

## **The Concept of Yoga and its Goal**

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### **Abstract**

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*Yoga is being popularized more than it has ever been these days. Its popularity caused a great deal of enthusiasm among the Hindus while it stirs a kind of anxiety or rather threatening among the non-Hindus as it is thought to be a plan for conversion to Hinduism. There is a general conception that yoga is about Hinduism but what it really is, except for the certain postures and answers to other questions relating to it are not generally known. The aim of this paper is to analyze Yoga thoroughly and try to answer questions relating to it, so that every reasonable man will be able to reason their way to truth and decide for themselves what to do and what not to do. In doing so, we will have to start right from the very beginning of all questions- What is Yoga? And ends with the question- Is Yoga for you? While trying to answer these questions this paper explains about the Classical Indian Philosophy, Ultimate reality, Moksha, how Sā mkhya and Yoga are related, about Citta, Citta Vritti, the five Kleś as or sources of afflictions, Eight-fold path or Ashtanga yoga of Patanjali, purpose of Yoga. The final question attempted is whether one's summum bonum is in accordance to that of the goal of Yoga. This will answer to the question- whether Yoga is for oneself or not.*

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## **Introduction**

One of the hottest topics nowadays is yoga. Yoga is being popularized more than it has ever been. Its popularity caused a great deal of enthusiasm among the Hindus while it stirs a kind of anxiety or rather threatening among the non-Hindus as it is thought to be a plan for conversion to Hinduism. There is a general conception that yoga is about Hinduism but what it really is except for the certain postures and answers to other questions relating to it like – What really is yoga? What is its origin? What is its ultimate goal? What is its purpose? Is its goal in correspondence with my goal? Will performing yoga make me reach my goal? Is it for me? Is it something to be scared of? are not generally known. The aim of this paper is to analyze Yoga thoroughly and try to answer questions relating to it so that every reasonable man will be able to reason their way to truth and decide for themselves what to do and what not to do. In doing so, we will have to start right from the very beginning of all questions- What is ultimate reality? In other words- What causes creation? The ultimate reality is, “That which is the basis of everything else and is beyond all contradictions. Besides this, the ultimate reality is characterized by infinity, independence, transcendence and immutability” (Bali, 1997). The ultimate reality is an uncased cause. Every Classical Indian Philosophical schools tried to answer this very important question.

## Indian Philosophical Schools

Classical Indian Philosophy is broadly divided into two main parts- Āstika/ Orthodox (those who believe in the testimony of the Vedas) and Nāstika/ Heterodox (those who do not believe in the testimony of the Vedas). The Orthodox includes schools like- Nyā ya, Vaiś eṣ ika, Sā mkhya, Yoga, Pū rva- Mī mā ṃsā, Advaita Vedanta, Visistadvaita Vedanta and Dvaita Vedanta while the Heterodox schools include Cā rvā ka, Buddhism, Jainism. The Orthodox schools can be considered as the six Brahmanical systems. All the schools of the Indian system except Cā rvā ka which is a materialistic school have common goal – liberation or Mokṣ ha. “Moksha literally means deliverance. Thus it is deliverance from all types of pains, worldly as well as other worldly. It is a state devoid of all sufferings. It is deliverance from the cycle of rebirth. It is the achievement of the other worldly welfare. It is the unity of the Atman with Brahman. It is the absolute aim. It is the highest value. It is the realization of ultimate Reality” (Sharma, 2007). The different Indian philosophical schools prescribe different paths to attain Moksha. Epistemological, metaphysical and ethical questions are attempted by every school like every other religion. Even though they have their own differences and specialties some share same opinion on certain topics. This relation can be seen with Sā mkhya School and Yoga school. The metaphysical and epistemological conclusions of Sā mkhya are mostly accepted by Yoga school.

The Yoga philosophy was founded by the great Indian sage Patañjali. It is known also as the Pātanjala system, after

the name of its founder. The term Yoga comes from the root *yuj*, “to yoke or join”. Here it is used to mean the union of the individual spirit (jivā tman) with the Universal Spirit (Parā matman) (Bernard, 1947).

### **Relation between Sā mkhya and Yoga Schools of Philosophy**

The Yoga is closely related to the Sā mkhya system. It is the application of the theory of the Sā mkhya in practical life. The Yoga mostly accepts the Sā mkhya epistemology and admits the three Pramā ñ a of perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumā na) and scriptural testimony (Ś ábda ). It mostly accepts also the metaphysics of the Sā mkhya with its twenty-five principles such as mahat (intellect), Ahaṃkā ra (ego), mind, five sense organs (jñā nendriyas), five organs of action (karmend riyas), five subtle states of elements (tanmā tras) and five gross elements (Mahā bhū tas), Prakṛ iti and Puruṣ a, but believes in god as the supreme self distinct from other selves. The special interest of this system is in the practice of yoga as the sure means of attaining discriminative knowledge which is held in the Sā mkhya as the essential condition of liberation.

