

Yoga and Theism: A philosophical Study

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Abstract

Yoga is pan-Indian psycho-spiritual practice for personal transformation with the connection of Bhagavad Gita. In Vedic literature, the Bhagavad Gita is a pivotal text that addresses the numerous hardships of life, presenting yoga as a means to overcome suffering and achieve spiritual union with the divine. This paper examines the different paths of yoga as outlined in the Bhagavad Gita: Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Dhyana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. Additionally, it explores the concept of yoga in Vaishnavism and other disciplines or institute for attaining cosmic consciousness. The paper focuses the means of attaining self-realisation with the introspection of yoga through Vaishnavism philosophy which develop consciousness by linking with the divine along with the study of Bhagavad Gita.

In today's stress-filled world, the Bhagavad Gita is regarded as a comprehensive system for holistic development, addressing the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of an individual's well-being. This paper investigates how these yogic principles can be integrated into daily life, the highest enjoyment emphasizing their relevance in navigating contemporary challenges, promoting mental well-being, and fostering a harmonious existence. Through an exploration of the Bhagavad Gita's teachings on yoga, the paper highlights its timeless relevance and applicability as a guide for a fulfilling and purposeful way of life for the evolution of consciousness.

Keywords: Yoga, Theism, Philosophy, Vaishnavism, Self- Realisation

Introduction

In India since ancient time the practice of Yoga has been deeply rooted. The term yoga arrived from the word 'yuj' which means to connect or to unite with the universal consciousness. Here connecting means integration of mind body and spirit which aims at a self-realisation that is realising the true nature of self –existence. Bhagavad Gita is a book of profound philosophy. In the Bhagavad Gita Arjuna's driving question is about Dharma, the right thing to do. Yet Krishna's response contains far more reference to Yoga than to Dharma beginning right from the second chapter itself. The Gita itself called Yoga-Sastra. Because it refers to the authoritative teachings of yoga about the practice of yoga in the form of book and later renamed as yoga-sutra. Gita's message hinges on a key truth: to know the right thing to do (dharma) we need to know the right way to link with reality. And as such link with reality is the essence of Yoga which stands linking or connecting or harmonizing. As Gita wisdom explains we are souls on a multi- life of spiritual evolution that is of evolving understanding of life's meaning and purposes. To know the right thing to do, we need the right understanding of existence, especially our place and purpose in it. And the Gita offers a various paths of yoga for those who are at various stages in their spiritual evolution Through its dialogues between lord Krishna and Arjuna, it offers insights into consciousness, reality, and spiritual transformation, emphasising that yoga is a comprehensive science rather than limited to physical postures or breathing techniques. The text introduces the concept of Karma Yoga (selfless action), Jnana yoga (divine knowledge) and Bhakti yoga (devotion or path of surrender) as they may be distinct in terms but they are interconnected, addressing diverse temperaments and spiritual needs. These methods guide the practitioners to realise the nature of reality beyond ego and physical identity.

The term Theism is derived from the Greek word theos meaning "God". The term was first coined by Ralph Cudworth. God is defined as the source of creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe. Now the existence of god or Brahman is to be known through the scriptural proof i.e Sabda Pramana. Theism contains the idea of god which is beyond human capabilities to understand because we are absolute finite and God is absolute infinity. The reason of jiva being finite is limitation of our senses. According to Vedanta there are four limitation of the senses. a) Bhrama (illusion): the senses including the mind often under various circumstances leads to misinformation and make illusion for example a mirage seen in the desert. This occurrence is caused when light rays from the sky are strongly refracted upwards near the surface giving the appearance of water. b) Pramada (Mistake): here it denotes that the senses may mislead a person and is liable to commit mistake. Example: mistaking a rope for a snake. c) Karanapatava (limitation): It means that our senses are very limited which means very limited portion of reality is perceived. Example: eyes cannot see that which is very distant or very small. In the Vedantic tradition, a spiritual seeker is trained to perfect one's senses by undertaking rigorous spiritual discipline so that the senses and the mind can be totally purified. At that stage, the material senses are completely transformed into spiritual senses and one can directly receive knowledge of the absolute reality. In general terms theism is the believe in verbal testimony (sabda) which is the most important process of receiving valid knowledge and the other

