



Indian Council for Cultural Relations

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was founded on 9th April 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first Education Minister of independent India.

The objectives of the Council are to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes relating to India's external cultural relations; to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries; to promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people; to establish and develop relations with national and international organizations in the field of culture; and to take such measures as may be required to further these objectives.

The ICCR is about a communion of cultures, a creative dialogue with other nations. To facilitate this interaction with world cultures, the Council strives to articulate and demonstrate the diversity and richness of the cultures of India, both in and with other countries of the world.

The Council prides itself on being a pre-eminent institution engaged in cultural diplomacy and the sponsor of intellectual exchanges between India and partner countries. It is the Council's resolve to continue to symbolize India's great cultural and educational efflorescence in the years to come.

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Indian Horizons

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Designed and produced by M/s Aakriti, 25/403, Eastend Apartments, Mayur Vihar Phase – 1 Extension, Delhi – 110096 The current issue on the theme of Yoga for me was like entering into a chasm of immense knowledge with which I had little or virtually no previous acquaintance. My only link with it was through stray photographs depicting asanas being performed by very trim and athletic looking people, in parks and designated halls for this purpose. A mutual acquaintance introduced me to photographer Briana Blasko who is in India currently taking photographs on Yoga and its status in the country. Her take on the instruction being given to aspirants in an orphanage in Varanasi, became the auspicious beginning to my venture of examining the intricacies and appeal behind Yoga.

Subsequently, my quest took me to important Yoga instructors in the capital where I was fortunate to make my acquaintance with prominent practitioners and ashram heads around the country. One of the first meetings on this search brought me to the doorstep of Shanta Gupta who is the sole representative in the capital of the Bihar School of Yoga, in Munger. In her well appointed home, I was privy to her yoga practice room and adjoining premises, where she went down memory lane about her own encounter with Yoga at the school and her current endeavour to propagate and enlarge the basis of Yoga in the capital.

A search for a hands-on practitioner of Yoga for a first hand experience on how Yoga postures need to be done, which could then be used as illustrations in the volume, brought Jai Prakash Naudiyal and me face to face. In his atypical gracious and disciplined way, this former policeman and ardent yoga enthusiast not only offered to show me the correct postures for each asana, but also introduced me to other practitioners, who had fascinating accounts to narrate about their personal takes on Yoga.

One such person was Sushanta Banerjee, by far the most experienced in matters of organization development and transformation, who has imparted his skills to over 200 corporate organisations. An ardent practitioner of Yoga himself, he uses Yoga as his basis to elaborate the techniques he elicits in his workshops on experiential learning. The delegates to these workshops are informed that Yoga is a crucial tool for collective and individual leadership as it is the bedrock of self-improvement. Vouching on the benefits that Yoga has brought about in his own life, made him graciously volunteer to elaborate the Yoga aspects used in his work.

When I approached Dr Das Lal, a lifelong scholar and head of an ashram in Agra, for some basic inputs on the subject, he obliged by referring to scriptural references on the topic. Taking time out from his duties as an ashram head, he examined the core values of Yoga with lucid understanding so that Yoga at last became for me, a topic that is easy to comprehend and so very down-to-earth in its makeover.

For years I have been curious to know the Who's Who on the Yoga list as Yoga has been growing in its acceptance and its followers are myriad. While it is a routine drill every morning in numerous parks and open spaces every morning in all cities in India, I did not know who were its brand ambassadors and its propagators beyond Indian shores. My curiosity brought me in contact with some of Yoga's legendary performers. One such person in living memory is the late BKS lyengar and my hesitant request for a writeup on the late BKS lyengar, met with unexpected success when Rajvi Mehta immediately consented to write a tribute on this Yoga guru. A search for a book on the topic, was rewarded by Debjani Chatterji who shared her reading of the The Autobiography of a Yogi as a perfect option for our readers. In her review she preferred to stress upon significant incidents and passages from this saga to acquaint our readers about the singular contribution of this guru towards engaging with a foreign audience on Yoga, a century ago. Her write-up stresses on the mystical attributes and premonitions mentioned in the account as also the circumstances of Swamiji's visit aboard to propagate Yoga and how enthusiastic acceptance of Yoga followed wherever Swamiji went. All this and more establishes why the book has been an inspiration to readers worldwide.

One of the first contributors to the issue was Prof Srinivas, of Pondicherry University whose enthusiasm about writing on Yoga was totally reassuring, coming at a stage when the whole issue was in a nebulous state of making. Incidentally, the concluding contribution for the issue came from Dr Upender Rao of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, another scholar who touched upon a lesser known side of this subject, namely the place of Yoga in Buddhism.

Our regular inputs for the issue covered a gamut of cultural activities, not only on stage and on the walls of the Azad Bhavan Gallery but even in our choice of memorabilia for the archival segment of the issue. While the display of contemporary art was slim, this being a lean period for exhibitions, the performances on stage were held to schedule as part of the 'Horizon' series of cultural activities. In particular, the music concerts and dance performances were appreciated and drew favourable audience response on account of the potential of these performances. The vintage photographs of cultural performances and exchanges from the sixties era, at ICCR, brought back fond memories as several of the seniors at the office narrated their personal takes on these events.

On the whole it was a lively encounter of many aspects while making this issue. Not only did I come out a little wiser on the subject but have also realized the profound potential behind this great Indian experience that we are today commemorating on World Yoga Day, internationally.

Editor Subhra Kunder

Subhra Mazumdar

Foreword

Satish C. Mehta Director General, Indian Council for Cultural Relations

ecember 11, 2014 will go down in history as a red letter day for Indian culture. On this day, with 'highest number of co-sponsors ever for any UN General Assembly resolution of such nature' and record support from 193 countries, United Nations adopted a resolution establishing June 21 as International Day of Yoga (IDY). Following this historic declaration, the first International Day of Yoga is going to be celebrated on June 21, 2015. This declaration is not only a success for the people of India to convince the world community of the utility and significance of yoga in our lives, but also a recognition to India's traditional culture.

In his address to the General Assembly on 27th September, 2014, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi had said, "Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature".

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has been promoting yoga abroad for decades now. Since 1977, yoga teachers appointed by ICCR have been active in different countries of the world to share and spread this traditional Indian knowledge. This year, working closely with the Ministry of External Affairs, AYUSH and Indian Missions and posts abroad, ICCR is celebrating the first International Day of Yoga all over the world. To make the celebration a success, ICCR is sending abroad additional yoga teachers, including to those countries where it does not have Cultural Centres. The underlying objectives of these efforts are to spread awareness and make traditional Indian yoga popular all over the world and help inculcate a holistic approach to health and well-being.

To contribute to the celebration, this issue of the Indian Horizons has been dedicated as a special issue on yoga. Articles incorporated here are on different aspects of yoga – philosophy of yoga, spread of yoga in the world, different schools of yoga, et al. I hope these writeups by scholars and experts will add to the interest of common people towards yoga and enlighten them with information on philosophy and practice of yoga.

On the eve of International Day of Yoga, I wish our readers in the following words:

"Sarve bhavantu sukhinah Sarve santu nirāmayāķ Sarve bhadrāņi paśyantu Mā kaścid duhkhabhāg bhavet"

(May all become happy. May all be free from illness. May all see what is auspicious. May no one suffer)

Satish C. Mehta

From our Archives



Students from Uganda, Fiji, Mauritius and Jordan at the Jain Temple, Chittor, ICCR Study Tour-October, 1969



Reception in honour of the delegates to the Conference on International Understanding through Education, January 3, 1965



Exhibition of Wood Block Prints by Kiyoshi Saito (Japan), September 7-14, 1967



Azad Memorial Lecture by Dr. D.S. Kothari, February 26-27, 1970



Exhibition of Coloured Block Prints by ABA Bayefsky of Canada, May 27-June 2, 1970



Secretary, ICCR presenting gifts to the delegates of Venezuela, 'Capella De Caracas' at Kamani Auditorium, New Delhi, August 15, 1980



Visit of Kalaripayattu group of Kerala to Hongkong, Oct, 1980



Kamba Dance from Kenya by Kenya African Students Association, Chandigarh, Foreign Student's Day/Diwali celebration, November 11, 1982



Members of the Bhutan India Friendship Association Delegation at ICCR, November, 1980

The Philosophy of Yoga

K. Srinivas

t is believed that the practice of Yoga for the sake of self-realization is much older than the Vedas. It is a technique or a method to control body and mind to achieve self-perfection. It appears that there are evidences to show the practice of Yoga during the Mohenjo-daro civilization. But Yoga as expounded by Patańjali is treated as an allied system of Sāṅkhya by the classical Indian tradition. The term '*Yoga*' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'yuj', which literally means 'union'. It is a spiritual union of the individual soul with the spiritual soul. It also means to join' or to yoke. As a matter of fact, it is a method that joins the finite spirit with the infinite or Supreme Spirit. In other words, Yoga is self-realization in its widest sense of the term. This method consists of the methods or practices leading to the union or self-realization



'Meditation of God involves repeating his name and thinking of its meaning. Through meditation the mind becomes totally inward'

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'According to Yoga, everything undergoes modification, including the objects of the physical world'

(viveka-jńāna). Even if one does not believe in the spiritual knowledge, one may practice Yoga to keep one's mind and body healthy and agile.

The famous *Yogasūtras*, the aphorisms of Yoga, were composed by the sage Patańjali around 4th century BC. But, it was Vyāsa who wrote a commentary on Patańjali's *Yogasūtras* around the 4th century AD. Patańjali Yoga is also popularly known as *Raja Yoga. Yogasūtras* are divided into four parts, namely, *Samādhipāda, Sādhanapāda, Vibhūtipāda,* and *Kaivalyapāda*. The first part deals with the nature and aim of concentration, the second with the means to realize this end, the third with the supra-normal powers that one can acquire through Yoga, and the fourth with the nature of liberation and the reality of the supreme transcendental Self. Being an allied system of Sāňkhya, Yoga accepts the metaphysical and epistemological framework of the former.

Epistemology

Like Sānkhya, Yoga too admits three valid sources of knowledge, namely, perception (*pratyakşa*), inference (anumāna), and verbal testimony (sabda). Patanjali recasts the Sānkhya position on cognition. It is held by Sānkhya that cognition is a transformation and modification of impersonal Reason (buddhi, Mahat). But in reality, according to Yoga, everything undergoes modification, including the objects of the physical world. These modifications are classified into five functions (vrttis). They are: the valid sources of knowledge (pramānas), wrong or false knowledge (viparyaya), empty concepts (vikalpas), sleep (nidrā), and memory (*smrti*). Sleep is a kind of experience wherein there is an experience of mere absence. The valid sources of knowledge mentioned above represent the right cognition. It must be noted here that Reason (Mahat) is not to be understood

as an ordinary reasoning process; rather it is the all-pervading metaphysical principle out of which everything originates. It is also the source of the ego.

The essential characteristic of this Reason is 'amness' (asmitā) or "I am' (ahamasmi). The 'I' in this context cannot be equated with ego but something higher than it. It is impersonal, yet it experiences itself as 'am'. In other words, to say that the empirical world is rational is to say that it is the assertion of an impersonal Reason. The impersonal Reason operates through the ego in spite of the fact that the former transcends the latter. The ego accepts the assertions of the impersonal Reason as its assertions and identifies itself with the impersonal Reason. The five functions listed above are the modifications of the impersonal Reason that are associated with the ego. Further it is observed that even the empty concepts are also modifications of impersonal Reason. The cognition through an empty concept is defined as the cognition that follows upon a word which does not have to correspond to anything in objective reality. Basically ātman is considered to be consciousness itself by Yoga. However, we tend to speak of consciousness of atman as if consciousness is an attribute of atman forgetting the fact that atman is consciousness. All these aberrations occur due to the misuse of language. In this sense Vikalpa means the ideational, the conceptual, the imaginary, the fanciful, or what is mentally created. Mind has the capacity to create such concepts which do not signify anything in objective reality. Patańjali warns of such vikalpas.

By sleep Yoga means deep sleep, which is a dreamless state. It is also treated as a modification of impersonal Reason (Mahat). As such it involves consciousness but not unconscious. It cannot be regarded as the consciousness of absence (nothingness); rather it is treated as the presence of consciousness even if all other functions are absent. Even in sleep there is consciousness for otherwise when a person wakes up he or she cannot say "I slept well". Illusion (*viparyaya*) is another modification of the mind. Unlike Sāṅkhya, Yoga treats it as false knowledge. Such a form of knowledge results from the perception of a nonexistent form ($atadr\bar{u}papratisischam$). The object perceived in illusion does not exist, but for Sānkhya it exists for it is only the modification (parinam) of the real object. Thus it is both existent and non-existent. According to Yoga, illusion is caused by five impurities. They are: ignorance ($avidy\bar{a}$), false identification of oneself with objective world or egoism ($asmit\bar{a}$), attachment ($r\bar{a}ga$), hate (dveşa) and self-attachment (abhinivesa), which is accompanied by the anxiety of death.

Yoga also recognises five levels of mental life (cittabhūmi). These levels are caused by the predominance of different gunas. Restlessness or ksipta is caused by the excess of rajas. This is supposed to be the lowest mental level. The next level is torpid or mudha. The mind has more of tamas which makes it ignorant, dull and sleepy. The next higher stage is called distracted (vik sipta). Here in this stage although sattva is a dominating quna, yet rajas too asserts itself at times. Therefore, the mind gets distracted. The next higher stage is called concentration (ekāgra). Here in this stage the mind is completely dominated by sattva. The mind can concentrate on the object of its choice without any hindrance. The fifth and the highest stage is called restricted (nirudha). The mental modifications in this stage are completely arrested though their latent impressions remain. The stages proceed in an ascending order. The first three stages are not conducive for yogic practices. The last two alone are the proper stages for taking up yogic life.

Metaphysics

Although Yoga admits the metaphysical foundations of Sāṅkhya, yet Patańjali adds up something more in the following way. First of all, he goes deeper into the analysis of the nature of transformation. Secondly, he admits the existence of God unlike Sāṅkhya. Thirdly, he attempts to show the relation between the impersonal Reason and moral action.

According to Sāṅkhya, everything is under constant transformation (*pariņāma*). There is nothing

which does not undergo transformation. This view of Sāńkhya is akin to the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness. In other words, it amounts to saying that there is nothing permanent or a stable substance to which change belongs. But both Sānkhya and Yoga admit the existence of Prakti, the primordial, eternal substance to which all change belongs. The change is only the modification of Prakrti's attributes. Sānkhva does not discuss this relation between substance (dharmi) and its attributes (dharmas) at all. Patanjali discusses this relation between substance and its attributes (qualities) in detail. If there is persisting change in everything at every moment, then how do we distinguish between substance and its attributes (qualities)? Patańjali makes an attempt to show how we can distinguish substance, attributes (qualities) and their changes within this continual change.

There is nothing special about the view that every transformation is a modification. For example, water transforms into ice at a particular temperature. Such a modification has three aspects within it. They are: modification of substance, modification of quality, and modification of the mode of quality. In the example given above, water modifies into ice. The former is in liquid form and the latter is hard. What we observe here is the modification of one quality into another (dharmaparirāma). The substance remains the same. The change occurs within the same substance. This passage of change takes place through three moments, past, present and future. Therefore, there occurs change in the modes of existence of substance. Further, it is also stated by Patańjali that each state of change has three moments - strong, weak and submerged. When the change is clearly observed it is strong and slowly becomes weak when it is going to be taken over by the next state. When it is completely overwhelmed then it submerges into the next state. Since these three stages are continuously overlapping with each other there exists no interval of nothingness (sūnyata). What is interesting to note here is that in all these three stages the substance remains the same. We can only observe the modifications of the substance but not the substance as it is too subtle.

From the above analysis of change we find that substance is the individual (vyakti). Its accompanying qualities alone change but substance remains the same. Substance possesses elements of stability in the object observed. As Raju puts it: "Change is not within time; on the other hand time is constituted by, and is none other than the three moments of the changing quality." Similarly, space is only an extended property of substances. It has no reality of its own. Both time and space are only the forms of ether (akāśa), which is the ground for the possibility of change of objects and their extendedness. Time and space, according to Yoga, are only the aspects of the transformation of objects. Substance is the generator of qualities, including time and space. Time is only the name given to the three moments of change of qualities. The individuality of substance can be explained in the following manner. Substance exists whereas qualities subsist in substance. In other words, substance for its existence is not dependent on qualities, but qualities need substance for their subsistence. This is the contribution of Patanjali to the concept of substance. He agrees with Sānkhya that there is change in everything.

God

Accepting the reality of God is another salient feature of Yoga. Patańjali holds that stopping of the five functions of Reason is the prime objective of Yoga. It is a difficult task for the nature of Reason is such that it is always active. When all its functions are stopped it goes to sleep, which is also its function. In that case it must be allowed to function and that would be to meditate on God in order to attain salvation. God being omniscient there is no knowledge greater than his. God is not touched by the five impurities - ignorance, sense of ego, desire, hate, and fear of death. Also, he is not touched by the results of ethical actions and the potencies left by ethical actions (karmāśayas). God is Puruşa, but of a special kind (*puruşaviśeşa*). He is not bound by time and is a teacher of all gods. Meditation of God involves repeating his name and thinking of its meaning.

