

The Journey Within: A Process of Discovering One's Self

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ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with the prime objective of realizing one's own potential. Knowing oneself is quite wearisome process. The entire process leads one to acknowledge one's own self and building harmony with oneself, others, and the almighty. In this paper two approaches of Self- Actualization are presented. The first approach is theorized by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow in which he explains the hierarchy of needs. First, the basic needs such as physiological needs and safety needs are satisfied, one proceeds in fulfilling the psychological needs such as love and belongingness and self-esteem needs where one respects one's own self and aspires to have the same respect from others. The fulfillment of all the needs leads one to attain Self – Actualization. This is that stage where one is aware of one's own potentialities, strengths, and creativity. Furthermore, there is eight fold method of Yoga to attain Self – Actualization proposed by the Indian Hindu Sage Patanjali in his ancient scripture called Yoga Sutra. In this way of attaining Self – Actualization Patanjali has give eight limbs such as Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. This way of practice leads one towards Self – Actualization. This proposed practice is more dependent on self – discipline and control over senses. All these eight limbs help one to contemplate and reflect over one's self and obtain acquaintance with one self and pious union with the supremacy of the universe. The detachment from senses and uninterrupted meditation leads one to be free from all the sorrows, pains, worries and reaches to that stage of reflection where there is pointed focus on one single thought or concept where there no running of thoughts but the one thought is in continuous progress. Finally, the person reaches to that state where he is one with his/her own creator.

Keywords: *Self – Actualization, Basic Needs, Psychological Needs, Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi*

But behaviour in the human being is sometimes a defence, a way of concealing motives and thoughts, as language can be a way of hiding your thoughts and preventing communication.

Abraham Maslow

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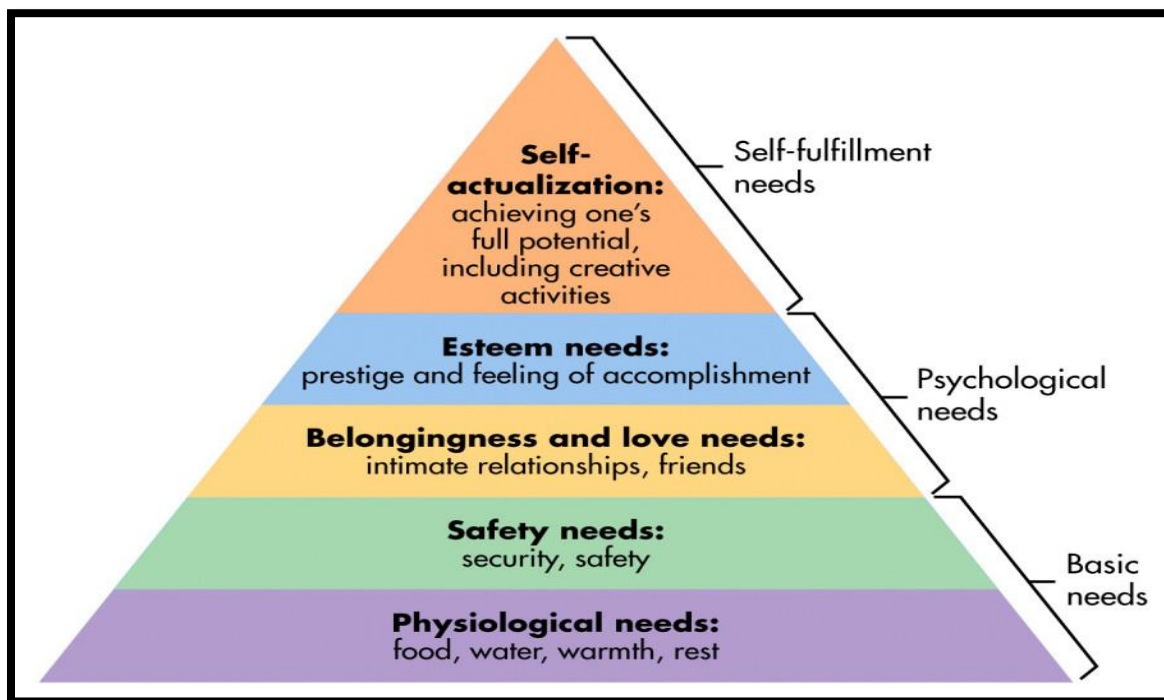
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One of the eminent philosophers from Ancient Greece named Socrates once rightly said that the unexamined life is not worth living. Self-contemplation leads to the understanding of one's own self. If one is ignorant of one's own self, the person may not be on the right of co-existence. Knowing our own self frames our life in an extraordinary way which establishes harmony with our self and others. The attainment of self-knowledge leads to be aware of one's own pattern of behavior, attitude, nature, characteristics, way of thinking etc. "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;" the opening of the poem named "*An Essay on Man*" by Alexander Pope clearly bespeaks that knowing and becoming aware of oneself is important. No one can know oneself better than the person himself/herself. Many great people have also shared their deep insight in discovering oneself. Many pious and sage people on this holy land have left their remarkable imprint on the pages of the history of the nation. This Holy mother land of India has thrived scores of scripture to pave the way for the human being to be one with the eternity. The Holy Scriptures like, the Bhagvad Gita and the Vedas have rendered immensely spiritual nurturing to the human soul. It is the veracity of the human existence that the body may decay but the soul is immortal. Self – actualization makes the person acquainted with the purpose of his/her living, one's destiny to meet.

