

Role of Yoga in Understanding the Self

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Abstract: *Our self identity is who we are? What we think about ourselves, how we look at ourselves and our relationship to the world? By understanding all these things we would be able to examine ourselves that who we are and what we want to be? This paper presents an idea about self concept/ self identity & self esteem and role of yoga in understanding the self.*

Key Words: *Under standing the self, Yoga, discrimination, Self identity.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Who we are? This is the basic question to find out. What we think about ourselves, how we look at ourselves and our relationship to the world? all these things help us to examine ourselves that who we are and what we want to be?

It is very necessary for a child or human being to know about himself/ herself i.e. who we are? Knowing about self means to know about own strengths and weaknesses. It is to get aware about what he/ she is able to do and what to achieve depending upon his/ her weaknesses and strengths. Our relationship to the world depends upon our thinking about ourselves. If we think positive about ourselves that gives us inner strength which reflects in our communication/ interactions to others. A positive thought builds a healthy relationship and a negative thought drives you to the negativity and loneliness. Our thinking about ourselves depends upon our self concept / self identity, our world view and self esteem which are discussed here.

2. SELF CONCEPT/ SELF IDENTITY:

According to Hilgard, Atkinson, and Atkinson, 1971, "Self-concept refers to the composite ideas, feelings, and attitudes people have about themselves"

Purkey (1988) defined the self concept as "the sum of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence"

Self concept or self identity is a global understanding that a person has about him/ herself. Self concept is not inherent. It is shaped and reshaped by the people around us, the people who influence us directly or indirectly. Self concept of a child depends upon the description provided to him by these people e.g. parents, teachers, peers etc. it may be correct or incorrect as it is formed by the people, how they see the child e.g. if the family members tell the child constantly that he / she is lazy, the child starts to see himself/ herself as lazy. However due to the subjective opinion of family members it may not be correct reading.

Self identity is poised of relatively permanent self assessments of a person e.g. knowledge of particular skills, abilities, hobbies, knowing or awareness of own physical attributes, personality attributes etc. A statement made by a person 'I am lazy' is a self assessment that is a part of self concept or self identity but the statement 'I am tired' would not be the part of self concept or self identity as it is a temporary stage. Self identity / self concept is not limited up to present and past capabilities and attributes of self only. It also includes future self possibilities e.g. what a person may become, what he/ she wants to become and what he/ she afraid or dislikes of becoming.

Self identity also includes boundaries. These boundaries are the rules of preferences which we have set for ourselves. These tell us how we have to behave with others, what behaviour we would accept from and towards ourselves and our ability to say yes/no in a particular situation e.g. suppose when you come to know that some of your close friend to whom you can do everything is indulged in some illegal activities and he also offers and emotionally forces for the doing the same. In this situation, whether you would be comfortable to say No or would follow the same.

3. WORLD VIEW:

Every person has his/ her unique view of world depending upon their experiences. On the basis of their experiences they organize and define the world to understand its structure and functions. World view includes one's perception of everything that exists around to him/her e.g. society, culture, earth, universe, life etc. As we are also an important part of this world so the answer of our basic question 'who we are?' also affected by our own world view. The World View is a global concept. It defines our standard of how things are or should be in the world we live in. It makes up our rules of how we and others should act and our values and morals to behave in the world. For most of the people, the world view is a vague set of rules that we have unconsciously adopted from the society. Generally our

family, religious groups and society seldom allow us for making creating our own. Through our intellect, we can create aspects of our world view. In short the World View is a filter through which we make judgments of others and ourselves.

4. SELF ESTEEM:

Self esteem is an emotional measure of the extent to which we are living up to our world view. It is an overall evaluation or appraisal of a person or of his/ her qualities. Self Esteem is our ability to feel all other positive emotions and beliefs about ourselves. For example it affects our measure of success, happiness, well being, confidence etc, and the combined sensation of all these feeling is called Self Esteem. It is a general state of mind and is affected by changes in any one of the feelings that make it up. For example any decrease in confidence will lower Self Esteem in the short term, A positive emotional experience will increase and negative experience will decrease the sensation (Self Esteem).

5. UNDERSTANDING THE SELF AND YOGA:

The matter of self -identity is very personal. It relates directly to knowing the true purpose of life—the reason for one’s existence. The question “Who am I?” is a real life question. Nothing is more important and relevant than to know who you are. Yoga is the science of understanding the true identity of oneself. According to the Yoga Sutras (Patanjali), “yoga is the science of the mind” (Satchidananda, 1990). “Yoga is a way of life, an experiential science of human nature that enables us to realise our real selves” (Bhavanani, 2011).The practices of yoga enable a person to achieve optimum physical health with a sound mind that is free from stress and negative thoughts. It enables us to improve the quality of our life by achieving a mind having greater concentration, clarity and memory. The practices of yoga are designed to awaken the hidden potential within the person, leading to a more balanced and harmonious life. So yoga is a means of self-discovery and self-knowledge. If we become more aware of the physical body it leads to the understanding of how the mind works and how it influences our all round personality. The more we understand about ourselves, the more we know about how we relate to one another. Awareness leads to understanding, which leads to the ability to be more controlled in life. We are able to decide when it is right to accept or refuse something. This ability comes through an increase in discrimination (viveka) and non-attachment (vairagya). We acquire these qualities through yoga then we find in ourselves more confidence and more self-esteem.

6. CONCLUSION:

It is an important aspect of one’s life to under him /herself. This is basically to know one’s strengths, weaknesses and everything about oneself. Understanding the self includes self concept/ self identity, one’s own world view and self esteem. Yoga helps an individual to find out the answer of the basic question Who Am I? Yoga is the means to understanding the self and achieving a successful and happy life

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