

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF YOGA IN ATTAINING INNER SERENITY AND SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT.

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### Abstract:

Every human being is enslaved to life and lives on false hopes and illusions. He spent his life in ignorance, experiencing joy and sorrow, success and failure, love and grief, without ever really coming to ultimate realisation.

To make life happy everyone should follow yoga that satisfies the body, mind and soul simultaneously. Yoga is a physical, mental, and spiritual discipline, originating in ancient India.. The philosophy of yoga tells us that, the root cause of all our sorrow unsuffering is the loss of contact with our true self. Known as Atman, Purusha and God. The continued practice of yoga will lead man to a sense of peace and well being and also a feeling of being at one nature.

Yoga philosophy prescribes four spiritual paths to attain self-knowledge.

Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Raj-yog, and Jhana-yo. Although these yoga methods appear to be different their aim is the same self realization

The Yoga-sutra or Patanjali-sutra is the first major work of the Indian school of Yoga. For the purification and enlightenment of the mind, the Yoga gives us the eight-fold means, which consist of the disciplines of Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayam, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. During the first two stages (Yama, Niyama), man has to go through ethical training. During the next three stages (Asana, Pranayam, Pratyahara) a person develops the discipline of the body. The three higher stages (Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi) involve physical exercise. Dhyana is continuous meditation or deep thinking beyond body and mind. It is realization of self. Samadhi is the end of the mental state. Here, one goes beyond body and mind, beyond pain and pleasure. In a way it is a state of complete detachment and the end in the spiritual path. Yoga is a great mind body exercise to keep a person fit, increases flexibility, reduces stress, increases strength. It shows us how to exercise self control and preserve a positive attitude towards life and help us to develop determination and resistance to find serenity and inner peace.

**Key words:** Yoga, inner peace, harmony, self-realisation.

### Introduction:

Every human being is enslaved to life and lives on false hopes and illusions. He spent his life in ignorance, experiencing joy and sorrow, success and failure, love and grief, without ever really coming to ultimate realisation. Under the sensation and passion man commits errors, which he subsequently regrets. He deludes them by looking for peace, happiness and self accomplishment through the pleasure of the senses.

Modern sciences provide us the leisure comfort, but it does not give us inner peace. There are so many examples throughout the world that they have everything they need materially and are yet unhappy, restless and tormented. Purpose of life should be sought in the depths of the soul, with experience, hope, faith, a powerful mind and spiritual wisdom. Things experienced on

a spiritual level are both permanent and true. It is at this moment that all illusion falls away and truth shines in its entire splendour. To make life happy everyone should follow yoga which satisfies the body, mind and soul simultaneously.

Yoga represents all the means allowing man to raise the veil of ignorance and illusion (Maya), so that his mind may reflect the light of the reality. It was probably during the period around 3000 BC that the Aryans gave to India and through it to the whole world a pattern of physical education which catered to the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of man. It is an evolution in itself. It is called Yoga.

### **Objectives:**

To determine how Yoga helps in achieving inner peace in the turbulent times.

To know the path of self realisation.

### **Research Methodology:**

Secondary sources of data were collected. While preparing the research paper, various references, journals and books were used.

### **Discussion:**

#### **Origin of Yoga:**

Yoga is a physical mental and spiritual discipline, originating in ancient India. The beginnings of yoga were developed by the Indus-Sarasvati civilisation in Northern India over 5,000 years ago. The word yoga was first mentioned in the oldest sacred texts, the Rig-Veda.

**Meaning of the word yoga:** The word “yoga” comes from the Sanskrit root yu which means “to join” or to “yuj”

“Yoga” is a practical aid, not a religion. Yoga is an ancient art based on a harmonising system of development for the body, mind and spirit. The continued practice of yoga will lead man to a sense of peace and well being and a feeling of being at one with the nature.

### **The Role of Yoga**

#### **Yoga Philosophy:**

The philosophy of yoga tells us that the root cause of all our sorrow and suffering is the loss of contact with our true self. This self is called by various names, such as Atman, Purusha and God. Our loss of contact with the self is due to our ignorance of the self as the only reality. Ignorance creates spiritual blindness and subjects us to a world of delusions and desires. This is governed by the seemingly unending rounds of birth and death, pain and pleasure and happiness and suffering. No material or psychological solution can dispel this ignorance. Our recovery is possible only by reestablishing contact with our true inner self.

