

## “Yoga – As a Preventive Technique for Crime”

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### Abstract:

The present article provides an understanding about the mental attitude of an individual during criminal activity, its various causes and yoga as effective preventive technique. Crime is any action or offence that defies a state or country and is punishable by law. In most criminal cases there is a history of emotional deviance and dysfunction of mind and trauma in verdict which make them to involve in serious crime either direct or indirect. To prevent criminal activities in our society, yoga could be used as a preventive technique to reduce vulnerability of criminal activity. This early prevention could be applied in early childhood and among young adult. Yoga emphasizes mental discipline and refinement of soul, body and mind through guiding emotion and intellect. aṣṭāṅga yoga works the same with its eight stages. śrīmadbhagavadgītā, concept of niškāma karma and balancing three guṇa (sat, rajas, tamas) guide the action. The practice of yoga works in two ways, firstly by releasing one from negative emotion and thought, secondly by guiding them which leads to good action by refining their thought.

### Introduction:

Crime is a global issue and is increasing with each successive day. Crime is a big threat in society and with every passing year we need more strict law and order to reduce the crime rate. There can be many reasons behind the crime the most prominent is psychogenic as most crimes are the result of dysfunction of mind which could be due to depression, anger, jealousy, sexual dysfunction, delusion, impulsivity, greed, lack of resilience. To reduce the increasing rate of crime its prevention in early childhood and adulthood is important.

A Crime is an act or fault, which prejudices the interest of the community and is forbidden by law under the pain of punishment [1]. Crime is derived from Latin word ‘crime’ which means ‘charge’ or ‘offence’. Crime or asocial act is nothing more than a ‘failure or refusal’ to live up to the standard of conduct deemed binding by the rest of the community[2]. Crime has many definitions. The most common thing about these definitions is that crime is punishable. Crime cuts across many disciplines such as sociology, psychology and criminology. Each of these disciplines tries to explain why crime is committed and how people are compelled to commit crime. Sociology attributes crime due to poor socialization in society, while psychology attributes crime mainly due to biological and pathological criminogenic behaviors[3]. It can be learned also through observation and imitating a model. In offending state biological changes also play a role, chemical and hormonal changes take place during criminal activity or thinking about committing it. Crime is linked with social norms.

In Sanskrit the word ‘aparādha’ means offence, transgression, sin. In Vācaspatyam punishable act is called as ‘aparādha’[4]. In Pātānjala yoga sutra Maharṣi patānjali has been described crime in three level kṛta (performed), kārīta (stipulated), and anumodita (applauded)[5].

Crime prevention includes reducing and deterring crime and criminals from committing crimes. To reduce the crime, law and order has been established in every country which has certain punishment for every offender who has been found guilty by law. The nature, amount, duration of punishment differs from country to country. Since long year ago, social system started in India, people used to practice various traditions and systems which prevent crime and play an important role to keep harmony in society. Yoga system is the most prominent technique which ensures greater quality of life and peaceful society. It interacts one mind, body and soul and unites them as integral energy to enhance one’s life toward wisdom.

Yoga is probably the most characteristic practice of India's Spiritual traditions. We find it pervading all domains of Indic thought and culture. Aspects of Yoga which include yoga postures, prāṇāyāma, ritual, mantra and meditation- can be found in Indian music, dance, medicine, martial arts, and in all its spiritual traditions, vaidika and non- vaidika. Yoga is one of India's greatest contributions for humanity.

Knowledge which leads from self exploitation to self nurturance is yoga. In Indian philosophy and spiritual literature, the way which was followed to overcome all sorrow of life is termed as the path of yoga. Yoga practices destroy all deeds and it is chief medicine for all pain[6]. Consciousness is subject matter of yoga and it is cognition, which purify emotion hence Maharṣi patanjali says “yogaścittavṛttinirodha:” it means stopping of functional modification (vṛtti) is yoga[7].

### **Crime: nature and causes**

A crime is an intentional violation of the law committed without defense or excuse and penalized by the state. Crime is the violation of individual rights also. Crime or a social act is nothing more than a failure of self discipline, moral values and humanity.

Crimes are viewed as offenses against society, serving psychological factors why people commit crimes: temperament, emotion, will, mind, character, self concept, stress, aggression, repression, personality disorders. According to āyurveda rajas and tamas quality are the traits that make the mind weaker results into illusion, obsession, anger, irritability, depression, fear, impulsivity, restlessness, grief which ultimately leads individuals toward committing crime[8]. It has been found in modern psychological research that crime is profoundly related to mind and its various diseases. Mental health is a predictor of criminal behavior. It shows that cause of the criminality is once mental health [9]. Other than mental health some other causes are also described by psychologists which includes greed, anger, jealousy, revenge, pride, the desire for material gain, the desire for control, power leads to violent crime such as murders, assaults, rapes[10].