Self-Actualization by Abraham Maslow:

Abraham Maslow was an American psychologist who developed the theory of self-actualization. In the details of his this theory he clearly indicates that nothing can exist without need in this world. Everything is just merely because of the need. Here, Maslow explains the hierarchy of the levels of the needs.



Maslow explains five different hierarchies of the needs dividing them into three different needs. Initially, he talks of Basic needs which include Physiological needs and Safety needs. The

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prerequisite for the human survival on the earth is to have food, shelter and clothing and rest. These are the essential needs which any human being needs to fulfill in order to have his/her existence. The theory of Self – Actualization is in pyramid shape. The fulfillment of basic needs leads to another level of needs. After fulfillment of the Physiological needs human being strives to achieve another level of needs that is safety needs. Human beings live in a society and he always thinks that he is secure in the society he lives, he has employment to meet with his expenditure, he has the resources and property. He works to have his safety needs fulfilled. Maslow also made it explicitly clear that on the process of meeting the higher levels growth needs, lower level needs have to be met. Once these basic needs are obtained, he puts his efforts to thrive his Psychological needs. These psychological needs include Love and Belonging. This leads him to have friends and intimacy with the people he is living. He develops the sense of connection. He meets people, gets connected with them. Thus, he paves a way to build his social circle stronger and healthier. He is aware of his belongingness and does his utmost to cater and nurture those intimate relationships. Social connections actually keep the human alive. Interpersonal relationships mould the behavior of an individual in a positive way. The intimate relationships make him believe that he is loved, cared, and wanted. The gain of these needs creates a path way for the fulfillment of another need and that is Esteem. The person starts respecting his own self. He recognizes himself and starts honoring his own dignity. The person is aware of his strength and freedom. Maslow tried to compartmentalize these needs into two parts; one is the respect that one adheres to himself and the second one is that the respect that one gets from others acknowledging his status, and dignity. If these needs are satisfied, the person can proceed further to attain the next level of need known as Self – Actualization.

According to Maslow, Self – Actualization is the highest level of the needs. Self – Actualization is also regarded as Being or Growth needs. This is the level where one becomes potential having the highest experience. The person is able to display his creativity after the attainment of the Self – Actualization needs. This is the highest level of the needs in the hierarchy. Everyone wishes to reach the highest level of the needs, the Self – Actualizations needs but the failure in attaining the Basic and Psychological needs interrupts the path of satisfying the Being/Growth needs. Maslow has vividly explained this hierarchy of the needs.

SELF – ACTUALIZATION: EIGHT FOLD PATH OF PATANJALI

One of the ancient sages of India named Patanjali has explained eightfold way of reaching to the state of Self – Actualization in Yoga Sutra. Yoga Sutra is one of the classical texts of Yoga philosophy in the Hindu orthodox tradition. Yoga Sutra dates back to 400 CE. These eight limbs are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi.

Yama deals with the one's behavior and the ethical and sense of one with the self. This reminds of the Universal Ethic which states “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Teachings of Lord Jesus and Lord Krishna tell us the same our actions and words towards others should be in the same direction as one wants those for them. The first limb includes five yamas; Ahimsa (nonviolence), Satya (Truthfulness), Steya (non-stealing), Brahmachrya (Chastity), Aparigraha (non-avarice). These five yamas are considered to be morally obligatory rules in Hinduism. This helps people a lot to have intimate relationships with others and the person can be away from hostility. According to Yoga Sutra by Patanjali, the second path is Niyama. On the path of the attainment of Self – Actualization, this component includes a list of varied rules

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such as Sauca(purity) it means to have chaste and pure soul, body and steadfast inclination towards upright words and actions, Santosa(contentment) contentment leads to have the belief of existence of others, the root cause of all the adversity and problems are greediness and avarice, Tapas(Persistence) or perseverance in doing righteous things will lead person to be morally upright, Svadhyaya(Recitation of Vedas or Sacred scriptures) leads the person to be aware of one's self and one's thought process, this is the process of contemplating over one's actions and words and thoughts, and the last habit or behavior of Niyama is Isvarapranidhana(contemplation of the almighty) leads to have the contemplation over the supreme power which runs the entire universe, contemplation over God leads the person believe that there is True self from whom everything emerges and to whom everything returns. If the person practices these habits, the person is on the path of attaining the Self – Actualization. It helps the person to gain inner satisfaction.