#### **The various systems of yoga:**

Yoga philosophy prescribes four spiritual paths to attain self-knowledge. **Karma-yoga**, the path of selfless action.

**Bhakti-yoga**, the path of devotion.

**Raj-yoga**, the path of concentration and meditation.

**Jnana- yoga**, the path of knowledge and discrimination.

**Karma-yoga** says that, our egoistic, selfish actions have created walls around us. These walls not only set us apart from others but they cut us off our true self within. By performing actions in

a selfless manner, we can break down the walls that separate us from the self. The key message of Karma yoga is to release yourself from the chains of attachment by practising non-attachment to the result of action.

**Bhakti-yoga** is the process of inner purification. The message of bhakti-yoga is that, love is the most basic human emotion. In its purest form, love is cosmocentric and divinely inspired. But because of the intervention of the ego, love becomes egocentric, obstructing the free flow of love towards the Devine. Lust, anger, jealousy and greed are the negative emotions created by the impure ego. Bhakti- yoga asks us to purify and transform our egoistic-self-love by pouring holy thoughts into our minds and transferring all over love and emotions to God, knowing that God is the only one who truly loves us.

**Raj-yoga** is the way designed to control and masters the mind by mental concentration. Raj yoga recommends suitable methods and the practice of postures (Asana) and breathing control (Pranayama) called Hatha-yoga, with a view of finding calm, mental balance and peace of mind. Bodily health is essential for mental growth; this is why Hatha yoga & Raj Yoga complements one another.

**Jnana-yoga** is the path of knowledge. Knowledge, according to Jnana-yoga, has two aspects: fire and light. The fire of knowledge burns all the impurities of our mind, and simultaneously, knowledge enlightens our inner consciousness. It calls for the practice of discrimination between the real and unreal, renunciation of all desires-both earthly and heavenly, mastery over the mind and senses, and intense longing for the goal.

Swami Vivekananda emphasised that any seeker may become established in one of the four paths or harmonised them in everyday practice.

All though these yoga methods appear to be different, their aim is the same self realisation. In practice all the yogis are in fact mixed to a lesser or greater extent. **Goal of yoga:** The goal of all four yoga is freedom from the assumed bondage of the mind and realisation of our true identity- the ever-pure, immortal self, which is non-different from the universal self or the ultimate reality.

### **Yoga school of philosophy:**

The Yoga Philosophy is an invaluable gift of the great Indian sage Patanjali to all bent upon spiritualrealisation. It is known also as the Patanjala system after the name of its founder. The Yoga –sutra or Patanjali -sutra is the first major work of the Indian school of Yoga, which presents in the form of aphorism the principles of yogic teaching and also some practical advice for attaining the ultimate aim of Yoga. The doctrine of Raj-Yoga was systematised by Patanjali (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.) The yoga system is closely allied to the Sankhya system. The Sankhya lays greater stress on discriminative knowledge as the means of attaining liberation. But spiritual knowledge can be had only when the mind is purged of impurities and rendered perfectly calm and serene. For the purification and enlightenment of the mind, the Yoga gives us the eight fold means which consist of the disciplines of Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayam, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

**Necessity of Yoga practice:** The influence of mind over body is however much greater than that of body over mind. Our evolution depends on whether we direct our thoughts positively or

negatively. When emotions reach their height, we call them passions. Anger, hatred, jealousy, fear, despair etc are negative emotions. The repercussions they have on the body are almost far-reaching according to how intense they are. Frequent emotional upsets affect the whole of the nervous system and may result in illness. Repeated assaults on the nervous system are harmful to the endocrine glands and may lead to ageing and premature death. During a fit of rage, we may lose control over our nerves. With resulting actions that may be regretted later on. There are also positive emotions, such as hope and confidence. They promote the well being of the nervous system and make the body healthy. Love, joy and happiness bring peace to the mind and make us optimistic. Nevertheless, when emotions are sudden and violent, whether they are positive or negative, they may be detrimental, for they create an inner upheaval, which may be fatal. This proves that the mind is strong enough to influence the body in every possible way. It is quite obvious that physical exercise will never produce the expected results unless supported by mental discipline. This is why Patanjali state 'Yamas' and the Niyamas (Mental purification) should be practised, and only then followed by Asanas. Patanjali has, however been reckoned as the greatest exponent of yoga. Yamas and Niyamas are principles of good conduct.