Criminal behavior is not itself indicative of mental illness. Person suffering from personality disorders, aggression, depression, adjustment disorders and sexual disorders such as paraphilias are prone to criminal behavior[11].

Criminological theories include biological theories of crime, psychological theories of crime, social bonding and control theories, Marxist theories or prenatal theories. Research has been conducted to investigate the role of neurochemical substances the brain releases to trigger body activity and hormones in influencing criminal behavior. Research expected to find people who committed violent crimes have reduced levels of serotonin and higher levels of dopamine[12]. Some studies indicate testosterone can have a strong bearing on criminal behavior. Cortisol is another hormone linked to criminal behavior. Research suggested that when the cortisol level is high a person attention is sharp increased physical activity[13].

Śrīmadbhagavadgītā has been described three ways to crime- action, anger and greed [14]. In same way Maharishi Patanjali considers action, anger and greed (attachment) as causes of crimes. Maharṣi patanjali has said “*vitarkā hiṃsādayaḥ kṛtakāritānumoditā lobhakrodhamohapūrvakā mṛdumadhyādhimātrā duḥkhājñānānantaphalā iti pratipakṣabhāvanam* ॥” 2.34, it means producing thought along with intention of violence, to self and others, approving, causing or committing action is caused by greed, anger or delusion. Initial thoughts whether weak, moderate or excessive, unknowing manifests infinite fruition. Indian philosophy describes the mind with its three attributes sat rajas tamas, these three attributes combine to make the personality of a person. Maharṣi suśruta has said that tamas peoples have greater vulnerability to develop anxiety, atheist, sin, avoidance of knowledge, catatonic, procrastination, futility etc. In Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, śrīkrṣṇa describes the nature of tamas peoples and says that -

“*anubandhaṃ kṣayaṃ hiṃsāmanapekṣya ca pauraṣam mohādārabhyate karma yattattāmasamucyate*” **18/25**

It means that action is declared to be in the mode of ignorance, which is begun out of delusion, without thought to one's own ability, and disregarding consequences, loss, and injury to others.

*“ayuktaḥ prākṛtaḥ stabdhaḥ śaṭho naiṣkṛtiko 'lasaḥ  
viṣādī dīrghasūtrī ca kartā tāmasa ucyat “*

**18/28**

It means A performer in the mode of ignorance is one who is undisciplined, vulgar, stubborn, deceitful, slothful, despondent, and procrastinating.

In Caraka saṁhitā (7:52) Mahārṣi caraka says prajñāparādha as causes of diseases in same way he says that root cause of all mental illness is also prajñāparādha and he says jealousy, grief, fear, anger, pride and malice are psychosis[15]. In the same realm śrīkrṣṇa has described about tamasic nature and says –

*“dambho darpo 'bhimānaśca krodhaḥ pārūṣyameva ca  
ajñānam cābhijātasya pārtha sampadamāsurīm”*

**16/4**

It means O Parth, the qualities of those who possess a demoniac nature are hypocrisy, arrogance, conceit, anger, harshness, and ignorance.

### **The role of yoga practices to prevent crime**

According to Śrīmadbhagavadgītā imbalance in three guṇa: sat rajas tamas result into criminal mind when rajas and tamas dominate over sattva. So, to keep them balanced various sattva practices should be performed on a daily basis. They are japa tapa īśvara praṇidhāna, meditation. Repeated practice prevents mislead in the direction of life and increases the likelihood of performing good action. In reverse indulging so much in the so-called world (materialism) and immature emotion leads toward sorrow, grief, pain, obsession which are ultimately precursors of crime. It was found in a study conducted by Michael C. Dillbeck et. al. that group practice of transcendental meditation is associated with reduced rates of homicide and violent crime[16].

Mahārṣi patañjali has described about fourfold attitude to keep serenity of our minds-“

*“maitrī karuṇā mudito-pekṣānām-  
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sukha-duḥkha puṇya-apuṇya-viṣayāṇām bhāvanātaḥ citta-prasādanam” (1/33)



