

# Role of Yoga Practices in the Protection of Human Rights

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## ABSTRACT

Human Rights are the moral and ethical principles which ascertain certain standards of human behaviour in the society. These are the basic rights of an individual by virtue of which one can develop one's personal as well as family life and in addition to these, one's every social and national transaction and interaction reach to the optimum level of their saturation and realization. But today, various forms of cruelty and inhumanity frequently destruct and demolish the very norms and foundation of human rights. Now torture, brainwashing, imprisonment, rape, theft, murder, forced labour, slander, economic deprivation etc have become common and day- to-day features of human society. Today's developed science and technology have also accelerated this process by providing a mechanized method of human torture and thus gives the unfair advantages to criminals and violators to demolish the very foundation of human rights i.e., justice, tolerance, co-existence, mutual respect of human dignity etc. Since last centuries, many national and international institutions and many independent organizations like UN committees, Amnesty International, International Federation of Human Rights Watch, World Organization against Torture and Freedom House have been trying to protect and monitor the violation of human rights but no effective remedy has been evolved so far. In fact, the success in the protection and monitoring of human rights lies in the root of attitudinal change and behavioural modifications of a person. An individual must be free from greed, vanity, violence and thirst for self satisfaction and over consumption. Until these deep rooted negative traits of personality are replaced by positive ones, mere legal aspects, intellect building education, awareness programs will not be evolved as an ideal solution to the protection of human rights. Yogic practices along with inculcation of Yogic ethical values can only guide an individual by changing the core of his personality. Yoga practices directly regulate and control the functions of 'body-mind equipment'. Through Yogic practices, flow of bio-energy and body fluids of a practitioner become smooth and normal and his mind becomes tranquil and steady. Consequently, individual achieves a good understanding and sound judgement capacity by which one can acts rightly and becomes luminous. Under luminosity, individual develops total awareness of the very core of his being and achieves the state of "Unified consciousness". Individual feels that all human beings and even the inanimate objects around him are one and they are meant for making destruction and violence. Therefore, Yoga practices can be suggested as a very congenial model for the protection of human rights.

**Key Words:** Human rights, Yoga practice, body-mind equipment, unified consciousness

## INTRODUCTION

The Universal declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1948 provided comprehensive protection to all human beings against all kinds of injustice i.e.,

social, political, economic etc. Human Rights are the moral and ethical principles which ascertain certain standards of human behaviour in the society. It is very inherent to all human beings regardless of their gender, nationality, place of residency,

language, religion or any other categorization. The human rights are non-discriminatory which signify that all human beings are entitled to them and cannot be deprived from them (Morsink, 1999). Thus, human rights are the basic rights of an individual by virtue of which one can develop one's personal as well as family life. And in addition to these, one's every social and national transaction and interaction reach to the optimum level of their saturation and realization through the human rights. But today, various forms of cruelty and inhumanity frequently destruct and demolish the very norms and foundation of human rights. Now torture, brainwashing, imprisonment, rape, theft, murder, human trafficking, forced labour, child labour, slander, economic deprivation etc have become common and day- to-day features of human society. Today's developed science and technology have also accelerated this process by providing a mechanized method of human torture and thus gives the unfair advantages to criminals and violators to demolish the very foundation of human rights i.e., justice, tolerance, co-existence, mutual respect of human dignity etc. In this way, the violation of human rights in modern age has created an insecure environment for the entire human community. Therefore, it is a crying need of present society to find out an appropriate means of protecting human rights.

