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Impact of Yoga on Society: A Study of Vivekananda's Raja-Yoga.

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Abstract

In ancient Indian Culture we found four Vedic Sanskrit greatest texts known as Vedas and among those The Rig Veda is one of them. It is an oldest text of Indo-Iranian (more known as Indo-European, Indo-Aryan Vedic Sanskrit) language and a collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns. The word Yoga arises first time in world's oldest religious sacred text. The Rig Veda Yoga has spread all over the world by the teachings of eminent Yoga master from ancient time to the present time. But it produced different immense impact in the last decades of nineteenth and first decades of twentieth century through famous Indian monk of Hindu Philosophy Swami Vivekananda. His contribution is recognisable in the Indian History. Vivekananda also laid great emphasis on four Yogas namely- Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga. Yoga is an invaluable gift of ancient Indian tradition that's why my paper will reveal views of Swami Vivekananda on Raja Yoga and their impact on human body.

Introduction

In ancient Indian Culture we found four Vedic Sanskrit greatest texts known as Vedas and among those *The Rig Veda* is one of them. The word yoga arises first time in world's oldest

religious sacred text the *Rig-Veda*, and yoga has spread all over the world by the teachings of eminent yoga master from ancient time to the present time. The famous Indian monk of Hindu Philosophy Swami Vivekananda's contribution is recognisable in the Indian history. He laid great emphasis on four yoga's namely- *Bhakti-Yoga*, *Karma-Yoga*, *Jnana-Yoga* and *Raja-Yoga*. Yoga produced immense impact in the nineteenth century and last decades of twentieth century when Swami Vivekananda played great role to spread worldwide through then lecture during the visit of America. In the ancient Sanskrit language from where the word yoga comes 'yoga' means 'union' (original verb Yuj is to joint) yoga is to join at man (means an individual consciousness). Yoga guru Vivekananda had adaptation of yoga in traditional way and introduced yoga to the west with excluding Asanas. Outside India, it has developed into a posture-based physical fitness, stress-relief and relaxation technique. Vivekanand's famous book *Raja-Yoga* (July, 1896), it defines about *Raja-Yoga*, is the royal path, the yoga of meditation. Its focus is to quiet the mind. It is his interpretation of Pantanjali's yoga Sutras adapted for a western audience.

Swami Vivekananda *Raja-Yoga* is the path of meditation and control of the mind, and it also gives a scientific treatment of yoga philosophy. Yoga describes the methods of concentration, mental development and the freedom of the soul from the worldly bondage of the body. Yoga uses breathing techniques, exercise and meditation. It helps word for union. Patanjali was a pioneer of classical yoga. It defined yoga as the cessation of the modification of the mind *Raja-Yoga* describes as the 'Raja' means supreme earthy power knows as 'king' and 'yoga' means 'self-control'. So we can say that a king act with independence, with his self-confidence and assurance upon the earth. *Raja-Yoga* is also known as the 'Ashtanga' yoga (ashta is eight and anga is limbs). It explains eight steps or limbs of yoga, are organized in eight parts. All these proceed to a human being inner peace, cleanliness in mind, clarity in thoughts, self command and realization. These eight steps basically act as guideline on how to live a meaningful and purposeful life. They direct attention toward one's health; and also help us to acknowledge the spiritual aspects of our nature. Vivekananda talks about all Asanas for fitness of mental and physical health.

In *Raja-Yoga* first limb is 'Yama' deals with one's self-control, it is an ability to control or restraint of oneself or one's actions.

There are five Yamas-

Ahimsa – nonviolence (non-harming other living beings)

Satya – truthfulness (non-falsehood)

Asteya – non-stealing

Brahmacharya – continence (chastity marital fidelity or sexual restraint)

Aparigraha – non-covetousness (non-possessiveness one)

Human emotions are appear as calm even those people who are very angry or afraid excited etc. self-control by the practice of yoga with breathing techniques that are learnt and acquired through the practice of yoga. Any real gains one to acquire in yoga, self-control is vital of them. Control comes when all parts of the brain intertwine and work together. The conscious state and the subconscious state become one and the focus is centered and directed. On a physical level, the breath plays a major role as it levels the heart rate into a smooth beat and oxygen is delivered on a regular supply to the brain and arouses connection between mind and body, become stronger. In a state of clean mind anything is possible decisions can be made with clarity and precision. Vivekanand defines through an example he says-

‘There is a *Mantram* called the *Gayatri*. It is a very holy verse of *Vedas*. “We meditate on the glory of that Being who has produced this universe; may He enlighten our mind”. Then *Om* is joined to it, at the beginning and end. In one *Pranayama* repeat three *Gayatris*. In all book they speak of *Pranayama* being divided into *Rechaka* (rejecting or exhaling), *Purka* (inhaling), and *Kumbhaka* (restraining, stationary). The *Indriyas*, the organs of the senses, are acting outwards and coming in contact with external objects. Bringing them in control of the will is what is called *Pratyahara*; gathering towards oneself is the literal translation (lecture.p.89).

