

YOGA AND MEDITATION: AN ULTIMATE PRACTICE OF LIFE

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Yoga is a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual discipline, and also a way of life. It is an integrated system of self-transformation whose ultimate goal is spiritual liberation or enlightenment however this can also be used to attain other benefits. There are many milestones on the way, after which permanent and deep transformations happen, and great possibility of future sufferings surely goes away. These milestones are called "awakening". And there are many stages of spiritual awakening before final enlightenment. It is a process. The present paper focuses on the ultimate practices of yoga and meditation for transformation of human beings. Through this paper the researcher wants to highlight the yogic nature of great yogi Guru Tegh Bahadur ji and his teachings for the mankind. This paper emphasizes on the ultimate yogic philosophy of Guru Tegh Bahadur ji and want to put forth how he has left spiritual lessons for humanity which are still relevant to present day and age.

Keywords: *Yoga, Meditation, Enlightenment, Yogic philosophy, Guru Tegh Bahadur ji*

The word 'Yoga' is derived from Sanskrit root **Yuj** which means 'join' or 'unite'. This may be taken as the union of body, mind and soul and is used in the literature both as an end as well as means. As an end, yoga signifies 'integration of personality' at the highest level. As means, yoga includes various practices and techniques which are employed to achieve the development of such integration. These practices and techniques are means in the yogic literature and are also referred collectively as 'Yoga'. As yoga means union and a yogi is someone who practices yoga, in other words, walks the path of union. One important element that makes someone a yogi is that they live by the yamas & niyamas, which are considered to be the ethical precepts required to live a happy, healthy, and integer life. And one can observe the yamas and niyamas in life to different extents. Yoga is a healthy way of life, originated in India. Now it is believed to be a form of science accepted all over the world. The western culture also is accepting it as a healthy form of scientific exercise. The major schools of yoga are Jnana yoga, Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga and Raja yoga. These schools of yoga advocate particular type of methodology which includes a variety of systematized practices of yoga depending on their particular approach. However, all these

are leading to the common goal of self-realization and integration of body and mind. Yogic practices are ultimate for development of all dimensions of personality.

Let us talk about the yogic practices that influences development of different dimensions of personality:

● Yoga and Physical Dimension of Personality:

Yogic practices like asana, pranayama, and bandha play a beneficial role in physical development of human beings. There is a series of asanas and pranayama's which help to improve the functioning of the body. Physical dimension is related to our body. It means that all organs and systems of our body should be properly developed and function. It implies a healthy body without any disease. **Yoga and Emotional Dimension of Personality:** Yogic practices are effective for development of emotional dimension related to our feelings, attitudes and emotions. Yoga plays a crucial role in development of positive emotions. It brings emotional stability. It helps to control negative emotions. Yogic practices such as Yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara and meditation help in emotional management. Yama and niyama help to develop positive emotions and attitudes in our

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personal and social life and therefore help in the management of emotions. Let's see how Yogic practices help in achieving ultimate goals of life.

● **Yoga and Intellectual Dimension of Personality:** Yogic practices such as Asana, Pranayama, Dharana, Dhyana (meditation) help to develop concentration, memory and thereby help in intellectual development. Intellectual development is related to the development of our mental abilities and processes such as critical thinking, memory, perception, decision making, imagination, creativity, etc. Development of this dimension is very important as it enables us to learn new things and acquire knowledge and skills.

● **Yoga and Social Dimension of Personality:** Socialization is the most important aspect of the personality development which takes place during infancy, usually within the family. The process of socialization is not limited to childhood, but continues throughout life and teach the growing child and adolescent about the norms and rules of the society in which he lives. Some key aspects of this process include respect for others, listening carefully to other persons, being interested in them, and voicing your thoughts and feelings politely, honestly and clearly so that you can be easily heard and understood.

● **Yoga and Spiritual Dimension of Personality:** For spiritual development, Yama, Niyama, Pratyahara and Dhyana (meditation) are helpful. Yama and Niyama help to develop our moral values while Pranayama, and Meditation help us to realize our true self. Introspection is a very effective for the development of 'self'. This dimension is related to the development of values. It is also concerned with self-actualization which is related to recognizing one's potential and developing them to the maximum.

