

## Yoga in educational venture: A way towards holistic development

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### Abstract

Education in its broadest sense is a sort of enlightenment within and without. In fact the aim of education is an all-round and holistic development of an individual. The concept of holistic development ensures the development of the three domains, e.g. cognitive, affective and psychomotor. In fact a well-balanced personality is the consequence of proper and proportionate development of these three domains. Yoga has long been attempting to focus on holistic development of personality. It is the quality of comprehensiveness that enables Yoga to accelerate and enrich the teaching-learning process. Though purely spiritual in origin, Yoga has conquered all boundaries by virtue of its brilliant approach in the modification of human life. Unfortunately, we have become the part of an education system where education ceases to be the means of enlightenment of mind and soul, rather solely becomes the medium of gathering information. As a result a queer spiritual vacuity is gradually corroding the human existence. This crisis can best be combated through the practice of Yoga. This cannot be done until Yoga is formally included in the curriculum. In this investigation we are to explore actually the role of Yoga as a means of holistic development of an individual.

**Keywords:** yoga, education, holistic development, spiritual vacuity, para and apara vidya

### 1. Introduction

“Sa evaayam mayaa te’ dya yogah proktah puratanah;  
Bhakto’si me sakaa cheti rahasyam hyetad uttamam.”

[Sloka-3, The Yoga of Wisdom, *Bhagbat Gita*]

[That same ancient Yoga has been today taught to thee by me for, thou art my devotee and friend; it is the supreme secret]

In the above *Sloka* from *Bhagbat Gita* Lord Krishna is explaining Arjuna about the importance and glory of ancient Yoga. Here He is suggesting that the ancient Yoga consists of profound and subtle teachings. Hence it is the supreme secret which the Lord reveals to Arjuna. In fact Yoga in varied forms consists one of the pillars of *Bhagbat Gita*. With the passage of time the concept of Yoga underwent changes, and it has evolved in many ways from its ancient forms and practices. Yet the role of Yoga in the making of a perfect man has highly been upheld globally, through ages.

We all know that the idea of making a perfect man is also the highest aim of Education. Education, in fact, ensures a balanced as well as harmonious development of personality in respect of physical, mental, intellectual and emotional aspects. Technically speaking, true Education that is holistic in nature, essentially emphasizes on the nourishment of the three domains of learning, i.e. Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor. The purpose of holistic education is enlightenment within and without. It attempts to create a man who is intellectually subtle and spiritually sound and socially acceptable. Among the means and approaches of implementing holistic education, Yoga has immense to

contribute. If we look at the concept, approaches and the purpose of Yoga we will find that Yoga has long been attempting to mould a perfect man. Sri Aurobindo once wrote in a letter:

The aim of yoga is to open the consciousness to the divine and to live in the inner consciousness more and more while acting from it on the external life, to bring the inmost psychic into the front and by the power of the psychic to purify and change the being so that it may become ready for transformation and in union with the divine knowledge, Will and Love.

Yoga, the etymological meaning of which is ‘to join’ or ‘to unite’ is actually a long accepted spiritual practice that works as the medium of uniting oneself with the Divinity. Hence, from time immemorial Yoga has a very distinguished place in the spiritual tradition of India. In his *Yoga Sutras* Maharshi Patanjali, who is rightly called *The Father of Yoga* introduced eight-fold paths of Yoga, known as *Astanga Yoga*. The *Astanga Yoga*, brilliantly formulated by Patanjali can ensure an all-round development of personality. The eight-fold paths were: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*. In this investigation we are to explore the role of Yoga as a means of holistic development of personality.

### 2. Yoga and Intellectual Development

This is a scientifically acknowledged fact that recurrent practice of Yoga helps in accelerating the development of different parts of human brain. Hence, Yoga has a specific role in the cognitive development of an individual. The changes in

cognitive process like attention, memory, thinking, reasoning and problem-solving may be noticed through repeated practice of Yoga. It has been proven helpful in improving memory and concentration. It can improve readiness for learning among the growing children. As Yoga is primarily about controlling the mind, hence it becomes helpful in sharpening our intellect. A number of practitioners of *Jnana Yoga* use *Pranayama* as a means to stabilize their minds. *Pranayama* covers inhalation, retention and exhalation of breath; it is about controlling the breath. It helps in increasing concentration and in removing tensions and anxieties. The best ways to enhance concentration are *Dharana* and then *Dhyana*. *Dharana* is fixing up of mind before *Dhayana* or meditation. *Dhyana* leads to *Samadhi* where there is complete withdrawal from the external world. Through these three steps *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*, a *Sadhak* attains salvation, as Indian spiritual tradition suggests. Though *Samadhi*, being the supreme state of Yogic practice is a very long and uninterrupted process of yogic practice and is very difficult to learn. One can attempt to learn *Dhayana* or Meditation under the guidance of a trained Yoga teacher. Mind matters a lot, hence, when mind is free from any kind of troubles and menaces, then intellect starts to work with subtlety. The Cognitive Structure of an individual gets strengthened through the practice of Yogic *Asanas* like, *Surya Namaskar*, *Trantak* and *Pranayama*. These *Asanas* are helpful in improving memory and other cognitive aspects of an individual. What is needed is a systematic inclusion of Yoga in the school curriculum.

