

Time Management and *Pratyahara*: A Philosophical Reflection

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Abstract

Time is conventional. Time is related to events and experiences. Events take place in the flow of the chronological time. But our experience of the events may not end in the chronological time. Our experience is not as mechanical as the flow of time. Experience is psychological and it is conditioned to our emotional attachments to the favorable and unfavorable events. So there is a time gap between the end of the event and the end of the experience of the event. We create mental images of our sense –objects and enjoy the imagined events investing our personal or psychological time. Our attachments do not let us move in the natural flow of time. This leads to our bondage and suffering in life. So we should learn time management in order to live a life of peace and tranquility. This is possible by the mental discipline of Pratyāhāra.

Keywords

Chronological Time, Psychological Time, Svadharma, Nishkāmakarma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāranā, Dhyāna, etc.

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Introduction

Time is event-specific. We understand and calculate time with the passage of an event. An event begins in time and ends at another time. That is how we do event management. Trains move in time. The classes of schools and colleges start and end in time. Time is a human convention relating to the occurrence of events. This is known as biological or chronological time. Sometimes we can know the time without the occurrence of an event. Suppose we are in a closed room locked up outside and we have no scope for experiencing any event. But we have a clock with us. In that case, we can know the time movement through the dictation of the clock. This is known as clock time. Clock time is not event-specific. It is abstract time flowing in its own flow without waiting for anything or anybody. The problem arises when we experience events one after another in the flow of time. It is because we have a psychological and emotional attachment to the events. We are motivated and biased by our likes and dislikes. If we like an event we wish for its continuity and if we dislike it, we wish for its discontinuity. The physical event becomes our psychological event and we run after the event-memory. The physical event (*Vastu*) becomes the psychological image (*Visaya*) which keeps us engaged behind the schedule of time. The event ends at a time but our experience does not end because of our attachment to the past event. Here, the synchronization between the flow of chronological time and our personal experience is not maintained. In that case, we live in our personal or psychological time holding on to our past memories and sometimes future anxieties. This is the cause of psycho-somatic diseases and stress in the mind. This paper will focus on the remedy of this problem through the psychic discipline of *pratyâhâra* or withdrawal of mental involvement maintaining the synchronization between the psychological time and biological time.

Time: Types and Dynamics

Life is an eternal flux. Nothing stands still even for two minutes. But man desires that the events stand still so that the experience may continue to its full satisfaction.

The Bhagavat Gitâ Observes

The game of desires is an endless gamble. The more one possesses, the more one is tempted to strive to possess. Each time a man strives to acquire something; he desires to feel his full share of satisfaction. But his experience is that he is not fully satisfied and in his disappointment, he thirsts for more and more possessions.¹

When the event does not stand still and moves in the flow of time, man resents and protests against the cruel way of fate. The clock time is conventionally created by society for its needs and requirements. Similarly, biological time is a fact

of nature over which man has no control. Events take place and end in biological time. Man seeks life to halt so that life can be experienced repeatedly according to his own requirements or out of his attachment to pleasurable events. He wants the movement of the event to slow down so that he can enjoy with the complete experience. But this is never possible as events occur without human interferences and flow mechanically in the flow of time. But man interferes with the natural flow of events superimposing his psychological or personal time over the movement of biological time. This undue interference of man leads to humanitarian crisis. This crisis begins with human stress. The crisis of stress leads to the crisis of all most all types of psycho-somatic diseases.

Bertrand Russell Observes

We all live in our own private worlds. The private world of instinctive interests is a small one, set in the midst of a great and powerful world that must, sooner or later, lay our private world in ruins. In such a life there is no peace, but a constant strife between the insistence of desire and the powerlessness of will. In one way or another, if our life is to be great and free, we must escape this prison and this strife.²

We are living in the same physical world, but we project personal factors upon it and create a personal world with its own time duration. Then the synchronization between factual time and psychological time is lost. The factual time looks too long or too short, according to the personal mood of thinking and experiencing. Factual time is a closed system without flexibility. It cannot be altered or reversed. It is only psychological or personal time that is flexible, alterable, and reversible.

