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Impact of Sri Aurobindo's yoga consciousness on individual's well-being

Shalmoli Palit

Department of Philosophy, Durgapur Government College, Durgapur, Paschim Burdwan, 713214, West Bengal, India

Corresponding author email: shalmolipalit2021@gmail.com

Abstract---Integral yoga has multi-dimensional aspect in our lives. On one hand it heads towards attainment of liberation, on the other hand integral yoga brings changes in intellectual, volitional, ethical, emotional, aesthetic and physical attributes of our lives leading to human perfection. For all perfection, the first pre-requisite is purification, *suddhi*. Mind, heart, the soul of vital desire and the life in the body are the seat of impurity, which when surrenders to the path of Yoga slowly clears of the impurities and develops their inner strength, which leads to the attainment of liberation or *mukti*. The path to liberation takes one to attain the *siddhi* or perfection that an aspirant desires of is attained when universality of being, of love and joy, of play of knowledge and of play of will in power and will in unegoistic action happens within an individual freely. The main intention here is to outline and analyse various developments that takes place when once the journey of yoga begins. The perfections and developments taking place within oneself help an individual to lead a comfortable life and enjoy an overall well-being with the enhancements of physical, vital and mental capacities. These abilities help in developing the overall outlook of an individual.

Keywords---Sri Aurobindo, integral yoga, consciousness, personality enhancement, well-being.

Introduction

Human personality is a complex system which includes collection of physical, mental and behavioral traits and patterns that an individual exhibits in our life. In other words personality is a set of qualities that distinguishes an individual from another. From the very time of birth personality starts developing and with passage of time during adolescence a reorganization of personality takes place. It involves patterns of changes that are multi-dimensional in nature. This pattern is mainly guided by growth and development that an individual undergoes from

infancy to childhood to adolescence to early adulthood including ones attitudes, emotions, thoughts, habits and traits. All these factors together put an impact on behavior which results in personality changes.

Yoga can be defined as a process (journey) as well as a state (goal) in many ways. Since it is the science and art of quieting the subconscious mind, a way of life, skill in action, union of thought word and deed, integration of our personality at all levels, the science of conscious evolution and the method to attain as well as the state of emotional and mental equanimity (Sri Aurobindo, 2014). In other hands the definition of Yoga itself outlines all the aspects of psychological developments that results by the help of Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo being one of the most eminent contemporary Indian philosophers of twentieth century is also a great visionary (Banerji, 2018). He not only presented his philosophical thoughts but also demonstrated them by his own practices and experiences in order to achieve the summits of Humanhood. Even though the dogmas of Indian Philosophy is inherent in Sri Aurobindo's philosophical thoughts but still he tried to reconstruct the philosophical thoughts with a new refinement of practical experiences that were attained from the experiences of social living. Mostly all the twentieth century contemporary Indian Philosophers were more of social reformists, who tried to encompass the social well-being of mankind through their philosophical thoughts.

Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo also promises to realize the ultimate aim of an individual and also of the collective humanity. It is thus a process with progressive awakening and self enlargement which is actually the journey of a human being towards the Divine life (Summum Bonum). What human would reach in this journey is infinite bliss and self conscious existence, which is same everywhere in all things, in all times and beyond time (Sri Aurobindo 2010). At the very beginning Integral Yoga rules out the most debated matter i.e. the duality in Nature – regarding the admittance of Matter and Spirit. Sri Aurobindo rather considers 'Cit - Sakti' or 'Conscious Force' of the Spirit as the dynamic energy source (Sri Aurobindo, 2002). This energy indeed makes possible every changes taking place in matter (Nature). So matter according to Sri Aurobindo is purely non-active element for the reason that conscious – force lies inconscient within the matter. This force evolves to bring out life and mind – which is known as Vital and Mental. So, the composite structure of human is comprised of physical, vital and mental.

