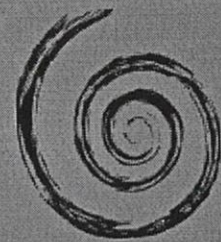




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Yoga philosophy: A potential tool for positive thinking

Abstract: Positive thinking is a mental and emotional attitude that focuses on the bright side of life and expects positive results. A positive person anticipates happiness, health and success, and believes he or she can overcome any obstacle and difficulty. It is said that when you think positively sound becomes music, movement becomes dance, smile becomes laughter, mind becomes meditation and life becomes celebration. Mind power is one of the strongest and most useful powers we possess. The thoughts that pass through our mind are responsible for everything that happens in our life. Our predominant thoughts influence our behavior and attitude and control our actions and reactions. Our conscious mind controls brain activity just five percent of the day and our unconscious mind controls most of our brain activity i.e. ninety five percent of thought in a day. One has 70,000 thoughts per day. Similar to an iceberg, only a small portion of mind is obvious to us and that is conscious mind. We are limited only by the dominating negative thoughts of our past. Therefore, the greatest majority is hidden below the surface and that is subconscious mind. This is the power of two minds. Our success and failures are not caused by the world out there but it is the outcome of our own inner world. Our thoughts and beliefs serve to create our reality. Changing our thoughts can change our reality and life too. Therefore thinking is a serious responsibility. This paper will try to explore the potential energy of yoga which helps us to generate positive thoughts in mind and thereby help us to live a peaceful and blissful life.

Key words: Positive thoughts, Yoga, Pratipaksha Bhavana, Bliss, Mind, Pranayam, Asthanga yoga, Pancha Kosha, Consciousness, Shatkarma

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Positive thinking is a mental and emotional attitude that focuses on the bright side of life and expects positive results. A positive person anticipates happiness, health and success, and believes he or she can overcome any obstacle and difficulty. It is said that when we think positively sound becomes music, movement becomes dance, smile becomes laughter, mind becomes meditation and life becomes celebration. Mind power is one of the strongest and most useful powers one possesses. This is the power of our thoughts. The thoughts that pass through our mind are responsible for everything that happens in our life. Our predominant thoughts influence our behavior and attitude and control our actions and reactions. This paper will try to explore the potential energy of yoga which helps us to generate positive thoughts in mind and thereby help us to live a peaceful and blissful life.

The great philosopher and father of nation Mahatma Gandhi stated that “keep your thoughts positive because your thoughts becomes your words. You’re your words positive because your words become your behaviour. You’re your behavior positive because your behavior becomes your habits; keep your habits positive because your habits become your values. Keep your values positive because your value becomes your destiny.”¹

Our conscious mind controls brain activity just five percent of the day and our unconscious mind controls most of our brain activity i.e. ninety five percent of thought in a day. One has 70,000 thoughts per day. Similar to an iceberg, only a small portion of mind is obvious to us and that is conscious mind. We are limited only by the dominating negative thoughts of our past. Therefore, the greatest majority is hidden below the surface and that is subconscious mind. This is the power of two minds. Our success and failures are not caused by the world out there but it is the outcome of

¹ Tony Charles, “*The 7 Secrets to Peace of Mind: Your Peace Is Your Command!*” p. 87-88, iUniverse Bloomington, IN47403, ISBN 978-4759-1854-0 (ebk)

our own inner world. Our thoughts and beliefs serve to create our reality. Changing our thoughts can change our reality too. Therefore thinking is a serious responsibility. Any thoughts occur in mind and our mind will attend and help to grow these thoughts. A negative thought will grow as much as a positive one and will affect our experience of life accordingly. For all negative thoughts we need to develop the opposite positive thought which is known as 'pratipaksha bhavana'. The practice of yoga helps us to embrace positive thinking which will be useful to discard negative thoughts, beliefs and attitude. It connects us to intelligence and wisdom and helps us to use mind constructively rather than destructively. This helps human beings to develop positive psychology; which focuses on what is the strength of an individual rather than what are weaknesses. The science and art of yoga will guide people in their search of truth. Even in our personal and social life yoga is a potential key to change the mind set with efficiency. Yoga maintains equilibrium of the mind in any situation. This equanimity of mind is the ultimate objective of yoga. This equanimity enables us to accept all circumstances with serenity.