On answering the ontological question about ultimate reality, “The Sā mkhya system advocates the ontological dualism of Prakṛ iti and Puruṣ a or individual souls” (Sinha, 1952). The classical Sā mkhya advocates dualistic realism and is atheistic in nature. Prakṛ iti is the unconscious ultimate cause of the world of objects or the material cause of the whole universe. It is constituted of three Guṇ as- Guṇ a of Sattva, Guṇ a of Rajas and Guṇ a of

Tamas bearing qualities of goodness, darkness and indifference respectively. Before creation these three Guṇa are in equilibrium. “Puruṣa is the soul, the self, the spirit, the subject, the knower. It is neither body nor sense nor brain nor mind (manas) nor ego (ahaṃkāra) nor intellect (buddhi). It is not a substance which possesses the quality of Consciousness. Consciousness is its essence. It is itself pure and transcendental Consciousness. It is the ultimate knower which is the foundation of all knowledge. It is the pure subject and as such can never become an object of knowledge. It is the silent witness, the emancipated alone, the neutral seer, the peaceful eternal” (Sharma, 1976). On the other hand, it is the ultimate conscious cause of creation or is the efficient cause of the universe. Only after Puruṣa’s consciousness influences Prakṛiti, the Guṇas undergo heterogeneous transformation or Virūpāṇī and this is the starting of the evolution process. The first product of Prakṛiti is Citta or mind. “The Sāmkhya treats manas, buddhi and ahaṃkāra as the three internal organs with different functions though they are inter-related to one another, and constitute the psychical apparatus. The yoga treats them as one and speaks of the citta and its modes. Patanjali generally speaks of the citta. Sometimes he refers to buddhi its equivalent” (Sinha, 1952). In Citta, the element of sattva or the power of manifestation naturally predominates over those of rajas and tamas. It is by itself essentially unconscious but being in close proximity to the self it reflects, through its manifesting power, the self’s consciousness so as to become apparently conscious and intelligent. When the citta is related to any object through manas, it assumes the form of that object. Although Puruṣa or the self really undergoes no change or

modification, yet because of its reflection in the changing states and processes of citta, the self appears to be subject to changes and to pass through different states of the mind or citta. The self thinks that it enjoys pleasure and suffers pain, subject to birth, death and different kinds of mental changes.

### **Mental Modifications or Citta Vritti**

Citta or mind undergoes different kinds of modifications, this is called **Citta Vritti**. These may be classified into five heads, namely-

1. *Pramā ña or true cognition*- which is again of three types- perception (pratyakṣ a), inference (anumā na) and scriptural testimony (Ś ábda).
2. *Viparya /wrong knowledge/ false cognition*- which includes doubt or uncertain cognitions.
3. *Vikalpa or merely verbal cognition*- which is mere verbal idea caused by words, to which no real facts correspond. Example “consciousness of the soul” arouses the ideas of two different entities (soul and consciousness) related together, whereas in reality there is no distinction between them.
4. *Nidrā or sleep*- this is due to preponderance of tamas in citta and the consequent cessation of waking consciousness and dream experiences. It thus stands for deep dreamless sleep. Some philosophers think there is no mental modification during sleep. But this is wrong

because after sleep a person says ‘I slept sound and knew nothing’. There must be some mental modification to support this absence of knowledge.

5. *Smriti or memory*- this is reproduction of past experience through impressions left behind without any alteration or modification. (Satischandra Chatterjee, Dhirendramohan Datta, 1968)

### **The Five Kleś as or Sources of Afflictions**

Even though Puruṣ a or the self is beyond all physical and psychical changes, it appears to be concerned in Citta when Citta Vritti happens. Since it is reflected in it, it considers that it undergoes every change that Citta undergoes. It appears to pass through different states of mind like- happiness, suffering, indifference and different states of life like birth, death, decay, rebirth, sleeping, waking etc. It also appears to be subject to the five Kleś as or sources of afflictions, namely-

1. *Avidyā* - Wrong knowledge of the non-eternal as eternal, of the not-self as the self, of the unpleasant as the pleasant, and of the impure as pure.
2. *Asmita*- The false conception of identity between Puruṣ a and Prakṛ iti and the absence of distinction between them.
3. *Raga*- Desire or thirsting for worldly pleasures.
4. *Dvesha*- Aversion to pain and the causes thereof.
5. *Abhinivesa*- The instinctive fear of death in all creatures (Sharma, 2007).

