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Nonviolent lifestyle: Gandhian tenets in Patanjali's yogic observances

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Abstract

In this Materialistic world, everything is being commercialized and even Yoga is not an exception. Gradually Yoga is being corporatized especially in the western world, is been Multi dollar business and the core values of Patanjali's Yoga sutras are ignored. Ultimate objective of yoga is attainment of glorified wisdom. MK Gandhi, a spiritualist in nature, believed in the means than the ends. Hence the researcher examined the need of nonviolent life style in a yogic path. He formulated a conceptual framework of nonviolent lifestyle and its components. He identified Gandhi's observances from the Patanjali's yoga sutra. If one can add these observances in his life style, truly Asanas and Pranayamas will yield its maximum benefit i.e highest level of wisdom or Super consciousness or Samadhi.

Keywords: Nonviolent life style, patanjali, yoga, Gandhi, inner peace, wisdom, truth

Introduction

In the quest of Physical and mental wellbeing, modern world has an ultimate fondness towards Astanga yoga. Eventually people are grasping the bits of pieces of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and practices as per their expedient. Gradually Yoga is being corporatized especially in the western world, is been Multi dollar business as some of the postures, sequences, and styles being are patented by companies^[1]. Even in India, Yoga is slowly becoming commercialized and has been diverted from its path of attaining glorified wisdom. M.K. Gandhi, a Karma yogi himself believed that "impure means must result in the impure end"^[2]. One doesn't have control over their end but everyone can drive their means. Patanjali also accentuated values and character than corporeal postures, pranayamas and Meditation^[3]. This paper attempts to latch Gandhian Tenets, the core of Patanjali yoga Sutra and provide the means to ultimate wisdom.

Objectives

1. To formulate conceptual framework for nonviolent life style.
2. To detect Gandhian Tenets in Patanjali's Astanga yoga.

Review of Literature

Nonviolence is the most cardinal virtue which distinguishes a human behavior from the Animal behavior. According to Prabhu and Rao (1966), Gandhi viewed Nonviolence is the way of life and is the root of all the fundamental religions in the world"^[4].

Tiruvalluvar (31 BC), an ancient Tamil poet underlined "Wisdom is doing goods even to an evil doer".

*இன்னாசெய் தார்க்கும் இனியவே செய்யாக்கால்
என்ன பயத்ததோ சால்பு*^[5]. (Tirukural, 987, Sanranmai)

According to Swami Satchidanandha, "In the presence of one firmly established in non-violence, all hostilities cease". Once a person started to experience nonviolent life style, he emits harmonious vibrations. Other people in the vicinity also give up their harmful tendencies. In the ancient times, sages, firmly following ahimsa, would live in the forest harmoniously with wild animals.

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Even a cow and a tiger would live peacefully together in their presence. Some known famous people who followed and advocated ahimsa are Mahatma Gandhi, St Francis and Gautam Buddha. “*Ahimsa Pratishthayam tat sannidhau vairatyagah*” (Suta 2.35)

In the view of Christoph Eberhard (2008), Ahimsa is but a guideline, the polar star guiding us on our spiritual journey. It sets a direction but we have to rediscover it and actualize it anew incessantly like little children who rediscover the world at each moment. Through the practice of Ahimsa, we may again become able to wonder and to marvel. We may little by little become innocent and non-harmful again and start enjoying instead of chasing the world ... and Reality ^[6]. (Ahimsa: A Yoga Perspective on Non-Violence)

Nonviolent Life style

Ends of Nonviolent lifestyle

Patanjali yoga sutras ultimately drive the people to attain Samadhi. Literal meaning of Samadhi is Supreme Consciousness which considered being highest level of wisdom. According to Gandhi the objective of life, is pursuit of Truth; in the pursuit of Truth one can attain God; This God has no form. One can feel the God in the pursuit of ultimate reality. Hence the objective of Astanga Yoga and Gandhi's Ends has literally aiming to attain Wisdom.

Definition

The first step on the truth path of yoga is living ethically ^[7] according to Patanjali Yoga sutra. Nonviolence is not merely absence of Non-killing and harmlessness but it is positive state of love of doing good to an evil doer ^[8]. Both Gandhi and Patanjali obliged Ahimsa is foremost principle in the way of life in the path to glory.

How can one experience nonviolent lifestyle in this competitive so called Modern World in other word “Self – Centric World”? J.C. Kumarappa stated that apart from God there is nothing can be said to be permanent ^[9]. Rests are transient. Hence self is transient compare to Nature; Nature is transient to Universe and Universe to God or reality.

Then we can define Nonviolent life style is the transformation of Self Centric world to Truth Centric or Wisdom Centric or God Centric world by means of love and compassion. In other word, nonviolent life style is the removal of EGO from oneself. Unless nonviolence becomes flesh and blood in individual's life, he cannot realize the ultimate truth of life ^[10].

