

RADHAKRISHNAN ON YOGA

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Abstract

Yoga is a practical method from oriental experience, which is popular in different countries of the West for various reasons, including the physical training, flexibility, the actions against the stress, the improved psychological state, raising the immunity, the treatment of the diseases, and learning good behaviors. Primarily, it is a way of effective life organization, as well as belonging to the category of the fine arts, and an effective path to self-actualization for every person; acquiring improved health and an increased level of intelligence. Anyway, Patanjali in his Yoga sutras written that, “*Yogas Chitta Vritti Nirodha*”¹ This might be interpreted as "Yoga is the cessation of mental fluctuations." This sutra emphasises the necessity of mind control and the ability to recognise that the mind does not always allow you to perceive the truth. In Kathopanisad "*Tam yogamiti manyante sthiram indriya dharanam*"² It means that Yoga is a state where the *indriyas* (or the senses) are held steadily. In other words, it is the mastery of senses and mind. Radhakrishnan also discusses about Yoga with a different point of view in his works. Such as, in his Book Recovery of Faith he says “Yoga aims at the reintegration of the self. It’s a kind of ingathering, recollecting, a concentrated relating of self to self when we realise the powers of the self. The term yoga suggests techniques and disciplines which are to be found in different degrees in all religions.”³ But In this Paper we discuss Radhakrishnan’s Points of View about Yoga. As well as this paper deals with the Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan how to represents it in his works or writings.

Keywords: Yoga, Radhakrishnan, Self-realization, Harmony, Moksha

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¹ *Yoga sutras of Patanjali, chapter 1 - samadhi pada, verse 2, commentary*

² *Kathopanisad, lesson-2, palli-3, verse-11*

³ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *Recovery of Faith*. New Delhi: Vision Books, 1948. Page- 169

Introduction

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, an esteemed philosopher and statesman, perceived yoga as an exercise for self-discovery and spiritual growth. He believed yoga transcends bodily and mental constraints, achieving unity of mind, body, and spirit, with or without physical postures. We can say that Yoga, according to Radhakrishnan, is a means of social reform and personal spiritual advancement, leading to self-realization and control over one's actions and mind. This process helps overcome worldly illusions and attain moksha (salvation). Also, many Indian philosophers explain about Yoga like, Swami Vivekananda has emphasized the role of yoga as a means to accelerate the rate of evolution of an individual soul. Evolution is a natural process. All beings including humans are evolving constantly. But through Yoga, one can make a conscious effort to speed up this process of evolution. One can get liberated from the cycle of birth and death in single birth itself. Sir Aurobindo emphasized that Yoga is a conscious method towards self-

development to bring out the inherent potential of the individual. He focused on all-round personality development at physical, emotional, mental, intellectual and spiritual levels. But in Radhakrishnan's philosophy we are seeing different explanation about Yoga.

"Yoga is essentially a spiritual discipline based on an extremely subtle science, which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. It is an art and science of healthy living."⁴ The word 'Yoga' has its root in the Sanskrit word 'Yuj', which translates to 'to join' or 'to yoke' or 'to unite'. According to Yogic text, through practice of Yoga the individual consciousness amalgamated with the Universal consciousness which implies the balance between the mind and body and Man and Nature. However, Sage Patanjali, the great yoga exponent, describes yoga as "the suppression of mental adjustments"⁵. (And the second well-known ancient yoga scripture, Shrimad Bhagvat Geeta describes yoga as "a condition of mental serenity at every instant of existence."⁶ As a result, Shrimad Bhagvat Geeta describes yoga

⁴ Basavaraddi, Ishwar V. *Minister of External Affairs*. April 23, 1015. <https://www.mea.gov.in/search->

[result.htm?25096/Yoga:_su_origen,_historia_y_desarrollo](https://www.mea.gov.in/search-result.htm?25096/Yoga:_su_origen,_historia_y_desarrollo) (accessed August 2, 2023).

⁵ Patanjali Yoga Sutra, 1:2".

⁶ (SBG, 2:47).

from a behavioural standpoint as "brilliance in action."⁷ So, we can say that, yoga is viewed as an umbrella term for all Asian mind-body practises, either from India (Hatha yoga, for example), Tibet, China or elsewhere in Asia. However, in the Indian context, yoga is more than only mind-body activities that involve spiritual practises.

