

Raj Yoga Meditation And Spiritual Education

Dr. Dharm Raj Ram

Associate Professor, Dept. of Psychology, T.P.S. College, Patna, Bihar

Abstract: Yoga and meditation can contribute to developing a balance personality, enhancing one's emotional intelligence and managing stress. Yoga refers to the union with the "all pervading power" as well as to an attainment of inner harmony between mind, body, emotions and the spirit and the outer balance between social, material, career and family related aspects in an individual. Meditation is a process of attaining "thoughtless awareness" and not the often mistaken notion of mental process of developing "concentration". According to the Upnishads, meditation is the route to the highest knowledge (spiritual knowledge) when self-realisation, which is integration of inner self or spirit into the cosmic spirit, occurs.

I. INTRODUCTION

Yoga, the practice of elevating oneself to the highest level of a human being has been an integral part of Indian Society for the past five thousand years. First mention of Yoga was Rig-Veda, the oldest known text in the world. The concept was further refined in Bhagvad Gita, the most revered and sacred scripture of India.

The first comprehensive treatise on Yoga named Yoga Sutras was written by Patanjali. The master piece has since been translated in worldwide languages (Arabic by Al-Beruni, 973-1050 AD). Modern spiritual leader like Swami Vivekananda, Rsi Aurravinda, social leader like Mahatma Gandhi, S. Radhakrishnan have reviewed and commented in depth upon various aspects of Yoga.

With the advent of information technology world wide, various practices of Yoga like meditation, consciousness, asanas etc., have often been discussed but also spread its appeal to the global community for its benevolent consequences. In recent year, an unprecedented number of people are getting interested in Yoga practices the world over.

Propagation of the concepts of Yoga, its teaching practicing has been a part of Indian Society since ancient days. Also, like other streams of Indian philosophy, the concept of Yoga is vast and rich, leaving room for interpretation, analysis and reinterpretation with the contemporary knowledge of science and sociology. Recent years, even western institutions have taken initiative in researching on Yoga and its effects on

human body and mind. In that context, I have recently come across one such text "Yoga Psychology" written by Shri Shri Anandamurtiji, the founder of the socio-spiritual organization Anand Marga. As expected from an enlightened spiritualist like Anandamurtiji, the book explains in lay man's term the philosophy of Yoga, its connectivity to our body and mind. The entire book is in a discourse format making it more informal and easy to understand. Specially, those chapters on "Food and Body Development". "Bio-psychology" "Biological Transformation Associated with psychic Metamorphosis and Vice Versa" deal with psychological and psychological aspects of Yoga. In those discourses, Anandamurtiji had explained certain yet unknown aspects of Yoga physiology in terms of present day knowledge of human biology.

II. SPIRITUAL RESPONSE

Today, one result of the absence of this practice of soul consciousness is that man's response towards all situations, problems or events in his day to day life is based on body consciousness. It is any kind of response-economic, political, militaristic, diplomatic, physiological, etc. except that, in almost all cases, it is not spiritual response because man's outlook is not based on his living awareness of being a soul. The result is that the problems are increasing instead of getting

resolved because when the very approach and the remedy are wrong, the result cannot be right or satisfactory.

So, the proposed conference has decided on this title, namely; *Spiritual Response to the Changing Times*. Prima facie it may not appear to be a very remarkable change but if one examines its outreach, its impact and its repercussions, one would understand that it is a revolutionary concept and practice that will bring about a paradigm shift. It has the potential of ushering the world into the Golden Age because it will end all kinds of discrimination and will instill spiritual love and the spiritual love and the spirit of mutual co-operation.

This one single change in concepts, outlook and emphasis will bring a shift in values. Man will now pay more attention to the moral and spiritual well-being than to material gains which he now tries to acquire even by foul means that corrupt his soul. He will now look upon all as brothers and will shed off at least some part of his selfishness, replacing it with the spirit of service, sacrifice, love and duty.

III. GUIDANCE

Developing a relationship with God will provide you with guidance for making decisions and solving problems. God has a universal wisdom that goes beyond what you can accomplish through your own intellect. In traditional religions this has been referred to as the "divine intelligence." Through connecting with God, you can draw upon this greater wisdom to help you resolve all kinds of difficulties. By learning to ask God for guidance, you'll be surprised to find that every sincere request sooner or later is answered. And the quality of that answer generally exceeds what you could have figured out through your own conscious intellect or will. Here, God is like your co-pilot. God is always available in the instant of need to those who have made a habit of waiting quietly before Him for insight and guidance.

