

CHAPTER – 2

THE ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE OF YOGA PHILOSOPHY

Yoga Philosophy – one of the most developed systems of India philosophy constitutes an integral part of rich heritage of India. As one of the six astika systems of Indian philosophy, yoga believes in the authority of the Vedas. The value of yoga as an important method of realizing the spiritual truths of Indian Philosophy has been recognized by almost all the Indian systems. We have clear evidence of the recognition of yoga practices even in the smrities and the Puranas. Tradition unanimously regards Patanjali as the founder of yoga system. It is a great system of spiritual discipline.

The word yoga is used in a variety of senses. Yoga literally means union, i.e. spiritual union of the individual soul with the Universal soul and is used in this sense in the Vedanta. In the Rgveda the term yoga has been taken in the sense of yoking, harnessing, achieving connection with and so on¹.

In the Panini's time the word yoga had attained its technical meaning and he distinguished the root 'Yuj Samadhau' (yuj in the sense of concentration) from "Yujir Yoge" (root yujir in the sense of connecting)². According to Panini the term yoga means self-concentration and joining or connecting.³

‘Yujuata anena iti yogah’

In higher terms, it means the joining of the individual with the Universal, i.e., jivatman with the paramatman. It is a process of joining.

The Gita defines yoga as the higher state of mind at which a person is never shaken even by greatest pain. The state free from all pain and misery is yoga. Yoga is also defined in the Gita as skill of preserving the equanimity or equality of the mind.

‘Atmoupomyen sarvatra samam pasyati yo Arjuna,

Sukham va yadi dukham sa yogi paramo matah.’

(Bhagavadgita VI-32)

In Patanjali’s yoga philosophy, yoga does not mean union but spiritual effort to attain perfection through the control of the body, senses and mind; and through the right discrimination between Prakrti and Purusa. The term yoga, according to Patanjali’s definition is the final annihilation of all the mental states. Bhoja states that in Patanjali’s yoga philosophy the term ‘yoga’ does not mean union but separation.³

Yoga is that state in which all Indriyas are be held steadily, i.e., state of mastery over senses and mind as portrayed in the ‘Kathopanisdad’.

‘Tam yogamiti manyante sthiram indriya dharanam.’

(Katha 2.5 – 4)

Krishna tells Arjuna that –

‘Yogastah kuru karmani Sangam tykta dhananjaya,

Siddhysiddhyoh samo bhuitva samatvam yoga Uchyate’.

(Gita 2-48)

This is above sloka means that, perform action, being fixed in yoga, renouncing attachment, unmindful of success or failure for everness (equanimity) of mind is yoga.

The origin of the word 'Yoga' is untraceable and lost in antiquity yoga postures depicted or seals, stones and statues discovered among the relics of the Indus Valley Civilization indicate that it was present in India even before the advent of the Aryans. The Upanisads, the Mahabharata including the Bhagavadgita, Jainism and Buddhism accept yogic practices.

The 'Yoga-tattava' Upanisad shows that there are four kinds of yoga, i.e. (i) Mantra yoga, (ii) Layayoga, (iii) Hathayoga, and (iv) Rajayoga. The yoga practices grew in accordance with the doctrines of the saivas and saktas and assumed a peculiar form as the mantrayoga ; they grew in another direction as the hathayoga which was supposed to produce mystic and magical feats through constant practices of elaborate nervous exercises, which were also associated with healing and another supernatural powers.

Besides, in the Gita, we find yogas as (i) Rajayoga, (ii) Jnanayoga, (iii) Bhaktiyoga and (iv) Karmayoga ; which have been acknowledged by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his disciples, Swami Vivekananda, Abhedananda and others.

So long as the mind or the intellect of a man is impure and unsettled he cannot properly understand anything profound and spiritual. We must have a pure heart and a tranquil mind if we are to know and realize the truths of philosophy and religion. Now, the practice of yoga

is the best way of self purification i.e. purification of the body and the intellect. Hence it is that almost all the systems of Indian philosophy both orthodox and heterodox systems, insists on the practice of yoga as the necessary practical side of a philosophy of life.⁴

Reference :

- 1) S.N. Dasgupta – A history of Indian Philosophy. P-226.
- 2) Ibid, P-226.
- 3) M. Muller – Six Systems of Indian Philosophy, P-309.
- 4) S. Chatterjee & D. Dutta – An introduction of Indian Philosophy, PP-272-273.

