

SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE OF VARIOUS YOGIC SYSTEMS

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Yoga is a form of mysticism that developed in India from the very ancient times. The philosophy of yoga deals with the nature of the individual soul and the cosmos and the way of unifying them. The practice of yoga, on the other hand, can be any activity that leads or brings the practitioner closer to this mystical union- a state called self realization. Yoga is also known as the spiritual activity which aims at emancipation of the soul. [1]It is the process of getting free from the karmas associated with our soul which force us in continual bondage of reincarnation. The yoga techniques cover a wide range covering physical, mental and spiritual activities. Yoga improves every aspect of physical fitness; the mind/body energy exchange supports a mental clarity and concentration. The strength improves posture/alignment to support daily activities. The flexibility helps to prevent injuries and keeps the body supple and youthful. The breathing practices are the basis and the link between the mind and the body, providing a precious tool for releasing tension and reducing stress. The practice of yoga gives the way to quiet the mind by placing attention on the breath and also on the movement (stillness) of the body. [2]

Yoga is a healing system of theory and practice; it is the combination of breathing exercises, physical postures and the nervous system and balances the body, mind and spirit. It is thought by its practitioners to prevent specific diseases and maladies by keeping the energy meridians (*nadis*) open and life energy (*pran*) flowing. Yoga is a way to attain the state of union of individual self with the divine spirit. According to yogic science, this state of union is the highest state in the life of every living being. This state is defined as *Moksha* (liberation/salvation). [3]

The meaning and definition of yoga has been discussed by a lot of philosophers and commoners that yoga is a philosophy that nurtures and connects the body, mind, spirit and soul within our selves and to one another. Yoga is a way of life, an art of righteous living or an integrated system for the benefit of body, mind and inner spirit. The Geeta [4] defines yoga as evenness temper, it is true union of *jivatma* (*soul*) and *Parmatma* (omniscient or God) [5]. Yoga means union of the mind, body and spirit with the divine and while this refers to a certain state of consciousness both individual and universal, it is also a method to help one to reach that goal.

The word yoga occurs in Rigved in various senses, such as yoking or harnessing, achieving the unachieved [6]. Eliade [7] has rightly suggested that the four basic and Inter-dependent concepts that bring us directly to the core of Indian spirituality are 'karm, 'maya(wealth)', 'nirvana(salvation)' and 'yoga'. There are a large number of yoga systems; everyone has its own importance. These are tabulated as shown below:-

1	Jain Yoga	:	Spiritual practices for purification of soul.
2	Vedic Yoga	:	Yogic teachings of Rig-Veda.
3	Astanga-Yoga	:	Eight fold Yoga taught by great saint Patanjali in his Yoga-Sutra (198 sutras).
4	Yoga in Vedanta	:	Spiritual yogic traditions in Upanishads-realization of ultimate nature of reality (Brahman).
5	Janana Yoga	:	Union of knowledge.
6	Bhakti Yoga	:	Union of love and devotion.
7	Karma Yoga	:	Union by action and service.
8	Raja Yoga	:	Union by mental mastery- the path of will.
9	Hatha Yoga	:	Union of bodily mastery (principle of breath).
10	Mantra Yoga	:	Union by voice and sound.
11	Yantra Yoga	:	Vision and form.
12	Laya and Kundalini Yoga	:	Union by arousal of latent psychic.
13	Tantric Yoga	:	A general form for the physiological discipline.
14	Yoga in Buddhism	:	Vipassana meditation.
15	Zen Yoga	:	Attainment of awakening by meditation (Mahayana Buddhism).
16	Yoga in Taoism	:	Chinese religion- path or way of expansion of awareness.
17	Yoga in Judaism	:	Process of making one self understand a concept well through analytical study.
18	Yoga in Christianity	:	Way of attaining inner stillness.
19	Yoga in Islam	:	Establishing the connection between the creator and creation which guides the soul to truth.
20	Yoga in Sufism	:	Inner transformation of heart for extinction of ego.
21	Yoga in Sikhism	:	There are 10 gates (chakras- energy centers) and top is dasam dwar which is highest stage of attainment.
22	Kriya Yoga	:	Movement of Consciousness.
23	Swara Yoga	:	Science of realization of cosmic Consciousness.
24	Integral Yoga	:	Yoga by Sri Aurobindo - God realization.