Through meditation the mind becomes totally inward and all obstacles to meditation, such as disease, lethargy, doubt, inattention, heaviness of body and mind attachment to objects, error, inexplicable failure to obtain a trance, and unsteadiness to the mind are overcome.

Patańjali does not offer any proof(s) for the existence of God unlike Western theologians. He only gives some descriptions about God and the advantages of meditating on him. But the commentators like Vijňānabhikşu forced some arguments into these descriptions of Patańjali. It is argued by the former that scriptures are absolutely authentic and they say about God's existence. Therefore, God exists. Another argument is that men possess different degrees of knowledge. There must be some upper and lower limit. The upper limit of knowledge is possessed by God and there is no knowledge greater than that.

Reason and Action

How do moral actions effect the change of our personality in terms of character? These changes would further affect the dynamic forces that are responsible for our future births. Yoga accepts the doctrine of karma and reincarnation. The moral actions leave their potencies (samskāras) in the impersonal Reason. These potencies later on become the modifications of the creative energy of Reason (buddhi, citta). Thus the Reason of every individual is modified in a different way according to the actions performed by the individual. The world comes out of such a modified Reason. In other words, Reason is the ultimate ontological principle for this school. Our bodies are also the evolutes of Reason. Hence they are not the agents of enjoyment, but only the instruments of Reason. The ultimate enjoyer is the "I" as the ego.



'These postures keep our body steady during meditation so that no discomfort may distract our mind from concentration'



'The ultimate aim of Yoga, like any other orthodox Indian philosophical system, is to attain liberation, which is known as samādhi'

Reason, according to Yoga, has two aspects. One aspect of it creates the world that is shared by all of us. The common world is the given world. The other aspect of Reason makes the world different to each individual in terms of its enjoyability. What produces pleasure in one individual may produce pain or agony in another. These differences are due to the actions performed by the individuals as moral agents. The potencies of moral actions accumulate together and constitute the reservoir of potencies. This reservoir of potencies becomes one of the afflictions (kleśas) of Reason, which creates a distorted world of colourful objects. This part of Reason is known as the Reason of action-potencies. These potencies do not manifest all at a time. Some of them are known in this present birth and some in future births. The results produced by these potencies manifest in the form of birth, duration of life and nature of enjoyments. These are the three fountains on which human life is built

up. It is left to the individual's freedom to perform new actions to cancel them or to improve upon them or not to perform any action. These potencies produce their effects insofar as the original ignorance between the Prakrti and Puruşa continues. Through the practice of Yoga discrimination dawns on the individual and ignorance is dispelled. But among those potencies that have started afresh in the present life alone bear the fruit and the others get dried up to become like dead seeds. Thus the doctrine of karma becomes teleological in Yoga. Without any reference to God, Yoga explains the cessation of these potencies through the practice of Yoga.

Techniques of Yoga

The ultimate aim of Yoga, like any other orthodox Indian philosophical system, is to attain liberation, which is known as *samādhi*. How does one attain it? Before we discuss the methods of attaining *samādhi*, it is necessary to explain what *samādhi* means. The English translations of the word 'samādhi' are highly misleading. The word is translated as trance, ecstasy, rapture, concentration and so on. None of these translations is accurate. To be in the state of trance means to be in the state of morbidity. Ecstasy means an exalted feeling, rapture is a kind of being carried away by means of attraction, and concentration is a mental feeling of fixing one's mind on an object one's choice. But samādhi cannot be equated with any one of these psychological states or processes. Etymologically the word means settling down of Reason on something. It implies peace and steadiness. In other words, it is the settling of Reason in itself.

The practice of Yoga is to stop or dam the functions of Reason. When these functions are stopped Reason becomes completely transparent as it purges out disturbances, agitations, and all other out-going activities. Even sleep, one of the functions of Reason, has to be stopped. The Reason stays in itself and is conscious. Its consciousness is the reflection of the Purusa. There is nothing objective to know. Such a state is technically called *samādhi*. To attain it is the ultimate goal of Yoga.

Modern psychologists are of the view that most of the conscious processes and their structures are hidden from us in the depth of the subconscious and the unconscious. Even the philosophers of Yoga such as Patańjali realised it long before Freud or Young. Most of these levels of consciousness are hidden from our awareness. For the sake of brevity and convenience let us reduce these conscious processes and their structures into attentive and non-attentive.or residual modes. The attentive mode represents all those conscious processes, structures and their contents illumined by witnessing consciousness or individual reason. We are fully aware of the conscious level of our own mental life as opposed to the subconscious or unconscious levels that contain non-attentive or residual mode of consciousness. This mode of consciousness traces the impressions or potencies buried in the totality of human experience. It is much deeper and pervasive than the attentive mode. This

non-attentive or residual consciousness accounts for most of our conditioning. These primary forces which reside in the hidden level of consciousness make up our personality, and are responsible for creating our personal identity. These powerful forces have to be brought back from darkness to self-awareness for otherwise they keep us in perennial bondage. Once they are brought back to the mode of attentive consciousness they are gradually eliminated or put to complete rest through yogic practices.

Although physical and mental exercises help us to some extent in attaining samādhi, the most important starting point is the purification of one's Reason. This Reason (I am) represents one's personal being. So long as it is driven by the residual conscious forces it cannot be pure and attain stability. It would be constantly fluctuating. Its steadiness and stability can be achieved through proper practice (abhyāsa) and detachment (vairāgya) from objects. The control over longing for something can be achieved by cultivating friendship with those who are happy without being envious, and by showing compassion towards those who are in sorrow, and by being pleasant without being jealous towards the others who are meritorious. Apart from that one must also practice self-control, non-injury, non-stealing, truthfulness, celibacy, and non-acceptance of gifts. Everyone can practise these virtues even if one does not care for liberation. It is also held that the sense of detachment would be complete in itself through *İśvara-prānidhāna* or constant contemplation of the Supreme Being, who is free from all works and afflictions and having the appellation Om or pranava. The repetition (smarana) of this monosyllable has its own miraculous effects. It is conducive to the knowledge of the supreme and also for the prevention of all impediments to yoga.

Coming to the steadiness of mind, only fortunate ones alone can attain it. But others who want to control their mind have to put in rigorous effort for that. One easy method is to meditate on God or one may practise measured inhaling and exhaling (*prāņāyāma*). When inhaling and exhaling are done

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in an irregular manner it results in mental agitation. First of all the mind has to be fixed on the measures of breath controlling its agitation is minimised. Another way is to remove all attachments from the mind in order to make it steady. One can also meditate on the consciousness present in dream or deep sleep. It is not the meditation on the objects of consciousness, but on that consciousness itself. It is the concentration on its very essence that represents the ontological or impersonal Reason (Mahat). Or one can fix one's mind on the objects of one's liking. These are all only the aids to attain the steadiness of mind. Once the effort of fixing the mind is complete, then it passes through five important stages (*bhūmis*). Here the mind refers to Reason which is variously known as citta, buddhi and Mahat, the nature of which changes at every instance. When we attempt to make Reason steady it becomes agitated and restless (ksipta). When a greater force is thrust on it to fix it, it becomes torpid $(m\bar{\nu}dha)$, a tendency to fall asleep. When we still make greater effort, it becomes distracted (viksipta). If we continue to put greater effort then it becomes concentrated (ekāgra) on the object of meditation. Finally, when we make a steady effort to make our mind stay on in that state it becomes restrained (niruddha) and all its functions stop. The last two stages are important for attaining samādhi.

Eight-Fold Path (Aşțānga-Yoga)

The practices prescribed so far are not all that easy to follow. Our mundane existence is the being of *Prakrti* which is under constant change. In the process of meditation we are supposed to go against our very mundane nature. Therefore, Patańjali suggests eight steps or limbs (*aṅgas*) to be practised step by step. But it should not be assumed that the earlier steps or methods are to be discarded in favour of the later ones. The steadiness of mind is absolutely necessary for practising *aṣṭānga-Yoga*. In a way both the earlier and later steps go well with each other. One cannot provide a solution to a mathematical problem without knowing the integers and their values. Similar is the case with these steps. The *astānga-Yoga*, which is also known as Raja-Yoga, includes self-control (*yama*), regulation of life by certain rules (*niyama*), bodily postures (*āśanas*), breath-control (*prānayāma*), withdrawal of senses from the external objects (*pratyāhāra*), fixing the mind on an object (*dhārana*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and *samādhi*. Let us examine them in detail.

Self-control (yama)

It is of five types. They are: non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, and non-acceptance of gifts. In other words, one should not accept anything that is an instrument of pleasure.

Rules for regulating life (niyama)

These rules include the purification of body, both externally and internally. This purification starts with cleaning of the body through washing, and by taking clean and pure food. Internally the mind has to be cleansed by practising friendship, kindness towards the others, cheerfulness, and indifference to the voices of others. Apart from these, contentment, penance by practising austerities, regular study of sacred books and meditation on God are recommended.

Bodily postures (āśanas)

Normally people think that practising Yoga means only to practise some prescribed *āśanas* by the guru. They are only part of the limbs of Yoga but do not represent Yoga in its entirety. The purpose of these bodily postures is to keep our body under our control. These postures keep our body steady during meditation so that no discomfort may distract our mind from concentration. Of course, it is not denied that some of the postures help the body to keep its agility. A healthy body is a prerequisite for meditative practices. There are many postures prescribed in the Raja-Yoga. These postures are chosen by the practitioners of Yoga to suit their requirement.

Breath-control (prānayāma)

Through this process we are supposed to regulate our inhaling and exhaling. This act is of several kinds. By practising breath-control one can achieve control over one's involuntary functions too. Irregular breathing leads to mental agitations and lack of concentration.



'The repetition (*smarana*) of this monosyllable has its own miraculous effects. It is conducive to the knowledge of the supreme and also for the prevention of all impediments to Yoga'

To arrest mental agitations breath-control is practised. It is also believed by Sānkhya-Yoga that the life-principle (prāņa) functions involuntarily in our bodies, and is the function of the inner sense. This life-principle operates through breathing. The human body operates through many involuntary functions such as muscular and nervous activities, the assimilation of food into the body. Through breath-control we can also regulate our involuntary activities too. Apart from inhaling and exhaling, Yoga also recognises the acts of retention of inhaled air in our lungs and emptying the lungs for sometime without immediately inhaling after exhaling. All these four activities have to be regulated in terms of proper time intervals. Through practice one can also stop the act of inhaling for a longer period without losing life. Thus one can gain control over the life-principle. But, the higher levels of breath control are not usually recommended for ordinary practitioners.

Sense-withdrawal (pratyāhāra)

This is another important and difficult task for a yoga practitioner. He/she has to withdraw his/her senses from external objects which cause desires in us. One has to turn one's senses inward through rigorous practice in order to make the senses unite with their sources. It is not destruction of the senses at all. When the senses are withdrawn the external objects to which senses are attracted are also withdrawn. The senses become one with Reason. In other words, the senses are completely conquered by the practitioner of Yoga.

Concentration (dhāraņa)

It is an important step towards meditation. Generally concentration makes us fix our inner sense on a desired object. It is the activity of centring our mind. The object on which the mind concentrates may be an external object, an idol, or an image of God, or any part of one's own body. Normally it is easy to concentrate on an external object or an image of God.

Meditation (dhyāna)

It is a steady and unbroken continuity of concentration. In this state of Reason the object on which the mind concentrates becomes continuous like a flow, like oil in which the drops cannot be distinguished from one another.

Samādhi

One does not find an English equivalent to this word. In the stage of meditation Reason can distinguish between the object and cognition and also knows itself as the knowing object. But in the stage of *samādhi*, Reason is completely absorbed in the object that the object alone stands. In this state there is no sense, no awareness, or sense of being aware of the object. The inner structure of the object reveals itself completely, whether it is a physical object or one's own mind with its layers of the Unconscious, or somebody else's mind.

As described above the last three limbs or states of Yoga or inner (*antarańga*) and the first five are external (*bahirańga*). Further *samādhi* is classified into two kinds. They are: *samprajńāta* and *asamprajńāta*. In the former the consciousness of the object of meditation persists, and in the latter it is transcended. In the state of *samprajńāta-samādhi* one who practises meditation and the object of meditation are fused together, yet the object of meditation remains. This state again is classified into *savitarka, savicāra, sānanda*, and sāsmita. In the savitarka state the mind concentrates on the gross object of meditation like the tip of one's nose, or the mid-point of the eyebrows or the image of God. In the savacāra state the mind concentrates on a subtler object of meditation like the tanmatras. In the sānanda state, the mind concentrates on a still subtler object of meditation that produces joy. In the state of sāsmita the mind concentrates on the ego substance with which the self is generally identified. Here the individuality persists and the individual will have conscious ecstasy. On the contrary, in the state of asamprajnata-samadhi the meditator and the object of meditation are completely fused together. No new mental modifications arise in this state. They are completely put down (*niruddha*), although their latent impressions may continue. This is the highest state of Yoga which is difficult to attain. Such an experience cannot be described. After attaining this state, the body breaks down and the person in question attains liberation.

Conclusion

The aim of a person who resorts to yogic practices is to attain liberation, is a state of freedom from the entanglement of Prakrti. One who gets entangled with the various forms of Prakrti identifies with its forms and with the functions of Reason (buddhi, Mahat), which is its first evolute. Thus one identifies oneself with Reason, ego, mind, senses and physical body. One's liberation lies in getting disentangled with the above mentioned forms of Prakrti. Yoga provides a way to get oneself disentangled from such a state to attain liberation.

Rajvi H Mehta

Yoga is an ancient Indian science which dates back thousands of years. The last century saw the reemergence of this science not only in India but all over the world. This discipline involves the mindful practice of postures [asanas] with breath awareness [pranayama] which lead to the involution of the senses [pratyahara] bringing the mind to concentrate on a point [dharana] which spreads into a state of total awareness [dhyana] ultimately leading to a state of bliss [Samadhi].

It is the body that is the instrument which unites the senses, mind, intelligence to prepare for the union of the individual soul with the Universal. The body can be moulded into hundreds of postures which in turn transform the physical, physiological, emotional



Guruji: B K S Iyengar



Alignment

mental and intellectual health of the practitioner. One of the greatest proponents of the ancient science of Yoga, in this era was Yogacharya BKS Iyengar from Pune, India, who taught Yoga for over 80 years.

On Dec 11, 2014, the 193-member U.N. General Assembly [UNGA] approved by consensus a resolution establishing June 21 as 'International Day of Yoga'. This suggestion of celebrating the International Day of Yoga came from our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi while addressing the UN General Assembly in September 2014, and subsequently a record 170 member states co-sponsored this resolution. This overwhelming response by the member states clearly indicates that these states have either experienced the benefits of the practice of Yoga or have at least heard about them. This is primarily due the immense contributions of some stalwarts in this field – one of the main ones being Yogacharya BKS Iyenar.



Entry about B K S Iyengar in the dictionary

Yogacharya BKS Iyengar has been considered as an international, cultural ambassador who has quietly spread the essence of universal understanding, friendship and goodwill through the subject of Yoga for over 80 years. The word 'Iyengar' has become so synonymous with Yoga that even the Oxford English Dictionary defines Iyengar as a form of Yoga.

Humble beginnings

Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar was born on December 14, 1918, in a small village of Bellur in the Kolar district in the then state of Mysore [currently Karnataka]. 1918 was the year of the world influenza epidemic and his mother suffered from influenza when she was pregnant. Both mother and child survived the infection but Sundararaja was born a sickly child. Right through his childhood he suffered from ill-health accompanied by bouts of malaria, typhoid and tuberculosis, and this too, at a time when antibiotics were not yet discovered! His consistent ill-health made him miss school which in turn made him a back-bencher despite a desire to study. While children of his age explored the world around them, he was often confined to bed not expected to live long! To add to his woes, his father died when he was only nine years old.

Initiation into Yoga

Yogacharya BKS Iyengar commenced his yogic journey as a frail teenager under the tutelage of his brotherin-law – Guru T Krishnamacharya – as a means to survive the consistent bouts of sickness. What started as a journey for personal health of the body has 80 years later resulted in providing health of the body,



peace of mind, equanimity of emotions, clarity of thought to millions of people with the *Time* magazine adjudging him as one of 100 most influential people in the world.

It is possibly destiny or divine intervention that introduced him to Yoga. Sri Krishnamacharya, a learned scholar and an authority on scriptures once suggested to Sundararaja that he spend some time with his sister in Mysore as he was to go on a tour. On his return, Krishnamacharya noticed the poor health of his brother-in-law and he advised him to stay back in Mysore to learn yogasanas to improve his health. The word 'health' struck a chord with Sundararaja. It was something he had never experienced and the possibility of being healthy was a great morale booster. Thus, Sri Krishnamacharya became his Guru who taught him a few yogic postures for his health condition. Sri Krishnamacharya did not teach him much at that time. Possibly, Sundararaja was too young. He was only 14 or possibly not too healthy

BKS Iyengar meets the Pope in the Vatican

or, maybe he did not see the potential or intellectual prowess in him. Guruji Iyengar later stated that his body was stiff and it was extremely difficult for him to do the Yoga postures that were shown to him by his brother-in-law. However, the word 'health' kindled the passion of Yoga in him and he continued practicing.

