

Yogic Meditation – A Remedy to Unlock Human Power and Strength

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ABSTRACT

The world is bounded with knowledge and ready to unveil its secret if human beings know how to knock and unravel it. Since time immemorial Vedic Rishis (enlightened sages) explored Yogic meditation and transcended to pure consciousness. Understanding the golden thread that runs through yoga and meditation is essential for releasing the unlimited power of human mind in today's world. Human mind is a great mystery. It is the abode of peace and war. Human mind is the master key which opens the locked doors of the "soul" hidden in the body. Through yogic meditation human beings have attempted to comprehend the informational database of the soul which carries the fruits of karmas from one life to another life. Both concepts: Yoga and meditation are closely intertwined. Research shows that worldly conflicts and more than 80% of all illnesses generate within the mind and tridosha (vatta, pitta and kapha) disturbance thereof. This presentation will explore yogic meditation and its implications for human mind. Some of the scientific research in field of yogic meditation will be presented. Ultimately, a few benefits of yogic meditation on the mind will also be presented.

Key terms: Yoga. Human mind, Meditation, self, Ventromedial prefrontal cortex (VmPFC), Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), Electroencephalograph (EEG). Vata, Pitta, Kapha and Rishi

INTRODUCTION

The world is bounded with knowledge and ready to unveil its secret if human beings know how to knock and unravel it. Since time immemorial Vedic Rishis (enlightened sages) explored Yogic meditation and transcended to pure consciousness. Understanding the golden thread that runs through yoga and meditation is essential for releasing the unlimited power of human mind in today's world. Human mind is a great mystery. It is the abode of peace and war. Human mind is the master key which opens the locked doors of the "soul" hidden in the body. Through yogic meditation human beings have attempted to comprehend the informational database of the soul which carries the fruits of karmas from one life to another life. Both concepts: Yoga and meditation are closely intertwined. Research shows that worldly conflicts and more than 80% of all illnesses generate within the mind and tridosha (vatta, pitta and kapha) disturbance thereof. This presentation will explore yogic meditation and its implications for human mind. Some of the scientific research in field of yogic meditation will be presented. Ultimately, a few benefits of yogic meditation on the mind will also be presented.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

The nature of Yoga

Yoga is India's oldest divine and natural healing system which evolved more than 5,000 years ago. In Sanskrit, the term "Yoga" stands for "union" with the divine. A yogi's eventual objective is to attain this "union" by nourishing the "mind" through deep meditation. Union between one's individual consciousness and the universal consciousness. The origin of yoga is in the Vedas. The ancient Sanskrit word "veda" means "knowledge". The four vedas are "Rig veda (knowledge of higher power.), "Yajur veda" (knowledge of Sacrifice), "Sama veda" (knowledge of Chants) and "Atharva veda" (knowledge of Medicinal Science). Yoga is a state of consciousness and awareness brought by tridosha (fundamental life energies) such as vata, pitta and kapha. Yoga, therefore, evolves on the basis of balance and harmony in human body, mind and spirit. Vata is conceptually composed of air and ether. Pitta denotes fire and water. Similarly, Kapha represents the equilibrium between water and earth.

Yoga is also closely linked with "gunas" such as "sattva, rajas and tamas. Sattva relates to light, purity and goodness. Rajas denote restlessness and tamas is concerned with idleness. Yoga is a method to harmonise these gunas in order to uplift human body, mind and soul. Yoga is one of the world's oldest branches of spiritual inquiry labelled as Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga and Raja Yoga. Hatha yoga is a branch of Raja Yoga which according to Maharshi Patanjali is composed of eight parts - Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dhyana, Dharana and Samadhi. Hence, according to Yoga philosophy all these are vital for body, mind and soul.

The nature of Meditation

The history of practicing meditation dates back since time immemorial. Research shows that ancient Rishis practiced meditation for attaining self-realization. Ancient Rishis applied the three pillars of Ayurveda - vata, pitta and kapha for spiritual upliftment. Swami Vishnu Devananda has stated that meditation is a "continuous flow of perception or thought, just like the flow of water in a river". Ayurveda has expounded one of the yogasanas - meditation.

Meditation is a process of directing our mind inwardly by shutting our sense organs. It is a powerful instrument to open unlimited energy hidden within human mind. Through meditation an individual enters the plane of sub consciousness. Meditation is a part and parcel of yoga. According to Hinduism and Buddhism, meditation is referred to as dhyana (an unbroken flow of thought towards the object of concentration). Therefore, it can be said that yogic meditation is a powerful method for emptying, calming and stilling the mind in order to attain tridosha equilibrium. By so doing, tranquility, peace, purity and self awareness are established for the divine light to illuminate the higher consciousness. Throughout history Yoga has been practiced to treat physical and mental disorders. Yogic practice gives some benefits of meditation -mental tranquility, calmness, peace and relief from stress.

