

Yoga and the Emotional Body – Article 1

Yoga teaches us that all is one and that the purpose of practicing yoga is to attain union or with this Oneness which is beyond our hearing, our seeing our thoughts....we just have words for it : « divine unity, universal field of creative consciousness....God » and so on.

Similarly, our body functions as an entity of oneness. It strives for unity and balance.

It is believed that a human being is made up of consciousness, a physical body, a feeling or an emotional body, a thinking body, an etheric or spiritual body (which manifests as consciousness), and finally, a system of subtle energies.

These bodies are overlaid one upon another. They all are expressions of the same consciousness or Atman that we inherit.

The feeling body (what most people call the emotional body) is an interpretation of who we are at a particular moment.

However, essentially, feelings and emotions should not be confused. Feeling is a mental process; emotion is a physiological process. Our senses drive emotions. The brain receives these emotions as neural impulses and converts them into feelings. These feelings are thought impressions.... Our mind takes over from this moment.

When we accuse someone of being (too) emotional, we imply that their behavior is uncontrolled, or dominated by sensorial-emotional activity

The emotional or feeling body is an interpretation of who you are, where you are, and your existential state at any given moment. But this layer of YOU contains imprints of the emotional aspect of your memories as well as your current emotional state.

But our brain and its product - feelings and recollections (the Id – Freud ; the Shadow - Jung) can also spark emotions. And so the dividing line between feelings and emotions is extremely subtle.

Whatever, the emotional feeling body is, we can confirm that it acts as a bridge between the physical self and our thinking self.

The feeling body interprets and translates the thoughts projected forth by our *eternal-consciousness perspective* and also by our *human perspective*.... into **states of feeling** or even further, **moods**.

The feeling and emotional body can also be an actualization of thoughts. This process makes us gain awareness. Because of the emotional body, we are able to experience our thoughts. Inversely thoughts can be converted into feelings-impressions. *The physical body*

interprets those feelings-impressions and converts them into neuropeptides and hormones that cause physical reactions in our body. These physical reactions are in fact emotions. They can range from fear, anger, stress to attraction, love, compassion joy... Bliss.

The feeling body specializes in interpreting sensations and perceptions that the emotional body and the senses produce then cognising them.

An emotion is thus a physiological experience of a feeling. A feeling is a sensation-based perception or cognated form of awareness. The feeling body is not an actual body it is etheric in nature; but it can be understood symbolically as a part of the physical body since it is a product of the brain.

The feeling body is the translator of the ***observer-based consciousness*** of a person. Without feelings nothing about our physical reality would seem real or believable. Our sense of life, our feeling-based conclusions about life ... are part of the feeling body. Our interpretations are part of the feeling body. Sensorial issues and traumas are part of the emotional body.

The emotional-feeling body in a negative condition.

If our experience of life becomes essentially painful, if conclusions about our life are painful, our feeling body will continue to convey those painful messages to the physical body which will be interpreted as unpleasant emotions within the body. This leads to a *physically painful life*. It can also lead to addiction as a release, or to failed relationships ... to health issues and so on ... physical reflections of any painful emotional states become toxic. Being a prisoner of such a condition, one cannot be in the present moment or in a *let go mode* because emotional trauma keeps coming up over and over again in an attempt to integrate itself. « If I keep feeling that father abandoned me in some way when I was young I will keep manifesting situations that make me feel abandoned over the course of my life. »

If healing must occur at the emotional and feeling level of our life *we must address* our emotions and feelings as they are. We have to become objective, an observer; we have to take time to *contemplate then meditate on the causes of the emotions and feelings* that inhabit us.

Next we have to *embrace* these feelings and emotions entirely. We have to listen to them and catch what they want us to know. This is a process of, firstly *integration rather than of healing* : regularly observe the sensations and feelings and emotions in our body. They should intensify as we focus on them use breathing techniques to aid consciousness in

catching them. Use mantras such as, "I am completely here with you now; I understand your situation..."

Ask yourself three questions : how do I truly feel / when did I last experience this exact same feeling / when did I first experience the same feeling in my life.

If no answer comes immediately be patient trust the process. If we find ourselves experiencing an emotionally traumatic memory, observe this memory, then mentally alter this memory in a way that feels emotionally positive. This is called the *inner child work*. It is a process of going back to the Innocence of our childhood years preceding traumas. Altering traumatic memories and this way changes the causation of the trauma. We are affecting the very blueprint of our emotional life using these techniques. A strong reaction means that that our past trauma has been triggered. Being with the emotion allows us to step back from the story or recollection that is urging us to react so strongly. It allows us to place our attention on how we are truly feeling in the now so that we can recognize what deep unresolved past wound is unhealed within us and is thus continuing to mirror itself in our lives. Such self-therapeutic work enables us to integrate our emotional body with ourselves. It is considered as being emotional healing.