Man has imaginative insight. We imagine the events after their factual occurrences. So events can reoccur at the psychological level. We love to live in our world of imagination because that gives us immense pleasure. We get lost in our fictitious world. There we become enchained by our own created psychological time. This psychological or personal time has been superimposed by the mind of a man on the normal passage of biological time. It is a superimposition of fiction over fact. Events are value-neutral. We add value to the events and sometimes, we give personal importance to some values. We take the facts granted according to our priority. When an event ends physically according to the chronological time but its experience continues within the mind of man, a gap is created between what has happened physically and not inwardly. It is in this gap that personal time comes into existence. The measurement of time differs from person to person because of the personal superimposition or projection over biological time. The mind relishes the

psychological experiences of the events and tries to retain them in memory. So the physical event becomes the psychological event and demands its experience at the psychological level. But this cannot be experienced in biological time. Then, there is a chance for psychological time to help the mind relish past memories. In such cases, we live in the physical world behind the flow of time. We run behind schedule as we always find ourselves in either the past or the future. We remain absent in the present. This leads to an abnormal state of our mind leading to stress and distress. If we learn to live in the flow of chronological time and end our experiences accordingly, we never suffer from psychological hang-over, tension, and stress. According to Brain Scientists, the human nervous system is equally attached to the facts and the facts that are intensely imagined. We can visualize happy and a pleasant events clearly and live in great detail and the problem is that we get lost in such imagined facts spending our valuable time. The imagined images or events create the same mental involvement as the objective facts of life. Our personal time and imagined events are not approved by the social or any other outer modalities. Therefore, we fail to be social or a man of complete awareness being a victim of our personal involvement with our visualized facts. So we are all living in our personal worlds and hardly, there is any interconnectivity between the subjective worlds.

The *Gîtâ* Perspective

Time management is a necessary instrument for doing *Nishkâmakarma*. In an action situation, the doer gets attached to three basic modalities of action, namely, Action, Agent, and Consequence. Without action, we cannot live. One act must. Without consequence, no action can be initiated or oriented. So the consequence is a must. Similarly, without an agent, no action can be performed. The *Bhagavat Gîtâ* admits these basic modalities of an action situation. At the same time, the *Bhagavat Gîtâ* claims the possibility of '*Akarma*', '*Akartâ*', and '*Phalatyâga*' while discussing *Nishkâmakarma*. How is it possible? The dialectics of '*Karma* and '*Akarma*', '*Kartâ* and '*Akartâ*', and '*Phala* and '*Phalatyâga*' are not logical opposites, rather, these are possible in the psychological discipline of time management. In an action situation, there is a reference to past, present, and future relating to the sequence of the karmic cycle as *Vâsanâ- Karma – Phala* (Tendencies- Action- Consequences). Every action is done in the present moment. Every action is just the reaction of past tendencies or *vâsanâs*. The consequence of an action refers to future time. In other words, the past *vâsanâs* cause the present action leading to future consequences. Our past *vâsanâs* compel us to imagine the past events and attachments and by doing that we fail to focus on the present time of action. Our future consequences compel us to imagine the possible consequences and by doing that we fail to concentrate on the assigned

action at present. Our presence in both the past and future proves our absence in the present. The future consequence must follow the present action and one should have an orientation about the consequences. But one should not hang over the future consequences over which no one has any control or right. So, unnecessary imagination of future consequences should be abandoned by a real karma yogi. This is called *karma phala tyāga*. Similarly, one should understand that every action is caused by

Prakrities	3,04,777	9.04% of India's area
Forest cover in India	3,06,800	9.33% of India's area
Very Dense Forest (70% and above)	3,07,120	9.34% of India's area
Moderately Dense Forest (between 40%-70%)	7,13,789	21.71% of India's area
Open Forest (between 10%-40%)		
Total Forest cover		

By mistake we claim that we are the doer of our actions. The so-called agent is nothing but an instrument only. So the doer should abandon the sense of agency (*kartābhāva*). The agent can perform his duty without a sense of agency. The consequence can be oriented without overthinking the consequences. Action can be done in such a way as if no action is done with any sort of attachment. *Nishkamakarma* is the detached action done by a karma yogi who is not psychologically trapped by the imaginary agency and consequences. The *Bhagavat Gītā* has focused on the present moment concerning the present context.