1. The Jain yoga system

Jainism like other systems of Indian Philosophy, aims not only at intellectual explanation of truth, but also at its realization. This involves the idea of the path of spiritual realization known as Yoga (merging of the finite with infinite), *Dhyan*,(meditation) and *Samadhi* (concentration). (8, 9]. The history of Jain yoga dates back to first Tirthankar Lord Rishabhdeva ji [10]. The statues of Jain Tirthankaras in Kayotsarga or meditative posture can be seen in nearly all Jain temples which confirm that Jain yoga is as old as Jain religion. Meditation is the backbone of Jain religion. Every follower of Jainism is very familiar with Jain yoga. Lord Rishabhdeva, the first Tirthankara in Jainism, dating back to the prehistoric era of end of the

stone age and starting of the agriculture age practiced meditation and attained enlightenment at Mount Kailash [10,11]. Bahubali, son of Lord Rishabha deva, practiced meditation for twelve months maintaining same standing posture [12] and attained enlightenment. King Bharat, the elder son of Rishabhdeva, entered a trance state by fixing his gaze on his image in the mirror and got deep into meditation and finally attained enlightenment [13]. Fixing the gaze on an object for meditation has been an important technique of Jainism [14].

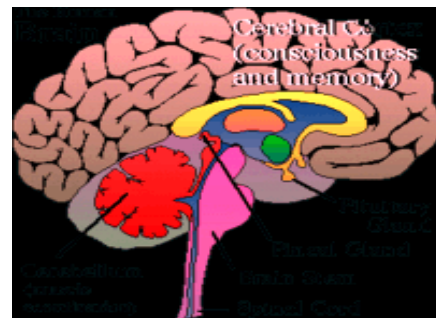
The Jain yoga has been described elaborately and in minute detail in the Jain literature like Acarang and Samaysar [15]. The Sutrakritanga, Bhagvati Aaradhana and Sthananga Sutras also give directions on contemplation, aasanas and meditation. The Aupapatika has an organized presentation of Tapo-yoga which is a kind of right conduct. Acharya Bhadrabahu of 400 BCE, practiced Mahaprana meditation for twelve years [16]. Description of practice of *Samadhi* (meditation) by many *acharyas* is also found. Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of Maurya empire, was Acharya Bhadrabahu's disciple and became a Jain monk. Acharya Bhadrabahu along with his large no. of disciples migrated to South India due to the very long famine which lasted for a period of twelve years. Chandragupta Maurya also accompanied Acharya Bhadrabahu [17]. Acharya Kundkunda of first century is the pioneer scholar and the great saint who wrote a large no. of Jain books (*puran*) like Samayasar, Pravachansar etc. which deals with real Jain Yoga and meditation methods. The holistic approach to the path of salvation, was written and compiled in a single book, Tattvarth sutra by Acharya Umaswati also known as Umaswami [18,19]

Acharya Bhadrabahu II, Jinbhadra and Pujyapada Devnandi were great spiritual experts during the period of the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries CE. They made remarkable contributions through their literature. Haribhadra in the 8th century and acharya Hemchandra in the 12th century, presented meditation through different approaches and view points. During the 18th century, Acharya Vinay Vijay wrote Shantsudharasa on contemplation practices. Upadhyaya Yashovijaya in the same century wrote extensively on meditation [20]

Acharya Mahapragya formulated Preksha meditation in 1970 and presented a well organized system of meditation [21, 22]. Numerous Preksha meditation centers came into

