

Shreyas The Art of Living

By: Dr. Maulik Trivedi



In the last article, you read about the role, meaning and value of religion in human lives. Most people associate religion with a specific God. But what is one to do if they are not particularly inclined to be religious? Can they still develop a higher state of awareness? We will continue along that theme and look at an aspect of Vedic traditions that allows one to pursue higher awareness purely scientifically. It is called Yoga.

Yoga seems to surround us these days in many popular media. The mere word brings about images of people with 'perfect' bodies dressed to evoke envy from most of us, twisted in the shape of a pretzel. Such images typically result in one of two reactions. Most people are disappointed that they cannot get their body to perform these poses without tremendous pain. The other reaction is that of having experienced moments of inner peace or dramatic physical benefit from having practiced some element of Yoga.

Postural and stretching exercises are but one aspect of the whole system of Yoga. Yoga is much more comprehensive. In fact, Yoga is not just a physical method but also, and more significantly, a mental discipline. When the two are combined in a systematic way, they lead one to their spiritual experience. After all, Yoga by definition means union of body, mind and spirit. After knowing all there is to know and doing all there is to do, we, as human beings crave one thing. That is the experience of being at peace within ourselves. Yoga is the prescription for such inner peace. We need not stop at the physical forms of Yoga but continue the journey towards the final destination to fully benefit from Yoga.

The person credited with formalizing a system of Yoga that incorporates body, mind and spirit is **Patanjali**. He made Yoga practical. He described methods for achieving unity of body, mind and spirit through an organized system of practice under the title of *Yoga Sutra* (literally, Yoga thread). Much like any other science that can be applied to the world around us, Yoga is a scientific system applied to what is inside each of us. It is natural to us. It is a part of our inner nature as is gravity a part of the natural world surrounding us. The thread of Yoga can be followed by anyone at any point in life to stay on course of spiritual journey. In his book, *The Heart and Science of Yoga*, author **Leonard Perlmutter** writes, "As you willingly practice these various steps, you will gain increasing access to the intuitive wisdom of the superconscious mind - the perfect, all-encompassing intelligence that surpasses the capabilities of the rational mind ..."

Patanjali formalized his system of Yoga as having eight different sections or steps. Hence, the name *Ashtanga*. *Ashta* means eight and *Anga* means limb or part of a whole. **Patanjali's** eight parts

of the Yoga system are successive and overlap in layers. One does not merely complete a step and advance progressively. Instead one works at perfecting each step then naturally is drawn to the next. Whatever one has perfected becomes ingrained into one's being. They continue to incorporate what has been ingrained while working on the next step. Each step adds another layer to what has been mastered at one's core. Let's look at how **Patanjali** guides each of us to practice Yoga in a complete sense without getting stuck in a pretzel.

We can regard the eight steps in two levels. The first level is aimed at achieving physical and mental preparedness that will be required for the second level. The first level has four steps. They concentrate on mastering the physical body and refining one's personality to develop a new awareness of one's self. The four steps in the first level are *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana* and *Pranayama*. These are collectively known as '*Hatha Yoga*.'

Yama is the first step in any Yoga practice. It guides one to recognize and uphold the fundamental universal principles for mind, body and spiritual unity. *Yama* is the process of recognizing and adhering to the universal laws of truth. It is the essential foundation for building the rest of the structure. It is composed of 5 principles: *Ahimsa* (nonviolence), *Satya* (truthfulness), *Asteya* (not stealing), *Aparigraha* (limiting possessions to needs, not giving in to wants), and *Brahmacharya* (conservation and moderation of energy). These principles are to be recognized as basis for organization of universe from the reference point of the human being. These principles describe the operating process for each human being's existence in the universe.

Niyama is the second step and refers to observances that one undertakes for the purpose of creating an inner and outer environment most conducive to spiritual growth. It comprises of regular practice of *saucha* (purity of thoughts and actions through practice of the 5 *Yama* listed above), *santosh* (contentment), *Tapas* (spiritual austerity), *Swadhyay* (self-study through application of scriptures), and *Iswar Pranidhan* (an attitude of surrendering one's ego). These steps are practiced in one's daily life by oneself with utmost attention. Their perfection over time builds the base for and draws one towards the higher steps. Some examples of what one can do in daily life to work on the *Niyama* practice are

1. Contemplation of the *Yamas* in the context of living your daily life,
2. Regular inventory and upkeep of the mental and physical environment you live in, making sure it has utmost cleanliness and simplicity to evoke and maintain spiritual awareness,
3. Recognizing and giving up cravings,
4. Thinking actively and intentionally on a regular basis in appreciation of what you have,
5. Practicing meditation,
6. Fasting
7. Practicing '*Maun*' - no talking, preferably non-interaction - for a given amount of time.