He lived with his Guru for about two years. His Guru was a very stern task master. As much as he respected his Guru, he feared him tremendously. Once, he was asked to give a demonstration at the Maharaja's palace and perform Hanumanasana. Sundararaja knew that he could not do this asana. His muscles were very stiff and he was in pain. He told his Guru that the shorts that he was wearing were very tight and therefore it was not possible for him to do the asana. His Guru would not take such an answer. He had a simple solution. He called for a pair of scissors and cut the sides of the shorts and Hanumanasana had to be done! Such strictness and sternness accompanied by a hot temper with a not very supportive body

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was not easy for a young teen but he had not many options.

He had appeared for the final school examination and failed in English. He could not continue his formal schooling because failure in the examination led to the cancellation of his 'freeship' and there was nobody who could pay for his education. Thus came the end to his schooling and the options of doing 'something' in life. He once stated that he was so frustrated that he even contemplated suicide!

Despite having failed in English in the matriculation examination under the British Raj, he went on to publish 30 books of which 26 were originally written in English! The clarity of thought with the practice of Yoga and his personal practical experiences following self-experimentation with asanas and pranayama (the two practical limbs of Yoga) made him write the masterpiece and his first best seller Light on Yoga in 1966, and Light on Pranayama in 1981. Light on Yoga was referred to as the Bible of Yoga by the BBC and it lived up to its name for forty-nine years. Light on Yoga still continues being reprinted year after year with the Indian edition undergoing the 60th impression while it has already been translated into 21 languages, including French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Persian, Korean, Japanese, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati amongst them, with the latest addition being Mandarin with over a million copies of this title being sold.

In his teens, uncertain about his future or what destiny had in store for him, he continued with his practice enticed by the thought and experience of health. He first taught at the age of 16 in the town of Dharwar. In those days, it was not appropriate for young men to teach only women but Sundararaja who was still boy, was acceptable as a teacher.

Pune – his Karma Bhumi

Dr Gokhale, a civil surgeon was impressed by these demonstrations and requested Sri Krishnamacharya to depute somebody to teach at the Deccan Gymkhana in Pune. It was Sundararaja who was deputed. He was not selected because he was a star pupil or the best teacher, but, because he spoke a 'little' English compared to his fellow practitioners who knew only Sanskrit and the local language Kannada and were not keen on leaving home for six months. Sundararaja had to take up this assignment. This excitement and enthusiasm did not last much as he soon faced reality. The students at the Gymkhana were strong and healthy young men. They were better educated and came from a higher economic strata. Sundararaja's personality then was not inspiring at all. He could not even communicate with them well as he did not know the local language Marathi and his English was not much to be spoken about! But, he could not let this opportunity go and within a few months – he used the 'tool' of Yoga to show these young men the things that his frail body could do which their apparently strong ones could not. And, thus he started gaining respect. But, the six months were over and the authorities closed the classes.

Personal Evolution in his Practice

These were some of the toughest days of his life despite which he decided to continue staying in Pune. He had no money, few students and often had to live only on tea and tap water. In those days, people did not pay much to Yoga teachers. He had a lot of 'free time' which he utilized in his own practice. These asanas had given him some freedom from ill-health and he was now curious to see what the practice could further lead to. He practised intensely and started learning the intricate connections between the different parts of the body and how they can be adjusted, readjusted in the different asanas. He started refining his own practice and observed the transformations that started taking place in himself. He thus became a student and remained a student of Yoga for his entire life. Although he had tremendous financial difficulties in the 1940s, his own personal practice and presentations improved. He accepted any opportunity that was given to him to give demonstrations. This sometimes gave him money, sometimes students, and if not anything, generated

interest in the subject amongst the observers. He became a performing artist par excellence. He would observe what appealed to the audience and gradually developed the art of presentation – the angle, the sequences and the grace and poise with which the asanas should be presented. He won over many hearts with his demonstrations and has individually given thousands of demonstrations in his life time.

Dr Gokhale, the civil surgeon also played a crucial role in the scientific presentation of Yoga. He was amazed by the demonstration of Sundararaja and scientifically explained what and how these Yoga postures worked. It is through these lecture-demonstrations that Guruji picked up a lot on the scientific approach to Yoga – which later became a hallmark of his 'system of Iyengar Yoga'.

He also started looking at the books on Yoga available at that time. He had been introduced to asanas by

his Guru but not to the philosophy or the yogic texts. When he looked at the books that were then available which dealt with the methods to do the asanas, he realized that the texts did not match the visuals. For example, the text stated the legs had to be kept straight but the visuals did not. What was the right way of doing the asana? He would then do the same asana keeping the legs straight as well as bent as in the visuals and studied the differences in the experiences which gave him clarity of mind. This brought in precision in his own practice as well as teaching. He kept refining and re-refining his own practice. He thus remained a student of Yoga for life.

He started looking at the yogic texts like, the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Patanjali's Yoga sutras as well as the Bhagvad Gita, not as a scholarly pursuit or to intellectually de-code what these ancient texts told but to check whether his experiences in his practice corroborated with the texts.



China 2011



Dhyana mountain top

For example, Patanjali states sthira sukham asanam. Sthira means stable; sukha means pleasure, joy, comfort and asana is a posture. This same sutra can be interpreted as being in any stable comfortable position or being comfortable and stable in ANY position. The way the sutra is interpreted makes a world of difference. Why should one only do asanas in which one is comfortable? Why should one not be comfortable in any asana? Thus he not only did the postures but learnt by self-experimentation on how to bring stability and equanimity in any asana. This clear understanding helped him in evolving precise methodology to perform the various asanas. This latter interpretation of sthira sukha asanam prepares an individual for all the challenges that life would thrust upon us.

He showed that by the practice of Yoga, you become better in whatever vocation or profession you have chosen or life has destined for us. Through Yoga a musician becomes a better musician, an artist a better artist, a businessman becomes a better businessman! That is why the violin maestro Yehudi Menuhin gifted him a watch on which was inscribed my best violin teacher. This is how Guruji Iyengar studied the sutras in a totally new light. His approach to philosophy was based on experience and not a scholarly intellectual pursuit. He taught what he experienced, expressed what he experienced and wrote what he experienced. Therefore, there was no duality about him. And, his teaching touched the hearts of his students starting with a few in Pune which over the decades grew into millions across the world.

Swami Shivananda who saw his demonstration in the 1940s was very impressed with him. He even offered to initiate him into Sanyasa. However, having seen the struggles of life, Sundararaja refused this offer from Swamiji although he accepted the title of Yogiraj that Swamiji gave him. Sundararaja wanted to take Yoga to the common man. He wanted people to realize how much Yoga could offer them in their day to day life. By renouncing the world, how would he know the trials and tribulations of a common householder and the role of Yoga in their life?

At the insistence of his Guru and his other family members, he married Ramamani who not only became a devout wife but an immense support for his Yoga practices. They had six children and Ramamani stoically managed the entire family with simplicity and ease despite limited resources. They lived in a two room house where one room served as the Yoga room where her husband then called as 'Mr. Iyengar' taught students or practised, while the other served as a kitchen, dining room, living room and study room for the children. Their eldest daughter Geeta recollects how her mother managed the household with only two utensils when she got married. The same utensil was used to cook dal, cleaned and then to make rice. But, she never complained but was rather doing her duties with a smile on her face so that her husband could continue with his work!

Introducing Yoga to the World

The word Yoga originates from the Sanskrit word 'yuj' which means union. Yogacharya BKS Iyengar has literally united the world by breaking across all the man-made barriers, be it geographical, geopolitical, language, religion, caste or creed as his style of teaching, popularly termed as 'Iyengar Yoga' by his students of Yoga, is taught in countries which drastically differed or still differ in ideologies from the 'capitalist' USA to the 'communist' China; (his seminal text Light on Yoga had been 'illegally' translated into Russian and was being circulated 'underground' even under the communist regime of USSR). His system is now being taught in the East European countries of Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia among others. Today, Iyengar Yoga is being taught and practised extensively in the middle-eastern countries of Israel, Iran, UAE, Jordan and Lebanon. Iyengar Yoga is now spreading among the South East Asian nations as well as South America too, and Iyengar Yoga is now being taught in 82 countries across continents. It is the



Dhanurasana

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universality of the subject of Yoga that brings people from such diverse cultures on the same platform!

The latest entrant is China where Yogacharya BKS lyengar personally conducted classes for 1300 participants in Guan Zhou in celebration of the 60 years of diplomatic relationship between India and China. One of the key organizers of this programme compared BKS lyengar's visit to that of Bodhisatva's visit 1000 years ago who totally changed the cultural make-up of China. Buddhism existed in China but Bodhisatva strongly established it in China and so too with Yoga. The *China Post* also released a series of six postage stamps in his honour.

This mass movement of Yoga was initiated in a very small way. Yogacharya Iyengar started as young demonstrator for his Guru and soon progressed into an instructor. The instructor evolved into a teacher, an Acharya, a Master and ultimately into a Guru. He started with teaching a few individuals on a personal basis. He then started a weekend public class in Mumbai, in 1954, and a chance meeting with violin maestro Lord Yehudi Menuhin made Menuhin accept him as his Guru. The violin maestro Yehudi Menuhin was invited by our then Prime Minister Nehru to perform in India to generate funds for the victims of floods and natural calamities. Menuhin had read about Yoga, in a magazine and was curious to know more about it. Pandit Nehru had organized for many Yoga teachers to meet Menuhin while he was in Delhi in 1954. One of Mr. Iyengar's students had also arranged an appointment with Mr Menuhin in Bombay. Menuhin, by that time had 'learnt' about Yoga and spared Mr Ivengar five minutes for an interview. This first meeting scheduled for five minutes turned into 45 minutes and a life-long friendship and studentship till Menuhin died in 1997!



Kapotasana



How did this five-minute meeting become a 43-year, student-teacher relationship?

Menuhin was extremely fatigued after his performances and Mr. Iyengar made him do Sanmukhi Mudra and Savasana which relaxed him to such an extent that he soon found his performance improved. It intrigued him and he invited Mr Iyengar to teach him and his family in Switzerland and London. It was an invitation that was not easy for Mr Iyengar to accept. He had a family in India. He was a staunch vegetarian and had not crossed Indian shores. After some convincing, he accepted Menuhin's invitation and first visited Gstaad in Switzerland. He taught Menuhin, his family members and his friends who were generally the who's who in Society.

Those were difficult times too. Guruji Iyengar came from a conservative background. The concept of vegetarian food was not well known in Europe and India, although an independent nation by then, was still considered as a backward colony! He often survived on bread and coffee. He was not accustomed

Mega class, Crystal Palace, London, 1993

to people smoking and consuming alcohol which was a part of social etiquette but 'unyogic'. He, however, decided not to get deterred from his path, decided to ignore and be indifferent to what was not conducive and not waver from him goal — which was to teach Yoga and he knew it was Yoga which would transform people.

After a few of these yearly trips, Guruji felt that it was not appropriate for him to teach only the elite in society who were the friends of Menuhin. He expressed a desire to teach the common public. The first public class taught by Guruji Iyengar outside of India was in London, in 1960-61, and was organized by the Asian Music Circle. There were only six students and that too, were managed with a lot of difficulty. One of the students was from Bombay and one of them was the organizer, who attended the class as there were not 'enough' students! The numbers gradually increased. Later, some came to Pune to study with Guruji. Some others who were not residents of London went back to their home town or countries and continued the



Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, Pune (RIMYI)

practised. Guruji, them guided then on how they could practise on their own; how one of them could lead the practice. Thus, the first few teachers were born. These six students were the first seeds of Yoga that have later grown into branches in all continents.

Then, in the late 60s, the Inner London Education Authority decided to offer Yoga in their adult education programmes. They wanted to include the teachers trained by Mr Iyengar as their approach was 'scientific'. But, how would one know whether the teacher is genuine or not? It was then that Guruji started certifying his teachers. A 10-tier certification programme, with a structured syllabus blending personal practice, the art of teaching and studying the scriptures, evolved over the years with a well defined system of training and assessment. Today, there are thousands of certified 'Iyengar Yoga' teachers spread over the world. Even the most basic certificate requires a minimum of three years of personal practice followed by training. In the 1960s and 70s, Yogacharya Iyengar was invited to many European countries where he won the hearts of people with his lecture – demonstrations and his teachings. The numbers here too started growing. The South African students were keen on having him in their country. However, because of the apartheid policies of South Africa, our Government did not permit him to visit South Africa. He insisted that musicians and artists were permitted but Yoga was then not considered as a form of performing art. Thus, all the students from South Africa organized for him to teach in Mauritius. He kept his word and ensured that the classes were mixed with people of all colours and races!

Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute

As the number of students wanting to study Yoga increased, Guruji Iyengar and his family bought a piece of land to build a hall for Yoga practices. The foundation stone for this hall was laid by Smt Ramamani who had an untimely death in 1973 two days later. Thus, the Institute was artistically built in her memory. Today, the Institute serves hundreds of local students and an equal number of foreigners. The demand to study there is so high that on an average a student has to book at least two years in advance. And, if there is an Iyengar Yoga teacher in their country then they are expected to study in their own country for at least eight years before applying.

lyengar Yoga becomes a Movement

In 1984, the first Iyengar Yoga Convention was held in San Francisco. By then, the teachings of BKS Iyengar had spread. His students or those who followed his method of teaching called themselves, 'Iyengar Yoga' practitioners. 'Iyengar' from being a part of his name, from being a noun had become an adjective. People respectfully started calling him Guruji. The practitioners of his method soon found that it was not only their body that was being healed or kept healthy but even their mind and behaviour was getting transformed. They started seeing life differently. Thus from being a Yoga teacher, he became a Guru – the one who removes darkness.

Although, his students differentiate his style of teaching and practice and call it Iyengar Yoga, he himself states that there is nothing like Iyengar Yoga. "Yoga is one, like God is one. It is just that people call Him by different names." "The human body and human sufferings remain the same across the world namely, ignorance, egotism, and fear of death of losing something or somebody. As these causes of unhappiness and miseries are universal, the solution in the form of Yoga is also universal and therefore applicable worldwide."

However, his teaching methodology was so unique that it could relate to one and all, irrespective of their intellectual, social, religious or cultural backgrounds.



Tai Chi master with Guruji

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Thus, the term 'Iyengar Yoga' was retained and in fact soon got modified into a noun where it is not uncommon for people to say that they do 'Iyengar' where Iyengar has become synonymous with Yoga. Despite his modesty in claiming that there is nothing like 'Iyengar Yoga', 'Iyengar' has become an international 'brand'.

It is important to emphasise here that Yogacharya BKS Iyengar was a traditionalist and has never ever advertised for his classes. It is only by word of mouth that the number of students has increased from tens to hundreds to millions. There are no franchises. Every teacher remains a student consistently studying and practising right through their lives.

What is it that Yogacharya BKS Iyengar has contributed to this ancient science of Yoga that has made it such an international brand? It is his focus on quality and precision in his practice and teaching.

Yogacharya Iyengar had spent just two years with his Guru when he was in his early teens. He soon realized that alignment of the body leads to equanimity in emotions, a balanced mind and a discriminative intelligence. He therefore worked relentlessly to develop the methodology to attain perfect alignment in the body in the various asanas. And, then he strove towards sustaining quality, irrespective of age. This approach corroborates with the sutras (aphorisms) of ancient Indian texts viz. the Yoga sutra-s of Patanjali and the Bhagavad Gita.

It was his consistency in practice, teaching and training of his teachers that has led to the sustained development of Iyengar Yoga. Very high technical, moral and ethical standards have been laid down and practised by Iyengar Yoga teachers worldwide.

Hatha Yoga Pradipika written in the 11th century states that the young, the old, the diseased and even the crippled can do Yoga and attain benefits from its practice. Yogacharya Iyengar brought this aphorism to life by his invention of Yoga props or supports and utilized household items such as bolsters, blankets, ropes, belts, chairs, planks etc. These props help one



Tribute to Guruji

to perform the Yoga postures (asanas) with ease irrespective of age, flexibility or health status. It is the use of these props that has made Yoga a modality of overcoming pain due to diseases or disorders.

Initially, he would support his students with his own body to attain the requisite alignment and precision in the practice of asanas. However, with the growing number of students, it became difficult to practically support each individual and that led him to use the household items and design the props. He was highly ridiculed for his use of props. One of the Yoga magazines labeled him as a 'furniture yogi'. Such criticism and humiliation did not deter him as he knew he was on the right path. In fact, the now indispensable rubber Yoga mat was also his 'discovery.' His students in Europe found the wooden floors slippery especially for the standing asanas. A cotton blanket made it worse. He happened to observe a rubber mat which was used under the carpets in Germany. And, this mat



The world of Iyengar Yoga

was cut into right sizes and became the Yoga mat! When he was asked later as to why he did not patent his props by which he would have earned millions or possibly billions, he said that Yoga was God's gift and he was happy that people could practice! The therapeutic efficacy of lyengar Yoga has been proved using modern scientific methodologies by independent investigators in renowned universities across the world.

