

THE JOURNEY OF SELF-REALIZATION IN YOGA PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Subrata Sharma*

**Assistant Professor in Philosophy (Principal In- Charge) Ambedkar College, Tripura*

Abstract:

The yoga philosophy highlights its significance for personal growth and spiritual development. The term 'Yoga' seems to derive from the root 'Yuj' means bind or yoke together. In theistic tradition Yoga is primarily conceived of as pathway leading to union with Divine, but this is not the only understanding of the term. An alternate rendering of the term sees it as the quest for the unification of the mind or the self in the attainment of meditative concentration.

Self-realization is a central theme in yoga philosophy, representing the process of discovering one's true nature and the ultimate reality of existence. This journey involves transcending the ego and connecting with a deeper sense of self, often referred to as Atman, which is considered one with Brahman, the universal consciousness. In an increasingly stressful modern world, understanding this journey can provide profound insights for personal growth and spiritual awakening. Yoga is more than just a kind of physical exercise; it is a timeless philosophy that originated in ancient India. It is now a widely accepted method for improving emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being that cuts across cultural divides.

Key Words: Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Jaina ,Buddha, Karma, Self-realisation, nishkama Karma, Astānga Yoga,

Yoga in the more traditional sense of the term has been practiced throughout south Asia and beyond and involves a multitude of techniques leading to spiritual and ethical purification. Hindu and Buddhist tradition alike place a great deal of practice of yoga as a means of attaining liberation from the world of rebirth. The practice of yoga as a discipline started since 2nd century B.C.

In *Srimad Bhagavad Gitā*, there are reference of three types of Yoga. These are-the yoga of knowledge (Jñana Yoga), the Yoga of good works (Karma Yoga) and the Yoga of Bhakti (Bhakti Yoga). *Gitā* integrates all the three types in to a single theoretical framework for cultivation of an attitude of selfless action i.e. *niskāma karma*.

There are two main forms of Hindu i.e. Raja Yoga and Hatha Yoga. Raja Yoga is usually identified with *Yoga Sūtra* of Pātanjali. Hatha Yoga or yoga of force and places much more emphasis upon self realization through the perfection of body, the utilization of postures or āsana. The primary aim of Hatha Yoga is to prevent the indulgence of the vital breath by centralizing it within the middle channel. This is thought to awaken the serpent force or kundalini Śakti. Hatha yoga promotes various mental techniques for the transformation of human into divine body, the body is a useful instrument for emancipation.

Raja Yoga or Royal Yoga is identified with *Yoga Sutra* of Pātanjali, which thereby function as the textual exposition of classical yoga. The first systematic techniques and theory of Yoga found in *Yoga Sūtra* of Pātanjali. Pātanjali use the term 'Yoga' in the sense of spiritual effort to control and purify body, mind and senses so that one can differentiate between Pūrusa and Prakṛti and to realize the isolated status of pure consciousness.

Pātanjali outlines two alternative schemes of yoga i. e. Kriyā yoga and astanga yoga. The Kriyā yoga of Pātanjali is different from the Karma Yoga of *Bhagavad Gitā*. The Kriyā yoga involves ascetic discipline, self analysis and devotion to the duty. Whereas, the karma yoga of *Srimad Bhagavad Gitā* refers cultivation of action without any personal attachment. Astānga Yoga or eight- limbed yoga emphasizes internal as well as external purification, self- discipline, meditation, physical fitness etc. Sensual attachment and passion distract the body as well as the mind. The practice of this yoga leads to the union of individual consciousness with that of the universal consciousness. This **Eight Limbs of Yoga**, serve as a roadmap for the journey of self-realisation. These are-- 1. Yama 2. Niyama 3. Āsana 4. Prāṇayama 5. Prātyahara 6. Dharana 7. Dhyāna and Samādhi. Each limb plays a crucial role in guiding practitioners toward self-realization by fostering a holistic approach to personal development.

Yama: Yama means abstention. It is abstention from injury through thought, word or deed, from falsehood, from stealing, from passion and lust and from greed. These are akin to Buddhist and Jaina precepts. The yamas of yoga philosophy are universal practices that relate best to what we know as a 'Golden Rule'. It helps us to instill moral values in us.