1.1 Scientific theory about Kevala jnana —

As is known to us, the Arihantas were also human beings till they could destroy all the eight karmas in the fourteenth spiritual stage, as shown above. We also know that the Arihant is blessed with 'keval jnana'; when the soul of arihant starts knowing all objects in their entirety with all qualities and modes. It arouses an anxiety, how it could have been possible with his 'human brain'. Scientific researches have shown the presence of a gland known as pineal gland, the activation of which leads to enhancement

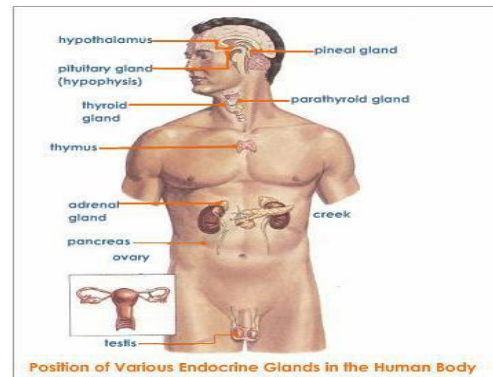


PINEAL GLAND

of knowledge. The enhancement depends upon the amount of activation of this pineal gland and also upon the karmas. More is the activation, more will be the enhancement. It is presumed that in the case of Arihantas obtaining ‘keval jnana’ the activation of this gland might have been maximum. The details about this strange and important gland are, therefore, given in this paper.

1. Brief History - We have two eyes to see the outer world. Besides these two eyes, we also possess a third eye which is known as spiritual eye or mind’s eye [23]. It is a symbol of enlightenment. Some philosophers also call it ‘‘Jnanakshu’’ – the eye of knowledge which is the ‘‘teacher inside’’. (antar guru) As we know, the third eye of Lord Shankar caused destruction of the physical world, but perhaps we don’t know that we also possess third eye. The third eye is a mystical and esoteric concept referring in part to the ajana (brow) chakra, in some spiritual traditions. It is also spoken of as the gate that leads within to inner realms and spaces of higher consciousness. The third eye is also associated with visions, clairvoyance, pre-cognitions and out of body experiences [24]. ‘‘The persons who have the ability to utilize their third eye are known as seers. As per the Upnishad, a human being is likened to a city with ten gates; nine of which (two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, mouth, urethra, anus) lead outside to the sensory world. The third eye is the tenth gate and leads to inner realms housing myriad spaces of consciousness [25].

2 construction-Third eye is a gland of human body known as pineal gland which was originally believed to be a ‘‘vestigial remnant’’ of a larger organ. In 1917, it was known that extract of cow pineal lightened frog skin. Dermatology professor Aron B. lerner of yale university, hoping that substance from the pineal gland might be useful in treating skin diseases, isolated and named the hormone received from pineal gland, melatonin in 1958 [26]. The pineal gland is a small organ, shaped like a pine cone. (hence its name) It is located on the midline, attached to the posterior end of the roof of the third ventricle in the brain. The pineal varies in size in species; in humans it is roughly one cm. in length and 0.1gm. in weight. It is situated right between the two eyes and expands up to the middle of the forehead when opened. It is one of the main energy centers of the body located at



**BEYOND PHYSICAL
GLANDS OF HUMAN BODY**



CHAKRAS OF HUMAN BODY

the sixth chakra. (The third eye is in fact a part of the main meridian, the line separating left and right hemispheres of the body.

In Taoist alchemy, the third eye is correlated with the upper dantian. [27] The gland is large in children and begins to shrink with the onset of puberty. It appears to play major role in sexual development, hibernation in animals, metabolism and seasonal breeding. Rene Descartes, who dedicated much time to the study of pineal gland, called it “principal seat of the soul” [28]. He believed that it was the point of connection between the intellect and the body. [29]

2. Vedic yoga

There are four Vedas which are important, Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. In any of these Vedas, there is no direct mention of the word yoga whereas the word ‘*dhira*’ is mentioned in all Vedas. The meaning of *dhira* is self realization. The sitting posture ie. *asana*, *pranayam*, *mudras*, *meditation techniques*, *yam* and *niyama*, the *dharanas* are explained in Vedas. The *asanas* explained are mainly for the purpose of meditation.