#### **Causes of violation of Human Rights**

Psycho-physiologically, the distorted mood, thought and behaviour of an individual due to immature, irrational and unstable emotion are the main causes of occurring embarrassing events like violation, destruction, cruelty, torture, brutality, rape, theft, murder etc in the society which in other words, results in the violation of human rights. Irrational emotional impulses normally contaminate one's mind and lead one to think only for self development, self satisfaction and self existence by ignoring the values of mutual cooperation, co-existence, friendliness, liberty, equality etc. Such individuals are

found to be lack of elevated level of consciousness. Limbic system, the most primitive region of the brain, plays an important role in generating emotions. Various parts of the limbic system encircle the brainstem and nerve pathways, interwoven through these parts, send a continuous flow of electrochemical impulses that direct human drives and emotions. The hippocampus constantly checks information relayed to the brain by the senses; the thalamus analyses and passes information from nerves to the brain. Hypothalamus rises the emotional feelings of pain pleasure etc. and above it, is the amygdale (Zaveri and Mahendra Kumar, 1994) which generates physiological reactions for emotions. The whole mechanism occurs due to over excitation of hypothalamo-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA) and sympathetic nervous system. The emotive stimulus is processed in the limbic area brings about a reactive behaviour which leaves an individual in a state of intense emotional feeling, impulse reaction, rigid and repetitive response and lack self reflection. But when the emotive stimuli is handled by higher cortical areas of the brain, it brings about reflective, rational thought process in the mind and thus produces the stable and mature emotional responses, as the cortical arousal generate conscious subjective awareness of feeling (Ravindra,2012). According to Vivekananda (2005), activity in the right middle frontal gyrus of the brain is highly associated with negative emotions such as pessimism, dejection, low energy, depression etc. Such types of emotional aberrations are responsible for distorting behaviour and personality and an individual becomes the victim of lowest level of bestial consciousness.

Therefore, the appropriate remedy lies in activation and arousal of the higher cortical areas of the brain along with the activation of left hemisphere of the brain; instead of over activation of limbic system, because a highly activated limbic system can overwhelm rational thought.

But in accordance with the Yogic Etiology, the (1) Trigunas (three qualities) (2) Vasanas (desires) and (3) Sanskaras (accumulated imprints of various incarnations of individual) collectively create the ground for generating thought pattern, mood and behaviour. The Trigunas i.e., Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the three basic qualities of human psyche (citta) which give form to one's life in its cycle of birth and shape one's emotional characteristics according to his past actions and experiences (Iyenger,2000,P.121). In the life of an individual, the gunas enter into enormous verity of combinations at different times, all of them irregular and one or other guna predominating at any point of time depending on the particular type of situation one is facing and the emotional and behavioural characteristics are changed accordingly (Krishnamurthy,1999,P.228). Carak Samhita (Sarira Sthana, IV/37) expressed that in every one's life, the trigunas of psyche play an important role in making behaviour. Of the trigunas, Rajas and Tamas are the culprit of creating emotional instability. Person with predominance of Rajasic guna attains the emotional characteristics of restlessness, conceited, lair, egoistic, aggressive, lustful, concern and sorrowful (Carak Samhita, Sarira Sthana, IV/46, 53). According to Bhagavad Gita (XIV/7) Rajasa guna reflects the emotional characteristics of constructive, physical courage and enthusiasm. Such people are sensuous, thirsty, little interested in spiritual pursuit, hatred, jealous, imitative, passionate, anxious, industrious and overambitious. Individual with the predominance of Tamasa guna found the emotional characteristics of ignorant, lethargic and delusional. They are destructive, drowsy, angry and fearful by nature (Gita, XIV/8). Tamas guna creates mental bogusness in which one displays his worst qualities i.e., sloth stupidity, obstinacy and helpless despair (Krishnamurthy, 1999, p.28). Vasanas are the desires deeply rooted in the strata's of sub-conscious and unconscious

mind which make present consciousness of past perceptions. If an individual attains negative, unrealistic and illicit Vasanas (desires) during his past perceptions, he analyses and reacts with the every event or stimulus of the surroundings negatively and found to be remained in the state of emotional instability. The theory of karma postulates that the results of every action whether it is good or bad are carried forward to the next life called Sanskara and as a result of this, an individual's psyche is influenced and directed accordingly (Betal, 2016,p. ). Maharishi Patanjali has rightly stated that 'as long as the root of actions exists; it will give rise to class of birth, span of life and experiences'-*"SATIMULE TADVIPA KAH JATI AYUH BHOGA"* (P.Y.S.-II/13). Thus, the state of emotional impulses of an individual's psyche is greatly designed and shaped by the nature of gunas and of past desires, actions and experiences (Vasanas and Sanskaras). These psycho-spiritual factors are obstacles to the way of achieving higher level of consciousness.

