

## **AN ETHICAL APPROACH OF YOGA PHILOSOPHY FOR THE REFORMATION OF MODERN SOCIETY**

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### **Abstract**

The New Millennium is the age of scientific and technological excellence. There is all round material development. This present era is more luxurious and full of stress due to mechanical and technological advancement. Man has set foot on moon and other planets. In spite of all these progress, we also find that, the world is full of chaos, violence; terrorism becomes the part of our life. Media reports global agitation and destruction which makes us aware about the whole situation of the world. Man suffers from mental agony and unhappiness. He is profoundly confused, frustrated and overstressed. This is the paradox of modernity. This is the strife-torn world which makes greatest problem in the present society. Yoga is an Indian unique key to overcome this unstable situation of the society. Yoga is one of the six systems of Indian Philosophy and sage Patanjali is credited to its authorship. Yoga is a normative and holistic science. All methods of yoga have ethical training and moral perfection as their basis. Sage Patanjali propounded Yoga as the only way of self-elevation, co-existence, communal harmony and the world peace. So Yoga is India's greatest gift to the World.

**Key words:** yoga, stress, strife-torn, paradox, moral perfection, world peace, Indian Philosophy.

In the present era there has been tremendous progress in Science and Technology. This new- millennium is more luxurious and full of stress. New and better gadgets are coming into the market. There is all round material development. Race after race man has taken the challenges up and tried their utmost to solve the world riddle on the plane of desires. Man moves in the space and planets. In spite of all these progresses in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we also find that the world is full of chaos, violence and terrorism is the part of our life. Through media we can aware about global agitations and destructions. This is the strife – torn world which makes greatest problem in the present society. This is the paradox of modernity.

Again we see, now-a-days our created society is rich and scientific and at the same time, it is unpleasant and uneasy. Poverty, absence of contentment and dissatisfaction causes man to live in miseries. Explosion of drugs abuses, crimes and sex offences are also in the recurrence of sufferings. As a result, men lost their mental balance and vigor. Alcohol, drugs, L.S.D and other toxin medicines becomes a habit as their regular intake, people are getting sleepless. In spite of having all these allurements and excitement in the external world, man lives in ignorance darkness inside. Though the wheels of progress are moving faster and faster, decade and decade man is feeling dazed. Result of which, he intensively roams around for happiness and tries to get rid of his confinement and miseries. Ultimately he is

searching for a path of enlightens. He is looking towards East, towards India, towards Yoga.

To create a better and new world we need a balanced and well- regulated life. This is essential for progress and development of society. Yoga is that extraordinary unique Indian technique which creates a new world order of love and sacrifice, co-operation and brotherhood, and the realization of the ideals of universal perfection. The term “YOGA” has its root “YUG” in Sanskrit. This means joining. Yoga is that which joins the individual with the universal i.e. Jivatman with Paramatman. It is the expansion of the narrow constricted egoistic personality to an all pervading state of reality.

Yoga is one of the six systems of Indian Philosophy and sage Patanjali was an Indian Philosopher who lived in the second century and credited to its authorship. He compiled the essential features of yoga which are obscurely interspersed in the different Upanishad in the form of sutras (aphorism). It reverses its author to be the father of modern yoga. Patanjali’s eight limbed path of yoga (astanga yoga) brings back balance in life. The adoption of yogic way of life is the release from and the guarantee against such abuse of power and the resultant disaster. It evolved on the Indian continent over a period of 5000 years. It has its roots in the Hinduism and Brahmanism. Though the basis of yoga certainly lies in Sankhya Darshana formulated by Rishi Kapila but Patanjali lighted yoga in a new direction. In Post – Classical period of yoga, there is wide practice of yoga. Around the year 1930 it was first studied as a part of Eastern Philosophy. As a philosophy Yoga no doubt offers a transcendental vision of Reality. But more important than this, is a fact, that as a practical discipline, it offers a precise way of life. So yoga is that perfect way of life, which bring balance and harmony in our lives, on physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual levels. There is no doubt about the beneficial effects of this ancient method in our modern Hi-tech world. But for maximum benefits, we must practice them, not just read and understand them.

