

# YOGA RESEARCH

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## Can Yoga Help Elimination of War?

A Talk by Swāmi Kuvalayānandaji delivered August 21, 1953

### PART II

We have now to study, on the one hand, the fighting mechanism and how it functions physiologically and, on the other, to examine yogic processes scientifically to find out whether these processes can at least control this fighting mechanism.

First, taking the fighting mechanism for our study, we find that it consists of the sympathico-adrenalin system, including the thalamus. All the life-functions in the human organism are carried on by the sympathetic nervous system.

Adrenalin is the secretion of the adrenal gland that stimulates the sympathetic. The thalamus is a mass of gray matter at the base of the brain and is responsible for the expression of emotions. When the fighting instinct is roused, the emotion of anger flares up and the fighting mechanism is ready for action. In order that the source of danger may be clearly seen, the pupils become dilated.

The lungs become activated in order to supply more oxygen for muscular consumption. The liver throws large quantities of sugar into the blood as fuel for energy. The heart beats faster for carrying oxygen and sugar to the muscles at work. The blood itself becomes richer by an increase in

R.B.C.s. The muscles get stiffer and more capable of action, etc. And thus the human organism is made ready for a fight. And, above all, this functional activity leads to an increase in blood and urine.

Here it is worth our while that we study physiologically the relation between the emotion of anger and the functional changes in the fighting mechanism. In this connection, it is to be noted that the James-Lange theory has long been exploded and now the physiologists hold that first the emotion is experienced and then the functional changes follow, almost instantaneously. (Dr. W.B. Cannon, *Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, etc.*, Chap. XVIII).

Having studied the fighting mechanism and its functioning, we now examine the Yogic processes. It is an admitted fact that the Yogic Prāṇāyāma slows down the whole sympathetic nervous system exercising a controlling influence upon the fighting mechanism.

One very important and interesting test that we carried out in our laboratory was about acidity. As stated just now, it is a well known physiological fact that the fighting mechanism, when it starts functioning, renders urine acid. In Prāṇāyāmic exercises,

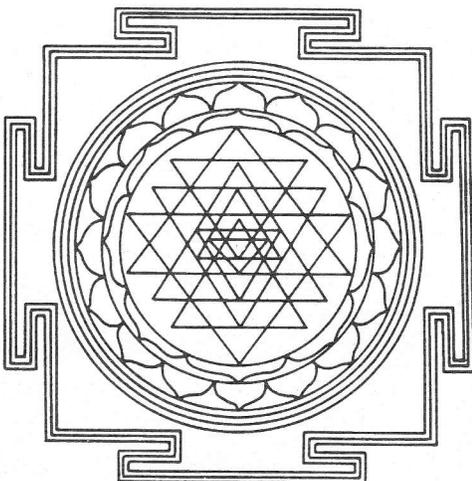
carried over 45 minutes, we found that there was no significant increase in acidity in the urine of the subjects.

This one test is sufficient to show that the activity of the fighting mechanism and the Prāṇāyāmic activity work in opposite directions, and hence Prāṇāyāma can exercise a controlling influence upon the fighting mechanism.

But the control of the fighting mechanism will not lead to the control of emotions, though the control of emotions will lead to the control of the fighting mechanism. Hence, now we want to see whether there is any scientific evidence to show that Yogic processes can lead to the control of emotions.

In this connection I am happy to state that we have tried some experiments on the processes of Dhāraṇā and Dhyāna, as they have been formulated by Patañjali, and we are satisfied that these Yogic processes do help a student of Yoga in controlling his emotions.

The piece of apparatus used in these experiments is a highly sensitive psychogalvanoscope which is worked electrically and which indicates the psychological level at which man begins to be affected by



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As to me I know nothing else but miracles –  
To me every hour of night and day is a miracle,  
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Walt Whitman

emotions. This level may be called emotion-free level. Now different persons have different emotion-free levels. Not only that. These levels differ in the same man according to his mental condition. If a man has a wandering mind this level sinks, but if a man is concentrated this emotion-free level rises.

In the experimental work on Yogic Dhyāna, we found that the deeper the concentration, the higher is this emotion-free level. What it means is this. The deeper the Dhyāna, the greater is the capacity of the individual to control emotions. Now if an individual practices Dhyāna from day to day and thus habitually raises his emotion-free level, it necessarily follows that he will develop great capacity to control his emotions.

Now, as the fighting mechanism functions only under the stress of emotion, the emotional control established by Dhyāna will also lead to the control of the fighting mechanism. We have already seen that Prāṇāyāma even by itself can control the fighting mechanism. So if Prāṇāyāma is combined with Dhyāna, man can not only control his emotion, but will acquire a double control over his fighting mechanism.

Having thus far examined the question of controlling the fighting mechanism and the emotions, I shall now discuss the problem of instincts - the combative and the acquisitive instincts in particular - which we found to be responsible for the development of the fighting mechanism throughout biological evolution.

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Now these instincts are invariably accompanied by their appropriate emotion, the combative instinct by anger and the acquisitive instinct by the feeling of ownership. In fact, these instincts cannot operate without these emotions. No fight can take place without anger and no possession is possible without the feeling of ownership. So it logically follows that control of emotion is identical with control of instinct. Hence, the Bhagavadgītā instead of referring to the fighting and acquisitive instincts, speaks of the accompanying emotions, namely, Kāma and Krodha.

So, after a scientific study of the Yogic processes of Prāṇāyāma, Dhāraṇā and Dhyāna, we come to the conclusion that they have the power to control, not only the fighting mechanism, but also the combative and acquisitive instincts with their accompanying emotions Krodha and Kāma.

Patañjali in his immortal Yoga sūtras has given several methods for securing emotional stability. His word for this is Citta Prasādāna. I shall make only a passing reference to one of them. This method consists of maintaining an altruistic attitude of mind towards everybody throughout the twenty-four hours of the day.

I shall now proceed to sum up today's discussion so that we shall be in a position to get a definite reply to our question, "Can Yoga Help Elimination of War?" We have seen that the sciences of biology and physiology tell us that the combative instinct with its accompanying emotion is deeply ingrained in man and that, because of the struggle for existence, during millions of years man has inherited a fighting mechanism which like other mechanisms in the human body clamours for satisfaction,

and the result is a conflict either on an individual scale or on a national scale, which latter we call a war.

So the only way to liquidate war is to control the combative instinct with its appropriate emotion as also the fighting mechanism. Further, a scientific examination of the Yogic processes of Prāṇāyāma, Dhāraṇā and Dhyāna has proved that the factors which biology and physiology hold responsible for the occurrence of wars can be controlled by them. So, now we can definitely answer our question in the affirmative and say that Yoga can help the elimination war.

I cannot close my talk of this evening before I offer a few concluding remarks. The results claimed for Yoga cannot be obtained by practising a few Āsanas for physical culture. Yoga is a way of life and has to be practised as such for securing the expected results. Further, war is a world problem and unless steps are taken to spread Yogic culture over the globe, it cannot help elimination of war. Shall we not then, we the sons and daughters of India, try our level best to take the Yogic teaching to the farthest corners of the earth? I am sure India, that is trying its best to secure international peace, will also use Yogic culture for the elimination of war and thus bring permanent happiness to humanity.

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