

The Role of Yoga in the Overall Development of Society

Dipika Mitra

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Surendranath College for Women, Kolkata, W.B., India

Author Email: dipikamitra2015@gmail.com

Abstract— Yoga practice is one of the most important aspects. Since ancient times, yoga has been incorporated into India's education system. Despite the ups and downs through the ages, we recognize the importance of yoga practice today and see a global movement to make yoga more acceptable. Following the proposal of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi, the significance of International Yoga Day celebrated on June 21, 2015, is being appreciated anew. India's contribution in this regard is particularly noteworthy. We recently joyfully celebrated the 'Tenth International Yoga Day' on June 21, 2024.

Keywords: Human Society and yoga, India and the roll of prime minister of India, Overall development of Human Society.

I. INTRODUCTION

As we navigate the tides of modernity, the gradual decline of human spiritual capacity seems to drag us towards oblivion. However, through the practice of our ancient Indian treasure, yoga, we find a way to live more vibrantly. Yoga education teaches us to be self-confident and self-reliant. To lead a disease-free, vibrant, and abundant life, yoga practice must become part of our daily routine. Everyone has a role to play in increasing awareness in this regard. In other words, everyone must practice yoga for personal well-being. In ancient times, Gautama Buddha adopted and practiced ancient Indian yoga techniques, eventually achieving enlightenment through profound introspection. For 45 years, until 80, he taught people how to live a happy, peaceful, and joyful life.

II. PLAN OF THE STUDY/RESEARCH

A noteworthy aspect of Indian yoga is its many divisions, such as exercise, pranayama, and unconscious body movement through normal activities. Exercise facilitates the movement of body parts, pranayama involves controlled breathing to increase lung capacity and thus bring about bodily health, and another method involves turning inward without controlling the breath, allowing natural breathing to feel the internal activities of our body.

We know that June is significant and memorable for yoga practitioners, as International Yoga Day is celebrated on the 29th. In 2014, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi proposed June 21 as International Yoga Day in his speech at the United Nations, describing yoga as 'an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition.' On December 11 of that year, the United Nations recognized June 21 as International Yoga Day. The first International Yoga Day was celebrated worldwide on June 21, 2015. Yoga not only balances the body's organs but also the mind, brain, and soul. This is why mental problems can also be overcome through yoga. Recognizing this quality of yoga, the world has accepted it as an integral part of life. The previous eight editions of International Yoga Day have been successfully celebrated, garnering widespread enthusiasm and global support.

At the inception of International Yoga Day each year, the Indian government's nodal ministry, AYUSH, along with the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, celebrates the Yoga Mahotsav. This day is celebrated to promote the various benefits of yoga practice worldwide. With a 100-day countdown to International Yoga Day, 'Yoga Mahotsav 2023' was held at the Talkatora Indoor Stadium in New Delhi on March 13-14, followed by a post-Mahotsav Yoga Workshop at the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga on March 15. The event included discussions, lectures, experience sharing, demonstrations, quizzes, and the presentation of the 'Common Yoga Protocol' by yoga experts and teachers. The significant theme of this year's Yoga Mahotsav is the association of yoga with the larger global community, particularly the G-20.

The G-20 is now the world's largest democracy and fastest-growing economy organization, deeply committed to democracy and multilateralism. At the G-20 Summit held in Indonesia on December 1, 2022, India assumed the chairmanship of the organization for 2023. This period represents a significant epochal moment for India, providing an opportunity to seek realistic

global solutions for the benefit of all, and to convey the true meaning of India's great Upanishadic principle, 'VasudhaivaKutumbakam' (The World Is One Family), to the global audience. Based on this principle, the theme for the 2023 International Yoga Day was chosen as 'One World One Health'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the general public to 'make yoga a part of your life if you haven't already.'

