

JOY: The Journal of Yoga

Fall 2005, Volume 4, Number 4

YOGA, A WAY OF LIFE

Nachimuthu.P*

ABSTRACT

The present age is said to be the age of change, stress and conflicts. This is mainly due to the drastic changes in the life style (behavior) of the people. People today are not willing to know or relate with others, they lack love for the fellow beings and/or other creatures and also they don't have time to follow some approaches for their self up-liftment. Hence we find there is lot of unrest, disrupted relationships and various other problems. This paper attempts to highlight the three main paths of yoga i.e., the Bhakthi, Karma and Jnana yoga and explain in detail of what it is and how practically these three paths can be followed in this present stone age (Kali yuga), for a healthy and harmonious living with oneself and others.

* Research fellow, Centre for Organization Development, Madhavpur,
Hyderabad-500081

YOGA, A WAY OF LIFE

The present day is said to be day of stress, conflicts, unrest and a very dynamic one. Due to the improvement in science and technology, men are now living in a very fast moving and fast changing world. They even don't want to know about or relate with his/her neighbor. This has occurred due to the change in life style, customs, values and decrease in following the ritual practices. Since people are also not willing to follow some approaches for the upliftment of oneself and harmonious living with others, the world is now experiencing lots of stress and disrupted and/or unfaithful relationships. Yoga is one approach or the philosophy of life, which can help an individual live happily with one- self and also with fellow beings. Yoga is not that which can be practiced only by those rishis, who live in forest and perform penance. It is a way of life that can be practiced or followed in our day-to-day life. It is the one-pointed ness or the self-awareness (Ekagrata) in whatever we do or say. Though there are various paths of yoga, this paper will deal with what is Karma yoga, Bhakthi yoga and Jnana yoga and how they can be practiced as a way of life, in this Kali Yuga.

What is Karma Yoga?

Karma is a Sanskrit term. It means action or deed. Karma means not only action, but also the result of the action. Karma is the path of self-transcending action or the path of action. We practice Karma yoga whenever we perform our work and live our lives in a selfless fashion and as a way to serve others. This awareness of action leads to a greater ability to manage mental associations in the form of desires, ambitions, ego and other personality complexes.

Karma Yoga is a Sadhana and not a practice. The state of Karma Yogi can be attained through Seva or selfless involvement in all activities and to serve humanity without any attachment or egoism. Since there is a quoting of Satya Sai Baba as, "Hands that help are more holier than the lips that pray", we can understand the holiness of Karma yoga. Since Karma yoga is said to be the yoga of action, few things, which we do in our life, can be focused. As Lord Krishna in Gita told, "Do your duty and never expect for the results", it is with regard to karma yoga, because for a person who perform some work with an expectation, may develop an anxiety or apprehension of the result. So just for that sake of keeping the mind unwavering, it was told not to expect for the results of one's action. Simply to say one should do without the thought of doer ship.

As a part of practicing Karma yoga, one should be ready to serve others, live harmoniously with others. Also one should stop criticizing or hating others, even the sinners/evildoers, because no one is sacred in this world and to hate others is like hating one's own self in other form. For this quality to develop, one must try to see the bad in oneself and good in others. Also one must always remember that to abuse others is like cleaning the sins of others with one's tongue. In practicing practical Karma yoga one should also have a check with the food they eat and their sleeping patterns. With regard to food one must consume less quantity of food. Heterogeneity in dishes increases the longing to eat, prompts the senses and makes one's mind waver. So one must remember that food is meant for the disease called hunger. When sleeping is concerned, one should

follow a schedule of how many hours to sleep, because to sleep is to waste the precious time of our life and it is just to give rest to the body. So avoiding sleep for more time, than what is necessary is a practical yoga. So by practicing these one can be a good karma yogi and can purify your heart. Egoism, hatred, jealousy, ideas of superiority and all the kindred negative qualities will vanish. People will develop humility, pure love, sympathy, tolerance and mercy. Sense of separateness will be annihilated. Selfishness will be eradicated. Everyone will begin to feel oneness and unity and will realize One in all and All in one.

What is Jnana yoga?

