

Yoga-Mimamsa

Vol. XXIV, No. 2, pp. 1 to 10, July 85

## Important Fundamentals for Yoga Education \*

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Swami Vivekananda's visit to America and his speeches and work made the Western mind interested in Indian philosophy viz., Vedanta and allied subjects, while the work of Swami Kuvalayananda aroused the curiosity of the scientific mind to study, understand and investigate Yoga. Visits of Zen masters, Chinese philosophers, Tibetan lamas, Indian monks and Yoga teachers to the Western hemisphere further helped to intensify this interest in the study of the Oriental way of looking at life and induced people to learn and practice yoga techniques so as to get personal experiences of what they were preaching. To-day we have lot of literature of technical, popular and philosophical **nature** on different schools and traditions of yoga belonging to different disciplines and cultures of the world, both eastern and western.

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\* Presidential Address for yoga session delivered at the First World Congress on Yoga & Ayurveda held at San-Marino, Italy from 8th to 11th June '85.

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I had- the previlage of meeting Yoga teachers and students in France and West Germany during the year 1972 when I was on a official visit to Czechoslovakia as a medical expert in Yoga. The following questions were very often put to me during discussions :

"We don't get any expèriences or results as mentioned in Yogic literature and as claimed by Yoga teachers even after 7 to 8 years of practice"

"Therefore 1. Are our Yoga techniques wrong?"

2. Is our teaching, learning or practice at fault ?

or 3. What is mentioned in Yogic literature is based on imagination or hallucinations having no rational basis at all ?"

Since then I have been thinking over these questions seriously and decided to get guided by the scriptures rather than what is being taught or written presently. I also stopped looking at Yoga through my educational back ground of modern medicine and started an effort to understand what the scriptures want to communicate under the guidance of my spiritual teacher and our Director of Research, Swami Digambarji. This brought about a change in the nature of my research work and during the course of time I realised that I must base my training and research programmes on various Yogic concepts in order to understand the significance and importance of different Yoga techniques in the light of modern education system. I would like to share with you my feelings on this important occasion. I realised that :

- 1- Yoga is a practical subject like science, technology and medicine where one is expected to have a first hand experiential knowledge and understanding through personal observations.

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2. In science and technology we make observations with sense organs and feed-back from motor organs which are further supplemented by various instruments like microscopes, telescopes, oscilloscopes, amplifiers, intensifiers, etc. for sensory functions and fast moving transport, cranes, weapons etc. for motor functions. Thus we continue to get more and more knowledge and understanding about the world around us. In Yoga, on the other hand, we are supposed to withdraw ourselves from the sense organs and motor organs and still continue to get information, knowledge and understanding. It becomes evident that during such condition we can't know anything about the world around us, but start knowing our own self. This could be called 'Self Realisation' or 'Atma-Shakshatkar' or 'Atma-darshan' in Yogic terminology.
3. During this process of self-realisation we can appreciate that we exist as different bodies viz. the physical or structural, functional, emotional, intellectual and as non-identified absolute entity. This existential experience of oneself could be easily compared with the concept of five bodies or five fold awareness described in yoga as 'Pancha-Koshas' viz. 'Annamaya Sharir', 'Pranamaya Sharir', 'Manomaya Sharir', 'Vidnyanamaya Sharir' and 'Anandamaya Sharir' respectively.
4. Further analysis of our existential experiences reveals that it also exists at different levels like the genital area, region of the lower extremities,

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abdominal area, heart region, upper extremities including the neck, the area of the face and lastly the region of the head. The experience of functions, feelings and thoughts associated with these areas are altogether different from each other excepting the head region where they are integrated and a picture of totality gets developed. This experiential aspect of oneself can be easily compared with the concept of \*Chakras\* in Yogic literature viz., 'Mooladhara', 'Swadhistan', 'Manipur', 'Anahat', 'Visuddhi', 'Ajna' and 'Sahashrar' respectively.