Although traditional thought relating to yoga mainly emphasizes the spiritual aspect of the Integral yoga but apart from this there is also psychological aspect and pragmatic aspect of Integral Yoga. All the aspects work together in transforming human egoic consciousness into an organized center for manifesting the higher levels of cognitive capabilities. The role of spiritual aspect is to manifest the Divine upon earth and unify the ordinary mental consciousness to the supramental consciousness (Sri Aurobindo, 1998). The psychological aspect leads to intellectual development of an individual being. Lastly the pragmatic aspect the most essential of all leads to natural well-being of an individual in daily life – by self development and heightening of an individuals' capacity.

Developmental Changes in Yoga

The yoga of Sri Aurobindo has been rightfully called as integral yoga, since the way enumerated by him for this yoga not only helps an individual to achieve the Divine but along with it every yogic steps leads to realization of human potential that remains hidden within an individual. This integral development and progress leads to personal growth, mental growth, holistic health and enhancements of various psychological, activities, where all of these are interrelated to the integration of human personality. Thus an integral understanding of human nature and consciousness helps in overall development of human personality. It takes into cognizance the entire range of consciousness including the inconscient, the subconscious, the circumconscient and the super-conscient (Cornelissen, M. 2018). Yogic urges and meditative methods of inner discoveries marks its step on the upward journey to the realization of a totally observant creative consciousness. Mere observation of the surface mind and the concomitant behavioral phenomena is absolutely inadequate to understand human nature. Integral yoga thus attempts to provide an integral perspective of human personality and helps an individual to enhance the abilities of the mind seated deeply within an individual.

Although all the aspect of integral yoga once having their special relevance but amongst them this particular paper intends to explain and reveal the pragmatic aspect of integral yoga. This intends to direct and individual towards the attainment of human perfection from the very core (Sri Aurobindo, 2012). It also reveals immense possibilities and potentialities of human nature of which an individual is almost unaware. The development and progress of the human nature starts from the physical level i.e. the level of matter till the mind or mental level which helps in all-round well being of an individual. As man is not limited to his physical existence alone, he is beyond body, life and even mind. In this way of progress along with integral yoga, the superficial well-being of an individual begins from the very physical level. To begin with the primary state i.e, matter which comprises of the human body, the physical form of nature also known to be the mortal form of human existence, there the gradual progress in Integral Yoga, the body within itself develops the qualities of *mahattva* (greatness), *bala* (strength), *laghuttva* (lightness) and *dharana-samarthyā* (holding responsiveness) (Pandit, 2018).

The presence of *Mahattva* (greatness) makes the body more capable of sustaining external forces. With the ongoing practice of yoga the physical capacities and capabilities gets enhanced. It is a very common experience that there is various capabilities and stamina amongst different individuals. The more the greatness resides more the stamina increases. The next quality or ability is the *Bala* (strength). The physical control and regime of yoga internally develops the physical strength of an individual. It leads to great power or puissance and energy to manage any and every sort of external forces or disturbances coming towards it. For example, simple cut or aberration in our body is treated by every individual in their own way of strength and stamina. Some feel it to be excessive painful, some feel it can be overcome, some feel it as a great panic, etc. all of which depends on degree of pain feeling in various individual. The third quality is *Laghuttva* (lightness) which implies swiftness and adaptability both in brain

working and also at physical being. With practice of Yoga the nerves and neurons attain lightness that actually leads to proper oxygen supply to various parts and organs of the body loading them for quick action and smooth functioning. By development of this attribute an individual can restrain more from stress and strain. This is the underlying cause how yoga boosts our physical energy and mental strength by making both of them capable to adjust to any and every new condition or situation. Finally the most essential physical quality is the *Dharana-sāmarthya* (holding and responsive power) of an individual. It is the power that regulates whole of the physical machine that leads to various physical activities. Many a times it is found that the physical activities get impeded due to heaviness, sloth and slowness of movement or fatigue. With the development of *dhāraṇa-sāmarthya* and the previously mentioned physical development the physical body becomes wonderfully light and gets ready for any action spontaneously. But what makes Integral Yoga distinguished from other Yogas is that in its ideal of the physical-perfection, there is absolute insistence on the invulnerability of the gross physical body to all attacks by the forces of disruption and disintegration in this material world (Sri Aurobindo, 2010). In other words, the physical body is provided with a protective shield to resist itself from all sorts of external environmental attacks. As we see better immune system of a body is less prone to be infected from external sources, in similar way the Integral Yoga develops the physical strength and stamina to encompass more of probabilities and possibilities within oneself.