In general, four key flows of yoga can be found in Indian classical literature: Karma Yoga (The yoga practice path of conducting selfless actions by using actualized intellect, authority, and affluence), Bhakti Yoga (The yogic path of devotion), Jnana Yoga (The yogic path that prioritises rationality over expertise), and Raj Yoga (The eightfold yogic path synthesised by sage Patanjali 5000 years ago).

Nevertheless, Raj Yoga, as envisaged by the philosopher Patanjali, is said to have combined all yogic practises into a garland. It contains eight successive limbs (a tree of aspects of humanity): Yama (universal integrity rules), Niyama (personal ethics), Asana (physically postures), Pranayama

(exhalation control), Pratyahara (sensory control), Dharana (focusing), Dhyan (meditation), and Samadhi (bliss). Actually, this Raj Yoga method is an integrative type of Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Jnana Yoga that anybody can follow for entire health and monastic elevation (spiritual advancement). According to contemporary scientists, everything in the universe is a manifestation of the same quantum⁸ reality. Experiencing this oneness is called being in yoga, and one who attains this state is known as a yogi. This state of freedom is referred to as mukti, nirvana, or moksha. Therefore, the aim of yoga is self-realization, overcoming all forms of suffering to reach a state of liberation (moksha) or freedom (kaivalya). The primary objectives of yoga practice are to live freely in all aspects of life, achieving health and harmony. "Yoga" also denotes an inner science with various methods enabling individuals to realize this union and gain mastery over their destiny.

Radhakrishnan's view

property, especially in atomic and subatomic systems. It is foundational to quantum mechanics, which describes the complex and often non-intuitive behaviors of particles at these scales.

⁷ (SBG, 2:48).

⁸ Quantum means "Quantum" refers to the smallest possible discrete unit of any physical

In his book “An Idealistic View of Life”, Radhakrishnan explains about self-integration that, intuitive insight involves a holistic view where the entire mind strives to understand the truth. Realizing this unified life from which intellect, emotion, imagination, and interest arise is central to spiritual life. Normally, we are not whole, genuine individuals but mere shells of people. Our responses are formal, our actions imitative, and we function more like human machines than true souls, leading to lives lacking grace and depth.

To become whole and balanced, we must integrate instinct, intellect, emotion, and will, which are not separate from our evolving personality. This transformation requires more than just changing beliefs; it demands discernment, spiritual purity, and a deep understanding of reality. Training the senses or intellect alone cannot lead to intuitive experience; we must reach a higher level of consciousness where the highest truths are revealed. Psychoanalysis shows that man’s mind is a war zone of opposing forces that have to be integrated. It outlines three methods for controlling

primary instincts: It outlines three methods for controlling primary instincts:

(1) Defence reaction: The conscious mind takes up an attitude of direct opposition to the subconscious instinct. (2) Substitution: Instead of repressing the instinct, the mind diverts it into other channels, as when the sex instinct finds its outlet in the cultivation of art. (3) Sublimation: Here the instinct is neither repressed nor diverted but is transformed into a higher form. Sexual love is sublimated into spiritual devotion. Dante’s spiritualised passion is an instance of this kind.⁹

However, such methods only produce the outward unification. So, the instincts remain in the unconscious ready to tempt the soul as soon as a possibility arises. For example, prude old maids who have starved themselves and suppressed their desires all their lifetime end up having nervous twitches and sexual enthusiasm in their post reproductive years. Their impulses, pushed into the unconscious, yearn to come out of the closet. For this reason, in their search for affection and

⁹ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *An Idealist View of life*. Noida, Uttar Pradesh: Harper Collins, 1932. page 211-213

attachment their feelings may be directed to pets. This unsatisfactory substitution can result to neurosis and imbalance as is well illustrated by the current jobless and powerless deluded politicians. Such methods do not result in a calm and content soul. While the method of Yoga is professed to be able to radically alter one's character, a process which bare consciousness of the will cannot bring about.

In contrast, the Hindu system of Yoga proposes a discipline that integrates all aspects of our nature—body, senses, life, and mind—to allow the spirit to work freely and creatively. Disease disrupts physical harmony, error and ignorance harm mental harmony, and vice obscures the alignment of will with the universe. Yoga seeks to overcome these issues by freeing us from the bondage of private passions and selfish interests, revealing things as they truly are. It enables mastery over the forces of our nature, transforms our activities, and allows the spirit to assert itself. Meditation helps our convictions become deeply ingrained and naturally influence us.