The sun salutation was the part of routine activity that time. The various types of meditation techniques are also explained there. The Vedas also explain about the *Tapas*, *vratas* and the ultimate aim of these are to attain *Moksha* (liberation). The vedic yoga was created by numerous vedic seers of the angiras and bhrigu families, of which the most important the seven great seers, Vashistha, Vamadeva, Bharadwaj Gritsamada, Vishvamitra, Kanwa and Atri. They all set the spiritual path for humanity.

3. Ashtang yoga

Patanjali, who is considered the father of modern yoga compiled 195 aphorisms which are called the yoga sutra. In the yoga sutra, he described eight aspects of a yogic lifestyle and called it the eight limbs of yoga. These are:-

1. *Yamas* – *Yama* is our attitude towards others and the world around us. There are five *yamas* (i) non- violence, (ii) truthfulness (iii) non-stealing (iv) non- lust & (v) non- possessiveness.
2. *Niyams*- *Niyam* is how we treat ourselves and our attitude towards others. These are five in no. (i) cleanliness (ii) contentment (iii) austerity.(iv) *Swadhyaya* or self study of religious books. &(v) Awareness of the divine or almighty.
3. *Asanas* or physical postures- The *asanas* are designed to free our mind and body from tensions and stress.
4. *Pranayam* or breath control- The breath is regulated and controlled through the practice of breathing exercises. The duration of inhalation, retention and exhalation of breath is regulated with the aim of strengthening and cleansing the nervous system and increasing the source of life energy.
- 5, *Pratyahara* or withdrawal of the senses.-Our focus becomes inwards and we are no longer distracted by the outside events.
6. *Dharana* or concentration- *Dharana* is training the mind to focus without any distraction

7. *Dhyana* or meditation – It is an uninterrupted flow of concentration aimed to heighten one's awareness and oneness with the universe.

8. *Samadhi* or enlightenment –This is the ultimate goal of the eight limbs of yoga. It is a state of peace and completion, awareness and compassion with detachment.

4. Yoga in Vedanta

The next yoga system is known as Vedanta, which is a spiritual tradition explained in the *upnishad* that is concerned with the self realization by which one understands the ultimate nature of reality. Vedanta is based on immutable spiritual laws that are common religion and spiritual traditions worldwide. The literal meaning of the term *vedanta* is 'the end of knowledge' or 'the ultimate knowledge'. While the traditional *vedic karma kand* or ritualistic components of religion, continued to be practiced through Brahmins as meditative and propitiatory rites to guide the society to self knowledge, more *jnana*. These are mystical streams of *vedic* religion that focused on meditation, self- discipline and spiritual connectivity rather than on rituals. In Hinduism, meditation is considered to be an instrument to gain self knowledge, separating *maya* from reality to help to attain the ultimate goal of salvation.

5 . Jnana yoga

Jnana yoga is the process of converting intellectual knowledge into practical wisdom. It is a discovery of human dharma in relation to nature and universe. Jnana yoga is described by tradition as a means to obtain the highest meditative stat and inner knowledge. Some of the components of jnana yoga are:- 1 Not believing but realizing. 2.Self awareness leading to self analysis. 3. Experiencing knowledge. 4 realizing the personal nature. 5. Developing intuitive wisdom. 6. Experiencing inner unity.

6. Bhakti yoga

Bhakti is yoga of devotion or complete faith.This faith is generally in the almighty. It may be Lord Rama, Krishna, Christ, Buddha etc. It may be a guru for his disciples. Important thing is the person interested in following this path should have very strong emotional bond with the object of faith. The flow of emotional energy is directed to this object.

Mostly people suppress their emotions and that often reflects in the form of physical and mental disorder. This Bhakti yoga releases those suppressed emotions and brings the purification of inner self. Continuous meditation of God or object of faith gradually decrease the go of the practitioner, which further prevents new distractions, fickleness or even pain and induces strong bond of love. Slowly the practitioner looses the self identity and becomes one with the object of faith; this is a state of self realization.

