

## YOGA PHILOSOPHY AS THE WAY OF SELF- REALIZATION AND LOVE DIVINE

Dinanath Ghatak

### Abstract:

This article emphasizes that yoga is not about making miracles; rather, it is a logical approach to spiritual practice. As one advances along the *yoga* path, they encounter a variety of voices, visions, and other extremely sensual experiences. He might even acquire exceptional abilities like healing or diction, but in the sake of his final objective, he shouldn't attach any significance to such items. Attraction to vision powers, etc., not only impedes spiritual advancement but might potentially lead to an aspirant's downfall. The aspirant must select his ideal in line with his faith in order to practice *yoga*. Despite the reality that God is worshipped both in and out of forms, under many names, an aspirant in any sect needs to be certain in his/her heart that his/her ideal is fundamentally the same as everyone else's. At the end, his/her egotism gives way to divine love and all of his/her problems and sufferings in this world disappear, and he unites with the absolute.

**Key-words:** Yoga, aspirant, spiritual, advancement, practice

\* Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, SKBU

**Introduction:** The term ‘Yoga’ means union— ‘a union of the human individual with the universal or transcendent Existence’<sup>1</sup>. It signifies ‘a methodized effort towards self-perfection’. Yoga is both a method and a goal. In this regard, it is a *moksha sāstra*. The word Yoga originated from the Sanskrit word *yuj*, which means “to yoke, unite, or join”. This implies joining all aspects of the individual - body with mind and soul - to achieve a balanced life. The science of yoga has its origin thousands of years ago, long before the first religions or belief systems were born. In the yogic lore, Shiva is seen as the yogi or *Adiyogi*, and the first Guru or *Adi Guru*. Though Yoga was being practiced in the Pre-Vedic period, the great sage Maharshi Patañjali systemized and codified the existing practices of yoga. In the second century C.E, Patañjali composed the *yoga sūtras*, which consists of 195 aphorisms.

The yoga system is one of the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy. Its exponent being Patañjali, it is called *Pātañjala darśana*. It adopts the Sāṃkhya metaphysics and adds to it the concept of God; and that is why it is called the *Seśvara Sāṃkhya*, as distinct from the classical *Sāṃkhya* which is atheistic by nature.

Patañjali’s *Yogasūtras* was the first systematic presentation of yoga considered to be the classical period written sometime in the second century. It is to be remarked that there are at least four schools of ‘yoga’ recognised in the Indian tradition; ‘mantra-yoga’, ‘laya-yoga’, ‘hatha-yoga’ and ‘raja-yoga’. These schools have been traditionally associated with the name of certain great Ṛṣi’s and yogin’s, the first with Bhṛgu, Kaśyapa, Marīch; the second with Veda-vyasa and others; the third with Mārkaṇḍeya, Gorakṣanāth etc. the fourth with Dattātreya’ Patañjali and others. This classification is however a classification of ‘yoga’ as ‘*sādhana*’. It is not known whether the first three of these schools have their distinctive philosophies represented in any systematic treatises. The last school, however, has a specific philosophy represented mainly by the ‘Yoga-sūtra’s of Patañjali, the ‘Yoga-Bhāṣyam’ by Vyāsa.<sup>2</sup>

Patañjali’s *yogasūtras* still strongly influence most styles of modern yoga. Then, several centuries after Patañjali, yoga masters create a system of practices designed to revitalize the body, mind and prolong life as the means to achieve enlightenment. In general Yoga is the holistic and integral science of life related

to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of individuals and society.

It is a way of life that gives the rare opportunity to leave an alienation of world behind and attain inner peace. The 195 sutras are divided into four *Padas*, which cover four broad topics of yoga: The first *pada* is *Samādhi pāda* (**what yoga is-51**). The second *pada* is *Sādhanā pāda* (**how to attain a state of yoga-55**). Third is *vibhūti pāda* (here discussed **the benefits of yoga practice-55**). The fourth is *kaivalya pāda* (**freedom from suffering-34**). Patañjali organized the practice of yoga into an eight limbed *pāth* in his second *pada*, create a streamlined process of self-transformation from the physical body and eventually involving the most subtle levels of life towards presence *Samādhi* or enlightenment. In his *Yoga sūtras*, the sage Patañjali describes the practice, or *sādhanā*, these limbs evolve in a process of fine-tuning from the grossest levels of our understanding to the most subtle. So the Yoga is the pursuit of *Pañcabhūta*, its means the union of the five elements. and this *Pañcabhūta* is manifested in the in *Anna*, *Prāṇa*, *Mana*, *Būddhi* and *Ahaṃ* or bliss. In this *Anna* and *Prāṇa* are involved with the human body, *Mana* or mind is the