There had been a common misconception amongst people that the eight aspects of ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali are like eight steps with asana being lower and the highest being Dhyana and Samadhi. It led people to demean asanas as if they were meant for the 'lowly' physical body while meditation was for the spiritual body. This often led the teaching of asana to young individuals while the older individuals did meditation! The fact is that the older people need to practice asanas and pranayama much more than their younger counterparts. The body fails as we age and that distracts us from pursuing the Truth and our quest for the Divine. Therefore the practice of asanas and pranayama at this stage helps us. In Gurujj's Iyengar own words, "cure what need not be



Yoganusasanam Dec: 2014

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endured and endure what cannot be cured". How can one separate the body from the mind and the self? Yoga by definition is union so how can we segregate the components of our own beings. All are closely integrated. How many individuals who are in pain and suffering can be calm and composed despite the suffering in the body? Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Raman Maharishi were rare souls. Even if we have a stomach ache, can our mind function clearly? There is a corresponding common (mis] belief that sitting quietly with closed eyes is meditation. How much does the mind wander when you ask it be quiet? Guruji Iyengar removed this fallacy. He showed the importance of the practice of asanas and pranayama and how this can lead to a state of dharana, dhyana and Samadhi. After all, the body is the gift of the Lord and it is our dharma to keep it clean and healthy.

Yogacharya BKS Iyengar has provided the happiness of health to millions across the world. For him, health was not just physical well-being but mental, emotional, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual well-being. It is this experience of wellbeing that has cultivated to universal friendship and goodwill and leaving behind the issues which may create barriers.

He lived by his words and practised Yoga till the very end on August 20, 2014. He was firmly established in Yoga – a yogastha. His impact on the world can be gauged by the tributes flowing in from all corners of the world making headlines on the mainstream news forums from the *Washington Post, New York Times, Guardian* and all our national dailies and news channels. The news that Guruji Yogacharya B KS lyengar had left his mortal body swiftly spread across the globe, be it through the breaking and flashing news of the public media or the trends of the social media or personal messages or through Guruji's official website. The 'news' led to a silent outpour of



Teaching Yoga to Yehudi Menuhin

grief as Guruji has touched the lives of millions across the world. From China to Chile, from the Americas to Africa to Russia; Iran or Israel – wherever we were – we were united in our grief.

Each of us felt as if we had lost a part of ourselves. But, as the days go by, we all realize that he has left a part of himself in all of us. The magnitude of work that he has done in one lifetime may make it difficult for the generations to come to fathom that this is indeed the work of one individual. As the intellectuals and scholars in this era debate whether it is the 'same' Pantajali who has written on Yoga, Ayurveda and grammar – the generations may wonder whether it is the 'same' Iyengar responsible for this massive body of work! No wonder that one of the local media called him Patanjali Part II!

> Extension means creation of space Space leads to freedom Freedom brings precision Precision leads to perfection Perfection is truth Truth is God. – **B.K.S lyengar**
Indian Horizons network with inputs from Shanta Gupta

The Bihar School of Yoga, one of the prominent forms of this practice in recent times, is located in Munger, in eastern Bihar, and despite its unusual location has made waves internationally. Contrary to common belief, the city of Munger in Bihar, has always had a socio-religio-mythological link. In prehistoric times, it found a mention in both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as it formed part of the 'midland' or madhyadesha territory of the early Aryan settlers. In the Ramayana, it is credited with being a spot where Lord Rama had rested during his exile. In the Mahabharata the city is identified with the name 'Mod giri', a monarchical state of eastern India. The 'sabha parva' excerpt of the Mahabharat it is mentioned that when the Pandava Bhima conquered eastern India, on defeating Karna, the king of Anga, fought a battle at

this spot. A less gruesome association and more in keeping with its current relationship is that the town was named after the monk Maudgalya, who was a devotee and follower of Gautama Buddha. According to a more historical association, Munger is believed to have been founded by the great Mauryan ruler Chandragupta, who christened the city Guptagars and this name still lives on inscribed on a rock in the north-western corner of the city's most visible landmark, the Monghyr Fort.

While these are derivations about the city obtained from ancient lore and traditional memory, the first written record of the town finds a mention in the writings of the Chinese monk and traveler, Huien Tsang who had arrived here in the 7th century AD. Bridging the huge historical gap in its records, one



In meditation

comes into the 18th century when the town fell into the grip of the Khilji rulers in 1225 A D. There followed further turmoil as the territory and town was wrested from the Khilji dynasty and came under the Nawab of Bengal, a fact that is found in the Lakhisarai inscriptions. A succession of princes then took control of the town till the time of Makhdun Alam, who entrusted the town to his trusted general Kutub Khan who then made the town and fort the headquarters of the rulers of Gaur. When the city passed from Afghan hands into the purview of Mughal rule during Akbar's time, it became the headquarters of the expeditions against rebel rulers. The place found mention in the famed annals of Akbar's rule the Ain-i-Akbari whence it is mentioned that the sarkar Munger with its 31 palaces paid a revenue of 10, 96, 25, 981 dams when 40 dams was equivalent to a single Akbari rupiya.

Under British rule, too, Munger did not sink into oblivion, but rose to prominence as the capital of the Nawab of Bengal's kingdom under its ruler Mir Kasim. The new ruler set up a manufacturing unit for making fire-arms at Munger and when the ruler had to surrender his kingdom to the British after the defeat following the Battle of Buxar, Munger became a part of the British zamindari and was subsequently ruled by them till the independence of India in 1947.

Away from its military significance Munger had attracted other luminaries as well. By and large a place that nurtures creative activities, it is recalled by the residents today, that the Nobel Laureate Tagore often made the Pahari Kutir at Munger his creative space and some of the verses of 'Gitanjali' are believed to have been composed here.

The centerpiece of Munger's present-day fame is not what is recorded in the annals of history, although it too is centred around the historic Munger Fort, which had earlier been under the control of the Tughlaq ruler Mohammad Bin Tughlaq of the Slave Dynasty. The fort was also famed for its natural landmarks such as the two main hills known as the Karma Chaura and Rectangular Mound. But most recently, the Fort has



Bihar School of Yoga & Bihar Yoga Bharati Ashram & University, Munger

acquired a new accoutrement as the headquarters of one of the most prominent schools of Yoga, the Bihar School of Yoga, with its headquarters located within the precincts of this historic fort.

While the ancient history of the town lies in crumbling ruins or broken down mounds of bricks and mortar grassed over and forgotten, the campus of the Bihar School of Yoga wears a different look. It boasts none of the trappings of medieval turrets and spires, palaces and moats. Instead it is a squat, cement building, with airy rooms and modest proportions. Instead of the clash of swords and the manufacture of firearms, it now boasts a pristine expanse of gardens and landscaped settings, and emerald green paddy fields beyond. Herein one can spot saffron garbed sanyasis and others, who have arrived here to experience the techniques of the integral aspects of Yoga, taught here as a synthesis of all approaches of the system, and aimed to bring about the practitioners' personal development. Aptly called 'Ganga Darshan' this landmark spot within the fort premises which is home to the Bihar School of Yoga, is girdled by the ancient



river, which even today, adds to the serenity quotient of the surroundings.

Today the school has acquired international recognition, but its humble beginnings can be traced to 1963, when it was first founded by Swami Satyanand who had obtained an enlightened understanding of the secrets of spiritual life and became an authority on Yoga, tantra, Vedanta, Samkhya and kundalini Yoga under his guru Sri Swami Sivananda. While setting out as a holy wanderer, he had taken to heart the final diktat of his guru: ' Spread Yoga from door to door and from shore to shore.' This simple message came to fruition before him in 1962, and led him to found the International Yoga Fellowship Movement. His aim, unlike other teachers and guides then prevalent in the art and science of Yoga, was to create and foster a global fraternity that would follow Yoga. Significantly this profound enlightenment came to Swamiji's vision when he was in Munger and thus led to the founding of the school in this chosen spot.

Initially it was eight of the surrounding villages around Munger that sent its children to the ashram. These

Bihar School of Yoga

children came to the ashram for basic instruction in the 3 Rs and arrived in tattered clothes hungry and even malnourished. Thus Swamiji's initial task was not an impractical plunging into Yoga asanas but a steady start by taking matters in hand, 'The children coming to the ashram were fed, clothed, given books, given opportunities to become literate, providing books for them and then taught the rudimentary practices of meditation.'

More than that, Yoga had moved out of the caves of hermits and ascetics into the mainstream of society. Whether in hospitals, jails, schools, colleges, business houses, the sporting and fashion arenas, the army or navy, Yoga was in demand. Scientific research into yogic techniques was being conducted all over the world. Professionals such as lawyers, engineers, doctors, business magnates and professors were incorporating Yoga into their lives.

Today, the ashram draws participants and enthusiasts ranging from undergraduates from the IITs to lifelong practitioners like Shanta Gupta in Delhi who continues her association with the school as a representative



Entrance of the Bihar School of Yoga

propounder of its Yoga teachings to a host of people who come to her doors in the capital. In her well appointed home, Gupta today, demonstrates and teaches the yogic asanas as an all round introduction, taking into consideration the overall effects of Yoga on the mind and body. 'Many of my students come to me to learn the art of yogic asanas so as to impart this knowledge to others and thus they too become nodal centres for the spread of Yoga among common people in the city. According to her, it is the Yoga Nidra principle of her yogic teaching that she impresses on her learners. The basis of this methodology she claims is that it is a way of self-realisation of the subject.

For such hands-on learning needs Shanta Gupta has set aside a special wing in the house exclusively created for teaching and practising the tenets of her system. The asanas are conducted in a room whose décor is primarily drawn from the saffron hues of ascetic significance. A large framed picture of the present Swamiji heading the ashram occupies centre place in the space while the calm setting is offset by shaded sunlight coming through the open landing leading up to the terrace where asanas can be performed in the salubrious outdoors. Back in the room, the floor area is carpeted specifically with a thick pile 'for the headstand ' asanas, she explains. The yogic colours one is told is for 'calming the mind' and thereby putting the practitioner into the correct frame of thought for imbibing the maximum benefit from this experience. The terraced lawn on the roof top is also a space with a special treatment so that asanas done there avail of the same benefits as one would get, if the asanas were done in a park or open ground.

Judging by the looks of this well ordered space, and the deep seated interest Gupta exudes in Yoga, one realizes how universal is the pull of Yoga in our times. Her profile helps explain the significant role that the Bihar School has played in the present status of this great principle of living has had on 21st century living. Instead of a practice that was once surrounded by mystique and attributed to ascetics and hermits who were doing asanas in caves and jungles, Yoga was brought into the mainstream of society and this school had played a significant role in this transformation. Today, it is practised universally and can be witnessed in schools, jails, corporate houses, fashion centres and even the armed forces of the country, making one realize how a single ascetic and his enlightenment has given this ancient system a modern push.

Thus Shanta Gupta's interest in Yoga echoes the tale of several others and needs elaboration. Born into a highly cultured and educated family of Hyderabad, her parents instilled into the children the values of education and good upbringing right from the start. 'My father himself was a Cambridge Tripos and made sure that all his children, boys and girls alike, were given a liberal education resulting in a very 'broadminded' atmosphere at home.' Her own inclination being towards the sciences, led to Gupta taking her Master's degree in Bio Chemistry after graduating from Johns Hopkins University in America. Thereafter her married life had been spent abroad for twelve years when the couple had moved back to India.

A chance meeting with the fraternity of the ashram was to play a decisive role in her being drawn into the Yoga discipline. Being invitees to the ashram she had noticed the striking manner in which the ashram's head had conducted his chief guest, the Honourable Governor of the state, around the premises. 'His speech thereafter, had magnetized me and I couldn't get my mind away from all this. I realized that I had struck upon a path that could make a human out of anybody.' Like several practitioners, she had pursued her call to the very end and began a regular routine of taking a train ride to Patna. Alighting from the



Paduka darshan diksha initiation satsang



Swami Niranjan, Bihar School of Yoga

station, Gupta would hire a taxi and set off on a fourhour drive to Munger and to the ashram, for the Yoga sabbatical.

As the pattern of yogic drill followed by the school are condusive for both the cleric and the householder, Gupta found herself falling in step with the routine without much difficulty. Instead of just empty asanas and acquiring proficiency in them, she found that the set-up helped her develop a routine for the maintenance of health not by prescribing a specific diet or medication, but through the awakening of the spiritual awareness lying dormant within her, strengthening her mentally and physically. All the more, the Yoga she was now experiencing was intended to develop the human potential within the individual and there was no universal yardstick of measurement applied to check proficiency that an individual practitioner was expected to match up to. Of course, the techniques taught at this place were not alien but were built upon the ancient basis of Yoga but had been tailored and oriented keeping in mind the demands of present day life that would appeal to a right thinking individual of the present time. It did not thrust knowledge at the person; rather it had a careful, cut-out systematic pattern built around the individual's experience. It was Yoga that had been based on a scientific approach and thus kept the doors of ongoing research wide open. Dogma and blind following were totally absent in such conditions.

On more pragmatic terns, what Gupta was to realize was that the core principles of this kind of Yoga practice was its basis in the practices of Yogic nidra. Not to be confused with falling asleep, Gupta quips, this kind of 'nidra' or sleep is a 'psychic sleep' which the instructor informs participants is done to make one aware of the whole body. 'We begin to see our bodies through the mental eye, the visual at the end of the symbol 'Om' 'she reiterates. Hence its greatest asset one learns is that Yoga nidra helps to calm the



'The early morning routine awakens one to a fresh start eager for action'

mind at first and then trains one to concentrate on the physical body. This progressive method of guided relaxation, she explains, at first puts the doer in a receptive frame of mind and comes to understand the principle of mind over matter being played out in concrete terms through these asanas. It is a sense of relaxation more than just a practice of relaxation that results from it and according to her, is known to transform criminal minds into inaction, while reinforcing disturbed minds into a calmer state.

The other end of the scale is also played out at the school, one learns through the routine of 'Karma Yoga' which begins at 4 o' clock each day, and encompasses cleaning up duties. Though no one is urged to perform these duties, the deep satisfaction that emits from a work well done as also the pleasure of self-service, goads all the inmates to participate in such duties unquestionably and willingly. The tasks may include toilet cleaning as also wielding the broom and the brush and the community outreach programme of helping the village folk around, but there exists a keen spirit of bon homie because the ashram members too, are part of this 'asana' and everybody pitches in without a murmur. 'It is so fulfilling,' says Gupta,' that the atmosphere seems charged and you give your best acquired discipline to the allocated task.'

Being on the premises has other brownie points on offer. Girdled by the serene waters of a placid flowing Ganga, one's mind is far removed from the bustling activities of a normal Indian city. The early morning routine awakens one to a fresh start eager for action. The evening closure, as one can hear the chanting of mantras and the gentle round of temple routine all around, has a mesmeric effect on the senses, making one rest one's head on the pillow satisfied with a day well spent.

For Shanta the attraction of ashram life steps beyond these parameters. The hours spent in the presence of the sanyasis as they teach and recite Sanskrit shlokas have a special draw for her. These are well organized gatherings of smaller groups maximizing to around 80 people at a time. Yoga asanas are taught under individual supervision where some of the asanas she states are significant. The Pawan mukta asana in the manner it is taught, removes tension from the body. Then there are asanas for increasing and maintaining flexibility of the arms wrists and the outer limbs in general. 'I find the bhujang asanas specially beneficial for the back and its counter part the shashankh asana gives a new release of energy to the whole body,' she adds. Thus even when she is miles away in the capital, the practice routine continues unabated.

Moving beyond the range of asana life, the place also is a pioneer of sorts. Ranging from the technique of Yoga adopted here has not meant a branching away to create a fresh stream delinked from existing practices. Rather, it is a technique of integration wherein all that is essential to personal development and derived from the various practices of Yoga have been synthesised in the practices of this school. Alongside, the school has a vigorous methodology of training to suit various classes of participants. For the women and children, the school has made pioneering strides by initiating women and foreigners into its sanyasi training scheme. This has resulted in its widespread popularity beyond Indian shores, enriching the intake of the ashram as also providing a source of introducing this ancient wisdom to eager learners elsewhere.

Other crucial outreach practices has been the holding of conventions, tours, seminars periodically and



Another view of the School layout

thereby spreading the knowledge of its existence beyond the confines of its ashram limits. Its trained personnel have also undertaken lecture tours and conducted seminars on Yoga throughout the country and even abroad. Its foreign arm has thus acquired vigorous support and attracted followers from across the globe. In this way, even those who cannot make it physically to the Munger ashram have had the privilege of access to its richness through the programme of outreach. For its fraternity to keep in touch with the institution, there is a designated blueprint of academic facilities. The Yoga Library is primed for research into the subject and attracts scholars and interested intellectuals year-round. To help followers residing in other cities the centre's own publications keep abreast of happenings and future plans that is manned by a professional group from among the order so that the communication chain of school related news and views can be had for the asking, by one and all.