With international outreach, active participation of the public through village panchayats, gram sabhas, and other yoga-loving organizations in every village and town is the main objective of International Yoga Day. This will undoubtedly increase India's acceptance globally and serve as a powerful tool for establishing global health, unity, and peace.

Yoga is defined as the cessation or complete stilling of the fluctuations of the mind. It is a philosophy of life, self-discipline, and a way of life aimed at achieving a disease-free, contented life. Yoga is the best spiritual practice for self-promotion and self-realization. It is the spiritual knowledge that transforms an individual from a dwarf to a giant in terms of personal growth. Yoga is not just an alternative therapy but a proven method based on the application of outcomes that eradicate diseases, making it a comprehensive science. Pranayama not only addresses physical ailments but also mental disorders. Yoga eradicates the root causes of diseases, providing health from within. Considering yoga merely as an exercise or a ritualistic practice is an unrealistic and unwise perspective. Rising above self-interest, ignorance, and darkness, we should view yoga as a complete science. The mythological perspective of yoga is that it awakens the eight chakras, and through the continuous practice of pranayama, it purifies the accumulated bad karma or sins of past lives. When we explore the scientific basis of the eight chakras and compare them with ancient medical science, we find the muladhara chakra, swadhisthana chakra, manipura chakra, anahata chakra/heart chakra, vishuddha chakra, ajna chakra, manas chakra, and sahasrara chakra gradually associated with each other. The functions of the eight chakras from muladhara to sahasrara activate and balance the eight systems of the body through the eight pranayamas practiced in yoga. Various diseases or disorders arise from the imbalance of each system. The significance of science and spirituality lies in the expression of thoughts in the same language. However, due to the stigma of four hundred years of slavery, we have spent some time filling ourselves with a sense of shame instead of pride in our traditions, culture, and knowledge.

"Prajñāparādhohisarvorogānāmmūlakāraṇam" (Charaka) –"Stress is the main cause of all diseases" - this statement is beginning to sound more scientific to us. We must abandon prejudice and ignorance, and establish a relationship with truth. It can be said that the fatigue or worry produced by the imbalance or excessive functioning of the abdominal system leads to many complex diseases such as heart disease caused by stress, high blood pressure, depression, obesity, diabetes, etc. In the same way, hundreds of types of arthritis caused by skeletal system imbalances lead to various muscle disorders. Any internal imbalance is a disease. Being internally balanced is being disease-free. From the direct and indirect application of yoga on millions of people, we primarily find that eight pranayamas practiced regularly and resolutely balance our eight chakras or eight systems. As a result, we get a beautiful disease-free life through yoga. Gradually, the need for the chemical salts or hormones we used to take as medicine is eliminated because those chemical salts are naturally produced in balanced amounts within our bodies.

Leaving aside temporary or surgical treatments, yoga is the supreme science in all fields of treatment. In the case of some complex diseases, if yoga practice is combined with Ayurveda for treatment, it becomes highly effective. Along with achieving health, the spiritual aspect of yoga is also very significant. The main goal of yoga practice is to attain samadhi, self-realization, or the perception of ultimate truth. The resolution of diseases through yoga is a by-product. We should never forget that the main goal of yoga practice is samadhi. We are hopeful that the future generation will embrace yoga with interest and, through yoga, will build a peaceful, healthy, sensitive, and prosperous nation or world. There will be a full development through the integration of materialism and spirituality. Through yoga, the individual religion and the state religion will awaken, and the world will progress towards self-welfare and global welfare. People will move beyond ideologies like casteism, hierarchy, linguistic chauvinism, Marxism, Maoism, or Manuism and accept individual nationalism or humanism. India will be established as the most culturally, spiritually, economically, and socially powerful nation in the world. All emotional states arise from fear, hatred, thirst, dissatisfaction, lack of conscience, anger, and intemperance. When a person's mind becomes calm through pranayama and meditation, fear, delusion, violence, crime, and corruption in society, the state, or the world will also be eliminated. The tendency of desire can be controlled through worship. The only solution to escaping the adverse effects of materialism is this yogic perspective.