psychological part of human being and *Būddhi* or intellect and *Ahaṃ* are involved with spirituality. So the mind is in the middle of the external and internal world. According to *Taittiriya Upaniṣada*, there are five layers or *koṣas* (*Annamaya-kosa*, *Prāṇamaya-kosa*, *Manomaya-kosa*, *Vijñānamaya-kosa*, *Ānandamaya-kosa*) to our seemingly individual existence. Like the eight limbs of *Rāja yoga*, they begin in the densest part of our being, to the most vast and subtle. According to James Reeves “these five *koṣa* are yoga series, the gateway to the soul”<sup>3</sup>. So the five *koṣa* are intimately related to *Pātañjala Yogā* or eight limbs of yoga. We saw that, through the practise of eight limbs of *Rāja yoga*, we can help bring our lives into balance and integration on all these levels.

#### **Ethical Discipline for Yoga aspirants:**

There are three sets of prescriptions laid down by Patañjali in connection with the practice of *Rāja-yoga*. They are ‘*abhyāsa-vairāgya*, *Kriyā-yoga* and *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*’. “It has to be remarked that these constitute the ethical discipline only for the ‘yogic’-aspirant and not for mankind in general”<sup>4</sup>. Ethical prescriptions for common people are given in the *Dharma-sāstras*’s. The yogic aspirant is a man first and then an

aspirant. The purpose of Patanjali's prescriptions is not to supersede the teachings of the Dharma -sāstras's.

The first set of instruction relates to the cultivation of certain attitudes and is called 'bhābanā's. They are 'maîtrî', 'karuṇā', 'mudutā', and 'upekṣā'. They ensure purification of the psyche and help towards mental attentiveness. The second set of instructions are also in connection with 'the cleansing of psyche' (*citta-parikarma*). These are called 'kriyā yoga' of which three varieties are mentioned: 'tapas', 'svādhyāya' and 'Īśvara-pranidhān'. The third set lays down the practices known as the 'Eightfold Yoga' (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*). Thus, yoga in *Pātañjala-Yoga* is a process or a path consisting of eight limbs: *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāranā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. This eight fold path of yoga, popularly known as "Yogāṅga's" or also known "Pātañjala-Yoga". The first two represent some moral activities; the next two stands for activities mainly physical, and the last four are mainly intellectual in their nature. The aspirant, who have the qualities of mentally healthy person is called in the word of Sribhagavad Gita—*sthitaprgña*. Some of the prerequisite

qualities of a mentally healthy person are enumerated in the Bhagavad Gita as follows: *veeta rāga bhaya krodha*, i.e., beyond passion, fear and anger, *nirmamo nirahamakah*, i.e., devoid of possessiveness and unbewildered.<sup>5</sup>

Among all of these we will mainly concentrate our discussion on 'Īśvara-pranidhāna' for realizing the title of this paper.

**Īśvara-pranidhāna:** Yoga is the "unitive impulse" of life, which always seeks to unite diverse streams and into a powerful force. Proper practice and living of the yogic principles produces an inner balance that gives stability and calm even in the midst of chaos. Yoga encourages us to step back and take a meta cognitive, objective view of our habitual patterns of behaviour and thoughts. This enables us to cope better with situations that normally put our bodies and minds under strain.

*Īśvara-pranidhāna* means the dedication of every action to *Īśvara* or the Supreme Guru. Yoga itself is a '*mokṣa-sāstra*' and the word '*svādhyāya*' means the study of the '*mokṣa-sāstra*' and meditation of the sacred syllable (*praṇava*) or other '*mantras*'. Now, we know that each soul is divine and finally attains union with God.

