

**Swami Vivekananda and Harmony of Yoga Culture:An
Imagination of Rejuvenation of the Youth**

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*Abstract:*Swami Vivekananda stands as a unique personality, enveloped in mystery and controversy, drawing the attention of philosophers, educational thinkers, and historians. This article focuses mainly on the connection between the science of yoga and the youth. Swami Vivekananda believed that through yoga, young people could achieve mental and spiritual goals. Swami Vivekananda understood the problems the young generation was facing in the colonial era. He decided to guide and encourage the youth through various means. The science of yoga would help the young ones to control the subtle body. He accepted the boundless ability of the human mind. He tried to motivate the young ones who were searching for a new light in the imperial era. He believed in transformation, and this could be obtained through the science of yoga.

Keywords: Bhagavad Gita ,Swami Vivekananda, Upanishad, Yoga, Youth etc.

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Introduction

India was considered to be a land of beliefs and ideologies- the birthplace of many pure souls who tried to follow positive virtues in their lives. ¹This was identified as the land of religious and spiritual beliefs, ideologies, love and calmness. A fully evolved idea of Yoga appears in the ancient texts like the Rig Veda, the Upanishad, the Bhagavad Gita and the Yogasutras of Patanjali. ²The word Yoga is present in the earliest text, but usually with special emphasis on the chariot that was used in the war. In ancient times, chariots were drawn by horses “yoked” jointly. The English word “yoke” forms a strong connection with the Sanskrit word “Yoga.” Atharva Veda focuses on certain practices which were quite similar to those of asanas and pranayama. The Mahabharata defines yoga as supreme, and no other power in this world could share the same platform with yoga. The core text of yoga is the Patanjali-Yogasutras. It

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mentions the philosophical system that was not there in the Rig-Veda. Patanjali-Yogasutras claims that “yoga is restraining the activities of the subtle body”.³ The yoga was genuinely associated with Saiva, Buddhist and Vaishnava traditions.

Importance of Yoga in Ancient Indian Culture

The Varna system was well-equipped to focus on the social roles, duties and responsibilities. The most suitable activities of the Brahmana were understanding the Hindu scriptures and performing different types of rituals for others, and receiving a large number of cows as gifts. The warrior class was following the footsteps of the priests by performing those rituals that were prescribed by the priests. The next social class was called the Vaishyas, who gave emphasis on agriculture and trade. The Shudras had to follow all the instructions of the Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya. They were considered as subordinates by the three upper classes. These three classes were entitled for the upanayana ceremony. The four life stages of the Ashram system are Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, and Sanyasa. This ashrama scheme is mentioned in the Smriti. In the ancient period, society was systematised on the basis of the varna system and the ashrama system.⁴ The varna system denotes an organised structure of the society, where as Ashrama system focuses on a person’s journey in that organised structure. Yoga is strongly linked with each and every stage of the Ashrama system. Kalidasa in Raghu Vamsha claims that children applied themselves to their studies; Young people go in search of pleasure; old people practise asceticism; and in yoga, they bring their existence to a close.⁵

In the first stage, Brahmachari had to follow certain rules and regulations in their life. Some of the rules included not hurting others, not telling lies, and not taking valuable things from others without their permission.⁶ The students in the gurukul were given rigorous training by their guru. Their first and foremost duty was to show their respect to their guru. They ate only pure food and ignored meat. Guru taught them several mantras, and they had to repeat it correctly. Different types of knowledge were given to the children, including painting, music, astronomy, mathematics, grammar, etc. They adopted the art of cleaning their nasal passages with the help of water.⁷ In this stage, students' interrelation with yoga was elementary. They learnt a few yoga techniques like pranayama from their guru. In the grihastya stage, a householder had to show his devotion to his family members. As a married couple, they had to take all the responsibility of the joint family. The daily activities of the

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householder were laborious. The wife of the householder had to prepare food for the joint family. In the brahmanic family, the family members ate rice, barley, wheat and boiled vegetables⁸

The third and fourth phases were completely different from the brahmachari stage and the grihastha stage. In the third order, the householder becomes a hermit and has to face severe austerities in life. The hermit develops a strong connection with the yoga practices, like breath control and meditation. Through these practices, they removed all the defects in life and tried hard to concentrate on the Supreme Being. Asceticism forms a symmetrical relationship with yoga. In the sanyasi stage, the devotee had no hope from life and developed a strong attachment to his soul. The devotee, through his love, wanted to achieve purity by overcoming all types of contradictions and inconsistencies. He was truly linked with knowledge. Ascetics should know that knowledge and yoga could bring about liberation. From the beginning, yoga promoted cleanliness, calmness, vitality, harmony, happiness, and good health. It removed all the negative elements present inside the body.