The next level where yoga creates its effect is the perfection and enhancement of the vital being i.e. the life or *prāna* whatever we address it. The vital being, from the name itself explains its significance that it is actually the driving force of the physical being. So, when physical strength gets developed, the vital being or vital energy too needs to be developed in order to make the well-being of normal human more comfortable. The developments that take place in the vital are – *purnatā* (fullness), *prasannatā* (purity and gladness) *samatā* (equality) and *bhoga – sāmarthya* (desire and passion). All these attributes together guides the vital energy and thereby help the self in attaining the desired goal of life. With the development of fullness (Purnatā) the power of possession grows which indeed brings within one, strength and ability. This power of possession invokes within oneself a tireless drive towards attaining or attainment of desired goal. The next change that takes place is purity and gladness (*Prasannatā*), which helps in relieving an individual from the problems of restlessness, frittering attitude and pessimistic thoughts. As until one is satisfied and glad with one's own self, the driving force of life cannot lead one to reach one's goal of life. The third development of the vital is *Samatā* (Equality). This important attribute of the vital helps one to remain serene and unperturbed in the face of all experiences. It helps an individual to free oneself from all types of inclinations and desires of fickle likes and dislikes. As our life continuously seeks pleasure with variety of things and gets diverted from the main goal, the quality of *samatā* (Equality) makes an individual remain stable towards all such variety pleasure seeking. The last attribute of vital is the *bhoga – sāmarthya* (desire and passion) where an individual develops the ability and capacity to experience all types of relations and contacts necessary of its existences. It is the attribute that clarifies an individual being to realize the relation between oneself and the world. How can the objects of the world help an individual to attain the desired pleasure, ultimate good and

highest goal in this life. It makes the vital all knowledgeable about the things present in this world and how would these things help an individual.

Apart from the developments that take place in the physical body and vital energy, another essential part of human being is also developed in the process of Yoga. Although it is not needed to say that yoga has a power of transformation, but still the main concern here lies in the overall well being of an individual which depends on the developments and changes in physical body, vital energy and the seat of all knowledge and intellect i.e. heart of an individual being, what the Mother intends to explain by the term 'heart' is – “A great joy is always deep in our heart, and always we can find it there” (16th April 1954). “The guidance is in your heart. Go ahead according to your inspiration” (14th Jan, 1972). The heart with incalculable emotions needs to be kept in control by the reason and the mental will and intelligence (Sri Aurobindo, 1997). The attributes or qualities that get developed are: *Soumyatva* (beaming and benign gentleness) *tejas* (high strength and force), *kalyān-śraddhā* (faith and will) and *prema – sāmārthya* (limitless capacity for love). A good human nature in general and in true sense is marked by these four qualities or abilities that are present and possessed by human beings. The only need is to manifest these abilities for a best well being. The first of the qualities i.e. *soumyatva*, is the benign gentleness and the loveable candour that should be present in one's attitude towards all, so that we can also in return receive a gentle fervor from the others. Unless we give to someone we cannot even expect to receive gentleness from other persons. Again apart from this limpid sweetness in ones behavior there should also reside the property of *Tejas*. Without strength and power no action can be executed when needed. The heart should possess the inner strength which gives it power to lead to any and every sort of violent action that may come in one's life. It may be the situation of crisis or the situation of decision making regarding any worldly affairs, the property of *Tejas* helps an individual to perform the activity. Thirdly, the heart should also possess faith and belief only then true knowledge can be achieved. The quality of *kalyān-śraddhā* helps an individual to realize the true nature of one's self and the worldly longings and thereby develop the discriminative intellect to be dispensed from grief, suffering, sorrow and defeat. Because the sorrow, grief, suffering, etc. all are the transitory feelings and does not persist eternally. Only true knowledge can help an individual to overcome such feelings easily. Finally, the quality of *prem-sāmārthya* viz. limitless loves for all makes an individual more wide and capable to realize the myriad forms and representations of nature. Unless we possess the power to accept everything, we will not be able to realize the variety existing in the phenomenal world. It is the capacity of love that being present in our heart helps us to gracefully accept everything else we would lie in utter confusion to accepting and rejecting only the objects or things known to us (Bidwaikar, 2011). This would be an impossible situation for an individual to lead a life of well-being.