Views on Yoga and Meditation

As discussed earlier, researchers have established that Yoga evolved around 5,000 years ago. The question that now arises is that - when meditation originated? Research says that the origin of meditation can be traced some 50,000 years ago (Y. Vorland: 2009). According to literature, meditation is concerned with awareness which evolves in the mind. Before writing materials were invented for recording meditation, meditation already happened in human mind as awareness. All inventions generate in the human mind. Following this, it can be said that Yoga and meditation evolved in our ancient ancestor's minds more than 50,000 years ago. Hence, the origin of Yoga and meditation is linked which dates back to the time when the first human being appeared on earth with an enlightened mind.

The nature of human mind and soul.

"As a lamp kept in a windless place does not flicker, such is the state of the yogi whose mind is under control and who is engaged in concentration on the self" (verse 19: Bhagavad Gita)

Such is the state of mind which needs to be attained by regular concentration. The rays of mind in a worldly man are spread in all directions. It is only by concentration that success can be attained in any walk of life. In many chapters of Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna has mentioned the importance of controlling one's mind through meditation. The mind is divided into conscious mind, unconscious mind and subconscious mind. The conscious mind uses the rational thought, the unconscious mind uses unbound energies and the subconscious mind revolves beyond space and time. According to Swami Yogiraj Nanak (2003) the conscious mind has a large accumulation of memory. The verses from 56 to 67 in Bhagavad Gita mention that failure in life is the inability to control the mind.

"The senses are said to be greater than the body; but greater than the senses is the mind. Greater than the mind is the intellect; and what is greater than the intellect is the self" (verse 42: Bhagavad Gita)

From the above, it can be said that by practicing meditation regularly one can develop a steady and sharp concentration on the soul. Accordingly, the soul is birth less, deathless, constant and eternal. Dr William Mc Dougall (1907), a Harvard psychologist stated that at the time of death, the dying body loses approximately an ounce (Dr Tan Kheng Khoo: 2009). Further, it was discovered by a Frenchman who photographed his dying son and wife that a misty cloud hovering over the bodies which represented the spiritual entity (Dr Tan Kheng Khoo: 2009). According to Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, the soul has five coverings: covering of bliss, covering of subtle bodies, physical covering, covering of intellect and covering of the mind. Droopnath Naga (2003) has mentioned that the soul is a pin-point source of divine light. It possesses the following entities: the mind, the intellect and the memory. The mind of a yogi is always submerged and engrossed in the divine self. Thus, controlling the mind is essential for success in life and for the realization of the immortal self.

Some of the contemporary scientific research on meditation

In 1920 an electroencephalograph (EEG) device was developed to study brain waves during meditation. The functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) has been used to study brain activities during meditation. Mind machine has recently been used to study human brain. This device sends sound frequencies into human ear via head phones and light patterns into human eyes via glasses for the generation of specific brain waves. Cranial Electro stimulation (CES) is used nowadays to stimulate brain activities. Moreover, Equisync's cutting-edge is also used to learn brain functioning. Another device which scientist uses to study the brain is Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex (VmPCF). Matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs), Activation of the hypothalamic - pituitary - adrenal (HPA) and Sympathetic - adrenal medullary (SAM) systems have been used by scientists to study human brain. Additionally, the US National Health Statistics Report of December 10, 2008 has indicated the interest US adults attach to meditation. The results published showed that nearly 9.4% of US adults (over 20 million) had practiced meditation within 12 months. Thus, research is still going on in the world.

Some benefits of Yogic meditation on the mind

Regular Yogic meditation improves the level of concentration. It increases the ability to remember things clearly. People practicing it are able to cope with any situation in life. Their ability of comprehension is improved. These people develop positive attitude towards life. It decreases anxiety, depression and irritability. It improves learning, memory, emotional stability, vitality, rejuvenation and happiness. Through Yogic meditation the equilibrium of the gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas) is established." Research shows that it expands aura, give experience of self-realization and enlightenment. It cures many psychosomatic disorders. It also eliminates greed, anger, hatred and ignorance from the mind. Yogic meditation has the ability to bring calmness, peace, psychological balance and enhance overall health. Further, it helps to attain mental stability and removes mental turmoil. Mind is the centre from where peace and war originates. World War I and World War II were the products of the unstable mind. Thus, Yogic meditation unfolds human divine nature and melts psychological upheavals.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the above that Yoga and meditation are intertwined. Both have originated from Vedas. Knowing the mind is important for understanding life processes. Everything generates in the mind. It is the abode of peace and war. Through Yogic meditation, the dormant unlimited life energies and strength are unveiled. This starts the flow of perception and brings awareness, deep wisdom and tranquility. Such motion uncovers the soul hidden in the body. The whole phenomenon activates the tridosha and trayapasthambas. The scientific use of modern technology on human brain has not provided adequate information on the mystery of mind activities. Research on human mind is still ongoing. 'Understanding human mind becomes highly complex when it starts to unravel reincarnation and rebirth. Scientists are challenged to comprehend the informational database of the soul which carries the fruits of Karmas from one life to another life. This expands the frontier of human mind thereby uncovering the veil which hides the soul from purusha.

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