Weakness and Yoga

All the foreigners, like the French, English, and Portuguese, wanted to establish their authority in Bengal. The British imperialists developed communication networks to fulfil their own purpose. The development of communication meant that roads, canals, railways, and embankments were designed by engineers. These engineering projects also led to the spread of diseases like smallpox, malaria, cholera, constipation, etc. It seemed to endanger the status of the colonial power and remained as a pivotal point of convergence between the authority and the oriental society. Raja Digamber Mitter claimed that embankments were made for managing the rivers.⁹ Malaria was caused by many factors like construction of embankments and the humidity of the soil. Malaria gave birth to jaundice, dropsy and diarrhoea. The native doctors suggested that unhygienic conditions that were emerging in the urban Calcutta created problems for the young ones. The young ones faced a lot of problems due to weakness and anxiety. The main physical symptoms were dark circles around their eyes, roughness of the skin, overthinking and sleeplessness. The weak person had no strength in his mind or body. The physical weakness could be cured by physical exercise. The mental weakness could be removed through meditation.

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Poverty, diseases, debility, mental tension, and unemployment affected the health of the youth.¹⁰ Native doctors and revivalists understood the strong bond between pathetic social conditions and ill-health. This urged the youth to profound social transformations. They wanted to create their own identity by challenging the belief of effeminacy, put forward by the imperialist discourse. Revivalists claimed that the youth of Bengal should alter the scenario by practising yoga. The yoga techniques enabled the youth to gain physical and mental strength to resist the foreign powers.

Among all the revivalists, Swami Vivekananda was a significant icon of the yoga culture in colonial Bengal. He was born in a very prestigious family on January 12, 1863.¹¹ His curious mind always tried to know the mystery of life. His yogic temperament enabled him to practice meditation regularly. He was deeply interested in wrestling and fencing. As a member of Brahma Samaj, Narendra Nath Dutta engaged in many religious discussions regularly. None of the religious gatherings could satisfy the escalating desire for spiritual knowledge. Swami Vivekananda was associated with the science of Yoga, not just because it was connected with spirituality, but it promoted inner satisfaction to mankind. This satisfaction occurred when the mind, body and soul formed a strong connection with each other.¹² His ideologies focused on the assimilation of four paths, like Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Karma Yoga, promoting mental and physical development for the youth.¹³ His glorifying words were awake, arise, and dream no more! He claimed that youth should throw away all their weakness and face reality. This meant they should break out from the yoke of British power. They should always focus on their actions rather than on imagination.

The four paths of attaining salvation were very praiseworthy and stimulating to mankind. As the young ones were not getting any freedom in their own land, youths became dissatisfied only when they failed to cope with the demands of the materialist world. The four paths of yoga helped the young person to handle all the problems. Each path had certain specific methods that helped the young generation to focus on their actions. The Sanskrit word used for yoga was Chittavritti-nirodha.¹⁴ Yoga teaches various methods to control the chitta, which is always subject to change. This change was due to the internal and external factors that created a strong impact on chitta. Yoga played a predominant role in maintaining a proper balance in the body. The science of Yoga helped them to control the inner self. This creation would ultimately help in the development of adolescent boys and girls. In the materialist culture, youth had a strong attachment to the body. They had no connection with the soul. Yoga taught the young ones to separate body from mind. In order to perform this

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separation, proper training must be given to them. This form of training begins from the body itself. The body formed the base, and the soul formed the superstructure. This new form of training was very difficult as numerous methods were associated with it.¹⁵ In order to acquire this new form of art, young ones should have strength, patience and perseverance to attain suitable results from it.

Vivekananda's Perception of Yoga

Swami Vivekananda expressed the relationship between religion and the mind. These two could be properly analysed through Raja-Yoga. It was considered the ultimatum that controlled other stuff in the mind. It was a very difficult task as the stuff inside the mind was very dynamic in nature. The science of yoga explained the mental satisfaction to mankind. The science of Yoga formed a strong connection with the experiences. In order to experience the truth, different types of scientific and practical methods were very important. Raja Yoga formed a strong attachment with the mind. It revolved around faith, which was scientific and logical. Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, and Samadhi come under Raja Yoga.¹⁶

The science of yoga teaches human beings to form a direct relationship with the power of concentration. The mind should take up one idea at a time. The brain, muscles, and heart would also focus on that particular idea. It focused on the sanctification of the mind and body. The state of mind passed through three stages. Tamas, which means darkness and negativity.¹⁷ Tamas was followed by Rajas, which dealt with power and happiness. The third stage is called sattva, which denotes peace and serenity. It is essential to control the waves that originate in the mind. It was quite natural that thoughts would create disturbances in the mind. But that disturbance should not control the mind. Mind must control the disturbances, conflicts and chaos. Only concentration could provide the utmost satisfaction to the mind and body.