### 3. Yoga and Psychological Well-being

Yoga is a great tranquilizer; it has a marvelous soothing impact both on body and mind. It helps in keeping away all sorts of worries and tensions. By purging off all such anxieties, Yoga enables one to possess a sound psychological health. *Hatha Yoga* has a brilliant role to play in this aspect. Now-a-days doctors are very often suggesting practicing Yoga to combat depression. It is very effective in dealing with patients who are suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Studies have shown that there is a strong relation between breathing systems and mental and psychological well-being. Even in the West Yoga has been accepted as a highly refined science that can positively stimulate nervous system. Yoga posture practices specifically *Pranayama* are the brilliant ways of developing a calm body and quite mind. Yoga can successfully lift one from depressed mood and pessimistic attitudes towards positivity. As a matter of fact, Yoga creates awareness within individual- awareness about himself/herself and about the surrounding world too. It makes him/her understand who he/she is, what role he/she has to play in the universe. It helps man regain his lost confidence and clarity of vision. Hence Yoga has a very significant role in psychological counseling and guidance.

The application of Yoga in the field of Psychology in dealing with different ailments has given rise to a new discipline

called Yoga Psychology. It is actually the theoretical basis of Yoga Psychotherapy. The two notable aspects of Yoga Psychology are that it is holistic in approach when combined with the Western therapeutic approaches, and it inspires spiritual awakening. Yoga Psychology is an ever evolutionary term that goes on exploring the links between body and mind. It is, in fact, a dynamic approach that works on the two fundamental levels: 1. Behavioral changes and development of a stable ego. 2. Deep Psychotherapy that supports the journey from limited, socially conditioned egoist consciousness to the awakened Self.

According to a report published on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2017 on the page of a reputed US based online magazine, patients suffering from depression can improve by over 50%, with weekly Yoga classes. Researchers from across the US have analyzed the impact of *Hatha Yoga* on 63 patients suffering from severe depression. After six months, when the entire process was over, it was noticed that 51% patients were reported at least 50% improvement. Study author Dr. Lisa Uebelacker, from Brown University, said: "We hypothesized that yoga participants would show lower depression severity over time, as well as better social and role functioning, better general health perceptions and physical functioning, and less physical pain relative to the control group. We found that yoga did indeed have an impact on depression symptoms."

### 4. Yoga and Self-realization

Yoga is the integration of body, mind, senses and intelligence altogether with the self. It is a way to self-journey. Yoga advocates four ways in order to achieve self-realization. They are: *Jnana Marg* (the path of knowledge), *Karma Marg* (the path of selflessness), *Bhakti Marg* (the path of love and devotion), and *Yoga Marg* (the path of self-control). Enlightenment or illumination of self is one of the highest aims of Indian Spiritual traditions. Here an individual gains consciousness (*Chetana*); consequently, all sorts of ignorance are driven away. And from time immemorial, Yoga has been the medium of fulfilling this goal of spirituality. *Atmanong biddhi* or 'Know thyself' as uttered by the Upanishad is a process where an individual learns how to remove ego. It is about strengthening one's inherent power and controlling the mind and mental process. The awakening of consciousness is considered to be the chief aim of every living organism according to Indian philosophy. Yoga, in its variegated forms, has always been the most effective media for this purpose. It is the moment of ecstasy that one enjoys with the acquisition of consciousness; as it is the moment when human spirit is dissolved into the Universal spirit. Apart from all these spiritual realizations as well as interpretations, an individual begets the true meaning of life on earth through a constant practice of Yoga. In *Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo wrote:

Mind and life themselves cannot grow into fullness except by the opening up of the larger and greater consciousness to which mind only approaches. Such a larger and greater

consciousness is the spiritual, for the spiritual consciousness is not only higher than the rest but more embracing. Universal as well transcendent, it can take up mind and life into its light and give them the true and utmost realization of all for which they are seeking: for it has a greater instrumentality of knowledge, a fountain of deeper power and will, an unlimited reach and intensity of love and joy and beauty.

