

ADVAITA VEDANTA, SAMKHYA AND YOGA

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Analysis of Yoga and its religious significance of the ideas it presents.

"We are like silk worms. We make the thread out of our own substance and spin the cocoons, and in course of time get imprisoned in them. In that cocoon we shall develop spiritual realisation, and like the butterfly come out free." – Swami Vivekananda

In this essay we will start with an overview of some of the given definitions of yoga, looking at the professed goals, aims and objectives. This in itself will quickly make apparent the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional nature of yoga and reveal it as an approach more than one specific path or set of practices. We will then go on to look at the history and evolution of yogic philosophy and practice, focusing in particular on four key works-Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutras. Finally we will assess the fundamentals of the yoga approach as a spiritual, philosophical and religious system.

Yoga is usually explained as union: union between the limited self (*jiva*) and the cosmic self (*atman*). This definition suggests that there is a kind of separation between these aspects of self and yoga aims to unite that. However, Indian belief states that the self is the cosmic consciousness and the goal of yoga is not really to unite one with anything, as one is already united. Rather, it is to make one realise one's identity with the greater Self, to make one

know and engage with one's existing inner nature. Therefore yoga is seen as union from the point of view of identity, where a person may feel separated from his or her higher self, but at that higher level of awareness there is no separation or any differentiation between the individual self and cosmic consciousness. 'Yoga eternal, this secret supreme'. (1)

It is only individual awareness that may obscure the issue and restrict one in realising this identification. Yoga in fact is the realisation that this union already exists. Yoga can be seen as both the method or path, and the endpoint that leads one to this realisation. Yoga attempts to disengage the ego that enhances the sense of separation from one's surroundings. Once the ego is transcended, an individual can realise his or real, inner nature. "When the sage climbs the heights of Yoga, he follows the path of work; but when he reaches the heights of Yoga, he is in the land of peace. (2)

The goal of yoga is often defined in terms of liberation – *moksha*. Liberation from suffering and from the cycle of rebirth. God – *Ishwara* is characterised as that being who is free and when one is meditating or practicing yoga, one is aiming to be just like God – free. It is not a case of having freedom or possessing it, but rather being it, being free. Yoga thus aims at self-realisation through the control of the mind. "Yoga is evenness of mind – a peace that is ever the same."(3)

Sue Hamilton in her book *Indian Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* suggests that the ultimate reality differs from that we perceive via our senses and experiences in the manifest world. Our perceptions are clouded by mental distractions; yoga intends to help distinguishing the manifest or matter– *prakriti* – from the self or pure consciousness – *purusha*. Until such time, one can be deluded that ego equates to the higher self. The highest aspiration is to free the self from the bondage of continual rebirth which will carry on as long as this delusion persists. The goal is to separate selfhood from *prakriti*, as *purusha* is the highest reality. She concludes, "The practice of yoga, therefore, is for the purpose of attaining control, calm, and, in some systems, cognitive insight."(4)

Dr ML Gharote and Dr Maureen Lockhart's in *The Art of Survival: A Guide to Yoga Therapy*, describes how yoga can create physical harmony and health, and help to synchronise bodily functions for enhanced overall equilibrium. Yoga also attempts to remove and to heal psychological problems and provide mental balance and peace. It establishes certain coordination between mind and body so that the body can respond better to mental direction, both conscious and subconscious. Swami Sivananda put this idea succinctly when he noted that 'yoga is integration and harmony between thoughts, words and deeds, or integration between head, heart and hands.'

Maharishi Patanjali, who compiled the classical yogic text, the *Yoga Sutras*, explained yoga as the control over the conscious, unconscious and super-conscious world of our being. One becomes like an observer and gains full knowledge of the higher states of consciousness. In the Sutras it is put forward that human unhappiness is due to an attachment to the low condition of one's mind. However, one can overcome this state and indeed become like the rishis (seers) and sages and eventually enter the Kingdom of God. The first thing to do according to Patanjali is: 'You must control the flow of ideas in your mind. If you will you can be your own true man, but if not you will be the pitiful victim of circumstances.'(5)

The paths of yoga all incorporate these fundamentals: physical health, mental peace and higher awareness. There are various systems of yoga catering for the most important aspects of our personality: Karma yoga (path of activity), Bhakti yoga (path of devotion), Jnana yoga (path of intuition), Raja yoga (path of introspection), Hatha yoga (path of balancing mental, physical and subtle). All these systems assist one in liaising with one's inner being in order to reach a transcendental state. All methods advocate the importance of concentration as a way of withdrawing consciousness from the outside and directing it more internally to the mind. William Blake summarised this idea by saying that 'if the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is – infinite.'

