

YOGA AND SPIRITUALISM

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Abstract

Yoga brightens up our life from within and leads to peaceful self. In today's stressful life going towards peaceful Self seems quite impossible but Yoga can do it. Yoga is an art and science of healthy living. Practicing Yoga leads to the union of individual consciousness with that of the Universal Consciousness, indicating a perfect harmony between the mind and body, Man & Nature. According to modern scientists everything in the universe is the manifestation of the same quantum firmament. One who experiences this oneness of existence is said to be a yogi, having attained a state of freedom referred to as mukti, nirvana or moksha. The aim of Yoga is Self-realization, to overcome all kinds of sufferings leading to 'the state of liberation' (Moksha) or 'freedom' (Kaivalya). Yoga refers to an inner science comprising of a variety of methods through which human beings can realize this union and achieve mastery over their destiny.

Keywords

Yoga, Spiritualism, Yog Sadhana.

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***“Yoga is a light, which once lit will never dim.
The better your practice, the brighter your flame.”***

—B.K.S. Iyengar

As truly said by B.K.S.Iyengar Yoga brightens up our life from within and leads to peaceful self. In today’s stressful life going towards peaceful Self seems quite impossible but Yoga can do it. How it works - a billion dollar question for younger generation, it’s a miracle by Yoga. ‘Yoga’ (derived from Sanskrit dhatu ‘yuj’ means ‘to join’ /’to unite) helps to lead healthy life. Some Yogic scriptures indicates that practicing Yoga leads to the union of one’s consciousness with that of the Universal Consciousness and makes a perfect harmony of mind and body, Man & Nature. Modern scientists claims that everything in the universe is the manifestation of the same quantum firmament and who attains or experiences that existence is known as yogi leads to liberal state as mukti, nirvana or moksha. Self-realization and to overcome all kinds of sufferings attaining to ‘the state of liberation’ (Moksha)/ ‘freedom’ (Kaivalya) is the main objective of Yoga is living with freedom in all walks of life, health and harmony. Yoga may be considered as an inner science and through various methods oneself can realize the union with Man and Universe and achieve mastery over their destiny and actions.

Yoga – History and Development:

The Yoga is believed to have started with the very dawn of civilization. In the yogic Literature Shiva is considered as the first yogi or Adiyogi, and the first Guru or Adi Guru who on the banks of the lake Kantisarovar in the Himalayas, enlightened Saptarishis or Seven sages with his profound knowledge. They carried this powerful yogic knowledge to different parts of the world as notified by modern scholars’ studies. Agastya, the Saptarishi travelled across the Indian subcontinent and poured his Yogic knowledge in the Indian society and slowly slowly imbibed in the culture.

The presence of Yoga is confirmed from Indus valley civilization, Vedas, Buddhism, Jainism, epics of Mahabharat and Ramayana etc. During that time Yoga was being practised under the direct guidance of Guru. Sun was given highest importance during the Vedic period and this influence leads to the practice of ‘Surya namaskara’. The great Sage Maharishi Patanjali is the Father of Modern Yoga in the form of Yoga Sutras. After Patanjali, many Sages and Yoga Masters greatly helps in the preservation and development of practices and Yoga literature.

During 500 BC - 800 A.D. Vyasa’s Yoga Sutras and Bhagawadgita etc. and two great religious teachers of India –Mahavir and Buddha spread their knowledge

about the concept of Five great vows – Pancha mahavrata- by Mahavir and Ashta Marga or eightfold path by Buddha- leads to Yoga Sadhana and more explanation in Bhagawadgita which emphasised on the concept of Gyan yoga, Bhakti yoga and Karma Yoga- three types of yoga considered as the highest example of human wisdom and even to day Gita is known as the most important peace giving Epic. Moreover Patanjali's yoga sutra with eight fold path of Yoga enlightened human beings efficiently to lead a peaceful life.

Modern period -1700 - 1900 A.D. which gives us Yogacharyas legends like Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Paramhansa Yogananda, and Vivekananda etc. who helps in developing and flourishing of Raja Yoga, Vedanta, Bhakti yoga, Nathayoga/Hatha-yoga. Now –a- days everyone is concern about yoga practices and its preservation which gives and maintaining healthy living. The teachings of pioneers like Swami Shivananda, Shri T.Krishnamacharya, Sri Aurobindo, Acharya Rajanish, BKS. Iyengar, Swami Satyananda Sarasvati and so on helps in spreading Yoga to this extent. The practice of yoga is not only restricted to Hatha Yoga and Asanas (postures) but among the Yoga Sutras, only three sutras are dedicated to asanas. We can say Hatha yoga is a preparatory process to make the body sustainable to higher levels of energy and the process begins with the body, then the breath, the mind, and the inner self.

Now we can say there's no era of life where yoga doesn't helps us. It changing our approach to life. It brings our creativity to life and also enriches our interactions with others. We develop Self control and growth. Self is no longer an attribute limited to personal functioning only, rather it goes beyond and goes to the social world. Our ideas and interactions with the social world also influenced by that. It also helps us in different walks of life by shaping our attitude, thinking, behaviour and above all Self Development - the process by which a person's character or abilities are gradually developed. Confidence, Listen Actively, Improve Your Body Language, Get Along With Others and with yourself, Become More Proactive, Master the Art of Conflict Resolution, Manage Stress Effectively, Increase your willpower, Become More mindful, Make Better decisions, Work on your growth mind-set are some of the examples of Self Development which enhances self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect.

