

Yoga and Health Education

Unit-I

1. Meaning of Yoga

The term Yoga has its verbal root as (*Yuj*) in Sanskrit. Yuj means joining (*Yujyate anena iti Yogaḥ*). Yoga is that which joins. What are the entities that are joined? In the traditional terminology it is joining of the individual Self with the universal SELF. It is an expansion of the narrow constricted egoistic personality to an all pervasive, eternal and blissful state of REALITY.

Pātañjala Yoga is one among the six systems of Indian philosophy known as Śaḍdarśanas. One of the great Rṣis (Seers), Patañjali, compiled the essential features and principles of Yoga (which were earlier interspersed in Yoga Upaniṣads) in the form of 'Sūtras' (aphorisms) and made a vital contribution in the field of Yoga, nearly 4000 years ago (as dated by some famous western historians). According to Patañjali, Yoga is a conscious process of gaining mastery over the mind.

The scope of Yoga as portrayed in the Bhagavadgītā and Upaniṣads is far more comprehensive. As Swami Vivekananda puts it "It is a means of compressing one's evolution into a single life or a few months or even a few hours of one's bodily existence". In general, there is a growth process due to interactions with nature in all creation. But it may take thousands and millions of years for this natural growth; that is the long, instinctive way in animals. *Manas*, endowed with discrimination power, conscious thinking faculty, the intellect (*Buddhi*) and well-developed voluntary control systems, aspires to accelerate his growth. Yoga is that systematic conscious process which can compress the process of man's growth greatly.

Sri Aurobindo emphasizes on all-round personality development at the physical, mental, intellectual, emotional and spiritual levels. He means by Yoga a methodical effort towards self-perfection by the development of the potentialities latent in the individual. It is a process by which the limitations and imperfections can be washed away resulting in a super human race.

Thus, Yoga is a systematic process for accelerating the growth of an individual in his or her entirety. With this growth, one learns to live at higher states of consciousness. Key to this all-round personality development and growth is the culturing of mind.

2. Definitions of Yoga

• *Yoga – mastery over the mind*

As mentioned earlier, Patañjali defines Yoga in his second aphorism – *Yogaś citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ* (Yoga Sūtra: 1.2). Yoga is a process of gaining control over the mind. Control involves two aspects – a power to concentrate on any desired subject or object and a capacity to remain quiet for quite some time. All of us have been developing the first aspect namely concentration. Rarely, the second capacity of man, to remain calm and silent, has been harnessed. Hence, Yoga mainly emphasizes, this second aspect. In Yoga- Vāsīṣṭha one of the best texts on Yoga, the essence of Yoga is beautifully portrayed thus, '*manaḥ praśamanopāyaḥ Yoga ityabhidhīyate*' – Yoga is called a skilful trick to calm down the mind. It is an (Upāyah), a skilful subtle process and not a brutal, mechanical gross effort to stop the thoughts in the mind.

An unskilled layperson trying to repair a television set is almost sure to spoil it, while an experienced and skilful person knows exactly what to lay hands on and to rectify the malfunctioning. He operates at the right place. Knowledge is the key.

Similarly, in the control of mind, a novice tries hard and gets disgusted when she/he finds himself more messed up, while Yoga gives him/her the necessary techniques to operate at the right place at the right time to gain complete mastery. This skill is the trick of allowing the mind to calm down and not to use brutal force to stop it.

In action, Yoga is a special skill which makes the mind reach its subtler state: '*Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*' (Gītā 2.50). Yoga is dexterity in action. The dexterity is in maintaining relaxation and awareness in action. Relaxed action is the process. Efficiency in action is an outcome. Thus, Yoga is a skilful science of gaining mastery over the mind. Yoga is popularly known as a process or a technique to reach the ultimate state of perfection. However, Yoga is sometimes defined even as the states of higher powers and potentialities and even as ultimate state of SILENCE. Further Yoga is also described as the power of all creative endeavours and creation itself. We will now see how Yoga is described as a state and a power in various Yoga and Upaniṣadic texts.

• **Yoga – a state**

A person leaps into higher states of consciousness and learns to stay and act tuned to these states. Yoga often refers to these subtle layers of the causal states of our mind,

Yogastha kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya siddhyasiddhyo samo bhūtvā samatvam Yoga ucyate. (Gītā 2.48)

Perform action, Oh, Dhanañjaya, being fixed in Yoga, renouncing attachments and staying even – minded in successes or failures. Evenness is verily Yoga.

Thus, the subtle state of mind featured by 'Steadiness' is referred to as Yoga. Yoga is a state of great steadiness at emotional level; balance of concentration and detachment at mental level and homeostasis at body level. It integrates the personality by bringing body-mind coordination in a well balanced way.

Thus, Yoga is:

- a process for elevating oneself through calming of mind,
- also the very states of higher, subtler layers of mind, and
- conceived as a creative power in man and that of the reality itself.