History and the development of Yoga

As Georg Feuerstein comments, the desire to transcend the human condition, to reach beyond consciousness and personality is a deeply rooted impulse. This desire towards transcendence found many expressions on the Indian peninsula. Feuerstein explains further that the civilisation of India has given birth to a variety of spiritual beliefs, practices, and approaches. They are aimed at pursuing aspects of reality that go beyond human life. Feuerstein continues by saying that India's traditions of psycho-spiritual evolvment can be considered as paths to liberation. They are attempting to become free from suffering, which is the result of unconscious conditioning, and are working towards full self-realisation, God-realisation.

Vedas and the Upanishads

'The Vedanta practically forms the scripture of the Hindus, and all the religious sects in India therefore take them as their foundation and base their teachings on them' (6). Feuerstein argues that by the time the Vedic civilization was blooming in India, sound (both as ritual speech or musical chanting) had become a sophisticated means of religious expression and spiritual transformation. The Vedas are regarded as revered scriptures and although the Brahmin priests and rishis did not compose the verses, they acted as 'transmitters' for them. In the Vedas (which means knowledge) Brahmin priests understood and saw (that is why they were called seers) the eternal cosmic truth and hence these sacred texts were considered primary. Feuerstein puts forward that the hymns are expressions of the profound spirituality of the Vedic Aryans and are holy testimonies to the spiritual potential of our species.

The Upanishads are also known as the Vedanta – Veda's end - as they contain the essence of the Vedas and are considered a continuation of the Vedic revelation. They state that the ultimate reality of the universe is identical with the ultimate Self – *atman* and Brahman are thus one and the same. Only with this realisation can come liberation from the suffering, birth, life and death. According to the Law of Karma one is destined either to the continuous cycle of rebirth or to achieve liberation and arrive at a state of formless, eternal, free and blissful existence of Consciousness. These are the central Upanishadic teachings according to Feuerstein.

Sue Hamilton argues that the Upanishads teach that one's *atman* is inseparable from all that there is. This is quintessentially expressed as *tat tvam asi: you are [all] that*. Hamilton suggests that this insight into one's true identity is necessary as such knowledge can affect one's release from continued birth – *moksha*.

There are about two hundred different Upanishads, which were written between 600 BC and the 15 Century A.D, but only around thirteen are considered authentic and authoritative. The major ones vary in their contents and are considered to be: *Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chhandogya, Svetasvatara and Brihadaranyaka*.

The core message of the Upanishads is that the Self can only be known through union (yoga) and not by mere learning alone. Also emphasized is that the Self is the very essence of one's being which was defined by a sage saying '*neti-neti*' meaning 'not this, not this'.

"The early Upanishads contain the first known record of the idea that human beings are reborn again and again into circumstances conditioned by their actions in previous lives. They state that the dutiful and correct performance of sacrifices will not only bring about the consequences to which the sacrifices are addressed, but will also beneficially affect the conditions of one's next life. This is the law of karma (action) applied not just to ritual but also to the mechanics of human experience."(7) Thus Indian philosophy claims that what one does with genuine unselfishness can cancel out an proportionate amount of 'bad karma' from

Several of the Upanishads explain the highest spiritual experiences through stories and poetry, while others are more practical regarding meditation and how to follow the yogic path.