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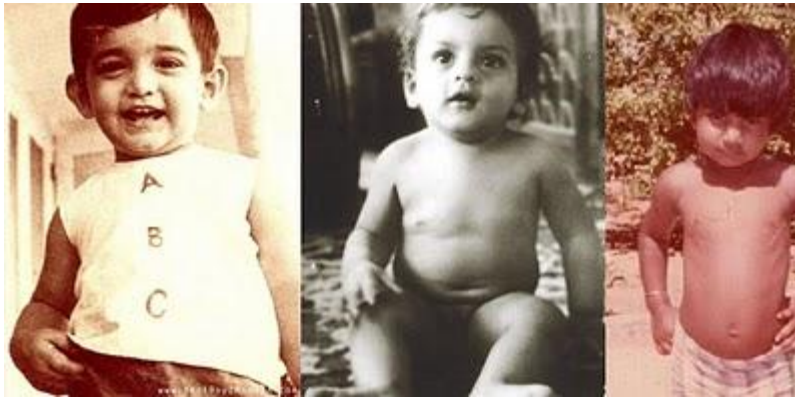
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Bollywood's Most Important Year: 1965

By: Kavita Agrawal



Aamir Khan

Shahrukh Khan

Salmaan Khan

They all look like cute adorable kids don't they? Can you identify them? They are destiny's favorite children, as today they not only rule the silver screen but also hearts of millions! These 3 children have grown up to be superstars of the Hindi Film Industry aka Bollywood - and they were all born in a span of 9 months in 1965! Now, you know why we say 1965 was a lucky year for the Industry. Lets have a closer look in order of their Birthdays.

Perfectionist Aamir Hussain Khan, was born to film producer *Tahir Hussain* and *Zeenat Hussain* in Mumbai on **14th March 1965**

Superstar Shahrukh Khan, was born to businessman *Taj Mohammed Khan* and *Fatima Khan* in Delhi on **2nd November 1965**

Bollywood's most eligible Bachelor, Abdul Rashid Salim Salmaan Khan was born to writer *Salim Khan* and *Salma Khan* in Mumbai on **27th December, 1965.**

Film Industry is notoriously known for its short associations and friendships. We hope that soon its "All Izz Well" between the trio.

**"... Knowing is not enough, you must apply; willing is not enough, you must do.
If you love life, don't waste time, for time is what life is made up of." - Bruce Lee**



The third step is *Asana*. This is the step that you see in practice most often. It has definite benefits for one's physique as well as health. It is incomplete when practiced without other steps and leads to only partial benefits. In context of the other 7 steps of *Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga*, *Asana* are physical exercises that aim to take one's body and create a "temple" where their spirit resides. *Yogasana* help self-discipline and concentration development both of which are essential for *Dhyana*, which is a step in the second half of the journey. *Suryasana* is a sequence of *Asanas* involving the whole body that is easily learned and can be

practiced with little time.

The last step in the first half of eight steps is *Pranayama*. It refers

to breath restraints. These are generally a variety of breathing techniques. These aim to help one gain mastery over emotions through breath-mind link. Regular training and formal practice of singing is an example of training one's mastery of their breath. *Anulom-Vilom* (aka alternate nostril breathing) is a simple *pranayam* technique readily learned from the internet.

As you can see, above practices can be easily incorporated into one's daily routine. As you start with small steps and perfect them to make them part of your daily living, you will be naturally drawn to the next step in your journey. The key is to prioritize the spirit of Yoga philosophy and to adhere to the system. In the words of the famous martial-arts master, Bruce Lee, "... Knowing is not enough, you must apply; willing is not enough, you must do. If you love life, don't waste time, for time is what life is made up of." So, don't waste another minute, do what you can, however small or big. Bring yourself upfront and center on the highway of spirituality. We will look at the second stage of *Ashtanga Yoga* in the next article. Namaste.

Maulik Trivedi, MD is a MindBody Physician in practice. Please access more information and resources at his website www.MindBodyIntegrated.com