Yoga Is Science, Not Religion

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudeva

The United Nations has declared June 21 as International Yoga Day. But there has been so much misinterpretation over the years, creating several doubts among those who are yet unclear as to what yoga is, really. Let us therefore look first at what yoga is not, so we know exactly what we are celebrating.

Is yoga a system of physical exercise? Is it a religion? Is it belief in God? Is it about becoming a good or moral person? These are common questions. The answer to all of them is that it is none of the above.

Standing on your head, or twisting your body into all sorts of postures, is not yoga. Yes, there are yogic practices that involve the body. But fundamentally, ‘yoga’ means ‘union’. It means you have begun to experience the universality of who you are. Science proves beyond doubt that the whole of existence is just one energy manifesting in various forms. If this scientific fact becomes a living reality for you, if you begin to experience everything as one, you are in yoga.

Yoga is a science, not a religion. Just as there is a physical science for external well-being, yoga is a science for inner well-being. Because this science evolved in Indic civilisation - in the land between the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean - it was identified over time as being Hindu. But to term it as Hindu is akin to saying the theory of relativity is Jewish! Yoga has nothing to do with any creed or faith.

Does it entail a belief in god? No, it does not. Devotion can be a powerful and effective stepping-stone to your ultimate well-being. But devotion works only if you are a childlike person. If yours is a questioning mind, don’t waste your time on devotion. If you happen to arrive at an overwhelming inner experience where your logic falls apart, that is different. Then devotion is natural and it can be explosive. But don’t try to practise devotion. It won’t work.

The question is, are you looking for solace or for a solution? If you want solace, believe in anything is fine; it will settle you psychologically. If you want a solution, that’s different. Yoga is a solution. No belief-system is involved. It’s about simply doing what works.

Does yoga entail a value system? No. If you experience yourself as one with everything, you don’t need any values. That is the beauty of yoga. It is an experiential system. If you experience everyone as a part of you, I don’t have to instruct you: ‘Be good to all’. Once inclusion happens, nobody needs to teach you morals. When you are in yoga, the need to be good has itself disappeared!

This is also the difference between morality and spirituality. Spirituality is not about trying to fix up, prescribe values or morals. Prescribing doesn’t work in the long run. Only that which is free will live totally and inclusively. Only that which is free will last.

For the first time we have the kind of Information technology that allows us to reach out to the whole world; we are now connected like never before, at the touch of a button. In this sense, we are more empowered than even Adiyogi, Gautama Buddha or Patanjali! In such information-rich times, the entire planet of 7.2 billion people can be inspired to turn to this profound science of inner well-being, by creating awareness of what yoga really is. All those who have been touched and benefited by yoga could make this happen.

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