

LESSON 25

SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND YOGA

SUMMARY

There is no domain of life where Yoga is not relevant. It changes our attitude towards life. It awakens our creativity and enriches our relationships with others. In the light of Yoga nothing remains simply mundane but everything gets a touch of the sublime. We develop self control and grow morally. In this way, self does not remain an attribute related to personal functioning only. It goes beyond that and relates to the social world that we inhabit.

We long and strive for success. Success is the result of tireless striving towards the goal with a positive attitude, and confidence in oneself and others. This is self-development.

Self-Development through Yoga

According to Indian thought the ego in us is the actor, knower and experience. The reflection of the absolute called Brahman or pure consciousness. It is said that the ego is the image of that divine spark within us, which gives it vitality and makes it do all works mental as well as physical.

As people grow, they develop their own concept of self-which determines how they relate to others and perform various activities. Our self-concept,

however, does not remain constant; rather it changes during the different stages of life.

Infancy - Infants are found to have a visual self-recognition by the age of two years but clear self-awareness is not found even in the third year of age. During childhood the idea of self remains concrete.

Childhood and Adolescence - During early childhood children start defining themselves on the basis of certain psychological attributes. During adolescence representations of the self-become much more subtle. They realize that they are not the same kind of person with everyone and in every situation. Identity provides a stable sense of who a person is and what one's values and ideals are.

Early Adulthood: This stage of development is characterized by the challenge of intimacy v/s isolation. Intimacy refers to the establishment of a committed relationship which is enduring. It includes both romantic as well as friendly relationships. In the course of development, one needs to redefine his or her role as father/mother, uncle/aunt.

Middle Age: During this stage of life people become concerned with relating to the next generation and one's contribution to society. During this period a person faces

crisis of engaging with generative activities.

Old Age: In view of social mobility and disintegration of traditional family ties, many aged people lack social support and suffer from poor self concept. However, those who look back upon their life with a sense of satisfaction that they have lived it well, experience a sense of integrity. Others may have regrets and despair.

Self undergoes transformation and many elements are included and excluded in one's self structure. People often strive for an ideal self.

In the first stage infants have difficulty in differentiating self from others. After one year they gradually develop a sense of self as characterized by egocentric thinking. Then comes third stage during which children show situation specific empathy. Finally, when they reach the fourth stage, they come to relate their expression of distress to others when others are also in distress. In fact, in the fourth stage only appropriate exhibition of empathy is demonstrated, that is, others get emotional support from those who show appropriate empathic reaction.

Yoga in the development of 'Self' can play a very important role. Through yogic asanas, pranayama and meditation the body, mind, vital force and intellect are properly nurtured which results in healthy development. It enhances

self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect.

Applications of Yoga in different walks of life

a) Studies - In the practice of Yoga, when we learn to perform Asana and Pranayama, our breathing becomes long and deep. We focus our attention on a particular spot. When this focused mind is applied to studies, it grasps the ideas and concepts better. It can retain the learning material more effectively.

b) Relationships - When we practice yoga, co-operation takes the place of competition. Instead of making constant and unreasonable demands from others, we learn to give selfless love to others. While making friends, we learn to give greater importance to the inner qualities than to outer appearances.

c) Work - Work or employment should be seen as a joyous opportunity for self-expression and growth. Good posture, deep breathing and gentle stretching will help you to keep relaxed at the workplace.

d) Health - Conflicts create blockages in the flow of life-force or Prana leading to diseases. Illness, depression, sulkiness all are the symptoms of negativity and obstructions in the flow of life-force. Through pranayama and meditation, we gradually free ourselves from the negativity and re-experience our natural state of vibrant health and energy. It is

possible through the use of will and Yogic techniques to direct the life-force wherever we want. It is possible to energize the whole system, heal the injured or diseased area or even heal others.

How Yoga shapes our attitudes, thinking and behaviour

Our happiness and success depend on the pattern of our attitude, thinking and behaviour. Yoga assures us that our dream can be fulfilled provided we acquire certain healthy attitudes and habits of thinking and living. Some ways to use yoga for effective living are –

1. Not complaining about our environment - It is not healthy to complain about what we have; it is good to think of how we can make the best of it. Let us have a goal and take steps to move towards it. Yogic techniques make our body, mind and intellect strong. We become competent to take decisions.
2. Train your body first - Yogasanas shake off our lethargy and idleness. They bring fresh vigour to our body. They free us from tensions and diseases, so that we can focus our attention totally on our goal. Be conscious of what we consume in the form of food. Rest and proper sleep are

also necessary to keep our body fit.

3. Train your mind - Self-education is very important in Yoga. If we train our mind to become strong, it will be strong. If we let it be weak, it will become weak and brittle. Avoid all kinds of negative thoughts like envy, jealousy and narrow-mindedness, self-pity.
4. Train your Intellect - Seeing dreams and exerting all our energies to fulfil them makes our intellect strong. Let us teach our intellect by taking wise decisions and staying firm with our decisions.

Yoga for Motivation and Excellence: In Action

Yoga can train the body and intellect for development of self to achieve excellence and competence in action. According to Gita, Yoga is excellence in action. Excellence in action does not come without motivation.

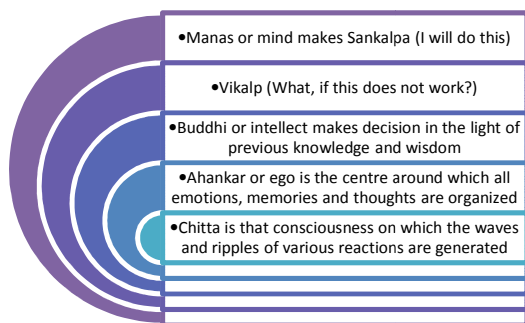
There are two reasons behind our work –

1. One is visible. People work because they get money.
2. The second is invisible. People work because they enjoy work, it increases their self-respect, people appreciate them and they are proud that they are given responsibility and try their best to rise to the occasion.