IV. METHOD

If you have never meditated before, it is suggested that you follow your breaths or count your breaths. Let all thoughts pass. If thoughts arise treat them as "clouds passing by." Acknowledge them, and let them pass. Focus your attention on your breath or on the countings.

If you count breaths you can count from one to ten, as you either inhale or exhale, or on the inhalations or exhalations. The more common method is to count as you exhale. But find the method that suits you. Count from one to ten, then start the sequence over, and continue this cycle.

If you follow your breaths, simply put your attention on your breath as you inhale and exhale. When (not if) your mind wanders, bring your attention back to the breath (or to the counting). Do not chastise yourself if your attention wanders, the purpose of the mind is to produce thoughts; they are with us always. The idea is to keep returning our attention to our breath or our counting, and our thoughts will settle down naturally.



Figure 1

Zen teachers suggest that we sit, for a short period in the beginning. A period of then minutes is a good goal to start with. Later, as you gain experience and confidence, you can extend the period up to 20 or 30 minutes. It's good idea to take a break after 25 or 30 minutes of sitting.

If you want continue meditation during a break, you can do kinhin, or walking meditation. In kinhin, we fold our hands in front at about the level of the heart. The right hand is made into a fist, with the thumb tucked in, and held to the chest, palm down. The left hand is placed, palm down, on top of the right. The arms are held level, with elbows projecting at the side.

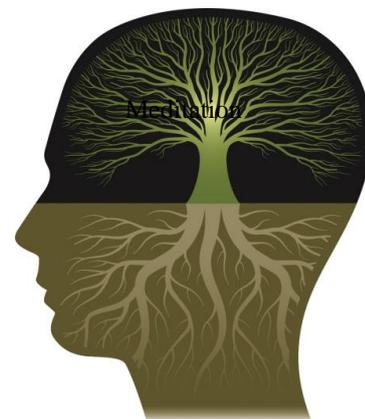


Figure 2

Through meditation we can learn to access the relaxation response (the physiological response elicited by meditation) and to be aware of the mind and the way our attitudes produce stress. In addition, by quieting the mind, meditation can also put one in touch with the inner physician, allowing the body's own inner wisdom to be heard.

Taoists believe that the mind of emotions is governed by the fire energy of the heart. When your emotions are not controlled, the fire energy of the heart flares upwards wastefully burning up energy and clouding the mind.

Walk slowly and deliberately, placing one foot in front of the other. Your attention is placed on the feeling of walking: Notice how your feet touch the floor, how your muscles contract and relax as you take each step. If you make a misstep, simply experience that and let it pass. If your mind wanders, bring your attention back to the slow, deliberate movement of “just walking.”

V. BENEFITS OF MEDITATION ARE MANY HEALTH

In this respect, the benefits of Meditation are now well-known. Meditation has been studied by researchers in medical profession from different parameters and it has been found that the Relaxation response obtained by its practice, affects man's mind and every cell of his body and it also raises man's level of immunity, tolerance, self-control and will-power which are very useful in treatment. It has now been established that Relaxation Response comes from the area of the pituitary-hypothalamus combine. One gives alpha and delta waves from this sub-cortical region when he engaged his mind in special kind of positive thinking, called 'Meditation'. Thus the importance of positive thinking for good health and harmonious nature is well-established and Meditation is considered as a tool of it. Proper understanding of sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems and hypothalamus, thalamus and hypophysis should leave no doubt in our mind that, unless man's mind is cured and his will to become well is strengthened, not long-lasting results can be assured only through medicine or surgery.

Among those discourses, the “Bio-psychology” section is interesting for its interpretation of body-mind dynamics and its elevation by superior practices. In that context, Anandamurtijiii's interpretation of “inborn instinct” is remarkable for its positivism. He clearly explains that our body-mind has a highly evolved built-in system of going towards its natural direction for sustenance. Any unnatural act against our instincts damages our health and is not sensible. It is thus in our best interest to live in conformity with natural instincts while having an inclination for heading towards perfection. This is an extraordinary approach as it finds a way of having normal life in desists from unusual practices of self inflicted sufferings as practiced by many sects, cults and religions with no apparent benefits.