Briana Blasko

'In ancient times Rishis brought students out of individualism, irrespective of caste and creed to realise the existent unity behind diversity. Yoga was the means to achieve that objective. Modern education teaches you how to earn the means of happiness but not how to obtain happiness itself. The ancient education system was for everlasting peace of mind which consequently manifested infinite peace. Here Yoga is a way of life and it is the very foundation of our project. The word 'educe' means to bring out and that is what we aim to do here where teaching is a mission rather than a profession. We share free nursery and KG education to 45 children.

Their day starts with meditation and asanas before the rise of the sun and finishes with meditation in the evening. Some of the children have special needs and all come several years behind their age group in literacy skills but we have found that through the eight limbs of Yoga they have all experienced dramatic changes in their life.'



The boys are standing in preparation for Surya Namaskara. This is the beginning of their Ashtanga Yoga practice



Chakrasana or walking in a backbend/wheel



Dhanurasana or bow pose



Variation on Chakrasana or backbend/wheel with one leg raised



Baddha Padmasana or lotus posture



Utthita Padmasana or raised lotus posture



Supta Kurmasana – tortois pose



Pranayama – Breathing Exercises. The 3 Locks being practised are: Mula bandh (lowest point of spine near the anus), Uddiyana bandh (stomach) + Jalandhar bandh (chin rests on throat)



Mayurasana – peacock pose

Concept of Yoga in Buddhism

C Upender Rao

Dhammapda says, Hitvā mānusakam yogam Dibbam yogam upaccagā Sabba-Yoga-visamyuttam Tamaham brūmi brāhmaṇam (Dhammapada verse-417)

(Having abandoned human bondage and gone beyond celestial bondage, released from any bondage, such a one I call a Brāhmin).

Yogic methods and practices were given importance in Buddhism. Buddha's guidance to perform the four Srtiprastahānas and four brahma-vihāras (maitrī, karuņā, muditā, upekṣhā) and many other teachings of Buddha are leading towards gaining Yogic powers. The Aṣṭānga-Yoga taught by sage Patañjali and noble Eight Fold Path (Ārya- Aṣṭānga-Mārga) propounded by Lord Buddha bear similarity.



Bhumisparsa Mudra

In the early discourses of Buddhism the term 'Yoga' was used in two main categories, where Yoga either assumes a positive sense as an application for something which has been undertaken and a in a negative sense as a form of bondage that needs to be overcome. These two senses express a regular pattern in the teachings of early Buddhism, where the distinction between what is wholesome and what is unwholesome makes a vital difference.

In fact the term YOGA is formed by root *yuj* which stands for 'yoking' or 'being yoked' and thus can mean 'applications', in the sense of making an endeavour, or else 'bondage'. Thus to 'yoke' oneself to wholesome qualities and actions is an essential means of progressing on the path and therefore something entirely commendable. But to be 'yoked' to something unwholesome is to fall prey to the influence of attachment and craving and hence should at all costs be avoided. In india Yoga had been an admirable form of application through the ages. In the Vedic period the term Yoga was used in the sense of to yoke, or join or tie together. This meaning over a of period began to imply to an act of fixing the mind upon an object. In a passage in the Kaṭha-Upanisad, Yoga stands for control of the senses and the calming of the mind.

Those who study Yoga may find much similarity between the Vedic and Buddhist perspectives of Yoga. We can see a strong yogic influence on Buddhism. This is quite natural as Buddha was born in India as an Aryan and as a follower of a Vedic tradition and it was after Buddha had passed away that Buddhism arose as a religion. We can find the accounts of a Shiva-Buddha teaching that existed in Indonesia in medieval times. All Hindus even today accept Buddha as a great teacher, even if they do not follow Buddhism as a religion. Yoga in fact is neither Vedic nor Buddhist but an independent, very



Buddha Mudra



Dharmachakra Mudra

ancient Indian thought and tradition which gained universal acceptability.

The Yoga system was established by Patañjali in the Yoga Sutras, but sage Patañjali has not been regarded as the founder of the Yoga tradition and only the compiler of yogic teachings that existed long before him. Patañjali, reflecting the older tradition, taught an eightfold (aṣtānṇga) system of Yoga emphasizing an integral spiritual development including ethical disciplines (Yama and Niyama), postures (Āsana), breathing exercises (Prāņāyāma), control of the senses (Pratyāhāra), concentration (Dhāraņā), meditation (Dhyāna) and absorption (Samādhi).

Yogic tradition could be traced back to the oldest Indian text Rig Veda, which speaks about yoking our mind and insight to the Sun of Truth and Vaśiṣṭha and Yājñavalkya were the early teachers of Yoga. In the Bhagavad Gītā it is mentioned that Lord Kṛṣṇa

himself was a great Yogin and the Bhagavad Gītā sung by him is a Yoga-śastra.

Yoga is a Sanskrit term that refers to both the union of the self with the Absolute and the vast array of techniques for achieving it. Hence it embraces all the great Indian-born spiritual systems, including Buddha-dharma. Buddhist masters cautioned that Haṭha-Yoga's influence on physical practices is a dangerous fascination with the body, which like all things, is impermanent and destined to decay. According to Buddhism if one wants to achive Yoga, one has to overcome the taṇhā (craving).

Yogācāra

In Mahāyāna Buddhism the second great school of Buddhism after Śūnya-vāda, was the 'Yogācāra' and this serves as an evidence of the fact that Yoga was given importance in Buddhism.

'Yogācāra' is a Sanskrit term. Ācāra means the practice and the Yogācāra means "Practice of Yoga" or "those whose practice is Yoga", refers to the practical yogic side of the second great school of Mahāyāna. It is also known as Vijñāna-vāda, "Consciousness School" or Citta-mātra-vāda, (cittamatra, alternatively vijñapti-mātra), "Mind Only School". The Yogācāra school which arose in the early centuries of the common era, does not acknowledge the existence of any reality independent of consciousness. It does however posit a "supreme consciousness which according to texts that explicitly or implicitly equate ālaya-vijñāna with tathāgatagarbha, serves as a kind of store-consciousness from which derived both the person in a conventional sense and the world's phantasmagorical multifariousness."

Through Yoga and finally transforming the storeconsciousness (ālaya-parāvrti) the truth seeker (yogin) can become enlightened or awake to the level of absolute truth at which the illusory distinction between subject and object is eliminated and final emancipation is realized. There are sufficient places



Dhyana Mudra



Karuna Mudra

in the Pali-Nikāyas or Āgamas of early Buddhist literature that are indicative of later Yogacara thought. These teachings of Buddha could have inspired the Vijñānavādins to develop their philosophy.

Apart from significant nikāya and āgama texts dealing with Śūnyatā and madhyamā-pratipad, the Prajñāpāramitā discourse is the root of the Mādhyamaka School, founded by Nāgārjuna (2ndA.C.). Likewise, the Saṁdhi-nirmocana-sūtra and the Lankāvatārasūtra can be considered the basic discourses of the Yogācāra School, preceding by at least one centrury, Asaṅga, the founder of Vijñānavāda (4th or 5th-centrury A.C.), and Vasubandhu, the second great systematiser of the Mind Only School and as tradition has it, the younger brother of Asaṅga.

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A verse in the Theragāthā brings out the positive connotations of the term Yoga in early Buddhism, recommending that one should apply oneself to tranquillity and insight at the proper time (Theragāthā verse 584). Yoga will lead to wisdom, 'yogā ve jāyati bhūri' whereas lack of application will result in loss of wisdom, ayogā bhūri saṅkhayo (Dhammapada verse-282). Hence a fact that leads to progress is, when a monk applies himself much, Yogabhūto, and even to recollect yogis of former time will be conducive to progress towards liberation (Theragāthā verse-947).

The term Yoga occurs not only in relation to meditating monks, but also in relation to monks who apply themselves predominantly to the study of the teachings (dhammayoga). In fact, Yoga can even stand representative for a type of teaching or practice. This type of usage occurs in descriptions of how someone, due to following a different type of teaching, 'aññatra-yoga' will be unable to understand the deeper aspects of the Dhamma (Majjhima Nikaya vol. I, 487). Another usage in which the term has positive connotations is yūjayoga, the application of a noble disipline to charity.

A repeated expression in the early discourses is yogo *karanīyo*, which conveys that something should be done or undertaken. Thus a monk living in the forest should apply himself to the teaching and the discipline, as well as to higher stages of meditation (Majjhima Nikaya vol. I, 472).

Other occasions for such application are the development of insight into each of the links of dependent origination or into the four noble truths, '*idam dukkhan'ti yogo karanīyo*. When one lacks tranquillity of the mind, ceto-samatha, or deeper insight and higher wisdom, *adhipaññā-dhamma-vipassanā*, one should apply oneself to developing the lacking quality. Once one possesses both, it is time to apply oneself to the teaching of the final goal, *āsavānaṃ khayāya yogo karan* yo.

An expression with closely similar implication is yogam āpajjati, which often stands for application

to living in seclusion. The same expression acquires a negative sense when it stands for a monk who gets himself involved in the affairs of the laity or in monastic affairs that should better be left to the elders in the community. A maxim that involves both positive and negative gradations of the term Yoga can be found in the Dhammapada, according to which those who apply themselves to what one should not apply oneself to, and who do not apply themselves to what one should apply oneself to, thereby lose their own welfare,

Yoga as a Reprehensible Form of Bondage

As it was already explained the term Yoga was used in a negative sense too, in Buddhism. Buddhism speaks about avoiding the four types of bondages (Yogas) which we can find in Pali discourses. These comprise

the bondage of sensuality, kāmayoga the bondage of existence, bhavayoga the bondage of views, Dițțhiyoga the bondage of ignorance, avijjā-Yoga (Dīgha Nikāya III, 230).

These are forms of bondage since they bind beings to evil and unwholesome things and thereby result in future 'dukkha'. Hence these four types of Yoga lead downwards, *hāna-bhāgīya* (Dīgha Nikāya III, 276). The state of bondage in these four cases comes about owing to not realizing the impermanent nature and disadvantage of sensual pleasures, of forms of existence, of views and of the six types of contact, whereby one falls prey to craving and attachment in regard to them. The remedy is to become aware of the arising and passing away of sensual pleasures as well as of their advantage and disadvantage. The eightfold noble path is the way that leads beyond the four types of Yoga. By teaching this path, Buddha leads many beings to freedom from Yoga.

A discourse in the *litivuttaka* (Pali text) explains that the bondage of sensuality is left behind with non-



Varada Mudra



Vajrapradama Mudra

returning; while the bondage of existence will be overcome with full awakening. Regarding the other two Yogas not explicitly taken up in this discourse, the bondage of views would already be left behind with stream-entry, whereas to overcome the bondage of ignorance there must also take place full awakening, whereby all bondages will be left behind, *sabbayogehi vippamutta* (Samyutta Nikāya I, 2013).

In addition to these four types of Yoga, another perspective on Yoga as a reprehensible form of bondage is based on a two-fold distinction between bondage to the human world, *mānusaka Yoga*, and bondage to celestial worlds, *dibba Yoga*. Both will be left behind with non-return. Yet another type of Yoga is the bondage of craving, *taņhā* Yoga. This comprises craving for sensuality, for existence and for nonexistence and will be overcome with full awakening.

The term 'Yogakkhema' was used in both Vedic and Buddhist traditions. Yogakkhema means liberation

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from all bondages, more literally obtainment and safety. "In the Rgveda 'yogakṣema' means the security or safe possession of what has been acquired the safe keeping of property, welfare, prosperity substance and livelihood". In early Buddhist literature the idea of welfare was then applied to Nibbāna. An example of this usage is a Dhammapada verse, which identifies Nibbāna as the supreme freedom from bondage, *anuttara yogakkhema* (Dhammapada verse-23), which at the same time is supreme peace, parama sānti. The same implications also underlies the formulation of the Buddha's pre-awakening quest for liberation, which was his noble quest for *anuttara yogakkhema*.

A hindrance to the attainment of such supreme freedom from bondage is laziness and recklessness as well as infatuation with the members of the other sex. While Māra is *ayoga-khema-kara*, one who wishes beings to remain in bondage, the Buddha is one who desires their liberation, *yoga-khema-kama*, an aspiration he had already, in previous lives. By supporting each other, the Buddha's lay disciples and his monastic disciples will progress towards this goal.

Supreme freedom from bondage could come about through any of the five spheres of liberation. That is, a breakthrough to *anuttara yogakkhema* can happen when one listens to the teachings; or teaches them to others; or rehearses them; or reflects on them; or during meditation practice.

The four Satipatthānas (Smrti-prasthānas) in particular are what leads a disciple to higher training to anuttara yogakkhema out of which the practice of mindfulness of breathing is especially singled out for the same purpose. A whole range of meditation practices that can lead to great freedom from bondage, mahatā yogakkhemā, can be found in the Bhojjanga Samyutta (Samyutta Nikāya V, 131). Hence a teaching on detachment in regard to the objects of the senses is a yoga-kkhema-pariyaya an exposition on freedom from bondage.



Vitarka Mudra



the mindfulness techniques laid out in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* and *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha's discourses on breath awareness and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness which offer some of his most explicit instructions on meditational practice.

Another book in this area is The Tibetan Book of Yoga Ancient Buddhist Teachings on the Philosophy and Practice of Yoga, Michael Roach from New York, Doubleday, 2004. The Concept of Yoga in the Nikāyas by Kumoi is another important book. Dr. Radhakrishnan discussed the subject in his book The Principal Upanisads published from New York. Werner's book Yoga and Indian Philosophy published from Delhi also is an important one. Norman's work of Collected Papers "Theravada Buddhism and Hinduism" Brahmanical published from Oxford is

Uttarabodhi Mudra

He who has reached the final goal is ultimately free from bondage is called in Pali '*accanta-yogakkhemin*'. They will dwell full of deep regard towards the Tathāgata and his teachings, being aware of the benefit they have attained through '*anuttara yogakkhema*'.

Several modern books explore the synthesis of Buddhism and Yoga. The most philosophically comprehensive is Frank Jude Boccio's '*Mindfulness Yoga: The Awakened Union of Breath, Body and Mind*'. Boccio — a Yoga teacher, interfaith minister and student of Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh solidly locates Hatha Yoga practice in Buddhist history another important book in this field.

We can find several *Yoga-mudras* in Buddhist scriptures which are the gestures of yogic powers which Lord Buddha and other Bodhisattvas have used for the wellbeing of the people.

Gesture of Protection

(abhaya-mudra) This mudra is characteristic of Buddha Shakyamuni and Dhyani Buddha Amoghasiddhi.

Gesture of Argument

(vitarka-mudra) Also called 'The Gesture of Debate' This is the mystic gesture of Taras and Bodhisattvas.

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Gesture of Witness

(bhumisparsha-mudra) This gesture is also called 'touching the earth' mudra or 'calling the earth to witness' mudra. The right arm hangs down over the right knee. The hand with the palm turned inward and all the fingers extended downward has the fingers touching the lotus throne. The left hand lies on the lap with palm upward. This gesture symbolizes Shakyamunis victory over Mara. The Dhyani Buddha Akshobhya shows the same Mudra.

Gesture of the Ascetic

(shramana-mudrâ) The hand points downwards away from the body as a symbol of the renunciation of secular pleasures.

Gesture of Understanding

(cit-mudra) The thumb and index finger grasp a fine object as if grasping a grain of truth. This is a symbol for spiritual understanding.

Gesture of Knowledge

(Jnana-mudra) The tips of the index finger and the thumb join, forming a circle. The other fingers are extended straight. This mudra is held against the chest, with the palm towards the chest.

Gesture of Discord

(kartar-mudra) This mudra is held with the hands at shoulder level. The thumb and the ring finger (third finger) touch the tips forming a circle. The index and middle finger extend straight, resembling rabbits' ears, or the horns of a deer.

Gesture of Teaching

(dharma-cakra-pravartana-mudra) In this gesture both hands are held against the chest, the left facing inward, covering the right, facing outward. The index finger and the thumb of each hand make a circle. It is characteristic of Dhyani Buddha Vairocana.

Gesture of Knowledge Fist

(vajramudra-mudra) The right hand makes a fist, thumb enclosed, index finger extended upward, palm out; the left hand forms a fist, palm inward and encloses the extended index finger. You will find this gesture very often mirror-inverted.

Warding Off Evil Gesture

(Bhûtadâmara-mudra) Also called 'Trailokyavijaya' or awe-inspiring mudra. It shows the hands crossed at the wrist, the right hand over the left hand, palms turned outwards. Usually the two middle fingers are slightly bent and the hands may both hold additional symbols like Vajras and Ghanta. This gesture is frequently seen in the representations of Vajrapani and Bhutadamaravajrapani.

Gesture of Praying

(namaskara-mudra) Also called the simple namaste (prayer) position.

Gesture of Perfection

(uttarabodhi-mudra) This gesture is also called 'bestperfection' mudra. In this position all fingers are intertwined. The index fingers extend straight up and are together. Frequently, Shakyamuni Buddha as liberator of the Nagas, presents this mudra.