## The Eight Fold Path or Way to Liberation Prescribed by Patañjali

To get rid of the Kleś as or affliction, one has to control and concentrate on the Citta so that no more modifications occur. To do so, the eight-fold path (Aṣ ṭ ā ṅ ga Yoga) is prescribed by Patañjali. Ciita vritti nirodha is the cessation of the mental modifications of the mind. It is a step by step process to get rid of ignorance by controlling the senses and mind and finally attain Liberation or Moksha where Puruṣ a is free from Prakṛ iti. The eight-fold path may be described as follows-

1. *Yama or Abstention from bad habits-* It includes the five vows of Jainism such as- Ahimṣā (abstention from injury through thought, word or deed), Satya (abstention from falsehood), Asteya (abstention from stealing), Brahmācā rya (abstention from passions or lust) and Aparigraha (abstention from acceptance of unnecessary gifts from others).
2. *Niyama or Cultivation of good habits-* This includes Ś auca (Purification of the physical body and of the mind), Santoṣ a (Contentment), Tapas (Penance), Svā dhyā ya (Regular habit of studying religious books) and Ī ś varapraṇ idhā na (meditation of and resignation to God).
3. *Ā sana or Posture-* Adoption of steady and comfortable postures of various kinds like padmasana, virasana, bhadrasana etc wards the body off of diseases and disturbing influences which may disturb concentration.

4. *Prā ṇ ā yā ma or Breath control*- So long as the function of breathing continues, the mind also goes on fluctuating and noticing the current of air in and out. If and when it is suspended, the mind is in a state of undisturbed concentration. Hence by practicing the control of breath, the yogi can suspend breathing for a long time and thereby prolong the state of concentration.
5. *Pratyā hā ra or Withdrawal of the senses*- Perceptual knowledge supplied by our five sense organs are the most valid sources of knowledge. They, however, cause a lot of distraction while concentration. So, this stage is about withdrawing our senses from their respective external objects and keeping them under the control of the mind. In this way , the mind is not disturbed by sights, sound etc., coming through the eye, ear and other sense but keeps all of them under perfect control.
6. *Dhā ranā or Attention*- Fixing the mind on the object of meditation like the tip of the nose, mid-point of the eyebrows, lotus of the heart or image of a deity.
7. *Dhyā na or Meditation*- Steadfast contemplation without any break around the object of meditation.
8. *Samā dhi or Concentration*- This is the final step where the mind is completely absorbed in the object of concentration. In Dhyana, the act of meditation and the object of meditation remain separate. But in Samadhi, they become one (Sharma, 1976).

This is the highest means to reach Citta Vritti Nirodha. It is the ecstatic state in which the connection with Prakṛiti and Puruṣa is finally broken because there is cessation of mental modifications (Citta Vritti). Thus, Puruṣa realizes that it is beyond all products of Prakṛiti. This is the highest form of yoga which is divine madness, perfect mystic ecstasy difficult to describe, and more difficult to attain. Even those who attain, it cannot retain it longer. Immediately or after very short time, the body breaks and they obtain complete liberation i.e., Mokṣa (Sharma, 1976). This stage is the true purpose of Yoga.

The paramount aim of yoga which is to free man forever from three sorts of pain, namely-

1. Those arising from his own infirmities and wrong conduct, such as disease.
2. Those arising from his relations with other living things, such as a tiger, thief and the like.
3. Those arising from his relations with external nature, such as the elements and other abstract and subtle powers (Bernard, 1947).

## Conclusion

The above explanation answers the general questions about Yoga- What really is Yoga? What is its origin? What is its ultimate goal? etc. The other important question remaining is – Is Yoga for me? To answer this question and other questions relating to it, it would be essential for us to identify our *summum bonum*.

*Summum bonum* (Latin, for the highest good) is an expression used in philosophy, particularly in medieval philosophy and in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, to describe the ultimate importance, the singular and most ultimate end which human beings ought to pursue. The *summum bonum* is generally thought of as being an end in itself, and at the same time containing all other goods. Thus, the highest good is the supreme good which would give complete satisfaction to a rational being, it is an end in itself. The highest moral good is a personal good as well as universal good. It satisfies all personal cravings and leads to his complete self- fulfillment, self- realization, self- expression and self- development. It is the common good of all mankind. It is, thus, the highest personal and social good.

Life without a proper goal would be aimless. That is the reason why every individual lives according to their *summum bonum*. However, this ideal may differ from individual to individual. Example, for a rationalist like Mackenzie, the complete good is a perfectly ordered Universe because it is chosen by rational beings and gradually achieved by their free efforts, for Hedonists like Sidgwick, pleasure alone is intrinsically valuable; it is the highest good which ought to be pursued for its own sake; and virtue, knowledge or beauty should be sought as a means to happiness, and for a perfectionist Self- realization is the highest ideal and so on. Having the goal of a rationalist and following the path of a Hedonist would be meaningless because it certainly would not make him reach his goal and vice versa. But a rationalist with a rationalistic goal, following rationalistic path

would definitely be worthwhile because it surely will make him reach his goal. Likewise, for a Hindu having a goal of Liberation or Mokṣ ha will most probably find the necessity of performing Yoga to reach his goal. But for a non-Hindu, Yoga will definitely not make him reach his goal if his goal or *sommum bonum* is not realization of discriminative knowledge between Puruṣ a and Prakṛ iti. A rational being would now have reasoned his *sommum bonum* and would probably have answer to the ultimate question- Will Yoga help me reach my *sommum bonum*?

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