

## **Raja Yoga Meditation: A secular treatise Defining The True Path of Human Life.**

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### **Abstract:**

Yoga is the invaluable treasure handed over by our ancestors to the posterity. The sage Patanjali, who lived somewhere between 200 BCE and the 4th century CE formulated these instructions into 196 Sutras or maxims which were made concise to the extent possible to enable their reciting and oral transmission possible. It aims at teaching mankind to understand the three components of human nature, the physical, mental, and spiritual. All the three components are the part of Nature, if these three components are taken care of at right proportions, they tend to bring a balance in the behaviour of an individual. In today's world over emphasis has been given to man's intellect and body but spiritual factor is completely ignored. Body is the symbol of physical strength, mind the intellect or the mental power, but these are ephemeral and are bound to leave the world after a fixed period. The spiritual component has power to trespass the boundaries of death, but it is often neglected to an extent that it is not allowed to grow into maturity. The power of the soul automatically gets vanished, with other two forces once the body leaves the earth. There are other paths for the realization True self like Karma Yoga — the yoga of action, Bhakti Yoga — the yoga of commitment, Jnana Yoga — the yoga of realization or discrimination, Raja Yoga — the Royal Path. "Raja Yoga incorporates the doctrines of all the discrete paths. It is through Raja Yoga complete realisation is possible, it emphasises on the fact that body is just an abode for the soul to lodge, if trained properly it could move above the constrains of body and experience the absolute bliss. Not ignoring importance to physical and mental power, Raja Yoga stresses the importance of spiritual power.

The paper is a humble attempt to disclose the key concepts of Raja Yoga which helps for the better appreciation of the treatise in true sense.

**Key words:** Soul, Knowledge, meditation, concentration,

Indian tradition highlighted the importance of the comprehending of One' Own self **Atman** and the realization of the Ultimate Self and **Paramatman**. The greatness lies in showing the path and paving the way for the attainment of the ultimate stage in realization. Yoga is the tool that assists in preparing an itinerary for the journey aimed towards realization. It is divided into two parts 1) Abhava 2) Mahayoga. In Abhava stage the existence of **Atman**, self, is ignored so the self finds no definition. In Mahayoga the **Atman**, self, is equated to **Paramatman** where there is only bliss and no other contaminations. In both the stages purity is the prime requisite. "Where one's self is meditated on as zero, and bereft of quality, that is called Abhava; the Yogi, by each one, realises his Self. That in which one sees the Self as full of bliss and bereft of all impurities, and one with God, is called Mahayoga (Raja Yoga, 72). "Maha Yoga" is sometimes used to refer to a specific form of meditation ritual that is seen as predominantly compelling and transformative. Raja Yoga is a system of yoga that stresses intellectual and spiritual practices, including meditation, self-reflection, and the promoting virtues such as peace, love, and kindness. It is sometimes referred to as "**Royal Yoga**" because it is the highest form of yoga, helps in the attainment of self-realization and union with the divine. It aids in cleansing the Atman, allowing it to transgress limitations of the body making the attainment of divinity, Union with **Paramatman**, more comfortable and practical.

Purification of the body is possible by external means like washing the face, hands and legs or taking bath for whole body cleansing. The external world can be seen and felt by our sense organs and if we could take the aid of advanced instruments observing every point of nature is practically possible. The internal world of one's self remains unobservable as it is above the comprehension of a common man and the external agency outside the self has no relevance in the internal world. The Raja Yoga, in the first place, proposes to give men a means -of observing the internal states through the instrument called mind. The mind, with proper guidance, if directed towards the internal world invades and conquers the invincible territories of the conscience. Once the inner world is captured, the gates separating the self and the external world are unfastened. The self will be able to understand the nature of truth that paves way for the ultimate realization. This is the state of absolute silence where there is no scope for disturbance except the thought of the divine all other noises get silenced, the state of complete tranquility. "That in which there is no sound, only mental repetition of the Mantram, at the same time thinking its meaning, is called the "mental muttering" and is the highest". (Raja

Yoga, 72). The science of Raja Yoga proposes to put before humanity a practical and scientifically worked-out method of reaching truth.