two pratyaksha and anumana are meant to assist the sabda pramana. Therefore, linking or uniting one's consciousness to the divine through sabda-pramana helps the individual to achieve the perfection in life. If one integrates mind, body and soul then one attains higher consciousness. Yoga-sthah kuru karmani is mentioned in Bhagavad Gita which means perform your duty being situated in yoga. Which means it is revealed in Bhagavad Gita as the most fundamental laws of reality that one must try to understand the real sublimity of life by enquiring the nature of self-existence. In modern times yoga, is as a means of people paying money to attend some classes in gymnastics exercises and deep breathing, and they are happy then that is not actual yoga system. It is recommended in the Vedic scriptures and is introduced by great authorities like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu that all the perfections of yoga system can be realized through bhakti-yoga. There is a difference between show-bottle performances and actual perfection of yoga. The material disease cannot be cured by artificial medicine we have to take the real cure straight from the divine. Real yoga in actual term is to concentrate the mind upon the supreme by controlling the ever disturbing senses. Actually adversaries in life's journey require sublimity through yoga. The nature and attribute of individual and supreme consciousness must be thoroughly understood to practice correct form of yoga. So, Bhagavad Gita is the ultimate manual for connecting the synthesis of yoga and spirituality.

Now different entities define god in different ways like Advaitins define god as 'Neti-Neti' which means not that, not this. Shankara the famous philosopher, a founder of Advaita Vedanta distinguished a god without attributes; here attributes is guna which is similar to the names or qualities of the divine. And Shankara names this guna, without attributes 'Brahma' meaning Brahman with guna.¹ In Buddhism focuses on enlightenment rather than a creator god. In Patanjali yoga defines god as a perfect, timeless consciousness and a meditative focus for seekers and they believe it is distinct from souls. If meditative is the ultimate to unite with the divine then how long one can meditate in object to linked that too without prema bhakti? Love signifies complete attachment to the supreme and it is the essence of devotional service without love, service becomes mechanical, like a duty-bound ritual rather than a heartfelt offering. So only selfless love leads to higher realisation. It is mentioned in Chaitanya charitamrita yoga is the means, prema is the goal. In Patanjali Sutra isvara is defined as merely a special purusa not the supreme creator but if we observe the universe the cosmic manifestation will find the universe is very fine-tuned and very special like a wonderland. As in Brahma Sutra it is mentioned *sarva karana karanam* (the divine is the cause of all causes). Also in Bhagavad Gita it is stated by the lord that *aham sarvasya prabhavo mattah sarvam pravartate* meaning god is the origin of everything in both material and spiritual world and he is the efficient cause of everything. Carvaka muni rejects the existence of god, the soul and states soul is a by-product of matter, and also denies any supernatural or divine authority and accepts reality what is perceivable. If god does not exist then without karma or moral accountability, society would descend into ethical chaos and no incentive for righteousness. And also how consciousness can rise from matter? If only perception is valid then historical events or future predictions become impossible. Carvaka slogan eat, drink, be merry promotes short term pleasure over spiritual and societal duties also leads to selfishness and societal decay no place for dharma. So we must be in inquisitive mood to understand we should not limit ourselves with the things that we perceive only. Something's are very inconceivable to understand so we must try to understand the reality of our existence by connecting with the divine through the verbal testimony.