Taittiriya, Brihadaranyaka and Chhandogya deal predominantly with prana and its implications. *Mandukya, Katha and Prashna* espouse the importance of meditation that can be induced by the mantra Aum or Om. Yogins say that in the beginning there was only one sound and that that sound was the sacred Om, which vibrates through the cosmos and everywhere. The Om created matter and everything else in the universe. Om is thus used as a mantra for meditative purposes to aid the journey to self-realisation and spiritual union. The idea of Om as the most profoundly primal resonance from which all is birthed is an idea echoed in Ervin Laszlo's works on the Akashic field.

The Upanishads are a great source of the principles of yoga, however they do not articulate the specific paths of yoga, they do not instruct so much as they seem to inspire. It was left more to the gurus to instruct and hence particular techniques were not especially recorded within the Upanishads. Although they do not explain yogic practices in any depth, they do project the delight of higher awareness while answering questions of existence.

The Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is a yogic scripture, regarded as the greatest compilation of religious inspiration that is philosophical, ethical, devotional and moral. It is a poem of seven hundred verses, which in fact is an episode of the greater epic Mahabharata, which was composed around c.500B.C.E. The Gita is a dialogue between Prince Arjuna, a great warrior, and Krishna, an incarnation of God. Krishna is instructing Prince Arjuna in the philosophy of yoga during the main battle of the epic.

'Historically speaking, the Bhagavad Gita can be understood as a massive effort to integrate the diverse strands of spiritual thought prevalent within Hinduism in the Epic Age' (8).

The Bhagavad Gita maps out the yogic path of karma yoga (path of action), jnana yoga (path of intuition), bhakti yoga (path of devotion) and dhyana yoga (path of meditation). The most

a comprehensive whole. It embraces the integration of a range of yogic paths, while predominantly adhering to one.

The Bhagavad Gita tells how the Supreme Being created the human soul with an immortal part of himself and that part develops the lord in every one, thus the yogin sees the *Ishwara* in himself. Aiming towards freedom – *moksha*, or independence – *kaivalya*, the disciple looks to attain the same state of truth as Ishwara has. As Feuerstein puts it, everything exists or arises in God, while God nevertheless transcends everything. Vishnu, the Supreme Being is the absolute source of all being and the manifest universe at the same time. Krishna explains that everything must be done in the consideration of the Divine and one's entire life must be a ceaseless Yoga.

The first six chapters of the Gita contain the philosophical teachings whereas the following six contain the devotional and the last six contain practical information. In the first chapters Krishna tells of how there is life after death, in his words: 'Because we all have been for all time: I, and thou, and those kings of men. And we all shall be for all time, we all for ever and ever. The eternal in man cannot kill: the Eternal in man cannot die. He is never born, and he never dies. He is in Eternity: he is for evermore. Never-born and eternal, beyond times gone or to come, he does not die when the body die.'(9)

Krishna speaks of the importance of wisdom (*buddhi*) and explains the qualities of body in terms of orderliness (*sattwa*), excitement (*rajas*) and bondage to laziness (*tamas*). Shri Krishna describes how he taught the yoga of knowledge (jnana-yoga) and yoga by action (karma-yoga) where the former is the path of the *Sankhya* and the latter is of the yogins. 'This is the wisdom of Sankhya – the vision of the Eternal. Hear now the wisdom of Yoga, path of the Eternal and freedom from bondage. Do thy work in the peace of yoga and, free from selfish desires, be not moved in success or in failure. Yoga is evenness of mind – a peace that is ever the same.'(10) He clarifies that the real goal of yoga is to know purusha by seeing clearly the difference between purusha (real man) and prakriti (material).

He expounds that all things are dependent on each other as they are in a great system of mutual support and thus one has to act accordingly. One can withdraw from action only if one has a real understanding of the Self.' But great is the man who, free from attachments, and with a mind ruling its powers in harmony, works on the path of Karma Yoga, the path of consecrated action.'(11) Then one becomes altruistic who carries out everything by duty while still being a conscious real person. In this way one is level with the Incarnate Lord without which there would be no leader in the path of duty. This is where religious devotion is realised. The yogin understands that it is at this point that everyone acts according to his or her own nature, be *rajastic* (energetic), *tamasic* (inert) or *sattwic* (methodical). To follow one's duty is beneficial in serving and respecting the supreme Self, and is given greater importance than *buddhi*. 'They say that the power of the sense is great. But greater than the senses is the mind. Greater than the mind is Buddhi, reason; and greater than reason is He – the Spirit in man and in all.'(12)