The *Bhagavat Gītā* begins with *Visāda Yoga* representing the inner conflicts

More than 75% of India's area	Less than 10% of India's area
Lakshadweep (90.33%)	Ladakh (1.35%)
Mizoram (84.53%)	Haryana (3.63%)
Andaman & Nicobar Islands (81.75%)	Punjab (3.67%)
Assam (79.38%)	Rajasthan (4.87%)
Meghalaya (76%)	Httar Pradesh (6.15%)
	Gujrat (7.61%)
	Bihar (7.84%)

and confusions of a basic psychological disorder. The field and time of battle are natural to man but very unfortunate when such disorders take place in the field of battle and at the time of battle. Here the field and time of battle symbolize the psychological readiness where a man should be action-oriented with full of wisdom and dedication. The time of war is meant for detachment from empirical attachments when one should not have any passion for personal relationships and any reactions to inner conflicts. But in the *Bhagavat Gītā*, it is shown that man is psychologically trapped even in the time of war and the place of war-field. This is the irony of human intellectuality and rationality. Man is always found at the crossroad of confusion and becomes indecisive about what to do and what not to do. Man suffers from this psychological battle throughout his life. The *Bhagavat Gītā*, from the opening chapter of *Visāda Yoga*, introduces the nature and limits of the human mind. A confused mind is not qualified for any war. War ethics suggests that if both the opposite parties standing on the opposite sides are not ready for fighting, there cannot be any fighting at all. As *Arjuna* was confused and reluctant to fight against his relatives, he needed psychological counseling to have readiness for war with strong conviction and wisdom.

Arjuna was disturbed by his past memories of family relationships and was worried about future consequences. *Arjuna* had some good reasons in support of his decision not to fight. But a biased mind gets motivated by supporting reasons. All the rational justifications for not fighting were proved futile because they were irrelevant to the urgency of time. *Arjuna* was prepared for the war for thirteen years

and he was aware of the consequences thereof. So the war was not a surprise for *Arjuna*. The confusion in the time of war is unexpected for a warrior on the battlefield. *Arjuna* was confused to do his duty only because he was not present in the present. The *Gitâ* concept of *Svadharmâ* is significant here. *Svadharmâ* is described as the performance of action according to one's *svabhâva* or past inclined *vâsanâs*. In other words, *svadharmâ* is determined by *Guna* and *Karma*.⁴ But if we understand the concept of '*svadharmâ*' in the wider sense, it can be said that *sadhana* is contextual action. 'My station and my Duty' is the appropriate understanding of *svadharmâ*. Action should be done in the sense of duty. Emmanuel Kant's categorical imperative suggests that duty should be done for the sake of duty without any compromise. This seems to be rigorous. This is deontological which is based on the fixed principle of acting for the sake of the principle only.