3. Misconceptions about Yoga

A person appeared on a spacious dais with a long rope in his hand. Drawing the attention of the curious audience he threw one end of the rope holding the other. The rope went swirling up and stood vertically quite unsupported in mid air. The person using the vertical rope as a ladder climbed up effortlessly to reach the top and saluted the audience from his mid air position. This rope trick cannot be called as Yoga.

A long haired half naked person was seen ready to enter a pit which measured 2 □ 1 □ 1 meters and had been dug specially for the demonstration. He entered into it and then the top of the pit is totally covered, so that no air could pass in it. The man remained inside for several days. He emerged out of the pit after a long stay, fresh and agile, with no symptoms of fatigue. This feat is called Bhūgata Samādhi. He is a great Yogī, the common folk think. But, infact, he is not.

The demonstration of *Bhūgata Samādhi*, *Siddhis*, magic, mantra-tantra etc. is what most people,

even in India, associate with, when they hear the term YOGA.

To summarize, there are varieties of misconception as associated with Yoga. Many persons who are laymen or not acquainted with the Indian culture and traditions think Yoga as associated with:

- Religion – dogma, belief, cult or -ism
- Magic, trick, mysticism
- Physical culture – aerobics and anaerobics
- Mental concentration Self mortification, self torture

But as we have seen earlier in various definitions, the true nature of Yoga is not so.

It is a complete system or better a Science or a way of life. Yoga being a way of life can be applied irrespective of age, gender, profession, state, conditions, problems and sufferings. Yoga can be applied in any/every human endeavour – personal, professional, social, family and spiritual.

• ***Basis of Yoga***

The basis of Yoga is search for happiness. But we search happiness in the objects of senses. The happiness is right within us. It is in silencing the mind. It is the state devoid of thoughts. It is a state of *Bliss, Freedom, Knowledge and Creativity*. The Upaniṣads also propound that this original state of *Silence* is also the causal state of the entire creation. All those who are in search of greater and permanent happiness and bliss, those who seek knowledge, those who want to be totally free and who aspire to become more and more creative will have one single aim to reach, that is *Silence*, a state with no thoughts! This happens when we tune ourselves to that blissful inner awareness.

4. History of Development of Yoga

Yoga means the classical Yoga system as set forth by Patañjali in the Yoga Sūtras. Patañjali taught an eightfold (aṣṭāṅga) system of Yoga emphasizing an integral spiritual development including ethical disciplines (*Yama* and *Niyama*), postures (*Āsana*), breathing exercises (*Prāṇāyāma*), control of the senses (*Pratyāhāra*), concentration (*Dharaṇā*), meditation (*Dhyāna*) and absorption (*Samādhi*). This constitutes a complete and integral system of spiritual training.

However classical Yoga was part of the greater Hindu and Vedic tradition. Patañjali was only a compiler of the teaching at a later period. Yogic teachings covering all aspects of Patañjali Yoga are common in literature prior to Patañjali like the Purāṇas, Mahābhārata and Upaniṣads, where the name Patañjali has yet to occur. The propounder of the Yoga system is said to be Hiraṇyagarbha, who represents the creative and evolutionary force in the universe.

Yoga can be traced back to the Ṛgveda itself, the oldest Hindu text which speaks about yoking our mind and insight to the Light of Truth or Reality. Great teachers of early Yoga include the names of many famous Vedic sages like Vāsiṣṭha, Yajñavalkya, and Jaigīśavya. The greatest of the Yogis is always said to be Yogeśvara Kṛṣṇa himself, the propounder of Bhagavadgītā which is called as Yoga Śāstra an authoritative work on Yoga. Lord Śiva is also the greatest of the Yogis or Ādinātha.

Yoga has been part of man's activities directed towards higher spiritual achievements in India. The history of Yoga is divided into five categories:

1. Vedic Period
2. Pre-Classical Period
3. Classical Period
4. Yoga in Medieval Times
5. Yoga in Modern Times

I. Vedic Period

The ancient texts of Vedas are the oldest scriptures in the world. The Sanskrit word Veda means “knowledge” and *ṛk* means “praise”. Thus the Ṛgveda is a collection of hymns that are in praise of a higher power. Other three Vedas are Yajur Veda (knowledge of Yajña), Sāma Veda (Knowledge of chants), and Atharva Veda (knowledge of worldly affairs given by the sage Atharvā). In Vedic period it was considered that the means to higher attainment was the Knowledge or revealed to sages from the Universe through meditation. It comprises three Yogas – Mantra Yoga, where the power of mantra, through which the mantra becomes active as a tool of transformation in the mind, Prāṇa Yoga – through Prāṇāyāma which energizes the vital force. Dhyāna Yoga – The word *dhī*, which means Buddhi or intellect is the root for the term ‘dhyāna’ or meditation. *Dhī* is the higher and interior portion of the mind (manas), which enables us to perceive the eternal truth. This cultivation of *dhī* or buddhi, the main faculty of discrimination, is the main characteristic of Yoga, Vedānta and Buddhism.