7. Karma yoga

Karma yoga is a path of devotion to the work. One looses his identity while working, only selfless work remains. This state is very difficult to achieve. In the initial stages of karma yoga, individual possesses strong sense of ego and consciously or unconsciously he is attached to the fruits of his efforts or at least praise or recognition, but by continuous involvement in the

work and change in the mental attitude, one can surely, disassociate him self from the ego and his own personality. The essence of karma yoga, as extracted from '*Bhagvad Geeta*' says : the world confined in its own activity accepts when actions are performed as worship of God.

8. Raja yoga

Raja yoga usually refers to the system of yoga that is described in the yoga sutras of sage Patanjali. In this ancient text Patanjali describes eight stages of yoga which are known collectively as raja yoga. Raja yoga is a comprehensive yoga system which deals with the refinement of human behavior and personality through the practice of *yamas* (restraint) and *niyamas* (disciplines); attainment of physical health and vitality through *asanas* (postures) and *pranayamas* (breathing techniques); management of mental and emotional conflicts and development of awareness and concentration through *pratyahara* (sensory withdrawal) and *dharana* (concentration) and developing the creative aspect of consciousness for transcendental awareness through *dhyana* (meditation) and *Samadhi* (absorption in the universal identity).

9. Hatha yoga

The term hath yoga has been commonly used to describe the practice of *asanas* (postures). The syllable 'ha' denotes the *pranic* (vital) force governing the physical body and 'tha' denotes the mental force, thus making *hatha yoga* a catalyst to an awakening of the two energies that govern *our lives*. *More correctly, the techniques described in hath yoga harmonize and purify the body systems and focus the mind in preparation for more advanced chakras and kundalini practices.*

The *hatha yoga* system includes *asanas* along with the six *shatkarmas* (physical and mental detoxifying techniques), *mudras* and *bandhas* (psycho-physiological energy release techniques) and *pranayam* (pranic awakening practices). Fine tuning of the human personality at increasingly subtle levels leads to higher states of awareness and meditation.

10. Mantra yoga

Mantra yoga has its origin in *vedic* sciences and also in tantra. In fact all the verses in Vedas are called mantras. It is said that any person who can chant or sing Vedas can achieve the ultimate salvation. Only chanting the mantras, is called as mantra yoga. Mantras are words, phrases or syllables which are chanted attentively and thoughtfully to attain certain goals. In the process the super consciousness is discovered and achieved.

11. Yantra yoga

It is a part of Tantric yoga. Tantra sadhana includes yantra, mandala and mantra practices to invoke deities like Shiva and Kali.

12. Kundalini yoga

This system of yoga is concerned with the awakening of the psychic centers of chakras, which exists in every individual. There are six main chakras in the human beings. The mind is made of different subtle layers. Each of these layers is progressively associated with the higher

levels of consciousness. Each of these levels is related to the different chakra or psychic center located throughout the psychic body. In *kundalini* yoga, higher level chakras are awakened and also the activities associated with these higher psychic centers. The basic method of awaking involves deep concentration on these chakras and forcing their arousal. *Asanas*, *pranayama*, *mudra* and *bandh* and other forms of yoga such as *mantra yoga*, are also used to stimulate the awakening.

13. Tantric yoga

Tantra consists of practices and ideas which has among its characteristics the use of ritual, energy and work for the identification of the microcosm (human being) with the macrocosm(universe). The tantric practitioner seeks to use the divine power that flows through through the universe to attain Nirvana. The process of working with the energy includes yogic practices, chanting of mantras, visualization etc. Yoga is used to unite the individual consciousness with the cosmic consciousness.

