Yoga -An ancient science for the modern world

Dr Ranjit Rao- Surgeon

We live in an era that is busier, more stressful, and more hectic and with fewer spaces in the day to simply be. In fact children in the modern era have not learned to just play and be in nature. Computers, Internet, iPhone, ipad have all made our lives more convenient but equally more cluttered.

The Yogic science was conceived and designed thousands of years ago when mankind faced different kinds of issues. The basic needs for food, shelter and survival were still of primary concerns, but with that taken care of, came the search for deeper understanding of this human entity and its relationship with the world around it. This ancient science is as applicable today, if not more, than when mankind was living in caves and leading a frugal existence.

In simple terms, Yoga is a scientific system of tools designed to help create a state of “union” by taking an individual from “known to unknown; darkness to light; truth to untruth”. Only with a healthy body and a composed mind, can the subtler realms be revealed to the seeker. The beauty of Yoga is that there are many different systems that can facilitate this process depending on the temperament of the individual, but practically speaking, it makes sense to utilize all of them.

Hata yoga is the yogic system of the body, that involves asanas to manage the physical body, pranayama to master the breath, and then internal techniques of concentration, contemplation and meditation to realize and experience inner states. Karma yoga is for the person of action who learns to act in the world in a state of selfless service, whilst Gnana yoga is for the intellectual personality who analytically searches for the meaning of “who am I”. Bhakti yoga is a means of harnessing the emotions and merging with its object of devotion. Since individuals have the ability to cognize; feel; act and experience, so can these different “paths” assist with the process of self- realization?

The path for the “seeker” is a journey that may take various routes, sometimes detours, periods of rest, and times of intense times of activity. Though many aspects of the journey may happen in solace and silence, it is in the world that one can see how much poise and balance has been integrated. How much patience, compassion and love have evolved? How do you react to pain, suffering and loss? How much composure is there in the setting of adversity? These are the signposts that give the seeker feedback along the way.

For the established seeker it is important to remain open and without judgment as no one path holds the monopoly on Truth. Teachers, mentors, Gurus can all be guides on the journey, but in the words of Lao Tzu, ultimately this path has to be walked alone. Read and study widely, and commit to a regular practice, then be patient with the ebb and flow that the journey will surely take.

 Dr Ranjit Rao- The writer is a surgeon, men’s health promoter and practitioner of Yoga.