The concept of yoga and theism in vaishnavism

- Vaishnavism is one of the major sects in Hinduism whose philosophical and spiritual tradition centers around Vishnu and one who strictly worships the immediate expansion of lord Vishnu in the personal form. The term vaishnavism is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Vaishnava' which means one who worships Vishnu and his incarnations. Vaishnavism includes four different sampradayas or Vaishnava lineages: Sri Sampradaya, which is also known as Vishishtadvaita Vedanta (Qualified non-dualism) that follows the teachings of Sri Ramanujacharya and it believes that the soul (jiva), the universe (jagat) and god (Vishnu) are distinct but eternally connect and they worship Vishnu and Lakshmi as divine consort and mediator. Madhvasampradaya also known as dvaita (dualism) this tradition was founded by Sri Madhvacharya. The core beliefs of Madhva sampradaya is God and the soul are eternally different which means Vishnu is the supreme and completely different from all souls and matter. Vallabha Sampradaya (Pushtimarg) path of grace and it was founded by Vallabhacharya. It believes the world is real and sacred and they are the manifestations of the supreme divine. It mainly centres on pure love and grace-based devotion to the Supreme personality of the God head (Sri Krishna). The Chaitanya Sampradaya also popularly known as Gaudiya Vaishnavism, was founded by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The core beliefs of this sampradaya is Achintya Bheda Abheda (Inconceivable oneness and difference) which means the soul is both a part of Krishna and eternally distinct from him. Also believed that this material world is temporary and real.

The Bhagavad Gita presents the path of yoga as a ladder with multiple rungs to reach the supreme lord Vishnu through the devotional service. This yoga ladder that begins from the lowest material condition of the jiva and rises up to perfect self-realisation in pure spiritual life.

Now in Indian subcontinent yoga is deeply rooted with the spiritual traditions. Yoga has gained popularity as a form of physical exercises and stress relief in the west. But it is important to recognize that yoga is a holistic approach to health and wellbeing that encompasses the mind, body, and spirit. Life is an experience of the unknown reality. From Socrates I know that I know nothing to Plato we perceive only shadows on the cave wall but never the full light. Actually the life's

¹ <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/35488/1/Unit-1.pdf>

reality is vaster than our maps to live fully is to dwell in the introspection of one's own nature of reality. Life's activity is always variegated and involves prioritising various activities during time frames. Example; health, family and friends, prayer, work, ultimate goal recreation .life's variety demands conscious choice. By prioritizing wisely across time frames, we shape a meaningful existence. So in life required deeply philosophical analysis at a mature stage of life that is Questioning for innate reality is essential in life which means the pursuit of understanding innate reality, the fundamental , unchanging, truth beneath appearances it is not just a philosophical exercise but a vital necessity for a meaningful existence. As sometimes we often mistake with the world of sensory experiences so questioning innate reality helps peel away layers of conditioning, revealing deeper truths which results in reducing suffering caused by attachment to fleeting phenomena. Sometimes in life without examining reality, life can feel like a series of random events so inquiry aligns actions with universal principles which creates coherence personal choice resonate with cosmic order. And sometimes societal narratives often trap us in borrowed beliefs so direct inquiry exposes mental concoction which direct results in liberating the mind from dogma, fostering authentic leaving.in life fear of the unknown paralyzes growth so by recognizing the reality is beyond full conceptual grasp which helps in building humility and adaptability which later turns mystery into inspiration rather than anxiety. So by questioning innate reality is the sword that cuts through illusion, freeing us to love with clarity, purpose and awe. "The unexamined life is not worth living"- Socrates. So in the conditioned state of existence, logic can't be used as an evidence to support or denounce impersonal or personal school. Ultimately one should depend on shabda, the higher dimension to realize the same. This is revealed in Bhagavad Gita as the most fundamental laws of the reality. To understand the reality Bhagavad Gita is the most practical knowledge which is the ultimate manual for yoga and spirituality. It is the purest and transcendental knowledge which is delivered by god himself who is beyond duality.

