

Kriya yoga is a concept which utilizes both the power of science and religion, specifically spirituality, to discover the ultimate truth of self-realization

Research Topic:

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Melani Suseenthiran

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Abstract

In society, it is common for science and religion to exist independent of one another. However, in Kriya yoga there is a clear connection between science and religion/spirituality. Thus in this essay it will be proven that Kriya yoga can be defined as “the scientific art of self realization and God-union” (Govindan, 2004, p.169). Moreover, the global issue focused on for this topic is the concept of self realization and the local manifestation used to analyze it is Kriya yoga.

Research was completed by investigating certain concepts and then analyzing the components of Kriya yoga itself. The concept of evolution, developed by scientists and creation, which is believed by religious saints is first compared. Then the idea of macrocosm in relation to microcosm is explored. Finally the essay analyzes how the practice of the five-fold path of Kriya yoga benefits a person. Specifically the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and spiritual bodies are discussed.

Hence, after looking at these five bodies, it is evident that understanding the science of our body and utilizing this knowledge, helps humans unite with God. Through the practice of all five bodies in yoga, there is a clear connection shown between human beings and the universe; macrocosm versus microcosm theory. All together it proves how scientific evolution and religious or spiritual creation can co-exist in Kriya yoga to ultimately lead people to self-realization (God-Union).

Word Count: 228

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Throughout centuries many people have been on a journey to uncover the purpose of life and paint a clear picture of the ultimate truth. There were many different approaches taken but the two most opposing directions would be science versus religion. Scientists went about this search by developing technology in order to understand the human body and make connections between us and the universe. However, religious saints looked into scriptures like the Bible or Koran to find truth and believed that the purpose of life was uniting with God. Both sides were not far off in their investigation and despite having such different approaches; science and religion can work in conjunction with one another. Kriya yoga is a concept which utilizes both the power of science and religion, specifically spirituality, to discover the ultimate truth of self-realization. Thus, in Kriya yoga the law which states that yoga can be defined as “the scientific art of self-realization and God union” (Govindan, 2004, p.169) will be proven in this essay with the support of many facts, providing a strong foundation of scientific evidence. Starting with the idea of evolution, followed by the concept of macrocosm versus microcosm and then how the practice of the five-fold path of Kriya yoga benefits a human being, it can be shown how self-realization is attained. Hence, the global issue discussed in this essay will be the concept of self realization and the local manifestation is the practice of Kriya yoga.

The idea of creation versus evolution has constantly been a heavy debate between scientists and religious saints. It is an argument in which a person either believes in one concept or the other; people do not generally compromise on both sides. However, in Kriya yoga it is proven that creation and evolution can co-exist because these practitioners believe that there is a trend of evolution -which has been discovered by modern science- in “God’s” creation (Ramiah, 1983, p.9). There is a divine law which governs all of us and it is understood that humans are the highest state of evolution in “God’s” creation because of the five senses that they have developed,

Kriya yoga is a concept which utilizes both the power of science and religion, specifically spirituality, to discover the ultimate truth of self-realization as well as the sixth sense which is intellect. In Kriya yoga the scientific theory of evolution is applied as one must evolve beyond the level of ordinary human beings in order to achieve self-realization (Yogananda, 1946, p.122). This higher state of existence is achieved by moving beyond the six senses already developed by a human, and learning how to use the other senses which we have not yet begun to realize. The higher state of existence is referred to as the super-consciousness which itself is divided into seven layers according to Kriya yoga (Nagaraj, 2003, p.109). It is evident that an individual human being can gain higher levels of consciousness by the process of self-realization.

To completely understand how the human must evolve to achieve super-consciousness of self-realization, one must learn about the correlation between the universe and the human body. First, the human body can be referred to as the microcosm in relation to the universe which is called the macrocosm (Nagaraj, 2003, p.181). This concept basically means that everything found in the universe can be found in a human being. It is understood that the universe is composed of five elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air and ether which corresponds with the five bodies identified in Kriya yoga as the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and spiritual (Govindan, 2004, p.155). Furthermore, the nine openings in the human body which are two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, one opening for bowel movement and another opening for urination are related to the nine different planets found in the universe, as well as the tenth opening which holds the sexual energy (Ramiah, 1983, p.12). During the birth of a child, once the umbilical cord connecting the mother to the child is cut, the activation of these nine openings is controlled by the nine planets. These nine openings plus the tenth (inward opening) are connected to the epigastric (naval) plexus, which has ten ganglions and is one out of the six plexuses in your body (Ramiah, 1983, p.13). These plexuses are known as chakras in Kriya Yoga.