The *Bhagavat Gitâ* gives the model of *Svadharmâ* which gives priority to the contextual contingencies. Duty is context-specific. The context is comprised of space, time, and person. An action is judged to be right depending on the context. The same action is right in one context and wrong in another context. Here time is the focused context. *Paradharmâ* is meant as following the principles which do not fit the present action. The present time is the context that determines the value paradigm of an action. If an action is done giving priority to the principles beyond the context then it is *paradharmâ*. So *svadharmâ* is context-specific. The *Bhagavat Gita* says, "*Svadharme nidhanam sreya paradharmâ bhayabaha*".⁵ In spite of one's *svabhâva* or *vâsanâs*, one has free will to attend to the present situation with the presence of mind. If one's *svadharmâ* is completely determined by his *svabhâva*, then there is no scope for transformation and freedom. Therefore, *svadharmâ* should not be restricted to *Varna dharmâ* based on caste discrimination. *Brâhmana*, *Vaishya*, *Sudra*, and *Ksetriya* are not four divisions of people based on their caste, but these four classifications represent four fundamental tendencies in each and every person. As *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas* are three ingredient qualities present in each and every individual, so are these four qualities that function in each and every personality. An individual is *Brahmana* or *Vaisya* or *Sudra* or *Khetriya* depending on his aptitude and attitude in a particular context. *Arjuna* was advised by *Lord Krishna* to fight for being a *Ksetriya*. This suggestion does not give the message that Brahmin soldiers on the battlefield should not fight. *Parsurama* and *Dhronacarya* were Brahmin by caste but they were ready to fight whereas *Arjuna* was reluctant to fight being a *Ksetriya*. So it is evident that if there is an occasion for a fight, one should rise to that occasion irrespective of being a *Kshatriya* or *Brahmin* or *Vaisya*, or *Sudra*. The *Bhagavat Gitâ* gives the message that one should not be attached to one's

predetermined *svabhāva*, rather one should be flexible to act according to the demand of the context. One should rise to the occasion according to the contextual emergency. This is possible by our being present in the present. To build a wall of discrimination around our inner personality and to keep such disturbances away is to discover the equipoise in ourselves without which no progress or growth is ever possible. With a little practice, this evenness of mind (the state of *Samatvam*)⁶ can be maintained unbroken in all situations of life – desirable and undesirable. A human mind, relieved from its preoccupations with its own present attachments and affections will discover in itself a tremendous amount of surplus energy conserved, which might flow into dangerous channels unless rightly directed. Concentration is the focusing of the mind upon a particular point to the exclusion of all mental excitement and agitations. This is possible by a conscious attempt at time management according to the contexts of life situations. Action is an effort put forth in the present, which, in its own time fulfills itself into the desired fruit. And, the fruit is what we reap later on as a result of the present action. A desireless action, therefore, belongs to the present, while the anxiety to enjoy the fruit is a disturbance of our mind regarding a future time. The fruit comes after the action; the fruit is the culmination of an action undertaken in the present.

Momentariness and Memory

Buddha's doctrine of momentariness (*kshyanabhanagavada*) explains the importance of the present momentous existence with its causal potency. Everything exists for a moment only. But the moment it exists, it has its causal potency to cause the next state of existence. The origin of everything is dependent on some conditions and after the origination takes place, the conditions exist no more. This doctrine of dependent origination⁷ explains the importance of the present moment of existence with its impact and limitation. This is a great solution for eradicating suffering from human life. The suffering is momentary and conditional. The suffering can be eradicated if the conditions of suffering are removed. Similarly, desire is the root cause of all attachments. If our desires are extinct, one can attain Nirvana. If the conditions of the life cycle are removed, one can be free from the life cycle. All most all the systems of Indian Philosophy have given importance to the present phenomenon as practical and worth living.

Mind memory, as opposed to brain memory, is concerned with the psychological feelings connected to these events, whereas brain memory is concerned with temporal or biological occurrences. Thus, psychological memory is a part of the mind's overall functioning. The full area of consciousness must therefore be investigated to comprehend the flow of personal or psychological

time. There must be an absolute halt to all movement in the entire field of the mind, not only in a piece of it, for the incomplete experiences to be fully realized. There is never enough time to fully experience things since one must continually rush from one thing to the next. The fatal diseases of the current era, however, are caused by unresolved issues from the past, which function as a source of tension, stress, and strain. The psychological or personal memory that is brought on by incomplete past events doesn't just exist at the conscious level; it also primarily inhabits the subconscious parts of the mind. Constant forces are at work in one's life, acting on both the subconscious and conscious levels. The source of many tensions and strains is these pulls. These are the ones that prevent all of the new experiences from being fully experienced. So, countless amounts of unfinished experiences start to accumulate. They prevent one from giving life and its events their full attention. The focus is diverted constantly. As a result, one encounters life and its events with utterly scattered attention. We have seen that psychological memory develops when the end of the event and the end of the experience are not synchronized.