Yoga and spirituality

Yoga and spirituality, focusing on the relationship between individual consciousness and universal consciousness. Individual consciousness means limited, personal awareness of the self. Universal consciousness is the infinite, all-encompassing reality. So now to unite this individual consciousness with the universal consciousness method is to bridge these two levels through yoga that helps to connect with it. Yoga and spirituality is interconnected, as yoga originated as a holistic system for spiritual and its essence lies in its ability to foster self-awareness, compassion, and harmony with existence. Growth In life if we see there may be various manuals to understand fundamental laws of the reality example: family their guidance may be culturally and personally biased, life counsellors may help with practical life decisions but may lack metaphysical depth , psychiatrists address mental health but often focus on biochemical solutions rather than spiritual ones, philosophers offer rational frameworks but may lack experiential practices , Vedanta that teaches philosophy of duality and non-duality and self-enquiry but may lack in direct experience of higher consciousness, spirituality which focus in direct experiences of higher consciousness . So among all manuals only spirituality addresses the most fundamental qualities of life and matter. We cannot find the difference of matter and spirit in the mundane knowledge. It could be find only in Bhagavad Gita. Hence best solution can be obtained from spirituality. So Bhagavad Gita is the ultimate manual from bridging yoga and spirituality that is individual consciousness to universal consciousness. Bhagavad Gita is the king of secrets and the most purest knowledge because it is delivered by the God himself who is beyond duality. If the knowledge is only in theoretical and has no spirit in practical aspects then how one can utilise the knowledge in life so therefore, Bhagavad Gita is the most practical knowledge due to complete understanding of the reality where it is in theoretically in reading and practically the spirit of devotion is possible. So yoga can be easily accommodated with good knowledge and prior to practice. Yoga is fundamentally a philosophical and spiritually discipline which aimed at transcending human suffering and realising ultimate truth. Yoga is a practical philosophy because it integrates ethical principles, mental discipline, and spiritual wisdom into daily life. As Yoga is rooted in ancient India offer a structured approach self-enquiry, consciousness and the nature of reality in its purest form and spirituality is the quest for understanding existence beyond the material world.

Three paths of yoga in the context of Bhagavad Gita

Bhagavad Gita is a manual for spiritual awakening. Its yoga- action devotion, wisdom, meditation and the purpose of Bhagavad Gita is to deliver mankind from the nescience of material existence. Every man is in difficulty in so many ways, as Arjuna also was in difficulty in having to fight the battle of Kurukshetra. Arjuna surrenders to Krishna as a disciple and seeks instruction. He felt mental agonies and bodily weaknesses because he feared of generations of misfortunes on killing his family. At the moment of Arjuna's physiological and psychological infirmity, Lord Krishna recited four yogas to Arjuna and resolved his infirmities. The teachings of Bhagavad Gita characterises the qualities of yogi who follow these four paths. Swami Vivekananda advocated that everyone identifies with mind, intellect, heart and body, and hence he must practice techniques from each path. Further, he emphasised on choosing a suitable yoga according to temperament, since spiritual paths improve wellbeing of individual and society; and all the paths lead to union with God or Supreme Power or Brahman.

The Karma Yoga (The Path of Action)

The word 'Karma' means action which is inevitable to engage in an activity in this world. And in life's activity is always variegated and involves prioritizing various activities during time frames. So to exist is to work. So Arjuna asking Krishna about Karma how to act intelligently? Krishna answered a person cannot stay without an action personally in a society everyone acts according to their choices. Personal action is very important. Because if it deviates then everything deviates. Now we see Arjuna gave list of reasons to not fight because he was feeling very compassionate towards the opponent because he was in dilemma towards enjoyment priority and also he was thinking that if there will be no head of the family then family's spiritual tradition may destroy and later killing develops sinful reaction. And the root cause of sin is Action with greed we should not kill for higher happiness. With this reasons he declines to not fight. In general greed is a driving force for a person to act. Then question comes how to act without greed and with only duty minded approach in conflicting scenarios. If we see everything is interconnected in a society every person is acting based on their personal choice why personal action is important because because it motivates person to act but if it deviates then everything deviates. Then how one should act? We should act socially which means must not deviate from the religious duty of each and every person. So each person in the society acts by thinking for the welfare of all or the upliftment of the society then this will become duty minded approach in difficult situation. Then we should try to act which will benefit ultimately all. Then again Arjuna asked then how our action should be because it's binding or liberating. Liberation through action means acting for the pleasure of the supreme and without selfish motive in addition he said there are two types of people –Jnana yogi who renounce work and karma-yogis who do prescribed work. Who is karma yogi? The one who understands working for themselves is binding so they started working for the satisfaction of the lord. They are called as Karma Yogis. So prescribed duty is better than not working as it is said idle brains are devil .And Krishna explains premature renunciation of work is not recommended, because inaction is unnatural. Then again it is said that a pretender externally renounces work but internally dwells on sense objects. Better perform prescribed work for Vishnu and avoid bondage. It means if one works for the satisfaction of the supreme personality of godhead it will not bind us for the transmigration. We must engage in noble work which leads to sublime reality. We must try to elevate from karma kanda to karma yoga. Karma Kanda means action which is performed to achieve material benefits and worldly success which leads to personal enjoyment and may commit sin for royal happiness. The term 'Karma Yoga' means doing prescribed duties with detachment. But question arises how long one can sustain in such action without sin then Krishna explains it is because of our desired action and intrinsically expecting the fruitive action but one should act without desired or expectation of the result by controlling our desire we can sustained Karma Yoga. If one detached oneself from enjoying the result of action then that action will be duty minded approach in conflicting scenario. Karma yoga meaning act intelligently not working for obtaining results for enjoying rather they work for divinity. And in this everything is taken care materially and spiritually.