1 Yama: Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (Chastity) and Aprigraha (non-coveting) are Yamas i.e. rules of good conduct for society and the individual.

2Niyama: Saucha (purity of body and mind), Santosha (Contentment), Tapas (discipline or self-control), Swadhaya (study for the scriptures) and Ishwara pranidhana (devotion to the Lord) are the Niyamas i.e. rules for self-purification related to personal discipline.

3 Asana: which constitutes directions for yogic posture in order to gain mastery over the body. A person develops the discipline of the body through a series of physical exercises aimed at training and hardening the organism in certain ritual postures.

4 Pranayama: Pranayama or breath control is an integral part of the yoga system. Pran is the vital energy in the air we breathe in. So Pranayama is the control of the vital energy in us. It is considered that by Pranayama we can control our mind. It helps in easing of tension and create peace and equilibrium.

5 Pratyahar: Pratyahar means the restraint of the senses from the outer world, which is the root cause of many diseases, bodily troubles, il, andalth and mental disturbance.

6 Dharana: In Dharana, the mind is concentrated on a point between the two eye brows. The point is called the chakra and is considered to be psychic centre of our system. Here all the outer and inner senses are supposed to meet. The mind is not allowed to deviate and the whole of it is to be concentratedont this point as if the body and the mind do not exist.

7 Dhyana or meditation: Now the mind is concentrated not at the point between the two eye brows but in the intellect this is neither physical nor psychic centre but spiritual centre. It is continuous meditation or deep thinking beyond body and mind. It is realisation of self. In this state, one experiences oneness between the whole of creation and the whole of humanity. During Meditation, the body is silently resting so that thought is absorbed in to Prana (vital force). As in dreamless sleep so here too, the only sign of life is breathing. The hypothalamus recharges its energy during meditation, as it does during sleep. We may deduce from this that whereas sleep is

a compensating form of rest, meditation is conscious and hence contains important therapeutic characteristics.

8 Samadhi: Samadhi is the end of the mental state. Here, one goes beyond the body and mind, beyond pain and pleasure. In a, ity it is a state of complete detachment and the end in the spiritual path. It is the final experience of oneness in which the individual remains embedded always and ever.

### **Benefits of Yoga:**

-Yoga is a great mind-body exercise to keep a person fit, increases flexibility, reduces stress, and increases strength.

1) Y-It is a method to obtain perfect health and maintain a psychological harmony of the body, as well as to achieve a state of mental perfection by progressing spiritually as a result of complete – self control.

2)Y-It teaches us to leave reasonably and avoids uselessly squandering our energy; it also shows us how to exercise s-controlrol and preserve a positive attitude towards life. It is in this way that yoga leads us towards universal love.

3)I-If practised regularly yoga is the sure way of restoring balance, helping us to develop determination and resistance to find serenity and inner peace.

4)Y-Yoga helps to come up with the problem as well as prepare an individual to live a healthy, happy, and prosperous life.

Dhyana or Meditation helps us to get read of our emotional conflict, inner disorder and psychological tension. It completely purifies the mind. Meditation enables the inner light to manifest itself.

- During meditation postures, the expenditure of muscular energy decreases, so that the movement of the heart and lungs is slowed down. At this moment, the production of carbonic gas is at its lowest. Breathing becomes very light, almost abdominal, so that one can scarcely feel it. Under such conditions, the mind is almost completely protected from the distractions caused by physical movement and can therefore be directed inwardly in complete tranquility.

### **Conclusion:**

Achieving yoga involves a deeply peaceful and introspective state of consciousness. It improves mental sharpness by strengthening the mind's psychological foundation and boosts one's ability to perceive. Yoga fosters a heightened awareness, allowing us to comprehend the fundamental aspects of life and thereby shed light on our existence and moral principles. It leads us towards our spiritual objectives and a state where knowledge is fully integrated with the reality being understood.

Multiple experiences in yoga show that the mind functions like the body, serving as a means to attain a state of super-consciousness that surpasses mental thinking, a state marked by the presence of pure awareness and unalloyed bliss. Maintaining a high quality of life depends significantly on a regular practice of yoga.

Consistent exercise is crucial.

Including it in the curriculum of schools and colleges would be advantageous.

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