



Personality Development through Yoga

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Abstract

Personality is an important theme. In modern psychology, several approaches have been adopted to understand it. However, from Yogic point of view, personality can be understood from a different perspective. A holistic personality comprises physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual dimensions. This article tries to discuss personality from Yogic point of view.

Keywords: Personality development, yoga, dimensions of personality

Introduction

Development of personality is an important issue. Personality starts developing since birth, but it assumes great importance during adolescence, when reorganization of personality takes place. Personality is a very common term which is used in our day-to-day life. It tells us what type of person one is. We know that each person generally behaves consistently in most of the situations. The examples of this consistency can be seen in a person who remains friendly or a person who is generally kind or helpful in most situations. Such a consistent pattern of behaviour is termed as personality. It can be called as the sum total of behaviour that includes attitudes, emotions, thoughts, habits and traits. This pattern of behaviour is characteristic to an individual.

Personality development in an individual is a process that involves patterns of changes or movements that begin at the conception and continues throughout his/her life span. Development is a multi-dimensional process that consists of evolution of personality on several dimensions. It is a multidirectional process characterized by both growth and decline. During infancy, childhood, adolescence and early adulthood, growth is the centre-stage of all development. However, as the person grows into middle and late adulthood, maintenance and regulation become more important and are more sought after (Santrock, 2007) ^[1].

Yoga is a spiritual science for the integrated and holistic development of our physical, mental and moral-spiritual aspects of being. The philosophy of Yoga is practical and applicable in our day-to-day living. Yoga has been documented to normalize physiological function and recent advances in the field of research have shown that it has sound scientific basis. Personality development is a multi-dimensional phenomenon.

There are several dimensions which need to be integrated. Absence of any one dimension makes one's personality incomplete and lop-sided. For a holistic personality, the following dimensions are required to be integrated

- Physical dimension
- Intellectual/cognitive dimension
- Emotional dimension
- Social dimension
- Spiritual dimension

Each dimension has specific activities and processes which undergo certain changes. These changes normally take place in an orderly sequence, though there may be variations in their rate. It is important to note that all dimensions of personality are overlapping, inter-dependent, and intricately interwoven. A purely compartmentalized approach is not at all possible. These are studied separately for the purpose of better understanding only for a holistic personality development, yoga plays an important role.

Yoga and physical dimension of personality

Physical dimension is mainly concerned with the development of body from anatomical and physiological point of view. It means that all organs and systems of our body should be properly developed and functions. It implies a healthy body without any disease. Changes in height, weight, and motor skills, development of brain, hormonal changes, cardiovascular changes etc. – all are parts or aspects of the physical development. The physical dimension is concerned with physical health and fitness of body. It gets reflected in healthy functioning of the body where different systems of body work in a coordinated way. For a holistic personality, a person requires to be physically fit and healthy. This dimension to

certain extent is determined by biological inheritance. Yogic practices like asana, pranayama, and bandha play a beneficial role in physical development. There is a series of asanas and pranayamas which help to improve the functioning of the body.

Yoga and Emotional Dimension of Personality

Yogic practices are effective for development of emotional dimension related to our feelings, attitudes and emotions. There are two kinds of emotions—positive and negative. For example love, kindness are positive emotions, while anger and fear (exam phobia) are negative emotions. Similarly, our feelings and attitudes may be positive and negative. For emotional development, positive feelings, attitudes and emotions should be developed and negative ones should be controlled, as the negative attitudes and emotions work as a mental block for the development of personality. Yoga plays a crucial role in development of positive emotions. It brings emotional stability. It helps to control negative emotions. Yogic practices such as yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara and meditation help in emotional management. For example, the principle of non-violence will protect us from negative emotions and develop positive feelings of love and kindness. Similarly, other principles of yama and niyama will help to develop positive emotions and attitudes in our personal and social life and therefore help in the management of emotions.

Yoga and Intellectual Dimension of Personality

Intellectual development is related to the development of our mental abilities and processes such as critical thinking, memory, perception, decision making, imagination, creativity, etc. Development of this dimension is very important as it enables us to learn new things and acquire knowledge and skills. Yogic practices such as asana, pranayama, dharana, dhyana (meditation) help to develop concentration, memory and thereby help in intellectual development.

Yoga and Social Dimension of Personality

Primary socialization, probably the most important aspect of the personality development takes place during infancy, usually within the family. By responding to the approval and disapproval of parents and grandparents and imitating their examples, the child learns the language and many of the basic behavior patterns of her/his society. The process of socialization is not limited to childhood, but continues throughout life and teach the growing child and adolescent about the norms and rules of the society in which she/he lives. Some key elements of this process include respect for others, listening carefully to other persons, being interested in them, and voicing your thoughts and feelings politely, honestly and clearly so that you can be easily heard and understood. Personality Development through Yoga 11 Principles of yama include these key elements and are very important as these helps us in the betterment of our relationships with our friends, parents, teachers and others.

Yoga and Spiritual Dimension of Personality

This dimension is related to the development of values. It is also concerned with self-actualization which is related to recognizing one's potential and developing them to the maximum. Proper development of this dimension helps the

person to realise one's true identity. For spiritual development, yama, niyama, pratyahara and dhyana (meditation) are helpful. Yama and niyama help to develop our moral values while pranayama, and meditation help us to realize our true self. Introspection is a very effective for the development of 'self'.

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