

Yoga of Equanimity among College Students

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Abstract: *Yoga is the union of man and master. In order to achieve this union man has to work hard. How this can be achieved is guided by the number of Sages and Saints in India. One of the renowned sages is Patanjali. He has given an eight fold path of yoga to get united with our master. Present study attempted to find how yoga of equanimity (Samvatam) may help to achieve the balance in life of college students. Therefore current study reviewed relevant literature and commentaries to gain a better understanding of yoga of equanimity in our life. It is proposed that understanding oneself, having clear intention, keeping steadiness of mind, being spaciouly aware, and maintaining tranquillity may help to achieve Samvatam, or in other word balance in life. This will help students to grow holistically. It is also recommended to explore this empirically more in future.*

Keywords: Yoga, Equanimity, Samvatam, Patanjali, College Student

1. Introduction

Yoga is a group of mental and physical spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. It is one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophical traditions. There is a broad variety of yoga schools and practices, and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism, & Jainism. The term "yoga" in the Western world often denotes a modern form of hatha yoga, which includes the physical practice of postures known as Asanas. The origins of yoga have been found to date back to pre-Vedic Indian traditions; it's mentioned in the Rigveda, but was most likely developed around the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, in ancient India's ascetic & sramana movements. The chronology of earliest texts describing yoga-practices is unclear, varyingly credited to Upanishads. The Yoga Sutras of *Patanjali* till date are from the first half of the 1st millennium, but only gained prominence in the West world in the 20th century. Hatha yoga texts emerged around the 11th century with origins in Tantra and now we have it. Yoga gurus from India later introduced yoga to the West world, following the success of Swami Vivekananda in the late 19th & early 20th century, Within the eighties, modern yoga or as now people call trendy yoga became popular as a system of physical exertion across the Western world. Yoga in Indian traditions, however, it's quite more than physical exercise; it has a meditative & spiritual core. Having understood Yoga and its importance briefly, the current study aimed to find how yoga of equanimity or *Samvatam* can help to make balance in the life of college students.

One amongst the six major orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy is also called Yoga, which has its own epistemology & metaphysics, and is closely associated with Hindu Samkhya philosophy (orthodox school).

Yoga of equanimity is referred to as the Role of Samvatam within the Bhagwat-Geeta in Chapter no. 2 Sankhya Yoga, in Verse 48.

“Yoga-stah kuru karmani sangam tyktva dhananjaya siddhy-asiddhyoh samo bhutva samvatam yoga uchyate”

It means be steadfast within the performance of your duty, O' Arjuna, abandoning attachment to success and failure. Such equanimity is named Yoga. Equanimity is a state of psychological stability & composure which doesn't get disturbed by experience of or exposure to emotions & pain, or any other phenomena that might cause others to lose their balance of mind. The virtue & value of equanimity is extolled and advocated by a number of major religions & ancient philosophies worldwide. The equanimity that enables everyone to accept all circumstances with serenity is so praiseworthy that Shri Krishna calls it Yoga, or union with the Supreme. This balance of force of interest comes from implementing the knowledge of the previous verse. When we try to understand that the effort is in our hands & not the results, we then concern ourselves only with doing our duty. The results are for the pleasure of God, & so we dedicate them to him. Now, if the results are not to our expectations, we calmly accept them as the will of God. In this way, now we are able to accept fame and infamy, success & failure, pleasure and pain, as God's will, and when we learn to embrace both equally, we develop the equanimity that Shri Krishna talks about.

This verse is a very practical solution to the vicissitudes of life (if seen this way). If we are sailing in the ocean within a boat, it is natural to expect the waves of the ocean to shake the boat & if we get disturbed each time a wave rocks the boat, our miseries would be endless & if we don't expect the waves to arise then we would be expecting the ocean to become something other than its natural self. Waves are an inseparable phenomenon of the ocean. So, as we wade through the ocean of life, it throws up all kinds of waves that are beyond our control. If we have a tendency to keep struggling to eliminate negative situations & we will be unable to avoid unhappiness. But if we can learn to accept everything that comes our way anyhow, without sacrificing our best efforts, we will have surrendered to the will of God, & that will be true Yoga.

In the book, titled Buddha's Brain-The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love and Wisdom by Rick Hanson and Richard, they describe and explain that the human mind defaults to negative emotions and suffering, but with practice, you can rewire your brain to develop

equanimity. The word equanimity has Latin roots meaning “even” & “mind”. The definition of equanimity is mental calmness; composure and evenness of temper and so on especially in a difficult situation.

