



YOGA FOR HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND HARMONY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE *BHĀGAVAD GĪTĀ*

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Abstract:

Yoga is gradually being welcomed into modern health care systems as an understanding of its multifarious benefits is gaining ground worldwide. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that yoga is first and foremost a spiritual science for the complete, holistic development of the physical, mental, and spiritual components of our being in our eagerness to have it accepted into the mainstream Medicare. The practice of yoga as a way of life is calming and offers a rare opportunity in our chaotic lives to leave the chaos of the outside world behind and achieve an inner peace by helping us to focus inwards, even though recent advances in the field of research have provided evidence that yoga helps normalize human physiological and psychological functioning. The Bhāgavad Gītā recognizes a variety of yoga styles, including *Jñāna yoga*, Karma yoga, and Bhakti yoga. The aim of Nature is also the aim of yoga.

Keyword: Bhāgavad Gītā, Yoga, self-realization, spiritual

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Introduction: The word 'Yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'yuj' that indicates a unity, a harmony, a balance between internal and external consciousness. In other words, we can say that 'yoga' means union of *atma* and Parmatama (the soul and the God). Yoga, as defined by Patanjali, is "*Yogaschittavrittinirodhah*,"¹ or the detachment of the senses from external things. It means that yoga is the removing of the fluctuations of the mind. Yoga is the stilling of the mind until it rests in a state of total and utter tranquility, so that one experiences life as it is: as Reality. Gītā defines yoga as the "evenness of temper". However, practically yoga is a science that deals with the health of the body and harmony of mind. Its ultimate objectives are 'self-identification' and 'self-perfection.' The yoga sutras are also aimed to attain this.

Yoga is not only the physical postures, breathing exercises or concentrating for few minutes, what we understand your actions, there is sameness *samatva*, in your response. A karma yogi always chooses to obey the laws of dharma, fundamental ethics, and morality when taking action since there is a choice involved. The yoga sutras have five rules namely *shaucha*, *santosha*, *tapas*, *swadhyaya* and *ishwarpranidhan*, which help us introspect and turn inward. When we turn inward and experience self-compassion, this naturally extends to others and ultimately helps us feel deeply grounded in life's meaning and purpose. Yoga is a way of communicating with the inner self, counteracting helplessness & weakness, increasing self-esteem and enhancing internal locus of control. What determines whether a person's life, whether in general or in a particular area like health or academics,

produces positive or negative effects. Yoga is a science which is a complete section to reform, transform and realize the self. Not only this but Yogic scriptures are the tools to educate the people round the globe of self-knowledge on the one hand and understanding the value-based life on the other because its messages are multifold to establish the relationship with everyone whether living or non-living things.

The various philosophies, traditions, lineages, and guru-shishya paramparas of Yoga have Yoga, Pātanjala Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Haṭha Yoga, Dhyāna Yoga, Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga, Rāja Yoga, Jain Yoga, Bouddha Yoga, and others. Each of these schools given rise to diverse traditional schools. These encompass Jñāna Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma offers its unique approach and practices that converge towards the ultimate objectives of Yoga.

Yogic Approaches for Health and Well-being

The widely practiced Yoga sadhanas encompass *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Āsana*, *Prānāyāma*, *Pratyāhara*, *Dhāraṇa*, *Dhyāna*, *Samādhi*, Bandhas and Mudras, Shatkarmas, Yuktāhāra, Mantra-japa, Yukta-karma, and more. *Yamas* are guiding restraints, while *Niyamas* are guiding observances, both serving as foundational prerequisites for subsequent Yogic practices. *Āsanas*, fostering physical and mental steadiness as emphasized in "*kuryat tadasanam- sthairyam*," involve adopting diverse psycho-physical body postures, enhancing the practitioner's capacity to maintain a stable bodily position (sustained awareness of one's structural existence) over extended durations.

¹ The Yoga sutra of Patanjali 1.2

Prānāyāma involves cultivating breath awareness and deliberate regulation of respiration, serving as the functional and vital foundation of one's being. It nurtures awareness of the mind and contributes to mental mastery. Initially, this entails becoming conscious of the inhalation and exhalation flow (*svāsa-prasvāsa*) through various openings, internal and external pathways, and destinations. Subsequently, regulated and monitored inhalation (*svāsa*) leads to the recognition of the occupied space (*puraka*), the maintained space (*kumbhaka*), and the emptied space (*rechaka*) during controlled exhalation (*prasvāsa*).