The constituents of ultimate yogic practice of life are:

- Ahara(Food)
- Vihara(Relaxation)
- Aachara(Conduct)
- Vichara(Thinking)
- Vyavahara (Behaviour)
- Ahara (Food)

Yoga emphasizes on Mitahara, which are related to quality and quantity of food and also the state of mind during the intake of food. As for the quality, the concept of mitahara implies that food should be freshly cooked, nutritious, nourishing and in the natural form. Regarding quantity of food, mitahara mentions that two quarters of the stomach should be filled with food, one quarter of stomach should be filled with liquid and the remaining quarter (one fourth) of the stomach should be left empty for free flow of air. Mitahara also advocates that the food should be eaten with positive state of mind and with utmost concentration thus called as mindfulness. So, the state of mind is also very important while eating. Thus, Mitahara emphasizes that right quality and quantity of food should be eaten in positive state of mind.

● **Vihara (Relaxation)**

Vihara means relaxation, which can be brought about by activities of body and mind. Yogic practices of asana, pranayama and meditation relax body and mind. Sound sleep is also important for relaxation. It is, therefore, important that we should regularly follow a timetable that provides adequate time for yogic and creative activities.

● **Aachara (Conduct)**

Aachara means conduct that includes emotions, attitudes, desires, instincts and habits. Right conduct is essential for a stress-free life. Positive emotions, positive attitudes, good habits and control on desires help in making us strong, both, individually and socially. Yoga encourages good conduct in our personal and social life. Yoga advocates for positive emotions and positive attitude towards self and other persons. Yogic principles of Yama (restraint) and Niyama (observance) help to develop control on our desires and emotions and bring about peace and harmony. The right conduct protects us from unnecessary stress.

● **Vichara (Thinking)**

Yoga prescribes that one should have positive thoughts. Positive thoughts give us strength to bear the sorrows of life. Yogic practices like pratyahara, and Dhyana (meditation) help us in generating positive outlook towards self and life. Our thinking

should be positive. Positive thoughts bring pleasure in our life, while negative thoughts can make us unhappy. Right thinking guides us towards appropriate behaviour.

● **Vyavahara (Behaviour or Action)**

Yogic philosophy propounds that our actions should be right. We should not be indulged in wrong activities. Our behavior towards others should be appropriate. Yoga proposes that we should perform right act with full dedication without worrying about the results. Vyavahara (behavior) means actions. Vyavahara is the result of ahara, vihara, achara and vichara. We can remain stress-free and become happy if we follow this philosophy and act accordingly.

Once you follow all the above ultimate practices of yoga and meditation there is transformation of mind and body and one can walk on the path of becoming true yogi. True Yogi is self-sacrificing and free from pride, vanity and personal ambition. A True Yogi fights the battles of life undisturbed by success or failure, victory or defeat. True Yogi is passionate, strong, courageous, adventurous and not afraid to undertake a daring path in life, without being combative or reckless. Like a true warrior, he has the capacity to put his principles into action and act with force to take decisive action when needed.

We had one such great yogi who practiced the path of Yoga and meditation and became immortal. He is known as The ninth Guru, also known as “Hind ki Chaddar” (protector of Hindu religion) He was a man of learning, a renouncer (of vices) as well as a warrior. Guru Tegh Bahadur was named “Tyag Mal” (man of renunciation) by his parents. Guru Tegh Bahadur ji, the key take away from his life and death is the exercise of choice and freedom in matters of faith. One of the prominent teachings of the Guru was that one should be willing to follow a faith, rather than be coerced into it.

Following are the famous quotes and teachings Of Guru Tegh Bahadur ji related to Yoga and Meditation:

“Meditation on His name and His glory in the ambrosial hours of the morning. Our actions

procure us this vesture (body), but the door of liberation is opened through His grace.”