Pratyâhâra

Time management is initiated by the practice of *Pratyâhâra* or the art of withdrawal of the mind from the sense objects and mind-objects. We can practice *Pratyâhâra* by removing the enjoyer from the act of enjoying. Although the energy produced by enjoyment is still present, it is the user of that energy, the enjoyer, who is being targeted for eradication. The act of *Pratyâhâra*, or withdrawal, is this process of getting rid of the enjoyer. The enjoyer is eliminated at the height of enjoyment. There is no distinction between the observer and the observed during high tide, the point of greatest enjoyment. If the enjoyer is engaged during that intense period, the act of enjoyment is interrupted. And a broken-up experience always leaves you with a hangover, and a sense of unfulfillment, and an unfulfilled experience gives us a longing, which is a want for the experience to continue. Therefore, the experience is not over here. It is an experience that is disrupted and looks to be fulfilled by altering circumstances or routines. The issue is only transferred here; it is not resolved. The experience can finish at its most enjoyable point and just at that point, leaving no desire for continuation in any way or conduct. *Pratyâhâra* is the retreat at the hour of fullness. The senses naturally distance themselves from sense objects as a result of the mind's retreat. Duality is a product of thought. Thus, the mind starts to work as an observer or a perceiver when thinking enters the body. Nothing can be done once the thought has entered. Preventing the emergence of thoughts is the secret of *Pratyâhâra*. The first yoga posture, called *dhâranâ*, allows for the movement of the

mind without any interference. *Dhâranâ* is silent visualisation. *Dhâranâ* prohibits the introduction of fresh ideas. Being silent as you observe is like approaching yoga. It is actually entering the portal of yoga to follow the flow of thinking without stopping it. From *pratyâhâra* to *dhâranâ*, this is the transition. It takes a lot of energy to keep the mind still when observing the movement of thinking. If the notion itself needs to be held, that would be a difficult act. The mind must be kept steady to be able to watch the flow of thinking. It takes all the energy one has to muster in order to hold the mind, which is perpetually restless. One can only enter the realm of meditation or the realm of communion from this stance. The elimination of the observer is the main goal of *dhyâna*, the condition of communion or meditation. It is an integration process that begins with *dhâranâ* and progresses via *dhyâna* and Samadhi. Concentration, communion, and communication are the components of this integration process. The foundation of vast awareness created by *dhâranâ* opens the door to the possibility of intense observation. *Dhâranâ*, *dhyâna*, and *Samâdhi* together make up a process of self-integration.

Conclusion

Mind binds and mind liberates. Human existence is more psychic than physical. We experience factual events physically and preserve the same events in our mental chambers as images. Mind helps imagine the events in its fanciful ways and gets attached to it. Then gradually we start living in the imaginary world getting trapped by the mental images. In this situation, we run behind the natural flow of time and never succeed to go in parallel to it. The synchronization between the biological time and psychological time gets lost and we suffer from insecurity and mental slavery. Due to the imbalanced mind, we always find ourselves in the past or future. We never find ourselves present in the present. This is a kind of mental indiscipline that influence our action performed in the present moment and situation. Our attachment to the doer of action, the action itself, and the consequences suspend our alertness and existence in the present moment. This is a serious problem with us that leads us to the realm of bondage and suffering. The remedy for this difficulty is the practice of *Pratyâhâra*. Our mind has a double function. It can be involved and at the same time, it can withdraw itself from the objects of attachment. This withdrawal is possible through spiritual *sâdhanâ*. Once *Pratyâhâra* is attained successfully one can practice the art of *dhâranâ* and *dhyâna* in the pursuit of *Samâdhi*. The consciousness of the present moment and the present activity is possible when the mind is free from the past memories and future anxieties. The mind that is deeply involved in the worldly allurements can withdraw itself from all types of attachment and attain eternal bliss. This is the goal of life.

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