### **Efforts for the protection of Human Rights through the ages**

The concept of the protection of human rights is not a new one. The struggle for the protection and recognition of Human rights and struggle against injustice and inequalities have found to be remained an integral part of the history of all human societies through the ages. The Yajur Veda proclaims "May all beings look at me with a friendly eye, May I do likewise and may we look on each other with the eyes of a friend (36/18). In Mahabharata, it is mentioned that one should not behave to other in such a way, which one regards as injurious to one self (XIII/113.8). In yoga philosophy, Maharishi Patanjali advised to observe non-violence in order to alleviate enmity (Yoga Sutra-II/35) because it develops the feeling of friendliness to all living and non-living objects. Great Emperor Asoka (274 BC-232 BC) implemented several laws for the protection of rights of human being and animals (Sen, 1956). Jainism established the

idea of “non-injury” as a great vow. In the mediaeval period, Mughal Emperors specifically Akbar exhibited great interest in the protection of human rights and natural resources (Verma and Agarwal, 1993). In ancient world, “the oldest legal Codex was found with the Neo Sumarian-The code of UR-Nammu 2050 BC. Similar laws were also found to be enacted in Mesopotamia including Code of Hammurabi 1780 BC. All these show protocols and punishments that if these rules are violated on Varsity of matters including women’s right, men’s right, slave’s right. Cyrus, the great fist king of the ancient Persia forced the slave of Babylon for liberation in 539 BC and declared that all people had the right to choose their own religion, establishment and racial equality. The Cyrus Cylinder (baked clay cylinder) has been recognized as the world’s first charter on Human rights. Documents asserting individual rights such as Magna Carta (1215 AD), the petition of rights (1628AD), the US constitution(1787), the French declaration of the rights of man and the citizen(1789 AD), the US bill of rights (1791), has been precursors to many of today’s human right documents” (Kumari,2016,p.67) . The constitution of India offered Fundamental Rights to ensure equality before the law prohibits discrimination against any citizens on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and guaranteed the equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Article 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c), and 42 of the constitution are of special importance regarding the protection of rights. The government of India has also passed an ordinance of human rights and formed a commission in 1994 in order to protect citizens’ rights (Basu, 2014). Since last centuries, many national and international institutions and many independent organizations like UN committees, Amnesty International, International Federation of Human Rights Watch, World Organization against Torture and Freedom House have

been trying to protect and monitor the violation of human rights.

### **Strategies for the protection of Human Rights**

But it is to be regretted that despite the enactment of thousands of law, graveness of the problem has not yet been solved, though they demonstrated some degree of success. In fact, the success in the protection and monitoring of human rights lies in the root of attitudinal change and behavioural modifications of a person. An individual must be free from emotional impulses like greed, vanity, violence and thirst for self satisfaction and over consumption. Until these deep rooted negative traits of personality are replaced by positive ones, mere legal aspects, intellect building education, human rights education and teaching along with awareness programs will not be evolved as an ideal means of protecting human rights. Yogic practices along with inculcation of Yogic ethical values can only guide an individual by changing the core of his personality. Yoga originated outside the structure of science and technology and is a psycho-spiritual means of achieving elevated level of consciousness (the consciousness of union or oneness). The Yogic processes developed by the Indian philosophical and spiritual geniuses aimed to break through negative habit patterns of ordinary consciousness. Their prime goal was to liberate human beings from suffering and distress which is a product of unconscious conditioning of mind (Feuerstein, 2002). Yoga practices directly regulate and control the functions of ‘body-mind equipment’. Through Yogic practices, flow of bio-energy and body fluids of a practitioner become smooth and normal and his mind becomes free from irrational emotional impulses and thereby achieve the state of tranquility and steadiness. Consequently, attains a good understanding and sound judgement capacity by which one can acts rightly and becomes luminous. Under luminosity, individual develops total