When we read the life stories of great men and women, we realize that they kept a lofty goal as the pole star of their life and strove hard to reach it. With singleness of purpose, they ultimately achieved their goal. This is Yoga. This harnesses all your energies in a particular direction, keeping your instruments i.e., body, mind and intellect ready and sharp for the work undertaken. Great men and women see great dreams and make great effort to realize them.

Patanjali on Mind: Its nature, functions, and states

Yoga was compiled in a concise form by Sage Patanjali and it is called Yoga Sutra. It tells us about the nature of human mind and its functions. It analyses the causes of turbulence and suggests the ways of overcoming them. It enlightens us on how to reach the state of oneness with energy or Supreme Consciousness that pervades the entire universe. According to Yoga Sutra mind comprises of four faculties namely - **Manas, Buddhi, Ahankar and Chitta**. These are called **Antahkaran**.



Vikalpa and Chitta or consciousness is seen as the birth place of all mental reactions.

Everchanging states of mind

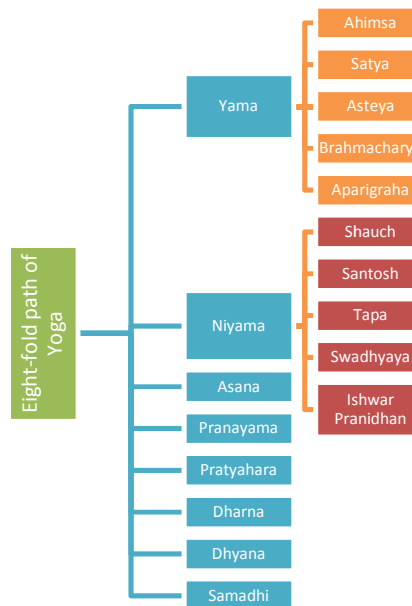
- Kshipt – outgoing mind, experiencing the world
- Vikshipt – mind plays ‘in and out’
- Moodha – unaware, not alert, coma, non-functioning state of mind
- Ekagra - concentration

Relatively stable states of mind

- Jagriti - Full awareness with conscience (Vivek)
- Swapn - A state of dream where some people play wish fulfillment game
- Sushupti - Deep and dreamless sleep
- Tureeya - state of deep meditation in which a person becomes oblivious of space and time

The Eight-fold path of Yoga

Maharishi Patanjali gave eight steps that you have to follow if you want to lead life with health and well-being. These steps are called eight-fold path of Yoga and are referred to as the limbs of Yoga.



Yama is exercising restraint on our lower animal like instincts, such as - greed, lust, anger and envy and never acting based on these impulses. It has given five rules of behaviour which purify one's mind and behaviour.

- **Ahimsa** - It means non-violence in thought, word and deed.
- **Satya** - To speak truth, we should mean what we say.
- **Asteya** - To keep away from temptations of money is non-stealing.
- **Brahmacharya** - To keep away from temptations of indulging in unethical sex.
- **Aparigraha** - not to store more than what you need.

Niyamas are mainly for purifying the body and mind. They are practiced on individual basis.

- **Shauch** - keeping your body and mind clean.
- **Santosh** - It means contentment. You should do your best in every undertaking and be happy with that.
- **Tapa** - The literal meaning of Tapa is penance. To achieve a goal we have to make sincere effort, and give up certain pleasures.
- **Swadhyaya** - it means studying the principles related to Yoga.
- **Ishwar Pranidhan** - It means being in constant contact with God by chanting or by keeping in mind all the time that our

actions are in the worship of the Lord.

Asana - Patanjali defines Asana as that posture in which we can sit comfortable for the Yogic practices, with our head, neck and back in a straight line. Since Yoga is vitally related to our nervous system, our spinal cord should be in the right position. The yogic tradition gives us 84 Asanas to keep our body and nerves supple. They build our resistance to diseases and keep us fit.

Pranayama - Pranayama is getting control on our Pranic energy through the regulation of breathing. Prana or the life-force, breathing rhythmically improves your blood circulation and circulation of Pranic or vital energy in the body. Inhaling air is called Poorak in Yoga. Exhaling air out is called Rechak. Stopping for a few seconds before exhalation is called internal Kumbhak.

Pratyahara - It literally means withdrawing. In Pratyahara we withdraw the senses (sight, smell hearing, touch and taste) from their external objects and turn them inward. In Yoga we train our sense organs to remain quiet. Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayam and Pratyahara are called external aids to Yoga. For the next steps, you have to go still deeper. So, they are called as internal aids.

Dharana - Dharana is focusing of mind on a particular object. Our

attention should be focused on either an internal or external object. This practice improves concentration which helps in studies and professional life.

Dhyana - When one learns to maintain Dharana or attention on a single object for a relatively longer period, that steady contemplation is called Dhyana or meditation. In Dhyana, we are aware of being a witness to what is happening in our minds. But we are not emotionally or intellectually involved in those happenings.

Samadhi - In Samadhi, the mind is so deeply absorbed in the object of contemplation that it loses itself in the object and has no awareness of itself. Here the individual consciousness is absorbed with pure consciousness.

A person, who progresses along this eight-fold path of Yoga successfully, becomes an evolved person. He or she is free from anger, lust and other vices. S/ he becomes lover of the entire humanity. S/he does his/her own duty with great excellence but is not at all proud of his/her achievements. This eight-fold path is not for a chosen few. Everybody can tread on it.

Evaluate yourself

1. Describe the eight-fold path of Yoga?
2. Discuss the applications of yoga in daily life.