It is big challenging situation able to set himself apart from the rest, become of that focused and control. Self-control has five major ways- balance, calmness, determination on, confidence and will power. The goal of yoga is to be able to witness and control our thoughts rather than being controlled by our thoughts. Improved self-control takes to places that are totally enjoyable and a blessing to experience. A calm and self-controlled person generates positive energy and proves fruitful to the society.

Niyama is the second part of the Patanjali’s yoga Satras. Niyamas means discipline in human behavior. There are five discipline in yoga, is given below-

Self-purification - Saucha (cleanliness of mind, speech and body)

Contentment - Sontosha (acceptance of other or one's circumstance as they are in order to get past or change them, optimism for self)

Self-discipline – Tapas (heat; spiritual austerities)

Self-study – Svadhyaya (study of the sacred scripture)

Self-surrender - Ishvara Panidhana (surrender to God)

The one goals of yoga is self-discipline and self-awareness. Through the practice and training of our mind and body, we would control our actions and obey rules. Whatever form of yoga one practices, the most important and crucial requirement is self-discipline without which one cannot see the positive results of yoga. In the Patanjali yoga Sutra self-discipline is known as Tapas. Self-study means svadhyaya. Auto-didacticism or self-education is an education without the guidance of master or institutions. Auto-didacticism is the result of human inquisitiveness the urge to engage with lifelong learning. A yoga aspirant surrenders the ego in meditation, allowing it to subside into transcendental consciousness. In various schools of Hinduism, svadhyaya is a Niyama connoting introspection and study of self by person. The Self-surrender means ishvara panidhana, the surrender of oneself or one's will to the external influence, an emotion or another person. To surrender in spirituality and religion means that a believer completely gives up his own will and subjects his thoughts ideas, and deeds to the will and teachings of a higher power. Such self-surrendered person makes the surrounding worth living and never entangled with others on trivial things thus, helps to bring peace to the society.

Asana means physical exercises in yoga comprises the third limb. In the yogic view, the body is a temple of spirit, the care of which is an important stage of spiritual growth. Through the practice of asanas, we developed the habit of discipline and the ability to concentrate, both of which are necessary for meditation. It is the performance of some activity in order to develop or maintain physical fitness and our health. It is often directed toward also having athletics ability on skill. Hatha yoga refer to a set of physical exercises (known as asanas or postures), and sequences of asanas, designed to align our skin, muscles, and bones. The postures are also designed to open the many channels of the body especially the main channel, the spine so that energy can flow freely. The practice of asana makes a healthier society, physically as well as mentally.

The fourth limb is Pranayama known as breathing exercises. Pranayama is the technique designed to gain mastery over the respiratory process while recognizing the connection between

breath, mind and emotion. The power of breathing deeply in yoga can actually help us to avoid injury. Deep breathing can also allow us to experience our true essence. The flow that steady in and out action of breathing creates stimulates a transformation in the body and mind, purifying and cleaning them, so that our true essence shines forth. In yoga breathing or Pranayama, is the foundation of our yoga practice. It begins with deepening our breathing with the three part breath, then move into more advanced breathing exercises such as Kapalabhati and the alternate nostril breath. Pranayama also goes hand in hand with the Asanas. These first four stage of Patanjali's ashtanga yoga concentrate on refining our personalities, gaining mastery over the body, developing an energetic awareness of ourselves, all of which prepares us for the second half of this journey, a higher state of consciousness. Thus, the pranayama practice on one hand may helps society in fighting against air pollution related illness such as bronchitis, asthma etc. on the other it helps society to become conscious.

