



YOGA : PERSONALITY, MIND AND VAIRAGYA

□ Dr. K. S. JOSHI, M. A., M. Sc. (Ag.), Ph.D.
Secretary of Indian Yoga Society & Head of the Department of Yoga,
University of Sagar (M. P.)

Yoga and Personality

Personality is a very vague term. Hundreds of definitions of it are given by psychologists, but there is not a single one which is accepted by all.

Whenever we talk about somebody being successful or unsuccessful in playing a particular role, or whenever we use such statements as 'he is liked by all', or 'he has become unpopular', we are really speaking about the personality of the individual in question. The process of education and learning which everyone of us undergoes in life, is concerned not only with the mere acquisition of knowledge, but is, also at the same time, a matter of personality development. The interest in the development of personality is perhaps as old as the human civilization. But a scientific treatment of the subject seems to be of a recent origin.

The word 'personality' is derived from the Latin *persona*, which means a mask. Masks were used extensively in the Greek and Roman drama to enable the spectators to distinguish the characters from a distance. Hence, personality is a convenient collective term for certain psychological functions.

We should distinguish between personality and mere individuality. Individuality may be said to be a characteristic of anything that can be counted separately ; whereas personality seems to imply self-consciousness. The term 'personality' may be used in relation to an agent who is conscious of himself. Thus, it may be interesting to ask whether a neonate has personality.

Guilford has classified all the definitions of personality into five groups : (i) Those which view personality as it appears to others, (ii) Those in which personality is called the sum-total of all observable characteristics, (iii) those which speak in terms of organization pattern, (iv) personality viewed as a whole, forgetting the parts entirely, and (v) those definitions which look at personality as organism-environment relationship.

A survey of various definitions shows that 'personality' is a convenient concept useful for understanding human behaviour. Personality is revealed through both overt and implicit behaviour. It is a function of two factors, namely, characteristics which are inherited, and those which are acquired. There may be general laws for explaining human behaviour, but our grasp of such laws is rather too poor. Hence it is generally said that each human being behaves in a unique manner. And lastly, personality as an indicator of behaviour can be measured in terms of quantitative variables.

Every person is found to have his own characteristic ways of doing things. These are called 'traits'. They show up in every act of the individual, in which he is trying to adjust himself with the internal and external reality.

Measurement of personality is usually done by first singling out aspects or dimensions of personality, and then assessing the position of an individual on the continuum or the scale posited in the method. Various such approaches have been tried by investigators, but a completely satisfactory method which would reveal one's personality in all its aspects is yet to be

found out. There are three main varieties of personality measurement, such as—(i) the life-record method, (ii) self-rating, and (iii) objective test method. No single test is sufficient to bring out a complete picture of personality. Hence a battery of such tests is generally employed.

Various dimensions have been studied by investigators of personality. They are, to mention a few, the somatic dimensions, dimensions of aptitude, dimensions of temperament, biological drives and so on.

In some sense, it is the job of the science of personality to analyse human behaviour with a view to arrive at the basic principles, and then to show as to how behaviour is to be modified in order to achieve what may be called the most desirable or ideal personality. I think, Psychology and its mother Philosophy, have both failed in this dual task, which is one of their primary objectives. Otherwise there would not be so much hypocrisy, exploitation, tension, war and superstition in the world in the which we live.

Is there any other discipline which can fulfil these two needs of humanity, namely, understanding the basic principles which govern human behaviour, and then showing a practical way of moulding human behaviour for realising the ideal personality? In relation to this question it may be said that Yoga, it is being realised more and more, is coming forward as that discipline or art or science of personality which humanity needs very badly today.

The ancient Indian view of personality may be summarized in the language of the *Kāthopaniṣad* (I. iii. 3 to 9) in the following manner :

“The human body is like a chariot, having the *buddhi* as its charioteer, and the *ātman* as the person travelling in that chariot. The mind provides the reins to control the horses, which are the *indriyas*, the objects of enjoyment being the territory to be traversed. The *ātman* along with the senses and mind is called the experiencer (*bhokta*). When the mind is filled with *avidyā*, it cannot be applied properly, and under this situation the senses act like uncontrolled horses. But when the mind gets filled with right knowledge (*vidyā*), it can be applied properly, so that the senses are fully under its control like trained horses, and such a person reaches the highest state, which is the goal of life.”