Niyama: Niyama means self discipline i.e. inner control of oneself. It has five aspects involving moral, mental and physical purity, contentment and ascetic practice. It relates to our personal observance through these five niyamas. The practice of niyama requires self discipline and spiritual observance.

Āsana: 'It is the third discipline of Yoga Philosophy. Āsana' means bodily posture which helps to settle the body for meditation. The āsanās or postures help us to preserve energy, to strengthen and purify body and mind. The word "asana" here doesn't mean that you can do a handstand or a beautiful backbend; rather, it means "seat," precisely the seat you would choose for meditation. "Sthira sukham āsanam" is the only alignment guideline Patanjali provides for this pose; it should be comfortable and stable.

Although the Hatha Yoga Pradipika and other traditional texts list numerous poses that are appropriate for meditation, such as Padmasāna (lotus pose) and Virāsana (hero pose), they also inform us that the most crucial pose is actually sthirasukhasana, which translates to "a posture the practitioner can hold comfortably and motionless."

Āsana enables balance at the mental, intellectual, and eventually spiritual level. The physical self must be in good health because it sets the stage for us to delve inward and discover our inner selves. This is the body's discipline. According to yoga philosophy, the body is a temple of the soul, and taking care of it is a crucial step in our spiritual development. Asana practice helps cultivate the disciplined habit and concentration skills that are essential for meditation.

Prānāyama : Pātanjali advises the practitioner of Yoga to manage the breath's inhalations, exhalations, and retentions in a cyclical fashion. This fourth stage, which is commonly translated as breath control, includes methods for developing emotional and mental mastery. According to yogis, pranayama, which literally translates as "life force extension," not only revitalises the body but also prolongs life itself.

Pratyāhāra: The fifth limb, pratyāhara, denotes sensory transcendence or retreat. At this point, we consciously work to shift our focus from the outside world to the within. Pratyāhara gives us the chance to take a step back, "take a look," and maybe identify harmful behaviours, attitudes, and habits that are preventing us from growing within. It is a practice that manipulates our senses, and we deliberately work to focus our attention on the meditative idea indefinitely. In order to focus the mind on the aim of meditation, it is crucial to detach the senses from material objects when practicing yoga.

Dhāraṇa:The sixth limb of Yoga means concentration or steadiness. This practice allows us to slow down the thinking process and to focus on a single point (like a mantra), creating mindfulness, and moving us to a state of meditation. Dhāraṇa is attention to fixation of the mind on the object of meditation like 'the tip of the nose or the midpoint of the eyebrows or the lotus of the heart or the image of the deity'. By focusing on a single mental object—a particular energetic centre in the body—we might learn how to slow down our thought processes. At this moment, we concentrate on only one thing.

Dhyāna:Dhyāna, or meditation, is the seventh discipline in the yoga philosophy for practicing yoga. It is the unwavering reflection that never stops until the objective is attained. It involves the unhindered flow of thoughts surrounding the subject of meditation and is the practice of meditation. At this point, the mind has calmed down and is producing few or no thoughts in the stillness.

Samādhi: "Samādhi," which translates to "concentration," is the eighth and last discipline in the yoga system. At this point, the mind is so engrossed in the subject of reflection that it becomes unaware of itself and loses itself in it.

The act and the thought's object continue to exist as different and independent states of consciousness while in the state of Dhyāna. However, the act of concentration is not cognised individually in the state of Samādhi; rather, it assumes the form of the object and, in a sense, loses itself. In this discipline, the meditation's aim and its act were one and the same. In this case, we are unaware that there is a thinking process occurring in our minds; only the thought object is still glowing there. It is important to note that the discipline of Samadhi is described as "the restraint of the mind (cittavrittinirodha)." Realising the finish, or the cessation of mental change, is the pinnacle of yoga practice.