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The other five plexuses are the sacral plexus, hypogastric plexus, cardiac plexus, cervical (respiratory) plexus and hypothalamus (intellectual) plexus (Govindan, 2004, p.159). All these six plexuses found inside the body are connected to a seventh plexus found outside the body, above the head called the universal plexus (Govindan, 2004, p.162). When a human being finally realizes their universal plexus after developing the six internal plexuses they have achieved self-realization. Once again, there is a clear connection shown between the theories of microcosm versus macrocosm in the process of self-realization.

An individual may only attain the goal of self-realization through dedicated and careful practice of Kriya yoga which maintains an overall healthy body, preventing any sicknesses or ailments. The word “Kriya” itself means practical, so Kriya yoga is a practical yoga that uses a fivefold path to develop the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and spiritual body (Govindan, 2004, p.170). While doing this yoga, the body is disciplined in an integrated manner by performing body movements in unity with free breathing and full concentration of the mental body over the physical movements. To train the physical body there is a series of eighteen poses which are completed in nine pairs, with a pose followed by a counter-pose. Following this several breathing techniques are done to enhance the vital body as well as meditation techniques to focus on the mental body. In the intellectual body, an individual is taught various sound vibrations or mantras (words producing sounds). Finally, to train the spiritual body a practitioner must have the faith that their soul can merge with spiritual forces in the universe to attain self-realization (Ramiah, 1992, p.68).

Creating balance in the body is an important aspect that must be achieved in the path to self-realization. Through disciplining the physical body one can attain this balance. First, a practitioner must learn to eat food on time rather than when they are hungry. Hunger itself is a

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sickness to the body though many may not realize. Learning to eat all three meals on time on a daily basis will help create a healthy body and will also get one in the habit of finishing all that has to be done in a day, so that the next day may start with peace and calmness. This balance can then be maintained through the careful practice of the eighteen physical poses, taught in Kriya yoga. Once again the 18 exercises are done in couplets as a pose and counter pose because without both poses no benefit can be achieved (Ramiah, 1983, p.15). This helps activate both the active and passive sides of the physical body. Fourteen (seven pairs) of these eighteen exercises help prevent or cure several incurable sicknesses, such as diabetes, asthma, thyroid, etc (Ramiah, 1983, p.16). Most importantly these exercises must be done in synchronization with one's breathing which completes full balance of the body and prepares it for the techniques taught through the vital body, which gives the practitioner the reward of self-realization.

The techniques involved in Kriya Yoga to train the vital body by various breathing exercises will automatically activate the energy levels of the chakras or plexuses. These special techniques must be practiced for a full year between 4:00am and 6:00am (Nagaraj, 2003, p.482). It is suggested that initiated members practice during this allotted time frame because it is the best time to connect to universal vibrations. In scientific terms: the earth itself takes a day to rotate completely, moving about a degree every 24 hours and 360 degrees in 365 days. This shows that each day's vibrations differ so the sun's power can only be derived in its entirety if a practitioner covers all 360 degrees. Furthermore, by practicing in the morning an individual can gain the most vibrations since they come closer to the earth without being combusted. The goal of practicing these breathing techniques is to awaken and distribute the buried energy located in the sacral plexus to the rest of the body (Yogananda, 1946, p.235). Eventually a practitioner can activate all 6 of the plexuses found in the body which can lead to self-realization. Meditation

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techniques are also taught alongside these breathing techniques which must be practiced in the same way as well.

Kriya yoga meditation techniques discipline the mind to focus inward and outward to bring forth a high amount of concentration. The mind gets trained to concentrate on inward functions of the body and outward objects through astral travel (Ramiah, 1992, p.69). The practice of meditation incorporates the concept of the five senses while also clearing one's subconscious of all superficial desires and any fears, which leads to the ultimate happiness that comes with self-realization.