Guru Tegh Bahadur ji meditated at “Bhora Sahib” in Bakala for nearly 26 years before the Divine Spirit of Guru Nanak was transfused into him by Guru Hari Krishan Ji. From 1644 to 1664, Guru Tegh Bahadur devoted his life to meditation and introspection. Guru Tegh Bahadur was found completely absorbed in meditation. He had set a precedent of great yogi that how one can be yogi while earning his living by honest and hard work and sharing his earnings with the needy. It was a meditation of a householder leading normal life (which is the philosophy of Guru Nanak). This is the triple formula of Nam - Meditating on God's name, Daan - Sharing one's earning, Isnan - taking bath before morning prayers.

Nam is to strengthen the unity of the world. We become as we think. When we think of One Force or Energy pervading all over in all of us, there will be no hatred or discrimination on the grounds of caste, creed, colour or country. A society based on this formula will be a perfect society of perfect men, and that is what the Great Guru Tegh Bahadur ji wished to achieve.

“One who grieves not in misery and delights not in pleasure, who is free from fear and attachment, and for whom gold and dust are the same and who has renounced both praising and blaming (flattery and slander) and is immune to greed, worldly attachments and pride....when the all Merciful Guru blesses a disciple with His Grace, only then does the disciple attain this blessed spiritual state and blends (merges) with the Lord as water with water.”

Above saying depicts that Guru Tegh Bahadur preached the conviction that takes to be indifferent to misery and happiness, to get rid of vices like flattery and allegation, and every other worldly pleasure. It is when one has mastered the art of self-control that he can truly be spiritual. This shows that he staunchly believed and followed the ultimate practices of Yoga.

“O saints, renounce the Ego, and always flee from lust, wrath and evil company. One should consider pain and pleasure, honour

and dishonour the same. One should renounce both praise and blame and even the search for salvation. This is a very difficult path and rare is a (Gurmukh) pious person who knows how to tread it.”

Above saying reflects that Guru Tegh Bahadur ji showed the path of divinity to his disciples by teaching them to overcome greed, desire, ego and pain. He advocated that the world is an illusion and the ultimate aim of life is to become a Gursikh (oriented towards the guru and trying to imbibe the good qualities) and to achieve a union with the supreme being. His entire Bani is about a journey from a worthless life towards an enlightened higher state of life. This very well proves that he was a great yogi who followed the path of emancipation and sacrifice.

“One who vanquishes his ego and beholds the Lord as the Sole Doer of all things, that person has attained ‘Jiwan Mukti’ (is liberated while living), know this as the real truth, says Nanak.”

Above quote shows that Guru Tegh Bahadur ji guided his followers towards the path of peace. He taught the world to be content with their life, as everything in the world is “Nanak’s doing”. He spread the idea of attaining Jiwan Mukti by making peace with every life-situation.

“Why go to search forests (to find Him). He who dwells in all hearts but remains ever pure, pervades thy heart also. Just as fragrance fills the rose and reflection the mirror, the Lord pervades all without a break; search Him inside thee. The Guru hath revealed this knowledge that the Aum pervades inside and outside. Saith Nanak, without knowing thyself the scum of doubt will not be removed.”

The Guru Tegh Bahadur ji pressed on the omnipresence of the Almighty. The Lord lives within us, and one only needs to look within himself to connect with him. He preached that the symbol of universe, Aum (Om), is everywhere, inside you, outside you, inside me and outside me.

To conclude we can say that Guru Tegh Bahadur ji was a great yogi. He practiced and followed ultimate practices of yoga and meditation that opened the floodgates of happiness for him. He truly believed in the power of yoga and yoga not only brought mundane benefits such as health and vibrance, but also uplifted the spirit and enhanced intuitive ability which was much needed for him. Hence yoga helps a yogi to learn so many things that he normally cannot gain easily. Clarity of mind, focus, dedication, discipline, self-awareness, calmness, and power to unleash potential are few of them. The synchronicity of breath take us to the most deeper state of mind which is responsible to boost intense peace and calmness. Regular practice of Yoga over an extended period of time can help us to get in touch with our inner core. The relaxation practices release tensions at various levels of the body and mind and lead to inner sense of harmony. Awareness is a key principle underlying all Yogic practices and the key to unlocking the door to our true nature. Yoga brings skill in action, helping one manage challenging situations without getting stressed. Yoga helps in developing the inherent goodness in people which can then be expressed externally. If we achieve that, we will undoubtedly contribute to a better world and live happier lives.

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