The third limb of the Self – Actualization is Asana which is discussed by Patanjali in the 46th verse of Book 2. Asana as described by him is the position of the body that is steady, motionless, and pleasant for a certain period of time in a comfortable manner. There are various types of Asana. Here, Patanjali does not mention any specific posture of Asana but later on numerous Asanas were developed namely Padmasana(lotus), Veerasana(heroic), Dandasana(Staff) and so on. Furthermore, in his translation of verse 47 of Yoga Sutra, Aranya points out that during contemplation over infinite, Asana helps to concentrate better and stops the body from trembling. This helps to be one with supreme and have the fruitful conversation with almighty. Almost all the religions tell the same thing that our body is the temple of God, so we do not have any right over our body. In the Holy Bible, in the book of 1st Corinthians Chapter 6 verse 19 clearly speaks of that that “Do you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.” Asana in Meditation will lead to this ultimate awareness that God is abiding in us and this will lead to attain Self – Actualization. Even it is said that in Hindu religion 84 asanas are taught by lord Shiva. Another important component in the eight limbs of Self – Actualization is Pranayama. The word pranayama derives from the Sanskrit word; Prana means breathing which is the vital source of our life and Ayama means extending or stretching. It clearly indicates itself that it is to have control over breathing. Pranayama helps the person to have clutch over inhaling and exhaling breath. It also makes one aware of the breathing process. Regular practice of this component helps one to have higher life expectancy rate. Pranayama also makes one aware of the connections between breathing and emotions of humankind.

The fifth important limb of Self – Actualization is Pratyahara. Pratyahara plays a pivotal role in taking one away from sensory world and develop the sense of detachment towards the external world and external forces. It merely does not mean closing the eyes but it also helps one not to get affected by the external forces. It leads to have the journey within, understand one's own strength, and understand the significance of the freedom one is possessing. Pratyahara takes one to experience the inner soul of one. This proves to be the bridge between the external forces and the internal journey. It is from this point one starts inward journey. From here for the rest of three limbs a person starts experiencing the inner belongingness. Pratyahara leads one to have the withdrawal from the senses. Another limb proposed by Patanjali is Dharana. Dharana clearly means to have the complete focus on one particular thing. It is either one single chanting, or specific idea, or one single part of body such navel, or complete concentration over breathing.

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Dharana helps one to acquire this stage in life where one can gain that stable concentration. It keeps mind not to shift from one idea to another. It tries to have the control over the thought process. It makes it slower and slower thought process stops mind switching from one point to another. Finally, it leads to one source of energy. This is the practice of self-observant. One is observing one's own actions and thoughts. The another component of Yoga Sutra is Dhyana(Contemplation/Reflection). The word Dhyana derives from the Sanskrit word Dhyana which means to have the continuous process of reflecting or contemplating over one thought without interruption. Talking about Dhyana, Patanjali states that Dhyana is the process of mind. Dhyana is that stage of mind where one is not disturbed by other thoughts. The person is steadfast in his/her process of reflection. In Dhyana there is focused attention and one reaches to placid and tranquil state of mind. The entire process is not so easy. It demands many efforts in remaining focused in the meditation but perseverance in contemplation will lead to this state of mental repose. Many times the person is distracted by various thoughts and things but determination can help one to be unwavering in contemplation and reflection. This helps one to refrain from sorrows and worries. The last limb of Self – Actualization is Samadhi. This is the highest stage of a meditator becomes one with the infinite. The person becomes one finds connection with the supreme power. At this stage, one puts himself/herself in the harmonious company with the almighty. Here, the person reaches to that spiritual state where even the person loses his/her identity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SELF – ACTUALIZATION:

The comparative study of the Self – Actualization theorized by Abram Maslow and the Eightfold path proposed by the Indian sage Patanjali indicates that both have the different paths but lead to reach the same goal achieving Self – Actualization. Maslow insights that fulfillment of one need leads to fulfillment of another needs. When all the needs; Basic Needs, Psychological needs are fulfilled, it leads to attain the Self – Actualization which is also known as Being(Growth) needs. Patanjali proposes different type of method. He focuses more on self-disciplined way of attaining the Self – Actualization. Eight limbs of Patanjali ask the person to have detachment from the world and from the outer forces if one wants to have union with one self and the almighty. The theory developed by Maslow is to nourish the needs in order to proceed further and attain Self – Actualization. The way of Patanjali as described in Yoga Sutra differs as it is rigorous practice with Yoga. To sum up, it can be concluded that Self – Actualization is that stage of mind where one reaches to be one with the self, the core purposes of one's existence on earth. Eight limbs of attaining Self – Actualization help one to be free from all the worldly pleasures at the same time worldly worries and reach to the state of detachment where one is not aware of his/her identity. **The contemplation over one's self and union with supreme power helps one to attain the state of Self – Actualization.**

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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