

Yoga and Positive Psychology for Managing Career and Life
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Asanas as the Intervention for Managing Self and Career
Lecture - 70
Characteristics of Asanas

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Asana: Prayatna Saithilya

प्रयत्न-शैथिल्य-अनन्त-समापत्तिभ्याम् ॥२.४७॥

- The posture is perfected, made steady and comfortable through relaxing the effort and coalescence (of awareness) with the endless or with endlessness.
- Prayatna saithilya is relaxation of all efforts. Only by such relaxation can one obtain genuine stillness of the mind/body.
- Prana does not flow where there is muscle tension. Refinement of asanas any tension is eliminated.
- Swami Veda lecturing with electromyograph (EMG) showed no tension like corpse.
- Dr Phadke experiments on senior practitioners shows that they are actually deeply relaxed in any posture.

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Second aspect of asana as mentioned by Maharishi Patanjali in the yoga sutra is called prayatna saithilya. [FL] these are the two things to be looked at these are the two sutras about asana. Let us look at prayatna saithilya. So, what sutra says that posture is perfected made steady and comfortable through relaxing the effort and in awareness with the endless or with the endlessness. So, there are two things.

Asana is perfected when it is made steady and comfortable through relaxing the effort when in holding asana, we need not to make effort. So, that is prayatna saithilya. So, that is the state we need to reach while practicing asana and second thing is anand samapati that we are going to discuss in the next slide. Prayatna saithilya is a relaxation of all efforts only by such relaxation can one obtain genuine stillness of the mind body.

When we achieve that stability and comfort prana flow freely in those parts of the body. Actually, prana does not flow where there is muscle tension. So, refinement of asana is about releasing any tension there in the body when total relaxation take place we need not to make effort. So, asanas have to be practiced to that extent or we can say that we have perfected a particular asana where we can be in that posture with the fully comfortable and relaxed situation.

Some very interesting experiments were conducted by Professor Lata Phadke in Pune and Dr. Sanjay Phadke and their team they looked at the practice of the novice yoga practitioner and a senior yoga practitioner while they are performing asanas. They saw that the senior yoga practitioners have much better heart rate variability that is the indicator of the health of the nervous system, health of heart and overall health indicator.

They also noticed that the senior practitioners even performing seemingly difficult and complicated posture remain totally relaxed and that is the a reflection of a definition of yog given in Bhagavad-Gita which is called [FL] equanimity is yog. Yog practice asana practice bring equality by externally performing the different difficult posture, but internally remaining calm and steady and in this process we naturally become comfortable.

One extreme example is of Swami Veda Bharati. Swami Veda Bharti was giving a lecture on biological feedback and he allowed one US doctor to fix EMG electro myograph to the few parts of his body in the neck, in the leg and in the hands. This instrument measures the stress in the muscular system after some time after observing these readings of the EMG doctor started chuckling and this incidence is mentioned in the Stephen Parker's book.

Naturally Swami Veda Bharti asked the doctor and others also got curious who were present in the session. Why doctor is chuckling why what he found. So, amusing he mentioned he told that the Swami Veda Bharti's EMG reading are reflecting utter relaxed situation of the muscles.

This relaxed situation is generally this kind of reading is generally found in the corpse on the dead bodies, but here was Swami Veda Bharti he was standing, he was making postures, he was explaining things, he was actually delivering a lecture.

Even while delivering a lecture standing and using mike and using board and writing on that he was not having almost any stress on his muscles. It is difficult to explain these things just by

looking at the physiological aspect because by the physiological calculations with that kind of relaxation he should not be standing what to talk about delivering a lecture but he was standing.

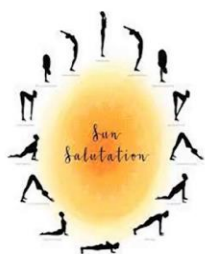
So, this aspect is explained by the masters by using the notion of prana. We are going to have more discussion on prana in the next session. But is inherently it says that when there are tension in the muscles, the pranic flow the vital energies flow in those portion is restricted when it is relaxed the pranic flow is unobstructed and when the pranic flow is unobstructed the pranic energy itself provides the energy to the physical body to perform the action.