This is, in sum, the Yoga view of personality, which is found described also in the *Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad* (II. 6), and *Mahābhārata* (Vana-parvan, 211. 23 to 27). It may be said that the main emphasis in Yoga has always been on the goal of human life, that is to say, the state of liberation or emancipation. It is a basic view-point of Yoga that the life of an individual on the earth (*saṃsāra*) is overwhelmingly sorrowful. In fact, having to be born is itself looked upon as one of the most dreaded things, and a complete fullstop to the cycle of rebirths once and for all is the sole and ultimate concern of all the techniques that go to form the Yoga discipline. Thus the normal everyday personality of an individual, which is the most important sphere of investigation in modern approaches to personality, seems to have received hardly any attention in Yoga. Out of the five possible states of mind, called ‘*chittabhoomi*’s namely, *mugdhā*, *kṣipta*, *vikṣipta*, *ekāgra*, and *niruddha*, only the last two are the concern of Yoga. And how many of us can have their minds go into these two states of stillness?

The actual jurisdiction of Yoga has thus ever remained extremely restricted to a handful of people. Perhaps it was this situation that caused Lord Krishna to declare in the *Gītā* that the tradition of Yoga started by him in the beginning of creation by imparting its knowledge first of all to Vivasvāna, the Sun God, got lost, and vanished after some time. Thus in the strict sense Yoga may be called the science of the ‘ideal personality’. And this science of personality has ever been without any significance, so far as the common man was concerned.

But things are showing a tremendous improvement over the past two decades. The practice of Yoga is spreading to all classes of the society, and it is becoming more and more evident that Yoga is not for the chosen few, as it used to be thought; it is a thing from which everyone of us can derive some benefit. Importance of Yoga as a system of exercise, and as a therapy has now come to be established. And development of personality seems to be a more fruitful



area where Yoga can be put to extensive use. If it is main business of the science of personality to understand the principles governing human behaviour, and to show us how to apply those principles for bringing about a balanced and integrated personality, then even a superficial inquiry into Yoga-Psychology and Yoga-Ethics would show it clearly that Yoga is the most wonderful science of personality.

Yoga-psychology derives all human behaviour from five basic propensities of the mind, called the '*kleśas*'. They are : *Avidyā* or faulty knowledge of one's own nature, *asmitā* or the ego-feeling, *rāga* or craving for enjoyment, *dveṣa* or aversion for pain, and *abhiniveśa* or fear of death. These five *kleśas* govern the behaviour of all of us, whether we are lay or learned, ignorant or intelligent. *Avidyā* gives rise to a conditioned, one-sided view of the self and the world. This is the root cause of all misery, conflict, tension and war in the world. Cessation of *avidyā* is what Yoga aims at. For achieving this aim Yoga propounds an excellent training programme for the mind. Its psychological aspect consists of three stages, respectively called *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. This is aided by attitude training through development of right attitudes like *maitrī*, *karuṇā*, etc., and *pratipakṣabhāvanā*. The ethical aspect of the Yoga training involves behaviour issuing from *yama*, *niyama* and *pratyāhāra*. In addition to these there is the physical discipline which helps to train our muscles, nerves, and breathing, making the mind calm and peaceful. This is brought about by *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*. Thus the eight parts or *aṅgas* of Yoga provide an overall and all-purpose training programme for the body and mind, bringing about balance, poise and peace in life.

One very remarkable feature of the Yoga practices is that even a small measure (*svalpamapyasya dharmasya*, as explained by the *Gītā*) of it yields very high and encouraging results. Just sitting silently in a meditative pose for a few minutes every day is found to give rise to personality changes which make life happier. Relaxation induced by yogic methods is found beneficial in overcoming tensions from the mind. *Āsanās*, *mudrās*, and *prāṇāyāma*, make up together a wonderful system of exercising all the organs, glands and parts of the body, taking care of the psycho-somatic dimension of personality. In fact, every one of the eight parts of the Yoga discipline helps to bring about harmony and balance in our life. Harmony and balance is the very essence of Yoga. Yogic counselling is found to be extremely useful in making us aware of the pit-falls which we must avoid while we look at ourselves in relation to the world. Outlook on ourselves and outlook on life is what forms the very core of our personality. Yoga helps to bring about a radical transformation in this core of personality. The result of prolonged Yoga training is a *jīvanmukta*.

