

Self-Development and Yoga

31.1 Introduction

So far, starting from Yogasanas and Surya Namaskaras, we have seen how Yogic practices help us achieve physical health and mental health. They make our life beautiful and enjoyable. There is no domain of life where Yoga has not made its contribution. It changes our attitude towards work. It makes us aware of the so far unseen challenges in our work. It awakens our creativity. It enriches our relationships with others. In the light of Yoga nothing remains mundane, everything gets a touch of the sublime. We all long and strive for success. And what is success? Success is the result of tireless striving towards the goal with a positive attitude of confidence in oneself and others leading to a fruitful culmination. This is self-development. In this lesson we are going to understand how Yoga contributes to our self-development.

31.2 Objectives

After reading this lesson you will be able to :

- explain how Yoga helps you in your studies, relationships, work and health;
 - describe how it shapes your attitudes, thinking and behaving;
 - explain the meaning and relevance of yoga for competence;
 - elaborate various ways and methods of Yoga relevant to the modern period.
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31.3 Self-development through Yoga

a) **Studies :** The main hurdle in preparing for our studies is that we study for hours together and still retain hardly anything because our mind wanders and not remain fixed on the lesson.

In Yoga, when we learn to perform Asana and Pranayama, our breathing becomes long and deep. We learn to 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 matter effectively. In other words, Yoga improves our learning and memory. When we appear for examination, our mind is cool and composed. So, an unexpected question does not disturb us.

Even if we study very hard sometimes we do not get the expected results and our mind gets clouded by anxiety and depression. Regular practice of Yoga – frees us from depression. In a country like Japan, where meritocracy prevails, the percentage of suicides among youth is alarming. Yoga teaches us to do our best and leave the rest in hands of the Lord.

b) **Relationships :** Our relationship with the persons around brings to us joy and pain together. We are constantly seeking fulfillment through our friends, our family members and people at our work-place. 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 that to outer appearances. The sage Patanjali gives important advice regarding our reaction in relationship. He says, 'Form friendship with those who are awake to the higher values of life and try to put them into practice. There is less likelihood of friction and misunderstandings in their company. For those who are in misery, we must have compassion. We should not be self-centred. We should feel happy in the progress and prosperity of others. There should be no shadow of envy or rivalry in our minds. Towards the wicked we should have indifference. It is not worth spending your precious energy – mental or emotional on their bad works. Being intolerant towards others and getting irritable unnecessarily spoils our mind, If we can be aware of our reactions towards others and develop a habit of giving positive response to even a negative situation, that is emotional development.

c) **Work :** Work or employment should be seen as a joyous opportunity for self expression and growth. What do we see in the offices? Boredom, clock watching, politics, fights between workers and management! Our work should be seen in terms of what we can give to it rather than what we get from it. Good posture, deep breathing and gentle stretching will help you to keep relaxed at work-place. Pausing for a moment and watching your breath immediately makes you relaxed. It is good to be creative in your work. Try to find new ways of doing things. Learn to enjoy even the routine work. Geeta says that the art of doing work in excellent way without expecting fruit is Yoga.

d) Yoga : Why do we fall ill? Usually it happens because of some kind of imbalance in our physical and mental system. Conflicts create blockages in the flow of life-force or Prana leading to diseases. Illness, depression, sulkiness all are 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.

Usually the life-force or Pranic energy flows in the body where it is needed without our conscious control or even awareness on our part. But it is possible through the use of will and Yogic techniques to over ride the the automatic and unconscious process and direct the life-force wherever we want. It is possible to energize the whole system, heal an injured or diseased area or even heal others. Will is the master switch that draws the Pranic energy into the body from the universal source and directs it to flow wherever it is needed. The connection between human will and life – force is key to healing.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 31.1

1. How does Yoga help us in our studies?

2. How Should one perceive work?

31.4 How Yoga shapes attitudes, thinking and behaving

Everybody feels that he or she should become a happy and successful person. Yoga assures us that our dream can be fulfilled provided that we acquire certain attitudes and habits of thinking and living. The ancient wisdom can be turned into some practical hints for joyous and effective living. Some of them are as follows:–

(a) Let us not complain about our environment : Some people are not happy with their parents, their financial status, and social status. They are not happy about our physique, looks and brains. They always look at others, envy them and feel sad! Then think, ;Only if I had a mother like that.. ‘or’ Had I been in the place of that scholar or that champion!’ It is not healthy to complain about what we have got; it is good to think as to how can we make the best of it. Many great persons in the world fought against physical disabilities and adverse circumstances and became successful.