Pratyāhara signifies the withdrawal of consciousness from the senses, disconnecting from external stimuli. *Dhāraṇa* encompasses focused attention within the body and mind, often referred to as concentration. *Dhyāna*, or meditation, involves contemplative concentration within the body and mind, while *Samādhi* represents a state of integration.

Bandhas and Mudras are practices linked to *Prānāyāma*, involving specific physical gestures and respiratory control. These practices further facilitate mental control, paving the path toward advanced Yogic achievements. However, the practice of *dhyāna*, which guides individuals toward self-realization and transcendence, is regarded as the quintessence of Yoga Sādhanā. Śaṭkarmas denote clinical detoxification techniques aimed at eliminating bodily toxins. *Yuktāhāra* promotes proper dietary choices and habits to foster healthy living. Yoga has a universal validity in course of achieving upliftment of soul. It is considered as one of the ways to achieve brotherhood, peace and harmony among people should be the starting point for spreading a new awareness is global education. India, as a cradle of yoga, is

the most qualified country in the world to spread yoga at the national as well as the international levels.

The meaning of 'yoga is union, ie, spiritual union of the individual soul with the universal and is used in the sense in the Vedānta. The Gītā defines yoga as that state than which there is nothing higher or worth realizing and finally rooted in which a person is never shaken even by a realist pain, that state free from all pain and misery is yoga. Different forms of yoga are admitted in Bhāgavad Gītā like jñāna yoga, karma yoga and Bhakti yoga. The aim of nature is also the aim of yoga. Yoga like nature all its summit seeks to break this mould of ego, this mould of metalized life, body and materialized mind, in order to achieve ideal action, ideal truth and infinite freedom in our spiritual being. Yoga is the appointed means nature holds in reserve for the accomplishment of her end, when she has finished her long labour of evolving at least a part of humanity temperamentally equal to the effort and intellectually, morally and physically prepared for success. Nature moves towards super Nature. Yoga moves towards God.

According to Gītā the highest ideal of life is to become one with God. This is the state of perfect bliss and happiness. Gītā says that the highest ideal of life consists of threefold processes- (i) Jñāna yoga, (ii) Karma Yoga and (iii) Bhakti Yoga.

(i) Jñāna Yoga: In Gītā it is mentioned that ignorance is the root cause of bondage and the circle of births and deaths in this world and knowledge in the source of liberation or Moksha, which is the highest value of life. Srikrishna has praised this path of knowledge. He says;

“na hi jñānena sadṛśhaṁ pavitrāmiha vidyate

tatsvayam yogasansiddhaḥ kālenātmani vindati."²

There is nothing in this world as sacred as knowledge. This knowledge is the mature fruit of all yoga. Jñāna yoga is the central teachings of the Gītā. The highest ideal of life is realized through the knowledge of the brahman, which is the ultimate Reality and true. But the universe is false. Ignorance is the cause of suffering and knowledge is the path to achieve the highest ideal of life.

(ii) Karma yoga: Niṣkāma karma is essential to attain the highest ideal of life. One is free to work but the effect is not in his control. One should not think of the end. It is said in the Gītā;

“karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana

mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo
*“stvakarmani.”*³

(iii) Bhakti Yoga: According to the Gītā, a person is liable to attain the highest ideal of life from the devotion of the Brahman who is ever ready to help us. Bhakti is love. Love belongs to the divine activity, though the power to benefit by it depends on the capacity of the recipients. Thus, God comes in this world to help his devotees. Sri Krishna speaks;

“yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata

abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmānam
*sṛijāmyaham.”*⁴

Yogic philosophies in the *Bhāgavad Gītā*:

Lord Krishna uses the term yoga more than one hundred times in the *Bhāgavad Gītā*. He

advised Arjun about his dilemma with the help of philosophies relating to karma (action), dharma (duty), ataman (the soul), brahman (the universe), moksha (release from the worldly coil). He showed Arjuna how these teachings could liberate him and how they could be applied to real life. According to Lord Krishna, yoga is not just about performing the asanas and the Pranayams of yoga. It also refers to the dynamic, voluntary and clear participation of the human being in their life and about a striving for the ideal, healthy life simultaneously at the physical, mental and spiritual levels. Yoga is also about recognizing the beauty around us and about responding to this with love and wonder. It is about being selfless, about helping others, about doing one's duty joyfully and harmoniously. The yogi's connections are to the whole universe — as one is a part of the world, the world is a part of one's own being as well. According to Lord Krishna, the practice of yoga also involves sacrifice and an embrace of our own higher being. Such practice elevates us and helps us evolve into better human beings. In his teachings, the Lord also speaks about yoga as being the most direct and quick way to become one with the ultimate reality; to achieve the ultimate goal of life. As such, various philosophers, writers and scientists from the west have also studied and become inspired by the teachings of the *Bhāgavad-Gītā*. I suppose it is up to us Indians to delve into and fully understand and rediscover our own treasures. Yoga delves in many philosophies, of which karma, reincarnation, Maya, Brahman and Moksha play an important role. *Bhāgavad-Gītā* helps to understand all these Yogic philosophies as