Jnana is 'Knowledge'. Jnana yoga is the path of knowledge or wisdom. This path requires development of the intellect through the study of the scriptures and texts of the yogic tradition. Jnana Yoga is the process of converting intellectual knowledge into practical wisdom. It is a discovery of human dharma in relation to nature and the universe. As Lord Mahavir quotes, "One must seek knowledge from cradle to the grave", is all about Jnana yoga or seeking for eternal knowledge. Jnana yoga is not just reading spiritual books or scriptures, but it is giving up the bookish scholarship, which is the seed for the ego and to become liberated, by using their intellect in applying what they learned. Jnana yoga is not just experiencing, but realizing the unity or oneness of one's own self with that of the supreme self. Although people today have lesser time to spend in reading books, they are more accessible to Internet and other technologies, which can also help them in practicing Jnana yoga i.e. what they learnt for uplifting themselves to the higher plane and putting it on to practice in their day-to-day life. Even Jnana yoga will further lead to Bhakti and Karma yoga i.e. for instance, if a person reads scriptures and realizes that every being or every creature is a part of the supreme being, he will then show love and affection towards them, treat them equally and live harmoniously with all.

What is Bhakti Yoga?

Bhakti comes from the root '*Bhaj*', which means 'to be attached to God'. Bhakti is love for love's sake. The devotee wants God and God alone. There is no selfish expectation here. Bhakti yoga describes the path of devotion, in which love and devotion are given emphasis. So, Bhakti is not just seeing God in stone, but seeing everything and everyone as God. It is the state of total surrender of one's senses, body, mind, intellect and ego. Seeing the divine in all of creation, Bhakti yoga is a positive way to channel the emotions. The path of Bhakti provides us with an opportunity to cultivate acceptance and tolerance for everyone we confront in life. The culmination of all Yoga's lies in Bhakti-yoga i.e., rendering of devotional service to others (other beings or God). This can be substantiated with this explanation i.e., an individual will selflessly serve (action or Karma yoga) other beings only when there is a true liking or love that springs from his/her heart for that individual and when he/she is able to identify oneself with that of others. This vision of seeing one's own self in other beings with true love is the real form of Bhakti (not Karma, which is action oriented). Bhakti softens the heart and removes jealousy, hatred, lust, anger, egoism, pride and arrogance. It infuses joy, divine ecstasy, bliss, peace and knowledge. All cares, worries and anxieties, fears, mental torments and

tribulations entirely vanish. The devotee attains the immortal abode of everlasting peace, bliss and knowledge. The fruit of Bhakti is Jnana. Jnana intensifies Bhakti and Bhakti in turn will make one pure at heart and love others and serve others i.e., Karma.

Whatever path one chooses what matters most is not how long one has been doing it, but how one does it is more important. Though spiritualists talk about non-attachment towards relations or relatives in this world, I feel everyone should have the following relatives as foresaid by Nithya neeti, for a harmonious living in this world viz., “ Truth is my mother, Knowledge is my father, righteousness my brother, compassion my teacher, peace my friend and forgiveness my sister”.

REFERENCES

Sathya Sai Shree Lakshmi (2000): *A Comprehensive life Sketch of Shree Shirdi Sai Baba*; Sathya Sai Vedanandalayam, Books and publication Trust, Hyderabad-500047

God Word (2002): *Teachings of his holiness Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda Swamiji (Volume-III)*; Raga Ragini Trust, Mysore-570025

Dr. Suhas.B.R- Compiled and annotated (2003): *Immortal sayings from Indian Scriptures and Classics*; Pustak Mahal, 6686, Khari Baoli, Delhi-110006

R. Balakrishnan, P. Nachimuthu, & R. Varthini : *Yoga attitude and U.S.H.A well-being among yoga practitioners*, Paper presented at the **National Conference on Indian Psychology, Yoga and Consciousness**, Organised by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre for Education, Pondicherry (India), 10-13 December 2004.

R. Balakrishnan, P. Nachimuthu, & V.Dhanalakshmi: *Gender differences In Universal Supreme Health for All (U.S.H.A) well-being among Post-graduate Students*, Paper presented in the UGC National Seminar on Stress and Coping strategies, held on 23rd and 24th March 2004, organized by the Department of Psychology, Annamalai University, Chidambaram.

<http://www.yogajournal.com/newtoyoga/157.cfm>

<http://www.dlshq.org/teachings/yoga.htm>

<http://yoga.iloveindia.com/yoga-types.html>

<http://www.holisticharmony.com/>

<http://www.abc-of-yoga.com/health/home.asp>

<http://www.yogaindailylife.org.au/>

<http://www.yogamag.net/archives/2002/5sep02/karmdail.shtml>