In the yogic state people do not make actions with the physical energy they perform actions with the pranic energy. I know this may sound little esoteric and there are there is a great scope to research and explain these things and understand these things empirically with the existing instruments, but notion of pran is very important in yoga pranama kosha is in a escapable aspect of human self recognized in all yogic traditions.

But what it is suggesting is that asanas are the ways to release tension in different parts of the body so, that prana can flow in those parts easily as a result of that without much use of physical energy we can perform our actions. So, that is the indicator of the prayatna shathilya.

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Asana: Anantya Samapatti



- Anantya samapatti coalesces with Ananta, endlessness, such as that as space, and reaches uninterrupted identification, then its ahankara with body configuration ceasing, the posture no longer causes discomfort.
- We use the power of mindful awareness or interoception to first to become much more sensitive to the body itself then to sense the part of the mind that is not in the physical body but paranamaya, manomaya, vijnanmaya kosha.
- This expands our me-map to a much larger frame. The distinction between body as microcosmos and macrocosmos begins to disappear.

प्रवृत्तिभेदे प्रयोजकं चित्तमेकमनेकेषाम् ॥४.५॥ प्रवृत्तिभेदे, प्रयोजकम् , चित्तम्-एकम्-अनेकेषाम् ॥

- There is only one mindfield in which our apparently individual mind/body are simply waves in a great oceanic awareness. This is true and final stability (Sthir) and Sukh.

Another aspect is anantya samapatti. Anantya samapatti is a coalescence with the anantha and less or endlessness. This is related to the endlessness such that as space and reaches uninterrupted identification, then the ahankar the body configuration seizing and postures no longer cause discomfort. Anantya samapatti meaning being identified with endless or endlessness.

How we achieve that? We achieved that by giving attention to different layers of self. So, while performing asana a novice has to give much more attention in comparison to a senior practitioner, they have to give more attention to the physical body. However, as the practice grows, we start giving attention to breath, then we start giving attention to the emotions, then we start getting attention to the thoughts and we become witness to ourselves while in that in series of asanas.

Because of this expansion of the identification first our identification is with our body, the larger identification is with our thoughts, emotions, prana we develop a sense of witness and that process actually expands our me map. We become more aware of our surrounding, we know that there are many studies and I have quoted in the earlier studies the studies and research conducted by our own team which has seen that egocentric bias come down with the practice of yog.

So, our egocentric bias our me map actually increases we become more inclusive. Actually, the distinction between body and which is microcosm and the macrocosm start reducing. So, our identity with this limited body is loosened and we start and define with the larger system and that is the reality because we might identify ourselves as body, we might connect our individuality our personality limited to this body, but the fact of the matter is that this body is constantly in interaction with the environment.

We are constantly exchanging oxygen carbon dioxide, we are constantly exchanging water, we are constantly exchanging food, environment that is why keep affecting us we keep in influencing the environment this this is a constant interaction process. So, our self is not actually limited to the body our self is much expanding.

When this becomes our experience, when this understanding goes beyond cognition and reaches to the level of experience and when this keep increasing it reaches to the level where we identify with the cosmos those movements may be very few while practicing yoga or mindfulness, but they bring deep sense of calmness and that result into a different order of metacognition.

Why this is factual according to maharishi Patanjali that he explains in the fourth chapter of his book yoga sutra where he says [FL] mind may look multiple, but inherently the mind or consciousness is one. This mind or consciousness is one that looks different in different bodies and that sense of difference is because of my identification which is limited to my body and my thoughts and my emotions, but reality is that what I call I is infinite.

Because there is one existence manifested in different forms, this is one consciousness or one chitta that is what Maharshi Patanjali say is captured because of ignorance in different forms and through the practice of asanas, we can have a glimpse of that infiniteness because we become aligned our system become aligned our egocentric bias come down because of metacognition because of mindfulness because of awareness because of alignment in the body which result into free flow of prana.

So, that is the ideal of performing asana prayatna saithilya and anantya samapati. Asana is said to be can be considered to be perfected when we are in this asana without any effort that is prayatna saithilya and it is it can be said to be perfected when we experience the limitlessness of myself with the small s merge into self with the capital S if we use the term of Professor S. K. Chakravarti who did phenomenal work in the field of spirituality and management.