14. Yoga in Buddhism

Meditation is the central part of Buddhism. Gautam Buddha himself was said to have achieved enlightenment while meditating under a bodhi tree. Most forms of Buddhism distinguish between two classes of meditation, Shamatha and vipassna. Shamatha consists of practices which develop the ability to focus the attention single pointedly whereas vipassana includes practices which develop insight and wisdom through seeing the true nature of reality. Both of these are necessary for attaining enlightenment. There are four deeper states of meditative absorption called the immaterial attainments. Sometimes these are also referred to as the 'formless' jhanas (meditation). The suffering caused by the karmic effects of previous thoughts, words and deeds can be alleviated by following the noble eight fold path which is as follows :- 1right view 2 Right -intention 3 Right -speech 4 Right-action 5 Right- livelihood 6Right- efforts 7 Right- mindfulness. & right –concentration.

15. Zen yoga

Zen is the school of Mahayana Buddhism. It gives emphasis on practice and experiential wisdom particularly as realized in the form of meditation known as zazen which leads to the attainment of awakening. It de emphasizes on both theoretical knowledge and the study of religious texts. It gives great importance to the direct individual experience of one's own true nature. Zen training emphasizes daily life practice, along with intensive period of meditation. Practicing with others is an integral part of Zen practice. According to Japanese Zen masters, Zen is a way of life. Meditation as a practice can be applied to any posture. Walking meditation is called kinhin. Successive periods of zazen are generally interwoven with brief periods of walking meditation to relieve the legs.

16. Yoga in Taoism

The character 'Tao' (or dao) means path or way , but in Chinese religion and philosophy it has taken on more abstract meaning. Tao is really an object of worship, being treated more like the central Asian concept of atman and dharma. Taoism is a cosmic thought. The aspiration of Taoism is to bring all elements of existence- heaven, earth and men- into harmony. The individual must empty himself of dogma and knowledge, act with simplicity and humility and above all seek nature.

17. Yoga in Judaism

Judaism has had meditative practices that go back thousands of years. In the old testament, there are two Hebrew words for meditation: haga, which means to sigh or murmur, but also to meditate and sia, which means to muse or rehearse in one's mind. Judaism is the religion of the Jews. It is a monotheistic religion, based on principles and ethics embodied in the Hebrew Bible ,as further explored and explained in the Talmud and other texts. In addition to prayer services, Observant traditional Jews recite prayers and benedictions throughout the day when performing various acts. Prayers are recited upon waking up in the morning, before eating or drinking, after eating and so on.

18. Yoga in Christianity

Christian meditation is associated with prayer or study of scriptures. It is rooted in Bible which directs its readers to meditate. The Bible mentions meditation twenty times a day. Christian practice includes acts of personal piety such as prayer, Bible reading and attempting to live a moral life style, to include not only obedience to the ten commandments, but also love for one's neighbor whether friend or enemy, Christian or non- Christian, in both attitude and action. Christianity teaches that it is impossible for people to completely reform themselves, but that moral and spiritual progress can only occur with God's help through the gift of holy spirit, who dwells in all faithful believers.

19. Yoga in Islam

In Islam the foundation of its creed and way of life is meditation. A Muslim is obligated to pray, focus and meditate on Allah through reciting Quran five times a day namely- before dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and night. Thus, the whole day of the practitioner transforms into meditation and when he/she goes to sleep its nothing but another phase of meditation. Pious Muslims follow the deeds of Prophet Mohammad. The word Islam is a verbal noun originating from the triliteral root s-l-m, and is derived from the Arabic word Aslama, which mans to accept, surrender or submit. Thus , Islam means acceptance of and submission to God. The word is given a number of meaning in Quran. The word Quran means "recitation".

20. Yoga in Sufism

Sufism signifies the esoteric dimension of Islam where spiritual evolution is sought through inner transformation of heart as opposed to the rigid theology and formation of religion. The path of Sufi is centered on the two fundamental doctrines of the transcendental unity of being a universal or perfect man. The concept of extinction of ego is the very heart of Sufism. Sufism is a mystical dimension of Islam. Sufism spreads the message of divine love and selfless service. A practitioner of this tradition is generally known as a Sufi. However, some devotees of the tradition reserve this term only for those practitioners who have attained the goals of the Sufi tradition. Another name sometimes used for the Sufi seeker is dervish. Sufism in its early stages of development referred to nothing more than the internationalization of Islam. According to one view point, it is directly from the Quran, persistently recited, meditated and experienced, that Sufism progressed, in its origin and its development. According to others, Sufism is the strict emulation of the way of Mohammad, through which the heart's connection to the divine is strengthened.