Pratyahara is withdrawal of the senses from external objects. It is the fifth element among the eight stages of Patanjali, Ashtanga yoga, as mentioned in his classical work, yoga sutras of Pantanjali. Pratyahara means literally 'control of ahara' or gaining mastery over external influences. It has been compared to a turtle with-drawing into its shell-the turtle's shell is the mind and the turtle's limbs are the sense. The term is usually translated is 'withdrawal from the senses', but much more is implied. It is one of the most common practices bringing the attention inwards towards the breath, observing it without trying to control it, as connection with the internal senses and stimuli are all gradually severed. "Just as the tortoise withdraws its limbs, so when a man withdraws his senses from the sense objects, his wisdom becomes steady" (yoga international). We also found the explanation of above in *Bhagavad Gita*. The consciousness becomes for more sensitive when it detaches from the senses. As the senses withdraw, the intuitive mind awakens. This practice restricts excessive involvement of consumerism that ultimately controls break down of humanitarism.

Dharana is the sixth stages or step of eight educated by Pantanjali, Asthtanga yoga or *Raja-Yoga* in his yoga sutras of Pantajali, is known as concentration. Dharana means 'collection or concentration of the mind', or 'the act of holding bearing, wearing, supporting, maintain, retaining, keeping back a good memory, or firmness, steadfastness, concentration refers to the ability to direct one's etc. attention in accordance with one's will. It means control of the attention. It is the ability to focus the mind on one subject, object or thought and at the same

time, exclude from the mind every other unrelated thoughts, ideas, feelings and sensations. This practice helps to become a society successful.

Dhyana known as meditation and it is the seventh limbs of yoga. Meditation is the process of quieting the mind in order to spend time in thought for relaxation religious/spirited purposes. In practice, meditation involves concentrated focus on something such as a sound, image or feeling. Meditation involves concentration and relaxation. It is the actual experience of union. In the yoga Sutra, Pantanjali given instruction on how to meditate and describes what factors constitute a meditation practice. In the yogic countered according to Pantanjali yoga sutra meditation also called Dhyanas. It defined as a state of pure consciousness. Meditation is a part of yoga, which deals with mental relaxation and concentration. Here attention is focused on thoughts and breath. Being aware of breathing automatically controls the thought process and thus, relaxes mind completely. In today's life everyone has stress, whether a man, women, old aged person or even a child. Meditation practice may help to reduce mental stress from their life and improve concentration.

Samadhi is the eighth and final stage and the eight fold path of yoga. It is a spiritual practice. It is a state of consciousness where individual awareness dissolves into the great whole. It is oneness with the subject of meditation, whatever it is whether any object, person, place or God. The distinction between the actor, action and acting upon depletes. The actor's mind is absorbed in a way that it loses its own identity. Samadhi is a kind of spirituality where thinker, the thought process and the thought fuse with the subject of thought. In western psychology and philosophy complete realization is an expression used in, and realization means total transparency to the supreme (owing to ego-transcendence).

By the term Raja-yoga, Swami ji meant the method of mental concentration. In the present state of our body, we are so much distracted and the mind is frittering away its energy upon a hundred sorts of things. As soon as, one tries to calm his thoughts and concentrate his mind upon any one object of knowledge, thousands of undesired impulses rush into the mind and disturb it. How to check it and bring the mind under control is the whole subject of study in Raja-Yoga. *Raja-Yoga*, thus is the psychological yoga; the psychological way to union. Not only the yearned of the ultimate truth, but even the chemist, the astronomer, the professor in his chair, the

student with his book, every man who is working to know employ the same method of acquiring knowledge- that means by concentration of mind.

Raja-Yoga, is the book defines yoga's benefits and affect each person in a different way. Many find that it helps them to relax; other find themselves feeling healthier and more enteric. All the system in the body-from the lymphatic to the digestive to the cardiovascular-benefits from yoga. Yoga benefits every aspect of our bodies, inside and out. Many practitioners find that yoga helps them to focus and feel relax in both work and play. Yoga has also been found to increase alpha and theta waves in the brain, it means that yoga can relax the brain and increase access to the subconscious and emotion and by simply increasing the feel-good brain chemical like endorphins, enkephalins, and serotonin, yoga practitioners just feel better. Swami Vivekananda was the first true traditional yogi to go the US and UK, with short tours through Europe, and it was he with his brilliance who first popularized yoga in the west. The great man with his scientific knowledge and excellent power over English was the ideal man to spread the message of yoga in west through his book and delivering his speeches on yoga in different cities, at the request of his followers. Government of India also promote through various programme from ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy Unnani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH). On December 1, 2016 yoga was listed by UNECOS as an intangible cultural heritage.

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