'And others, faithful to austere vows, offer their wealth as a sacrifice, or their penance, or their practice of Yoga, or their sacred studies, or their knowledge.'(13) Krishna states that the offering of religious and philosophical knowledge is greater than any material offering to a man since all acts have their accomplishment in knowledge. This can be learnt through devotion, in the service of those who already know it. 'Those who themselves have seen the Truth can be thy teachers of wisdom. Ask from them, bow unto them, be thou unto them a servant.'(14)

In Chapter 6 yoga practices are discussed in specific detail. Krishna explains to Prince Arjuna that when man embraces yoga, he has no attachment to objects, actions, and people. He understands the Self and sees it everywhere. Pain does not concern him as he is aligned with Truth. 'When his soul is in peace he is in peace, and then his soul is in God. In cold or in heat, in pleasure or pain, in glory or disgrace, he is ever in Him.'(15) He also advises on the exact posture of the body and on how to find an suitable place to sit to practice yoga for 'the

purification of the soul'. 'Yoga is harmony' (16) achieved by not eating too much or too little or sleeping an inappropriate amount. It entails balance in all things in life: resting, being awake and whatever else one does. The main aim is to be liberated from the oppression of pain and suffering 'when all desires are in peace and the mind, withdrawing within, gathers the multitudinous straying senses into the harmony of recollection.' (17) Krishna concludes his teaching in this chapter by explaining that one carries on the wisdom of previous lives into the new life until reaching perfection 'and thus the Yogi ever-striving, and with soul pure from sin, attains perfection through many lives and reaches the End Supreme.'(18)

The following chapters (9-12) of the *Gita*, are considered devotional, Krishna refers to himself as the origin of all excellent things 'In this whole vast universe there is nothing higher than I. All the worlds have their rest in me, as many pearls upon a string. I am the taste of living waters and the light of the sun and the moon. I am OM, the sacred word of the Vedas, sound in silence, heroism in men.'(19)

Those whose sin no more and whose minds are free are devoted to Krishna and furthermore will know Brahman the Divine at the time of their death. These chapters contain guidance to the disciples in order that they have a clear idea of the deity. They provide foundations for meditation and for contemplation. Devotees are described as 'Those who set their hearts on me and ever in love worship me, and who have unshakeable faith, these I hold as the best Yogis.'(20)

The last chapters of the Bhagavad Gita share philosophical thoughts that were partially explained in previous chapters. Matter and spirit are now the focus, as well as the Supreme Brahman who is described as an all-pervading being. 'But the Spirit Supreme in man is beyond fate. He watches, gives blessings, bears all, and feels all. He is called the Lord supreme and Supreme Soul'. (21)

The good and bad qualities of humans are listed along with the qualities of Nature (*gunas*). 'Men who are pure like food which is pure: which gives health, mental power, strength and long life; which has taste, is soothing and nourishing, and which makes glad the heart of man. (22)

Chapter 17 concludes with the famous mantra 'Om, Tat, Sat. Each one of these three words is one word for Brahman, from came in the beginning the Brahmins, the Vedas and the Sacrifice.'(23)

Krishna concludes his teachings to Arjuna by saying that the deepest knowledge is 'God dwells in the heart of all beings, Arjuna: thy God dwells in thy heart. And his power of wonder moves all things – puppets in a play of shadows – whirling them onwards on the stream of time. Go to him for thy salvation with all thy soul, victorious man. By his grace thou obtain the peace supreme, thy home of Eternity. I have given thee words of vision and wisdom more secret than hidden mysteries. Ponder them in the silence of thy soul, and then if freedom do thy will.' (24) meaning that besides studying philosophy and religion, carrying out strict practices and exercises for self purification in order to reach a higher awareness of the Self, the devotion to God in all things and at all times is primary.