Yoga is the science of eradicating all diseases. Except for diseases like malaria and TB, allopathy provides medicine for controlling diseases like hypertension, diabetes, asthma, or thyroid, but there is no permanent cure in allopathy for these diseases. However, diseases like BP, thyroid, or asthma can be cured through yoga practice and a natural lifestyle. If we divide pranayama into two parts, different yogic processes before and after anuloma-viloma balance the entire body's system and provide us with complete health. Many people question how all diseases can be treated together through the primary practice of eight pranayamas and some yogic actions, while allopathy prescribes different medicines for each disease. It is natural for an ordinary person to doubt how yoga can be one solution for all when diseases are different. To understand this, we need to correctly understand the physiology and psychology of our bodies and scientifically analyse the effects of yoga science processes. Even though our bodies and minds are different, the reproductive system and endocrine glands from the root chakra to the crown chakra, and the mental, intellectual, thoughtful, and egoistic components of our physical bodies are the same.

In allopathy, medicines, chemicals, salts, or hormones are introduced externally into the body of a sick person to bring about health. However, the practice of yoga and pranayama balances the internal state of the body. Yoga and Ayurveda aim to address the root causes of diseases rather than just alleviating symptoms. Through yoga, the eight chakras from the root to the crown are maintained in health and strength. Everyone should come forward to use the knowledge and applications of yoga and Ayurveda for the welfare of the world.

Children as young as three years can practice pranayama and simple exercises, and elderly people can continue doing pranayama and yogasanas until the end of their lives. Pranayama and yoga enhance the functioning of the endocrine glands, making it possible to eliminate many serious diseases.

Now the question is, what do we understand by pranayama? The processes that increase the level of oxygen in the lungs and expel carbon dioxide in greater amounts are called pranayama. Blood clots that may form in the arteries are dissolved by the vibration energy produced through pranayama, allowing them to flow through the blood. As a result, arterial blockages are cleared, and bypass operations become unnecessary.

Our body contains over 72,000 nerves, but the most important ones are the Ida, Pingala, and Sushumnanadis. Pranayama helps to regulate the respiratory system. There is a strong bond between the respiratory rate, heart rate, and brain function. When the respiratory rate is low, these bonds become stronger, spiritual peace is felt, blood pressure normalizes, blood sugar levels remain in proper proportion, and heart rate stays normal. Thus, pranayama is the simplest and least complex way to stay spiritually and physically healthy. The essence of pranayama is oxygenated blood, gentle internal exercise, and a positive lifestyle.

Yoga is a complete science, a comprehensive lifestyle, a thorough medical system, and a full spiritual practice. The secret of yoga's popularity is that it has never been confined to the narrowness of gender, race, caste, community, field, or linguistic barriers. Practitioners, thinkers, renunciants, householders, brahmacharis—anyone can practice yoga and benefit from it. Yoga is beneficial not only for individual development but also for the multifaceted development of family, society, nation, and the world. The solution to modern human society's tension, unrest, terrorism, scarcity, and ignorance lies only in yoga. Yoga is a wonderful knowledge that brings people to the broad path of positive thinking, discovered by the wise sages of India billions of years ago. Maharshi Patanjali codified and perfected it in the form of Ashtanga Yoga. Ramdev Swamiji teaches and practices the lessons and practices of Ashtanga Yoga through his discourses and yoga training. He believes that a healthy person and a happy society can only be created through yoga practice. Yoga is not just for the recluses, ascetics, and yoga practitioners living in caves; it is necessary for ordinary householders as well. It is very surprising that people are easily ready to be financially, physically, and mentally exploited by the 200-year-old allopathic system but remain indifferent and inexperienced with the ancient yoga science, which is not only proven but also a free treatment system. If yoga were only a mysterious science, why did Yogi Raj Sri Krishna give its teachings to Arjuna on the battlefield? Yoga Acharya Swami Ramdevji has accomplished great work by establishing this great science, which was on the brink of extinction, in the Indian public mind. Therefore, he has earned the respect and trust of millions of people not only in the country but worldwide.