To train the intellectual body, mantras are used. These are known as sacred words that form sound and systemically train the six plexuses of the body. The word *mantra* can be divided into the words *man* which means "to think" and *tra* which comes from the word *trai*, meaning "to free" (Govindan, 2004, p.172). In other words mantras are used as a way to free mankind from any inner superficial desires, greed, bad habits, lust and fear. There are many different sound waves that can be found in the universe but only some are detected by the human ear. During the practice of meditation, once the practitioner's mind has gone quiet after they have gained concentration, they can start to hear these sound vibrations which are related to the different plexuses and levels of consciousness. The goal of uttering these mantras is to rid the intellectual mind of traumatic events or bad forced habits. For example, when a person experiences a traumatic event, they are constantly reminded of these repressed memories which then cause unnecessary frustration and confusion, leading to the absence of self awareness. By cleansing these thoughts with the use of mantras we are able to prevent ourselves from falling victim of unhealthy habits and eventually awaken the intellect because mantras are a tool, which

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stimulates creative thinking in a person. As a result a person achieves self control and experiences one's inner self.

At last the final body which is the spiritual brings about love and devotion which is an important part in self-realization (Ramiah, 1992, p.71). This is the final step in which we realize that "God" is nothing but one's own soul and that *he* cannot be found anywhere in the world except in ourselves.

To get the full benefits of yoga and move on to learning advanced techniques, a practitioner must have a balanced state of breathing and can do this by practicing Kriya yoga in a scientifically, systemic way. This practice brings about realization of Pranic (breathing) energy flow in one's body. Furthermore, balance in all five bodies will help to attain self-realization (I and Myself) as inward growth of the body is exhibited (Nagaraj, 2003, p.109). As a result our soul becomes aware of itself in the sacral plexus and step by step, it rises up through the rest of the five plexuses mentioned earlier. Most importantly, the breathing techniques practiced in the vital body help to activate the central breathing. There are three types of breathing that every person has which is right, left and middle (Govindan, 2004, p.157). Right side breathing is taken through the right nostril, left side breathing is taken through the left nostril and middle breathing is when the right and left nostril intake air in synchronization. Middle breathing is what automatically corrects any imbalances. The breathing taken place through the right nostril holds the term sun or father and controls heat, while the left nostril bring coolness to the body as it holds the term moon or mother (Govindan, 2004, p.156). Therefore, since the middle breathing is a combination of both the right and left breathing it combines the concept of mother (cold) and father (heat).

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In conclusion by understanding the concept of microcosm versus macrocosm, the idea of evolution and by also practicing the five-fold path of Kriya Yoga, a practitioner can attain the ultimate goal of self-realization. Kriya Yoga is defined as a practical way of mastering the mind in all five bodies; namely physical, vital, mental, intellectual and spiritual. These techniques which have been created and evolved by the master Kriya Babaji are simple to practice, in order to receive its benefits. Initially the 18 poses in the physical body help give movement to all parts of the body. Next the vital body techniques systematically increases the rate of breathing and intakes a flow of energy to help live a healthy life. Then, in the mental body the techniques are utilized to help one learn how to still their mind and bring forth new knowledge or intelligence. Afterwards, through the techniques practiced in the intellectual body in the form of sound, there is an increase in the spiritual value of the self, bringing them to a higher spiritual state. Once the practitioner brings forth energy in the form of sound through the seventh plexus (universal) above the head, they are connected to the universal vibrations (cosmic energy). Finally, the soul goes into a calm and peaceful state with universal forces, in the spiritual body. The ultimate goal of Kriya Yoga breathing techniques is to activate the six plexuses of the human body so that a connection between the soul (man) and the seventh plexus (universe) can be created. Once a human is connected to the universe he/she receives excessive cosmic energy to their body. This cosmic energy is required by us all in order to lead an active and healthy life. All of this further establishes or proves the theory of the macrocosm (universe) versus microcosm (man) as discussed earlier because everything found in the universe is also found in the human body. Finally, through this method of connecting ourselves to the universe, with the practice of the five fold path of Kriya Yoga, we achieve our goal of self-realization.

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