### **The power of knowledge:**

Truth is remains evident in nature, but the lens of external sense organ cannot make an image of it as it is controlled by brain, the central nervous system, which is devised to see the external world. The logical brain becomes helpless in sending commands that aid in preserving truth. It is not easy to view inside of oneself as the route is not properly laid and there are many undiscovered areas challenging the progress of the journey. The vehicle through which travel can be taken up is through **Gnana** or knowledge. The role of knowledge in self-realization is immense, it gears the journey of realization in proper direction by trespassing the limitations of ego and misery which pose the obstacles in the of smooth ride towards emancipation.

Misery is the reason for all evils, it disturbs the tranquillity of mind and make the latter inert to an extent that it prepares to remain reluctant even towards realisation. The constant engagement with the fear and desire leaves no room for peace. A confused mind does not perceive truth. It through knowledge the individual could traverse in the path towards eliminating the misery. A mind free of misery welcomes the springs of knowledge which helps in illuminating the senses and paving way for understanding the reason for sufferings. Then the man wakes up to the fact that fears, and unsatisfied desires are his real foes which hurl him into valley of misery, this is realization vouchsafed him by true knowledge. As a norm only a happy soul is eligible to practice Raja Yoga, a superior practice in yoga. The goal of Raja-Yoga is to make us understand how to concentrate the mind, then to discover the facts in the inner self and to generalize those facts and draw our own conclusions from them. So, it is the mind that escalates the self towards realization. The external world is full of attractions, so Raja Yoga proposes to start from the internal world, it trains the mind to study the dynamics of the inner self. As the external world is too complex it is not easy to have control over it, many factors play their part in different proportions. So control over the inner world will equip the individual with the courage required to battle with the attractions of the external world thus navigating him towards true knowledge of self.

### **Raja Yoga:**

The founder of the Ashtanga Raja Yoga system is Patanjali Maharshi. He is said to have lived about three hundred years before Jesus Christ. The name 'Raja Yoga' itself conveys that it is a state comparable to that of a king, referring to the symbol of freedom and confidence. He is

also the emblem of authority, courage. A king acts with independence, self-confidence and assurance, The Yogi who can practice the Raja Yoga reaches to state where his confidence, courage become matchless to common man. Likewise, a Raja Yogi is autonomous, independent, and fearless. This autonomy in thought and action elevates the individual to a height from where he never stoops down to meaner considerations, stays immune to external disturbances and in turn practices to rule his emotions. It is the path of self-discipline and practice that helps to lead an independent life. The individual who sincerely treads in the path of Raja Yoga becomes the ruler of his life capable of commanding obedience from external and internal world as well making him eligible to claim internal and external purity sanctioning ultimate state of bliss or devotion.

### **Ashtanga Yoga or Eight Steps of Yoga:**

Raja Yoga is also known as Ashtanga Yoga (Eight Steps of Yoga), because it is organised in eight parts:

**Yama** – A state of Self- control able to be content and capable of controlling mind or **Chitta**. “Non-injuring anybody, truthfulness, non-covetousness, chastity, not receiving anything from another, are called Yama; it purifies the mind, the Chitta.” (Raja Yoga, 72)

**Niyama**- Discipline cleanliness, contentment, humiliation, study, and self-surrender to God. The procedure and rules to be respected while surrendering oneself to the Supreme the Paramatman who can be called in any name depending on the faith ( religion) he/she is the follows.

**Asana** – Physical exercise. Yoga is often mistaken as the physical exercise. It is a wrong notion. The physical exercise is though mandatory does not explain the complete meaning of Yoga. As it is always true that physical fitness and healthy body are prime requisites for any accomplishment or **Sadhana** it is considered as one of the parts of Raja Yoga.

**Pranayama** – Breath exercise or controlling the vital forces of the body. The inhale and exhale of air is essential for the maintenance of metabolism. Pranayama makes the individual to hold the breath and expel it out as per his command.

