



## *Holistic Living and Its Global Relevance*

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Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia defines Holistic Health as a non-medical philosophy of well being that considers the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of life as closely interconnected and balanced. Holistic Medicine takes holistic approach involving allopathic and complementary Systems of Medicine for treatment of patients. Interestingly 'Holistic Living' has not been defined either in Wikipedia or in Oxford dictionary. Possibly it has been left to Scriptures and Spiritual teachers to come out with a definition. All religions have spelled out on the goal of life. Christianity and Islam emphasize on Prayer and Submission to God, for salvation or entry into Heaven. Hinduism shows several paths such as *Bhaktiyoga* (devotion), *Karmayoga* (selfless action), *Jnanayoga* (knowledge), *Rajayoga* (physical & mental, self control by meditation) and of course belief in God for Moksha or liberation from material existence and cycle of birth and death and join 'Universal spirit' which is an ultimate goal of life. Buddhism addresses the suffering or misery of living and guides one towards enlightenment or Nirvana for Peace and Bliss. All the religions do emphasize on getting rid of egoism, hatred, greed and selfishness and harbour qualities of love, compassion, spirit of service etc at emotional and intellectual level but how to imbibe these qualities at experiential level is the crux of the problem, that too in consumeristic environment. Going to Temple, Church, Mosque or Satsang have been ritualized without life transformation. There is need for spending a few minutes in silence for introspection on divine nature and purpose of life. In this Globalization era, day to day living with contentment, peace and productivity has become a challenging problem, necessitating the need for a definition and meaning of Holistic Living applicable at Global level.

There are number of religions and faiths in the world. 75% of the humanity (4.5 billions) belong to major religions namely Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism with about 16% being secular / atheist (Wikipedia). We have amalgamation of rich & poor, educated & illiterate, intelligent & dullard, ambitious & quiet, hot & cold people in the world. Holistic Living has become even more important, as average human life span is increasing due to better nutrition and health care. Life expectancy is 80 years in developed world today compared to 55 years, a century ago. With anti-ageing research picking up largely in repairing cellular and molecular damage, the time has arrived to 'slow ageing' in humans says gerontologist Olshansky. Five technology areas ranging from genetic engineering to replacement of body parts including drugs for enhancing physical performance, cognition etc have been identified to enhance normal human functioning by the US National Science Foundation. According to some reports, around 10% of US university students regularly take Ritalin as smart drug to boost their attention and concentration. The wakefulness promoter modafinil is increasingly being used. Cosmetic surgery originally used to treat injuries is becoming popular and socially acceptable. The first humans to reach a happy, healthy 150th birthday may already have been born, says Graham Lawton (New Scientist, May 2006). All these new developments make the living a



challenging one in the coming years, giving us the option of drugs or drug free holistic living to lead a stress-free healthy and purposeful life. To define and practise Holistic Living without hurting religious sentiments and in the face of aggressive consumer culture is a challenging proposition.

We have a very long history of *Rishis* (Seers) and visionaries who have explored understanding of human creation, purpose and life beyond and documented for posterity while modern science with sophisticated technology is just moving farther to understand the higher and deeper dimensions of Reality.

Based on *Sanatan dharma* and Vedic wisdom we may broadly define -

**'Holistic Living as Simple, Spiritual, Peaceful, purposeful and productive living in Harmony with Nature'** or simply

**'Holistic Living is an art of living in harmony with Nature and concern to the whole universe'.**

Patanjali's Asthanga yoga is science and art of living based on the principles of *Ahar* (food), *Vihar* (exercise) and *Vichar* (thinking). Live in moderation free of excess syndrome and without vulgar display of wealth. Cultivate moderation in food intake, have adequate exercise and positive thinking and attitude to life. The popular techniques which have been helpful in Holistic Living of millions of people are *Rajayoga* (Yogasana, Pranayama, Meditation), Sudarshan yoga etc. Meditation is taught as Aana pana, Vipassana, Transendental meditation etc. and practiced with beneficial effect. Regular daily (morning or evening) Yogasana, Pranayama, Meditation (TM, Aana pana sathi / Vipassana) at least for 30 minutes on week days help in physical and mental health which are important for healthy body and sound mind. Disciplined life (regularity in day to day activities), Fasting, Prayer (Thanking God for all the blessings) and introspection in silence (30 min. a day in the night) with questions - 'Who am I ?' and 'What is the purpose in this life ?' will help in promoting Spiritual health generating a feeling of sacrifice, sharing and spirit of service to the needy and less fortunate. Lastly one has to think of how better he or she contributes in one's own way for making this world a better one.

Further in the morning or evening on weekends, one should spend an hour appreciating the Nature. Sun is giving bright light without charge. Clouds pour rains for sustenance of life. The plants churn the dirty mud and selflessly provide beautiful flowers and delicious fruits to enjoy. We have to learn selfless and disciplined life from birds and animals with regularity in their getting up, eating, movements etc and how they maintain health. We are hopeful of thorough deliberations in the November Symposium, and coming out with a definition and module for 'Holistic Living' applicable in life and acceptable to the whole world.

It is nice that 2005 Nobel Prize for World peace was awarded to IAEA institution and its Director General for their efforts to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. India and its Spiritual teachers deserve next Nobel Prize for peace, for presenting wisdom culture based on Yoga (Yogasana, Pranayama and Meditation), the 'Art and Science of Living' to the world.