Jnana Yoga (The path of Knowledge)

Jnana means knowledge or wisdom which is the activity of the brain and intellect. Any karma or action for yoga which is connecting with the divinity is karmayoga and jnana yoga is the knowledge which connects the knowledge to the divinity. Who is a jnana yogi? When one tries to find the absolute truth, which is beyond the material world, by the process of negation. Jnana yoga also refers buddhi yoga and the goal of jnana yoga is to acquire knowledge through jnana about self. Jnana yoga, or the road of wisdom and discernment, is one of the main routes to self-realization in the Bhagavad Gita. The practice of Jnana yoga entails developing wisdom that goes beyond material knowledge and results in a more profound comprehension of the nature of the self and the cosmos. Jnana yoga involves knowing the precise characteristics of the living entity or jiva(life) and the material nature or prakriti(matter). Jnana yoga means realisation of self by culture of philosophical discussion. It is a process of trying to understand the absolute truth through the cultivation of philosophical knowledge. Jnana Yoga, the path of knowledge and wisdom, focuses on self-realization through introspection and discernment. It encourages people to inquire into the nature of the self, aiming to transcend the limitations of the ego and realize the eternal essence within. The Gita highlights the importance of understanding the impermanent nature of the physical self and recognizing the eternal, unchanging aspect of the true self (Atman). Through the pursuit of knowledge, discrimination, and contemplation, one unravels the layers of ignorance to unveil the inherent divinity within.

Bhakti Yoga (Devotion as the highest path)

Jnana yoga serves as the door to bhakti which is described in the middle section without the thought of bhakti both karma and jnana are useless. Bhakti yoga is the topmost of all yogis. (*Yoginam api sarvesam*) Bhakti or devotional service in loving surrender unto Krishna is the essential and conclusive message in the Gita. If we analyse Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga then we find that it helps us for Bhakti Yoga. Karma means action where we do service for pleasing the lord without the expectation of the result. Jnana yoga helps to think and discriminate for advancing in Bhakti. In the material world when we come in the contact than these gunas Sattva, Rajas, Tamas) influence our action. Our action is driven according to these modes but bhakti is beyond the material modes. So we can transcend the mode if one engages in devotional service then the mode of goodness, passion and ignorance cannot influence us. Now in any path self- control is very necessary to achieve success in any path. Especially who seeks progress on a spiritual path of yoga needs to control the mind and senses. Mind is a very subtle components in body and where senses are the instruments for any action through which mind functions. Mind is the center of all sense activities and reservoir of all ideas for sense gratification. The nature