To keep the mind solely on one object is contemplation. "Contemplation is that state in which the tendencies of the concentrated mind begin to flow around one single notion like an uninterrupted stream of oil, and the mental faculties (manas) remain without any outward object." The five characteristics of Dhyāna are: single thought, effortlessness, slowness, wakefulness, effortless expansion. Any state of mind having these five characteristics can be said to be as Dhyāna.

In the Maitrāyanī Upaniṣad; Yoga is spoken about as: Śaḍanga-Yoga – The uniting discipline of the six limbs (*ṣad-anga*), as expounded in the Maitrāyanī-Upaniṣad:

(1) breath control (*prāṇāyāma*), (2) withdrawal of senses (*pratyāhāra*), (3) meditation (*dhyāna*), (4) concentration (*dharaṇā*), (5) recalling and examination (*tarka*), and (6) transcendental state (*samādhi*). Yoga is the state in which all our Indriyas are beheld steadily i.e., a state of mastery over senses and mind, as portrayed in Kathopaniṣad (2.5.4). The state of *samādhi* is preceded by the indiscriminate impressions such as fog, smoke, sunlight, wind, crystals, etc. (Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad 2.11).

II. Pre-Classical Period

One of the most outstanding Yoga scriptures is the Bhagavad-Gītā, which was composed around

5000 B.C. According to the Bhagavadgītā, there are four paths which lead to establishing relationship with the Supreme. These have been designated as the Yoga of perfect actions (*Karma Yoga*), the Yoga of perfect devotion (*Bhakti Yoga*), the Yoga of perfect knowledge (*Jñāna Yoga*), and the Yoga of will power (*Rāja Yoga*).

The Bhagavadgītā consists of 18 chapters. Each chapter is called a Yoga. Each chapter is a highly specialized Yoga revealing the path of attaining realization of the Ultimate Truth. Bhagavadgītā gives specific knowledge regarding the purpose of human existence, the immortality of the soul and our eternal relationship with the Supreme. This knowledge applies to each and every one of us without exception.

III. Classical Period

During the classical period, around 2nd century BCE, Patañjali wrote Yoga Sūtra, comprising 196 aphorisms, elucidating the eight steps (*Aṣṭāṅga*) to reach the goal of human life which is freedom from miseries of death and birth. This is known as the Yoga of will power or Rāja Yoga or Aṣṭāṅga Yoga. (Explained in detail below in Section 15 of this Unit)

Buddha who existed a few centuries before this period taught us eight fold path emphasising on meditation.

Vipāsanā is one of India's most ancient meditation techniques. Long lost to humanity, it was revived by Gautama, the Buddha more than 2500 years ago. The word Vipāsanā means seeing things as they really are. It is the process of self-purification by self- observation. One begins by monitoring the natural breath to concentrate the mind. With a sharpened attentiveness one proceeds to observe the changing nature of body and mind and experiences the universal truths of the mortal and miserable life.

Pratyāhāra and cintana (contemplation) are two important wings of Yoga in Jainism.

IV. Yoga in Medieval Times

Buddha (around 6th century B.C.) had popularized meditation on the entire sub- continent. However, there was a point of disagreement that one cannot start the spiritual practices with meditation immediately. One has to prepare oneself for meditation. During 6th century A.D. when

the influence of Buddhism had declined, some great Yogis like Matseyendranātha and Gorakṣanātha set out to purify the system. There were many treatises on *Haḥa Yoga* written during this time.

The main texts written during this period are *Haḥa Yoga Pradipika* by Svātmārāma, *Gheraṇḍa Saṁhitā* a conversational treatise, *Haḥaratnāvalī* by Śrinivāsa Yogī which also discusses Āyurveda along with Yoga, Śiva Saṁhita, Siddha Siddhānta Paddhati by Nityanātha etc.

Guru Gorakṣanātha is believed to be the founder of the Nātha Sampradāya and it is stated that the nine Nathas and 84 Siddhas are all human forms created as Yogic manifestations to spread the message of Yoga and meditation in the world. They were yogis, who revealed samādhi to mankind. Guru Gorakṣanātha is thought to have authored several books including: *Gorakṣa Saṁhitā*, *Gorakṣa Gītā* and *Yoga Cintāmaṇi*.

V. Yoga in Modern Times

Integral Yoga or Pūrṇa Yoga by Śri Aurobindo emphasised surrendering to the Divine and an opening to the Divine Force so that it may work to transform one's being.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, records the path of Bhakti Yoga and Divine love. To Ramakrishna all religions are revelations of God in His diverse aspects to satisfy the manifold demands of the human mind. One of the greatest contributions of Śri Ramakrishna to the modern world is his message of harmony of all religions.

