

Technology guided by Spirituality can lead to happiness

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Introduction

More than 16 years' ago I wrote my [first article on Spirituality for Times of India column 'Speaking Tree'](#). The subject was how technology and spirituality are related. I believe that was probably the first article on this subject anywhere and seemed like a novel perspective since science, spirituality, and technology were not supposed to mix.

Since then I have written [scores of articles on how spirituality and technology are related](#). This issue is in vogue now, hence I thought of revisiting the topic and presenting the point of view that both technology and spirituality are important in achieving happiness.

This idea is not new since our ancient rishis understood the importance of technology in a Yogi's life. One of the oldest books on *Yoga* is [Patanjali Yoga](#)

[Darshan](#). Almost one fourth of the book is devoted to how a *Yogi* can achieve superhuman powers so as to free himself from the vagaries of nature. These powers do not come to a *Yogi* naturally but he/she has to obtain them by the practice of *Sanyam* (combination of concentration, contemplation and Samadhi) on different parts of the body.

A question can be asked as to why *Patanjali* devoted one fourth of the book on how to achieve these powers. And a simple answer is that by overcoming the challenges of the natural world, something we do regularly with technology, a *Yogi's* life was made easy so that he/she could devote his/her energies to pursuit of truth, happiness and attainment of salvation from the cycle of birth and death. Besides, this section on attaining supernatural powers is placed in the later part of the book after *Patanjali* has described in detail how a *Yogi* can master the discipline of *Yoga*. Thus by mastering the art of *Sanyam*, a *Yogi* can gain wisdom to use these powers judiciously and not be swayed by them.

Why Happiness?

All of us aspire to have a [good life and happiness](#). There are as many definitions of happiness as there are people. But generally people want a decent place to live, mobility, good and wholesome food, good education for their children, clean environment, a challenging workplace, good and wholesome entertainment and enough money to meet their usual daily requirements. These are the issues around which the modern industrial societies have evolved though this has created the biggest problem of totally unsustainable lifestyles fueled by greed. Thus the climate change, food shortages, economic meltdown and other subsequent social problems are direct result of our greed for resources and energy. Hence the control of greed or better yet the sublimation of greed emotions into higher ones like humility and simplicity can lead to sustainability, happiness and a rewarding life.

Happiness is a state of mind. We feel happy and enjoy life through our senses and the mind. Brain processes the information from the senses and our level of happiness is dictated by its processing power. A powerful brain (the processor) which produces deep thought can therefore extract more information from the sensory signals and

can give us more happiness as it is easily able to satisfy the mind. Besides it can look at a greater number of eventualities and hence can resolve the issues amicably.

A smaller processor obviously needs many more inputs to reach the same enjoyment or satisfaction level. Thus weaker brains need more resources to occupy them and **this leads to greed and unsustainable lifestyle.** Therefore one of the prerequisites to having happiness and consequently a sustainable lifestyle is development of a powerful and smart brain. Such a brain allows us to think deeply or concentrate on any subject during which we can get “lost” in processing the information about it.

Attainment of happiness is the goal of all religions and almost all spiritual writings are about how to achieve it. Most of the religions have focused on detachment, renunciation and elimination of desire. Some use this to control others by promising happiness in afterlife. However one can find happiness in this life and our world. Based upon the material presented in this paper we will try to explore how one can lead a happy life by making our brain powerful through spirituality and then using it to solve our problems through technology. This can help in channeling our desires into fruitful avenues and by curbing or sublimating our greed impulses.

What is spirituality?

Spirituality is concerned with the matters of spirit. When we think deeply and for a long time about anything whether it is an idea or an object then the brain has a tendency of focusing on it like a laser and in that process the object vanishes from the vision field and only its germ or the spirit remains. Then complete knowledge of that idea or object results and is called *Sanyam* by *Patanjali*. This is the [mechanism by which all great discoveries are made.](#) **It is this deep thinking on anything which makes us [spiritual and gives us a sense of peace and happiness.](#)**

Spirituality is not religion. It is the state of mind that makes it understand that the Truth is beyond the barriers of worldliness, religion, caste, creed, race or geographical boundaries. It connects us to marvels of nature in a deep way and subsequently to Universal Consciousness.

Spirituality also helps us to have a compassionate view of nature and as we evolve spiritually we become more tuned to it which helps us in preserving it. Besides it helps us live in harmony with each other and enables everybody to work together for the common good. **This is the genesis of non-violence.** Also in all religions the respect for nature is preached and the maxim of simple living and high thinking is ingrained in its teachings.

Technological progress

Technological progress unravels a lot of hidden areas of nature and shows us how it performs its miracles. In doing this, technology helps us understand the power and greatness of nature. For example humans felt that they had invented and developed fiber optics. However, scientists have found that the [root systems of plants are excellent optical fibers – something that has existed in nature for millions of years.](#) This knowledge could only come once we had enough technology for creating fiber optics, lasers etc.

