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## The Essence of Yoga: In the Light of Life and Sanskrit works of Yogi Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra

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### Abstract:

Scientific evidence is building up steadily over the half century regarding the efficacy of Yoga. Traditional sources too vouch for the health benefits of Yoga. But is this the be-all-and-end-all of Yoga? This is where consulting the lives of great Yogis of the past like Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra might help. Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra's life is full of spectacular deeds that reveal greater human potential that can be accessed through Yoga, this is evidenced textual references and also his works in Sanskrit language. A question is to be asked as to whether this is highest possible outcome of Yoga. The greatest potentials of human life is to realize the nature of the true self. Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra with his life and writings strived diligently and guided numerous people on this path. The writings of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra are also brimming with insights and inputs on the highest outcome of Yoga i.e., realization of self. Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra has lived not only as a true Yogi embodying the highest possibilities of Yoga, but he has left behind a treasure of house of Yogic insights in his writings.

**Keyword:** Sadāśiva Brahmendra, Yoga, Yogasudhākara, Self-realization

### Introduction

Scientific evidence is also building up steadily over the half century regarding the efficacy of Yoga. Traditional sources too vouch for the health benefits of Yoga. But is this the be-all-and-end-all of Yoga? This is where consulting the lives of great Yogis of the past like Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra might help. This paper attempts to answer this question. This paper has three parts

1. Current perception on Essence and essentials of Yoga
2. Essence and essentials of Yoga from the Life of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra
3. Guidelines from Yogasudhākara of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra on the Essence and essentials of Yoga

### Current perception

In the year 2014, the United Nations Organization adopted a resolution initiated by the Government of India on declaring June 21 as the International Day of Yoga. In the UN document that presents the resolution we find that yoga is presented as an effective method to overcome NCDs (non-communicable diseases), a healthy lifestyle practice and holistic approach to health. (<http://undocs.org/A/RES/69/131> date accessed September 1, 2018)

Scientific evidence is also building up steadily over the half century regarding the efficacy of Yoga. The following quote sums up the scientifically verifiable physiological and psychological benefits of yoga (Bhavanani, 2014)–

*“Yoga improves all aspects of our health including the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual components. At the Physical level it induces autonomic nervous system equilibrium with a tendency towards parasympathetic dominance rather than stress-induced sympathetic dominance. Heart rate and blood pressure decrease implying better relaxation, reducing load on the heart. Respiratory rate decreases and respiratory efficiency improves with all pulmonary parameters like tidal volume, vital capacity and breath holding time. Cardiovascular efficiency increases while gastro intestinal function and endocrine function normalize. Musculoskeletal flexibility and joint range of motion increase. Weight normalizes,*

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*sleep improves, immunity increases, and pain decreases.”*  
*“The psychological health benefits of Yoga include better somatic and kinesthetic awareness with improvement of mood and subjective wellbeing. Improvements are also seen in self-acceptance, self-actualization and social adjustment with decrease in anxiety, depression and hostility. There is improvement of various cognitive functions such as attention, concentration and memory and learning efficiency. Psychomotor functions such as grip strength, balance, dexterity and fine motor skills including eye hand coordination and reaction time, steadiness and depth perception and the integrated function of the body parts improve.”*

Traditional sources too vouch for the health benefits of Yoga. As per the 15<sup>th</sup> century Hathayogapradīpikā (Iyengar, 1972), the following are the health benefits of the practices of Hatha

वपुःकृशत्वं वदने प्रसन्नता नादस्फुटत्वं नयने सुनिर्मले।  
 अरोगता बिन्दुजयोऽग्निदीपनं नाडीविशुद्धिः  
 हठसिद्धिलक्षणम्॥ (2.72)

*The indicators of the success of Hatha are - slimness of the body, pleasantness in face, Clarity of voice, clarity in eyes, freedom from illness, conquest of Bindu, stimulation of digestive fire and purification of the Nāḍīs.*

This sums up the current understanding about the utility of Yoga which is of course based on evidence that supports the traditional references. But is this the be-all-and-end-all of Yoga? This is where consulting the lives of great Yogis of the past like Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra might help.

