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Yoga: A system of Indian philosophy

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Abstract

India is a treasure trove of all knowledge. As far as Philosophy is concerned Indian philosophy system is one of the oldest systems in the world. Yoga philosophy discusses how to practice spiritual union of the individual soul with the supreme soul. Yoga is a spiritual effort to attain perfection through the control of sense organs, gross body, subtle mind, intellect and ego. Acharya Patanjali is the founder of this school. He explained Yoga as the process to unite body, mind and soul. He considered it as a mean of achieving freedom or mukti.

Yoga is one of the most dynamic systems of Indian philosophy. As mentioned above it is in orthodox (aastik) school. Now today's world accepts the yoga as a way of living. Modern world defines yoga as postures, energy and breathe control, meditation, music, philosophy and other approaches. Yoga refers to the goal, unity and harmony with oneself and others, but also to the methods by which that goal is achieved. In a broader sense, yoga is a lifestyle that involves practicing awareness and achieving harmony using a variety of methods. In this regard Yoga is one of the richest systems in the history of Indian philosophy.

Keyword: *Klesha*, harmony, meditation, orthodox, philosophy, yoga

Introduction

India is a treasure trove of all knowledge. As far as Philosophy is concerned Indian philosophy system is one of the oldest systems in the world. Ancient Indian Philosophy is of two kinds: 1. Orthodox System of philosophy and 2. Heterodox or Unorthodox system of philosophy. Sankhya, Yoga, Nyay, Vaishesik, Poorva Mimansa and Uttar Mimansa or Vedanta are orthodox system of Indian philosophy. Baudha, Jain and Charvak are heterodox system of philosophy.

Before coming to the title with its elaborate discussion, it is necessary to know about all schools of philosophy in brief, having interconnectedness amongst them.

Orthodox system of philosophy:

- **Sankhya:** kapilmuni is the founder of sankhya school of philosophy. Twenty five elements are mentioned in this philosophy which defines vikas kram or parinamvad. Two main elements namely purusha and prakriti play a vital role in creation or evolution. All beings manifest from purusha (self, soul or mind) and prakriti (matter, creative agency, energy).

It is the oldest of the orthodox philosophical systems; this is so because the basic tenets of samkhya can be seen in Nyay, Vaisesika, Yoga, Jainism and Vedanta. This philosophy is based on sankhya sutra, written by Kapil muni. Sankhya philosophy has its own literatures. Srimad Ishwar Krishna's Sankhya Karika is prominent among them. Sankhya Karika and tatva kaumudi are the basic books to explain sankhya philosophy. The main theory of this system is Parinamvad and Satkaryavad and is also defined as karya-karanvad. It is the theory of the existence of effect in its cause prior to its production (sankhya karika 9).

- **Yoga:** Yoga philosophy discusses how to practice spiritual union of the individual soul with the supreme soul. Yoga is a spiritual effort to attain perfection through the control of sense organs, gross body, subtle mind, intellect and ego. Acharya Patanjali is the founder of this school. He explained Yoga as the process to unite body, mind and soul. He considered it as a mean of achieving freedom or mukti. This system of philosophy would be elaborated in discussing the said topic after attaining brief ideas of other schools of Indian philosophy.

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- **Nyay:** Gautam muni is the founder of nyay darshan. The configuration of nyay word is a technique of logical thinking- niyate viviksharthah anen iti nyayah (Nyay sutra).

Nyay is a source to achieve our supreme goal. Nyay sutras say that there are four means of attaining valid knowledge: perception, inference, comparison and verbal testimony. In this philosophy we can study nayayika's views on God through valid source of knowledge

Many literatures are found in this system of school. Nyay sutra and Tark sangrah are main among them. Maharshi Gautam and Annam Bhatt are author of the books respectively.

- **Vaisesik:** Maharshi Kanad is the founder of this school. The main principle of this darshan is anuvaad. This principle dealt with all objects in the physical universe are reducible to a finite number of atoms and Brahman is regarded as the fundamental force that causes consciousness in these atoms. Vaisesik system is based upon the theory of realistic and objective philosophy of universe.

In vaisesik darshan there describes that all objects of the universe are composed of five elements-earth, water, air, fire and ether. Law of karma is one of the basic theories of this school in which God presents as a guiding element. The living beings are rewarded or punished according to the law of karma, based on actions of merit or demerit.

- **Purva mimansa (Jaimini):** This philosophy encompasses the Nyay-vaisheshika systems and emphasizes the concept of valid knowledge. According to Purva mimansa, Vedas are eternal and possess all knowledge. This philosophy defines Dharma very well. According to this system essence of Veda is dharma. By the execution of dharma one earns merit which leads one to heaven after death. Here religion means the fulfillment of duties prescribed by the Vedas.

The original book of purv mimansa is Jaimini sutra. The Shabar bhashya is the commentary on Jaimini sutra.