**maitrī (Friendliness)** -in relation to happiness



**karuṇā (Compassion)**- in relation to misery



**muditā (Gladness)**- in relation to virtue



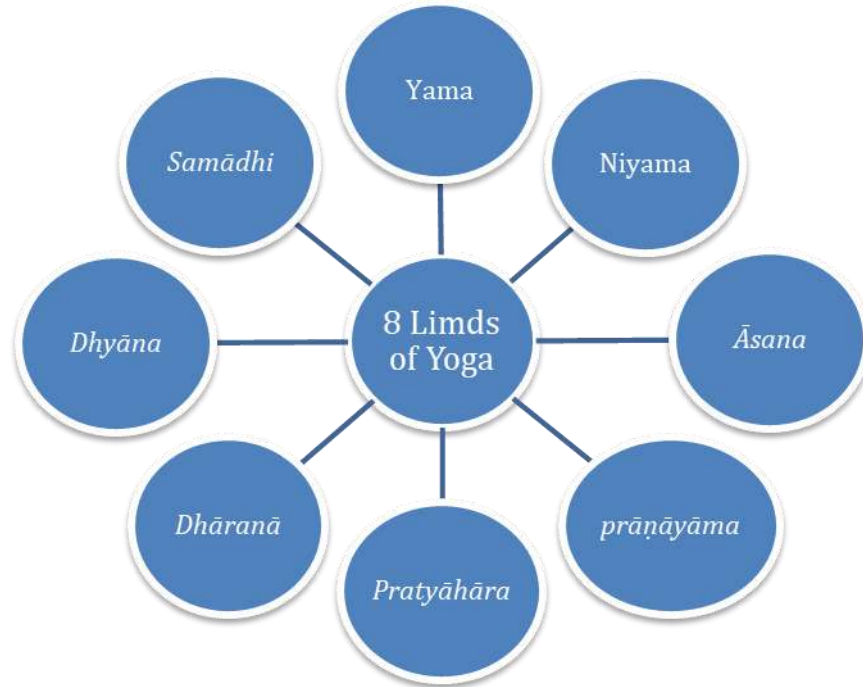
**Upekṣā (Indifference)**- in relation to vice

It means- By cultivating the attitude of friendship, compassion, joy and indifference respectively towards the persons or events of being in pleasure, misery, virtue and viciousness, through repeated treatment is produced citta-prasādanam (the blissful and peaceful state of citta).

The foremost method to develop dormant abilities of individual is yoga, with the help of which one can enhance mental and physical wellness. Maharṣi kaṇāda has described about yoga in vaisheshik philosophy and says that “*tadanārambha ātmasthe manasi śarīrasya duḥkhābhāvaḥ saṃyogaḥ*” It means establish oneself in blissful soul and detach from material and physical pain is yoga[17]. Śrīmadbhagavadgītā helps one to destroy all grief and it is source to detach oneself from union of pain. In yoga sutra Maharṣi Patañjali says – “*yogāṅgānuṣṭhānādaśuddhikṣaye jñānadīptirā vivekakhyaṭeḥ*” It means through repeated daily ānuṣṭhāna of the limbs of the yoga with diminution and ultimate disappearance of impurities, the illumination of knowledge upto the stage of vivekakhyaṭeḥ [18].

Maharṣi Patañjali has described *Aṣṭāṅga yoga* (the eight limbs of yoga) that are explained in sequential manner: - Yama

(Refinement of heart), Niyama (Refinement of mind), Āsana / posture (Refinement of body), Prāṇāyāma- Control of prana through breathing (Refinement of intellect and emotion), Pratyāhāra– Withdrawal of senses (Refinement of thought), Dhāranā (Concentration of thought), Dhyāna– meditation: uniform experience of the subject of meditation (Refinement of brain ), Samādhi (Contemplation of being happier)



Practicing yama and niyama purifies and leads to sat and awareness. Āsana makes individuals free from conflict. Prāṇāyāma makes an individual's mind stable. It destroys false knowledge. The research on prāṇāyāma has been conducted by yoga research foundation of yoga, munger (2002) in which it was found that prāṇāyāma has direct effect on autonomous nervous system[19]. There is another research on bhrāmari prāṇāyāma which shows that practicing bhrāmari prāṇāyāma helped to reduce stress, anxiety and keeps mind stable and have great impact on

hypothalamus, pineal, pituitary glands[20]. In many researches it was found that yoga practices increase melatonin, endorphins and balance serotonin, cortisol secretion and decrease adrenaline hormones, which ultimately calm impulsivity of mental and keeps balance in mental activity[21]. In research conducted by Varambally revealed that yoga practices show positive impact on neurological functioning and symptomatic system[22]. In another research by Skanavi et. al. it was found that mindfulness has significant positive effect on addictive behavior and reduced psychiatric symptoms and perceived stress[23]. Kovalsky has conducted research on Israel prisoners and found that lower recidivism rate among prisoners who had practiced yoga[24]. In another research done by Rhodes et. al. reveals that yoga practices contribute to well being, calmness, wholeness and self-regulatory capacity in women[25].

In Another context Maharṣi Patanjali said- “dhyānaheyāstadvṛttayaḥ” (2/11), means kleśa vṛtti can be curbed and abolished through dhyāna. It was found in research that Negative emotions were significantly lower in meditation group and also enhanced the subject’s positive emotion [26].

### Conclusion

It is saying that one become what he thinks and does. To prevent criminal activity, it is need of time to adopt yoga system in our routine in life. It is refinement process which transforms the individual toward the wisdom and enables one for great action which enhances the quality of life. The practice of aṣṭāṅga yoga, knowledge of śrīmadbhagavadgītā both work in manner to develop quality in life. It prevents the harmful thought and emotion and enables person to realize the potential of him and use it to transform one’s personality to attain blissful life.

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