Means of Nonviolent Lifestyle

1. Non possession

“The world has enough for Everyone's needs but not enough for one's greed”. – Gandhi. Materialism is the real challenge for the nonviolent life style. One has to understand their priorities in this world and our life is being time bounded one. According to Patanjali, When one able to confirmed in Non Possession, the sense of why and how of Existence is attained. “With constancy of *aparigraha*, a spiritual illumination of the how and why of motives and birth emerges. (*Yoga Sutra 2.39*) Non possession does not mean that, if one has wealth, it should be thrown away and wife and children should be turned out of doors. It simply means that one must give up attachment of these things and dedicate one's all to God and make use of his gifts to serve him only. (Harijan, 28-4-1946, p. 111)

We can witness simplicity in the pursuit of Wisdom and thus non possession will lead to high thinking. When one decrease

his needs and wants, and then one can enjoy all the treasures of this world.

2. Fearlessness

Gandhi always felt that Nonviolent is vastly superior to violence because violent is needed for the protection of external things where as nonviolence is needed for the protection of Athman which will protect one's honor ^[11]. We are believing that fearless is just in the form of arrogance and aggressiveness but it will be absence of all type fear – fear of death, fear of injury, fear of insults and so on.

Patanjali also stated that fear or will to live (Abhinivesha) prevents one to get liberation. Even though, this physical body will die one day yet our fear of death is deeply suppressed in our unconsciousness.

“*Avidya Asmita raga dvesha abhinivesha pancha klesha*” (Yogasutra 2.4)

3. Brahmacharya

The word Brahmacharya is the combination of two words: Brahma and Charya. Brahma means eternity and Charya means Moving. Hence moving in eternity (ultimate reality) is the true sense of Brahmacharya.

As per Gandhi, Brahmacharya is the process to remove all our animal behaviors from oneself. All the sense organs should be under control. If a person controls only one Sense organ and allows others free then it will not be considered brahmacharya ^[12]. Gandhi also felt liberation only starts from Brahmacharya ^[13]. He also considered “Pleasure without conscience is a social Sin ^[14].”

One has to practice Brahmacharya to gain mental fitness and physical fitness thereby he can get spiritual fitness. He will get strength to walk in the highest reality or ultimate reality ^[15]. It does not just mean giving up sex; it also means to transmute the energy of sex into devotion of God ^[16]. “*Brahmacharya pratishthayam viaryalabhaha*” (II Sutra 38)

4. Control the Palate

மருந்தென வேண்டாவாம் யாக்கைக்கு
அருந்தியது அற்றது போற்றி உணின்.
(Thirukural 942)

This Thirukural clearly explains the concept of Diet. One should know what should be eaten and what shouldn't be. If so no disease will interrupt in one's life.

Gandhi had followed this vow throughout his life since 1904. Gandhi felt that, human body is meant to serve others and his /her stomach is not a dustbin. In order to maintain our body fit and clean, one has to master over his palate. This paves way to Brahmacharya too. According to Gandhi, the purushartha (life objective) of humble seekers of God has to put efforts to win divine grace of God then artificial tastes will be slowly and steadily disappeared from oneself ^[17].

In Patanjali's point of view the type of diet will influence the nature of mind. Sattvic (Pure and light) food will give harmony, goodness, luminous and thereby clear state of mind. Sattvic food will also lead to Detachment. Rajas (Spicy) will give egoistic state of mind whereas the last one tamasic (Heavy) will lead to delusion state of mind. “*te vyakta-sūkṣmāḥ guṇa-atmānaḥ*” (yoga sutra 4.13)

5. Selfless Service (Karma Yoga)

One has to quench all his Ego, attachment and expectations and surrender oneself to the selfless service to humanity ^[18].

Gandhi strongly believed that Selfless Service is only possible if one sees God all around him. One needs not to be rich to serve selflessly, anyone with right intention and action can do. According to him, the outcomes of Karma yoga are (i) Freedom from the Karmic Law of Birth and Death (ii) attainment of oneness with God (iii) Happiness and (iv) Peace [19].

Patanjali describes two types of Samadhi (i) Sabija (Lower Samadhi) (ii) Nirbija (Upper Samadhi). To move from Sabija to Nirbija, one has to cultivate inner Purity. Inner Purity occurs when one is actively practicing Compassion, Kindness, Dispassion and Selfless Service [20].

“Rutambharaa tatra praj~jaa” (Yoga sutra 1.48)

Conclusion

Transform into nonviolent lifestyle is a progression but is the only means for existence of Homo sapiens in the universe. It should be evolved from the thought process and synchronize with speech and action. One can read the mind of Gandhi and how he successfully framed nonviolent lifestyle started from Phoenix Settlement in 1904. He had continuously tested these components till his death in 1948 without changed its essence. He whole heartedly surrendered himself to the God by means by serving others. Yama and Niyama are the fundamentals of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra and Gandhi's Tenets; to attain holistic Peace, one has to refurbish Patanjali's yoga sutras and observe Gandhi's nonviolent life style.

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