A *jīvanmukta* is free, first of all, from *avidyā*. He is a person who has achieved *ātma-darśana* by overcoming conditioning. As a result of this he stops seeking. Everyone of us is ever seeking to be something or to have something. This seeking stops completely in the state of *ātmadarśana*. That puts an end to all psychological conflict, struggle, fear and uneasiness. Such a person exhibits the ideal of Yoga through his behaviour. It may be an ideal extremely difficult to attain. But that is not really a weak point of Yoga. Because every step in the direction of that ideal brings with it a wonderful experience of personality development. We can start near so that ultimately we can go far. Yoga is a way of training the body and mind, and thereby bringing about better adjustment within us, and between us and the world we live in. Yoga seems destined to play an increasingly important role as a science of personality in a world of Scientific achievement and psychological backwardness.

Yoga and the Mind

In Yoga the mind is called '*chitta*'. Another word for it is '*antaḥkaraṇa*' or the internal organ. There are in all thirteen organs or *indriyas* recognised in Yoga. Ten out of them are called external organs, which are the five cognitive organs (*jñanendriyas*) and five motory organs (*karmendriyas*). The *antaḥkaraṇa* is composed of three segments, respectively called

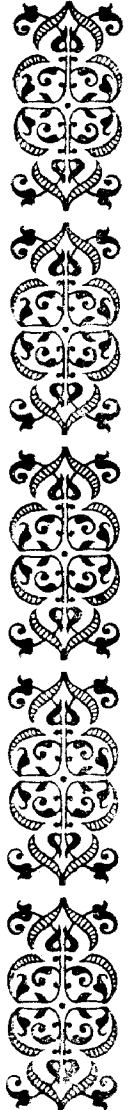
buddhi, *ahamkara* and *manas*. At times the word *manas* is also used in the sense of the *antaḥkaraṇa*. But '*chitta*' is a more common word with Patanjali, although he also uses word such as *sattva*, *buddhi*, *mana* and so on. *Buddhi* is the first product out of *Prakriti*. It has a preponderance of *sattvaguna*. It is the most important segment of the mind, as in it there are stored all the traces of past experiences in the form of *saṁskāras*. It is the decision-making part of the mind. Understanding or lack of it, memorizing, and arriving at conclusions and decisions, are all its functions. From the *buddhi ahamkāra* or *asmitā* arises. It supplies the ego-feeling, or feeling of one's existence, or self-consciousness. Words like 'I', 'me', 'to me', 'for me', 'mine', etc., are due to this segment. *Manas* is the segment which establishes a relation between the *buddhi* and the external world through the *Jñānendriyas*. Hence it is called *ubhayātmaka*. Its function is *saṁkalpa* and *vikalpa*. It is this part of the mind that needs to be silenced in *dhāraṇā* and *saṁādhi*.

Chitta is the instrument of knowledge. Being a product of the insentient *prakriti*, the *chitta* also is completely insentient (*jaḍa*). Then how can it be an instrument of knowledge? This difficulty is solved by yoga by supposing that the *chitta*, due to the preponderance of *sattvaguna* in it, has a special capacity of reflecting the *puruṣa*, which is the sentient principle, and thus getting 'energized', so to say. Thus the *chitta*, which has formed a reflection of the *puruṣa* in itself, behaves itself like being sentient. This is made possible because of the togetherness (*saṁyoga*) of the *puruṣa* and *chitta*, which is a fundamental presupposition of Yoga. The cause of this *saṁyoga* is *avidyā*. As long as this cause is there, *saṁyoga* also continues, and with it, the experiences gathered by the *chitta* go on accumulating in the form of *saṁskāras*. Yoga aims at putting an end to the accumulation of *saṁskāras* by the *chitta*, and seeks to achieve this by putting an end to *avidyā*. When *avidyā* is removed, the *saṁyoga* based on it also ceases to exist. That is called *Hana*, or *kaivalya*. All the eight parts of Yoga are prescribed in order to achieve *kaivalya*.