Yoga – Learning from Experience – a Pragmatist's Story

Sushanta Banerjee

Yoga is nothing but practical psychology: Sri Aurbindo

I am a hard core pragmatist. I have to be. As a management consultant doing business with formal organisations and teaching in leading Schools I have to be and am glad to be a pragmatist. I studied engineering and management and have been in consulting practice since 1980 – one of the early birds in India. I have been consulted by organisations in Singapore, Dubai and Nigeria – apart from the few hundreds in India. I have also been a coach

to senior officials of the World Bank in India. My practice is geared to assist in resolving conflicts using experiential learning. So what am I doing, talking about Yoga in this issue? Yoga facilitated my work and helped change my life. So here goes.

I studied engineering and management at elite institutions in India and morphed into an applied behavioural scientist. This was a relatively



Five day intensive - with Ivy League Professors USA, 1999



Deep dialogue — dissolving cultural barriers — Nigeria, 2012

"unconventional" route. It was based on my dismay towards the end of my studies that all my formal education had left me with very little understanding of the human processes that we live with. The "hard" knowledge of "things" and "strategies" was devoid of wisdom and insights into the real world of living. It became an imperative to understand and learn from my experience.

At the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (1970 to 72) I discovered that while I had "hard" knowledge about how "things" are made and how they work – I knew precious little about us human beings – and that I knew perhaps even less about myself and my own inner world (other than my own biodata and the confusing private world of my emotions). This made me vulnerable to becoming an instrument, not setting my own goals. I took a job with the Indian Space Research Organisation, then taught at the Administrative Staff College of India and then in 1980 began my own independent practice as a Management Consultant. Education for a change was the nature of my engagement with the professional world – leading to teaching and consulting.

Two decades passed – the "unconventional" beginning transformed gently into the usual – I was a practising management consultant – helping a range of organisations in the corporate sector, educational institutions and others including the catholic church for a while. In 1996, at age 48, I was passing through the classical struggles of peaking middle age. All the important relationships seemed in dire need of renewal and recalibration; questions and doubts about the validity and value of my own stands in life began to become acute – a high stress period was in full swing – even as professional success kept coming in.

My life had taken its own trajectory until I was 48 years old that is when I came upon Yoga. This proved to be a major turning point – and here is the story and the underlying reflections. As a professional of four decades plus standing, I believe that the most valuable quality of being engaged, is the ability, openness and willingness to learn. Learning of knowledge as well as learning which bits of my knowledge are not valid any more.

Enter, now at age 48, the world of Yoga. It dawned upon me very clearly that I needed to develop the ability to quieten the multitude of choices and voices that my own mind was generating an every issue. My bag of rational thinking, my knowledge were serving others but were found wanting when it came to helping myself. Meanderings into the poetry of TS Eliot, flipping through Yoganand's Autobiography and avid reading of Aldous Huxley seemed all to point to the need for inner stillness. I began to learn Yoga by joining a class in a nearby public park. The initial experience itself was dramatic. Within a fortnight my body was feeling and behaving differently. The various exercises and postures were doable – no need to become a contortionist – this was good for ordinary folk like me, one of the persistent instructions during the sessions was "please observe your own thinking your own experience as you practise".

The postures were decidedly manageable, the instructor did not preach anything and the rewards

immediate and palpable. I began to look forward to the Yoga session every alternate morning. Physically
I began to lose weight my cholesterol came down, patience went up and sleep became deeper and more refreshing. This was a completely new experience as my earlier efforts with fairly vigorous morning jogs and walks only led me to feel more hungry and end up gaining weight – here Yoga was doing the reverse.

As the practice continued I found the need to periodically upgrade the engagement. I came across books and magazines on the subject where serious articles with high levels of internal consistency and intellectual quality - were very encouraging. Yoga was not only some mountain reach's secret - it was a public discourse - in India as well as abroad. It was energy, in fact a pleasure to use and - most wonderfully began to help clarify thinking itself. Quite obviously the mind is heavily influenced by the body - which is heavily affected by the choices I made what I ate and drank - how much, how I treated my body - and so on. I could clearly see how my actions were influencing my body - and how the state of my body was influencing my thinking, emotions and action patterns. I found ways in which it was possible to consciously alter my own patterns - in other words begin to communicate with what normally is thought of as a part of the unconscious self.

The Value of Learning – Learning as a Value

Knowledge and learning – two words that are critical and accompany us from birth to death. In the popular mind these are caught with the idea that they can be "handed down". In other words knowledge and learning happen by listening and absorbing or reading and absorbing. This idea is valid for concrete information based knowledge that can be passed on from an authorised source to a desiring learner. The business of life however is a much larger canvas. It calls for knowledge that is to be applied for material transaction. These material transactions are however contained or enfolded and embodied in a universe of learning and knowledge that is lived, experienced and is called "wisdom" and "culture". The "hard" type of



Presenting the 'way forward'- Nigeria Corporate Leaders, 2012

knowledge provide us with the instruments of action. The tasks however are chosen by that part of the mind which mainly is under the sway of the "soft" knowledge emotions, ideals and so on. To use a certain body of knowledge for war or for peace, for conquest or for integration, for exploration or exploitation. The goals are set by the "soft" body, the achieving is attempted using the "hard" body of knowledge.

The "soft" kind of learning is developed by us through our real life experience. Broadly therefore we can look at two types of learning – formal "hard" learning (classically the 3 R's and much more) and, insights, perspectives, philosophy and wisdom that in fact shape and govern our lives, our conduct, our perspectives and indeed the very way we perceive ourselves and the world. All this is what is studied and practised in experiential learning. As an example experiential learning can help find answers to questions such as why am I the kind of person that I am? Why has my life gone the way it has? And so on. The "soft" learning is particularly potent in resolving conflicts, between groups, or individuals, and of course, within individuals. It is the only way to arrive at new visions, perspectives and beginnings.

No Religiosity

I was very relieved to find that Yoga had nothing to do with religion whatsoever. In fact I came across ardent



Self-reflections sharing — Personal growth — Sumedhas India, 2015

practitioners from all religious origins, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs etc.

As I got interested and delved further into it -1 came to recognise that Yoga is an epistemology - it helps to learn - from one's own experience - treating that as the acid test of truth. In some sense Yoga stands completely apart from religion. It could perhaps be called the original science technology and practice for expanding individual and collective intelligence.

I use the principles of Yoga heavily in my work. Being an epistemology, Yoga lends itself to application in a variety of domains – most dominantly for me – in the domain of understanding, unravelling and grappling with the latent the unmanifest that has always been the ground for human conflict and grief. Yoga is not a practice of standing on one's head or retiring to the mountains – it is a living guide for a better life.

On deeper study Yoga reveals itself as a repository of brilliant intellectual material. I will give only one brief example here. Yoga postulates that not only are we actors living out our lives – but within us is also a witness who watches, reflects and can enrich our perspective. This is called the Drashta – Literally the "one who sees". Progressive engagement with Yoga helps enhance this capacity – the cornerstone of wisdom.

Practical Stuff

Yoga science is replete with practical guidelines. These guidelines are not based on any religious or parochial beliefs. For instance – a first principle put forward is the position that man is a living moving element in a universe of living moving phenomena. As such a key goal of all processes of living and growing is to be in synchrony. So the first steps Yoga proposes are 'Yama' and 'Niyama'. Yama is a resolve that fosters and cultivates restraint while niyama fosters and cultivates discipline. All mental and intellectual endeavors gain from these, in fact these two qualities are the basic minimum requirements in the practice of healthy ethical living.

Yoga is probably the only body of knowledge that harnesses knowledge of breathing. We all know that our breathing speeds up and slows down – as a collateral of our emotions. It is possible, according to Yoga, to use this for our benefit. A sector of Yogic practice is to pay attention to our breathing habits and thus alter our emotional state of being by choice. Practised over a period of time – this art "Pranayama" brings in significant positive changes to our inner world increasing the good health of the mind and the body. Yoga is a paradigm that is distinct from the Cartesian frame and looks at man in the context of existence, not man – out to conquer, at war with nature. It presents a holistic (mind body cosmos) frame. To one who is looking for better health – it shows the way to that, to the one looking for freedom from stress Yoga opens new worlds of inner strength; to anyone desiring to go further it opens new doors of perception.

I believe Yoga is one of the finest and most brilliant bodies of knowledge that has come from India but is a universal gift to mankind. It is a pathway to higher levels of humanness whatever be the starting point.

Back to Experiential Learning

We now return back to the two kinds of knowledge referred to earlier – soft and hard. Our lives and the collective context is the product of the soft



knowledge we carry within. Our beliefs, emotions, world view and aspirations come from this body of knowing. Positive changes in any of these generates experiences of relief, freedom and in small or large measures – an experience of awakening. Getting to know how my computer works, "hard" knowledge, can increase my skills and indeed my abilities – in other words an aid to my instrumentality. Awakening on the other hand, expands my intelligence in a way that instrumental knowledge cannot.

Human beings are gifted with several qualities unique to the specie. One, is our spontaneous proneness to dream and envision a better future – and indeed work towards it. The second accompanying gift is our ability to reflect on ourselves – individually and collectively. These two add up into a potent force – the ability to make changes to ourselves and our lives by choice. This is a major ingredient of humanness and creativity. Experiential learning is aimed at enhancing these qualities in us.

With a group of corporate leaders - Nigeria Multinational 2012

Yoga is a body of insights and wisdom - it is in many ways a brilliant embodiment of experiential learning. It cannot be "taught" - certainly not by straight forward lectures. Like painting or music, like philosophy or psychotherapy - learning Yoga and learning from Yoga requires application. Once learnt it is not possible to "forget" it either. It brings about deep change from within. Several institutions have engaged with researching this, the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger and the Krishnamachary Yoga Mandiram, Chennai, are prominent examples. They have conclusively demonstrated the benefits of Yoga practice on all age groups as well as its immense utility in healing physical ailments - from spinal misalignments to lifestyle disorders. The following is increasing across the world. The book "Autobiography of a Yogi", has been translated into 22 languages and gives a graphic simple story - like account of Paramahansa Yogananda's life, in the first half of the last century. It is at the forefront of a worldwide movement growing by the day.



Soul searching Dialogue - Nigeria, 2013

In my own work with professionals working in organizations, the principles of Yoga have been signally effective in helping bring about changes in personal conduct – thus improving not only behaviour at the work place but, perhaps more importantly in the domain of family relationships. Leadership qualities and processes improve by leaps and bounds. And,

always these are changes brought about by voluntary choice collective and individual – not coercion. Students report life changing experiences when Yoga based learning processes are deployed in workshops for life review and personal growth.

Yoga offers a key hope to the world.

A Study of Yoga

Das Lal

The word 'Yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Yuja Samadhao' denoting the meaning of samadhi, or super consciousness. The second root is 'Yujir Yoga' which means to add. Thus the word Yoga is used in the sense of samadhi as well as to add.

The Emergence of Yoga is a spiritual science which has existed in the world since time immemorial. According to the Bhagwad Gita Lord Krishna relates to Arjuna that this immortal Yoga was in the beginning of the universe imparted by Him to Lord Visvasan the sun god who later on, gave it Manu who again gave it to his disciple Ishvaku. In fact, this divine wisdom is not like the worldly teaching of the subject. This divine wisdom is transmitted by the enlightened Guru to the deserving disciple. In the Upanishad it is mentioned that Lord Shiva imparted this divine Yoga to the Creator, Lord Brahma and many other rishis. In the Vedas it is said that Lord Hiranyagarva is the first guide of Yoga. Some thinkers are of the view that Lord Kapil is the second name for Hiranyagarva.

Thus it is evident that this sublime knowledge came down to earth from Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva. Though it is apparent that this divine knowledge descended on earth from celestial sources, due to the



Tortoise posture. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)



The crescent moon. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)

negligence of the preceding generations, it ceased to be known for a long period. In the modern age it was great, enlightened yogis like Mahavatar Babaji, and a host of others, who appeared on earth and preached this divine Yoga among deserving aspirants.

At this stage we may well ask the question: What is the goal of Yoga? In the simplest explanation we may say that Yoga provides manifold benefits to mankind. It is the shortest way to self-realisation which enables a man to be free from the bondage of life and death. In the Vedas, the Upanishads and other spiritual scriptures the glory and importance of Yoga is described in a highly glowing manner. In fact, Yoga is the second name of spirituality.

The main goal of Yoga is to remove 'avidya' or ignorance prevailing in the mind of man. In an aphorism Lord Patanjali defined avidya as follows: Thus this ignorance is divided into four categories. The first type of avidya is to accept transitory things as permanent. Everything in this visible is transitory; hence destroyable. Yet, due to ignorance, man takes it to be permanent. All our mortal forms, our bodies, likely to be destroyed, but as avidya pervades on the mind, man ignores the truth and thinks it to be eternal. This is the first type of ignorance.

The second type of ignorance is to know impure things as pure. The human body is a heap of impurities. All the time these impurities flow from our sense organs. Thus the body is a vessel of impurities. It excretes cough, sweat, and other impure elements. As long as a man is living, he loves this body and remains bodycentred. But as soon as the spirit leaves the body, the same body is regarded as a phantom. The near and dear ones are even afraid of coming near it. It becomes an untouchable. In this state of affairs, unintelligent humans, consider the body to be pure. Only the wise are not cowered by this illusion and hate the body due to its natural or biological impurities.

The third type of ignorance is that men are always suffering from the sorrow of birth, death, old age and disease. During birth the mother suffers birth pangs but instantly forgets it. Similarly, at the time of death, according to saintly souls, man feels acute pain as if thousands of scorpions are biting simultaneously. Throughout his life man is surrounded by sorrows. In spite of suffering pain, man still embraces sorrow. Old age and disease are other crosses that man has to bear. With advancing age a man becomes feeble and unable to work, walk and talk. His body starts to decay. But on the other hand, Man wants to live on, for thousands of years but is forced to die.

The fourth type of ignorance is to think of the mortal as immortal. This makes our vision clouded and we fail to realize that the gross body is not the soul. This ignorance is deeply rooted in the causal body. Removing this ignorance is the goal of Yoga. Lord Patanjali gave an aphorism thus: These sorrows are of five kinds and among them, avidya is the first. Then comes asmita, the reflective theory of intellect and spirit. The unity of intellect and spirit is asmita. In this theory the subtlest form of nature — buddhi – is reflected before the soul. The intellect is attributed with the natural power of suffering and pleasure and this thought reflects in the soul. The soul in turn, reflects its 'chetna' or awareness to the intellect. This asmita is a double reflective theory. The intellect throws its reflection on the soul and the soul throws its lustrous rays on the intellect. In Yoga it is called 'Jadh chetan' the knot of nature and the soul.

The Aspect or Nature of Yoga

Though Yoga has been defined in many ways yet the form of Yoga is one; just as a man can be addressed in many names but his appearance is one. In spite of its many definitions Yoga implies only one form and that is believed to be an immortal one. In the Bhagwad Gita in the first couplet of the fourth chapter, Lord Krishna says 'Oh Arjuna this immortal Yoga is imparted by me to Vivasvan, the sun god, in the beginning of the universes.' Again in the second couplet of the ninth chapter of the Gita, Lord Krishna says that this imperishable Yoga is easy to practise if it is taught by an enlightened guru. The knowledge of Yoga is the king of all sciences. It is worthy of being kept a secret it is the holiest of the holy and sublime as well as practicable. Thus Yoga is the highest



Plough posture. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)



Crow posture. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)

knowledge: the vidya which is immortal just as the soul is immortal. Hence, to realize it, the means should also be immortal.

The third sorrow is raag or attachment. Man had previously felt pleasure and has always wanted to keep his happiness existing forever. But nature is ever changing and a human being is floating between sorrow and pleasure. Raag has deep roots in the consciousness and man aspires to it. 'Dwesh' is a sorrow and men hate one another because of a past hurt. This feeling of hatred is deeply rooted in the mind and occasionally creates pain. The fifth one is 'abhinivesh' which means the fear of death and every creature in this world is afraid of death as he aspires to be alive all the time.

The definition of Yoga

Yoga has been defined in many ways. Lord Patanjali in his philosophy defines it as checking of the stream of consciousness. At one stage this stream flows continuously. It is called 'sapragyaat samadhi' and at this stage the yogi realizes the higher and subtle elements. As a result of his concentration he gets many supernatural powers. Sublime and wise thoughts occur in his mind. The more concentrated the yogi is the more true are his her experiences. When all the streams of consciousness are checked then the yogi realizes his true self. This stage is called 'Nirveej Samadhi' where the actions and its seeds have been completely burnt out and the yogi is free from bondage and gets salvation. In the Bhagwad Gita in the second chapter, Lord Krishna while explaining the condition of a yogi says that he who is established in Buddhi Yoga is beyond the actions of virtue and vice and advises Arjuna to adopt Yoga.

At this same chapter the Lord defines Yoga as yoga 'Karamsu Kaushalam' and this to my understanding is the true definition of Yoga. To act with full awareness is Yoga.



Half-wheel posture. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)



Cobra posture. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)

It means that the yogi should act in such a way that its fruits should not bind him and the doer will not be compelled to yield its fruits. At another place the Lord defines Yoga as 'Samasta Yoga Ucchchate'. To keep one's mind balanced in every way is Yoga. It means he who wants to be a yogi should not loose his equilibrium of mind. He should keep his mind devoid of expectations, either good or bad.