awareness of the very core of his being and achieves the state of unified consciousness (Yoga Sutra-II/28). Under the state of elevated level of consciousness, one experience "Yoga" i.e., "Union" with all life around oneself. Individual feels that all human beings and even the inanimate objects around him are one and they are meant for making friendship but not for destruction and violence (Betal, 2008). Such type of feeling of "oneness" or "unified consciousness" is only the single means for demonstrating an individual's commitment to human dignity, co-existence and promotion of an adequate standard of life to everyone which can ultimately bring forth the environment of global peace, security and prosperity.

Unified state of consciousness may easily be accessible to any individual through devoted practice of various yogic processes. Devoted practice of yogic processes brings about a perfect body-mind coordination as it correlated with maximum coherence, maximum orderliness and integration of body-mind functioning. Yogic (1) Psycho-ethical practices (2) Psycho-physical practices and (3) Psycho-meditative practices are sufficient to neutralize the negative thoughts and attitudes and thereby promote many positive qualities (values) within the individual. Individual starts from the point of diversity and reaches to the point of uniformity.

Therefore, the objective of this theoretical research paper is to examine the efficacy of Yogic processes in the development of unified consciousness which is the breeding ground of values like mutual respect, co-existence, non-violence, non-stealing, communal harmony, liberty, equality, fraternity etc which pave the way to protect Human rights.

### **Competency and efficacy of Yoga Practices in the protection of Human Rights**

According to Yogic texts, effects of all the Yogic processes are directly related to sophistication of human consciousness

and behaviour yet depending upon the nature of functions and effectiveness; they can be categorized into three broad types:

**(1) Psycho-ethical group of Yogic processes** which includes five types of Yama i.e., (1) Non-violence, (2) Truth, (3) Non-stealing, (4) Continence, (5) Non-possessions and five types of Niyama i.e., (1) Cleanliness, (2) Contentment, (3) Religious zeal, (4) Self-study and (5) Surrender to supreme self. Pratyahara (withdrawal of senses from outer objects) is also included in this category. This group of yogic practices are done to channel the energies of the organs of action and the senses of perception in the right direction (Iyenger, 2000, p.26) which bring forth ethical values and ethical consciousness among the individuals and thus develop 'psychological' and 'social' aspects of health.

Psycho-ethical group of Yogic practices are such a conscious psychotherapeutic technique (Singh, 1999, p.) which follows the principles of auto-suggestion and through their practice, effort is made to sow the seeds of positive values of 'Yama' and 'Niyama' in the deeper bed of sub-conscious and unconscious mind. These seeds will eventually manifest themselves at the conscious level and bring about positive changes in mood, attitude, behaviour and personality.

Individuals' selfish nature and bestial urges like rape, theft, murder, aggressiveness, cruelty, violence, covetousness and greediness create emotional disturbances and they become the victim of stress, anxiety and conflict which ultimately responsible for their behaviour, personality disorder, physical, psychosomatic and lifestyle disturbance.