In his book “Occasional speeches and writing” Radhakrishnan says, the Yoga Sutra highlights that physical prowess is

essential for developing spiritual powers, emphasizing the importance of attributes such as beauty of form (*rupa*, radiance (*lavanya*), strength (*bala*), and invulnerability like a diamond (*vajrasamhananatva*). Ancient thinkers believed that without a sound physical foundation, it is impossible to develop the mind or spirit. Thus, physical well-being is seen as a prerequisite for any kind of development, whether spiritual or intellectual.

Furthermore, health is described not just as physical fitness but as a wealth of energy and vital dynamism. The body (*sarira*) is considered an instrument for practicing dharma, which requires more than just the absence of ailments; it necessitates a positive overflow of physical energy. This perspective argues that physical health is essential for higher pursuits, integrating the principles of yoga into a broader understanding of well-being.

According to Radhakrishnan's book East and West in Religion, there is an Indian saying that words are the daughters of earth but deeds are the sons of heaven, highlighting those words come from intellect while deeds come from spirit. Faith, which can move mountains, involves

the whole self - mind, body, and spirit. It is not just intellectual but grows from the deepest layers of life and mind. Hindus equate "jnana" with inward realization, suggesting that ideas must be rooted in life to become creative. Ideals and suggestions must possess and transform us until we become living embodiments of them.

Most of the time, we interact with words rather than things themselves. By communing and brooding over ideas, we can make them vital and generative. True creativity comes from self-transformation. Where Yoga teaches us to find stillness and meditate, suggesting that many of the world's problems would be avoided if people could be content in solitude. However, modern distractions like play and luxury make solitude difficult.

Yoga is not just for physical fitness or magical powers but aims for self-unification and spiritual integration. A solid foundation is necessary for building a meaningful life. Each person must discover their true nature and align their life accordingly. Psychoanalysis also seeks to uncover hidden desires and integrate them

into our true self. Yoga aims to discover the self and transform life into a meaningful whole, with every aspect inspired by spirit.

In the book *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana*, Radhakrishnan said that "Yoga wants to control the mind primarily through physical and physiological processes. It is true that the mind is intimately connected with the body, and it is normally expected that the regulation of the physical and physiological processes would lead to a corresponding regulation of the mental processes."¹⁰

Conclusion:

In conclusion we can say that, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan viewed yoga as a profound spiritual discipline that transcends physical postures to achieve the unity of mind, body, and spirit. He emphasized yoga's role in self-discovery, personal spiritual advancement, and social reform. Radhakrishnan believed true self-integration requires spiritual purity and a higher consciousness, harmonizing all aspects of human nature. He underscored the importance of physical health as essential for spiritual and intellectual

¹⁰ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana*. Delhi: Delhi University Library, 1932. Page-73-74.

growth, aligning with ancient beliefs about the interconnectedness of body and spirit. Ultimately, Radhakrishnan saw yoga as a transformative practice that frees individuals from selfish interests, enabling them to realize their true nature and live-in harmony with the universe. In the book *Occasional Speeches and Writings*, Radhakrishnan says that, “We have to tread the path which saints have trodden to direct union with the Divine. We have to tread the interior way, to pass through crises, through dark nights and ordeals of patience. Nanak says : “Yoga is not the smearing of ashes, is not the earrings and shaven beard, not the blowing of conches but it is remaining unspotted amidst impurity; thus is the contact with Yoga gained.”¹¹ In the book *The Heart of Hinduism* he say that, “The Yoga discipline is intended to train the mind to hear the mighty voice of the silence within We then feel our identity with the universal self, the Atman in us.”¹² In his Book *Recovery of Faith* Radhakrishnan says “The Yoga Sutra gives a detailed account on the place of prayer, abstraction

and contemplation in the pattern of spiritual life.”¹³ In his Book *Recovery of Faith* Radhakrishnan says “The Yoga Sutra helps us to develop a single-minded concentration on the Supreme. It asks us to be still, to cease from struggle, to wail and let the light within shine forth. It assumes that the soul the vehicle of the Spirit even as the body is the vehicle of the soul.”¹⁴

¹¹ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *Occasional Speeches and Writings*. India: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, December 1963. Page-371-372

¹² Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *The Heart of Hinduism*. 5th. Madras: G N Natesan & Co, page-9.

¹³ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *Recovery of Faith*. New Delhi: Vision Books, 1948. Page-113

¹⁴ Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *Recovery of Faith*. New Delhi: Vision Books, 1948. Page-171