In this paper, I want to point out the fact that by applying Astanga yoga of Patanjali in one’s life, how man can remove impurities from his life. When the impurities are removed by the practice of eightfold path of yoga, and the chitta (mind) becomes purified like a gem, it can assume the form of an object very perfectly and vividly. Sage Patanjali describes Yoga in his yoga sutra as: “YOGA CHITTA VRITTI NIRODHA” \*1. It means the cessation of functional modification of CHITTA (mind). The scope of yoga is also well portrayed in Bhagwad Gita. In the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of Bhagwad Gita, Lord Krishna explains the meaning of Yoga to Arjuna in this way – “when his mind intellect and self are under control, free from restless desire, so that they rest in spirit within, a man becomes a Yukta one in common with God”. The Bhagwad Gita also gives other explanations of the term “Yoga”, and lays stress upon Karma yoga (yoga by action). It is said: “Work alone is your privilege; never the fruits of action are your motive and never cease to work. Work in the name of lord, abandoning selfish desires. Be not affected by success or failure. This equipoise is called Yoga”. The Kathopnishad says, Yoga is that state, in which all indriyas are beheld steadily, i.e. that is state of mastery over senses and mind. So, yoga is a process of gaining control over the mind and senses. Sensual

attachment and passions distract the body as well as mind. To overcome them we must have to follow the Astanga yoga or eightfold path of Patanjali.

In fact Yoga is a normative science. It speaks of virtuous thoughts and actions through Yamas (codes of conduct) and Niyamas (codes of personal conduct). All methods of yoga have ethical training and moral perfection as their basis. The eradication of vices, the development of certain virtues forms the first step in the ladder of yoga. Disciplining of our nature and the formation of a steady and pure character through a set of right habits and regular daily observance is the next step. This is Yama and Niyama in Raj yoga. Sage Patanjali in his treatise on yoga has first stressed on purification of mind through do's and don'ts (Yama and Niyama) followed by Yogasana for purification of physical body and by breathing exercises (Pranayama) to activate hidden energy to the body. Yoga encompasses all the abovementioned perspectives of ethics in human being. In the Astanga Yoga of Patanjali an excellent scheme has been presented for morality. The eight paths are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. These eight parts of yoga are expected to develop harmoniously and proportionately for gaining speedy progress towards the final goal of yoga i.e. self- realization or kaivalya. So it can be said that Patanjali's Yoga sutra is a challenges of the twenty-first century. The twenty first century has been marked by miraculous growth of our knowledge about human life, the human mind and the world around us. Patanjali's yoga sutra makes influences and challenges in this century.

In ethical context, it is necessary to throw a light on the Astanga yoga or eightfold path of Patanjali for reformation of modern society. At a glance we can see the eight limbs path of Patanjali in the following way -:

**PATANJALI ASTANGA YOGA PATH**

<b>Limbs of yoga</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Values/ purpose</b>	<b>Developm ent</b>	<b>Yoga categories</b>
Yama	Abstinences	Non-violence, Truth, Celibacy, Non-stealing	Social Developme nt	Foundation
Niyama	Obedience/self discipline	Cleanliness, Contentment, penance, Self study, Dedication to God, Teacher	Self Developme nt	Ethical Values & yogic way of life
Asana	Body postures	Physical development & health	Physical developme nt & good health	Bahiranga yoga
Pranayama	Energy control	Control of breath and Vital functions of the body	Mind	Internal development

Pratyahara	Abstraction Control of sense organs	Control of senses by restraining them from object.	Disturbance Control	External Yoga practice
Dharana	Concentration	Focus on the goal	Clear & focused goal	Antaranga yoga
Dhyana	Meditation	Total Knowledge of the goal	Mind on the goal	Internal Yoga practice & development
Samadhi	Absorption	Oneness with the goal	Oneness with goal & detachment	Internal Yoga development

For my present paper, it is relevant to discuss first two limbs such as yama and niyama of astanga yoga. It can be said that Yamas and Niyamas lay foundation for the ideal life of the society. The main object of these ethical codes of social conduct (Yamas) and personal conduct (Niyamas) is to eliminate completely all mental and emotional disturbances which characterize the life of a common man. Yamas and Niyamas help us to overcome our inborn reactivities, thus making us fit for a higher social life.

From the above chart, it is clear that Yama, the codes of self restraint is the first limb of Patanjali's Astanga yoga that means 'taking a vow'. Being the first limb of yoga, the five yamas are the foundation of ethical and spiritual life on which the super-structure Samadhi is built. The yamas means sticking to the ideals and the principles. It is about development of positive traits that will transform the human nature into a divine nature and annihilate cravings and negative qualities. When the yamas are truly practiced, the heart is filled with cosmic love, goodness and light.

