



UNDERSTANDING YOGA AS BOTH A TOOL AND THE PROCESS ITSELF FOR SELF-REALIZATION AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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Abstract:

Yoga is a word that needs no introduction in today's scenario. Its roots are universals, spiritual enlightenment and discovering one's own self is the outcome of this. Most people perceive yoga as combination of asana, prāṇāyāma, meditation considering it as daily practice for maintaining good health. While this is true, it is beyond physiological and psychological wellbeing.

The growing demand for physiological and psychological health requirements, yoga has become absolutely necessary. Strong mind is base for strong body. Otherwise, we end up with sorrow and misery (दुःखं). Sorrow and misery are primarily caused by Adhi (mental disturbances) and Vyadi (physical ailments) says -Yogavashista. And also, we can see same from the caraka saṃhitā,

विविधं दुःखं आदधाति इति व्याधिः।¹

If we address *ādhi*, which originates in the mind, we can prevent *vyādhi*. Here the mind is represented by *Citta* which acts as a black box containing *manas*, *buddi*, *ahankāra*. Cessation of continuous process of thought-modifications of *citta* is known as Yoga from *Maharṣi Patañjali*.

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः॥²

This article explores the progressive nature of yogic practices, illustrating how each preceding limb lays the foundation for the next, ultimately leading to self-realization. By nurturing unwavering discriminative knowledge (*viveka*), continuous practice (*abhyāsa*), and detachment (*vairāgya*), an individual can attain lasting fulfillment, joy, and tranquility which is the ultimate goal of human existence. *Maharṣi Patañjali* has given clear way to surpass these obstacles through a tool known as *kriyāyoga* and *Aṣṭāṅgayoga*.

Keywords: Yoga, Self, Self-realization, Limbs of yoga, Spirituality

Introduction:

Peace, happiness, satisfaction are the minimum things for every human being to have. But how does one attain everlasting satisfaction that leads to happiness and ultimate peace which is not momentary? This state achieved through self-realization and awakens a person's spirituality, which is not something reserved for old age but is rather the essence of awareness of unmodified.

However, attaining this awareness is not easy. One must train the sense organs and motor organs through discriminative wisdom; thus, it gradually diminishes the false identification with the ego ("I"). This can be achieved through practice (अभ्यास) and detachment (वैराग्य), which are the first steps toward self-mastery. Scientific studies also support that we can rewire the neurological pathway by continues effort over specific time periods of 21 days, 48 days, 6 months or longer depending on the intensity of the habit³.

¹ Caraka Saṃhitā, cikitsāsthāna 1/5

² Patañjali Yoga Sutra 1.2

³ Cited in References



Abhyāsa: *Abhyāsa is a disciplined effort to achieve the goal. Maharṣi Patañjali says the efforts to keep mind modifications to still is known as the Abhyāsa⁴ and that Abhyāsa can be done in a continue manner for a long time uninterruptedly with Austerity, celibacy, education, faith. Then one can established in firmly in Abhyāsa⁵. From patajali yoga sutras 1.13, the word Tatra represent Abyasa and Vairagya and by practicing these leads to still the mental modifications thus results seer to appear.*

तदा द्रष्टुः स्वरूपेऽवस्थानम्।⁶

Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya says that Abhyāsa results the Bliss. Here the bliss is the ānandamaya. If we connect the pañcakośa theory from taittirīyopaniṣat, ānandamaya kośa is the inner most layer of 5 layers. With Practice (Abhyāsa) we can reach to the fifth layer which is full of bliss (ānandamaya).

आन्नदमयोऽभ्यासात्।⁷

Vairāgya: Vairāgya is not resisting from enjoyments and pleasures; it is dispassion towards them.

इहामुत्रफलभोगविरागः।⁸

Vairagya of two kinds known as *para* and *aparavairāgyam*. *Paravairāgyam* is gaining knowledge of purusha and freed oneself from the triṣṇas. *Aparavairāgyam* is dispassion towards worldly attachments. Neither having cravings for the pleasurable experiences in this life (दृष्टा) nor about heavenly enjoyments described in scriptures (आनुश्रविक) is known as *vairāgyam*. Pure knowledge (विज्ञानम्) and discrimination (विवेकम्) are the grounds for *vairāgyam*.

दृष्टानुश्रविकविषयवितृष्णस्य वशीकारसंज्ञा वैराग्यम्।⁹

As stated by Sankaracharya, desire to renounce all objects of enjoyments that are impermanent, those perceived by the senses such as seeing and hearing from the body up to Bhraman is defined as *vairāgyam*.

