

## YOGA FOR PEACE AND HARMONY: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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### Abstract:

The first-ever International Yoga Day, which has been widely observed in India and other countries around the world, has as its motto “Yoga for Harmony and Peace.” Now, June 21 is observed as International Yoga Day, an initiative spearheaded by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who practices yoga on a regular basis. Yoga and meditation are believed to improve our lives by making us physically fit and mentally refreshed, and PM Modi thinks that yoga will unite people from all over the world. The purpose of the current study is to examine the value and necessity of yoga for social and global transformation. Yoga benefits the body, the mind, and the spirit. As a result, it is referred to as the global art. Being a healthy and harmonious organ of the larger body of humanity, if our body, mind, and soul are all in good shape, we can spread that health and harmony to our society, our country, and the entire world. Yoga has a universal appeal and can benefit anyone, regardless of caste, creed, religion, or country. We are currently dealing with a number of issues on a global scale, including terrorism, religious fanaticism, racial hatred, and global warming. Yoga is capable of providing a long-term answer to these worldwide issues. By promoting and engaging in the age-old yoga concept, there is a need for the moral, ethical, and cultural development of each unique personality on a global scale.

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India's historic culture and spiritual traditions are embodied in yoga. For the individual, society, and all of humanity, it has been passed down from the traditions of saints, seers, sages, and Rishis. The world's most magnificent gift from India is yoga. The ancient sages received yoga as a divine gift so that mankind would have the chance to recognize its divine nature. In general, disciples received yoga teachings from their gurus. Sincere seekers could learn from self-realized *yogīs* through their own experiences. It was gradually developed over time by *yogīs* and seers from different eras, both ancient and modern. *Vedīc* Seers conducted extensive experiments that served as the basis for yoga during the *vedīc* era. The universal message of the *Upaniṣads* during the *Upaniṣadīc* period has been that self-realization is only possible through union (Yoga). The ideas of meditation came into prominence thanks to Lord Buddha's influence in the sixth century B.C. Maharshi Patañjali is credited with codifying yoga in 300 B.C. Adi Shankaracharya illuminated the *Jñāna yoga* (Yoga of Knowledge) light in the eighth century. The different streams of yoga, such as the yoga of knowledge, the yoga of action, and the yoga of devotion, flowed during the middle ages under the guidance of saints like Kabir, Tulsi, Meera, Ravi das, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. *Haṭha-yoga* developed during the Middle Ages and rose to prominence. The great *haṭha yogīs* included Guru Gorakhnath, Swami Swatmarama, and Gheranda Rishi. The development and divine tradition of yoga were significantly influenced in the modern era by great yogis like Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Maharshi Aurobindo, Maharshi Raman, Swami Shivananda, Paramhansa Yogananda, Yugrishi Sri Ram Sharma Acharya,

and Swami Ramdev, among others. The big celebration of yoga is currently taking place in the twenty-first century on June 21st, which is designated as the International Day of Yoga. The Sanskrit word “*yuj*” (which means to yoke, join, or unite) is where the English word “yoga” originates. It represents the harmony between man and nature as well as the unification of the body, mind, and spirit. It also represents the connection between idea and deed. Finding oneness with oneself, the world, and nature is the goal, not exercising. Our well-being can be improved by altering our lifestyle and cultivating consciousness. To create a sense of wholeness, one's thoughts, words, and actions must be integrated. It involves discovering one's inner world and growing more conscious of the environment. Our consciousness can reach as far as the universe and beyond by engaging in yoga. Up until this point, every system of yoga practiced had a similar aim and purpose. *Rāja yoga*, *Haṭha yoga*, *Mantra yoga*, *Laya yoga*, *Karma yoga*, *Jñāna yoga*, and *Bhakti yoga* are just a few of the many different types of yoga. The identical destination of self-realization is reached by all of these yoga paths. The *vedīc* literature contains the word yoga's earliest recorded use as, “*sa dhīnām yogam invati*”.<sup>1</sup> Yoga has been practiced from the beginning of time, but Maharshi Patañjali deserves credit for organizing and preserving the nectar of yoga in the form of a *sūtra* in a jar that has come to be known as the *Yogasūtra*. Self-realization is without a doubt yoga's ultimate objective, but yoga also prepares the road for bodily, mental, spiritual, and social well-being. While practicing yoga has enormous positive effects on a person's body, mind, and

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<sup>1</sup> *Rigveda*— 1.18.7.

spirit, it also transforms society into one that is prosperous, happy, harmonious, and healthy. One becomes aware of his or her true identity through yoga. And as a result of this awareness, everything changes. According to Swami Vivekananda, just as the moon's reflection on the sea is distorted or obscured by the waves, so is the reflection of the *Ātman*, the true self, distorted or obscured by the mental waves. The moon's reflection can only be seen when the water is stilled to a mirror-like calmness and when the mind's clutter, or *citta*, is under full control,<sup>2</sup> and when the mind is completely controlled, the seer is established in his own essential nature.<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying that vibrant, active people are necessary for a harmonious society. Yoga can therefore be used in both the personal and social and global spheres. Since a person is the smallest unit of a society when they are formed and nurtured with human values via the practice of yoga, a society of tolerant, honest, non-violent, honest, and caring people starts to form right then and there.