- **Uttar mimansa or Vedanta:** This philosophy concentrates upon the philosophical teachings of Upanishads. The Brahman instructs the rituals and sacrifices to achieve the supreme goal but Upanishads are focusing on mystic or spiritual contemplations within the Vedas.

This system of Indian philosophy has six sub schools and each has its own founder. Here we can see series of six sub school-

Advaita: Adi Shankaracharya is the founder of this school. It describes that both the individual self (Atman) and Brahman are the same, and knowing this difference causes liberation.

Vishishtadvaita: Ramanujacharya is the founder of this system. It believes that all diversity is subsumed to a unified whole.

Dvaita: It considers Brahman and Atman, as two different entities, and Bhakti as the route to eternal salvation.

Dvaitadvaita (Nimbarka): It states that the Brahman is the highest reality, the controller of all.

Shuddhadvaita (Vallabhacharya): It states that both God and the individual self are the same, and not different.

Achintya Bheda Abheda (Chaitanya Mahaprabhu): It emphasizes that the individual self (Jivatman) is both different and not different from Brahman.

Unorthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy

Schools that do not accept the authority of Vedas are by definition unorthodox (nastika) systems. The following schools belong to heterodox schools of Indian Philosophy.

Charvaka (Brihaspati): Charvaka is a materialistic, sceptical and atheistic school of thought. According to Charvaka there is no other world. Hence, death is the end of humans & pleasure is the ultimate object in life.

It is also known as the Lokayata Philosophy-the philosophy of masses.

Buddhist philosophy (Siddhartha Gautama): Buddhism is a non-theistic philosophy whose tenets are not especially concerned with the existence or nonexistence of God. Buddha considered the world as full of misery and considered a man's duty to seek liberation from this painful world. He strongly criticized blind faith in the traditional scriptures like the Vedas

Jain philosophy (Mahavira): A basic principle is anekantavada, the idea that reality is perceived differently from different points of view, and that no single point of view is completely true. According to Jainism, only the Kevalins, those who have infinite knowledge, can know the true answer, and that all others would only know a part of the answer.

Yoga is one of the most dynamic systems of Indian philosophy. As mentioned above it is in orthodox (astik) school. Now today's world accepts the yoga as a way of living.

This system is based on the Yoga-sutras of Patanjali. The language of yoga sutra is Sanskrit. In Sanskrit the word yoga comes from the root word, yuj, which has been translated to mean "Yoke", to bring together, bind or to unite. It means to unite individual soul with Supreme soul through yogic practices.

Patanjali's Yoga sutra is basic book to give theoretical and practical aspects of yoga. Many literatures are written on Yoga sutra which are treated as commentaries on yoga sutra for examples Vyasa's Yoga bhasya and Vacaspati Mishra's Tattva vaisaradi.

The yoga philosophy is developed form of Samkhya philosophy. The Yoga presents a practical side of achieving supreme goal whereas the samkhya emphasizes on theoretical side of attaining liberation. The Gita says that Yoga and Samkhya are the practical and theoretical sides of the same system. Although there are many similarities found between Samkhya and Yoga system yet a few dissimilarities are highlighted. The similarities are; both the schools uphold that liberation can be attained through knowledge. And, to attain this knowledge it requires the power to control body, mind, senses, intellect and ego. Yoga accepts three pramanas which are agreed by the Samkhya. These three Pramanas are; perception, inference and verbal testimony. There are twenty five metaphysical Principles as viewed by the Samkhya and it is agreed by the Yoga. The dissimilarities lie when Yoga states that there is only one and one Purusa is known as 'Supreme self' who is eternal, ubiquitous, beyond time and space. Rejecting this view, Samkhya expresses that there are

many Purusas and hence, there are innumerable number of selves.

To understand the yoga system of Indian philosophy we have to go through the concept of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

Yoga sutras are the basic text of yoga philosophy. These are written by Patanjali. The Samkhya philosophy is closely associated with the Yoga philosophy. In this regard, the Gita says, Yoga and Samkhya are the practical and theoretical sides of the same system. One among the other dissimilarities between these two schools is Yoga accepts only one purusa whereas Samkhya accepts the existence of many purusas or selves.

Organization of the yoga sutra: Patanjali prescribes the following organization of the yoga sutras.

1. Samadhipada
2. Sadhanapada
3. Vibhutipada
4. Kaivalyapada

The citta is an important element of the psychology of yoga. There are five stages of citta.

1. Ksipta (Restless)
2. Mudha (Torpid)
3. Viksipta (Distracted)
4. Ekagra (Concentrated)
5. Niruddha (Restricted)

The citta has three forms.

1. Prakhya
2. Pravrti
3. Sthiti

The citta modifies due to the reflection of the Purusa on it. It is known as citta-vrtti. There are five types of modifications found in the citta.

1. Pramana
2. Viparyaya
3. Vikalpa
4. Nidra
5. Smrti

We the human beings suffer because of the modifications of citta, which is known as klesas in Yoga philosophy. Klesas are of five kinds.