21. Yoga in Sikhism

In Sikhism, the practices of *simran* and *nam japo* encourage quite meditation. This is focusing one's attention on the attributes of God. Sikhs believe that there are ten 'gates' to the body. 'Gates' is another word for chakras (energy centers). The top most energy level is called tenth gate or 'dasam dwar'. When one reaches this stage through continuous practice, meditation becomes a habit that continues while walking, talking, eating and even in sleeping. Followers of Sikh religion also believe that love comes through meditation on the Lord's name. The first guru of Sikhs Guru Nanak devji preached the equality of all human beings and stressed the importance of living a householder's life instead of wandering around jungles. Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world, founded on the teachings of Nanak Dev ji and nine successive gurus in fifteenth century.

22. Kriya yoga

The word '*kriya*' means activity or movement and refers to the activity of consciousness. 'Kriya' also refers to a type of practical or preliminary practice leading to total union, the final result of practice. *Kriya yoga* does not curb mental fluctuations, but purposely creates activity and awakening in consciousness. The *kriya* practices are inscribed in numerous tantric texts written in Sanskrit. The practices of *kriya yoga* were propagated by Swami Satyanand Saraswati from secret teachings described in *tantra shastras*.

23. Swara yoga

Swara is Sanskrit word, meaning sound or note. It is also a continuous flow of air through one nostril. Swara yoga is a science which is realization of cosmic consciousness through control

and manipulation of breath. In *swara yoga*, it is association of breath in relation to activities of sun, moon, various seasons, physical and mental condition of individuals etc. we can conclude that scientific research findings so far support the yogic concept of ida and pingala as the two main lines on the switchboard of our mind that handle very specific aspects of our perception, thinking, emotions and behavior. In the integrated evolution of human beings, the right hemisphere or ida, the mental energy domain, takes care of music and art awareness, three-dimensional perception, creativity and imagination, insight and intuition. The left side, the domain of vital energy or pingala, takes care of written and spoken language, dealing with numbers and abstract problems, rational decision-making, accurate judgment and discrimination. To live life fully and evolve in a harmonious way we need both kinds of abilities. Therefore, achieving and maintaining balance between the right and left brain, between ida and pingala, has very real implications in our daily life, in the way we function, interact, grow and evolve. And here swara yoga does come in the picture.

24. Integral yoga

Integral yoga has become a significant choice of many persons. In integral yoga, it is not only to see and feel the conscious evolution of life, but also to embody a fully harmonized life of matter and spirit. An integral yogi is he who sacrifices his life to become a bridge between earth and heaven. In the teachings of shri Arvindo, **integral yoga** (or *purna yoga*, Sanskrit for *full* or complete yoga, sometimes also called **supramental yoga**) refers to the process of the union of all the parts of one's being with the divine and the transmutation of all of their jarring elements into a harmonious state of higher divine consciousness and existence.

Sri Aurobindo defined integral yoga in the early 1900s as "a path of integral seeking of the Divine by which all that we are is in the end liberated out of the Ignorance and its un-divine formations into a truth beyond the Mind, a truth not only of highest spiritual status but of a dynamic spiritual self-manifestation in the universe. He describes the nature and practice of integral yoga in his opus *The synthesis of yoga*. As the title of that work indicates, his integral yoga is a yoga of synthesis, intended to harmonize the paths of karma, jnana and bhakti yoga as described in the *Bhavad Gita*. It can also be considered a synthesis between Vedanta and Tantra, and even between Eastern and Western approaches to spirituality.[30]

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