² The Bhāgavad Gītā 4.38

³ The Bhāgavad Gītā 2.47

⁴ The Gītā 4.7

Arjuna is guided by Lord Krishna through various confusion levels, to take steps which aid in happiness and relieving him from all the suffering of the world. This indeed is the uniting of the soul with mind to create a sense of pure satisfaction which forms the crux of Yoga principles.

Basically, Gītā revolves around chapters of which the first six deal with Karma Yoga, the middle six with Bhakti Yoga and the last six with Jñāna Yoga. All the three formats are essential to gain true spiritual knowledge. Yoga in its meditation form helps to calm oneself and do a little soul searching. With Karma, Bhakti, and Jñāna Yoga, one can actually understand the concept of soul, human body, and exactly, why human beings suffer. Cleansing of the soul to attain a complete liberation to achieve happiness in its purest form is what Gītā conveys in a beautiful manner, and hence, reading it is quintessential before practicing the practical asana's. Karma Yoga essential portrays a selfless service, which can only lead to Bhakti Yoga or the feeling of faith, which is all divine. Once, one achieves faith, the path for ultimate unity which is the actual Jñāna of the world can be achieved. Generally, this state is represented as Moksha, when one is relieved of all the pains and worries of the world and is left with a pure soul. To understand the underling philosophies of Yoga and see their implementation through examples is what Gītā preaches, and hence, inevitably, it is a very important part to go through the script while practicing Yoga. Yoga is a mind, body and soul practice that has a wide possibility in case it is practiced and utilized in the right sense of the word. At present, this yoga is most commonly known as an exercise form and changing this particular belief in people is an important yet huge task to fulfil. Yoga is not just about losing weight,

fixing the back pain or just getting healthy. These things are rather results that come with regular practice of yoga but they are not the purpose with which yoga is done. Exercising is a very new and developed idea. In the bygone era, it was something done by only wrestlers and the people who went for the war. The rest just worked. There was plenty of physical activity involved, so automatically people used to exercise.

Coming back to the primary topic, yoga is not just an ancient form of exercise and people must get this belief out of their heads if they want to become a true yogi. When a person practices Surya Namaskar, the focus is not just on the muscles but on becoming one with the light that the sun transmits or becoming one with the source from which all energy is attained. The next question that arises is how can a person get there and how long will it take to become a yogi? The right answer is that it depends, this can be done in a moment, a millennium or it can be never. The person who wants to achieve the status of becoming a yogi must understand the subtlety of yoga. There is a strong difference between mental and spiritual knowledge. You can understand or experience a thing mentally by looking at it from the outside or by comparing it with other things, etc. However, you can only experience a spiritual thing when you become one with it. You must be like a moth in search of his idol, the flame in case you want to become a true yogi.

The Gītā also provides several new and more refined definitions of the word yoga and describes several different forms of yoga. As it was previously described as a complex and expansive concept, this is an important shift in understanding of the term. A definition of yoga is first described in the second chapter as state of equanimity created through an indifference

to pleasure and pain, and a detachment from the fruit of one's activity. Further on in the text, three types of yoga are described: Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jñāna Yoga. Karma Yoga is the path of selfless action, while Bhakti Yoga is the path of devotion, and Jñāna Yoga is the path of knowledge.

Conclusion:

The *Bhāgavad Gītā* is important to the practice of yoga and spiritual development. It incorporated many of the philosophical concepts that remain essential to the modern practice of yoga. *Bhāgavad Gītā* explains that we do become one with the Supreme Being, but in quality and not in quantity. Each seeker is called upon to decide which Yoga best corresponds to his/her natural disposition. If your goal is just to become a yoga teacher then just a couple of months of the yoga teacher training in India will be good enough but if your goal is to become a yogi then it can happen within seconds. You just need to allow it to happen and the process will follow.

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