Similarly a new science of biomimicry or “copy the nature”, is developing where we are finding that nature, which has billions of years of head start, has far better answers than we have in almost every aspect of life and hence realization has dawned that our technological progress will take a quantum leap by copying nature’s designs. In fact daily we discover that there is nothing new under the sun and all our inventions have been preceded by nature’s designs millions of years ago.

Thus as we progress ahead in the technological area, we will discover the great laws of nature and ultimately God. **For God is nothing else but this marvelous Universe which follows its own scientific laws.** And technology allows us to discover universe and ultimately God.

I also feel that it is the law of evolution that as we become more spiritual we will also become a technologically advanced civilization. This is because when we apply our sharpened brains to any problem, then solutions result. This is the reason why *Patanjali* put the conquest of physical nature by obtaining supernatural powers as third chapter in his book. Therefore, a necessary condition for large-scale spiritual progress is to have technological progress.

The nature of brain is such that as we make it powerful it wants to increase its inputs and experiences and the mind-expanding process includes the understanding of world, cosmos and universe. This obviously includes the desire to explore and travel in space and intergalactically. That can only be achieved by very advanced technological progress and is the **genesis of conquest of space**.

Quite often technology and wisdom have gone hand in hand. Though we have developed weapons of mass destruction, the collective wisdom of mankind has not allowed us to annihilate each other. The fact also remains that many more people used to be killed in wars when technology was very rudimentary. In today's war many fewer human lives are lost.

Most of the wars are resource related. As we advance spiritually and technologically we will stop waging wars since the resources available will be converted more efficiently to provide creature comforts to all of mankind. I am sure that as **the level of technological progress increases we will also use it judiciously to further raise our levels of consciousness and not use it to harm mankind**. The power of technology for mass communication also teaches and spreads the message of moderation.

Putting it all together

Our technological and spiritual progress can be explained by giving the example of the [path that particles and molecules take in water heated in a container](#). Each individual particle or molecule darts randomly in the water container depending upon the heat energy given to it but on the whole a stream is formed so that the warm water rises and the cold water comes down to be heated. These are convection cells commonly seen when water is heated or boiled. Individual particles dart furiously in these streams but are restricted by the convection cell boundaries.

Similarly as individuals we create technologies for our own selfish needs and depending on our spiritual progress may or may not use them for the betterment of mankind. But collectively the spiritual and technological progress follows the natural evolution of humans towards an advanced civilization just like the stream of heated

water in a utensil. And all our individual shortcomings are swept away for general good by the stream of evolution.

We feel and enjoy this world through the sense organs of our bodies. Getting a human body is the most important gift to the soul. Almost all technological interventions are to enhance this sense-world interaction. In coming years technology will provide us tools to create a much more hospitable planet in which majority of mankind will be able to live comfortably. It will help us repair our bodies and produce designer drugs which will make us live longer with less disease and pain. In fact the whole basis of *Yoga* according to *Patanjali* is to make the human body fit for spiritual experience and happiness. Our future medicines will allow us to do this. This increased level of physical comfort will allow us a quantum jump in our quest of spirituality.

Nevertheless the next biggest technological and spiritual challenge for mankind is to enable two billion people, who live in conditions of utter poverty, to improve their quality of life. They cannot think about spiritual matters, since their basic needs are still unmet. Technology can help in improving their quality of life. It is not an easy task to achieve but I feel that mankind has enough ingenuity and resources to do this.

With better international cooperation in technological fields it will be possible to provide very efficient and economically viable technologies to the developing world. How many years it will take we do not know but I feel optimistic that it will eventually be done. Once the quality of life of bottom of pyramid population is improved then their progress to spirituality and happiness will be rapid. I therefore think that the **mantra for India's and world's development should be spirituality with high technology.**

How we as individuals can help in this development? To reduce our greed for resources and simplify our lives we need to make our minds very powerful. This process should start at young age. We need to inculcate in our children the merits of deep introspection and try to wean them away from instant reaction process of social media. It is a tall order but all of us have to pitch in.

For older people regular meditation helps in achieving calmness of mind and happiness. This together with the judicious use of modern technology will lead us to a happy and sustainable life.

Today far more people than ever before believe in life after death, in spiritual matters and in extrasensory perception. Popular poll after poll has shown this trend all over the world. I believe this has only come about because of the ability of human beings, through technological progress, to research these areas. For example, we can now map the brain with the latest tools of MRI and can even “see” what the brain is doing in a heightened state of spiritual experience. Similarly we can peer through extremely sophisticated telescopes to see the unfolding of the great drama of galaxy formation. It fills us with awe and amazement. Thus we are creating the building blocks of the laws of spirituality by poking deeper and deeper into nature with the help of technological tools.

[HOME](#)

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