Yoga –spiritual aspect of Yoga

Yoga gives us unlimited benefits like physical, mental, emotional and spiritual and it depends upon the person which aspect of Yoga oneself want to unfold. Mostly people sticks to the physical and mental and some the emotional benefits of Yoga, but the Spiritual benefits of Yoga are the long lasting. Knowing oneself is the

true spirit of Yoga and discovering self is a long and tough journey. The yogis encourage and helps union with the finite 'jiva' (transitory self) and with the infinite '**Brahm**' (eternal self) means union of Atma and Brahm (God)

To reach to the spiritual aspect of Yoga one should follow Yogic Practices: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana (Meditation), Samadhi /Samyama, Bandhas & Mudras, Shat-karmas, Yukta-ahara, Yukta karma, Mantra japa, etc. Yama's are restraints and Niyama's are observances. All of them are pre-requisites for the Yoga Sadhanas (Practices). Asanas makes the body capable of bringing stability of body and mind 'kuryat-tad-asanam-sthairyam...' and by adopting various body (psycho-physical) patterns enhances the ability to maintain a body position for a considerable length and period of time. Different postures of Pranayama helps in developing willful regulation of respiration leads in developing awareness of one's mind and helps to establish control over the mind.

Pratyahara indicates dissociation of one's consciousness (withdrawal) from the sense organs like tortoise withdrawing the body into the shell which helps oneself to remain connected with the external objects. Dharana indicates broad based field of attention (inside the body and mind) -usually understood as concentration. Dhyana (Meditation) is the contemplation (focussed attention inside the body and mind) and Samadhi – integration.

- Yuktahara (Right Food and other needs) means good food and food habits for healthy and peaceful living. Practice of Dhyana/Meditation helps in self-realization which leads towards one step closer to Brahm and is often considered as the essence of **Yoga Sadhana** (The Practice of Yoga) which is the foundation stone of **spiritual yoga**.

Spirituality is a broad and vague term having psychological, philosophical, transcendental-religious, and phenomenological perspectives. All these perspectives are very well supported by authentic studies. It is considered a universal, human-specific phenomenon (Piedmont and Leach, 2002; Emmons, 2006; Tomcsányi et al., 2011). In traditional yogic terminology, spirituality refers to the spirit or soul, i.e., the innermost core of every human being, which can also be interpreted as pure consciousness (Rama et al., 1976; Baktay, 1992; Satyananda Saraswati, 2013; Swartz, 2015). The ultimate goal of spiritual practices in yoga is the "realization of the oneness of all things" (Satyananda Saraswati, 2013, p. 18), namely the insight that individual consciousness is part of/the same as universal consciousness. This experience is often referred to as "self-realization," "oneness," "union," or "highest state of consciousness" (Rama et al., 1976; Iyengar, 1994; Satyananda Saraswati,

2013; Swartz, 2015). All these studies have shown that the positive effects of yoga practice leads to Spirituality.

How do we train the body for yoga practices which ultimately leads to Spiritualism?

- Take Proper diet - avoid eating unhealthy food. Select the food that agrees with oneself and brings harmony to our body.
- Take proper sleep and rest is to keep our body fit.
- Train the mind: Self educate the mind to become strong, it will be strong.
- Self-pity should be avoided because it makes us feel weak.
- Negative thoughts like envy, jealousy and narrow-mindedness should be avoided as they make oneself feeble and susceptible to diseases.
- Train yourself to be independent. There is no person or thing in the world without whom or without which it is impossible for us to live.
- Train our intellect: Give the challenging work to our intellect, otherwise it gets rusted, loses its capacity to do mighty things and try to enhance the decision making capacity of the brain
- By following ten Principles of Yoga - Non-violence (ahimsa) No killing other beings. ..., Truthfulness (satya) Live in the truth. Righteousness (asteya) Not stealing, not cheating. ..., Wisdom (brahmacharia) ..., Simplicity (aparigraha) ..., Worship of the spiritual goal (ishvara-pranidhana) ..., Sacrifice the ego (shaucha) ..., Self-discipline (tapas)

Yoga works on the level of one's body, mind, emotion and energy which leads to four broad classifications of Yoga: karma yoga- utilize the body; bhakti yoga -utilize the emotions; Gyan yoga - utilize the mind and intellect; and kriya yoga - utilize the energy. Each system of Yoga we practice would fall within one or more of these categories. Every individual is a unique combination of these four factors. Guru first know the individual and then mix the appropriate combination of the four fundamental paths for each seeker. Traditionally, Yoga Education was imparted by knowledgeable, experienced, and wise persons in the families, Rishis/ Munis /Acharyas) in Ashramas Yoga education is 'Being oriented' means according to each individual. Present days, Yoga Education is being imparted by Yoga Institutions of varied types.

Conclusion

"Yoga is not a work-out; it is a work-in. And this is the point of spiritual practice, to make us teachable, to open up our hearts, and focus our awareness so that we can know what we already know and be who we already are." —Rolf Gates

Now-a-days, worldwide millions of people have benefitted by Yoga which has been preserved by the Gurus and Acharyas and now promoted by the great eminent Yoga Masters. The practice of Yoga is flourishing and growing more vibrantly every day. It becomes the part and parcel of healthy lifestyle seekers now a days.

In summary, yoga practice is towards the improving various aspects of spiritual well-being and spiritual intelligence among individuals. Yoga practice also enhances levels of spiritual health, increase positive outlook on life, happiness within, and this leads to lower levels of existential anxieties.

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