In a sense, equanimity is your brain's circuit breaker and it breaks the chain of suffering by separating the feeling tones of experience from the machinery of craving and neutralizing your reactions to those feeling tones. The authors also state that psychologists have a term that they call “demand characteristics” for the aspects of situations that really pull at you every time. With equanimity, situations have only characteristics and not demands. When you have equanimity, you do not grasp after enjoyable experiences or push against undesirable ones you have space, or a buffer zone, between you and your feeling zones & are able to not react impulsively anytime.

How to train our brain to not react but to maintain calm? In the book there are five stages to developing the factors of equanimity, as follows:

- 1) Understanding: Develop an ability in yourself to recognize that rewards and painful experiences are transient, meaning that both do not last that long or are that awful. Life is a continuum of change and that most of the factors that shape the future are most of the time out of your hands.
- 2) Intention: Keep reminding yourself of the most important reasons for equanimity, you want more freedom from craving and suffering it brings usually.
- 3) Steadiness of Mind: Pay particular attention to the neutral feeling zones through sensitizing yourself to the neutral aspects of experiences so your mind will become more comfortable staying with them & less inclined to seek rewards or scan for threats.
- 4) Spacious Awareness: The space of awareness allows each content of your mind to be or not to be, to come and to go & thoughts are just thoughts, sounds are just sounds, situations are just situations & people are just being themselves.
- 5) Tranquillity: Don't act based on the feeling tone. Set aside a period every day, even just a minute long to start with then increase or extend that time & to consciously release preferences for or against anything. Your actions will be guided more by your values & virtues rather than the desires that are reactions to positive or negative feeling tones.

Buddhism has a metaphor for the different conditions in life. They are called the Eight Worldly Winds of Buddhism: Pleasure & pain, Praise & blame, Gain & loss, Fame & ill repute.

As one will gain equanimity, these winds have less effect on your mind then. When managing the emotions of separation, think of the gains your child is striving for rather than the loss of yours. Michigan State University Extension offers a social-emotional health development programming throughout the state that are designed to help participants navigate feelings & stress.

2. Review of Literature

Although there are little studies on Yoga of Equanimity even if some of the relevant studies with other participants are reviewed as follows:-

Chinna, Keeffe and Darling (2009) described how to enhance global business practices by following the Bhagavad Gita and Nishkama Karma motivates one's duty to do objectively without worrying about the consequences. *Tat-Twam-Asi* is cognition of the interconnectedness of nature, the human, and the spiritual that encourages managers to look at the big picture, a holistic view, for guidance with a realization that there can be no simultaneous winners and losers.

Mulla and Krishna (2010) assessed how Karma-Yogis became better leaders. Karma-Yoga has three dimensions of duty: orientation, indifference to rewards, and equanimity and constitutes a comprehensive model for moral development in the Indian context. And found it helpful in becoming a good leader.

Pradhan, Pradhan and Mazumder (2012) focused on the effect of transformational leadership on employee's contextual or extra-role performance (helping others, exerting additional effort, and supporting organisational values and culture). In this study karma-yoga (selfless action) is conceptualised as having five dimensions; emphasis on process than outcome, obligation towards others, to act with equanimity, seeking perfection/excellence in action, and regarding work as an offering to higher Self. That helps employees to improve and make a balance in life.

Toise (2012) evaluated the efficacy of adapted yoga (vs. usual care) in reducing psychosocial risks (e.g. anxiety and depression symptoms) and to improve the quality of life in recipients. Study suggests adapted yoga can help in reducing psychosocial risks in patients.

Rastogi and Prakash (2015) found Karma Yoga as a persistent positive state of mind that is characterized by absorption and service consciousness. Further the findings also suggest the importance of sense control and equanimity as the necessary prerequisites for individuals to practice Karma Yoga.

3. Conclusion

College students attain this state of Yoga of equanimity in their life and can be more productive in their academic and extracurricular activity. As most of the problems or hurdles are ultimately part of their life due to the gap they see between the success and failure. It is proposed that understanding oneself, having clear intention, keeping steadiness of mind, being spaciouly aware, and maintaining tranquillity may help to achieve *Smavatam* or in other word balance in life. This will help students to grow holistically. It is also recommended to explore this empirically more in future.

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