Swami Vivekananda summarised the Vedanta's teachings as follows:

- Each soul is potentially divine.
- The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, both external and internal.
- Do this either by action (*Karma Yoga*) or worship (*Bhakti Yoga*), or psychic control (*Rāja Yoga*) or philosophy (*Jñāna Yoga*)—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.
- This is the whole of religion. The doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details

5. Aṣṭāṅga Yoga or Rāja Yoga

The Yoga of Patañjali is also called Aṣṭāṅga which comprises 8 limbs. These are: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Āsana*, *Prāṇāyāma*, *Pratyāhāra*, *Dharṇā*, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi*.

Yoga is more than just a physical discipline. It is a way of life—a rich philosophical path. And the *yamas* (restraints) and *niyamas* (observances) are ten good common-sense guidelines for leading a healthier, happier life for bringing spiritual awareness into a social context. They are for you to think about and ponder over with a rational mind, because Yoga is not about mindlessly accepting externally imposed rules—it is about finding the truth for yourself—and connecting with it.

i. Yamas

The *yamas* as described in Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra are only five, which are also known as the great universal vows or the *sārvabhauma mahā vratas*, because they are not limited by either class, creed, time or circumstances. They are the guidelines for how we ought to interact with others. These are the social disciplines to guide us in our relationships with others. These five *yamas* are:

- *Ahimsā* (non-violence),
- *Satya* (truthfulness),
- *Asteya* (non-stealing),
- *Brahmacarya* (celibacy), and
- *Aparigraha* (non-covetousness)

According to the Yajñavalkya Saṁhitā, *ahimsā* or non-violence is the awareness and practice of non-violence in thought, speech and action. It advocates the practices of compassion, love, understanding, patience, and worthiness.

Patañjali describes truthfulness as: "To be in harmony with mind, word and action, to conduct speech and mind according to truth, to express through speech and to retain it in the intellect what has been seen, understood or heard." A perfectly truthful person is the one who expresses in his speech exactly what he thinks in his mind, and in the end acts according to it.

Non-stealing or *asteya* is the third constituent of the *yamas* of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga. It upholds forgoing

the unauthorized possession of thought, speech and action. Asteya stands against covetousness and envy. It advocates the cultivation of a sense of completeness and self-sufficiency in order to progress beyond base cravings.

The Vedas, the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas all glorify the fourth constituent i.e. celibacy. It is believed to be a behaviour, which brings man nearer to the Divine. This *yama* believes in avoiding indulgence in all sensual pleasures, whether mental, verbal or physical.

The literal meaning of *aparigraha*, the fifth *yama*, is the non-accumulation of worldly objects, caused by covetousness and attachment. Commentator Vyāsa says that this last state of *yama* is attained when one remains totally detached from sensual pleasures of all kinds and so effectively refrains from committing *Himsā* or violence of any sort.

ii. Niyamas

The niyamas are the second constituents of *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga*. It tells how we should interact with ourselves, our internal world. The niyamas are about self-regulation—helping us maintain a positive environment in which to grow. Their practice harnesses the energy generated from the cultivation of the earlier yamas. Patañjali names five *niyamas*:

- *Śauca* or purity,
- *Santoṣa* or contentment,
- *Tapa* or austerity,
- *Svādhyāya* or self-education, and
- *Īśvara-praṇidhāna* or meditation on the divine/surrendering to His Will

Śauca implies both external as well as internal purity. In the words of sage Manu, water purifies the body; truthfulness the mind; true knowledge the intellect and the soul is purified by knowledge and austerity. It advocates the practices of intellectual purity, purity of speech and of the body.

The second *niyama* is that of contentment, which is described as not desiring more than what one has earned by his honest labour. This state of mind is about maintaining equanimity through all that life offers. *Santoṣa* involves the practice of gratitude and joyfulness—maintaining calm at all costs. This state of mind does not depend on any external causes.

Austerity (Tapa), the third *niyama*, is described in Yoga philosophy as power to withstand thirst and hunger, cold and heat, discomforts of place and postures; observing silent meditation and ritual fasts. It implies to a person who practices both mental as well as physical austerity.

According to the commentator Vyāsa, self-education or *svādhyāya* consists of scriptural studies. The scripture being, the Vedas and Upaniṣads together with the recitation of the Gāyatri Mantra and the Om mantra. Commentators describe *Īśvara-praṇidhāna*, the last of the *niyamas*, as the dedication of all our actions performed either by intellect, speech or body to the Divine. The results of all such actions are by definition, therefore, dependent upon Divine decision. The mortal mind can simply aspire to realize the Divine through dedication, devotion, purification, tranquility and concentration of the mind. This Divine contemplation spills over to all aspects of the yogi's life.

The benefits of practising yamas and niyamas

The *yamas* and *niyamas* help in managing our energy in an integrative manner, complementing our outer life to our inner development. They help us view ourselves with compassion and awareness. They help in respecting the values of this life, in balancing our inner growth with outer restraint. In short they help us to lead a conscientious life.