तद्वैराग्यं जिहासा या दर्शनश्रवणादिभिः।

देहादिब्रह्मपर्यन्ते ह्यनित्ये भोगवस्तुनि॥¹⁰

Tapas: Those who are not performing tapas doesn't attain yoga says Vyasa.¹¹ The process of eradicating identification with the body and senses and mind by means of Sastras known as tapas.

शास्त्रीयमार्गेण कायेन्द्रियमनसां शोषणे।¹²

Following Kṛcchra, Chandrayāna vātras in a prescribed manner is known as tapas from Sage Yājñavalkya. Krichhra and Chandrayana are regimens of fasting. The word for fasting in sanskrit is upavāsa. 'Upa' means 'near' and 'vasa' means 'to reside'. Residing staying close to the Divine or to one's self is upavāsa.

विधिनोक्तेन मार्गेण कृच्छ्रचान्द्रायणादिभिः।

शरीरशोषणं प्राहुस्तापसास्तप उत्तमम्॥¹³

Svādhyāyam: Svādhyāya refers to self-study. Study of scriptures and chanting of the sacred Prāṇava(ॐ) where one realizes the true nature of Self. Study of scriptures should be done with inquiring into self otherwise efforts will be wasted. Svādhyāya results communion with one's chosen deity.

⁴ Patañjali Yoga Sutra, I.13

⁵ Ibid I.14

⁶ Ibid I.3

⁷ BhrahmaSutra Sankarabhashyam, 1.1.6-12

⁸ Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, Ch V-19

⁹ Patañjali Yoga Sutra, Ch I.15

¹⁰ Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, Ch V-21

¹¹ Patañjali Yogasūtra, Vyāsa Bhāṣya Ch II-1

¹² Vācaspatyam dictionary, tapas.10

¹³ Yoga Yājñavalkya, Ch II-2



Īśvara Praṇidhānam: Surrendering all actions and their results to Īśvara is known as Īśvara Praṇidhānam. In the words of Sage Yājñavalkya ‘mind devoid of desire, speech that avoids falsehood and harshness, and a body that does no harm to others is Īśvara Praṇidhānam’

रागाद्यपेतं हृदयं वाग्-दुष्टानृत-वादिना ।
हिंसादिरहितः काय एतद् ईश्वरपूजनम्॥¹⁴

By performing kriya yoga one’s mental impurities (kleśas) get lean and reach the state of samādhi. Samādhi is eight limbs of aṣṭāṅgayoga of Mahārṣi Pātañjali which is achievable by *kriyāyoga*.

Aṣṭāṅgayoga: The trace of yoga can be seen before Vedic period. Mahārṣi Pātañjali has arranged in a systematic proven way to attain Samādhi in the form of aṣṭāṅgayoga.

Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇa, Dhyānam, Samādhi are the limbs of Aṣṭāṅgayoga. Yama and Niyamas are proper discipline and personal habits as a foundation, āsana is to center and stabilize body, prāṇāyāma to regulate the breath, Dhāraṇa and dhyāna are to center the mind, there by altering the flow of prāṇa from ida-pingala to shushumna, getting absorbed in the middle path is known as Samādhi.

Yama:

Yamas are self-restrains, ahimsā, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, dayā, ārjavam, kṣamā, dhṛti, mitāhāra, and śauca are the ten Yamas. Not causing any harm to beings by thought, word or action is said to be *ahimsā* by yogis¹⁵. Satya is that which is beneficial to all beings, not just speaking raw truth¹⁶. Not logging for others’ possessions either by deed, mind or speech is said to be *asteya*¹⁷. All the time renouncing from the act of physical intimacy is *Brahmacharya*¹⁸.

Daya is to be kind to all beings everywhere. Equality towards all things, favorable and unfavorable is said to be *kṣamā* for humans by scholars well versed in the Vedas. During the loss of wealth and separation from one’s dear ones, or attainment of both, steadiness of mind everywhere (in all states) is *dhṛti*. Eight mouthfuls of food are to be eaten by a Sanyasi, sixteen by those in Vanaprasthashrama, thirty-two by a Grihastha, and as much as they wish by students. This is *mitāhāra* for them, and for others it is eating less. Śauca meant by purity and is of two types. Purity of the mind is internal Śauca, purity of body with water and mud is external Śauca.