**Pratyahara** – Withdrawal of senses from external objects or making the mind introspective. This practice moves the individual more towards himself.

**Dharana** – Concentration. Making the mind un-perturbed and retaining the spell for longer intervals.

**Dhyana** – Meditation. Having control over one’s thoughts.

**Samadhi** – Complete Realisation or super-consciousness an ultimate stage where Atma and Paramatma get united.

Each part of the **Ashtanga Yoga** has different components.

**Yama** - Self-Control: The control over the self is realised by following five principles.

Ahimsa - Non-Violence

**Satya** – Truthfulness. This is supreme of these principles. If the individual is truthful, he lies closer to all other virtues. “Through truth everything is attained; in truth everything is established” ( Raja Yoga, 73)

**Asteya** - Non-Stealing. Not taking others’ goods by stealth or by force is called Asteyam, non-covetousness( Raja Yoga, 73)

**Brahmacharya** - Pure Way of Life. Chastity in all forms is Brahmacharya. An individual remains uncorrupted and remains pure in his thoughts and deeds he is a real Brahmachari. It is often wrongly interpreted as remaining unmarried. Celibacy is one of the requirements in this stage of life, but it does not explain the full meaning of Brahmacharya. It is a time when an individual remains uncorrupted by worldly attractions and tries to move closer to the divine self the **Brahman**.

**Aparigraha** - Non-Accumulation of Possessions. Taking presents or desire to possess the wealth curtail the freedom of the individual. Raja Yoga practice expects individual to remain indifferent to these worldly possessions. “When a man receives a gift from another man, the theory is that his heart becomes impure, he becomes low, he loses his independence, he becomes bound and attached”. ( Raja Yoga, 73)

**Niyama – Discipline:** This can be explained through of five principles:

- **Saucham** – Purity. Worshipping God with purity of heart and body.
- **Santosh – Contentment.** This bestows a state of tranquillity.
- **Tapa** - Self-Control, Self-Discipline. Austerity or strict control over senses is termed as tapa it is in a way a penance to cleanse the conscience.
- **Sradhyaya-** Study of the Holy Scriptures. Holy scriptures are preceptors that direct the soul towards right path. So reading them make the individual to move towards spiritualism.

- **Ishvara Pranidhana** - Devotion to God. Practicing all the above principles alone prove inadequate to realise the Supreme or the Paramatman. The love for God and the undaunted devotion towards him is very much necessary to achieve the desired goal.

### **Asana - Physical Exercises:**

A healthy brain in a healthy body. Physical exercise is given due importance in Indian scriptures. Yoga prescribes different exercises for various ailments of the body. The advancement in medical sciences has made the man parasite on the allopathic medicine. Yoga instead shows remedies to physical and mental ailments. Body is a machine it must be preserved in proper condition for maintaining it fit and to carry the journey life without any disturbance. The body should be left free and the head straight for Asana. The aim of the Yogi is to attain **Moksha**. Moksha is the union with the ultimate the Paramatman. Mere death of the body does not sanction Moksha to the soul. The attain the ultimate stage the **Sadhaka** should have all the requirements and a strong body is one such eligibility. A weak body makes oneself weak there by distracting him from concentrating and there by spoiling the prospects of meditation. Hence Raja Yoga Stresses the importance of physical fitness. As per Raja Yoga clean and good health conditions are very much necessary for practicing Yoga. "Where there is fire, or in water, or on ground which is strewn with dry leaves, ..... ..Yoga must not be practiced in such places. When the body feels very lazy do not practice, or when the mind is very miserable and sorrowful, or when the body is ill". ( Raja Yoga, 75).