Chitta is supposed to go out through any one of the five doors of the cognitive senses. It grasps the object and becomes one with it. This communion with an object of experience gives rise to a modification in the *chitta*, which is called a '*vr̥tti*'. *Vr̥tti* may be a thought, or memory, correct or incorrect understanding, imagination, fantasy, etc. In Yoga, sleep is also called a *vr̥tti*, as it is also a modification of the mind.

The *chitta* is compared to a crystal, which, although colourless in itself, shows completely the colour of any object in its vicinity, as if that colour belongs to itself. Thus a crystal placed near a blue flower appears blue, and one placed near a red flower shows the red colour in itself. Similarly the *chitta* when it reaches any object of experience, becomes '*tadākara*' or '*tadrūpa*' with the object and assumes its form. This is called '*uparāga*' which gives rise to a modification in the *chitta*, which is its *vr̥tti*. But the *chitta* is full of all the *saṁskāras* of past experience, and these *saṁskāras* interfere with the process of '*uparāga*', and the resulting *vr̥tti* is more or less confused. When the *chitta* is purified by *dhyāna*, and the impurities of the *saṁskāras* are removed, the '*uparāga*' with any object becomes complete. This gives rise to a complete knowledge about that object. This is what happens in '*saṁyama*', and Patanjali has described many *siddhis* which arise due to *saṁyama*. The *chitta*, actually, has a capacity to know anything past, present, and future, without any limits. But in actual experience this limitless capacity is very much restricted, because of the impurities called '*chittamālas*', which are the *kleśas* and the *saṁskāras* gathered over countless past lives due to the presence of the *kleśas* in the *chitta*. Yoga aims at complete removal of the *kleśas* and *saṁskāras* from the *chitta* through the practice of the eight āṅgas of Yoga.

Experiences of the *chitta* are superimposed on the *puruṣa* reflected in it. Actually, the *puruṣa* being devoid of the *triguṇas*, does not really get affected by anything happening in the *chitta*. An example is given to explain this. The moon in the sky is reflected on the surface of a pond. When the water moves due to wind, the reflection of the moon also moves, and it may



appear to be broken into pieces. But actually nothing happens to the moon in the sky. Due to the relation of water with the moon, what is happening only to water and not to the moon, gets superimposed on the reflected moon. Similarly the *puruṣa*, although it is ever free and outside the happenings in the *chitta*, gets affected by the *vyttis* of the *chitta*, and starts assuming itself to be happy, sorrowful, successful, and so on. This is called '*aviveka*', and it is one of the primary objectives of Yoga *sādhana* to overcome this *aviveka*. That is achieved through making the *chitta* completely free of *avidyā* and the other *kleśas*. Then it shows the real nature of the *puruṣa*, just as an undistorting mirror shows the image of a person perfectly as the person actually is. This puts an end to *aviveka*, and gives rise to what is called '*puruṣakhyāti*' or '*viveka-khyāti*'. That is the highest state of experience for the *chitta*, which precedes '*kaivalya*', or liberation, which is the ultimate aim of Yoga.

Yoga and Vairāgya

Vairāgya is the beginning of Yoga. And a higher form of it, called '*parāvairāgya*' marks the culmination of Yoga, because, when that is achieved the ultimate goal of Yoga is sure to be reached. *Vairāgya* is the one single factor which determines to the greatest extent the success of Yoga. Hence it is spoken of very highly in Yoga literature. Patanjali, who defines Yoga in terms of cessation of *vyttis*, has declared that *vairāgya* and *abhyāsa* are the two means to that end. The same thing is said also by Lord Krishna in the *Gītā*.

Rāga means the desire to have something or to be something. It is looked as a *kleśa*, or affliction of the mind. It does play a great role in the life of every one of us. It is primarily the dual process of *rāga* and *dveṣa* that continually keeps all of us bound to the *samsāra* and the various activities in life. The absence of this process is what is called *vairāgya*. It is a state of silence marked by a complete absence of craving for getting any object or reaching any state. It consists of a sort of 'turning in'. As described in the *Kāthopanīṣad* (II. i. 1.), "our senses have an inherent tendency to be attracted towards the objects of enjoyment. The wise man, who wants to reach immortality has to turn his eyes inward and look to his inner self." Such a person is described there as "*avyttachakṣuḥ*". This is *vairāgya*. It means absence of greed.