Positive Psychology is a science which focuses on individual and societal development for cultivating happiness, strengths, self-esteem, and optimism. This field is a naturally goes along with yoga. The latest science of positive psychology fits wonderfully with the ancient practice of yoga. Positive thinking is potential tool to achieve success and development in life. A positive thinker can transform troubles into blessings. A man of positive thinking is not vulnerable to the cycles of pain and pleasure. The practice of yoga puts us on a high on positive thinking because it helps us to gain the knowledge of the occult law of resonance. The positive thinking put us in resonance (energy subtle connection) with different force secret spheres of the Universe facilitate us to a transfer of energy within us. By such mechanisms, which are perfectly real and infallible even if they are secret, person gradually becomes what he thinks he is, as the yoga aphorisms say, we create our success or failure in any direction we go with the help of our thoughts. We are the

ones who create our happiness or misery; we are the ones who are responsible for our inner development and our external behaviour. The thoughts of success put us in resonance with the energy of success while chaotic, predominantly negative thoughts put us in resonance with energies of failure, mistake, and disappointment. Thus, pratipaksha bhavana will replace negative thoughts. If we carefully analyze the successful people, we will notice they are full of optimism and self confidence even when they face miseries or sorrows in their life.

Yoga is India's greatest gift to the world. It is an inevitable treasure of the ancient Indian heritage. It is a very practical science. Yoga practices give direct and real benefits to people belonging to all walks of life regardless of their spiritual aspirations. The power and effectiveness of yoga comes from its holistic approach. It aims at making a person perfect and balanced human being. With diligent practice, yoga can make a person perfect in every walk of life. Yoga is essentially a spiritual discipline based on an extremely subtle science which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. It is an art and science for healthy living. The word "Yoga" is derived from the Sanskrit root 'yuj' meaning "to join", "to yoke" or "to unite". According to Yogic scriptures, the practice of Yoga leads to the union of an individual consciousness with the universal consciousness.

Yoga works on the level of one's body, mind, emotion and energy. This has given rise to four broad classifications of Yoga: Karma Yoga where we utilise the body; Jñāna Yoga where we utilise the lighter mind; Bhakti Yoga where we utilise the emotion and Kriyā Yoga where we utilise the energy. Each system of Yoga practice falls within the gamut of one or more of these categories and help us to speculate within us. It is a journey from here to there, from impurity to purity, from imperfection to perfection, from fear of death to immortality, from ignorance to wisdom. The body and mind are our vehicles because yoga is the journey of the self to the self, through the self.

Now question arises: What is health? Is absence of disease? Is health Or anything else is health. According to WHO,

“Health is a state of well being at physical, mental, social and spiritual levels and not mere absence of illness or infirmity.” As per yoga, causes of disease are tri doshas and their imbalance as well as psychosomatic and non psychosomatic disorders. Yoga has tools and techniques with which one can find health, happiness, spiritual realization and social harmony. Yoga is integration of mind and body and spirit and universe. Yoga therapy works as a tool to attain this integration.

Yoga understands the person more deeply than just as a physical body and mind; it has added a third entity called self (atman). In Yoga, the concepts of ego, self, and consciousness have different connotations. The concepts of *pañcakoṣas* and *guṇas* are very relevant in the context of understanding. The concept of Pañcakoṣa adopts a multi-dimensional approach to understand the person and explains the person in an extensive manner. According to Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Pañcakoṣa is comprises of two words ‘pañca’ and ‘koṣa’. ‘Pañca’ means five and ‘koṣa’ means body or sheath or layer.”² Thus, Pañcakoṣa literally means five bodies or five sheaths. The concept of pañcakoṣa, the ‘self’, ‘the divine spirit’ is the real identity of a person. It constitutes the inner most core of a person. This real identity is encased in a series of five koṣas (sheaths), named respectively from the outermost to the innermost as Annamaya koṣa (physical or gross body), Prāṇamaya koṣa (energy body), Manomaya koṣa (mental body), Vijñānamaya koṣa (wisdom body), and Ānandamaya koṣa (bliss).

The mind is the king of senses, but the breath is king of mind. Thus by owning one’s own breath one can control mind and improve mood and it will help to increase somatic awareness, kinesthetic awareness, subjective well-being, self-acceptance, self-actualization, social adjustment, decreases hostility, anxiety, depression, stress and tension which will Improve general health, posture, muscle tone, sleep, immunity and pain tolerance. It also improves physiology by

² Singh Naorem Arjun ‘Yoga The Way Of Life’, Blue Rose publisher, ISBN 978-93-5347-420-1, June 2019.

normalizing the weight, stable autonomic nervous system. It helps to Increase cardio-respiratory efficiency, musculo-skeletal flexibility, range of joint musculo-skeletal flexibility, range of joint movement, physical endurance, strength and movements energy levels.