Yoga uses a more comprehensive, holistic approach that aims to teach people new ways of living, thinking, and being in the world. Even scientists from around the world have recognized the importance of yoga for leading a happy and healthy lifestyle. Yoga creates a balance between the body, mind, and spirit. A person who is not in good physical, mental, spiritual, or social health is dangerous to both themselves and the wider community. Today's society is overrun with negative traits like violence, corruption, selfishness, and numerous other immoral and inhumane behaviors. Why? Because living in society is unhealthy for a person's mental, social,

and spiritual well-being. He lacks moral principles. He doesn't have the knowledge or clarity to take action. He is thus perplexed and confused. It is there that yoga offers to assist us. According to Gita "yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam"<sup>4</sup> implies that skill in action lies in yoga or that excellence in action is yoga. In order to understand our thoughts and behaviors, philosophers, psychologists, and social scientists argue that we must first look within. Maharshi Patañjali gave eight steps to follow in order to practice *Rājayoga*. Among these are *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Āsana*, *Prāṇāyāma*, *Pratyahāra*, *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyān*, and *Samādhi*. This yoga starts off very methodically by emphasizing values through *Yama* and *Niyama*.

The individual and society are useful adjuncts to one another. A healthy society cannot exist without healthy individuals. A healthy individual who has undergone transformation will create a healthy society free from caste, creed, and other forms of discrimination. As a result, the desired personal and ethical values aid in both self-purification and society's transformation. One's values are constantly being examined by the person. It is important to always keep in mind that moral values bring integrity, happiness, peace, and bliss, whereas immoral values bring confusion, disputes, suffering, and bad luck. One learns that one can select their values for a happy life. The adoption of ethical values and a proper understanding of those values lead to responsible and moral behavior. Therefore, it is imperative that yoga be used to promote social well-being and transform society. The societal ills and all immoral and inhuman behavior will vanish when the sun of yoga shines over the horizon of the

<sup>2</sup> *Yogasūtra* – 1.2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* –1.3.

<sup>4</sup> *Bhagavad Gītā*— 2.50.

world and society today, and the dream of a tranquil, prosperous, joyous, and transformed society will come true. A society with such people is like a heaven on earth because yoga truly immerses a person into the essence of *Satyam-Śivam-Sundaram* and *Sat-Cit-Ānanda* (Truth-Bliss-and-Consciousness). That is why all the enlightened yogis like Maharshi Aurobindo, Maharshi Raman, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Yugrishi Sri Ramsharma Acharya, Swami Shivananda etc gave importance to the global application of yoga and initiated a renaissance among the common masses to eradicate personal and social evils and to create heavenly atmosphere on the earth.

The body, mind, and soul are all improved by yoga. As a result, it is referred to as the global art. When all three of our bodies—body, mind, and soul—are in good health and harmony, not by withdrawing from the world but by being a strong, functional part of humanity as a whole, we will bring health and harmony to the world. As a result, yoga is for humanity and the entire world. Suffering in people is universal. No matter if we are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews, or any other faith, or if we are from India, Italy, Japan, China, or the United States. We are all human beings. To live a peaceful, prosperous, and happy life, everyone needs to be in good physical, mental, and spiritual health. In fact, yoga accomplishes this goal. The body is affected by the same diseases. Mental illnesses are all the same. Yoga is offered to treat those illnesses since caste, religion, or country are not barriers to suffering or disease. Yoga is referred to be *Sarvabhauma*, or Universal, by Maharshi Patañjali. According to Patañjali: “*jāti-deśa-kāla-*

*samaya-anavacchinnāḥ sārva-bhaumāḥ mahā-vratam*”<sup>5</sup> Which implies that when practiced universally without exception due to birth, place, time and circumstances they (*yamas*) become great disciplines. It is advised that everyone, without exception, should practice *yamas*. Due to variations in birthplace, nation of birth, location, and circumstances, there shouldn’t be any modifications. Yoga therefore has universal appeal or is it a part of a universal culture? It is intended for the overall development of mankind on the levels of the physical, mental, and spiritual, just as it affects the whole of the individual. Yoga is capable of providing a long-term answer to these worldwide issues.