### **Extraordinary powers of Yoga as revealed through the life of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra**

Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra's life is full of spectacular deeds that reveal greater human potential that can be accessed through Yoga. Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra led an extraordinary life. R.Krishnamacharya (Sarasvati, 1911) records various anecdotes from the life of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra. Once he was carried away by flood but he was found after some months under a mound of sand, still alive, having been buried by sand accretion. It has also been recorded that the hands of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra severed by a Muslim ruler grew back. The account on the life of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra also records - him being seen in many places simultaneously; his ability to travel and transport people to far off places and so on. Thus we see that the 18<sup>th</sup> century Yogi possessed many extraordinary human potentials manifested in his life. A higher dimension of Yoga thus emerges as more than a therapy for healing.

At this stage a question is to be asked as to whether this is highest possible outcome of Yoga. Life of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra and also Yogasūtras, a text that he commented upon, give us the answer that take us to the next level.

### **The ultimate outcome of Yoga and the life of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra**

The greatest potentials of human life is to realize the nature of the true self, which has been presented in the Yogasūtras (Patanjali, 2016) as “तदा द्रष्टुः स्वरूपेऽवस्थानाम्” (1.3) Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra with his life and writings strived diligently and guided numerous people on this path.

### **Anecdotes from the life of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra**

A couple of anecdotes in his life stand out as shining examples of sincere pursuit towards self-realization. Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra strived hard from very early times in his life towards reaching this highest goal of human life. Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra demonstrated remarkable sensitiveness to worldly sufferings from his very early life. There is an anecdote from his life that indicates this (Sarasvati, 1911). As a young lad he returned home after completing his studies in Gurukulam and had just been married. There was festivity in his home on his return from the Gurukulam. So a big feast was being prepared. As the preparations were going on, he felt hungry. No one bothered to give him something to eat. He was suffering from acute hunger. His sensitive mind reflected ‘if the very commencement of the life of householder involves suffering like this then what might be in store for me as a householder?’ So he immediately decided and ran out of his house through the back door unnoticed by anyone. After getting away from his house, he started the search for a worthy teacher who could guide him in the path of spirituality. This anecdote thus exemplifies the first prerequisite towards realizing the true nature of one's self, namely sensitivity towards worldly sufferings. In this regard Vyasa (Śāstrī, 2007), in his commentary to Yogasūtra 2.15, states that –

अक्षिपात्रकल्पो हि विद्वानिति। यथोर्णतन्तुरक्षिपात्रे  
 न्यस्तः स्पर्शेन दुःखयति न चान्येषु गात्रावयवेषु।

*A wise person is like the eyeball. Even if (the very slender) thread of the cobweb by its mere touch of the eyeball generates a lot of pain and it does not create such pain if it touches the other limbs.*

This indicates the sensitiveness of a wise person towards worldly pain. Others are numb to worldly suffering. Realization of the real conscious nature will not be possible if one is numb and not sensitive to worldly sufferings.

There is another Yogasūtra that reads - तीव्रसंवेगानामासन्नः YS 1.21 For the one who has the intense Vairāgya (attaining the state of Samādhi is) close by. Intensity of Vairāgya and alacrity in utilizing tools of yoga will help to reach the goal of Yoga sooner. Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra who shone as a self realized soul could attain such a state because of this intensity. An anecdote from his life can be cited to this.

Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra (Sarasvati, 1911) found his guru in Śrī Paramaśivendra and was staying with him to get trained in spiritual pursuits. Many devotees used to visit the Guru Śrī Paramaśivendra. Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra used to engage these visitors in debates and defeat them in dialectics. Some devotees complained about this conduct of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra to the Guru. The Guru immediately summoned the disciple and instructed him to stop indulging in such debates which might not be conducive to spiritual progress. On realizing his folly, then and there he took a very severe vow of not speaking for the rest of his lifetime. This is called as intensity: when something is not conducive to the desired goal one has to shun it intensely if self-realization is desired. This among the other qualities propelled Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra to the state of Jīvanmukta.

Thus we see how Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra led by example in living and working intensely towards the highest goal of Yoga i.e Self-realization.

### **Writings of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra**

The writings of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra are also brimming with insights and inputs on the highest outcome of Yoga i.e, realization of self.

Though there are numerous commentaries on the Yogasūtras, the Yogasudhākara commentary of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra is unique and carries greater merit because the author of this work is also known as realized soul and not a mere scholar. Having scaled the highest peaks of enlightenment, his compassion for those who have embarked upon this arduous journey of self realization is evident from this work. The comments and quotes that he presents to the Yogasūtras merit mention in that regard. Let us consider a couple of examples from his writings.