Yamas and *niyamas* are not about right and wrong. *They are about being honest with the true Self.* Living according to these principles are living our lives in a better way, moving towards an understanding, making it possible to 'connect' with the Divine.

iii. Yogāsanas

‘*Sthirasukhamāsanam.*’ (P.Y.S. 2.46)

Āsana is to stay in a position firmly with ease.

That's how Patañjali defines it. The purpose of *āsanas* or *Yogāsanas* or physical postures is to use the body to gain health and mastery over the mind.

Yogāsanas are practised slowly and the positions are maintained for longer durations. By doing so there is a reduction in the muscle's tone. The main characteristic of this type of practice **is deep relaxation**. There is conservation of energy, reduction of rājasika (active) temperament, and

reduction of excessive speed of the mind and it leads to stress release. **This is the key feature of āsanas.** *Āsanas* make the mind tranquil – *Manah Praśamana* takes place, which in turn brings harmony in the brain. All the cells in the brain start working in cohesion and the alpha rhythm is induced. It brings a balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. It also brings a balance in the autonomic nervous system and in the endocrine system, which in turn is responsible for the reduction of stress. **Āsanas can also lead us to a meditative state.** By doing *Yogāsanas* we can gain mastery over our own desires and this can lead us to overcome worries, anxieties and tensions. It works at the deeper and subtler levels. Physical exercises merely burn out the calories but do make you feel hungry all the time and makes you gain weight in no time. But *Yogāsanas* **reduce this craving of food and hunger** by gaining mastery over mind. **There is physical personality development and leads towards selflessness and promotion of positive health and bliss.**

There are three stages in *Yogāsanas*: *Sthira*, *Cira*, and *Sukha*. *Sthira*, the first step, is to make the *āsanas* more stable. There is a lot of effort involved and it should be done with full concentration and will-power. Once the desired and right position are achieved, the position is maintained without undesirable movements and bending of the body for certain duration of time. Slowly and steadily, the duration is increased for a longer period of time. This is the second stage known as *Cira* which is featured by relaxation. Patañjali has given the trick as how to be steady with relaxation in the form of a sūtra, ‘*Prayatna Śaithilya*’ (PYS : 2.47.) i.e., to withdraw oneself from the effort. That is the reason why the Yoga instructor keeps telling repeatedly to relax the whole body and enjoy the pain with a smile on the face. One should keep telling to oneself, “Let me relax, let me relax, let me not become tensed up, let me not get anxious”, while doing the *āsanas* i.e. to relax by withdrawing the effort. The next stage or *Sukha* is a stage of bliss. Once one starts maintaining the *āsanas* effortlessly with relaxation for longer duration, the general tendency is that the mind starts wandering which is against the whole objective of *āsanas*. So, how does one overcome that? Patañjali gives yet another trick: ‘*Prayatna śaithilyānantasamāpattibhyām*’ (P.Y.S.: 2.47) i.e. to imagine the vast beautiful blue sky or infinite ocean and allow the mind to stay to resonate, and to tune with the total infinite object. It keeps the mind above dualities, ‘*Tato dvandvānabhigātaḥ*’ (P.Y.S.: 2.48). This brings the stability and the balance, *Samatva*.

So, Yoga starts working from the physical level and moves towards subtler level – the mind. It starts from the body level and moves towards muscular level, then the breathing level, the mind or

emotional level to maintain the balance and calmness of mind. By so doing, one achieves Samatva the ideal state of body and mind.

Let us now try to understand the various sequencing of *āsanas*. How do we sequence *āsanas*? Generally, they are sequenced as Standing postures, Sitting postures, Prone postures and Supine postures, apart from the topsy-turvy postures. All those *Yogāsanas* which are done while standing come under the standing postures and similarly the *āsanas* which are done in the sitting posture fall under the category of sitting postures and *āsanas* done by lying down on the abdomen are the prone postures. The *āsanas* done by lying down on the back are the supine postures. For example, the standing postures include: *Ardhakaṣi cakrāsana*, *Pādahastāsana*, *Ardha cakrāsana*, *Parivṛtta Trikoṇāsana* etc. In this standing posture, one does the side bending, backward and forward bending, etc. And the sitting postures include: *Vajrāsana*, *Paścimottānāsana*, *Ardhamatsyendrāsana* etc. In the prone postures we have *Śalabhāsana*, *Bhujāṅgāsana*, *Dhanurāsana* etc. and in the supine postures we may have *āsanas* like *Śavāsana*, *Sarvāṅgāsana*, *Halāsana*