Bhakti Yoga focused too much on love for the almighty, which might bring eternal satisfaction.¹⁸ Bhakti Yoga was much more distinguished than the Karma yoga and Raja Yoga. Meditation and worship formed an important segment of the Bhakti Yoga. It began with natural worship and ended with showing the highest dedication to God. In this preparatory stage, mythological and spiritual steps helped the soul to contemplate.¹⁹ The aspiring souls of the student required a guru who tended to create spiritual awakening in the mind. This spiritual awakening was not possible through books and intellect. The spiritual

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teacher should preach with love and dedication. He should not develop any connection with name, fame, status, or money. He should be pure and not selfish in nature. He should work for mankind. Bhakti Yoga claimed that there were numerous methods that, in turn, led to salvation. Bhakti Yoga depended on purity and inner cleanliness. The best way to accomplish Bhakti Yoga was through Ahimsa and strength.²⁰ Strength plays a crucial role in attaining spiritual enlightenment.

Jnana yoga proclaimed that religion played a predominant role in shaping the fate of human beings. The spirit theory of religion focused on ancestor worship. The ancient Aryan literature claimed that religion was rooted in nature worship. Mind had the power to surpass the restrictions of perceptions and the restrictions of reason. Religion performed the hardest task by conquering the india. Jnana yoga made a sharp distinction between religion and superstition. Religion formed a strong bond with positive thoughts and action. These thoughts created strong motivation to perform any form of action. On the other hand, superstitions were genuinely associated with negative thoughts and actions. These negative thoughts do not form any strong connection with the truth. Jnana yoga held that everything in the universe was a manifestation of religion. It emphasised illusion, which is very dynamic and changes automatically.²¹ Maya creates a huge obstruction in the path of progress. This obstruction could be removed only by Jnana yoga. It was the Almighty who resided in the mother, father, grandparents, children, etc. Only positive ideas could bring about happiness. All forms of satisfaction and desires revolved around the Almighty. This type of yoga showed a strong relationship with the mind, body and soul. The body derived its energy from the mind, and the mind receives all signals from the soul.

The word karma was derived from the word kri, which meant action.²² From a psychological perspective, the same word karma meant causation. It gave emphasis on knowledge and not on pleasures. Knowledge was the source of happiness. The spiritual knowledge could destroy all negative thoughts. This form of knowledge gives new strength to move forward in life. Knowledge and action are closely related to each other. Every action performed out of love can completely bring satisfaction. All forms of duty were considered pure. Duty, when performed with ignorance, did not create any spiritual emancipation. Karma Yoga taught each and every person to perform their action without receiving any form of gift. By following all the good qualities like honesty, kindness, love, responsibility, respect, etc,

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an individual's good character was formed. Action and knowledge created scope for self-development and liberation.

Vivekananda believed that youth were the main instrument of social transformation. They had the potential to alter the scenario by overcoming their fear and resisting the foreign power strongly. He urged the youth to be bold in their actions and not to cultivate self-doubt. Boldness, according to the spiritual monk, depicted the youth's ability to overcome various obstacles. He suggested that the youth had within themselves the strength to overcome fear. By doing this, they could throw away their weakness. He encouraged the young ones to navigate all the obstacles that they faced in the colonial period with a positive attitude. They should learn from their mistakes. Embracing transformation meant that the youth had the capacity to face new experiences in life. His teachings on yoga acted as a torch that helped the youth to build a prosperous future. Yoga empowered the youth to create new avenues teeming with love and peace. The young ones could easily discover the complexities that were present in the colonial period. They should have the passion to remove all the complexities by adopting new skills in their life. He claims that yoga was a magical instrument that could bring about new colours in their life.

Popularity of Youth in Vivekananda's Narrative

Swami Vivekananda was deeply concerned with the degradation of the youth of Bengal. It was indeed beneficial to educate the young ones. They had the capacity to recreate a glorious Bengal. His educational perspective was to rebuild the character of the youth. Swami Vivekananda claimed that "education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man."²³ This meant that the child was born with some talents. In the growing phase, talents needed to be expressed in a proper manner. In this phase, proper guidance gave them the courage to express their talents in a proper way. Education should not remain confined to secular education. It should focus on spiritual education as well. The spiritual knowledge increases physical and mental strength. His ideal form of education tried to set up a strong connection between the fine body, subtle body and soul. The culture of the subtle body was very complex as it had lot of variation like the conscious and subconscious state of mind.

