple way of living, thereby helping in creating a highly idealistic lifestyle of an individual.
- It aims to help the youth in creating a life full of moral values and also aids them in developing a spiritual outlook towards life.
- It helps in maintaining good health of the human nervous system.
- Yoga helps in developing a good organ system in an individual and also enhances sound sleep.

ENGRAFT VALUES IN PERSONALITY THROUGH YOGA

Value Education: 'Values' itself is an abstract thinking which resonates individual's beliefs, choices, vision, relationships, attitudes and the all-round perspective of life. One may always change and develop his/ her values on the basis of their own experiences. It means values have no objective idea; it has a subjective approach. Values are principles and beliefs of an individual to judge what is right and what is wrong. One can control his/ her own behavioural pattern and outburst of any emotional toxicity which impacts his/ her mannerism.

Values are set of guiding principles of life that gives us the equilibrium track in the various chaotic situations. It helps an individual to shape their own behaviour, attitude and outlook towards the society. Thus, we conclude that value education makes us better humans and enlarges



our quality of life.

There are two kinds of values; innate and acquired. The innate values come from within like love, kindness, sympathy, empathy, care, honesty etc. they all develop from our feelings. These internal values develop since childhood at home. Acquired values develop from outer knowledge and experiences. It depends on external factor of environment like, where we live. These acquired values are not static. It changes with time and situation. It differs from culture to culture, generation to generation, individual to individual. They are influenced by the societal needs and norms.

Need to Inculcate Good Values through Yoga in the Present Context of Moral Degradation:

Nowadays, increase in the number of cases about student restlessness, addiction, anti-social behaviour, juvenile crimes, abuse of woman and children are specimen of value crisis. This growing value crisis is not a result of a particular incident that happened one day, all of a sudden. The immoral activities in different areas which have been going on for a long period of time, have taken the form of a chronic disease. The reason behind the lowering of standards in the young generation in terms of their behaviour and their values cannot be entirely the young generation themselves. Rather, the responsibility lies upon us all, meaning the people of their society and their families.

The members of the family should take good care of parenting and re-evaluate the behaviour and values of their own because, their own behaviour is transmitted to their next generation. The parents of today are more interested in teaching their children “the lesson of living well” instead of “the lesson of becoming a good human being” meaning that the idea is to take care of a child keeping his or her as much happy as possible. The bottom-line there is that the child would take education and grow up to be a happy and well-earning person. The real objective of education which is “lesson of becoming a human being” is neglected here.

Therefore, a mentality of selfishness can be seen in the society. In workplace, in case of social relations— everywhere there is a reflection of profitability and materialistic ways of leading a life. The effects of moral degradation can be observed in people from all levels of the society. The roots of it are deep in the earth.

Hence, the aims of the present education system will be decided and instructional objectives will be prepared keeping in mind the aforesaid aims and objectives of Yoga Education. Has it not been possible to amend and modernise the aims of the education system, the richness and true objectives of education remains unfulfilled. True aim of education was profound in Vedic literary system. In ancient days, the Gurukuls were a replica of education in all spheres. Knowledge, back then, was not only confined to intellectual enhancement, but the importance of leading a spiritual way of life; religious practices, ethics was also dominant. We can get a glimpse of this from the prayer song of The Veda:



*Om Asatoma Sadgamaya
Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya
Mrityorma Amritamgamaya
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih*

(Lead me from falsehood to truth
Lead me from darkness to light
Lead me from death to immortality)

Presently, Yoga is one such tool which poses beneficial to both man and the society. Yoga is a practical philosophy involving every aspect of a human being. The mind, body and the soul make a complete human. Corresponding to this, there are three basic needs: Health, knowledge and inner peace. Health is the physical need; knowledge is essential for our psychological need and inner peace is a spiritual need. This inner peace can be experienced through Yogic meditation. The practice of breathing techniques calms the mind. Yoga teaches the evolution of the individual through development of self-discipline and self-awareness.

YOGA FOR POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

Understanding the Concept of Mental Health: Mental health is not so new topic in this modern context; the concept is as old as human civilization. Our ancient scriptures give evidences of references to mental diseases and their treatment. The *Atharva-Veda*, the *Charak Samhita*, the *Susrut Samhita* and the *Astangh Sangrah* have described several diseases of the mind with specific methods of treatment.

According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2014), mental health is not just the absence of mental illness. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

According to Professor Humley, “The balanced personality is like the balanced physical system; it stands of midst of strain and stress. There can be no balance of personality, where there is no possibility of conflict. We do not seek the balanced personality in the cloister, or in the retreat, although it is often to be found there but, in the tempests, and storms of life.”