Classification of Āsanās

Āsanās can be classified as Cultural, Relaxational and Meditative postures. The *Śavāsana*, the *Makarāsana* (the crocodile postures), *Śithila Tāḍāsana* and *Śithila Dhanurāsana* are called Relaxation postures. While the *Padmāsana*, *Siddhāsana*, the *Vajrāsana* and the *Sukhāsana* are known as the meditative postures. All the remaining postures are called cultural postures. These postures are meant essentially to culture our personality. For example, there are people (B-type) who are very shy and their shoulders droop forward and they have shrunken faces. To bring confidence, to shatter the shyness and to become bold and dynamic, the best prescription is to practise the cultural *Āsanās* the back bending postures or the *Cakrāsana*, *Bhujāṅgāsana* (the cobra postures), the *Ardhacakrāsana* (standing bending backward) and *Suptavajrāsana*. On the other hand, there are people who are born A-type – very egoistic and go-getters. And these people always have their shoulders back and heads up and for such people, humility has to be brought in and the front bending postures like *Paścimottānāsana*, *Śāsāṅkāsana*, front bending *Pādahastāsana* are prescribed to overcome the egotistic characters and to develop the pleasing and blossoming personality. Therefore, every cultural *Āsana* has been designed to build the personality.

iv. Prāṇāyāma

According to Patañjali:

‘tasmin sati śvāsapraśvāsayorgativicchedaḥ prāṇāyamaḥ. (P.Y.S. 2.49)

i.e., to cut the speed of inhalation and exhalation is Prāṇāyāma. Prāṇa is related to breathing and when one starts controlling the breathing rate, one starts Prāṇāyāma. The respiratory system acts voluntarily and as well as involuntarily. When it is voluntary in nature, the breathing is done according to one’s wish. But, when one is not conscious of it, breathing goes on automatically at a particular speed. The normal speed is 15 to 18 breaths (inhalation together with exhalation) per minute. What one does in Prāṇāyāma is to use the voluntary mode to reduce the breathing rate and also to balance the breath between the two nostrils.

Cleansing is the first step in Prāṇāyāma. It is very necessary to see that our respiratory system comes under our control. It involves the fast breathing technique, called as *Kapālabhāti*. It cleanses the respiratory tracts. **Kapāla** means *skull* and **Bhāti** means *to shine*. **The fast breathing stimulates the brain cells and makes the skull shine**. It is done by **active exhalation** from both the nostrils followed by automatic inhalation. The whole activation takes place in the abdomen by pulling the stomach inwards and allowing the breathing to exhale as a burst. The whole breath should come out as a burst. When it’s done with both the nostrils it is called Both Nostrils *Kapālabhāti*. But, when it’s done with alternate nostrils, bursting through the left first and then through the right, it is called Alternate Nostril *Kapālabhāti*. Normally the speed should be 120 strokes per minute i.e. 120 inhalations and 120 exhalations in one minute. Kriyās cleanse the system by decreasing the carbon di-oxide concentration in the blood and increasing concentration of oxygen in the blood. *Kapālabhāti* cleanses the respiratory system. Either Both Nostril *Kapālabhāti* or Alternate Nostril *Kapālabhāti* gives rise to the same effect. There is oxygenation of the system and also the stimulation of the brain cells, as the brain gets full by oxygenated blood supply. It increases memory and concentration power and greater authority on mind emerges.

The next step is **normalizing the breath**. It is done with the practice of sectional breathing. **The process of inhalation and exhalation makes one cycle of breathing**.

The normal breathing rate is 15 to 18 per minute. But certain people have shallow breath due to wrong habits and in most of the people suffering from respiratory problems, it is found that the breathing **rate is very fast**.

The simplest Prāṇāyāma is to sit relaxed in any meditative position and breathe in and out slowly. This is *Sulabha Prāṇāyāma*. To progress, feel the cool air entering in and the warm air coming out. Feeling the whole body getting energised while we breathe in and relaxation of the whole body while we exhale slowly helps in further progress. This Prāṇāyāma can be done in standing, sitting or lying down positions and at any time of the day.

Different types of Prāṇāyāma can be classified into four main categories:

1. Balancing Prāṇāyāma
2. Sensitizing Prāṇāyāma
3. Cooling and awareness developing Prāṇāyāma
4. Resonance and laya Prāṇāyāma

In *Nāḍīsuddhi Prāṇāyāma*, inhalation is done slowly through left nostril and exhalation through the right nostril; the next inhalation is done through the right nostril and exhalation now through the left nostril. This makes one cycle. This practice brings balance in the prāṇa and cleanses the prāṇic channels. The Upaniṣads indicate that there are 7.2 million nāḍis in the body through which the prāṇa flows. One of the five major prāṇas called Vyāna goes through all the 7.2 million nāḍis. Any imbalance in the prāṇic flow is shown as imbalance between Iḍā (left nostril) and Piṅgalā (right nostril). Nāḍīsuddhi Prāṇāyāma brings balance between these two. Therefore, it is also called as the *Balancing Prāṇāyāma*.