The colonisers denoting the people of Bengal as a race of "namby-pamby", imposed a scar on this particular race, which was highlighted in two perspectives. On the one hand, it forced them to adopt different types of yoga techniques and physical exercises. On the other hand, the youth received the courage to acquire new skills in order to prosper over the

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colonisers in the yoga culture. In the first case, yoga techniques were strongly connected with the mainstream freedom struggle.

Yoga was a symbolic part of the indigenous culture. The most crucial to the radical movement was the desire to explore the spiritual satisfaction to exhibit the manly features in front of the colonisers. Love and compassion were the two important factors that united the young ones. This unity helped them to raise their voice against their superior powers. Swami Vivekananda believed that yoga culture was a means of cultural liberation. Many organisations like Bharat udher came into existence in order to train the young ones. From his childhood days, he liked to meditate for long hours. Meditation is an art that helps the youth to control their emotions and weaknesses. It helps in connecting with some supernatural powers.

Youth should learn to help others in life. It enabled them to set up an organisation that can bring about social emancipation. At an initial stage, he established mathas at Baranagar. After this monastic community, Ramkrishna Mission Association was formed under the leadership of swami Vivekananda.²⁴ Youth were initiated into the world of service by Vivekananda. In this organisation, the young ones were kept under strict observation. Physical exercises, as part of yoga, became an important segment of the positive routine. The Ramkrishna Math and Mission focused on socio-cultural and spiritual development. Positive habits can bring about happiness and prosperity in life. These positive habits had a strong relationship with the positive thoughts. Habits determined the complete creation of human beings. Any form of result depends on the habit itself.

Yoga and Youth

Youth should have a proper aim in life. Without a proper target, young people moved like a pendulum. After fixing all the targets, they had to take small steps in life. They had to make suitable routines for achieving the goal. The youth were more attached to material goals in life. They were not at all concerned about the spiritual goal in life. Attaining a spiritual goal was difficult as they had to go through rigorous lifestyles. Yoga and spiritual goals formed a strong connection, as certain techniques were formulated that tend to bring self-fulfilment. Abraham Maslow emphasised different types of needs: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs and esteem needs.²⁵ The young people needed to be motivated to fulfil all their

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needs. The safety needs and social needs constituted material needs. The physiological needs and esteem needs were denoted as spiritual needs.

He claimed that self-development can be achieved through character-building education and mind training. He was in favour of skill-based learning. They should not get accustomed to rote learning. If the teenagers want to operate the machines, they should know how to operate them correctly. Self-development depended on concentration and practice. While practising, young ones should focus on physical activities. In the case of self-development, there was no highest point that the youth had to achieve through hard work. It was a never-ending process. Any form of good actions had the capacity to purify the mind by fostering good qualities. Action and knowledge created scope for self-development and liberation. Youth had to adopt different techniques of yoga in order to raise the level of concentration. The science of yoga taught human beings to form a direct relationship with the power of concentration.

As a duty-oriented person, Swami Vivekananda wanted to perform positive actions throughout his life. He emphasised knowledge and not pleasures. Duty, when performed in ignorance, did not enable any spiritual emancipation. The physical obstacles and problems like laziness, disease, doubt, stress and false promises should not affect concentration. The lazy and indifferent teenagers cannot make progress in life. Only strong and healthy people can change the world. He wanted the youth to be dynamic in nature. He claimed that courageous men can achieve anything in life.

Youth should follow basic steps like focusing on the issues, the cause of those particular issues, finding a proper solution to the issues, and executing in an efficient way. He claimed that weakness can create destruction in life. This Weakness could be overcome by adopting different methods of yoga and a proper diet. Yoga helped to control stress. Anxiety affects mental and physical health. Anxiety could create sleeplessness, neck pain, headache, etc. Stress control refers to managing different types of emotions and actions. Meditation was the ultimate solution for all these problems. The young generation should not form any attachment to anything. They should understand that through attachment, they tend to lose their own identity in society.

Conclusion

From the ancient period, yoga culture played a crucial role in Indian society. Even though it prevailed in dependent Bengal. Yoga was not restricted to the fitness of the body but also

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formed a strong connection with the mind. The science of yoga had the potential to convert impossibilities into possibilities. Yoga focuses on self-recognition, leading to development and promoting harmony and tranquillity. The science of yoga was always against contradiction and conflicts. Swami Vivekananda's thoughts were based on certain concepts like self-fulfilment, concentration, power of mind, love and action. All the powerful concepts guided by the spiritual ideas of Swami Vivekanand purified the subtle body and mind. He worked hard to motivate the innocent ones to build a new structure where positivity can create its own space. It helped the youth to chase their passion by inculcating positive virtues. The four paths of yoga gave the young men the proper direction which were needed to fulfill their passion.

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