VI. OTHER KIND OF INHUMAN

Similarity, while explaining “non-inborn” or “acquired” instincts, Anandamurtijiii explains how we can attain certain superior traits while growing towards adulthood. Importance of various “centers” or cakras (Glands, sub-glands and hormonal secretion from them as perceived by the ancient philosophers) of the body in its physical and emotional development has long been appreciated by Indian scholars. In contrast, only in the past half a century; biologists have learned how various glands and hormones regulate this process although its intricacies and synergy as still unknown. Our ancient practice of Yoga emphasizes that our personality development is intensely coordinated by various centers. So,

while certain stimuli contribute towards the development of first and second strata of our mind, other advance the third and the fourth strata. Thus, while Muladhara cakra and Maniura cakra control our basal as well as inferior instincts like ignorance, jealousy, fear etc; Vishuddha cakra and Ajina cakra control our higher faculties like choosing what is right and wrong, creativity, self-esteem and their expression.

In tune with that ancient concept, Anandamurtijiii has used his knowledge of biology of explain the importance of harmonious development of the body and mind with healthy habits. Thus is concept of a hierarchical interaction between various glands and sub-glands provokes intense thought. It is thus a remarkable approach to explain the relevance of harmony of body and mind in the attainment of prama purusa, the ultimate objective of harmony of body and mind in the attainment of prama purusa, the ultimate objective of humanity. Thus, our divine objective ought to be using the body and mind with the aspirations for attaining the highest level of spirituality and towards the ultimate salvation. Taken together, his effort is noble as it aims to make the wealth of yoga philosophy reach out to the common man agonized by the burden of daily existence. It is enlightening and harmonizing for the body and mind. I am sure it is a long lasting piece of work from an elevated soul who had dedicated his entire life for uplifting humanity.

Let us realize before it is too late on the that it is Raj Yoga Meditation that removes mental tension, washes the mind clean of enmity, rivalry, jealousy, dishonesty, greed, injustice, violence and other kind of inhuman or subhuman behavior. It is this which stabilizes a person in the real and original self and enables him to have his divine worth and dignity.

The first thing a man must know in his real identity and his relationship based on that identity. One must also know what the goal of his life is and what his role is. He must also understand thoroughly the theory of laws of karma. Human actions, done in relation to other human beings have a moral quality which is determined partly by his sankars. There is thus the need to reform one's sanskaras. These sanskaras can be changed only by means of spiritual knowledge and Meditation. One, must therefore, help in this work because it helps to build a better society.

VII. CENTRE OF THE PLACE

Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, Rajyoga Education & Research Foundation and Brahma Kumaris Academy for a Better World are doing this much needed service of the society. In this way, they, in their own way, are supporting and promoting Human Rights and supplementing Education in Schools, colleges, universities, IITs, etc. by imparting Spiritual Education, Education in Values and in Rajyoga Meditation. Their main aim in doing this is to build a Value-based society. In that society, everyone will naturally enjoy his or her Rights and will have to greatest worth and dignity and all kinds of freedom.

VIII. YOGA AND MEDITATION

Patanjali therefore has yama and niyama as the first and second stages of his eight fold path. These are meant to achieve the clairvoyance of mind before one goes further to achieve physical control through the 3rd stage i.e., asanas where physical well-being and fitness is established as a by-product. There after an attempt is made to control the breathing i.e., pranayama, when Patanjali realized that there was a direct effect on breathing which reflected the state of mind or even vice-versa, hence he succeeded in including the desired mental state by controlling the breath or, pranayama, the life giving force. After achieving mental control, physical control and breath control, the next step was to control the senses which could be a major distraction and create hindrances in one's ambition to meditate. He prescribes pratyahara or control of the senses as a next step which can make one incredibly strong, like the shell of a tortoise which gets tough on withdrawal of its five limbs. Incidentally, the senses are also five.

Having established control of the senses, one can very easily pour all senses in the desired, which Patanjali calls dharana or concentration, when concentration matures, one can identify the self as the subject or the subject as the case may be, when one is objectively able to review the subject without being involved in it. When there is a close proximity with the subject, it is termed dhayana, which is meditation. Following or observing Patanjali's astang yoga is definitely the most secure, definite and systematic way to reach spiritual sublimation.

This continued effort of regular meditation can further culminate into Samadhi, when the everlasting bliss or sat-chit-anand is experienced. It can be experienced all here and in this world with the help of Patanjali's astang yoga. It is the most ideal and realistic form of scientific evolution according to Swami Vivekananda which can be attempted or practiced by any individual. This can be done without running away from society.

Benefits Increased brain wave coherence. Harmony of brain wave activity in different parts of the brain is associated with greater creativity, improved moral reasoning, and higher IQ.

Decreased Anxiety.

Decreased Depression.

Decreased Irritability and Moodiness.

Improved Learning Ability and Memory.

Increased Self-Actualization.

Increased Feelings of Vitality And rejuvenation.

Increased Happiness.

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