The next practice is the *Ujjāyī Prāṇāyāma*. It is a **sensitizing** prāṇāyāma. It consists of partially closing the epiglottis and allowing the air to scrub through the trachea and the wind pipe producing a hissing, frictional sound of scrubbing (as opposed to any vocal sound). It **sensitizes** the region around throat.

The next category of *Cooling Prāṇāyāma* consists of three classical procedures: Śitalī, Sītkāri and Sadanta. In Śitalī Prāṇāyāma, the tongue is folded and protrudes out of the mouth like a beak of a crow. The inhalation is through this beak and exhalation is through the nostrils. One can easily feel the cool air going in and the warm air flowing out. Under the Sītkāri Prāṇāyāma, the tongue is folded backwards into the mouth so that the tip touches the upper palate. Inhalation is done through both sides of the tongue and exhalation is through the nostrils. In Sadanta, the teeth are gently clenched with the tip of the tongue touching the back of the teeth. The inhalation is done through the crevices of the teeth and exhalation through the nostrils.

The next category of *Resonance Prāṇāyāma* starts with Bhrāmarī Prāṇāyāma. Here, inhalation is normal through the nostrils but the sound of a female honey bee is produced while exhaling. It produces a resonance throughout the body bringing a soothing effect and calming the mind. It can be practised by all and in any position: even severe cancer patients can do this while lying down.

v. Pratyāhāra

The essence of *Pratyāhāra* is to use the senses to gain mastery over the mind. *Pratyāhāra* consists of two words *prati* and *āhāra* meaning denying the senses of their food viz., controlling senses from rushing towards their objects and thereby controlling the mind.

vi. Dhāraṇā

Initially there were several subjects with indefinitely many thoughts floating in the mind. With concentration it is reduced to one subject with several thoughts and then it is brought to one subject and to a single thought. This is the stage of Dhāraṇā. Patañjali says, *Deśabandhaścittasya dhāraṇā* (PYS:3.1) which is binding the mind on a single thought. In this connection we can profitably see the procedure of Trāṭaka. Keeping a burning candle at eye level and concentrating by focussing on the single thought of the tip of the wick of the candle. This is dhāraṇā.

vii. Dhyāna

The next step to Dhāraṇā is Dhyāna or meditation. If Dhāraṇā is focussing, then Dhyāna is de-focussing. Patañjali gives us the concept of Dhyāna as an effortless Dhāraṇā. As opposed to the focussing under Dhāraṇā, there is total de-focussing under Dhyāna effortlessly. This is the seventh limb of Patañjali's *aṣṭāṅga* Yoga.

viii. Samādhi

The mind in grossest form with a host of random thoughts is brought into a state of *Dhyāna*, first by concentration and then by *Dhāraṇā* (focussing) and then by *Dhyāna* (de-focussing). From here, one goes to the eighth limb called the *Samādhi*: *Samyak ādhīyate iti samādhi* i.e., deep absorption or super-consciousness.

6. The Streams of Yoga

The human personality can be divided broadly into four fundamental categories: emotional, active, intuitive and volitional. Patañjali has clearly understood this fact that each person has a different temperament and inclinations according to predominance of one or more of these categories. He, therefore, knew that the Yogic path had to be designed to suit the specific characteristics of an individual. Therefore, he suggests:

Bhakti Yoga for those who are emotionally and devotionally inclined (refer to 1:23; 2:1; 2:23, 2:45; etc.).

Jñāna Yoga for those who are intuitive by nature. He recommends reflection and enquiry into the real meaning of AUM (1:27-29) and also explains much of Sāṃkhya philosophy (2:20, 21 etc.) as a means to higher realization. He also makes it clear that all mental knowledge is limited.

Rāja Yoga or *Pātañjala Yoga* for those with strong willpower; this is the theme of the entire scripture.

Karma Yoga for those who are active by nature, though is not particularly mentioned, but certainly it is implicit in many Sūtras. For example, the *yamas* and *niyamas* signify the Karma Yoga in daily actions and duties. Karma Yoga is also implicit in the verses on Bhakti Yoga.

Patañjali knew that success in Bhakti Yoga leads automatically to success in Rāja Yoga; Jñāna Yoga leads to perfection of Rāja Yoga, and so forth. He knew that a person on the path of Yoga must integrate his whole being. Petty-mindedness and egoism have to be removed by any available method. All negative and limiting functions of the mind have to be controlled.

The stopping of the *vṛttis* (mental modifications) can be achieved by *vairāgya* (detachment) and *abhyāsa* (practice of Yoga). (1:12)

This statement includes all paths and techniques of Yoga. None are excluded. They all lead to success in Yoga.

➤ *Karma Yoga*

The 4 major laws of *Karma Yoga* are described in Bhagavadgītā so that you can enjoy every moment of your work totally free from all stresses.

a) work with a sense of duty;

- b) work without getting intensely attached (focussed attention) to the work;
- c) never allow the anxieties about the results interfere with your mind during the currency of the job;
- d) accept failure and success with equanimity.

