

Definitions of Yoga

**Course - BA / B.Sc. Yogic Studies
Paper - 1**

Lesson Presented by-

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Under this lesson we will get a brief overview of the meaning of Yoga as well as valid ancient and modern definitions of Yoga.

Definitions of Yoga Meaning of the word Yoga:

Etimology: The word 'yoga' originates from the Sanskrit verb 'yuj' (युज्) meaning to add, combine or unite. In yoga it means the union of the soul with the divine.

In different paths of yoga, this unity is represented in other forms, but the goal of all is one - union with the cosmic energy, God. There seems difference among them based on methods. As per *Hatha Yoga* it is union of *ida* and *pingala*, *kaivalya* in *Rajyoga*, attaining the *darshan* of deity in *Bhakti Yoga*, finding *brahma* within in *Gyan Yoga*, merging with *Hari* as *karta* in karma yoga, etc. Thus, the word yoga is the attainment of that ultimate goal when the soul meets the divine, just as the river current meets the ocean.

The number of texts related to yoga is vast. Numerous books have been written on Yoga from the the era of *Vedas* and *Upanishadas* to the present time. The form we are studying today is mainly based on the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*, *Patanjal Yog Darshan* and *Hath Yog Pradipika*.

Here we will describe the definitions of yoga in some scriptures of yoga. It is noteworthy that the major texts of Indian philosophy have been composed in Sanskrit language itself. Therefore, students are expected to learn a little Sanskrit.

Raja Yoga

The main text of *Raja Yoga* is from '*Yoga Darshan*'. Yoga philosophy is one of the main six philosophies of India. The other ones are as follows:

1. Maharishi Gautama's *Nyaya Darshan*
2. Kanad's *Vaishika Darshan*
3. Kapil's *Sankhya Darshan*
4. Patanjali's *Yoga Darshan*
5. Jaimini's *Purv Mimamsa Darshan*
6. Badrayan's *Vedanta Darshan*

Yoga philosophy is based on the work of *Maharishi Patanjali*, popularly known as the '*Patanjal Yoga Sutra*'.

Maharshi Patanjali has defined yoga clearly in this verse: -

Yogachchittavritti nirodhah I (1-2)

That is, Yoga is stilling the fluctuations of the mind (consciousness) ”.

What are these fluctuations of mind? We can begin to understand them by equating them with waves rising and falling in the sea. Our mind also keeps on stirring up different types of thoughts and emotions. These thoughts or emotions can be either of pleasure or of sorrow.

On the basis of manifestations, the sage has given five types of *vrittis* - *Praman*, *Viparyay*, *Vikalpa*, *Nidra* and *Smriti*. There are two distinct types of the five *vrittis* - *Klisht* and *Aklisht*. *Klisht* meaning giver of sorrow and pain. They causes sadness in life for the seeker and hinders the path of yoga. *Aklisht* are helpful. They do not cause misery

or pain. A yoga practitioner must recognize them and restrict them through practices of yoga.

ShrimadBhagavad Gita

This is an excerpt from the Sanskrit epic '*Mahabharata*' composed by *Maharishi Vyasa*, in which *Krishna* preaches mankin using *Arjuna* as an instrument. In the war of Mahabharata, seeing close relatives and dear ones standing against himself, '*Moh*' arises in the mind of *Arjuna*. He wants to run away from the battlefield. *Krishna* pacifies this state of *Arjuna* with his divine words. Thus, Gita is the holy message of *Lord Krishna*.

Here are some *sutras* of Gita related to yoga: -

(1) *Yogastha Kuru Karmani Sangam Tyaktwa Dhananjaya I*

Siddhyasiddhyo Samo Bhootva Samtavam Yoga Uchhyate II

(2/48)

Krishna says to Arjuna that you do your karma by submitting to yoga and abandoning attachment.

Because taking success and failure as equal, is yoga.

Man experiences great joy in success and becomes unhappy when he fails. According to the Gita, maintaining equality in both success and failure is yoga. To become very happy on getting success and to drown in sorrow upon failure, this mentality is

unfair and unhelpful for life. The result of this is that many people become a victim of depression when they fail. They even commit suicide.

(2) *Buddhaiyukto Jahatih ubhe Sukritdushkrite I*

Tasmadyogay Yujuyasva Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam II (2/50)

By this, *Lord Krishna* has told mankind that doing karma in the spirit of yoga is the only way to get rid of karma bondage. Those who are intelligent renounce both virtue and sin in this world. Therefore, O Arjuna, you should be engaged in yoga as equanimity, because yoga is perfectness in actions.

(3) *Yuktaharviharasya yukt cheshtasya karmasu I*

Yuktswapnavabodhasya yogo bhavati dukhaha II (6/17)

That means, for those who eat proper diet, behave appropriately in their deeds, and those who sleep properly - for them yoga is the destroyer of all sorrows.

Definitions of Yoga according to modern yogis :-

A. Sri Aurobindo :

Sri Aurobindo conceived the 'Super Mind' state for man. According to him a person can develop his mental powers to the level where he transforms himself into divine form. According to him practising yoga **asanas** and **pranayams** etc. is not enough. Yoga does not mean renouncing life either. It is believing in divine power and facing the problems and challenges of life with courage. The education of yoga is

to surrender selflessly to God and to transform oneself into divine form through mental education.

B. Swami Shivanand Saraswati

Yoga is perfect life. This is the method that affects every aspect of human nature. Yoga is the name of a system, through which the oneness of the soul and the divine is realized and through this knowledge, union of the divine and the soul takes place .

C. Swami Satyanand Saraswati

Yoga is not to be kept limited to the rishis and sages of the Himalayan caves. Yoga and Tantra have extremely scientific principles, which can be used scientifically for human welfare. Every method of yoga is the essential need of the present, which is to be dedicated to the service of mankind. There is no better Yoga than service to the poor and downtrodden .

Foretelling of Swami Ji - "Yoga is not an ancient myth buried in oblivion. It is the most valuable inheritance of the present. It is the essential need of today and the culture of tomorrow."

Relevance in modern context

Modern era is the era of science. Man's life has become very resourceful. We are completely based on external means. The result is that man is satisfied with the pleasure he gets from his senses and never tries to look inside himself. In this way, a situation of imbalance has arisen between the outer world and the inner world, due to which stress and outbreaks of various types of diseases are increasing. These

diseases are spreading from the family to the global level. The means of nature are being increasingly exploited, which is the cause of many disturbances. Also, increasing use of medicines is making humans physically disabled and weak.

In such a situation, mankind needs a discipline that can take it to the path of peace. In this situation when we look at yoga, we find that in today's situation it can help human life in various forms. Especially in relieving stress and preventing various disturbances that are happening in nature and environment.

In this way, with the advancement of science, the relevance of yoga is increasing day by day. If the definitions of yoga we have discussed can be followed even in lesser quantities, then miracles can happen.

Possible questions: -

- a. Give an account of definitions of yoga, based on ancient texts.
- b. Explain the definitions of yoga according to Raja Yoga.
- c. Discuss yoga related thoughts of modern-day sages. Underline their relevance in today's life?