Similarly in the 6th chapter in a couplet the Lord further urges Arjuna to adopt and practise Yoga. In this stage the aspirant becomes detached from the material world and he becomes situated in trance-samadhi, realizing the super soul through the transcendental mind and intelligence. This stage of steadiness in yogic wisdom would destroy the suffering and sorrow of human life. But this yogic practice should be done with great awareness and patience. As long as the material body exists, the yogi has to work in the way of ordinary people but he must be soul-centred.

The Theme of Yogic philosophy

Yoga accepts the three elements of Iswar (God), soul, and nature. Lord Patanjali defined Iswar as God, who never falls into ignorance. Hence he performs no acts and he is not liable to yield the fruits of action. He remains ever free of ignorance and actions. He is the guide of all personalities, manifesting in the beginning of creation. He is the all-powerful and supreme being in the world. He is named as 'Pranav'. He creates the universe with the help of Para-Prakriti. He is omnipresent and whosoever worships him is helped by him with his will power. Surrendering to the Supreme Being is one of the best methods of attaining samadhi. Thus a yogi can attain samadhi by surrendering himself to God, keeping extreme faith in Him.

The second element is Soul. This is as constant a factor as God because he is part of the Supreme Soul. So it is immortal and thus remains unchanged. It is called
'drashta' in yoga philosophy. It is the witness of all the actions of the human being. Due to the reflective theory the attributes of the intellect are imposed on the soul. That is why the soul is said to be bounded. The soul is the subject and the intellect is the object. A human being is the doer of all the actions and is compelled to yield the fruits of his actions. The knowledge of the soul is said to be the real knowledge as is declared in the Bhagwad Gita in the 13th chapter, by Lord Krishna. To know completely the distinctive feature of individual nature, and soul is said to be the real knowledge. Though according to the Upanishad the super soul is the master of all souls, the atman is devoid of beginning or end. Where the soul is bonded with the intellect it is regarded as bound but as soon as it is enlightened and devoid of imposed impurity it is pure and unbounded. Through nirveej samadhi the soul is disconnected with the attributes of the intellect. Now the reflection of the intellect does not affect the soul. It is again established in its real form.

To clarify this point further, in the Upanishad there is a description of two birds residing in the body. One is the Jivatma and the other is Paramatma. The Jivatma enjoys the fruits and thus has to yield its fruits, while the Paramatma never enjoys the fruits but is the witness of the actions of the Jivatma. Similarly, the soul is immortal but it changes the body according to the desires of man. Hence without going into a long discussion on the subject, according to Yoga, once the soul is purified the yogi attains 'kaivalya' the complete form of salvation. This is the sutra of Lord Patanjali and it is the complete liberation and actually it is also the final goal of Yoga.

The third factor is nature or Prakriti. Nature covers a wide range in Yoga. From the earthly body to intellect, everything is part of nature. This is the individual nature bestowed on human beings, of earth, water, fire. In the Sankhya Yoga it covers the elements of earth, water, fire and ether. These originate from smell, taste, form, touch and sound. Including the mind there are seven organs and including the mind there are eleven organs.



Cobra-variation-2. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)

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Apart from this is the intellect, ahankar and lastly Para-prakriti, the unmanifestable. The purpose of nature is to give pleasure and enjoyment to creatures and lastly by providing them salvation. When the intellect is extremely purified it reveals to the being the pure soul. This wisdom leads a yogi to liberation. In a worldly way the word 'nature' is used in the sense of habit or character also. One's individual nature is transitory while the manifest nature is permanent,

The Glory of Yoga

Both the Upanishad and the Vedas sing the glory of Yoga since ancient times. The ancient yogis concentrated their minds and realized the truth in their inner selves. There is a scientific method of uplifting the soul from the bondage of ignorance and this process is described as 'Yoga in samadhi'. In the Scriptures it is stated that an aspirant who is highly well versed, be he a man of renunciation or a great scholar of dharma, and one who has the greatest control over his senses, even he cannot get salvation without Yoga. A yogi realizes God in samadhi. In the last couplet of the 8th chapter of the Bhagwad Gita Lord Krishna states that only a yogi attains the eternal abode. This same theme is elaborated in the last couplet of the Gita when the Lord declares that a yogi is superior to an ascetic, greater than the wise and greater than the fruitive worker. 'Therefore O Arjuna you become a yogi and the highest yogi is he who remains united with me and who with utmost faith praises my divine glories all the time.' Thus it can be said that neither scholarship nor sacrifices, great penances or charity of the highest degree, can make an aspirant reach the highest goal which is the supreme soul, God.

Kinds of Yoga Systems

In yogic scriptures, for attaining the perfection of Yoga many ways have been described. In short, Yoga is the object and the systems of Yoga are helping factors towards it. The major forms of Yoga are classified as Bhakti Yoga, Laya Yoga, Hatha Yoga and Raj Yoga. In Bhakti Yoga the aspirant surrenders himself completely to the Supreme Being, God. All his actions are dedicated to him. He always chants the name of God or his deity. In the Patanjali Yoga system the revered maharishi has laid down the principle of Iswar pranidhan or surrender to God. This too, is a way of self-realisation. The devotee seeks full refuge at the lotus feet of his deity.



Half crescent moon. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)



Bow posture. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)

In this system however, the aspirant should not change his deity. Once he has chosen his deity then it should be adored with full reverence and faith. If the aspirant changes his deity he is not likely to get success in his sadhana. Concentration on the form of his deity for a long time leads to success. When an aspirant attains full concentration at least for two hours at a stretch, then that is called Laya Yoga. In this process the aspirant chants the holy name of his deity for a long time. While chanting the mantra the form of the deity should be meditated upon

Jyan Yoga is also a method of obtaining Raj Yoga. A jyan yogi indulges in studies of the scriptures. He becomes a scholar and is well versed in it. Thus on the basis of his scholarship he tries to gain selfrealisation. It is through this means that he adores the Supreme Being.

In Hatha Yoga, the practitioner follows the science of pranayam. He learns the technique of inhaling

and exhaling. In this way he is able to control his breathing. Controlling the prana or breath is a vital force, because when the prana is controlled the mind is automatically controlled. This is the famous principle of Hatha Yoga. The breath passing through the right nostril is called 'ha' and the one from the left is called 'tha'. Thus the combined passage of breath through both the nostrils is referred to as Hatha Yoga. It is imperative that this process should be learnt from an experienced guru or it is likely to cause harm. If done carefully, it is believed to cure diseases also. Also in Hatha Yoga the practitioner should observe complete celibacy.

Raj Yoga by its very name makes clear that it is the king of Yoga systems. This is a royal way to Yoga. It is also referred to as Dhyan Yoga or Samadhi Yoga. The purpose of Hatha Yoga is primarily to achieve perfection in Raja Yoga. Patanjali Yoga is also defined as Rajyoga-Samadhi Yoga and is regarded as the true method of self-realisation. In the chapters of the



Half cobra. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)

Patanjali Yoga the sage has described the tenets of Raja Yoga.

Yoga and the Bhagwad Gita

As the Bhagwad Gita mainly deals with the principles of Yoga, it is sometimes referred to as Yoga Shastra. At the end of every chapter, it is addressed as Yoga shastra or book of Yoga. According to the Gita every soul is a part of the Supreme Being and every soul is eternal and without beginning or end. Yoga is a process of enhancing the consciousness, so the more a yogi enters into sadhana the more he attains the higher stages of Yoga. According to the last couplet of the second chapter the Lord says: 'Thus achieving the Brahmi stage the yogi never falls into an illusion and remains in this state till the last moments of his life, when the yogi reaches the state of Brahma Nirvana or kaivalya.'

Similarly in the last chapter it states, 'A yogi remaining in a secluded place taking very little food, controlling his tongue, body and mind, practising regularly Dhyana Yoga observing non-attachment to every man and thing, seated in peace and bliss deserves to be one with God.' It will not be an exaggeration to say that Yoga is the theme of the Bhagwad Gita. In the Bhagwad Purana also, one can find a detailed explanation of Yoga in the third skanda wherein Lord Kapil advises the tenets of Yoga to his mother Devhuty. He unfolds the secrets of Yoga, practising Dhyana Yoga and its meritorious results. This thought is similar to the one in the Gita of the sixth chapter where the Lord advises Arjuna to know the science of Yoga as it destroys the chains of sufferings and that it should be practised for a longer period patiently.

In fact, Yoga is a state in which the yogi keeps his mind stable in all conditions, favourable or otherwise. A seer whose mind is devoid of attachment, fearfulness and anger is called 'stith' or of stable mind fixed on an object under all circumstances. This is the real stage of a self-realised yogi. In this state he is pure of mind and therefore his mind is completely stable.

Thus we see that in the Gita, Yoga is described as the royal path to God realization. The yogi knows about God in the real sense, through the divine eye. At many places Lord Krishna has expressed the importance of this third eye, the 'Jyan Chaksu' to realize God. With this bestowal of the divine eye, Arjuna had the power to see the universal form of Lord Krishna.

Yoga and the Evolutionary Theory

According to the Darwinian principle species developed consciousness and gradually came to the form of man. Similarly in Yoga, according to their state of consciousness human beings can be classified. In the state of undeveloped consciousness, a man is akin to an animal. He has very little thinking power and his mind is enveloped with tamas or ignorance or darkness. Such a man is completely lethargic, full of laziness and indulges in a great deal of sleep. He also has a devilish attitude.

The second level is slightly developed. In this stage a man is more conscious than in the previous one. The man in this stage is full of attachments and jealousy. He is quarrelsome, selfish and concentrates only on himself.

The third status of the mind is reached where men in this stage believe in God and perform virtuous deeds. Yet sometimes, they indulge in misdeeds. The consciousness is affected by the material world. Such a person wants to develop his range of knowledge, believes in charity and is curious to know about God and the universe. In short, he is virtuous, but is yet ignorant of the path of Yoga and hence far away from spirituality and self-realisation.

The fourth stage is a concentrated stage wherein the aspirant finds the right path to divinity. He comes in contact with a perfect Yoga Guru. He is initiated into Yoga and practises Dhyan Yoga daily. The more his mind is concentrated, the more stability he gains.

In this stage, the yogi attains the stage of super consciousness. The hidden or the occult powers of the mind come into his vision of experience. In this stage of super consciousness the yogi becomes a rishi. In the state of samadhi the meaning of holy mantras appear before the vision of the yogi. In this stage certain seers release their own special mantras as did Rishi



Full moon posture. Photo credit: Shri Jai Prakash Naudiyal "Yogacharya" (Shri Sidha Yoga from Uttrakhand)

Vishwamitra when he released the gayatri mantra. In this stage on account of intense concentration the yogi sometimes attains metaphysical powers. He is fully enlightened and realizes the Truth in its true form. The yogi reaches his climax in the samapragyat samadhi when he becomes equal to the demi-gods and possesses celestial powers or vibhuti. The yogi attains full control over his nature . He also overcomes earth, water, fire, wind and ether and can use them freely. In this state of mind the yogi attains a purified intellect called 'Ritt'. He is endowed with ritambha pragya and can be the founder of a doctrine. His mind is completely devoid of delusion or ignorance. In the last stage of such concentration, he is completely diverted to the soul

In the fifth and final stage, there is complete diversion of mind stuff. In this stage even the functions of the body cease to exist. Such a yogi is not subjected to the cycle of birth and death, which is removed. His real self is established. This is the stage of Nirjeev Samadhi where the yogi becomes completely united with a master of spiritual powers. He becomes omniscient and the embodiment of knowledge. Hence it is evident that the practice of Yoga makes aspirants climb higher and higher and reach the peak of Yoga.

Art Reviews: Azad Bhavan Gallery

Back at school every Indian child is taught that Indian culture is the mother of all cultures and that imposes a special discipline of accepting with grace the diversities that exist in our midst. Even the exponents of this culture therefore bear on their shoulders the responsibility of propagating their brand of culture through the medium of love and acceptance of diversities. Over the years this has evolved into a humbling of our individual egos so that what emerges ultimately is an understanding that respecting and honouring the culture of others, results in developing purity of mind and expression and revering other cultures actually leads to the strengthening of our own culture. Thus exposure to various forms of culture pays back dividends hitherto undiscovered.

More than anything else this experiential finding is evidenced in the spheres of classical music, dance and Indian contemporary art. That is why the programmes held on the premises of the Azad Bhavan complex, comprising a gallery space and an auditorium give



Mowna Ramachandra performing under Horizon Series at Azad Bhavan Auditorium on March 27, 2015



Mowna Ramachandra performing under Horizon Series at Azad Bhavan Auditorium on March 27, 2015

opportunities to artists who have created a niche for themselves not simply for the excellence of their performance but also for their capacity to broadcast Indian culture according to the basic tenets of honouring others through their own specific strengths of performance. The above premise has made us veer away from the rigid format of reviewing art exhibitions by and large and offering instead a gamut of cultural exposes in the way of dance performances on stage, musical evenings and art on the walls. As young performers in general miss out on offers to exhibit their histrionic talents on a national platform, the programmes chosen for public entertainment on this platform have adopted another angle of selection. The emphasis has not been on time-tested artists acknowledged as maestros of international acclaim, but on promising youngsters who have tremendous potential and have acquired due recognition in their chosen spheres within a select coterie. The selectors have therefore taken on the additional responsibility



Accompanying artist with Mowna Ramchandra



Mowna Ramachandra performing under Horizon Series at Azad Bhavan Auditorium on March 27, 2015



Accompanying artist with Mowna Ramchandra

of choosing fresh and budding performers for the capital's audience and have received very positive feedback about them.

Taking due note of the performer's artistic roadmap and choosing a handful who have received extensive training and guidance under the best gurus and trainers of the country, the selectors have been able to home on to hidden gems that the country has on offer. Thus while the artist herself or himself is still a fresh entrant on the capital's stage, each one of them comes with impressive credentials, holding promise of both quality and creativity. All of them have been graded by professional yardsticks such as the selection process of All India Radio, by far the most acknowledged and reliable medium of selection available in the country. They are also the recipients of nationwide musical and artistic awards from organizations who are known for their yeoman service to the field of culture, in the country. Hence the Azad Bhavan stage is but another

Mowna Ramachandra performing under Horizon Series at Azad Bhavan Auditorium on March 27, 2015

extension of their excellence and audiences are privy to their performances on a platform that is known to showcase genuine and tried out talent.

One such artist who did not disappoint was **Mowna Ramachandra** of Bangalore, who is a disciple of Pt Arjunsa Nahod of Dharwar and originally from the Gwalior Gharana and the renowned vocalist Vidushi Veena Sahasrabuddhe of Pune, under whose tutelage she has acquired the expertise and variety of the

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Gwalior school and the excellent voice training of her latter guru. Despite her young years, Mowna has several concerts under her belt and has regaled audiences with her masterly singing quality both in India and abroad. She has graced some prestigious music platforms such as the sursingar samsad of Mumbai, the Sursagar stage of Bangalore and the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in London. In all these places audiences were mesmerized by her strength of tonal resonance, the confident approach to her concert layout and her level of preparation where she combines an astute variety of Gwalior tenets in the chosen raga of the evening.

At the Azad Bhavan Mowna chose the raga Shri and the well known vilambit composition 'Hari Ke Charan Kamal...' a favourite of audiences young and old. Mowna did full justice to this number by building the raga layout right from the start of the evening. Her unhurried pace and sound command of the raga established the flavour of the 'gambhir' character of the raga using the main notes of the raga as the mainstay of her musical mapping. The innovative touches were not far to seek thereafter, as the smaller gamaks were introduced with close attention to the voice quality making for a steadiness of voice which was evidence enough of her excellent tayyari.

The Dharwar reference came forth when Mowna branched into a sequence of taan outlays. The patterning covered the entire scale of octaves with convolutions woven expertly into the design of performance. Using sargam notes instead of alankar of other kinds. listeners were able to imbibe the aura of the raga with greater pleasure as her taan pattern ran across several cycles of the beat before resting back with knife like precision on the sam point. Thus a clear, yet vivid build-up marked her concert recital. The arrangement of her innovative segments were both attractive and playful giving her concert an effortless grace. The quick paced chhota khayal, 'chalo ri mayi Ram Siya darshan...' rounded off the evening, resounding the music and the grandeur of the raga with aplomb



An evening of music by Shirin Sengupta from Kolkata under Horizon Series at Azad Bhavan Auditorium on April 24, 2015

Quite early in this quarter, one had the pleasure of listening in to a classical music recital by Kolkata based classical music performer and renowned radio artist Shirin Sengupta from Kolkata. This artist is no green horn as she has received accolades for her performances. So far, Shirin has under her belt 20 performances around the world at prestigious platforms in USA, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, UAE Algeria and Syria among others, from across the globe. Shirin was recognized quite early in her singing career and holds the distinction of being one of the youngest "A" graded artists from All India Radio, the benchmark recognition to artists of caliber in this country. Her mellifluous voice, complete command of swaras so that the music seems to glide on the ears, without any theatrical inclusions, makes her concerts a soothing and likeable session among both the connoisseur and the beginner.