Rig Veda says, “Truth is one, Sages call it by various names”. Men learn of God from the wise and the sages of all climes and ages in His various facets”. “God is in everything and everything is in God”<sup>6</sup>, says Gita. Men exist because God exists in him as the blissful self- the *Ātman*. It is due to ignorance, which according to Sankara is *Avidyā*, that man identifies himself with his physical body and mind, “The wise becomes immortal knowing the self to the Brahman”, says the Upanishads. Patanjali the propounders of Yoga philosophy defines ignorance as mistaking Finite for the Infinite, phenomenal for the real. Seeking for the Infinite in the Finite mankind meets untold miseries. After all, apart from God there cannot be any love, light or liberty in the true sense of the terms. The history of religions furnishes the one and the same answer to all spiritual aspirants in all ages. It is that the religious are one in essence. That essence is ‘perfection in God’. “Know thy self”, says the Upanishad. It is, in brief, the unitive knowledge of God – the attainment of divine love.

Ignorance or *avidyā* is the cause of the impurities of the human mind. The crux of the problem is how to get rid of

ignorance which covers the self with a veil. Accumulated through many lives the impurities cannot be effaced from a man’s mind merely by wishing. The aspirant’s wish or will is no doubt a great factor, but it is ultimately by God’s grace that *avidyā* is removed. Lord Krishna accordingly says in the Gita “My inscrutable *Māyā* is insurmountable. Those who wholeheartedly surrender themselves to my feet can overcome it”.<sup>7</sup> The aspirant therefore, should first pull his resources together with a view to strengthening and enforcing his will, so that he could lift the veil of ignorance that covers his true self—the *Ātman*. Spiritual discipline, prayers, meditation etc. are requisite exercises for strengthening and enforcing the will in order to be the *Ātman*. The will must in any case, be purged of ignorance, as otherwise, it would tend to become the enemy of the *Ātman*. By living a disciplined life according to ethical principles a man gradually develops love and longing for God. This longing by and by imparts the urge for practicing spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines inculcate in man the spirit of dispassion and discrimination and the aspirant starts feeling a heart-felt yearning for the love and knowledge of God. Continual practice of meditation on

*Ātman* as Brahman at this stage gradually diminishes the force of the sense Ego.

The less the Ego is left, the more the mind of the aspirant becomes tranquil and pure. He begins to feel the presence of God in his heart. Slowly true dispassion gains ground in him and the world is felt unreal, and Brahman the only real is revealed in his *Ātman*. He then feels the identity of the *Ātman* and the Brahman. He is thus led to transcendental consciousness—the *Samādhi*—the final attainment of Love Divine.

**Seven planes of consciousness:** A man is a complete universe. His experiences vary according to the level of consciousness to which his mind dwells. He possesses all the seven planes of consciousness in his physical system. These planes or centres of consciousness are called lotuses in Yogic texts. They correspond with the seven mental planes of the Vedānta. These centres are known as *Muladhāra*, *Swadhisthān*, *Manipur*, *Anāhata*, *Vishudhā*, *Ājñā* and *Sahasrār* being located at the base of the spine, root of the genital, near the navel, in the heart, near the navel, near the throat, between the eye-brows and in the brain respectively. Each of the centres furnishes a ground for

contact between the soul and the cosmic spirit on a given level of consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

Living in the first three centres of consciousness as a man ordinarily does, his experiences do not transgress the world of appearance. When in these three centres, the human mind ordinarily dwells in physical comforts and sense pleasures. In the fourth mental plane—the *Anāhata*—which the Upanishads call *Brahmapura* or the abode of Brahman, a man gets the vision of Divine light. The Upanishads describe this centre to be shaped like a lotus bud. This centre is the most appropriate plane for meditation. Whenever, by the grace of God, the mind of a man soars up to this plane of consciousness, there arises in him the desire to love God and obviously he starts thinking about God. When his devotion for God intensifies due to prayers and experiences of ecstasies and vision, his mind someday ascends the centre of consciousness in the throat i.e., in the fifth mental plane—*Bishudha*. Resting in this centre the aspirant talks only on subjects related to God. All worldly talks become intolerable to him.

When the mind of a man gets settled in the centre of the throat, it may one day rise up to the level of consciousness localised between the eye-brows i.e., in the

sixth plane— *Ājñācakra*. In this centre a man comes face to face with God and talks to Him. In untold joy he experiences what is called “*savikalpa Samādhi*”<sup>9</sup>. He however sees God even in this exalted stage as if separated from him by a thin glass-like partition. The partition is the veil of his Ego. Due to this veil he cannot touch God. God is revealed to him like a light within a lantern. He has, therefore, to put up a hard fight in this centre of consciousness in order to overcome this final hurdle. He does continuous or rather incessant meditation which ultimately repels this ego. When by the grace of God, the Ego vanishes, or in other words, sense consciousness of the devotee ceases, he rises to the topmost plane of consciousness in the *Sahasrār* and becomes one with God. His loves culminate here in complete union with the Brahman.

