



## Yoga as a Science of Self Realisation and Health

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### Abstract:

*In Indian culture, Yoga Philosophy occupies a very important place. It is an invaluable contribution made by the Indian culture to the world. In earlier times yoga was taken to be a subject for those who took to a spiritual life. But in the present time, the importance and relevance of yoga is as much in social life as its use was in spiritual life in the past. The all round development of a person is possible only through yoga. It is a way of life. Today, it is seen that many people are suffering from mental and physical ailments. The importance of yoga is increased day by day.*

**Keywords:** Science, Self-realisation, Yoga

'The Bhagwad Gita ' popularly know as ' Gita ' is widely acknowledged as a unique and universal treatise on the philosophy of life which came directly from the God incarnate same 5000 years ago. It is a part of the Bhismaparva of Mahabharat. It contains 18 chapters and 700 verses. It is a treatise on yoga, going by the opening verses 1 to 3 of chapter 4 and leading to holistic picture in the end. According to the 'Gita ', yoga means, ' union of the individual soul with the universal soul (God), of the Atman with the Brahman. According to Patanjali, it means not only spiritual union, but all round development of human personality, physical and mental.

Self-realisation is the supreme and ultimate goal of human life. It is the realisation of the Atman with the Brahman. The Gita has indicated different paths such as Jnanayoga, Bhaktiyoga, Kormayoga and Rajayoga to attain this union. In the 'Bhagwad Gita', Lord Krishan guides a disheartened Arjuna and asks him to practise yoga. Lord Krishna as the charioteer defines yoga as ' equanimity of mind ' – being even-minded in the midst of constantly turning tides of life. The transformation of faint heartedness Arjuna's initial condition into large hearted ness lies at the heart of yoga.

**1. Jnanayoga:** In the ' Gita' IV:8, it is explained that “there is nothing so sublime and pure as knowledge. And one who has achieved this enjoys the self within himself in due course of time. ‘Further, it is stated that, “even if you are considered to be the most sinful, you can cross the ocean of miseries by means of boat of knowledge alone. ” (The Gita IV: 36). The knower is identified by Lord with his own self. (The Gita VII: 18). There are three stages of Jnanayoga. They are: Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasna. Sravana means listening of scriptures about Atman. Manana is reflection on the meanings of those learnt scriptures and removes doubt regarding the final truth. Nididhasana means deep contemplation on Atman.

**2. Bhaktiyoga :** Bhaktiyoga is the way of love towards the God. It is surrendering of oneself to the God. Lord Krishna declares. “For who worship me with devotion, meditating me alone, I take care of them.” (The Gita IX: 22). Further, Lord Krsna says “Think of me always, become my devotee, worship me and offer your homage unto me. I shall protect you from all sinful reaction.”(The Gita XVIII : 65-66). Choose love and all fear is gone. This is krishna's final message in the 'The Gita' There s deep and emotional relationship between the individual and the God in the Bhaktiyoga.

**3. Karmayoga :** Renunciation of the fruit of actions is the thing of distinctive importance in Karmayoga. We should understand the difference between the actions of a worldly man and those of Karmayogi. Each and every action of a Karmayogi unites him with the whole universe. Lord Krishna reveals in the Gita, “you have a right to perform your duty alone but not entitled to the fruits of action. So never work for fruit and never be attached to inaction.”(The Gita II : 47 ) In short, a Karmayogi by renouncing desire for the fruit of his actions, will receive infinite rewards. His body will be sustained and both his body and mind will remain healthy and radiant. His mind will be purified and he will attain wisdom. The society to which he belongs will also be happy.

**4. Rajayoga :** The classical phase of yoga as an orthodox system owes its foundation to sage Patanjali, author of the 'Yogasutra'. He talked about Rajayoga in his 'Yogasutra'. Patanjali's 'Yogasutra' was compiled almost 2500 years ago indicating yoga as a set of disciplined practices. It is concerned with the healing of mind and spirit. This work consists of four chapters called padas (quarters). The first is 'samadhi pada' dealing with meditative absorption (samadhi). The second is 'sadhna-pada' explaining the means to reach the goal of yoga. The third which is 'Vibhuti -pada' discusses the supernatural powers that come to one who practises yoga. The fourth which is 'kaivalya-pada' sets forth the nature of release, the state of aloneness. According to Patanjali, yoga means all round development of human personality, physical and mental. It is not just the pinnacle of inner evolution. It is a path of discipline to holistic progress. Aiming to integrate body, mind, intellect and breath, the discipline of yoga entails eight steps in progression. Sage patanjali's 'Yogasutra' prescribes eight steps which are called the limbs of yoga (Astanga yoga) for such development. The eight steps are:

1. Yama
2. Niyama
3. Asana
4. Pranayama
5. Pratyahara
6. Dharana
7. Dhyana
8. Samadhi

The eight steps mentioned above, the first five are external aids and the last three are internal aids. 'External' means the disciplines that lead to yoga proper and 'Internal' signifies the stages within yoga which is mind-control.

The first two steps represent an ethical training. In other words, the mind should be cleansed of passions and emotions, of supine and lethargic traits. Yama means restraint and it includes five vows viz. ahimsa (non-violence), satya, (truthfulness), asteya (non stealing), brahmacharya (celibacy) and aparigraha (non possession) . These are described as great vows or vrata, they are not conditioned by anything such as caste, place, time or circumstance.

Niyama means observance of certain rules, discipline. viz. saucha (purity), santosa (contentment), tapa (austerity) svadhyaya (self-study) and isvarpranidhana (devotion to the god). The five abstentions and the five observances together constitute all that is necessary for a perfect moral life. They prepare the ground for yoga practice.

The next three steps in the yoga discipline includes cultivating steady posture of body, regulating the breath and withdrawing the senses from their respective objects.

Asana means posture. Maharshi Patanjali, defines asana as that posture which is stable and conducive to happiness. Pranayama means control of breath and is a very powerful technique in yogic science. The regulating of the breathing process helps considerably to bring the mind under control. It is required for

purifying the mind. Pratyahara means withdrawing senses from their objects. Its purpose is to tame the mind through taming the senses.

The last three steps are stages in mind control. They are Dharan, Dhyana and Samadhi. Dharana means the concentration of the mind to a particular spot. This prepares the mind for its ascent to yoga. The restrained mind is that from which distractions have been checked and the flow of modifications has been arrested. It means meditation and it is the uninterrupted flow of mental modes towards the same object. When the process of thought is continuous it is called dhyana. Samadhi is higher stage of dhyana. When dhyana or meditation is so intense, it transforms into samadhi.

If we follow these eight steps carefully in life, there is a all-round development of human personality. Yoga is a science of self-realisation and health. We cannot ignore unparalleled role of yoga in promoting health and spiritual progress. It aims at harmonious development of body, mind and soul. In inculcates balance both physical and psychological. Due to ever increasing ambitions and competitions, stress and tensions have also increased by leaps and bounds. Everybody's life is found full of ups and downs and it is very difficult to get rid of stressful situations always. In a world of rapid sociological transformation and bewildering technological change, nothing is more important than balance of body and mind.

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