Psycho-ethical practices of Yoga remove the seeds of these abnormalities from the bed of sub-conscious mind and in place of them introduce the seeds of positive social and ethical values, attitudes, behaviour and personality. Yamas are that yogic practices which develop and enhance the sociability

and social nature of a practitioner by bringing about the values of non-violence, truth, non-stealing, sexual continence and non-acquisitiveness whereas Yamas rectify their mental afflictions, emotional aberrations and other psychogenic illness by initiating the values of purity (both physical and mental), contentment, austerity, self-study or self-introspection and complete surrender to the almighty (effective for demolishing conceit). In this way, the psycho-ethical groups of yogic processes are very effective in curing negative thought patterns and irrational feelings and thus heighten the mental and social health (Betal, 2017)

**(2) Psycho-physical group of yogic practices** which include (1) Asana, (2) Pranayama, (3) Bandha, (4) Mudra and (5) Cleansing process This group of yogic processes specifically asana, Bandha and Mudra bring forth remarkable flexibility to the muscles, joints and spine and thereby tone up all the internal organs which stimulate free flow of body fluids and bio-energy. Pranayama promotes free flow of vital energy throughout the body parts and also produce tranquility in mind (Hathapradipika-II/2) whereas cleansing processes equalize the flow of vital energy (prana) through Ida Nadi (sympathetic nervous system) and Pingla Nadi (parasympathetic nervous system). This group of practices bring about a disease-free state and thereby offer a sound physical fitness, 'physical health' and 'psychic stability'

Psycho-physical group of Yogic practices act as an integrated system of medicine for complete development of physical health along with vital (pranic) mental and intellectual aspects of personality. This group of practices acts unconsciously over the 'body-mind equipment' and bring forth complete homeostatic balance within the body. As an immediate effect, it regulates and harmonizes the neuromuscular, neurohormonal and other bio-chemical functions and thereafter coordinate the 'body-mind equipment'. Because of neuro-

physiological disturbances, youth are incapable of orderly and effective adjustments. Normally they are found to be chaotic, impulsive and inadequate (Page, 1947). But through the administration of this group of yogic medicines, these neuro-physiological problems can be removed. They activate and tone up the whole nervous system; the electrical impulses through the nerves and the neuro-transmitter system of the brain are equipoise and function at their optimum level. This condition also enhances the adjustment capability of a practitioner with the rapid changing environment of modern age (Satyananda, 2000).

In fact, the uncoordinated and disharmonized physiological functions are the basic cause of human illness. But this group of practices brings about a harmonious coordination among body, mind and consciousness. Breathing exercise (pranayama) lowers and regulates the emotional upsurges and irrational feelings and consequently, stress response is minimized which helps to develop the immune capacity of the cells. By developing strong immune-capacity within the body, one can achieve the normal optimal physiological and metabolic state and body-mind integrity. Thus, this group of practices provides a good physical as well as psychophysical health by eradicating all kinds of psycho-physiological maladies (Betal and Nayak, 2006, p.63).

**(3) Psycho-meditative group of Yogic processes** which include (1) Dharna (concentration), (2) Dhyana (Meditation), (3) Yoga nidra, (4) Relaxation etc. This group of yogic practices are the most powerful to treat psychogenic illness by eradicating all the psychic impurities, afflictions and emotional aberrations, the causes of which are rooted in the deep strata of sub-conscious and unconscious part of mind. These groups of medicines are extremely helpful to ward off the turmoil and turbulence of conscious mind and thereby established a link of conscious mind with the sub-conscious and unconscious

mind. As the mind becomes steady and tranquil, individual can see the Sanskaras or karmasaya (residuals of actions of past incarnations) those are responsible for making one's present physical health, mental faculty, behaviour and personality (Yoga Sutra-II/12,13).. After observing the root causes of all behavioural negativities, individuals achieve the elevated level of spiritual consciousness. By virtue of elevated level of spiritual consciousness, one experience that the whole universe is the manifestation of a single "Unified consciousness" and all the creations are divine and life is meant for adoration but not for violation and destruction. Thus, this group of yogic practices provides spiritual health.

Psycho-meditative group of Yogic practices are direct means of calming down and purifying the mind. Through the practice of this group of yogic processes, mind enters into the sphere of subtle level of thought and it gradually becomes steadier, more collected and more tranquil. This calm and tranquil state of mind helps to break down the vicious cycle of emotional stress, conflicts and anxiety by reconditioning the arousal of hypothalamo-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA) and sympathetic nervous system and also regulating the secretion of nor adrenaline which initiates excitement (Betal, 2015p.383).