of mind is very powerful, restless, turbulent, obstinate and strong and if we see senses are also very strong they forcibly carry away the mind even of a man of discrimination whose endeavouring to control them. And the fall down also happens when one tries to contemplating on sense objects within the mind. So to make perfect consciousness one should be able to withdraw his senses from sense objects, as the tortoise draws its limbs within the shell, is firmly fixed. To control mind and senses is very important because if mind is not controlled then one cannot fix mind in one particular thing because ethics will lead to fall down. The techniques for controlling mind is mentioned in Bhagavad Gita by tolerating the urges of material sense and desires until death. By meditating on the tip of the nose one cannot control because for how long one can meditate or even if one tries to concentrate then the slightest agitation can cause fall down. Therefore only by engaging sense in the devotional service one can actually control them. Mind can be controlled by practice and detachment. Self-control is one of the austerity of mind. The result of controlling mind and sense is one can be liberated and ultimately attains the supreme. Annanya bhakti or Kevala bhakti is pure devotional service, because it is unmixed with any selfish material motivations or intellectual pursuit.

Comparative perspective of yoga in Vaishnavism, Advaita Vedanta and Shaivism

Vedanta offers unique perspective on the nature of reality, the self and the divine. Vaishnavism and Advaita Vedanta had a deep impact on thought and spirituality both in India and globally. Both schools differ in interpretation and conclusions. The main difference in between these two schools lies in the understanding of the relationship between individual (jiva) universe (jagat) and the absolute truth. Vaishnavism aligns with the duality which means there is an eternal distinction between god, souls and matter, whereas Advaita Vedanta aligns more with non-duality which means there is no distinction between soul and god. Its teachings centered in oneness that the individual soul (jiva) is none other than Brahman beyond duality and states "Brahma Satya Jagat Mithya" (only Brahman is real and the world is unreal (maya)).

Vaishnavism is a devotional tradition that worships Lord Vishnu and his incarnation. It emphasizes bhakti, or devotion, as the primary means of attaining spiritual fulfilment. Here God is seen as a personal, loving being who actively engages with his devotees. The relationship between the devotee and the god is characterised by love and surrender. In Bhagavad Gita it emphasizes the significance of devotion Arjuna who receives guidance from Lord Krishna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The practice of chanting, and engaging in rituals are common in Vaishnavism, reflecting its focus on personal devotion.

On the other hand, Advaita Vedanta, centers in non-dualistic view of reality. The ultimate truth is that there is no difference between the individual soul (Atman) and the supreme reality (Brahman). This philosophy teaches that the apparent diversity of the world is an illusion (maya), and that realising the unity of Atman and Brahman leads to liberation.

Vaishnavism they worship personal god and they engage in eternal loving service of the lord. It more emphasizes on bhakti which means to surrender. It teaches we are the eternal servant of the god and the universe is real and it is a manifestation of god's energy. But Advaita Vedanta defines god as impersonal, formless and one can get liberation only through realising one's identity as Brahman. Only jnana yoga is enough for self enquiry and discernment between real Brahman and unreal Brahman. Vaishnavism holds that how this world can be an illusion? The universe is real, manifestation of the divine energy. It is not an illusion. While real, the material world is temporary and subject to cycles of creation and dissolution. In the field for Spiritual Evolution if we analyse then the world serves as a place for jivas to engage in devotional service and eventually return to the spiritual realm. This material world is Krishna's energy because this universe is created and maintained through Krishna's various energies, primarily the material energy (mahamaya) and the marginal energy (tatastha shakti, which includes the jivas).

Vaishnavism argues that dismissing the world as an illusion or mere appearance undermines the importance of ethical action and devotional service. They contend that if the world isn't real, there's no genuine basis for compassion or spiritual practice. Actually Vaishnavism sees the Advaita view as potentially leading to nihilism or indifference to worldly suffering.

SHAIVISM

The principal difference between the two is that in Vaishnavism, the devotees worship Lord Vishnu as their main deity, while in Shaivism, the principal God is Shiva. Practitioners of Vaishnavism, called Vaishnavas worship Vishnu as their main God. They praise the ten different incarnations of God Vishnu, the most prominent being Krishna and Rama. Their main yoga practice is bhakti, the yoga of devotion. The followers of Shaivism are called Shaivites and they worship Shiva as their most important god, and they practice raja yoga, which is based in the 8 limbs of yoga.