Emotions – the Original sense of the word

Emotion has its Latin origin in **emovere** - to *move*. Its current usage essentially means, sensorial energy in motion. In Ancient yoga texts, emotions are described as waves, «vrittis» or fluctuations in our conscious mind.

Any kind of sensory perception can be traced back to these vacillations in the body-mind. In dealing with our emotions and transforming our physiological responses these emotional waves are calmed. And this is the penultimate object of practicing yoga. Sanskrit language describes the goal of emotional movement as achieving **ananda**. When the state of ananda is attained, all our emotions are perceived as blissful. This is a super-conscious state. The process towards this state is termed, *Sat Chit Ananda*.

Before reaching this state - if we practice yoga regularly and sincerely - we reach a sense of stability and balance within an impression of being centred.

The whole intention of yoga practice is to become an integrated human being. It is certainly not just to gain suppleness or muscular prowess, to do a lot of postures so as to convince ourselves that we are superhuman.

Emotional Stability

To be a functional member of society and enjoy healthy social relationships we must have a certain amount of emotional stability.

The practices of **emotional yoga** come in several forms :

Inquiry on our *emotional behavior*; ***self-observation*** , ***physical exercises***, ***breathing methods***, ***meditations***, ***rituals***, ***healing sounds and images***.

In essence they are :

- Take responsibility in determining who you are and what you feel
- See your emotional experiences as part,of feelings and moods
- Realize that you are perhaps not responsible for emotions that arise but you ARE responsible for managing emotions and being stuck in a mood.
- Open your self to the possibility of healing troubling or challenging emotions
- Change your attitudes and beliefs ; use your body and mind to help shift your emotional state ; understand **how** your emotions can help develop character resoluteness sensitivity and contribute to wisdom.
- Learn to grow spiritually; attune yourself to the physical and greater world around you.

Emotional yoga practice is a lifelong healing practice. You develop skills that come when you realize you can take your practise to another level if you inject feeling into doing your postures and sequences, if you observe and accept any emotions when you practise, and consider how to put them to good use to improve your well-being.

In your yoga practice « *taking time to feel how you feel* » helps you to know what is going on in your body. Having the courage to feel helps you examine your life and see what adjustments you can make to feel happier..

Emotions are physiological in nature not psychological. Feelings are psychological.

Emotions act as a bridge between our bodies and our minds via a psychosomatic network. And everything is connected.

For over 350 years Western culture has built up on the belief that reasoning is far more important than emotions. Being reasonable and rational is the order. Being emotional is much lower down in the list. Over the centuries most, if not all of the profound texts have

been written by men. So, Reasoning is fundamentally a masculine energy; emotions and feeling are a feminine energy.

Descartes' « ergo cogito sum » elevated thinking as the sovereign activity of humanity.

Today, at a neuro-biological level of study, thinking is no longer divorced from feeling. There is a profound connection between our emotions and our decisions, between our feelings and our logic

In Eastern cultures there is disregard, often a contempt for emotions. Great value is placed on the ability to withdraw oneself from everything but minimal involvement with the world in order to master our existential self and seek purpose in life.

Here again, just about every great text on the subject was written or passed on by men. « Reasoning is fundamentally a masculine energy; emotions and feeling are a feminine energy » can be confirmed once again.

Feelings vs Emotions

Feelings stir us; they also light up emotions. Meanwhile emotions provide us with our most basic communication network: helping us connect the incidents, the relationships and experiences that make up our lives..... with our mind and thus inducing feelings/

Our emotions and our health are intimately connected. Moods and attitudes directly influence our bodies. Unresolved distressing emotions that linger become toxic and a risk factor to health.

But when emotions are acknowledged, are understood and objectively expressed (observed by the subject who becomes the observer in yogic texts), they are as valuable as any healing intervention available.

By honestly getting in touch with our emotions ... both by listening to them then directing them through our body-mind, we gain access to healing wisdom. Once we make a conscious decision to enter into conversation with our body-Mind, we can heal what we feel and true Life occurs only when we feel deeply.

As we engage in this play of feelings we move through a range of emotional experiences. Our controlling of logical processes and structures fall away. Spontaneity arises from within, bringing real transformation and change.

Feeling is an art of managing emotions ... but regular practice is needed.