The problems of modern lifestyles are well known. We have found ways to control communicable diseases, but the focus is now shifting to dealing with non-communicable, lifestyle diseases. People suffer from stress related ailments and also lifestyle related diseases like diabetes and hypertension. Stress and Depression have become silent killers. Even in today's' pandemic situation yoga is offering a healing ray n such situation also one can lead a stress and disease free life by adopting certain yogic practices like Pranayama, Shatakarama (Cleansing techniques), Asanas, Meditation and moral rules and regulation (Yama and Niyama). Yoga offers a solution to these ailments. Practicing Yoga helps fight stress and find peace. If the body is a temple of the mind, Yoga creates a beautiful temple. Yoga is ideal for relaxation.

Sage Patanjali in his treatise on yoga known as 'Patanjali Yoga Sutra' says, "*Yogas Chitta Vritti Nirodha*" (Patanjali Yoga Sutra (1.2)³). It means yoga is mastery over the mind. We all possess a mind which we define as a 'non-stop thought producing machine'. It is a nature of mind to generate thoughts but they are mostly scattered thoughts, flitting from different subjects causing us sorrow and pain. If all our thoughts flow in one positive direction we would certainly have peace and bliss. It is said that the sound mind resides in the sound body so we need to balance the body first to achieve the peacefulness and it is possible only through yoga.

A similar definition of '*yogas chitta vritti nirodha*' is found in Yoga Vashishta which states, '*Manaha prasanopayah yoga ityabhidhiyane*'. It means yoga is the means of keeping the mind calm. Our mind keeps thinking incessantly in an

³ Veda Bharati Swami, '*Yoga Sutra of Patanjali with exposition of vya- A translation and commentary Vol. II sadhana pada*', Motilal Banarasidass publishers pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 2001.

uncontrolled manner. This over working of mind leads to stress, tension, anxiety, many psychosomatic ailments. Thus, yoga helps us to rein the mind and make it our friend rather than our enemy. We become happy in desirable situations and miserable in undesirable situations. The situations are not in our hand so our mind fluctuates between happiness and sorrow. But yoga strengthens our mind in such a way that we feel peaceful and content in every situation and relish bliss within ourselves. With the help of yogic technique we learn to de-stress about trivial matters. When we are not affected by worldly matters, our mind and intellect work more efficiently and we are sure to progress in every aspect of our life. In similar manner it is discussed in Bhagavad Gita, '*Samatvam yoga uchatte*' (B. G. 2.48) and '*Yogah Karmasu Kaushalyam*' (B. G. 2.50).⁴

Swami Vivekananda has coined a very nice definition for yoga. According to him, "Yoga awakens the dormant divinity that dwells within all of us".⁵ Our divine nature is dormant because we think of ourselves to be the material body. The practice of yoga manifests that internal divinity in us, to reveal the glorious qualities of soul; such as peace, harmony, humility, kindness and love and creativity. The great yogi Sri Aurobindo stated that, "Yoga is the process of all round development of humans. To being perfect human beings, we need the development of many aspects of our personality physical, psychological, social, and educational and spiritual."⁶ All these aspects will get enhanced and sharpen through the practice of yoga.

We need to make sure to send out only positive thoughts because that is what is called the karmic reaction. That means if one send negative thoughts they will bounce. If one learn how to perceive only positive things in other people and send positive thoughts out what will come back to you

⁴ Swami Meenakshi, '*The Science of Yoga*', p.11, Children's Book Trust, Nehru House, New Delhi- 110002, ISBN 81-7011-934-0, 2019 (Reprint)

⁵ ibid

⁶ Sri Aurobindo, '*The Integral Yoga: Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Method of Practice*', Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1953, ISBN: 0-941524-76-0, Pondicherry, 605002. (3rd print 2003)

will be positive. Keep the mind positive nurture the positive thoughts in our mind then we will become free from stress and tension and become kind, generous. So, developing positive thought for each negative thought in our mind is necessary. While walking on the street one can send the positive thoughts out and he/she will find people are smiling at them. But if one walk around cursing others then he/she will find all kinds of stress, tension and difficulties in your life.

Many times when person is tired, a cool shower refreshes. In the same way, practicing Yoga will truly relax the mind and body. Yoga does not have any boundaries of age, gender, caste, creed, religion and nations. Yoga doesn't discriminate between anybody. All you need is willingness to practice it. In a world of excess, yoga promises restraint and balance. In a world suffering from mental stress, yoga promises calm. In a distracted world, yoga helps focus, boosts concentration. In a world of fear, yoga promises hope, strength and courage. Yoga gives peace of mind. People who are at peace with themselves are at peace with others too. Such people build harmonious nations. Such nations build a harmonious world.

Yoga is an integrated way of life. Awareness and consciousness play a greater part in guiding our spiritual evolution through life in the social system itself and not in some remote cave in the mountains or hut in the forest. Yoga is the science and art of right use of body, emotions and mind. Yoga only needs you, your dedication, discipline and determination.

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