Niyama:

Tapas, Santoṣa, Āstikya, Dāna, Īśvara Pūjana, Siddhānta Śravaṇa, Hrī, Mati, Japa and Vrata are the Niyamas. Performing Krichram, Candrayanam upavasa in accordance with the Vedas is the best *Tapas*. Being content whatever get by chance is enough is *Santoṣa* and it is a sign of happiness. Trust in Dharma and Adharma that which is prescribed and proscribed according to the Vedas is *Āstikya*¹⁹. Giving rightfully earned wealth to those in need with the right attitude is said to be *Dāna*. A mind devoid of desire, speech not impure by lies and a body that does no harm to others is known as *Īśvara Pūjana*²⁰. Listening to the ultimate truth that is expressed in the Vedas (Vedanta) is said to be Siddhānta Śravaṇa by the wise. The shame that one feels at doing actions that are considered contemptible by the Vedas is called Hrī. Faith in all the duties laid down in the Vedas is *Mati*. Following the path permitted and initiated into previously, by a compassionate Guru in order to attain freedom and worldly benefits is *Vrata*.

¹⁴ Ibid Ch II-7

¹⁵ Yoga Yājñavalkya I.52, अक्लेशजननं अहिंसात्वेन योगभिः।

¹⁶ Ibid I.53, सत्यं भूतहितं प्रोक्तं न यथार्थाभिभाषणम्।

¹⁷ Ibid I.54, कर्मणा मनसा वाचा परद्रव्येषु निःस्पृहा।

¹⁸ Ibid I.55, सर्वत्र मैथुनत्यागो ब्रह्मचर्यं प्रचक्षते।

¹⁹ Ibid II.4, धर्माधर्मेषु विश्वासो यस्तदास्तिक्यमुच्यते

²⁰ Ibid II.7, रागाद्यपेतं हृदयं वाग्दुष्टानृतादिना । हिंसादिरहितः काय एतदीश्वरपूजनम् ॥



Āsana: The state which is stable with ease is known as (posture) Āsana²¹. By gaining mastery over postures one will not be affected by pair of opposites²². According to lord Śiva. There are as many as Āsanās as there are species and out of them lord Śiva described 84 lakhs of postures.²³

Praṇāyāma: Prāṇa is vital air, Āyāma is regulation or controlling, the regulation of breath is known for *praṇāyāma*, this regulation involves three components, *Recaka*, *pūraka*, *kumbhaka*. Recaka is exhalation, pūraka is inhalation, kumbhaka is retention. *praṇāyāma* is of two types *samavṛtti* *praṇāyāma* and *viśamavṛtti* *praṇāyāma*. When the ratios of components are equal is known as *samavṛtti* *praṇāyāma* like 1:1:1 Or 2:2:2 and the indifference in the ratios known as *vishamavṛtti* *praṇāyāma* like 4:8:7, 4:16:8. Practicing of pranayama varies from person to person based on their lung capacity. The progression in pranayama should always be gradual and it is recommended to start with *samavṛtti* or with only two components I.e., Recaka and pūraka.

Pratyāhāra: Withdrawing the senses from its objects known as *pratyāhāra*, this word is combination of preposition *prati*, which means ‘against’, opposite, and *āhāra* which means ‘food’. So, the word *pratyāhāra* literally means ‘non-feeding’. Maharṣi Pātañjali define *pratyāhāra* as a state of mind when the senses have ceased to have contact with their object of enjoyment and the mind, as it were, looks like following the self. Lord Kṛṣṇa describes this state with an example I.e., When tortoise senses danger, withdraws its limbs. In same way the individual should withdraw his senses from sense objects foreseeing the danger from attachment.

विषयेभ्य इन्द्रियार्थेभ्यो मनोनिरोधनं प्रत्याहारः।²⁴

Forceable pulling away of the sense from their natural object of desire is *pratyahara*.

इन्द्रियाणां विचरता विषयेषु स्वभावतः।

बलादाहरणं तेषां प्रत्याहारः स उच्यते।²⁵

Dhāraṇa: Generally Fixing the mind at particular spot is *Dhāraṇa*, however the phase that must be mastered prior to *Dhāraṇa* is *pratyāhāra* in order to be well established in it. Maharshi Patanjali says fixing of the consciousness (चित्तस्य) on a particular place (देश) is known *Dhāraṇa*. Here the word देश represents any place with in the body like navel, knees, throat, upper palate, heart, eyebrow center, tip of nose etc., or outside of the body like space around us, sun, moon, stars, ideals etc., The state of *dhāraṇa* contains 3 elements: the object/ *deśa*, meaning of the object, and the sense of ‘I’ (Cognitive perception)

देश बन्धचित्तस्य धारण।²⁶

Dhyānam: When *dhāraṇa* becomes continuous and uninterrupted, it matures in to *Dhyānam*. This state of *dhyāna* contains the meaning of object and an unbroken flow of awareness toward it as the sense of I begins to subside.

तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम्।²⁷

Human body contains 108 cakras or the energy centers, in some other opinion 112 cakras. When a practitioner draws unbroken flow of attention on these points get respective powers. According to *Shiva Samhita* one who meditate in

²¹ Patañjali Yoga Sutra II.46

²² Ibid. II.48

²³ Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā II-1

²⁴ Maṇḍalabrāhmaṇa Upaniṣada I.1.7

²⁵ Darśanabrāhmaṇa Upaniṣada VII.1

²⁶ Patañjali Yoga Sutra III.2

²⁷ Patañjali Yoga Sutra III.3



muladadhara for 6 months he can restrain the breath and conquers the mind²⁸. Daily contemplating on Swadhistana center becomes free from disease, obtains highest psychic powers like *anima* and *laghima*. Meditating on Manipura, one will become lord of happiness, he can make gold and can enter into another body.²⁹ The psychic powers *khichari* (moving in the air) and *Bhuchari* (going at will all over the world), knowing past, present, future undoubtedly obtained by contemplating on Anahata cakra³⁰. The body never grows weak, and he retains his full strength for a thousand years, it becomes harder than vajra (diamond) upon meditating visuddha cakra³¹ and many more powers can be obtained by contemplating on Ajna Cakra, even the gods like braham, etc., cannot be fully describe its importance.

It is important note that even though the meditation on different places may results in to various powers, still the practitioner should not cling to them. Such clinging will become hiddenness(*upsarga*) and prevents progress toward the next stage I.e., *Samādhi*. From the various scripters and texts *dhyāna* is broadly categorized is of two types *Saguna* and *Nirguna*. *Saguna* is with attributes and other is *Nirguna* without attributes. Practicing one of the kind leads to *Samādhi*.

सगुणं गुणहीनं वा विज्ञायात्मानमात्मनि । सन्तः समाधिं कुर्वन्ति त्वमप्येवं सदा कुरु ॥४४॥³²

Samādhi: *Samādhi* is obtained when one is free from all *saṃkalpa* (Thought/loops of thoughts). The consciousness is confined in the body. Knowing it (*caitanya*/ consciousness) is separate from body, let one be free from desires and passions, and not even been attached by one's own body, progeny etc.³³ In the state of *Samādhi*, only remains 'the pure meaning of the object', as the ego of the observer completely dissolves. Remaining still with the meaning is *Samādhi*.

तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भास स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः³⁴

According to Śiva Saṃhitā, when *cittavṛtti* dissolves completely the yogi enters the state of *Samādhi*. Same we can see from the yoga sutras³⁵ I.e., 'dissolving of *cittavṛtti* (mental modifications) are known for yoga which results the state where the perceiver is situated in his own form'.

चित्तवृत्तिर्यदा लीना कुलाख्ये परमेश्वरे । तदा समाधिसाम्येन योगी निश्चलतां व्रजेत्॥³⁶

According to Hatha Yoga Pradhipika, when the *prāṇa* becomes lean and the mind becomes absorbed, then their becoming equal is called *Samādhi* ³⁷.

According to Sandilya Upanishad *Samādhi* is the unity of the individual self and the supreme Self, free from the triad of knower, knowing, known, is whose nature of supreme bliss, and whose essence is pure consciousness.

जीवात्मपरमात्मैक्यावस्थात्रिपुटीरहिता परमानन्दस्वरूपा शुद्धचैतन्यात्मिका भवति ॥११॥³⁸

How yoga as both a tool and the process itself:

Yoga as a Tool:

In yogic framework, whether in traditional hatha yoga or in the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* of Maharṣi Pātañjali the sequential disciplines functions as deliberate tools that discipline the body and mind. Various hatha yoga practices including *āsana*, *kuṁbhaka*, *mudrā-bandha*, *ṣaṭkarma/aṣṭakarma* and their relation in purification of the cakra's (energy centers) demonstrate the same.