5. Apart from these regional awarenesses, one can experience heaviness, currents or pulsations like water flows, burning sensations or heat without fever, twitchings or contractions and relaxations of muscles or a sort of touch sensation and a feeling of voidness or space inside the body. Such experiences help us to get an insight into the concept of 'Mahabhutas' i. e. five elements in Yoga-which are termed as 'Prithvi', 'Aapa', 'Teja', 'Vayu', and 'Akasha' respectively.
6. All the above experiences can be localised along certain planes of the body viz., front, back, right, left, central and likewise. These expressions take us very near to the concept of 'Nadis' i. e. channels of pranic activity in yogic literature. We are already accustomed with some like 'Ida', 'Pingla', and 'Sushumna'.
7. As everything in the outside world requires some sort of energy for any type of action, in the same way the human existence also requires

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some sort of energy working inside the body to carry on different functions at different levels and planes. That energy is termed as 'Prana' in Yoga. It has been further divided into five kinds with five more sub-divisions. Five main 'Pranas', being 'Prana\*', 'Apana', 'Vyana', 'Samana' and 'Udana'. The concept of prana is also experiential in nature.

8. The last concept that remains to be mentioned is that of 'Kundalini'. An integrated picture emerging out of these various experiences of one self which may be disturbing, painful, balancing, pleasurable or ecstatic in nature could be called an experience of 'Kundalini' because it is supposed to be the force responsible for our life and living.

Almost all of the concepts and terms described so far cannot be demonstrated to others as we demonstrate any physical or chemical phenomenon neither they can be experienced through the sense organs, even though their manifestation at the level of the body could be used as useful indicators and monitors. Thus they can be sensed and experienced in a different way.

One may question the purpose of referring to these concepts here. To my mind various yoga education programmes, yoga practices, and application of yoga in therapy, sports etc should be based on these concepts keeping in view the guiding principle "Integrated approach to Totality which is highly Individualised".

Again a question could be posed, "Is it necessary to learn Yoga to get the existential experience of oneself"? The answer is 'No'. Then why should we think of yoga

and what could be the real benefits of this system to us? Can we not derive the same benefits by following other systems in vogue? I request you to kindly give a thought to these questions posed here and let us try to find suitable answers.

In our day-to-day life we do experience ourselves i.e. experiencing hunger, thirst, sleep, anger, sexual tension, conflict, depression, agitation, confusions, instincts, urges, desire to pass urine, stool etc, etc. However, all of these and such other experiences make us aware of a disturbed, imbalanced and even painful state of 'Being' and goades us to undergo suitable actions or mode of behaviour so that we could once again get into a state of 'At-ease' from that of \*Dis-at-ease" or from the state of imbalance and disequilibrium to a state of balance and equilibrium. Very often our behaviour removes the initial disturbances, but develops another type of disturbance, and this vicious circle continues. At other times we create a purposeful imbalance at the intellectual level and thus disturb the whole state of our being , e.g. while enjoying rest, peace and tranquility, we feel like participating in 100 metre race or have jogging or play football. When we are completely taken over by the thought, the body is made to undergo suitable warming-up practices through which we develop tensions in different groups of muscles for undergoing the required activity most efficiently. When the activity is over, even though one expects that the whole tension should be released and return to normal; in reality, some tension lingers on and depending on the winning and loosing, other types of tensions get superimposed on them. Thus an imbalance in muscular tonus, mode of breathing, sensitivity to feel pain etc., and the ability to think and react gets modified along with the change in the value system of the individual and the appro-

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ach to life situations. This is continuously at work in our life without our cogniscance or awareness till we become prey to some sort of psycho-somatic disorders. It is only in retrospective analysis that we may realise the nature of tensions at work. It is the basic contention of yoga that all of us are in a disturbed state of being (Vyuthita chitta) at various levels of our existance and every one of us want to come back to a balance condition (Samahita chitta) so that we could experience bliss (Anand), contentment (Santosh) and peace (Shanti) of perpetual nature. Different schools of yoga have devised different techniques and approaches to achieve this goal. We could summarise the basic principles emphasised by most of the yogic disciplines below.