Says Swami Shivananda,

Today in this age of atomic armament, racial hatred, intolerance, and distrust, the moral, ethical, and cultural refinement of the individual personality upon a worldwide scale is to be realized first and foremost. For, the prime and fundamental unit of all wider groups like class, race, nation and human society the world over is the individual man. This is not an impossible proposition, for the divine exists in all beings and it is an integral part of every individual consciousness. The method to draw it out is right and true yoga or spiritual education.<sup>6</sup>

According to Sri Rama Sharma Acharya,

The dream of the creation of a divine society for Universal peace, prosperity, and bliss can come true only when each one develops divinity within oneself and becomes a divine and pious human being by refining his thoughts through yoga and spirituality, otherwise, there seems to be no other

<sup>5</sup> *Yogasūtra*— 2.31.

<sup>6</sup> Sivananda, S. (2004). *Divine Life*. Rishikesh: Divine Life Society, p. 3.

way of permanent and real peace and bliss in the world.<sup>7</sup>

Maharshi Aurobindo remarks very beautifully, The yoga we practice is not for ourselves alone, its aim is to work out the will of the divine in the world, to effect a spiritual transformation, and to bring down a divine nature and a divine life into the mental, vital, and physical nature and life of humanity. Its object is not personal *mukti* or liberation, although *mukti* is a necessary condition of yoga, but the liberation and transformation of the whole human being.<sup>8</sup>

According to Swami Ramdeva,

All people in the world want peace and happiness. All the nations of the world agree on this point that peace should be established in the world. Is there a path that can lead to social and global peace and harmony? Is there a way to achieve complete happiness, peace, and bliss in life? This is the path of *Aṣṭāṅga-yoga* propounded by the great sage Patanjali. This is not a creed, belief, or sect; it is a complete method of living life. If people all over the world are really serious about it that peace must be established in the world, its only solution is- observance of *Aṣṭāṅga-yoga*. It is only through eight-limbed (*aṣṭāṅga*) yoga that personal and social harmony, physical health, mental peace, and spiritual bliss can be realized.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. H.R. Nagendra says,

Yoga is a science of holistic living. It is Universal in its approach and applicable to all human beings irrespective of sex, age, caste, creed, or religion. Anyone who wants to raise himself from the

lowest level to the highest level of human achievement can take to yoga.<sup>10</sup>

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is a *yogī* and a genuine spiritualist who rises above all narrow-mindedness, loves people, and views the entire world as his family. We may differ from one another geographically and nationally, but despite our differences, we are all human beings and the offspring of the same God. As a result, from the perspective of being God's children, we are all related. What yoga teaches us is this. Since the individual is the fundamental building block of society, the transformation of individuals is where a transformed society starts before it can be applied to the rest of the world. The individual and society are useful adjuncts to one another. Society cannot change without individuals who are pure and in good health. The eight-fold path of yoga known as *Aṣṭāṅga-yoga* has been described in Patañjali's Yoga Darshana (yoga philosophy). In *Aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, *yama* focuses on the individual's social discipline, which highlights the social code of conduct for an individual, whereas *niyama* highlights the individual's personal code of conduct. Society is currently overrun with social ills like corruption, crime, cheating, violence, rape, etc. as a result of people breaking personal and social codes of conduct and engaging in various antisocial activities. Applying *Rāja yoga's* eight-fold path can significantly contribute to reducing these social ills and paving the way for the transformation of society, which entails a healthy and harmonious society. We can therefore

<sup>7</sup> Acharya, S. S. (1998). *Samajik Naitik Boddhik Kranti Kaise*. Mathura: Akhand Jyoti Sansthan, p. 79.

<sup>8</sup> Aurobindo, S. (1968). *The yoga and its objects*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ramdev. (2005). *Maharshi patañjali pranīta Yogadarśana: Sarala Hindī Vyākhyā sahita*. Divyā Prakāśana, p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> Nagendra, H.R. (2000). *Yoga: Its basis and applications*. Swami Vivekananda Yoga Prakashana, p. 55.

conclude that yoga has universal applications and is thus essential to modern life. Yoga and spirituality, which have the potential to transform the world, can thus play a crucial role in raising the level of civility, sophistication, and enlightenment in each individual, their families, societies, countries, and the entire planet. It ought to uphold moral principles and ethical standards rather than degenerate into something monstrous or barbaric so that the world we live in can be improved.

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