Everyone of us is gifted in some way or the other. Let us find out our gift. It may not be academic intelligence, it may be social or other types of intelligence. We may not be good

with books but we may be very good with machines, which is equally valuable. We may have a potential to become a singer, a painter or a stage-actor. Let us have a goal and decide steps to move towards it. Yogic techniques make our body, mind and intellect strong.

(b) Let us train the body first : Yogasanas and Surya Namaskaras shake off our lethargy and idleness. They bring fresh vigor to our body. They free us from tensions and diseases, so that we can focus our attention totally on our goal.

How do we train the body? Let us take care of our food. Let us avoid eating very less or eating unnecessarily. Select the food that agrees with us and brings harmony to our body. Digestion of food, its assimilation in the body and excretion of unwanted stuff, must be regular.

(c) Let us train our 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 like a pampered child, it will become weak and brittle. It would collapse at the smallest shock. Swami Vivekanand said that he wanted young men of iron muscles and steel nerves. Let us avoid self-pity because it makes us weak. Let us avoid all kinds of negative thoughts like envy, jealousy and narrow-mindedness. Some students do not exchange notes because they feel that somebody would 'steal' their knowledge! They forget that the more we give, the more our knowledge grows! Also, let us give up the ideas of dependence. There is no person or thing in the world without whom or without which it is impossible for us to live. Nothing is indispensable. There are persons, communities and nations who have rebuilt life from ashes. Japan is one of living example Why can't we.

(d) Let us train our intellect : If we don't give challenging work to our intellect, it gets rusted, it loses its capacity to do mighty things. In fact we do not use our brain to the fullest extent. If brain does not get enough exercise, it gets tired easily.

Seeing dreams and exerting all our energies to fulfill them makes our intellect strong. Let us teach our intellect taking wise decision-making and staying firm with our decisions. Clarity in thinking and grit to stick to our decisions is self-development. This way we build up our character. There is a beautiful saying : Watch your words. They form your thoughts. Watch your thoughts, they form your habits. Watch your habits, they make your character, Watch your character, that builds your destiny.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 31.2

Match the Columns?

- | A | B |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. One way of becoming happy is | a) leads to hearing impairment |
| 2. Eating unnecessarily | b) not complaining about your environment |
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3. Negative thoughts c) causes accumulation of fat on body
 4. There is strong relationship between d) make your mind brittle
 e) thinking habits and character

31.5 Yoga : Motivation and Excellence in Action

A poet says –

**Heights that great men reached and kept were not achieved in a single flight.
 They, when their companions slept strove upward in the night.**

There is a beautiful story about Maharaja of Baroda, Shri Sayajirao Gaikwad. The earlier Maharaja of Baroda had no issue. He wanted to adopt a son who could be the heir of Baroda State. He invited a number of young boys to his palace. Most of the children were bewildered by the riches there. Some started crying in the unfamiliar place. Some got nervous. But a young boy was sitting there in perfect poise and confidence. The Maharaja asked him, 'Child, why have you come here?' The firm answer was, 'I am going to become the King!' And in deed, he was chosen for the throne. He proved himself worthy of it. He used to take exercise regularly, pray regularly, study diligently and nourished the desire to be an excellent Maharaja!

We, in our respective fields can make resolution to ourselves that whatever we do, it will be of excellent quality. May it be teaching or typing of plumbing or fitting!

One of the definitions of Yoga given in Geeta is *योगो कर्मसु कौशलम्*. Yoga is excellence in action. Excellence in action does not come without motivation.

Why do we work? There are two reasons : One is visible. You work because you get money. The second is invisible. You work because you enjoy work, it increases your self-respect, people appreciate you, you are proud that you are given responsibility and try your 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. They had no place for laziness in their life. They could not afford to get entangled in clumsy and demanding relationships. With singleness of purpose they ultimately achieved their goal. This is Yoga. This harnessing 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 see great dreams and take great effort to make them great realities- like TajMahal, Eifel Tower or Space centers.

Our destiny depends on our thinking habits. Geeta says *योगो कर्मसु कौशलम्* । One becomes what he believes he will become. A poet has said :

If you Think

If you think you are beaten, you are.
If you think you dare not, you don't!
If you like to win, but think you can't
It's almost a cinch you won't!

If you think you'll lose, you're lost
For out in the world we find
Success begins with a fellow's will
It's all in the state of mind.

If you think you are outclassed, you are.
You've got to think high to rise
You've got to be sure of yourself before
You can ever win a prize.

Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger and faster man
But sooner or later the man who wins
Is the man who thinks he can.

31.6 Contemporary Approaches to Yoga

As the modern life is full of stresses and tensions people are realizing the need of relaxation and mental calm. From ancient times the sages have developed various systems of Yoga which, if practiced properly give rest to your mind and body and refresh them.

All religions have their own system of prayer and meditation which bring peace to their followers. Jains have Preksha Dhyana. Buddhists have Vipassana. The crux of various methods of meditation is observing your own mind. Being a witness to it. In Vipassana one first observes his own breath and then the bodily sensations and later, the flow of consciousness. Kiran Bedi held Vipassana classes for the prisoners of Tihar Jail and it was observed that the practice brought about remarkable changes in the temperament of prisoners. It freed them from violence, vengeance and irritability. Even for liquor addicts and drug addicts Yoga has proved to have extremely good therapeutic effects. Shri Ravishankarji has popularized the courses of Art of living in which Soham Mantra is chanted with breathing rhythm.

Many people find this Sudarshan Kriya beneficial for physical and psychological health and well being. 'So' is God and 'Aham' is I. In this chanting one feels the oneness with God.

There are a number of devotional cults in India and the followers of these cults chant

different names of different deities and that purifies their mind and brings happiness to them. Mahesh Yogi discovered a method of meditation called Transcendental Meditation and many people in Europe and America started practicing it and doing research on it. The researches have proved that this meditation normalizes your temperature, pulse rate and blood pressure. Bihar school of Yoga teaches the students to do Yoga exercises systematically and to become witness to one's own thoughts. There are various energy centres in human body. Kundalini Yoga is a systematic technique of creating awareness about them, awakening them and availing ourselves of the infinite energy they bring us in contact with.

In the Western world, people look at Yoga for attaining physical excellence and creative ability. A famous computer company in the U.S.A. gives meditation courses to all its employees. Sayaji U Ba Khin, the Accountant General of Brahmdesh or Myanmar taught Vipassana to all the employees in the Govt. Accounts Department. The number exceeded ten hundred. That practice improved their work efficiency in a surprising way. Vipassana is also found useful in a number of diseases related to mind like asthma and skin diseases.

Thus the ancient science of Yoga discovered by our Sages thousands of years back has become in modern age a way of life, a cure for a number of physical and mental diseases. It is an effective antidote for stress and tension. It also is a wonderful energizer for the sportsmen and women who participate in national and international competitions. Here we are reminded of Sri Aurobindo's words, 'Yoga is practical psychology.'

No wonder that it is useful to us, Students who want to excel in examinations life and career can benefit from yoga. If we practice Yogasanas and Suryanamaskaras for about 20 minutes it would make our body and mind healthy. If we practice meditation everyday for about 15 to 20 minutes it would give us strength to cope up with day to day problems and tensions. It would make us happy, smiling persons who spread joy and bliss wherever they go and hence are always welcome everywhere.

INTEXT QUESTION 31.3

Fill in the blanks

1. Our destiny depends in our _____
 2. Jain approach to yoga is _____
 3. Buddhist approach to yoga is _____
 4. _____ is discovered by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.
 5. Yoga is an antidote for _____ and _____.
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31.7 What you have learnt

- Yoga helps us in our studies, in improving our relationship with the world, in enhancing our job efficiency and health
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- Yoga teaches us not to complain about our environment. Even if we do our best to change it, if it does no, then we must happily accept it.
- Being moderate in eating, exercise and enjoyment is necessary if we want to lead healthy life. Prayer and meditation help us develop strong mind and sharp intellect.
- One definition of Yoga is ‘ .’ which means excellence in action. Doing one’s duty with love and skill and offering its fruit to the lord is Yoga.
- There are a number of paths in the Yoga which give peace and fulfillment in the modern age of stress. Vipassana, Transcendental meditaion, Art of living and such other methods and courses are followed by interested people.
- Though paths are many, the ultimate goal of Yoga is the same. That is transforming are common human consciousness into divine consciousness and making our individual and social life happy and beautiful.

31.8 Terminal Exercises

1. Analysis how yoga helps us in studies and work.
2. Does Yoga shape our thinking. How.
3. Describe the contemporary approaches to Yoga.

31.9 Key to Intext Questions

31.1

1. By focussing our attention
2. Job should be seen as joyous opportunity for self expression and growth.

31.2

1. b
2. c
3. d
4. e

31.3

1. Thinking habits
 2. Preksha Dhyana
 3. Vipassna
 4. Transcendental Meditation
 5. Stress and tension.
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