Finally, the need of intellectual development helps the mind to reach towards perfection from the ordinary superficial level to the highly insightful state. Unless the intellect fortifies the will an individual cannot develop the power to overcome failure, frustration and depression. The very common man moves away from overcoming such situations leading to life of miseries and sufferings. To enjoy the overall well-being one has to develop the intellect with the qualities of: *Viśuddhi*

(Pure and Crystal Clear), *Prakāśa* (Reflection of Truth), *Vicitrabodha* (Variety of understanding the true or real nature of objects in order to arrive at the knowledge of truth) and *Sarvajñāna – sāmāthyā* (Comprehensive, manifold capacity for acquiring and assimilating all forms of knowledge). Taking into consideration the first property i.e. *viśuddhi*, it helps an individual to be free from various inclinations of desires, emotions and all other types of passions. The intellect being pure and transparent can easily understand the true nature of object and its transitoriness, thereby not being inclined or afflicted towards them (Sri Aurobindo, 1989). Only when this property resides in the intellect, the intellect is able to search the Truth – the true nature of object, the truth of oneself, the truth of worldly affairs, etc. Various ways can lead one to attain such knowledge. The intellect thus should be prepared for the *Vicitrabodha*. Finally, if one adopts various ways or means to attain the knowledge, there another important factor also plays a major role. It is the *Sarvajñāna sāmāthyā*, by help of which intellect overcomes the narrow moulds, rigid formulas in order to enter into the expansions of mental horizons and limited thoughts. In this way all these four fold of development through the process of integral yoga help in overall well-being and enhancement of an individual.

Conclusion

The paper outlines the various developments of human being in practicing Integral Yoga, starting from the physical, the vital, the heart and the intellect. All these planes of being ultimately attain enhancements for various capabilities of human being in general apart from the attainment of the spiritual goal. The abilities lies latent within an individual and can manifest only with proper activation, i.e. as we find the development of physique takes place under controlled exercise and practice. The qualities of deeper understanding, immense love, sense of responsiveness, inner strength, discriminative ability, assimilating manifold knowledge, etc. are all various factors that when reflected within an individual reveals one's nature and personality. These qualities are the measuring parameters of an individual's personality traits. The development of the physical level ensures an individual with physical strength, power of endurance, spontaneity and active for any and every work. Similarly the development of vital shown in personality leads to containment, pleasing attitude, mental stability and control over various desires and passions. The pleasing attitude of an individual helps to develop within one the inner strength to cope up with various situations and share sense of brotherhood with all. These definitely mark some good personality traits to be present within a human being. Teaching, practicing and developing are the three important factors that play a major role in shaping an individual personality from the very childhood. No doubt, the path of Yoga also makes way to enhance such personality traits within an individual.

Always human beings as such are not prepared to be guided spiritually, as that requires complete belief and surrender, but primary initiative to such journey enriches an individual human being with overall wellness and some physical enhancements which are a part of worldly living. Although almost every yoga systems aims at the highest spiritual achievement of the ultimate goal of Realizing the Divine or Brahman – but the intermediate steps towards such attempts indeed brings in a lot of benefit to the general outlook of the practical aspect of an

individuals' life. So, not only yoga aims at the attainment of spiritual delight, but it also primarily adds the practical fervor to the overall well-being of an individual. As Sri Aurobindo being a nationalist, has by virtue always looked upon the nation and its people, his main outlook was to find a relieving pathway for all. The idea behind his experiential records of yoga enrich and encourage individual and collective mass to walk into the path in search of Light. The notion of Integral takes into account the collective consciousness that needs to be developed, enriched and liberated as was perceived by Sri Aurobindo himself. But, only a part of it can be achieved if individual takes the initiative to follow the steps of yoga and begin with the well-being of oneself.

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