They provide a calm and tranquil mind after removing all the emotional upsurges and irrational fear. They offer a feeling of well being, leading to better emotional adjustment. Because they lead to heightened the arousability of higher cortical area and lessened limbic arousability (traditional seat of emotion) simultaneously. When the arousability of limbic system is reduced, emotional reaction is automatically reduced. The situation brings forth rational thought process (viveka chetna) in the mind along with a mature responsive behaviour to emotive stimulus. Consequently, one becomes more accommodating, internally more controlled, more relaxed and steadier. Yogic psycho-

meditative group of medicines elevates the level of awareness and understanding by which one experience that the whole universe is the manifestation of a single unified consciousness and all the creations are divine and life is meant for adoration but not for violation and destruction. In this way, an individual can achieve the global and "Unified Consciousness."

## **DISCUSSION**

After the analysis of theoretical data, it has been confirmed that 'Yogic Ethical Practices' through its ethical values under 'Yamas' and 'Niyamas' contributed in producing desirable moral and spiritual values and eradication of psychological distortions and thereby reformed the mental states, behaviour and attitudes. 'Yogic psychophysical exercises' regulate and harmonize physiological and psychological functions by effecting neuro-muscular and neuro-endocrinal and other systems of body. These harmonized functions of 'body-mind equipment' helped to get freedom from physical disabilities and mental distractions. Yogic Psycho-Meditative practices, on the other hand, calm down, purify and tranquil the mind. The passionate internal vibrations are removed and individual attained freedom from anguish and infatuations. Now consciousness detached it from irrational thought waves and emotional upheavals and assumed the quality of reasoning consciousness (viveka chetna) which is devoid of personal and material identity. Now all the three e.g., body, mind and consciousness are blended into one and the individual achieves 'Spiritual consciousness' which is adorned by the qualities of non-attachment, non-violence, tolerance, non-acquisitiveness, friendliness and reasoning consciousness etc.

Having acquired the characteristics of spiritual consciousness, he feels that his Self (Atma) abide in all beings and beings are in his own Self - "Atmanam Sarva Bhutesu". He is now filled with serenity, insight and truth and experiences 'Yoga' or 'Union' with all lives around him. This

altered state of understanding broadened the vision and makes a man see beyond the mundane and limited sphere of life and rises above selfish end. This growing universal outlook enriched by ethical values like universal friendliness love, and kindness made him a man of 'Unified Consciousness' who always feels the whole universe as one. He begins to deal with each and every creature with outmost care and love because now he realized that the whole universe is just like an essential part of his own body without which he cannot survive. This union and integrated outlook paves the way of protecting Human Rights.

### CONCLUSION

The aim of this theoretical research paper was to examine the role of 'Yogic Practices' in the development of unified consciousness within the practitioners. An individual adorned with 'Unified state of consciousness' begins to understand the mystery of infinitely diverse multiplicity of all the material creations i.e., entire universe. He perceives them as a 'single whole body' and also feels their close and eternal connectedness with the unified source i.e., the un manifested 'Supreme Self'. This psycho-spiritual upliftment abstains an individual from indulgence to illegal and unlawful acts and also from destruction, violence and killing and thus one acquires the tendency of mutual respect, cooperation, co-existence, tolerance etc to human being, natural and cultural resources as well.

In conclusion, it can be stated that through the practice of Yogic psycho-ethical, psychophysical and psycho-meditative processes, all the ripples of thoughts and irrational instincts are removed and man's level of understanding or consciousness shifted from point individuality to the point of universality. This extended, elevated and purified form of consciousness i.e., "Unified Consciousness" paves the way of protecting Human Rights. Therefore, Yoga Practices may be

considered as a very congenial and potent means of protecting Human Rights.

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