Discussing the nature of yoga, it can be said that the word 'yoga' has been used in the Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, and Puranas since ancient times. In Indian philosophy, yoga is a very important term. From self-realization and samadhi to work, yoga has been widely utilized in our scriptures. The advisor of yoga philosophy, Maharishi Patanjali, defined the word 'yoga' as

'cessation of the fluctuations of the mind.' When the five vrittis—proof, misapprehension, imagination, deep sleep, and memory- become habitual and are subdued, the mind settles in its own nature, and then yoga occurs. Maharishi Vyasa defined yoga as 'samadhi.' We can say that enjoying bliss by uniting the soul with the Supreme Soul through disciplined practice is yoga. The five states of mind are scattered, distracted, infatuated, concentrated, and restrained. Among these, yoga or samadhi does not happen in the first three states. In the concentrated and restrained states, when the bondages of ignorance and the five afflictions are loosened, samadhi is gradually achieved.

In Indian religious scriptures, the Gita holds its significant place. Modern Indian saints have spread the yoga of the Gita throughout the world. In the Gita, Yogeshwar Shri Krishna has applied yoga in various senses. Being equanimous in all situations—favorable and unfavorable, pure and impure, successful and unsuccessful, victorious and defeated—is called yoga. In the Gita, acting skillfully under divine inspiration within oneself is also accepted as yoga. According to Jain Acharyas, the practice that leads to the realization of the soul and liberation is yoga. In Jain philosophy, the vrittis of the mind, speech, and body are also referred to as karma yoga. According to the modern yogi, Sri Aurobindo, 'all yoga aims to unite with the Supreme Being and to achieve this union is the essence of yoga.'

Discussing the impact of yoga on the body, it can be said that yoga develops inherent power and facilitates the meeting with the Supreme Consciousness and complete bliss. Various types of actions have been prescribed by our sages in this yogic process. Here, we can mainly talk about Ashtanga Yoga: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi. These actions develop our latent conscious power, reawaken dormant fibers, and create new cells. The subtle actions of yoga activate our nervous system. Yoga enables proper circulation of blood and, by constricting and relaxing the body, increases bodily strength and alleviates diseases. Asanas further simplifies this process. Asanas and pranayama improve health, and the blood vessels become healthy. Hence, through asanas and other yogic actions, the pancreas is activated, and insulin is produced in the correct amount, resulting in the elimination of diabetes. The root cause of all diseases is the ill-functioning digestive system. Yoga can completely heal the digestive system, and the whole body can become healthy, light, and energetic. Yoga can also provide relief from severe diseases like heart disease. Practicing yoga increases lung capacity, reduces body fat through digestion, and makes the body healthy, well-formed, and beautiful.

Good health is the foundation of complete happiness. In the Gita, Sri Krishna says, 'A person whose eating, recreation, activities, and habits are balanced and disciplined; who has divinity in their actions, purity in their mind, and a desire for the good; whose sleeping and waking are meaningful, is truly a yogi.' In a healthy person's daily routine, diet plays a special role. The body is built from food. The impact of food is not only on the body but also on the mind. For a yoga-infused life, sleep, celibacy, exercise, bathing, and meditation must be routine.