²⁸ Śiva Saṃhitā V.73,74

²⁹ Śiva Saṃhitā V.81

³⁰ Ibid. V. 86, 88

³¹ Ibid. V. 94,95

³² Yoga Yājñavalkya, VIII-44

³³ Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 7.21

³⁴ Patañjali Yoga Sutra 3.3

³⁵ Ibid. I. 2,3

³⁶ Śiva Saṃhitā V.155

³⁷ Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā IV. 6

³⁸ Śaṇḍilya Upaniṣad I.11



For example, purification of mulādhāra by Chakrikarma, purification of svadhiṣṭhāna by vajroli karma, purification of maṇipūra cakra by nauli, purification of anāhata cakra and viśuddhi cakra by dhauti and purification of ajnacakra by neti and trāṭaka. *Basti* and *Kpalabati* brings purification to all cakras. Kumbhaka helps in conquering the mind by regulation of the breath. The relation between mind and breathe are deeply interwoven. *Mudrā-bandha* helps to channelize the energy and prāṇa. *Asana* should be practiced for gaining steady posture, health and lightness of body.

Yoga as a process:

The meaning of yoga is “to join” or unite and it is derived from Sanskrit root yuj. From the scriptures it delegates deepest sense of yoga which signifies the union of individual soul (jiva atman) with the supreme self (paramatman). This state of union can’t be achieved in a single day, rather it unfolds by progressive evolution, where each stage naturally leads into the next.

In Pātāñjali’s aṣṭāṅgayoga system, *Yama* and *Niyama* form the foundation of all further practices. Without these ethical and moral disciplines, the successive limbs of yoga cannot be properly established. When these bases are weak one cannot be in deeper state of yoga.

As we proceed to Asana the prominence lies in maintaining steadiness in bodily movements along with breath regulations. The coordination of posture and breath brings stability to the body and prepares the subtle channels (nāḍi cakrās) for the uninterrupted flow of prāṇa.

शुद्धिमेति यदा सर्वं नाडीचक्रं मलाकुलम् । तदैव जायते योगी प्राणसंग्रहणक्षमः ॥³⁹

Praṇāyāma becomes effective and provides a number of advantages if this steadiness is maintained. When prāṇa and apāṇa are joined, the higher condition of Samādhi occurs automatically. Thus, each exercise is a necessity for the next. The preceding stage prepares the practitioner for the one that follows. In lineage of sacred texts, the Yoga Chudamani Upanishad also states praṇāyāma is combination of rechaka, puraka, kuṁbhaka and can be done both left and right sides⁴⁰. Each *praṇāyāma* holds 12 matras⁴¹ and their categories of *adhama* (lower), *madhyama* (middle) and *uttama* (best) *praṇāyāmas* according proportions of rechaka, puraka, kuṁbhaka⁴². 12 praṇāyāmas are called 1 pratyahara. 12 pratyaharas are called 1 Dhāraṇa. 12 Dhāraṇas are called 1 dhyāna. 12 dhyānas are called Samādhi.

प्राणायामद्विषट्केन प्रत्याहारः प्रकीर्तितः । प्रत्याहारद्विषट्केन जायते धारणा शुभा ॥⁴³

धारणाद्वादश प्रोक्तं ध्यानं योगविशारदैः । ध्यानद्वादशकेनैव समाधिरभिधीयते ॥⁴⁴

Even though there are many forms of and dhāraṇā⁴⁵, dhyāna⁴⁶, samādhi⁴⁷, these variations represent progressive steps toward more advanced states of realization. Therefore, yoga is a methodical procedure that leads the individual soul to the ultimate reality. It is a road of enjoyable inner development, but it needs careful attention to detail, self-control, and steady advancement through a number of phases. When practiced properly, yoga becomes not only a spiritual process but also a strong instrument for maintaining the balance and integration of body and mind.

³⁹ Yogacūḍamaṇḍanopaniṣad 94

⁴⁰ Ibid. 93, वामदक्षिणमार्गेण प्राणायामो विधीयते॥

⁴¹ Ibid. 100, एकश्वासमयी मात्रा ऊर्ध्वाधो गगने गतिः॥

⁴² Ibid. 104

⁴³ Ibid. 111

⁴⁴ Ibid. 112

⁴⁵ Śiva Saṁhitā VI-1

⁴⁶ Gheraṇḍa Saṁhitā, VI-1

⁴⁷ Patañjali Yoga Sutra I-17,18,42-47,51

Ibid IV-29



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Conclusion:

In Conclusion Yoga is culmination of one into another i.e., one state of consciousness merging into next and obtaining equilibrium state(समाधि) at end. The process starts by consciousness efforts of body with the mind, proceeds towards mind with discriminative factor known as buddhi and melts away ego(identity), where we are able to feel complete calmness and which is not momentary. This unwavering calmness allows the practitioner to see through the reality i.e., the Self, and awakes spiritual knowledge with continuous practice and detachment according to the rules given by *śāstram*. This realization of *Self* is the ultimate purpose of human existence where one can experience absolute *satisfaction*, *bliss* and *inner peace*.

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