**‘Kundalinī’ or Creative Consciousness:** ‘Kundalinī’ or the coiled up creative consciousness has been called the “The Serpent Power” by Arther Avaton.<sup>10</sup> She lies asleep at the base of the spine. She is consciousness in the creative aspect. She is the spiritual power latent in the man. She has to be awakened and lifted up through different centres of spiritual

consciousness as described above. The channel in the spinal column through which spiritual consciousness has to be flown is called ‘*Suṣumnā*’. The subtle nerve has been localized between those of ‘*Idā*’ and ‘*Piṅgalā*’ running respectively at her left and right in the spinal column. These nerves are called rivers in the Yogic texts.

Special exercises are prescribed for awakening the *Kundalinī* and to cause her flow up through the ‘*Suṣumnā*’ to the ‘*Sahasrār*’ piercing on way the six lotuses down below. Those exercises should not be taken recourse to without the direct guidance of a teacher who must be a perfect adept in them, because faulty practices of those exercises merely relying on book knowledge may lead to disastrous results. Holy men have therefore, prescribed for the present age *Japam* and meditation for awakening the *Kundalinī*. It should also be noted that purity of the body and mind are purged is essential for all spiritual practices, otherwise they might do more harm than good. When the body and mind are purged of dross and dirt, spiritual striving ensures progress.<sup>11</sup>

**Conclusion:** The Vedas say that God can be realised through yoga. Yoga means union— union of the individual soul

with Supreme Soul—of the Atman with the Brahman. Yoga is a rational method of spiritual practice and has got nothing to do with miracle mongering.

With progress in the path of yoga an aspirant comes across various types of visions voices and other super sensuous perceptions. He may even get extraordinary powers of diction, healing etc, but in the interest of his ultimate goal, he should not attach any importance to those things. Those are hindrances to spiritual progress. Attraction for vision powers etc. not only retards spiritual progress, but might even bring disaster to an aspirant. The Upanishads have compared the spiritual path to the Razor's edge<sup>12</sup> in view of all those possible consequences. According to the Upanishads this path has to be traversed with unwavering and one-pointed devotion till the end is reached. The Mundako Upanishad say's "Om is the bow, the arrow is the individual and the Brahman is the Target. Make aim with a tranquil heart and lose thyself completely in Him as lost in the Target"<sup>13</sup>. So, in order to practice yoga, the aspirant must choose his ideal in accordance with his faith. Notwithstanding the fact that God is worshipped in various names and forms as well as without forms,

as the case may be, in various sects, an aspirant must be sure in his heart of hearts that his ideal is essentially the same with those of others. His egotism at the end give place to divine love and all his troubles and tribulations in the world cease and he becomes one with the absolute.

#### **References—**

1. The synthesis of Yoga, Introduction, pg.
2. Bhattacharya, Gopinath, 'An Analytical Study of Yoga Philosophy', University of Calcutta, 1985. pg. 5
3. Bhavanani, Bal yogi, Ananda. *A Primer of Yoga Theory*. Dhivyananda Creations, Puducherry, 2017
4. Bhattacharya, Gopinath, 'An Analytical Study of Yoga Philosophy', University of Calcutta, 1985. pg. 29
5. Bhagavad Gita, 2/56, 2/7
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Sri Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnathdev, 'Sri Lilabibhuti', *Sri Omkarnath Racanabali*, vol. 19, Kolkata, 2020, pg. 465

9. Ibid.
10. Sir John George Woodroffe (15 December 1865 – 16 January 1936), also known by his pseudonym Arthur Avalon, was a British Orientalist whose extensive and complex published works on the Tantras, and other Hindu traditions, stimulated a wide-ranging interest in Hindu philosophy and yoga
11. Sri Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath, *The Mother*, Vol. v, No.9, May,1963, pg. 384
12. The Razor's Edge philosophical novel by W. Somerset Maugham, published in 1944. The novel is concerned in large part with the search for the meaning of life and with the dichotomy between materialism and spirituality.
13. Sri Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath, *The Mother*, Vol. v, No.9, May,1963, pg. 385