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THE ROLE OF YOGA IN HUMAN VALUES

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Abstract : This paper discusses the science of Kriya Yoga as propagated by four Yogoda Gurus. Mention of Kriya Yoga is found twice in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras (Yoga Sutra II : 1 and II : 49) and Bhagawad Gita (Bhagawad Gita IV : 29, V : 27-28). The authors take up discussion from the commentary on Bhagawad Gita by Sri Paramhansa Yogananda. Concepts of Prana and types of Pranas and Pranayama, classification of Pranayama, importance of Kriya Yoga, techniques of Kriya Yoga as taught by Sri Shyama Charan Lagiri Mahashaya and Sri Paramhansa Yogananda are discussed in details. This is followed by the concept of higher Kriyas and Paravastha of Kriya and requirements for Kriya. Lastly, the role of Kriya Yoga in inculcating human values in a permanent manner is discussed. The authors, themselves Kriya Practitioners, believe that Kriya Yoga's scientific techniques do help in inculcating strong a strong value system thereby taking such a person to higher plane of human existence.

The greatest contribution of Sri Paramahansa Yogananda and other Yoga Gurus namely Mahavatar Babji, Sri Shyama Charan Lahiri Mahashaya and Swami Sri Yukteshwar Giri, to the modern world is the revival of ancient science of Yoga, the same yoga that was given by Bhagwan Sri Krishna to ARjun long ago. Over the passage of time, due to a number of reasons, this science became obscure and was not available to ordinary mortals. In his tradition (Parampara) in order to keep the techniques of Yoga pure and accurate, only officially authorized persons of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India and Self Realization Fellowship (both established by Sri Paramahansa Yogananda) can give initiation to the desirous devotees.

It may however be kept in mind that practice of Yoga should not be done after reading from books but the technique must be learnt from Guru or authorized Yogi. Guru-discipline relation is most important for attaining success in Yoga practice.

Mention of Yoga is found twice in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras(Yoga Sutra II:I and II:49) and Bhagawad Gita (Bhagawad Gita IV:29; V:27-28)

Kriya Yoga In Bhagawad Gita:

In his commentary on Bhagawad Gita, "God talks with Arjuna, Sri Paramahansa Yogananda has explained Kriy Yoga in details. In Bhagawad Gita, Yoga is mentioned specifically by Bhagawan Krishna in verse 29 of chapter IV.

Other devotees offer as sacrifice the incoming breath of prana in the outgoing breath of apana, and the outgoing breath of apana in the incoming breath of prana, thus arresting the cause of inhalation and exhalation (rendering breath unnecessary) by intent practice of Pranayama (the life-control technique of Yoga)

Paramahansaji explains this stanza in following words:

“By the concentrated practice of Kriya Yoga Pranayama-offering the inhaling breath into the exhaling breath (prana into apana) and offering the exhaling breath into the inhaling breath (apana into prana) – the yogi neutralizes these two life currents and their resulting mutations of decay and growth, the causative agents of breath and heart action and concomitant body consciousness. By recharging the blood and cells with life energy that has been distilled from breath and reinforced with the pure spiritualized life force in the spine and brain, the yogi stops bodily decay, thereby quieting the breath and heart by rendering their purifying actions unnecessary. The yogi thus attains conscious life-force control.”

Meaning of Pranayama

Word PRANAYAMA is derived from Sanskrit words-prana(life) and ayama (control). Prana-yama is therefore life control and not “breath science of breath for control.” According to Yogananda the broadest meaning of the word prana is force of energy. In this sense, the universe is filled with prana and all creation is nothing but simple a manifestation of this force (prana). It is the power lodged between soul and matter for the purpose of expressing the former and moving the latter.

Classification of Prana

Yogananda further explains the role of prana in building of complete body from a single cell. According to him “specific prana enters the body with the soul (in the soul’s astral encasement) at the time of conception. At the soul’s command, the specific prana gradually builds from a primal single cell the body of the infant according to that individual’s astral karmic pattern and continues to sustain that form throughout its lifetime. This bodily prana is continuously reinforced not only by gross sources such as food and oxygen, but primarily by the universal prana, the cosmic energy, which enters the body through the medulla (“the mouth of God”) and is stored in the reservoir of life in the cerebrum, and in the centres of the spine whence it is distributed by the functions of the specific prana. It can be classified into five different pranas according to these functions.

1. Prana (by preeminence), or the main power that brings all other functions into manifestation.
2. Apana, the power of excretion, the scavenger energy of the body by which bodily waste products are thrown out;
3. Vyana, or the power of circulation;
4. Samana or assimilation, digestion, by which various foods are processed and assimilated for the nourishment of the body and for building new cells; and
5. Udana, or the power by which cells are differentiated in their functions (some growing hair, or skin, or muscle and so on) by infinite disintegrations and integrations among themselves.

Prana and Apana

Paramhansa Yogananda further adds that this Gita verse deals with two specific functions of life force in its differentiations as prana and apana. As there is a “tug

- of - war " the macrocosmic scale reflecting Spirit's projecting with to create and his opposing attracting wish to bring the many back into the one, so does this same contest in duality take place on a microcosmic scale in man's body. One expression of this positive-negative duality involves the interaction between prana

apana. There are two main currents in the body. One , the apana current flows from the point between the eyebrows to the coccyx. This downwardly flowing current distributes itself through the coccyx centre to the sensory and motor nerves and keeps the consciousness of man delusively tied to the body. The apana current is restless and engrosses man in sensory experiences.