There are five Yamas:

- a) Ahimsa or non-violence; it comes first because one must remove one's brutal nature first. One must become non-violent and develop cosmic love. Only then does become fit for the practice of yoga.
- b) Satya or truthfulness. It is second yama which means the whole phenomenon of Maya or illusion is asat or unreal and the aspirant should be aware of this fact. He should be aware of this fact. He should ever remember the truth or Brahman.
- c) Next is Asteya or non-stealing. As one must develop moral consciousness, one must know right from wrong, and one must know that all is one.
- d) Brahmacharya or continence, which is the fourth yama, usually translated as continence or abstinence from sex, celibacy, chastity etc. It is a divine attribute. The aspirant is now becoming superhuman through its practice. Thus the broad

meaning of brahmacharya is a mode of behavior which will be conducive for reaching the highest goal of an ideal life.

Brahmacharya actually includes yamas and niyamas. It is obvious that in such a disciplined life the proper restraint of the sex activity is very important. In sum, a judicious control on sex is recommended for the social being.

- e) Aparigraha or non-covetousness is the fifth part of yama. In this stage the aspirant should free from cravings, unnecessary wants, the desire to possess and enjoy, and his heart has expanded manifold. According to Dr. Karambelkar (1987) aparigraha on mental level is samnyasa.

The second limb of eightfold yoga is Niyamas. Niyamas generally called as codes of personal conduct. While practices included in Yamas are moral and prohibitive those in Niyamas are disciplinary and constructive. There are five Niyamas:-

- a) Saucha is cleanliness. By most commentators of Patanjali Yoga sutras saucha means purification of body and mind. With the practice of saucha one gradually gives up attachment to the body and it become easier to maintain brahmacharya. Removal of lust, anger, greed, jealousy, etc. constitutes internal purity. Internal purity is more important than external purity. It makes the mind one-pointed, bestows serenity, cheerfulness, poise and happiness. It instills love, patience and magnanimity. Therefore develop internal purity through vigilant effort influence for making a greater society.
- b) Santosha or contentment cuts at the root of all desires. It bestows peace, one-pointed of mind, serenity and satisfaction. It brings success in practice of yamas. Contentment is willing to accept things as they are and to make the best of them.<sup>1</sup> Now we see that man is running after wealth, fame and for many other worldly things. The mind is always restless on account of greed. Greed is a kind of internal fire that consumes one slowly. Contentment is a powerful antidote for the poison of greed. This step changes the lower attitude of mind which is very harmful for the present society.
- c) Tapas is one of the three method of dynamic yogic practice. Tapas mean austerity or even practice of penance. Tapas also mean restraint of the senses. It leads to control of the mind. Mental tapas is more powerful than physical tapas. To keep a balanced mind in all conditions of life, to bear sorrows, injury and persecutions, to be ever serene, contented and peaceful to be cheerful in adverse conditions to have fortitude in meeting danger, to have presence of mind and forbearance, are forms of mental tapas. This method so improves higher mentality of all the social beings.
- d) Swadhyaya or self-study leads towards chastity, and surrender to God free from possessiveness. Swadhyaya is indirect company of truth. Swadhyaya clears doubts and strengthens the flickering faith. It fills the mind with purity, inspires and elevates the mind, helps in concentration and meditation, cuts new positive grooves in the mind and makes the mind run in these grooves. It helps unrest

mind to settle down in its own space. So this step indirectly build our society strengthen and powerful.

- e) Iswara Pranidhana is surrender to God. This is the practice where the devotee consecrates everything to the higher force. Self- surrender to God is regarding every work as that of the Supreme Lord and renouncing all claims to its fruits. In surrendering his will to the devotee's will becomes one with the cosmic will. He becomes one Lord. Self surrender makes the devotee feeling of divine grace and Lord's readiness to bestow help on him at all times. In fact, the I-consciousness of man is easily removed by Iswara Pranidhana. The I-consciousness is the product of unreal knowledge when we identify ourselves with our body and mind, and also eager to get unreal object of the world. While surrendering ourselves to God we surrender our ego and thus become ego-less. At present the whole world is suffering from self ego which makes the destiny in destruction. A haphazard and unregulated life achieves nothing at all. A balanced and well regulated life is essential for progress of the society.

It is said that Yamas and Niyamas prepare a man for Asanas and pranayamas. In fact, all the six other parts of Astanga Yoga help man to observe Yamas and Niyamas. These first two steps of Astanga yoga includes all the moral teachings that are given in all the scripture of the world. These all parts are inter-linked and inter-connected with each other like petals of a blooming bud, which blossoms and becomes one complete beautiful flower. The eight parts of yoga should take place like harmonious and integral development of various limbs and organs of a growing child, which is wholesome and proportionate. All these attributes enrich the life of the total human beings.