### **Pranayama - Breath Exercises**

Prana means the vital forces in one's own body, Âyâma means controlling them. There are three sorts of Pranayama, the very simple, the middle, and the very high. Pranayama is divided into three parts: filling, restraining, and emptying. The beginning stage starting with twelve seconds is the lowest Pranayama. The mediocre type is to control the breath for twenty-four seconds it is the middle Pranayama. The best Pranayama practice begins with thirty-six seconds. In the lowest kind of Pranayama( twelve seconds) there is perspiration, in the medium kind, ( twenty four seconds) quivering of the body, and in the highest Pranayama ( thirty six seconds) levitation of the body and influx of great bliss.

### **Pratyahara - Withdrawal of the Senses**

Yogis are in the position of being able to direct their mind and senses at will, either inward or outward. Just like a tortoise can withdraw its limbs and head under its shell and extend them out again. Once there is controlled Pratyahara the self gains an independence from external

conditions. One can immediately withdraw the senses from external objects and also, when desired, use the senses consciously, with full awareness.

### **Dharana – Concentration:**

Dharana means to focus one's thoughts and feelings upon a single object. Usually, we succeed with this for only a short time, then other thoughts come and distract us. We become aware of our lack of concentration after just a few minutes. Candle meditation or Trataka: meditation that involves staring at a single point such as a small object, black dot or candle flame. It is said to bring energy to the "third eye" (ājñā chakra) and promote various psychic abilities. specific Asanas and Pranayama's, as well as the repetition of Mantra, greatly help in improving the ability to concentrate.

### **Dhyana – Meditation**

One cannot learn to meditate, just as we cannot "learn" to sleep. Sleep just happens when our body becomes relaxed and quiet. Meditation happens when the mind is quiet. In meditation there is no imagination because imagination arises from the intellect. Our human brain can only reproduce what has been fed into it. But in meditation, we experience pure being. The moment the intellect is still and the individual ego ceases to exist, Divine light shines within the heart and we are one with it.

### **Samadhi - Complete Realisation:**

**Samadhi** is where the knower, knowledge and object of knowledge unite. The knower i.e. the person practicing Knowledge and God and the object of knowledge become one. This means that the blessed self unites with the Divine consciousness. This experience cannot be conveyed in words, only one who has tasted milk, knows how milk tastes; Only one who has felt pain, knows what is pain; Only one who has loved, knows what is love; So only one who has experienced Samadhi, knows what is Samadhi. In this state all duality is dissolved. It is an inexplicable stage. The Yogi who attains Samadhi will unite with ultimate hence no live proof to share the experience. One must enjoy it for oneself.

### **Positive Attitude and Perseverance:**

Raja Yoga stresses the point that the attitude of the individual is very important in attaining destined goal. A story is quoted in the text to bring home this point. Narada, a great Yogi, travelled all three worlds. Once when he was passing through a forest, saw who was in meditation for many years. The man asked Narada where he was going the later said he was on his way to the abode of God. Then the man requested the sage to know from God when the

former will be relieved from the cycle of birth and attain Moksha. Narada in the same forest found a man who was happily dancing. The man also requested the same favour from the sage. Narada in the return journey met the first person who was meditating, the man asked about his deliverance the sage said that the man would be relieved from the cycle of birth after four births. The man felt miserable at the thought of waiting for four more births. Narada then approaches the happy man and said that the later needs to take so many births as there are leaves in the tamarind tree. The man felt happy and said he is happy that he had to take only so a smaller number of births for getting relieved from the cycle of births. The divine voice was heard stating that the happy man would be freed the very moment. This is effect of the positive attitude of the man and his perseverance towards attaining the goal. ( Raja Yoga, 77).

### **Conclusion:**

In The Raja Yoga there is no mention of religion or cast or any other reference which restricts the practices to a particular community. The self and the supreme self are secular terminology not restricted any one religion. It covers all most all the factors that are essential for both physical and mental wellbeing of the individual. In recent time Yoga gained popularity and even the western countries started to follow the yogic practises. In the present world man is occupied by many priorities and seldom finds time to understand himself, the yogic practices help him to introspect himself and listen to his inner voice which propels him towards right thought and action. Raja Yoga meditation aims building a healthy society which is strong physically and mentally and helps in attaining spirituality living very much in the world of mundane experiences.

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