The vital current flowing outward from the brain and spine to the cells, tissues and nerves becomes attached to and clogged up in matter. It is used up, like electricity, through bodily motor movements (voluntary and involuntary) and mental activity.

According to Paramhansa Yogananda, from the opposite pulls of the prana and apana currents in the spine, the inhalations and exhalations of breath are born. When the prana current goes upward, it pulls the vital breath laden with oxygen into the lungs. The surplus oxygen from the inhaled breath carried by the blood throughout the body, where it its utilized by the five vital pranas in various physiological processes.

Yogananda states that respiration, activated by the dual currents of prana and apana, accomplished physiologically through a series of complex nervous reflexes-chemical and mechanical-involving primarily the medulla oblongata and the sympathetic or involuntary, nervous system. The apana current then pulls the astral body out of the physical body. When the final breath leaves the body through the action of the outgoing current apana, the astral body follows it to an astral world.

Importance of Yoga

Bhagawad Gita advocates Pranayama as the most effective scientific technique for releasing his soul from the bondage of breath.

The Gita states: "The yogi is greater than body- disciplining ascetics (hath-yogi), greater even than the followers of the path of wisdom or of the path of action; be thou of yogi!"

In sleep, breath, lungs, heart slow down but they are not completely stilled. When motion leaves the entire body, owing to lack of agitation and to complete physical and mental stillness, venous blood causes to accumulate.

Yogananda clarifies that the Yoga Pranayama stops the bodily decay associated with apana, manifest in the exhaling breath, by fresh oblations of life force or prana, distilled from the inhaling breath. This practice enables the devotee to dispel the illusion of growth and decay of the body as flesh; he then realizes it as made of lifetrans.

When the pulsating life of the heart pump becomes quiet, owing to non-pumping of venous blood, exhalation and inhalation are no longer needed. The life force, which was dissipated in cellular, nervous, respiratory and heart action, withdraws from the external senses and organs and unites with the current in the spine.

Pranayama Yoga, the scientific method of neutralization of breath, has nothing in common with the foolish practice of trying to control life current by forcible retention of breath in the lungs-an unscientific, unnatural and harmful practice. Anyone holding the breath for a few minutes in the lungs feels pain, suffocation and heart strain. This adverse bodily effect should be sufficient proof the yogis would not recommend such

unnatural practices. Certain teachers do advice unscientific, not to say impossible, long retention of breath in the lungs-a practice completely tabooed by God-enlightened yogis.

True kumbhaka, or the retention of the breath metioned in enlightened yoga treatises, refers not to the forcible holding of the breath in the lungs, but to the natural breathlessness brought about by scientific Pranayama, which renders breathing unnecessary.

Impact of Yoga

When by Yoga the mortal breath disappears from the lungs, the yogi consciously experiences, without dying, the death process by which energy is switched off from the senses(causing the disappearance of the body consciousness and the simultaneous appearance of the soul consciousness). Unlike the ordinary man, the transcendent yogi realizes that his life is not conditioned by exhalation and inhalation, but that the steady life force in the brain is continuously reinforced through the medulla from the omnipresent cosmic current.

When, with cessation of breath and quieting of the heart, life force is switched off from the senses, the mind becomes detached and interiorized, able at last to perceive consciously the inner worlds and supernal spheres of divine consciousness.

In the first stages of ecstasy by Yoga, the yogi perceives soul blessedness. By higher ecstasies that come as a result of complete mastery of the breathless state, he realizes the physical body to be made of lifetrans that are surrounded by a halo of grosser electroatomic cells.

Technique of Yoga

Four different levels of initiation are explained in the following pages. These were taught by Sri Shayama Charan Lahiri Mahashaya to his disciples and are religiously kept in pure form by his line of disciples. Here various techniques forming the basis of Yoga are also explained, through many secret explanatations of these techniques cannot be included in this paper. These techniques are best learnt from a yogi, who has been duly authorized to give this initiation. Without the grace of a true Guru, the practice of these techniques can be harmful to the body and mind.

Talabhya Kriya: This technique is preparatory for Khechari mudraas it helps to lengthen one's tongue and make it flexible.

Nabhi Kriya: The Yogi mentally chants 'Om' a certain number of times, placing the chin against the throat cavity and concentrating on the navel. The chin is raised and the head is thrown backward. Simultaneously, the mind concentrates on the spinal point behind the navel. 'Om' is chanted a number of times in this position.

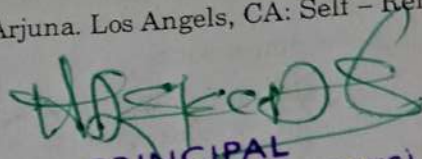
Maha Mudra: Legs are stretched out, hands hold the feet. At the end of each inhalation of the Pranayama, the forehead touches the knees.

Mental Pranayama: The mind is allowed to go up and down the spine uttering 'Om' at each of the spinal centres.

Pranayama: Breathing is reduced through gradual practice to 1/10th its normal rate. The mind ascends the spine while breathing in and descends on exhalation. The tongue will be in Khechari Mudra and the mouth will be closed. This results in cessation of breathing. With practice, the body cells are automatically oxygenated and decarbonized.

Yoni Mudra or Jyoti Mudra: (The original name is Yoni Mudra, but Paramhansa Yogananda used the term Jyoti Mudra which also aptly denotes this technique) . the mind is placed at a point between the eyebrows . 'Om' is chanted at that point. Thumbs block

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