Now the vital question therefore arises; can yoga be a solution to bring back the vanishing ethics and morality in society? The instant answer is "yes". The character building and inculcation of values, is a pioneer job, which educational institutes must have to take up. The basic "Sanskaras" of Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha of the Yamas and the Niyamas-saucha, santosha, tapa, swadhyaya and Iswara Pranidhana from the foundation of values of life, in relation to discipline in social living and self development, self realization as the pious purpose of human life. Ultimately the society is formed of individuals and when every individual strives for perfection, the nation can easily stride in the direction of perfection for a complete well- being of its human race. Yoga is therefore the best curative and preventive medicine for all the ills of man resulting from the so called modern living.

Yoga contains several branches of learning which includes, Hata Yoga, the physical branch of yoga. However there are many forms of yoga, Hata yoga, Laya yoga, Patanjali yoga, Mantra yoga, as regards the means and ways to achieve self realization. Patanjali's yoga sutra presented a version of Kriya yoga. That is by perfecting Niyamas or self disciplines of the eight limbed path, an aspirant could erase samskara or subliminal activators from his subconscious mind. It was believed that samskara were like karma scares that resulted from good or bad behavior. In

this paper, I want to mention the yogic remedies to create a balance in the modern unrest society.

**Yogic remedies are mentioned here:-**

By understanding yogic philosophy, it may change our perceptions of the world-attitude towards the achievable goals and cognition about the success and failures. Yoga philosophy teaches us to be unruffled in frustration.

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1. By establishing adequate personal adjustment through niyamas and yamas respectively, we prevent and reduce the effects of frustration.
  2. By systematic practices of Astanga Yoga one can imbibe in oneself the yogic values like egoless and equality, which can have a positive impact on the person to face the various social problems.
  3. Through kriya yoga a person can do some tangible actions in his pursuits of sadhana. It may successfully divert his attention from distorting experiences. It may give a satisfaction of performing some useful tasks for the society.
  4. Studying intently Patanjali yoga sutras one can adopt various methods of tackling mental disorders are given in Samadhi Pada, e.g. pranava japa, Vitarka Badhane, Pratipaksha Bhavanam Chittaprasadanam etc.

The above methods found in Yoga, tackle the whole personality of a person. Thus yoga can accomplish an all round development by the solving the problems of man and by bringing bliss into his life. It is for this reason Yoga is becoming popular in all parts of our globe just as science and technology have done. Yoga is a science applicable to all irrespective of age or sex, caste or creed, religion or sect. It is said, in the west Yoga is resorted for better health and relief from tension, but in India its scope is beyond, it has a spiritual goal also. One who has attained his union with the inner self is a great yogi. Sri Aurobindo was one such. Sri Ramakrishna established in the Paramahansa state was an embodiment of Bhakti. Self embodiment is the path of jnana yoga. Sri Venkataraman, through self enquiry became Bhagwan Sri Ramane Maharshi. There are karma yogis as for example, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Chidbhavananda, Sri Eknath Ranade and such others who worked for the welfare of the humanity without expecting anything in return for themselves. Swami Vivekananda said ‘.....each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within .....’. Swami Kuvalanandaji, a great yoga pioneer, preaches a message to all human being i.e. “yoga has a complete message for human body; it has message for the human mind. And it has also a message for the human soul. Will intelligent and capable youth come forth to carry this message to every individual, not only in India but also in every other part of the world?”

In true sense Yoga helps man to synchronise his diverse life currents, making them united, uniform and unidirectional and ultimately one with the Universal. At the end of spiritual realization, our heart is filled with deep abiding peace, love and

compassion, and out of this emerges the strong desire to share this feeling with all the beings around us. The world is now-a-days in a time of unprecedented challenges and fear. Terrorism and other social crisis, wherein a flu epidemic in one part of the world, can instantly affect the economy and political stability on the other side of the planet requires nothing less than the discipline of yoga by millions of inspired practitioners. Furthermore, the societal effect of a yogi's positive thinking or blessing is much more powerful than the depressed negative thinking of a thousand ordinary folk. Such an enlightened person can and will act as a powerful agent for the good, solving the problems of the world in a spirit of compassion and wisdom. So Yoga is exemplary uniquely Indian technique which creates a new world-order love and sacrifices, co-operation and brotherhood and the realization of universal fraternity.

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**Note**

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