1. Avidya
2. Asmita
3. Raga
4. Dwesa
5. Abhinivesa

The eight fold yoga

1. Yama - non violence, non-hatred
2. Niyama - cleanliness, reading religious scriptures
3. Asana - to do different postures
4. Pranayama - control of breathe
5. Pratyahara - controlling passions for objects
6. Dharana
7. Dhyana
8. Samadhi

Samadhi is of two types.

- i) Conscious Samadhi (Samprajnat)
- ii) Supra-Conscious Samadhi (Asamprajnat)

Further, samprajnat samadhi is divided into four kinds.

- i) Savitarka Samadhi
- ii) Savicar Samadhi
- iii) Sanand Samadhi
- iv) Sasmit Samadhi

According to the Yoga philosophy, God is known as 'Isvara'. He is the creator of this universe. He is beyond time and space. He is eternal, all pervading, and free from liberation. A jiva or an individual seeks liberation because of his/her karmic influx. But God is beyond the karmic chain. He is almighty, benevolent and sumum bonum of one's life. 'Liberation' in the Yoga philosophy is known as "kaivalya" and the aspirant to attain the liberation is known as 'kevali'.

Yoga a system of Indian philosophy is very deep rooted in Indian culture and civilization. It's history starts from Veda. The meaning of word veda is knowledge. The knowledge is of two kind -

1. Physical knowledge - The wisdom which is embodied under sensory organs is called physical knowledge.
2. Spiritual knowledge - This knowledge is experienced beyond sensory organs. This is directly related to our self or soul. For example Yoga or Yogic Science.

It proves that Vedas provide the first record of yoga philosophy. Vedas are the collection of hymns, invocations and prayers to nature deities.

The Upanishads

The Upanishad is the last portion of the Veda. Upanishads provide logical glimpse of life philosophy. Soul, Brahman, jiv, maya, mukti and ishwar all these elements are mentioned in Upanishads in simple logical method. The root theory of Upanishads is to establish the hidden connection of the human realm of existence to the divine planes of Brahman. One can see how this later developed into the science of Yoga or union of oneself to higher consciousness. Many references are found regarding yogic science in Upanishads like Taittiriya, Kena, Katha, Brihadaranyaka, Mundaka, Chandogya and Isa Upanishads.

The Bhagavad Gita: The bhagavad gita is the part of the larger epic work called the Mahabharata. In the bhagavad gita Krishna is a teacher and Arjuna is his student and in this text Krishna appears to Arjuna and teaches him the principles of yoga as a means to end suffering. There are eighteen chapters in the Bhagavad Gita with chapters 7 and 14 being the most important with regards to yoga philosophy. The system of philosophy known as Sankhya strongly influenced this work as well as later yoga philosophy.

These three are basic books to understand the ancient concept of yoga system. Later some important historical yoga teachers are there in the system of Indian philosophy those works are more influenced in the field of yoga. Some names are here-
Abhinavagupta (950-1016AD)
Swami Sivananda Saraswati (1887-1963)
Krishnamacharya (1888-1989)
B.K.S. Iyengar (1918-2014)
Indra Devi (1899-2002)
Harbhajan Singh Khalsa (1929-2004)
Sri Swami Satchidananda (1914-2002).

Types of Yoga: The ancient form of yoga has changed its features according to change of time. It can be better understood by keeping views on the branches of yoga which is called The Yoga Tree-

Raja Yoga Branch or Patanjali Yoga
 Hatha yoga branch
 Bhakti yoga branch
 Jnana yoga branch
 Naad yoga branch
 Karma yoga branch

From the above ancient traditions many new forms or Yoga have developed in the modern era. They include, but are not limited to Ashtanga Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Kripalu Yoga, Jivamukti, Anusara, Bikram, Urban Zen, OM Yoga and Vinyasa Flow.

Yoga: a system of Indian Philosophy is till now very relevance in today's Pandemic Covid-19 affected world. Yoga brings full of peace, balance and harmony in this challenging condition of human being.

During lockdown all the world is suffering from depressed condition. In such situation Yoga helps the humanity to move forward from this condition. People come to yoga for a wide variety of reasons- fitness, stress management, relief from physical or emotional pain. It gives oneself not only outer strength but inner strength too.

Modern world defines yoga as postures, energy and breathe control, meditation, music, philosophy and other approaches. It is more than simple exercise. There is development of common styles of Yoga in modern time. These are Gentle yoga, Yoga flows, Power yoga, Fitness yoga, Specialty yoga and Therapeutic yoga. These all techniques to help those facing health challenges, manage their condition, reduce symptoms, restore balance, increase vitality and improve attitude.

One of the oldest systems of philosophy yoga becomes essential means for every dimensions of life. It is beneficial for education sector, health sector, professionals and psychological treatments.

In conclusion yoga refers to the goal, unity and harmony with oneself and others, but also to the methods by which that goal is achieved. In a broader sense, yoga is a lifestyle that involves practicing awareness and achieving harmony using a variety of methods. In this regard Yoga is one of the richest systems in the history of Indian philosophy.

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