

12. THE PHILOSOPHY OF YOGA

Charity is the ornament for the hand.
Truth is the ornament for the throat.
Scripture is the ornament for the ears.
Of what use is any other ornament?
Deeds done without purity of mind will never confer peace
on the seeker.
He who can still the mind without agitations and impurities
is the one who is really great.

Embodiments of Divine Atma,

The seers of ancient India professed and practised Yoga with its eight components of **Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana** and **Samadhi**. Though India is the homeland of Yoga, it gains popularity in foreign lands. Indians have neglected Yoga, nourishing the mistaken notion that Yoga is meant for the ochre-robed forest-dwellers who feed on tubers. They think that only recluses and renunciates are worthy enough to practise Yoga. They deluded themselves, entertaining the wrong idea that an ordinary man has nothing to do with Yoga.

Man in his frantic scramble for amassing wealth has lost proper sleeping habits. Man forces himself to take sleeping pills and intoxicants to induce sleep, into his worried mind. Pills and drugs take a heavy toll of his health and make him a target for blood pressure and heart ailments. The hurry and insatiable greed of man have brought in their wake a host of mental maladies.

THE HEALING POWER OF YOGA:

Some intellectuals began to think whether there could be a remedy for the heated nerves and worried minds and diseased bodies afflicted by blood pressure and lung diseases. Professor Carlton researched into these problems and declared that the Yoga Shastra of Patanjali shows a sure remedy for this malady of the modern man. Inspired by the investigations of Carlton Cane, the Professor of Hawaii University like Elliot, Shuton and Johnson began researching into Yoga. Professor Johnson in the beginning doubted the efficacy of Yoga; but as his research progressed, he realised the great power of yoga. He concluded that the clue to the problem lay in controlling the vagaries of the mind. He along with other Professors, further stated that the practise of Yoga fosters physical and mental stamina, and people could remedy their mental afflictions without spending a pie. The professors determined that the joy that one derives from two hours of undisturbed deep sleep can be obtained by twelve minutes of Yogic practise.

In their frantic hurry to ensure more production, the farmers and labourers in advanced countries like America, Germany, France etc. neglected their health by forgoing sleep. The stress and strain, the worry and the tension of modern life and the lack of proper environment, damage the health of the modern man. There is an increase in the number of people suffering from physical ailments and mental maladies all over the world. Experiments were conducted on the prisoners in a jail in Old Mexico to find out the exact cause for the rapid rise of mental patients amongst the prisoners. They concluded, after thorough investigation, that the problem was caused not by food, but by tension and worry. The professors made the prisoners undergo Yogic practises, to rid the prisoners of their mental tension. In a short time the patients became normal. The patients not only made a total recovery, but gained great happiness due to the practise of Yoga.

The practitioners of Yoga began to shun drugs, intoxicants and even stimulants and evinced a keen interest to intensify their Yogic practice. Today, there are about four lakh students who practice Yoga in Mexico. Though India is the homeland of Yoga, the people ignore the efficacy of Yoga and thereby fail to benefit from it. Though Devaki was the mother who nurtured Krishna in her womb, it was Yashoda who enjoyed the pleasure of Krishna's company as a foster mother. Sitting under a tree Devaki lamented her misfortune thus:

It was not for me to see the wondrous deed of your sucking
away the life of Putana while she
suckled you;
It was not for me to kiss your wondrous belly, which ropes
failed to bind;
It was given to me to suffer the labour pains to deliver you to
the world;
It was given to Yashoda to fondle you in fond joy:
Though fertile, I became a barren women.
Without begetting a son, Yashoda became the mother of a Great
Son.

The plight of the Indians today is similar to that of Devaki. Though India is the mother of Yoga and Shaddarshanas, it is the foreigners who foster Yoga in their countries and derive immense benefit thereby. The Indians are reduced to the pitiable condition of learning Yoga in foreign lands. They do not strive sincerely to benefit from the marvellous, sacred and unique wisdom contained in the sacred texts.

Sage Patanjali devoted his entire life to the study of Yoga and declared that health is most essential for life. He stated that the well-being of the body depends on discipline. He defined Yoga as,

“the observance of discipline for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being.”