Śaṅkarācharya, in his commentary on the *Kena upanīṣad* (I. 1.) has pointed out that "he alone, whose mind is filled completely with *vairāgya*, is a fit person for taking a course to *mukti*." At another place (*Vivekacōḍamaṇi* 78), he has clearly said that "even a person well-versed with the six śāstras can become fit for attaining *mukti* only when he is a man of *vairāgya*." We learn from the *Bhagavadgītā* (XV. 3-4.) that first the tree of ignorance should be brought down with the instrument of "*vairāgya*" and then one can proceed to reach that highest plane from where there is no return to this *samsāra*.

Vairāgya may be called detachment from cravings and retirement from the process of desire. Thus it is a sort of liberation or emancipation itself. Many of us have an experience of it, especially when we are grief-stricken, or when there is a terrible shock of disappointment. While attending a funeral, all of us seem to be convinced of the utter futility and insignificance of life, of achievements, small and big, and of the whole process of desire. This is called '*śmaśāna-vairāgya*', because it lasts only so far as one is in the crematory. After getting caught up in the stream of events of daily life again, we forget those thoughts. The effect of this *vairāgya* is very short-lived. So this kind of *vairāgya* is not of much use. *Vairāgya* in Yoga is a product of right thinking, and of understanding the true nature of the self and the world.

Patanjali speaks about two forms of *vairāgya*. The lower one, so to say, is called '*vaśīkara-vairāgya*'. It is the *vitṛṣṇa* or absence of desire in relation to two categories of objects of enjoyment, namely the '*dṛṣṭa*' and '*ānuśravika*' objects. In the first category, objects which we can actually experience, such as, house, clothes, riches, money, sex, recognition, felicitation, and so on, are included. The second category comprises those objects which are only heard of, but never actually experienced, like *svarga*, *apsarās*, *amṛita*, etc. When the desire for enjoyment

of both these kinds of objects ceases, one is in the state of *vaśikara vairāgya*. In Yoga the *chitta* is compared to a river. *Vairāgya* may, in that case, be compared to a dam on the river. It cuts the flow of *vṛttis* about objects of enjoyment.

The higher kind of *vairāgya* is said to be a product of *viveka-khyāti*. It puts an end even to the craving for *muktī*. It denotes the highest state of understanding or realization. It paves the way to '*kaivalya*'.

A person who has attained *vairāgya* is called '*veetarāga*'. Patanjali has recommended the *chitta* to be fixed and absorbed into thoughts of the *veetarāgas*. All the high authorities of Yoga, like Kapila, Panchaśikha, Śuka, Janaka, Matsyendra, Jñānadeva, Shankarācārya, and in recent times, Ramakrishṇa, Ramana, and Vivekānanda, were examples of *veetarāga* personalities. They do not crave anything to achieve for themselves. The Jaina Tirthankaras like Bhagavan Mahavira are also called *veetaragas*. He provided the best example of all that Yoga stands for. And *vairāgya* is one of the most unmistakable and most fundamental marks of yoga.

There can be no Yoga without *vairāgya*. Lord Krishna has himself said this in the Gita. The highest form of *vairāgya* may be very difficult or even impossible for most of us to achieve. But every one of us seems to be in need of achieving *vairāgya* in actual practice in our daily life, to some extent. It brings peace and satisfaction, and helps a great deal in reducing tensions. It is very essential that every one of us should learn this essential part of Yoga so as to overcome the present unhappy state of humanity due to conflict, tension and war.

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The Spiritual Heart-Centre is quite different from the blood-propelling, muscular organ known by the same name. The Spiritual-centre is not an organ of body. All that you can say of the heart is that it is the very core of your being. That with which you are awake, asleep or dreaming whether you are engaged in work or immersed in Samādhi.

This conscious entry into the heart will result in consciousness free of body-identification, i.e., thought free awareness.

—Raman Maharshi