Using these techniques of *Karma Yoga* we learn the art of 'working in relaxation' with total 'Awareness in Action'. Not losing sight of the innate bliss and poise, the path of work teaches us to interact in society judiciously and effectively. To retain this objectivity and attunement to a clearer and more subtle state of mind, as a judge does while hearing the powerful arguments of both the parties, is the trick of *Karma Yoga*. The regular release of stress & tension helps us to spread the insight throughout the action phase. Application of the *Karma Yoga* techniques help to reduce the accumulation of tension and stress and thus makes the possibility of a tension free life, a reality.

➤ ***Bhakti Yoga***

Bhakti signifies both devotion and loving attachment to the Divine. Strictly the word denotes 'participation' (from the verbal root *bhaj* "to participate, to partake"). The Yogī on the devotional path literally participates in the Divine through surrender, devotion, service, worship and finally is drawn into mystical union with the Divine.

Bhakti has been an all-pervasive concept in the philosophical and religious traditions of India. Nārada Bhakti Sūtra (NBS) is a premier treatise on the nature of bhakti that emphasizes the connection between *bhakti* and *prema* and treats the age-old enigma about the nature of love in an original fashion.

Bhakti softens the heart and removes jealousy, hatred, lust, anger, egoism, pride and arrogance. It infuses joy, divine ecstasy, bliss, peace and knowledge. All cares, worries and anxieties, fears, mental torments and tribulations entirely vanish. The devotee is freed from the wheel of births and deaths. He attains the immortal abode of everlasting peace, bliss and knowledge.

The path of *bhakti* is prevalent in this entire universe and it is for all the Souls of this universe. It remains the same in all times and it is directly related to the Soul and the Supreme Soul is above caste, creed, sect and nationality. Bhakti is the pure love of your heart that longs to meet the Divine beloved of your Soul in this very lifetime.

➤ ***Rāja Yoga***

We all possess the “will” power as a manifestation of the freedom at the mind level. ‘*Man is the maker of his own destiny*’. In today’s time if we are suffering from various problems, suffering from ill health, tensions and stresses; these are of our own making. Therefore, it is for us to change ourselves; to overcome these miseries and grow to reach higher states of bliss, creativity, and freedom.

When we recognize this freedom within us and make a resolve to develop ourselves towards higher levels of consciousness, the journey begins. As we journey further difficulties and hurdles crop up at every step. Techniques needed to systematically channelize our will-power to solve these problems form the core of *Rāja Yoga*. The steps are discussed in detail under *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga*.

➤ ***Jñāna Yoga***

Jñāna Yoga is the path of intellect and the path of analysis. This is also the Yoga of wisdom and has its own methodology. The methodology centers around hearing called as *śravaṇa*, recalling & analyzing called as *manana*, dwelling & meditating is *nididhyāsana*. The age of science has made man a rational being. Intellectual sharpness is imminent. Analysis forms the tool. The path of ***philosophy*** (*Jñāna Yoga*) is apt for the keen intellectuals and is centered around the analysis of ‘happiness’, the vital contribution of the Upaniṣads.

The contemplation starts dwelling on those truths which have been enunciated and which are logically accepted. This is *sādhana* or deep meditation. This is also the deep contemplation of the *Jñāna Yoga*. As we go deeper and deeper into the meditation, we start unravelling higher and higher dimensions and an individual comes to the conclusion – ‘I am that blissful awareness’ or infinite consciousness’. This is *Jñāna* or realization.

• **The two schools of Yoga: Rāja Yoga and Haṭha Yoga**

Patañjali’s Yoga is *Aṣṭāṅga – Yoga* or *Yoga* with eight limbs. This *Yoga* deals with the discipline of the mind and its psychic powers. *Haṭha Yoga* emphasises the methods of bodily control and regulations of breath.

The culmination of *Haṭha Yoga* is *Rāja Yoga*. A progressive *Sādhana* (self effort; spiritual

practice) in *Haḥa Yoga* leads to the accomplishment of *Rāja Yoga*. *Haḥa Yoga* is a ladder to ascend the stage or summit of *Rāja Yoga*.

Purification of the body and control of breath is the direct aim of *Haḥa Yoga*. The ~~ṣaḥ~~ *ṣaḥ karmas* or six acts of purification of the body are *Dhauti* (cleansing of the stomach), *Basti* (natural form of enema), *Neti* (Cleansing of the nostrils), *Trāḥaka* (unwinkingly gazing at some object), *Nauli* (churning of the belly) and *Kapālabhāti* (removal of the phlegm through a certain kind of *Prāḥyāma*). [*Prāḥyāma* = regulation and restraint of breath]. The body is rendered healthy, light, strong and steady by the practice of *Āsanas*, *Prāḥyāma*, *Bandhas* and *Mudrās*. The achievement of physical fitness and worldly power, is a method to prepare the student for the rigors of *Rāja Yoga*.