Discussing the utility of Ashtanga Yoga, it is seen that Yama is its first limb. Non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy, and non-possession are the five Yamas. Niyama includes cleanliness, contentment, austerity, self-study, and surrender to God. In reality, indulgence is the obstacle to yoga. Whether happiness or sorrow comes, staying calm is being in yoga. - 'Mental purity and gentleness' (Gita- 17/16). A major problem for people today is the restlessness of the mind. How can the mind be stabilized? With the help of yoga, concentration can be achieved. Divine power says, 'I bestow grace upon those who act according to the Vedas. I establish them as powerful, wise, and of good intellect.' There are three main pillars or bases of yoga practice: pure knowledge, pure action, and pure worship. 'Yoga chittavrittinirodhah' (Yoga Sutra 1.1) means yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. This causes the soul to immerse in its peaceful nature. 'Abhyasavairagyabhyamtannirodhah' (Yoga Sutra 1.2) means that the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind is possible through practice and detachment. When the mind's fluctuations cease, concentration is attained, and repeated efforts to immerse in the eternal, pure, and liberated nature of the soul are called practice. Thus, through practice and detachment, the fluctuations of the mind cease. The word used for practicing yoga or samadhi is Pranava (Om). The chanting of this word strengthens and calms the mind's fluctuations. 'Om' is all-pervasive like the sky. The Gita says, 'At the final moment, chanting 'Om' while leaving the body leads to the ultimate goal.' The Atharva Veda describes the eight chakras. The application of the knowledge of these eight chakras awakens one's energy from the root to the crown through practice, leading to disease-free and blissful experiences. Normally, these chakras are like unopened lotus buds pointing downward. Through celibacy, pranayama, and meditation, they gain divine vitality and bloom upward, releasing their mystical powers. The Atharva Veda says, 'The city with eight chakras and nine gates is the body, wherein the golden core covered with light resides' (Atharva Veda- 10.2.30).

Discussing Bhakti Yoga, we find nine types of devotion: hearing (Parikshit), chanting (Shukadeva), remembering (Pahlada), service (Lakshmi), worship (Prithuraja), bowing (Ankura), servitude (Hanuman), friendship (Arjuna), and self-surrender (Bali Raja). The Gita describes four types of devotees - the distressed, the inquisitive, the seeker of wealth, and the wise. The third part of Kriya Yoga is IshvaraPranidhana, exclusive devotion to God.

Discussing Karma Yoga, it is said that a person acts either good or bad based on their inclinations. The effort made by the soul through the mind, senses, and body is called karma. Karma is of three types: auspicious, inauspicious, and mixed. By performing actions that lead to human birth, one gains human life. A yogi's actions are devoid of sin, meaning they are selfless actions performed to attain God. A yogi performs divine actions for the happiness of the world and never becomes inactive or lazy.

Raja Yoga can be divided into three parts: Samadhi Yoga, Kriya Yoga, and Ashtanga Yoga or Kaivalya Yoga. There are four sections in yoga philosophy, each describing four types of practitioners. The first section describes the methods for attaining samadhi for high-level practitioners. The second section provides guidelines for Kriya Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga to achieve samadhi while fulfilling worldly duties. The third section, VibhutiPada, explains how to attain moksha and yoga after attaining high-level powers. The fourth section prescribes Kaivalya Yoga for practitioners.

Vivekananda says that pranayama consists of three parts: Puraka - inhalation, Kumbhaka - retention, and Rechaka - exhalation. The second method of pranayama is not the same for everyone; before controlling the mind, one must understand it, and always stay cheerful and courageous. After attaining completeness, nothing else is desired, and one attains the state of sat-chit-ananda (existence, consciousness, bliss). I wish that yoga practice brings auspicious results for all.

REFERENCES

1. Yoga Sangbad Monthly Magazine, June 2023
2. Swami Ramdev - Pranayama Rahasya
3. Maharishi Patanjali - Yoga Darshan (Bengali translation)
4. Swami Ramdev - Yoga Practice and Yoga Therapy Mystery
5. Swami Ramsukhdas - Yoga and Bhoga
6. Swami Ramsukhdas - Lifestyle
7. Rigveda
8. Yoga Sutra
9. Srimad Bhagavad Gita
10. Atharvaveda
11. Swami Vivekananda - Simple Raja Yoga
12. Sahayog Shikshak O Shikshika Proshikshon