A part of this mellifluity can be credited to the impeccable musical education that Shirin has received



Accompanying artist with Shirin Sengupta



An evening of music by Shirin Sengupta from Kolkata under Horizon Series at Azad Bhavan Auditorium on April 24, 2015



Accompanying artist with Shirin Sengupta



An evening of music by Shirin Sengupta from Kolkata under Horizon Series at Azad Bhavan Auditorium on April 24, 2015

from her early years. A disciple of Pandit Arun Bhaduri and Pandit A Kanan, the two stalwart performers and tutors at the Sangeet Research Academy at Kolkata. Currently she is under the direction and guidance of another top musician of the country Pandit Ulhaas Kashalkar and is currently part of the Monomanjari Institute of Performing Arts and Research, an international cultural institute based in the city. Aside from her memorable stage presentations, Shirin has also been a keen scholar of classical music and has several papers to her credit. Having an academic and a practical approach to matters of music benefits her doubly, for while her academic knowledge has empowered her base, her practical demonstration of it comes off as a clear-cut intelligent application of musical knowledge through her singing prowess. Her choice of raga for every occasion are another of her strengths and was ably demonstrated during the conert session at the Azad Bhavan platform. Her music was a welcome performance and had audeiunces longing for more.

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Jyotsna Jagannagthan performing under Horizon Series

Bharatnatyam performance by Jyotsna Jagannagthan from Chennai under Horizon Series at Azad Bhavan Auditorium on April 17, 2015



Jyotsna Jagannagthan performing under Horizon Series

From the city of Chennai, on this platform, during this quarter was the Bharatnatyam recital of **Jyotsna Jagannagthan**. Though Jyotsna has followed a very ancient form of dancing, she has inculcated into its age-old structure an innovative angle that is in keeping with the very spirit of Bharatanatyam. Matead of demonstrating verbatim what she has

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Jyotsna Jagannagthan performing under Horizon Series

imbibed from her revered gurus, Jyotsna breathes into each performance an individual quotient of innovation and demonstration that is entirely of her own making but strictly within the parameters of this ancient dance form. Thus the dance stage with Jyotsna in the forefront changes from being just a performance platform into a space which is charged with excitement, awe, and deep sense of humility for the art form which Jyotsna has given to it.

Elaborating on this journey of self-discovery through her vocabulary of dance, Jyotsna has created an expansive repertoire of her own. In each setting she has included her individuality with such subtlety that while watching her performance one cannot easily decipher where the performer has demarcated her own inputs and where she is remaining strictly within the grammar of her dance. Of note is her permutations of moods expressed through her graceful and accurate movements making her dance rich in mood creation and vibing well with audiences in cities as far placed as Bangalore, Mysore, Mumbai, Pune, Madhya Pradesh centres of dance and music as well as Kerala, Odisha, and elsewhere. She is also the recipient of several awards notable of which are the Nadanamamami from the Karthik Fine Arts, the Kala Vipanchee from Dr Balamuralikrishna, and the Yuva Kala Bharathi. Recently she has also bagged the Singar Mani Award from the Sur Singar Sansad.



Jyotsna Jagannagthan performing under Horizon Series



In the Tone of Nation, acrylic on canvas: 22x35 inches

Right through this quarter, the art gallery wing of the Azad Bhavan Complex has been active with exhibitions from artists with a genuine artistic streak whose talents need a recognisable platform for display. One such artist whom the selectors chose for display was **Tabassum Malik**, under the designated 'Horizon' series of programmes. What is striking



Kumhar, acrylic on canvas: 22x32 inches



Habitation, water color on paper: 17x15.5 inches

and one supposes deliberate, by the artist is the fact that she has chosen not to give her exhibits a group title thus leaving her viewers to caption and arrange her work into a format of their own making. Such unrestricted opportunity of viewing the works shows great respect for her audiences who find their imaginative skills being put to a thrilling test as they strive to club the works under a single roof. On deeper introspection



Aaradhana, mix media on canvas: 26x35.5 inches



Friendship, water color on paper: 11.5x8.5 inches



A Thing of Beauty, water color on paper: 11x17 inches



Jungle Ladies, acrylic on canvas: 26x29 inches

of course, one can associate her works to the use of a delicate palette of colours and a soft textural quality in the ultimate forms on view.

Being a regular participant on several platforms has given Tabassum a wide variety of subjects and treatments that she has imbibed into her art with flair. Of course the primary stress of her works are integrated with Nature in its many moods. These moods come across in her works as strategic studies sometimes in graphic formations and in subtle and blurred abstractions in others. Of note is her strict adherence to an earthy palette in which the colours of the earth, the play of panoramic stretches on our sensibilities are mapped with a rare delicacy. Her rivers run across her space into a distance that leaves much to the imagination to realize, while her single tree, atop a bare hill, carries in its bosom a crying need for conservation. Such messages of pertinence are juxtaposed with single flower studies where each petal and leaf is detailed with becoming grace. This is an artist with a keen eye, a sense of beauty and the ability to see aspects of nature that would only strike a true artist who has sharpened her insightful capacity to the maximum limit.



Love, mix media on canvas: 5x3 feet

On the other hand the exhibition of artist Mukta Gupta, was a delight to view with her playful placement of the circular form. With geometrical exactitude, this artist creates bulbous figures of beings that have a touch of fantasy and recall the child hidden within all of us. The figures, look at us through rounded bodies, elongated eyes and overlapping placements in a setting where the lines are decisively graphic but the overall composition has a marvelous irregularity that adds to their appeal. The playfulness of the figures and the bright choice of palette make for a composition that at one time makes one think of a waterscape undersea. At other times, it appears to be a facsimile of what a fairy kingdom might be like, when perceived on canvas. Though the figures are held in affectionate and protective compositions, their endearment has a comforting and snuggly



Love, mix media on canvas: 3x2.5 feet



Love, mix media on canvas: 3x2.5 feet





Love, mix media on canvas: 3x2.5 feet

Relation, mix media on canvas: 5x3 feet

quality that falls in the region of a mother and child theme. Even in their amorous postures, there is grace and softness that alludes to divinity and ethereal qualities rather than a contemporary feel.

The figures and the layout carry in themselves a narrative of soft words, delicate gestures and unspoken grace. There is a certain challenge in making such works for though the artist has chosen the graphic form and the circular bubble as her main forte, she has dexterously managed to combine these parameters into a succinct composition through an ability that has infused the design format into an innovative vocabulary through her capability of utilizing their potential in hitherto untapped ways. Naturally the artist has not delved into contemporary problems in her art but has relied on the very grain of human existence, such as maternal love, human attachment for each other and the pull of romance in our lives. With these basic tenets she has woven a canvas of colours and circles that are attractive, expressive and talkative, which demand a re-look from her viewers.



Foot Print-13, papier mache: 52x56x13 cm

In the sculpture inclusion for this quarter, the works of artist **Amresh Kumar** in his solo display, made a huge impact. For one, instead of using the standard materials for sculptural compositions, such as metal, bronze, wood and terracotta, he has deliberately expressed his artistic talent through a seldom resorted to material, papier mache.

In his works it is the intense textural quality of his final shape that is most appealing for it creates an imagery

that excites all the five senses of touch, sight, feel, aural and visual delight. In his work titled 'footprint' the canary hued demarcation of the 'footprint' contrasted with the earthy surface elsewhere, gives the feel of a step firmly taken towards one's goal and the circular shape of the sculpture creates a limitation of boundaries within which these steps are being taken. The imagery of the work titled 'Sanctum Sanctorum' is hugely descriptive and appealing for its hewn out





Foot Print-14, papier mache: 58x58x10 cm

visual effect on the senses. The funnel like top of the shape left uneven, brings out immense possibilities of thought for the viewer, with a discerning eye. The smaller collection of shapes titled 'Sandesa' carry in their surfaces embedded designing, symbolizing unsaid messages that are hidden away from the

Foot Print-12, papier mache: 61x55x12 cm

public gaze but hold strength and meaning between the sender and its recipient. Their varied shapes also stabilize their purpose for no two messages carry the same meaning.

In continuation with his series on footprints, the artist has also made an interesting use of blue and brown tints to depict the insides of his bowl-like constructs. These allow greater interpretation as the colours are not formatted into a rigid pattern but wear a whimsical trait as they are brushed on to the surface with carefree abandon. In the swirls of his other footprint depictions too, there lies a subtle underbelly for the various rings of the circular form are faintly hinted at, with a deeper turmeric-and-earthy brush, instead of any definitive outlines. The edges are left uneven adding to the 'natural' look of his art. Thus the viewer realizes that shapes and their embellishments are best left as hints rather than as polished pieces detailed and structured to the last stroke, leaving nothing to the imagination of its admirers.



Performance of Ghazals by Shevanti Sanyal under Horizon Series at Azad Bhavan Auditorium on May 29, 2015

The quarter ended on a commemorative note with a concert by artist **Shevanti Sanyal** which was a homage to the ghazal diva the late Begum Akhtar. This being the centenary year since the great doyen of ghazal singing had graced the musical horizon, this concert was a befitting tribute to the immortal pioneer who shaped and enhanced the image of ghazal singing in India to a pedestal of eminence that has been hard to equalize ever since. A disciple of Vidushi Shanti Hiranand, the late Begum's senior most and closest disciple, Shevanti has imbibed all the nuances and the varied techniques of the music right from its origins and thus her presentation bore a highly authentic ring.

A trained classical musician who has adhered to the tenets of the musical culture of the Gwalior gharana, Shevanti had begun her musical introductory taleem at the feet of her mother Protima Majumdar, who was trained in the Gwalior style. Thereafter, Shevanti gave



Shevanti Sanyal performing under Horizon Series



Shevanti Sanyal performing under Horizon Series



Shevanti Sanyal performing under Horizon Series

her practical skills a sound academic base by qualifying and completing the Sangeet Visharad degree from the Prayag Sangeet Samiti of Allahabad, and then going on to specialize in the light classical genre consisting of ghazals and bhajans. In these categories she has explored all the genres ranging from Sufi ghazals to those of Khusro and Kabir. In the bhajan category her repertoire consists of both the Nirgun and Sagun categories, enriching both these genres with melody, deep feeling and emotional depth.

At this dedicatory concert evening, Shevanti managed to recreate an old world Lucknawi air that was the specialty of the late Begum, as she sang her immortals that are now etched into musical

memory with deep nostalgia and fond remembrance. Some of the numbers that she presented were so representative of the diva that even before she had taken the first note and while still the instruments were playing out the preliminary passages there were murmurs of approval rising from the audiences. Her numbers such as 'mere hamnafas, mere hamnava.' 'aeye mohabbat tere anjaam pey rona aaya...' and others of this ilk, transported the audience and the stage to that memorable era, with the sheer magic of her artistry. Her choice of numbers also gave credence to another great shayer Shakeel Badayuni, who had written these memorable verses for the lyric. Thus her tribute was not just a haphazard selection but one that highlighted the peak period of the great diva's singing journey.

Besides choosing numbers with a long association, Shevanti also presented a few numbers composed by her guru and artist Vidushi Shanti Hiranand such as 'Mauje gul mauja saba...' which has been taught to her as a special hand-me-down by her guru. To do justice to this challenging task of recalling the music of these immortals, Shevanti had veered from a plagiaristic approach to the music and had infused the concert with a highly emotive element giving justice to the main framework of the lyrics so that she created strong vibes with her audience of the evening. In the bargain she managed to capture the underlying pathos of the versification and gave the music a rare depth of understanding and meticulous presentation without becoming a slavish imitator of the original. It was her classical training that gave her singing a pertinent leeway in that she was able to produce a plethora of gamaks and short syllabic patterns of taans that ornamented the numbers with her personal signature giving the evening a delightful mix of nostalgia and innovation to relish and recall ahead.

Autobiography of a Yogi

Paramhansa Yogananda Publishers: Yogoda Satsanga Society of India Distributed by: Jaico Publishing House Pages: 508 Price: Rs. 115 Year of Publication: 2012 (fifth edition)



Review by Debjani Chatterji

ustomarily, book reviewers tend to pick up the latest works on the stands for review purposes. When it came to works related to the subject of Yoga, the present volume came off a winner hands down, in terms of popularity, readership, sustained attention to its contents, and its garnering of a wide international readership. Presented in a lucid and face-to-face style, for the casual reader the 'Autobiography' lives up to its contents as a personalized account, as it begins with a narration of the parent nucleas of Yogi Yogananda the narrator of this autobiography. Swami Yogananda one learns came from a well-off Bengali family and he was intently devoted to his mother, while his father comes off as a caring and understanding guardian. Mercifully, the writer does not delve into every anecdote of his boyhood as he limits himself to pickings from this period which show that quite early in his life the swami was aware of recollections of his earlier life right from infancy, his powers of self-realization that manifested itself through casual instances, seeing visions of his mother's untimely



Sri Sri Lahiri Mahasaya (1828–1895), A Yogavatar, "Incarnation of Yoga"



Sri Yogananda at the age of sixteen

passing away, the photographing of the family's kul guru Lahiri Mahasaya, among others.

Just why the book has survived as a leading work in this genre of spiritual literature from India is partly due to the fact that the style of writing is 'intensely human.' There are no far fetched theories and practices being pushed down the minds of readers. Also, no attempt is made to corroborate events into scientific theories or other means of justification. The book therefore remains true to its spirit as an autobiographical account and narrates happenings with the forthright candour of personal experiences without giving any scope for questioning its contents in any other light. Thus his narrations of a yogi who could grapple with a tiger or another who could reveal himself at two places simultaneously, does not raise eyebrows. The happening on a spiritual plane when he mentions his experiences of receiving an amulet by his mother and then him, are readily accepted by the reader when he writes:



Yoganandaji in 1915, on the back seat of a motorcycle given by his father. "I rode everywhere on it," he said, "especially to visit my master, Sri Yukteswarji, in his Serampore hermitage."



Yoganandaji on stage, conducting class in Denver, Colorado, USA, 1924

"The next morning as I sat with folded hands in meditation, a silver amulet materialized between my palms, even as the sadhu had promised. It made itself known as a cold, smooth touch. I have jealously guarded for more than twenty years and now leave it in Ananta's keeping... A blaze of illumination came over me with possession of the amulet; many dormant memories awakened. The talisman was round and anciently quaint, was covered with Sanskrit characters. I understood that it came from teachers of past lives, who were invisibly guiding my steps"

Besides it easy writing style which has a distinct Indian turn of phrase and thus becomes easy for its readers here, the book treats everyday miracles and happenings of yogis with a natural ease. The work has given serious elaboration of Swami Yogananda's understanding of kriya Yoga alongside and with the same ease of narration. In its simplest terms this form of Yoga according to Swamiji is a psychophysiological method of decarbonating and recharging human blood with oxygen. The atoms in the extra oxygen rejuvenate the brain and spinal chord and in advanced stages a yogi can transmit these cells into energy. This causes the body to materialize and dematerialise simultaneously and that is what Swamiji eludes to,



Paramahansaji meditating in a boat on Lake Xochimilco, Mexico, 1929

when speaking of Lahiri Mahasaya, who had learnt the art from his guru Babaji. In fact, it was Babaji who had named the process as Kriya Yoga.



Paramahansa Yogananda at the White House, Parmahansa Yogananda and Mr. John Balfour leaving the White House after a call on President Calvin Coolidge, who is looking out at the window. *The Washington Herald*, January 25, 1927 reported: "Swami Yogananda told him he had been reading a great deal about him. This is the first time in the history of India that a Swami has been received officially by the President."

Not stopping with an elaboration of Kriya Yoga, perhaps the most crucial segments of the book that has made readers return to it time and time again is the writer's explanation of the phenomenon of light. He writes:" In joining space as a dimensional relativity, time is now stripped to its rightful nature : a simple essence of ambiguity. With a few equational strokes of his pen Einstein banished from the universe every fixed reality except that of light... On the epochal Theory of Relativity have arisen the mathematical possibilities of exploring the ultimate atom. Great scientists are now boldly asserting not only that the atom is energy rather than matter, but that atomic energy is essentially mind stuff."

Beyond the spiritual appeal and the clarity of presentation of some profound ideas, the work is also a factual account of many important landmarks in the life of this Yogi. He had founded a Yoga School in Ranchi one learns where students combined academic studies along with health and physical development through Yoga meditation, using the Yogoda techniques. This was a pioneering step in that time when academia was strictly confined to book knowledge and strict living. Even more gripping for his readers is the series of events whereby Swami Yogananda had arrived in America in the early years of the 20th century. Much before his physical presence had reached there he had seen its coming through his visions. Even skeptic readers are for a moment silenced as one reads of how funds for the American trip had materialized from his father in his role as a faithful follower of their guru Lahiri Mahasaya.

Not complete in his life's mission, the reader is told of his next advancement into the realm of selfrealisation, a matter that has been inspirational to several readers of this volume and which maps out that with self-effort one can pass from mortal consciousness to God consciousness. And to this end the Yogadas Satsanga was established. Hence what one takes away from this volume is his message : "The goal of Yoga science is to calm the mind, that without distortion it may hear the infallible counsel of the Inner Voice."



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