Feuerstein highlights that the Gita's teaching of eternal love, flowing from the Divine to the disciple and to everywhere around is a unique evolution in the history of Indian religiosity. Krishna's yoga introduced emotionality to the rishis. This enabled the spiritual seer to connect and to relate to the Divine in personal terms, from the heart as well as solely from structured practices. In Feuerstein's view, the Gita introduces Krishna not so much as an inventor but more as a retriever of ancient teachings that had been lost.

Yoga Sutras

Before the birth of Christ, Rishi Patanjali compiled in the *Yoga Sutras* one hundred and ninety six verses that successfully explain the core philosophy, techniques and achievements of yoga. As Feuerstein has noted, they represent 'authoritative summaries that drew on many generations of thinking and debating'. Specifically, Patanjali's Sutras draw predominantly on the philosophical ideas of the Samkhya tradition for their theoretical and theological base. The Yoga Sutras develop this theology practically in putting forward an accessible practice via which a shared and revered vision may be realised.

Patanjali presents the notion of I-am-ness stating that lower consciousness originates from it. It is characterised by the ego whose elimination is necessary to achieve liberation. Patanjali teaches that whatever comes into existence is never completely new as the transcendental Self is deathless as it is never born, and hence cannot be destroyed. This idea may have been derived from the Bhagavad Gita when Krishna instructs Prince Arjuna about the manifestations of latent possibilities.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras explain that the path to Self-realisation requires separation from one's false identification with the non-self and the practice of recognising the true self via repeated meditative assimilation and ecstasy (*samadhi*). To advance well in yoga, the prerequisites are goodness in personal character and in social relations. He suggests Kriya-yoga, which involves ascetic discipline (*tapas*), self-analysis (*svadhyaya*) and devotion to deity (*ishvara-pranidhana*).

The Sutras also stipulate eight 'limbs' as paths or ways (*ashtanga-yoga*) to achieve transcendence such as: Abstention (*yama*), Observance (*niyama*), Posture (*asana*), Breath-control (*pranayama*), Sense-withdrawal (*pratyahara*), Concentration (*dharana*), Meditation (*dhyana*) and Contemplation (*samadhi*). The first two limbs focus on one's attitude toward the outside world and oneself, the following three are concerned with the body and the senses; and the last three point to the mind.

Abstention incorporates non-injury (law of karma), truthfulness, non-theft, spiritual conduct (abstinence from sex after having done one's duty regarding family, in order to retain the vital energies for the use of higher mind) and non-greed (possessiveness).

Observance describes what to do, whereas the previous limb was about what not-to-do.

These are: cleanliness (*shaucha*), contentment (*santosh*), austerity (*tapas*), self-study (*swadhyaya*) and attentiveness to God (*Ishwara-pranidhana*). Yogic philosophy gives great importance to certain cleansing processes besides meditation, asanas and pranayama.

Without regular cleansing for the body one will not gain the total benefits from yoga practices, purification is necessary in order to reach higher states. Cleanliness is very important from the point of view of physical and mental health as well as being valuable in

healing internal disorders. These include: nasal cleansing, digestive cleansing, colon cleaning, abdominal massage, purification of the frontal lobes and blink-less gazing.

Contentment requires the acceptance of things and people as they are, including their possessions. Ernest Wood summarised his views on austerity (*tapas*) saying it 'does not mean mortification, and must mean body-conditioning, with great firmness of will, avoiding all bodily indulgence and insisting upon that quantity and kind of food, exercise, and rest which one believes to be best for the body.'(25)

To study the thoughts of others was advocated in order to understand existence and accept that the essential Self is eternal and pure. This could be achieved directly via the experience of yoga.