### 5. Yoga and Inculcation of Values

“Disputes may be inevitable, violence is not. To prevent continued cycles of conflict, education must seek to promote peace and tolerance, not fuel hatred and suspicion”

[The declaration of UNICEF ‘Anti-War Agenda’ set out in The State of the World’s Children 1996]

With the conclusion of Second World War (1939-1945) UNESCO was founded in 1946, and it was charged with planning, developing and implementing general changes in education in connection to international politics of peace and security. In this connection UNICEF has been struggling hard for years to implement the resolutions declared by the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All held at Jomtein. The Declaration emphasized on the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required to live and work with dignity and to participate in development. The term ‘Education’ whether formal, non-formal or informal should develop in both children and adults such knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will lead to behavioral changes.

Values are such attributes that separate human beings from other beasts. *Satyam* (Truth), *Shivam* (Goodness), *Sundaram* (Beauty): these were the root values uttered and practiced by the ancient *Rishis* and Sages. From these root values there emerged all other societal values. Yoga has a significant role in drawing out these values from within an individual. Through constant yogic practices human body and mind are cultivated in such a way that such values are automatically instilled in his blood. In fact, the entire process of Yoga centers around the cultivation of certain values those are essential to lead a healthy living on earth. Modern man is the outcome of evolution from mere beast to human being. And Yoga has a significant role to play in refining human behavior. In the eight-fold paths as prescribed by Maharshi Patanjali, the first two steps called *Yama* and *Niyama* indicate ‘restraints’ and ‘observances’. Here the suggestion is about controlling one’s animal instinct and hence, elevating oneself to higher plane. The restraints propagated by *Yama* are *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Satyam* (Truth), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Aparigraha* (non-greed), *Brahmacharya* (chastity). On the other hand, *Niyama* emphasizes on five practices, like: *Saucham* (Purity), *Santhosam* (Contentment), *Tapasya* (Austerity), *Swadhyaya* (self-study and study of Scriptures), and *IswaraPranidhana* (Surrender to Divine Will).

The first step called *Yama* actually expects to abide by certain fundamental human values. The need of similar values were also prescribed in *Panchamahavrata* by Jain Philosophy and

in *Astangicmarg* by Buddhism:

- *Satya* (Truth) means adoption of truth whole-heartedly. This principle is very useful in student-teacher relationship. By mind, speech and behavior, a teacher should be a real teacher, and the students should devote themselves in the learning process.
- *Ahimsa* (Non-violence) emphasizes on peaceful co-existence of all living beings.
- *Asteya* (Non-stealing) makes a person honest by heart and mind. It advocates that one should not earn money by adopting unfair means.
- *Aparigraha* (Non-greed) disregards the insatiable desire for more than requirement. Excessive desire diverts the mind of man from real to unreal, and thus results in his own doom.
- *Brahmacharya* (Chastity) exhibits the techniques to control the desires. The focal concept is that we should be masters of our desires, not slaves to our desires.
- If we look at *Niyama*, we will find the following five principles prescribed for us:
- *Sauchm* (Purity) emphasizes on both physical and mental purity. Here mental purity is more important where an individual is expected to be free from any sort of evil; and he/ she will be the source of positive energy.
- *Santosam* (Contentment) is the satisfaction with what one has possessed. It is the denial of excessive desire.
- *Tapasya* (Austerity) focuses on spiritual practice that creates a stoic attitude within a man. He reacts in the same way in time of victory and defeat, pleasure and pain. He possesses a mental stability.
- *Swadhyaya* (Self-study and study of Scriptures) helps in attaining right direction. The study of scriptures helps one to differentiate between real and unreal.
- *Iswarpranidhana* (Surrender to Divine Will) advocates developing faith on God, devotion to the Supreme Power. As per students and teachers, they should be devoted towards their respective works.

These were the primary preparations for a yogic way of life. After *Yama* and *Niyama*, there are *Asana* and *Pranayama*, associated with body movement and control of breath respectively. All these practices help in enhancing will power, stability, energy, clarity of emotions and self-control. In fact, Yoga is a comprehensive way of life that can take one towards perfection; and we all know that one of the aims of Education is to create a perfect man. In modern times, when the hollowness is all around, we need to lay stress on the introduction of Value Education; we must take refuge under the serene abode of Yogic philosophy.