Although both paths share basic scriptures, there are also many scriptures and hymns dedicated to one of these Gods, for example, the Gita Govinda in Vaishnavism, and the Shiva Tandava Stotram hymn in Shaivism. Shaivism is still close to the ideas of Advaita or non-duality, focusing on the oneness of all living beings, while Vaishnavism is more focused on the personal aspect of the principal Godhead. Although they both lead to liberation and connection to God, Vaishnavists will focus more on bhakti, the yoga of devotion, through mantras, prayers, service, and kirtans. Shaivites are more similar to yogis, in that they want to unite with the divine, so the path is focused on the principles of yoga and meditation. Hindus who prefer to worship Shiva are called Shaivites. Shaivites worship while focusing on the importance of Shiva and practise raja yoga. Raja yoga is a system of meditation and self-discipline that focuses on controlling the mind and achieving spiritual realization. It is also known as classical yoga or the yoga of the mind. But if we see in the modern day

context day to day life for raja yoga meditation one have to go to Himalayas and focus on the tip of the nose and sitting in the skin of the tiger and meditating how is this possible ? Because our senses are so contaminated then how one ordinary man can do. And to do this one must take sanyas life and even if one does then question arises for how long one can do and after meditation again engaging in material activities and again mind is contaminated. The nature of mind is very flickering and very agitated and in very small things it gets bewildered so mind becomes very contaminated and to control mind one must engage senses in devotional service then only mind control . We should think and develop some practical thing in life to deal with. So in vaishnavism it has the concept of bhakti yoga the topmost yoga where by being in material world one can engage senses in devotional service fully just by hearing, reading, chanting one can develop consciousness mode. And continuously engaging senses into devotional service ones senses becomes purified and inclination happens towards spirituality. And by engaging senses one becomes transcendental because mind also controlled if senses controlled. Then one can called as Goswami. Goswami is the one who is the master of senses. To be perfect one must do unalloyed devotional service. That is why bhakti yoga is considered as the topmost yoga in vaishnavism which is very much practical in today's world.

Vaishnavism theistic yoga contrast with Patanjali's Astanga Yoga

Vaishnavism is one of the major traditions within the broader Vedic, or Hindu, spiritual culture. Unlike some Vedic traditions, Vaishnavas believe that the ultimate reality is personal. Thus, they understand that God is the Supreme all-attractive person, or Krishna. They acknowledge that all living beings are eternal persons, and that all life's problems are rooted in the individual soul's forgetfulness of his or her relationship with God.

Vaishnavas teach that by chanting God's names the soul can reawaken his original spiritual knowledge, live peacefully in this life and return to the spiritual realm, or Vaikuntha, the place of no anxiety, at the time of death. But it contrast with patanjali astanga the difference is in astanga yoga is a meditative process to control the mind and the senses and to ultimately focus one's concentration on the supreme. In the eight fold process consome of these powers called siddhi which are: anima , laghima, prapti, isitva, prakamya, vasitva and kamavasayita that is becoming lighter than the lightest, heavier than heaviest, obtaining anything of one's choice, controlling others and so on. Even genuine astanga yogis look at these siddhis with contempt as they are simply distractions on the path. But in Vaishnavism the devotees of the lord , in particular , are not at all impressed by a display of such powers, because they understand these things to be material, insignificant sand irrevelent.so the devotee they realise the eternal position of one's existence so they understand the substance of life is devotion of god and nothing else. of :Yama , Niyama, Asana, Pranayama,Pratyahara,Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi. By initially following strict codes of conduct and then practising some physical and breathing exercises, one tries to meditate on the parmatma, the lord in the heart. Whenever the unwanted , disturbing thoughts come one drives them away . As soon as one advances in the meditation process finally, one is able to achieve full absorption in the lord. It is a very rigorous, strict and difficult regime and discipline to follow. Often strict practice of astanga yoga awards the yogi certain extraordinary powers, which are simple material by-products of the process.