### Clarity about the tools toward the Goals

In his commentary to the Yogasūtras (2.28) (Sarasvati, 1911) we can see that he clearly categorizes various tools of Yoga for different practitioners of Yoga and thereby prescribes the starting point for various levels of aspirants in the path of Yoga. He states that -

पूर्वस्मिन्पादे समाहितचित्तस्यान्तरङ्गसाधने  
अभ्यासवैराग्ये अभिधाय आदावस्मिन्पादे व्युत्थितचित्तस्य  
क्रियायोगोऽभिहितः । अधुना ततोऽपि व्युत्थितचित्तस्य  
संप्रज्ञातसाधनान्यष्टाङ्गान्यभिधातुमाह

*For a person with a calm state of mind - abhyāsa and Vairāgya were stated in the previous chapter. Earlier in this chapter, for a person whose mind is outwardly, Kriyā yoga was prescribed. Now, for a person whose mind is more outwardly ...aṣṭāṅgā(yoga) is being advised.*

Hence being concerned with the fact that aspirants may be confused with multitude of tools of Yoga, he presents this categorization that provides clarity regarding the starting points in Yoga. It goes without saying that such clarity with regard to the tools of yoga is indeed impossible without having traversed through these stages which evidently Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra did.

### How long will it take to reach the goal?

There is another interesting part of commentary of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra that also reveals his wit and practical wisdom on a serious topic regarding the duration taken to achieve the state of Samādhi through the practice of the tools of Yoga. The commentary of Sir Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra to the Yogasūtra 1.14 (Sarasvati, 1911) reads as follows -

यदि दिवसैर्मासैर्वा समाधिसिद्धिं वाञ्छेत्, तदा  
विद्यमानाश्चत्वार एव वेदाः;  
तानध्येतुं गतस्य माणवकस्य पञ्च दिवसा अतीताः  
नाद्याप्यसौ समागतः इति मूढवचनानुसार्येवायं योगी स्यात् ।

*If a Yogi desires the attainment of Samādhi in a matter of few days or few months then it would be like the following foolish thought - 'there are only four Vedas. It is already five days since the student has gone and has not returned yet!' (after completing the study of all the four Vedas)".*

### How to develop Vairāgya?

This last selection from the Yogasudhākara commentary is not a direct statement, rather it is a quotation of Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra prefers to bring in (from Yogavāsiṣṭha?) that powerfully drives home the point that has been taken up for elucidation. The quotation that he brings in (source not quoted by the commentator), to explain sutra 2.40, is as follows (Sarasvati, 1911) -

स्वदेहाशुचिगन्धेन न विरज्येत यः पुमान्।

विरागकारणं तस्य न किञ्चिदुपलभ्यते॥

*If a person does not attain a sense of detachment (from his body) due to the disgusting smell that his own body emits, then what advice will be of avail to such a person which might cause him to attain detachment?*

Thus we see that apart from his own ingenious comments the quotations that he brings in from other sources are unique and enlightening.

### Yogic spiritual route to overcome disease?

Another important quotation that Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra (Sarasvati, 1911) brings in, in the context of explaining the sutra तत्प्रतिषेधार्थमेकतत्त्वाभ्यासः (1.32) is worth noting in the current era when Yoga therapy is gaining popularity as a potent complementary system of healing.

वासनासंपरित्यागे हि यदि यत्नं करोष्यलम्।  
तत्ते शिथिलतां यान्ति सर्वाधिव्याधयः क्षणात्॥

*It would be enough if you put in effort to shun the Vāsanās. All your mental and physical diseases will get weakened in a moment.*

This quotation that Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra has brought in, presents the right perspective and approach of Yoga therapy. The attempt through Yoga is to be aimed at the mind and the ingrained subliminal impressions that it carries. Even while practicing āsanās, Prāṇāyāma and other meditative techniques, it would be beneficial to look at them as practices that are intended to create new Saṃskāras at the respective levels that could efficiently counter the age old Vāsanās - rather than considering them as mere physical, breathing and mental activities. In one blow this approach will address the spiritual quest of cleansing the mind of non-conductive impressions and also help work towards better management of suffering caused by illness - physical and mental.

### Conclusion

Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra has lived not only as a true Yogi embodying the highest possibilities of Yoga, but he has left behind a treasure of house of Yogic insights in his writings. It can be observed in the recent history that great personalities in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century like the Ācāryas of śringerī pīṭha have been inspired by his life and have taken him as their role model. Thus, though Śrī Sadāśiva Brahmendra lived more than three hundred years ago, he still guides, inspires and shines as a beacon light of Yoga leading to the highest wellbeing of humanity.

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