2.1 YOGA LITERATURE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO 'YOGA-SUTRA'

The great Indian Sage Patanjali's 'Yoga-Sutra' which is also called 'Patanjala Sutra', is the oldest text book of yoga philosophy. The Patanjala-sutra is divided into four padas or parts.¹ They are accordingly:

1) SAMADHI PADA :

This pada deals with the natural aims and forms of yoga ; the modifications of citta or the internal organ, and the deferent methods of attaining yoga.

2) SADHANA PADA :

This second pada deals with kriyayoga as a means of attaining Samadhi, the klesas or mental starter causing affections, the fruits of action (Karmaphala) and their painful nature, and the fourfold theme of suffering, its cause, its cessation and the means thereof.

3) VIBHUTI PADA :

The third pada gives an account of the inward aspects of yoga and the supernormal powers acquired by the practice of yoga and so forth.

4) KAIVALYA PADA :

The fourth pada describes the nature and forms of liberation, the reality of the transcendent self and the other world and so on.

Yoga sutra is regarded as the first systematic work of philosophy Patantali calls his work 'Anusasana'.² Vyasa's commentary on the

Yoga-Sutra (Forth century A.D.) namely Yoga-bhasya and Vyasa-bhasya gives the standard exposition of the yoga principles. Vacaspâti wrote a glossary on Vyasa's bhasya called Tattavavaisaradi (ninth century). Bhojaraja's Vitti, Yogamaniprabha and Rajamartanda are very simple and popular works on the yoga system. Vijñanabhikṣu's Yogavarttika, a running commentary on Yoga-bhasya and Yogasarasamgraha are useful manuals.

Some of the later Upanisads, such as Maitri, Sandilya, Yogatattva, Dhyānabindu, Hamsa, Varaha and Nadabindu, attach great importance to the principles of the Yoga.

References :

- 1) S. Chatterjee & Dutta – An introduction to Indian Philosophy, P-272.
- 2) Radha Krishnan – Indian Philosophy Vol-II, P-341.

2.2 RAJA-YOGA OF PATANJALI

The yoga philosophy is an invaluable gift of the great Indian sage Patanjali, who seek spiritual realization for all. It is a great aid to those who wish to realize the existence of the spirit as an independent principle, free from all limitations of the body, the senses and the mind. It is also known as the Patanjala system, after the name of its founder.

Patanjala Yoga is also called 'Rajayoga'. According to some, it is the surest – the most direct and the quickest method for attaining salvation. That is why they call it Rajayoga, the king of all yogas¹. By definition, its aim is the realization of unit with God. It is believed that this marga consists in a ruthless suppression of all hindrances that create difficulties in the way of realization.

Rajayoga is the way of physical and mental discipline. It is based on the presupposition that bondage is due to the distracting activities of the body and the mind. They waste the energy of the soul and dominate over it. Therefore, they must be brought under control so that the energy wasted by them may be saved and directed towards the supreme. But to control the body and the mind, a direct and forceful method has to be adopted. That is why in Rajayoga a plan of physical and mental disciplines has to be worked out. That would involve certain yogic exercises of the psychological nature. Even here, the final stage is that of concentration, but the conviction is that perfect concentration cannot be practiced unless the psycho-physical organism is put completely at ease and under complete control of the individual.

The Patanjala system makes a special study of the nature and forms of yoga, the different steps in yoga practice and other important things connected with these.

According to Rajendralal Mitra, Yoga, in the philosophy of Patanjali and Kapila did not meant union with God or anything but effort (Udayoga, not samyoga) , pulling oneself together, exertion, concentration. Yoga might mean union, but the proper term would have been samyoga. Thus we read in the Bhagavadgita II, 50 –

Buddhiyukto Gahaliha ubho sukritadushkrite,

Tasmad Yogaya Yugasva, Yogah Karmasu Kausalam.

This statement means that – ‘He who is devoted to knowledge leaves behind both good and civil deeds; therefore devote yourself to yoga, yoga is success in (all) action’.²

Reference :

- 1) B.K. Lal – Contemporary Indian Philosophy, P-36.
- 2) M. Muller – The six systems of Indian Philosophy, P-310.