Ancient yogins realised thousands of years ago that spiritual aspirations require a healthy body and mind. For this reason they developed 'asanas' which support the path to higher consciousness in order to understand one's relationship with existence. One cannot achieve the highest states of awareness while being ill, or while having mental disorders. 'To the yogi the body is an instrument. It is a tool for the contact of his mind with the world' says *Ernest Wood*. Asanas are designed to loosen up the joints of the body, stretch and tone the muscles and eliminate poisons. They also harmonise the nervous system by applying gentle massage to improve the functions of the internal organs. Asanas aid the body in resisting disease by bringing the mind and body into the best possible condition. The ancient yogins aimed at transcending the normal limitations for the mind and body. Their goal was to transcend individuality and to achieve self-realisation. In this context, asanas were a means to an end, namely to make the body so perfect and the subconscious mind so calm that the aspects of individual existence could be forgotten and one's true nature could be realised. 'The unreal never is: the Real never is not. This truth indeed has been seen by those who can see the true.' (26)

The Sanskrit word *prana* can mean many things. Fundamentally it means energy at all levels, whether subtle or dense. It is the link between mind and matter, cosmos and particle. Rishis understood that without prana there is no life. Prana is the vehicle of consciousness and in

constituents of the universe in the form of matter and energy. Yoga science agrees that there are various energies within the body that allow all the different organs, nerves and muscles to function and communicate with the brain. Without them the physical body and brain could not operate.

They also recognised other types of energies that permeate and surround the body known as *pranamaya kosha* (shield of prana). Yoga utilizes the pranic body and the flow of prana to bring about changes in the sensitivity of the disciple and to influence the mind. *Pranayama* is an important part of yoga practices and as such is mentioned in almost all traditional texts on yoga. In the expression *pranayama*, prana is joined with *ayaama*, which is defined as stretching, extending and expansion. Therefore pranayama means to extend and overcome one's normal limitations. It provides a method to attain higher states of vibratory energy and brings new levels of awareness by helping stop distractions of the mind. The practices of pranayama are intended to bring about calmness of the mind by harmonizing the pranic flow in the body. Regular breathing during meditation provides the most essential foundation to counteract disturbances. Pranayama is not only beneficial for respiratory functions, but also helps remove diseases, expel impurities and has both preventative and curative effects on the body.

The Yoga Sutras present the last three of the eight limbs as distinct mental exercises forming a connected and combined series. They are characterized as 'inner limbs' (*antaranga*) as they are activities for the mind and not of the body.

Concentration implies the focusing of the mind's attention on a singular idea or thing without diverging or wondering aimlessly.

Meditation builds on the work of concentration aiming at the complete absorption of the chosen focus point without deviation. Meditation may result in the insight into knowledge of past and future, workings of the universe and nature, understanding of the mind, intuition and so forth. Meditation provides detachment and realisation of the central Self while giving a profound understanding of the universe and one's place in it. . Patanjali put it in the following way: 'The binding of the mind (*chitta*) to one place is concentration (*dharana*). Continuity of ideation there is meditation (*dhyana*). The same, but with the shining of the mere object, as

Contemplation indicates the total absence of any clash of ideas. It commences upon the successful completion of the meditation phase, when the coordination of thoughts regarding the focus point is accomplished.

The above are considered exercises in mental discipline. They discipline the mind towards a desired end. It is important to note that meditation and contemplation are not states of mind but rather functions of mind. Thus one is meditating and not in-meditation.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras teach that one's existence is a composite of the forces of Nature, a temporary state, and of an eternal transcendental self. The task throughout life, and indeed at death, is to awaken the Self. Those who are not able to do so remain in a less evolved form of existence until reborn again. Only Self-realisation is the absolute enlightenment and liberation.

To reach Nirvana

‘Never shall yearnings torture him, nor sins
Stain him, nor ache of earthly joys and woes
Invade his safe eternal peace; nor deaths
And lives recur. He goes

Unto Nirvana. He is one with Life,
Yet lives not. He is blest, ceasing to be.
Om, maní padme, hom! The Dewdrop slips
Into the shining sea!