DISCIPLINE AND THOUGHT CONTROL:

‘Na Shreya Niyamam Vina’ (No well-being is obtained without discipline). Yoga lays down certain disciplines (**Niyama**) like partaking of moderate, balanced and pure food. But modern man flouts the yogic discipline by helping himself with spicy and sumptuous food to cater to his greedy tongue. He ignores the ancient doctrine that food should be taken like medicine for the disease of hunger. We should take the medicine. Whether it is tasty or not, to cure our illness. But the modern man flouts this discipline and feeds voraciously on spiced food, e.g.: Indians make use of a bit of tamarind to savour their dishes, though tamarind is detrimental to health. The modern man has hence fallen prey to mental debility, blood pressure. Blood pressure is the cause of mental restlessness, tension and anxiety. The chaos and the confusion, the agitation and upheaval that you see in the world today arise from ill health. A German doctor, Ritan, conducted experiments on the behaviour of monkeys, to determine the benefits of observing silence. He found that the monkeys benefited tremendously. Consequently, he found that their intelligence, memory power and mental health increased by observing silence.

An experiment was also conducted on a dull student who used to score low marks in the examination. Though he had no faith in the efficacy of Yoga, he started practising it due to the compulsion of teachers. Three months of yogic practise tremendously improved his intelligence and memory power and enabled him to perform excellently in the examinations. It changed the very mental makeup of the student. The boy who had been crude and never uttered courteous words like ‘please,’ started behaving like a gentleman, uttering words like ‘please,’ ‘excuse me’

etc. Inspired by the tremendous improvement in his son, his septuagenarian father also started practising Yoga. He too registered excellent progress. Yogic practices should be accompanied by yogic disciplines as well. It is a serious mistake to take Yoga as a physical exercise.

Yoga is not mere physical exercise. It involves exercise of breath as well. It is known by the term '**Pratyahara**' and '**Pranayama**'. Pranayama involves the three processes of **Puraka** (filling in the air), **Kumbhaka** (retaining the breath) and **Rechaka** (breathing out). The observance of time is very important with regard to Pranayama. The time taken for inhalation, retention and exhalation should be the same. The entire exercise should be natural without any strain. The air taken in goes through the nerves of **Ida**, **Pingala** and **Subhumna**. Pranayama should be performed with meticulous care, lest it should damage the lungs and the brain. Breathing should also be without any strain and panting. Some boys pant heavily after running. But a good runner does not pant even after running. As we have to keep the ingredients for cooking in proper proportion to ensure proper cooking, so also inhalation, retention and exhalation should be in proper proportion.

There is a proliferation of pseudo-yogic systems all over the world. Many physical exercises are paraded as Yoga today. The true Yoga is based on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and is marked by **Nyaya, Vaiseshika and Samkhya**. True Yoga observes the sense of fair proportions, which is an important mark of Nyaya system.

The system of Yoga is also marked by the influence of Vaiseshika. The Vaiseshika philosophy believes that the world is made of atoms, but each of a different nature. It also believes that there is a connection between one atom and another. For example, a stone thrown into a lake generates a series of waves which travel to the shore. Similarly, a thought that arises in the lake of mind,

surfaces and spreads to the borders of the mind. Good and bad thoughts which arise in the lake of the mind have their impact not only on the mind, but on the body as well. Thoughts determine the good and evil in a man, and it is these thoughts which make the mind. Hence, Yoga gives utmost importance to the control of thoughts. **“Yogaha Chittha Vritthi Nirodakha.”** (Yoga is the control of thoughts).

ASPECTS OF YOGA:

‘Yama’ (the control of inner sense organs) is an important aspect of Yoga; whereas Niyama is discipline. Yama is sense restraint. **‘Parigraha’** is another important aspect of Yoga. Whatever we take, we should take from good people, because the thoughts of the good people also exercise their impact. Hence, whatever we do, we should do with a sense of devotion, firmly established in the feeling that the Lord is everywhere. It is said in the Bhagavad Geetha, **“Sarvada Paani Padam.”** When you pray to the Lord, “O Lord! Don’t you see my difficulties with your eyes?” God responds only with His two eyes, and His two eyes will present themselves where the devotee has uttered his prayer. When the devotee prays, “O Lord! Don’t you listen to my prayers?” the Lord responds only with His two ears, and these two ears will present themselves where the devotee uttered his prayer. When he prays, “O Lord! why don’t you be with me and rid me of my difficulties?” The Lord responds and one can hear the footfalls of the Lord. The Lord manifests Himself in different ways according to the prayers of His devotees. There is a chapter in the Patanjali Yoga Sutra which speaks about the offering of different limbs to the Lord. But the modern devotees make a mockery of this. They say, “I offer my eye to You, O Lord!” But they touch their eye with a flower and throw it at the idol. Similarly they pray “O Lord! I offer my ear to you.” They then touch their ear with the flower and throw it at the idol. People only make lip service but they do not

follow what they say. The two prayers made by the devotees, call for the control of the ear and the control of the eye. Even while Swami is speaking, the people do not pay proper attention to His words. Their eyes are on Swami, but their thoughts are somewhere else. That is why it is said:

O ears! You are so keen to hear all kinds of idle talk about others.
 Why don't you be so keen and alert when Divine things are told?
 Why don't you say Shiva, Shiva, Shiva and thereby erase all your sorrows?
 O mind! Are you not ashamed to roam around the world? You hear all kinds of rubbish talk about cinemas and you are still not satisfied.
 O Eyes! Is it so hard for you to rest your vision on the Divine form? You often prowl around, like an unemployed dog.
 Why don't you,
 O mind, contemplate on the feet of the Lord even for a moment?

We have the patience to stand in queues to see a cinema, but we don't have the patience to pray sincerely even for an hour in the temple. We come out of the temple as fast as we enter into it. We display monumental patience in temporary and ephemeral things, whereas we want to hurry up in spiritual matters. A total reversal of this attitude is essential. That is 'Yoga.' People should discriminate between what is good and what is bad. To some people the worldly life appears to be very good, and they derive pleasure out of it. The pleasure which they obtain out of temporal activities is momentary. **Santhosham** is **Some** + **Thosham** (some pleasure). You derive temporary satisfaction by satisfying your hunger at a canteen by eating two chapatis. But, after two hours you become hungry again. The pleasure we obtain from activities of this kind is known as Santhosa, whereas the joy we obtain from spiritual

matters is '**Ananda**' (Bliss). Whereas pleasure arises from the head, bliss springs from the spiritual heart. The head is the seat of responsibility; the heart is the seat of right. Hence, the heart and the head are equally important to man. Think good and perform with hands whatever good you have thought. The essence of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra is the harmony of the three H's head, heart and hand.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutra professed the supreme quality of unity. Unity is nothing but harmony of heart, head and hand. Unity leads to purity and purity leads us to Divinity. Everything will be extinct when we reach Divinity.

PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE:

Students should press forward with patience in spite of the stress and the strain, the trial and the tribulation which they have to undergo. It is hard for you in the beginning to move forward. But, as you press forward, it becomes natural for you to make your journey towards God. Man masters walking, talking, reading and writing after assiduous practice. It is by dint of practice that he will be able to reach his destination.

It is a mistake to think that Yoga is only for Yogis and Sanyasis (renunciates). In fact, it is necessary for every man to practise Yoga. If you wish to lead a peaceful life, you must lead a healthy life. 'Yoga' helps you lead a peaceful and healthy life.

'**Dharana**' is another important aspect of 'Yoga.' One-pointed concentration is called Dharana. Ramana Maharishi used to practise this by concentrating his vision on a single star in the sky by lying down on the ground. 'Dharana' (concentration) enables us to practise '**Dhyana**' (meditation). People think that it is very hard to practise concentration and meditation. It is easy to practise exercises like concentration, meditation and Pranayama.

Whether you believe it or not, Swami never practised these exercise of concentration, meditation and Pranayama. In all the sixty-seven years of my life, I never experienced tiredness or panting. All powers are in Me. The Yoga Shakti is very powerful. The Atmic power is only one. Foster the feeling of Atmic oneness. Do not give room for evil feelings of anger, ego, envy etc. to rest in you, for these feelings are animal qualities. Ever nourish the feeling that, **“I am God, I am not an animal.”** If you practise this faithfully every day, you will achieve serenity and peace of mind. Since the body is the temple of God, we must maintain it carefully. We keep doors for our houses to facilitate the entry and the departure of the people authorised. But, if you allow each and everybody to enter into the house, the house becomes a choultry. Hence the doors of the senses should be used to perceive, to do good, to see good, to hear good and to be good.

By sincere enquiry and investigation, by effort and endeavour, man can become God. You should not undergrade yourself by thinking that you can never become God. **‘Daivam Manusha Rupina’** (God is in the form of man). Be firmly established in the faith that you can become God. Be steady, free from bumps and jumps.

Students, you are most fortunate to get this opportunity of participating in the summer course on Indian Culture and Spirituality. Strive hard to benefit from the **Golden opportunity** given to you. Yoga is very easy to practise and never involves strain and expense. It is easy to obtain joy by Yogic practices. By practising Yoga, you can enjoy the gifts of health and Bliss.