According to the yoga founder Pātanjali, the meditator transcends the self completely and merges with his or her subject of focus during the Samadhi stage. The meditator discovers a deep connection to the Divine and a sense of interconnectedness with all living things. Therefore, it can be seen that of the aforementioned "eight-fold" disciplines for yoga practice, the last three are internal aids (antaranga sādhana) while the first five are outward aids (bahiranga sādhana). Therefore, in accordance with yoga philosophy, one can achieve the goal by performing the yoga practice. The eight phases listed above are focused on self-discipline, physical fitness, meditation, and both internal and exterior purification, which lead to awareness and mental strength.

In essence, yoga is a spiritual discipline that helps people keep their bodies and minds in harmony. It is a technique for reducing mental tension. According to yogic texts, yoga practice results in the unification of the individual's awareness with the global consciousness, signifying complete mental and physical harmony.

Since a person must attempt to alleviate stress from his life and seek happiness from all of the resources at his disposal, Pātanjal's eight-fold discipline for yoga practice is regarded as being extremely important in our lives. A happy life is the result of a stress-free mind. We should constantly work to balance difficult situations and release ourselves from all forms of stress if we wish to live a joyful and stress-free life. The eight-fold discipline of yoga reduces stress and infuses a man's head and heart with vitality.

The Yoga Sutras of Pātanjali offer a timeless path for everyone looking to achieve self-realization and better health. These sutras have many real-world uses that go well beyond the yoga mat. Patanjali's Yoga is extremely beneficial in the following important areas:

Stress Reduction: Asanas (postures) and pranayama (breath control) are two aspects of yoga that help reduce tension and anxiety. Frequent practice improves emotional equilibrium, mental clarity, and relaxation.

Physical Health: Yoga enhances general health, flexibility, and physical strength. It can aid in the treatment of a number of illnesses, including respiratory, cardiovascular, and chronic pain.

Focus and Mental Clarity: Dharana and Dhyana, the contemplative components of yoga, improve focus and mental clarity. In the fast-paced, distracting world of today, these techniques are priceless.

Spiritual Development: For those pursuing self-realization and spiritual development, Pātanjali's Yoga offers an organised route. The pinnacle of unity, samādhi, signifies a close relationship with God.

Ethical Living: The yamas and niyamas provide principles for living an ethical life by encouraging virtues like contentment, honesty, and non-violence. These guidelines are applicable to anybody attempting to live a purposeful and kind life.

Pātanjali, explains that "Yoga is about harmonising oneself with the universe." It is a technique for achieving the highest degree of harmony and perception by lining up individual geometry with the cosmic. Yoga is a life science. It must be a part of everyday life. It affects people's physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being. It contributes to a higher standard of living. It brings the body and mind into balance. Living a healthy lifestyle is both an art and a science.

Yoga, which has its roots in Indian philosophy and is best represented by Pātanjali's Yoga Sutras, provides a holistic method for improving one's physical, mental, and spiritual health. Its ageless wisdom and ability to adapt to modern circumstances are demonstrated by its continued relevance. The value and practicality of yoga, as taught by Pātanjali, endure as people look for all-encompassing answers to the problems of contemporary life.

REFERENCES: --

1. Chatterjee Satis Chandra and Datta Dharendra Mohan (1939), *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd. 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi, 110002.
2. Dasgupta Surendranath (1921), *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Rupa Publications India, Delhi.
3. Dr. Vatsyayan, *Indian Philosophy*, published by Ramnath Kedarnath, 132, R. G. College Road, Meerut, 250001, Delhi.
4. Dr. Radhakrishnan Sarvapalli (1929), *Indian Philosophy, Centenary Edition Volume Two*, published by Neil O'brien, Oxford University Press, YMCA Library Building, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi, 110001.
5. Dr. Sharma R. N. *History of Indian Philosophy*, Surjeet Publications, Kolhapur Road, Kamla Nagar, Delhi, 110007.

6. Dr. Sinha Jadunath (1963), *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, published by New Central Book Agency 8/1 Chintamani Das Lane, Calcutta, 700009.
7. Hiriyana M, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy* (1949), Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd, Delhi.
8. Pandit Dr. S. Balkrishna (1969), *Indian Philosophy* SBD Publishers, Pvt Ltd. Delhi, 110006.
9. Sharma Chandradhar (1960), *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass 41 U. A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi, 110007.