Feuerstein considers that in Hinduism, the distinction between philosophy and religion is not as apparent as it is in the Western tradition. The concept of religion is embodied in the Sanskrit term *dharma*, which means law or norm. Feuerstein carries on to say that Hindu philosophy is not a matter of abstract knowledge but rather a metaphysical understanding, a way of life. In other words, a person's spiritual well being depends on how they relate to the existence of the transcendental reality. 'Yoga is not a religion in the conventional sense but rather spirituality, esotericism, or mysticism. Yet, whether we look at Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, or Sikhism, Yoga is as a rule intimately connected with the cosmologies as well as the religious beliefs and practices of these distinct traditions.' (28)

In Indian philosophy, the ultimate end of the physical world is a return to the source of all elements, the origin of the higher, subtle energy. All things of the manifest world merge into a status that is the domain of Brahman. From its ultimate being comes the temporary becoming of the manifest world through cycles of *samsara* – being-to-becoming-to-being – an endless creation. In the work of Ervin Laszlo we can see this cyclical evolutionary pattern explored and applied across a range of fields, from consciousness to cosmos.

The absolute reality is the reality of Brahman. The manifest world entails a reduced state that is an illusion – *maya*. Yogic philosophy treats the mind-body dynamic as an inseparable whole where mental and physical aspects are regarded as illusory reflections of the world around us. Yoga presents the basis for starting the process of expanding awareness and human potential. Yogic perspective means to flow with life, to accept whatever life brings rather than fighting against it.

The mind is the basis of our way of thinking and from it come thoughts from which actions then spring. We are what we think hence it could be said that the entire universe is in reality a projection of the human mind. Ancient sages observed that the mind is the cause of both happiness and sorrow. One who conquers the mind reaches beyond pain and pleasure. Through the practices of yoga, one comes to understand one's place in the universal flow of things. One can find greater happiness and peace and gain a new understanding of oneself

change the subjective elements of life so one is able to more easily detach from emotional and mental connectedness. In these ways yoga can help integrate and develop the entire human personality, not only the body.

'We do not fundamentally want *to have* and *to do*; we only want *to be*, and we use the having and doing for that purpose. Further, our will to be is not content with anything; it seeks its goal beyond the irksome limits of having and doing. Man will not be really happy until he is consciously one with God, and shares the freedom of that one Reality'. (29)

Indian philosophy expounded the view that living in harmony with oneself, one's inner nature, and with those around us, are the desires of most people. Yoga offers a system of practices and exercises orientated to achieving release from the suffering of this world and from the cycle of rebirth. Samkhya establishes the theoretical foundations for this aim and yoga determines the desired outcome, namely the key to moksha is via knowledge of one's true identity as soul instead of body or prakriti.

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Advaita Vedanta (अद्वैत वेदान्त, Advaita Vedānta, literally, "non-duality") is a school of Hindu philosophy, and originally known as Puruṣa Sūtra, is a classic system of spiritual realization in Indian tradition. The term Advaita refers to its idea that the true self, Atman, is the same as the highest metaphysical reality of the universe, Brahman. Advaita influenced and was influenced by various traditions and texts of Hindu philosophies such as Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, other sub-schools of Vedanta, Vaishnavism, Shaivism, the Puranas, the Agamas, as well as social movements such as the Bhakti movement. Beyond Hinduism, Advaita Vedanta interacted and developed with the other traditions of India such as Jainism and Buddhism. Samkhya philosophy rejects god. Vedanta: Vedanta and Yoga are the only major Hindu philosophies that have survived into the modern age, and Vedanta has been by far most the popular and had a huge influence on modern philosophy and spirituality. Major modern proponents include Swami Vivekananda, Ramana Maharishi and recently Ken Wilber, Gangaji, Mooji etc. In Advaita Vedanta the material cause of the universe is called Maya, a creative energy which belongs to the supreme Purusha (also known as Brahman and Atman) This causes the Brahman to be enveloped in ignorance (avidya), causing existence to manifest and then creation proceeds from subtle to gross. Samkhya establishes the theoretical foundations for this aim and yoga determines the desired outcome, namely the key to moksha is via knowledge of one's true identity as soul instead of body or prakriti. 17 References: 1 Mascar3, J. 1962. The Bhagavad Gita, Penguin Books, London p.22.4:3 2 Mascar3, J. 1962. The Philosophical and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata 20 Swami Hariharandanda Aranya. 1983 Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali, Albany NY:State University Press of New York Press. Related Papers.