1. Correcting the food habits. In fact some of the masters talk of sensory inputs for the sense organs as their food and advocate correction in this inputs also. This could be equated with the concept of 'Anna Suddhi' or 'Ahaar Suddhi'.
2. Correcting the awareness from the physical body through different asanas. In modern medical language it could mean correction in proprioceptive awareness so that one can experience a balanced condition in opposite groups of muscles and an uniform awareness throughout the body. This could be equated with the concept of 'Deha suddhi' and relate it with the terms 'Dvandana-bhigat' and 'Angame jaytva' found in Patanjala yoga sutras,
3. Correcting the mode of breathing with a view to get right type of breathing awareness by resorting to various cleansing processes. This helps us to understand the concept of 'prana Suddhi' and 'Nadi Suddhi'.

4. Correcting ones own sentiments and emotions associated with different organs, systems and regions of the body which have been instrumental to develop our emotional being from birth till to-day. The concept of 'Manas suddhi' could be understood in this way.
5. Correcting and developing right type of thinking for self existence. This could help us to understand the concept of 'Chitta Suddhi'.
6. Transforming and transcending the levels of our existential awareness so that the self centred or selfish individual (Jivatma) could develop impersonal behaviour and in due course of time one could start thinking as a universal being (Paramatma). This reflects the concept of 'Atma suddhi'.

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7. Different individuals can exist at different levels and therefore will require suitable type of approaches for their transformation and transcendence. The out come of such an educational process based on existential experiences is supposed to lead to the final realisation that the conscious principle in oneself is independent of the body, mind and intellect. It is very subtle in nature and is directly related to the principle which is responsible for the existence of the SUN in the sky and to which all the life and living owes its existence. Even to-days science and technology has the same understanding about the formation and existence of our universe. In Vedic, yogic and Pauranic literature this principle is variously termed as 'Savitru Tatva', 'Avyakta', 'Iswar', 'Paramatma', 'Maha Purusha', 'Brahma', 'Vishnu', 'Rudra' etc.

8. Such a realisation is expected to bring about a radical change in the over all behaviour of an individual based on different value system and attitudes to life, so that one could experience and enjoy a state of internal bliss, contentment and peace which may also be experienced by those coming in close contact with that individual like the influence of magnet on magnetic objects. On the other hand, objective analysis may indicate that he is undergoing hardships, miseries and penance in life.

To my mind, this seems to be the aim and object of yogic education programme. Unfortunately the literature that is being brought out on this subject seems to be far away from these aims and objectives. We are trying to put yoga as an exercise system or something like a sports activity. Some authorities are even trying to organise competitions in yoga with a view to make it more popular and to attract the attention of masses, and instead of helping an individual to realise himself or herself as a human being, we are making one to get identified with some other things like the capacity to perform very difficult asanas or holding the breath for a long time to establish world record or fasting for eight to ten days at a stretch just to develop the ego. The person is putting another label on oneself. In such situations how can we expect that our yoga practicants will ever realise the absolute state of their being and transcend from individualised awareness to universal awareness and thus become noble in their thoughts, words and deeds. I humbly feel that the yoga teachers and practicants gathered here should come together and try to have some introspection to find out why for and what for do we want to teach our students

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different yoga practices and to what extent our techniques and methods are standardised and effective. How do they foresee the end product of their yogic training programme. We know that the end product of medical education is a doctor, that of weight lifting training programme will be a weight lifter and so on. But we can not say or predict the outcome of yoga training programmes. On the other hand we come across literature claiming that yoga would help to become good football players, typists, tennis players, sexual partners etc. etc. Does these claims make a viable sense based on sound logic and reasoning in line with the long living tradition of Yoga ?

In their letter to the participants the President and the Secretary of this Congress have appealed 'to discuss the subject of promotion of health of the humanity through the wisdom and knowledge of Yoga and Ayurveda with special reference to (1) Psycho-somatic stressful conditions, (2) drug.addictions, alcoholism and smoking, and (3) toxic effects of modern drugs for the present and future generations. It is being believed by them that Ayurveda and Yoga can provide detailed answers for all these problems and the deliberations of this conference could initiate a silent revolution in the health care programme of the world. I appeal to you that through our deliberations we could give definite guidelines to the organisers for planning a line of action in future.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