When lord Krishna described the process of astanga yoga to Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita , with all its strict requirements (celibacy, freedom from ego , fear and material desires, going to secluded place , controlling the mind)Arjuna said it was very difficult to follow these . So in practical day to day life how is it possible that too people are in so much into material things. People are in the influence of kaliyuga so how this knowledge can be practically possible. the thing which has theoretical aspect but has no spirit in practical life and utilising then such knowledge is not definite. The knowledge must have theoretical, practical and spirit of service or utilising in life then it is perfect knowledge. In Vaishnavism the topmost yoga is Bhakti yoga because it emphasizes the direct, loving relationship with the Supreme Being Vishnu or Yoga. The reason it is the highest among all because here our senses mind are all contaminated so by completely engaging our sense and mind in devotional service one can purify one's senses and can become transcendental . Our mind has very flickering in nature so to control mind we have to engage it for some higher purpose. If mind is engaged in understanding the bigger picture of reality in life then it will never be distracted with small things in life then it will be static by nature. And by engaging in devotional activity in an indirect way it is possible to meditate on the lord which is not hard for any being to follow.

Yoga's Holistic Lifestyle beyond Physical Practice

Yoga, often misconstrued as merely a physical practice involving postures (Asanas) and breathing techniques (Pranayama), embodies a profound philosophy that extends far beyond the confines of a workout routine. It encapsulates a holistic way of life encompassing the body, mind, and spirit. At its core, Yoga promotes holistic living by integrating various dimensions of human existence. It emphasizes physical health through the practice of yoga asanas, which not only enhance flexibility and strength but also promote overall well-being by balancing the body's systems. Yoga transcends the physical realm by incorporating mental and emotional well-being. Through practices like mindfulness, meditation, and breath work, people cultivate mental clarity, emotional resilience, and inner peace. These practices offer tools to manage stress, reduce anxiety, and foster a harmonious mind-body connection.

Yoga embraces spiritual development by offering paths to self-realization and union with the divine. The teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and other Yogic texts elucidate various paths—Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Dhyana Yoga—catering to diverse spiritual inclinations. These paths guide people on a transformative journey, leading to a deeper

understanding of the self, the universe, and the interconnectedness of all existence. Ethical conduct forms an integral part of Yoga, emphasizing values such as non-violence (ahimsa), truthfulness (satya), and self-discipline (tapas). By embodying these principles in everyday life, people cultivate a moral compass that guides their actions, interactions, and contributions to society. Yoga encourages a mindful approach to nutrition, advocating for a balanced diet that supports physical health and mental clarity. It emphasizes the importance of rest and relaxation, recognizing the significance of adequate sleep and rejuvenation for overall well-being.

Yoga is a way of life—a comprehensive lifestyle that harmonizes the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human existence. It promotes a balanced and integrated approach to living, fostering health, vitality, inner peace, and spiritual growth. By embracing Yoga as a holistic lifestyle, people embark on a transformative journey that enriches not only their personal well-being but also their relationships, communities, and the world at large.

Conclusion

The exploration of Yoga paths outlined in the Bhagavad Gita unveils a profound spectrum of transformative methodologies. From Karma, emphasizing selfless action and detachment from outcomes, to Bhakti, fostering devotion and unconditional love for the divine, and further to Jnana, emphasizing self-realization through wisdom, and Dhyana, the path of meditative absorption—these paths offer diverse avenues for personal growth and spiritual evolution. Integrating Vaishnavism Yogic principles with other tradition into everyday life reveals their practical applications, facilitating mindfulness, ethical conduct, and a balanced lifestyle. Their contemporary relevance shines through as these teachings offer invaluable guidance in navigating modern-day challenges, offering tools for stress management and enhancing mental well-being. Furthermore, these Yogic paths are instrumental in fostering ethical conduct, shaping people to embody virtues such as compassion, integrity, and self-awareness. Finally, Vaishnavism Yoga transcends mere physical postures, embodying a holistic lifestyle encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual facets. Embracing Yoga as such provides a transformative journey toward inner harmony, spiritual enlightenment, and a deeper understanding of oneself and the interconnectedness with the universe. Thus, the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita continue to resonate as a timeless guide for holistic living, offering profound insights into a purposeful and fulfilling way of life.

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