### 6. Yoga and Socialization

“Man is there to affirm himself in the universe that is his first business, but also to evolve and finally to exceed himself: he has to enlarge his partial being into a complete being, his partial consciousness into an integral consciousness; he has to

achieve mastery of his environment but also world-union and world-harmony”

The attainment of ‘world-harmony’ through a constant process of self-elevation as stated above in *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo can best be materialized through the practice of Yoga. Socialization is one of the chief aims of Education. Indian philosophy has emphasized on the acquisition of both *Para and Aparā Vidya*, as advocated in the *Mundaka Upanishad*, which actually registers to the two significant dimensions of Education. *Para Vidya* leads one towards self-realization, on the other hand, *Aparā Vidya* prepares one to fit into the world around. *Para Vidya* is the way of realizing the Brahmo (God/ Universal Spirit), and *Aparā Vidya* is about realizing the world created by Him [tasmai so ubachodwe vidye beditobye iti ho smo jodd brhmovidyo bodonti./ para chaibapara cho. Sen. (ed.) 2009, p.210] As per Indian philosophy, the acquisition of these two *Vidyas* (Wisdom) becomes possible only through yogic practices. Significantly enough, we notice that *Aparā Vidya* advocates the need to be socially conscious being, which is one of the aims of Education too. Education teaches us how to adjust with the society as a whole. Hence, Social Development is one of the aims of Education, which is incorporated with the growth and development of attitudes and behavior. Apart from making a man physically, mentally and spiritually refined, it prepares him to fit into the real world that surrounds him. Earlier we have discussed how Yoga serves to cater and instigate values within man. The entire system of Yoga as a whole is not altogether a system to be practiced in seclusion. The concept of *Sadhaka* associated with Yoga actually makes us think that the practice of Yoga is less the concern of common people; rather it is a segregated approach working beyond the everyday society. The truth, in fact, lies in the fact that Yoga is for all- from a true saint to a hard-core business magnet- each and everybody can uplift their entire existence through the practice of Yoga. The values that one begets through its practice helps him maintain healthy social relationships. Man, as a social being cannot ignore his duties and responsibilities towards society. On the other hand, society is the sum total of people belonging to different socio-economic status, and exhibiting different views, opinions, religious and cultural beliefs. An individual possessing clarity of visions and values can live in harmony in the midst of manifold differences; and in so doing he/she can motivate others to understand the values of living a successful social life. Regular practice of Yoga can mould one’s mind in such a way that he/she can break the barriers of ego easily and embrace others with a broad and open mind.

### 7. Yoga and Physical Development

The practice of Yoga from the early childhood contributes a lot to the physical development of the child. There is a year-old saying, “Health is Wealth” that declares that, first and foremost, it is the sound health that is needed for a healthy

living. Yoga, as an important part of Physical Education, can exercise immense impact on the growth and development of the adolescents. It improves physiological functioning of the body thereby making our body steady, flexible and strong. Various Yoga *Asanas*, and the practices of *Hatha Yoga* were developed for specific health benefits. The *Hatha Yoga* practices of *Neti* are fruitful for nasal hygiene; it removes sinusitis and relieves headaches and migraines. *Asanas* like *Padmasana*, *Hamsasana*, *Mayurasana* *Makarasana*, *Chakrasana* were formulated to strengthen and stabilize different body parts like arms, shoulders stomach, back and spine.

The third step of *Astanga Yoga* formulated by Patanjali is called *Asana* where there are attempts to make the body stable and to gain a comfortable posture. *Yogasana* can draw out the inner potentials of the students making them physically strong and stout. Swami Vivekananda has always stressed on the need of practicing *Yogasana* for a healthy body; because he used to believe that a healthy body is the abode of a healthy mind. Practice of *Yogasana* should be made compulsory in schools and there should be provision for the appointment of trained Yoga experts.

### 8. Conclusion

It is widely acknowledged that health is influenced by biological, social, economic, cultural and political forces. Access to basic needs like food, safe drinking water supply, housing, sanitation and health services influences the health status of a population, and these are reflected through mortality and nutritional indicators. Health is a critical input for the overall development of the child, and it influences enrolment, retention and school completion rates significantly. This curriculum area adopts a holistic definition of health within which physical education and yoga contribute to the physical, social, emotional and mental development of a child. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 declared the urgent need of health and physical education including Yoga, for ensuring the holistic development of the child. Modern science has acknowledged the role of Yoga in harmonizing the life of an individual. It is a comprehensive approach in as much as a scientific Education system demands. Hence, Originating from the core of Indian philosophy, Yoga has conquered the world today by its quality of bio-psycho-socio-spiritual approach which is designated as a holistic approach in the modification of human behavior. Yoga is a way of life; it is one of the effective components of life-style modification. What is essential is its compulsory inclusion in the school curriculum.

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