Symptoms of positive mental health (Characteristics of mentally healthy person):

- A mentally healthy person has own philosophical view towards life. He or she has own clear vision about their goals. They are not overwhelmed by the indoctrination of stereotype beliefs.
- A mentally healthy individual has enough emotional intelligence to make adjustments and to communicate with others in any situations. He or she tries to solve the problems instead of showing any anger and emotional outbursts.
- Emotions are energy. Energy cannot be destroyed, only converted from one form into another. A mentally healthy person can transform their negative energy into constructive approach.



- A mentally healthy person knows himself well. He or she has the proper understanding about their own weakness and strengths. They can evaluate their own position. And feel free to change their thoughts or behaviour if necessary.
- They have the sense of self sufficiency, self-esteem and self-worth and also have the ability to experience deep emotions.
- They always learn from experience and take risks.
- A mentally healthy person can tolerate any kind of uncertainty. They have the ability to facing failures in their life.

People are nowadays engaged in the rat race of life ‘show off culture’ while they forget about their own philosophy of life. They are wholly engaged in asking validation trying to justify themselves in other’s eyes. It is noticed that nowadays a man’s life is somehow influenced by the joys and sorrows of another. This unhealthy struggle for existence and unproductive competition has not only made one’s life complex but has also given rise to mental trauma which ultimately has adverse effects on the health. Anxiety, mental stress, frustrations and fatigue cannot be cured by defence mechanisms only. Some negative defence mechanisms (Rationalisation, projection, regression, repression, displacement, simple denial and dissociation) can even increase the chances of escalating these diseases. Yoga is the only way out which can help in controlling mental stress thereby reducing it. Meditation is of similar importance.

Dhyana (Meditation): Dhyana is the state of keeping oneself engaged in deep contemplation. Dhyana is to control our minds and train it to not wish to enjoy worldly pleasures. When a particular topic is being thought of, our mind should not think any other topic for the moment. One needs to concentrate on one particular topic at a time. The condition can be compared to that of seamlessly flowing water. When a thought lasts a long time, it is known as “Dhyana”. Centralising a definite point in our mind in order to increase the strength of our mind is known as Dhyana.

As per Swami Vivekananda’s opinion of Dhyana and Samadhi, it can be rightly said that Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are together called ‘*Sangjam*’. If one can concentrate their mind on one object particularly, he/she will be able to concentrate their mind on that object for a long time. On maintaining continued concentration on that object, the subliminal feeling that incorporates in our mind can be focused on; everything can be subjugated with the mind. This state of mind is the extremity of the state of human life. Ultimate happiness cannot be attained as long as the pleasures and desires towards enjoying worldly means exist. It is only when one can perform constant meditation that ultimate source of true happiness can be achieved.

The only difference between Dhyana and Dharana is on the parameter of depth of meditation and its time span. According to some sages, if the time span of thinking about a particular object is of 12 seconds, it can be termed as a Dharana. When 12 such Dharanas is completed, it forms a Dhyana, and 12 such Dhyanas make a Samadhi.

According to J. Krishnamurti – “Meditation has continuity only when thought colours it, shapes it and gives it a purpose. The purpose and meaning of meditation given by thought becomes a time-binding bondage. But the meditation that is not touched by thought has its own movement, which is not of time. Time implies the old and the new as a movement from the roots



of yesterday to the flowing of tomorrow. But meditation is a different flowering of yesterday and therefore it has no roots at all in time.”

CONCLUSION

Swami Vivekananda has rightly said that cowardice should be dispelled from our lives. We should become true human beings. In order for us to become real humans, chanting of the Geeta should not be the priority. Games, sports and exercise should be prioritised over reading the Geeta. Vivekananda has also said that: If we practice games and sports, we will be strong enough to understand the Geeta even better. Our youth will be strong enough, both mentally as well as physically to chant the Geeta when they'll practice sports and exercise regularly.

As it is important to practice basic yoga exercises for maintaining a sound physical health, similarly it is also important to practice higher level of Yoga like pranayama, dhyana, dharana and Samadhi to maintain a good mental health. Practicing yoga helps in reducing energy loss, increasing body's energy level, maintains a good physical health and also helps in preventing diseases and infections of the body. Pranayama aids in curing the diseases of the heart, lungs and the brain. It calms the mind and maintains peace. Dhyana is beneficial for increasing the concentrating capacity of the brain. Practice of yoga in higher levels, increases an individual's capacity of Self-actualisation. Swami Vivekananda remarked “... humans are happy in intellect, spiritual beings in Dhyana.”

Last but not the least, it can be stated that complexities and advanced technologies in the modern days has been the main cause of our physical and mental instabilities. To end these illnesses, practice of Pranayama, Dhyana, Yogasana will prove to be an effective step. After all, Yoga helps in bringing a man's life to its mainstream. One learns the true meaning of his life. Yoga plays a dominant role in making an individual's life complete and wholesome.

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