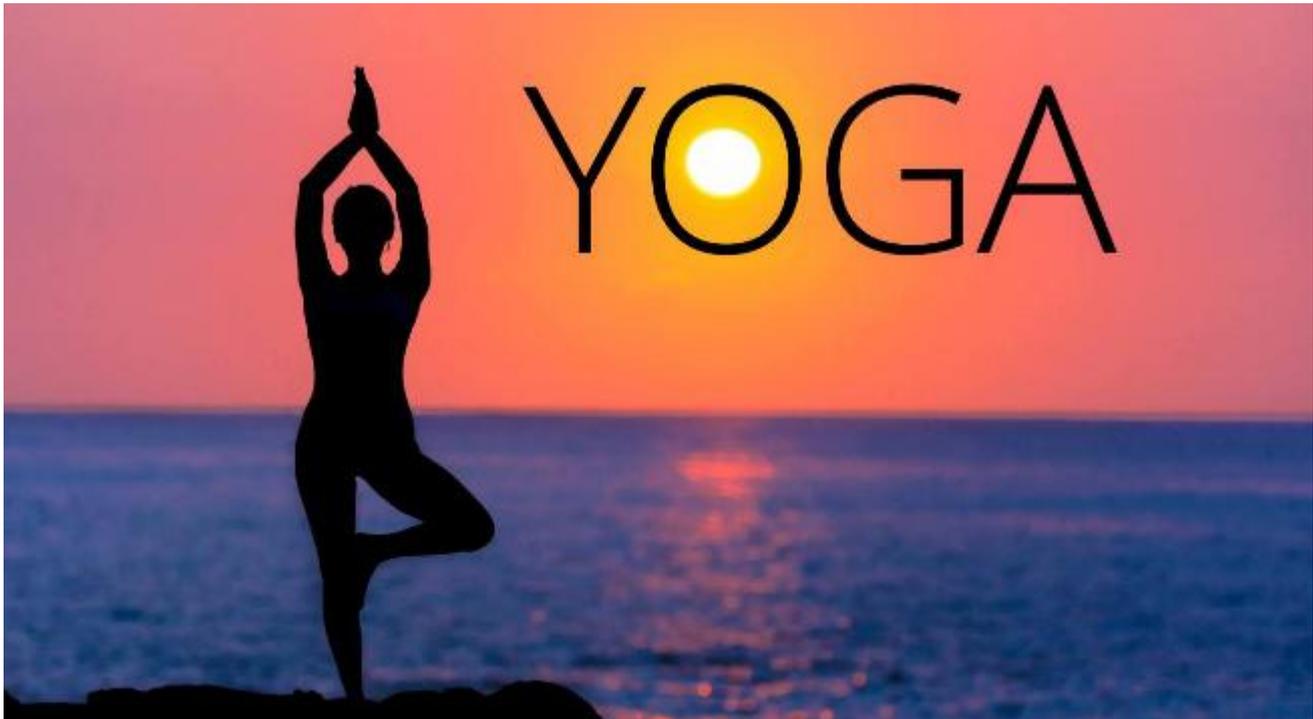


By: Vijai Singhal.

In these times of complete lockdown due to Coronavirus we have to keep ourselves mentally and physically active for our own wellbeing. *Yoga* provides a complete science of physical, mental and spiritual practices that would help us to live a healthy, happy and meaningful life and in the end help to attain *Moksha* (मोक्ष), our ultimate goal in life. *Yoga* is a deep science of spirituality. The word *Yoga* is derived from its Sanskrit root “*Yuj*”, to unite - union with the Divine.



The four main aspects of Yoga are:

Karma yoga (कर्म योग) - the way of action, doing our duties with the spirit of renunciation. “*Yogah karamasu kosham*” (Gita 2.50) (योगः कर्मयोगो कश्चिच्छ्रेयसाय) - Yoga is excellence in work. This verse advises us to perform our allocated duties with full dedication without any attachment to the fruits thereof. We will attain perfection. This non-attached work leads us to overcome our ego and helps realize our true self.

Bhakti yoga (भक्ति योग) - the path of devotion. It involves practice of maintaining an emotional loving relationship with our *Ist devata* (इष्ट देवता) our chosen idol of the Godhead. People worship in the temples or at homes, singing devotional songs in praises of the divine. It requires complete surrender to the will of the divine.

Dhyana yoga (ध्यान योग) - the path of meditation to develop one-pointed concentration of mind, culminating in enlightenment or union with the divine called *Samadhi* (समाधि). It is very difficult to

control the mind. Shri Krishna says in *Gita* (6.35) through *Abhyasa* (अभ्यास) and *Vairagya* (वैराग्य) - i.e. through constant practice and detachment, you can achieve that.

Sage Patanjali (c. 200 BCE) developed a detailed science of yoga. He prescribed *Ashtanga Yoga*, (अष्टांग योग) eight limbs of yoga for a morally disciplined and purposeful life. He defined the eight limbs as:

1. **Yama** (यम)- (the precepts of Social Discipline) that includes: *Ahimsa* (अहिंसा) non-violence, *Satya* (सत्य) truthfulness, *Asteya* (अस्तेय) non-stealing, *Brahmacharya* (ब्रह्मचर्य) celibacy, and *Aparigraha* (अपरिग्रह) abstention from greed.
2. **Niyama** (नियम)- (the precepts of Individual Discipline) that includes: *Saucha* (साucha) cleanliness, *Santosha* (संतोष) contentment, *Tapas* (तप) austerity, *Svadyaya* (स्वध्याय) self-study, and *Isvara-Pranidhana* (ईश्वर-प्रणिधान) surrender of the self to God.
3. **Asanas** (आसन) - set of physical exercises to keep our body healthy. Also known as *Hath Yoga*
4. **Pranayama** (प्रणायाम) - control of breath, the vital life-force.
5. **Pratyahara** (प्रत्याहार) - withdrawal of mind from sensory objects.
6. **Dharana** (धारणा) - concentration, introspection, focusing the mind on a subject.
7. **Dhyana** (ध्यान) - contemplation, reflection on whatever focused during *dharana*.
8. **Samadhi** (समाधि) - complete absorption in the object of contemplation.

Jñāna yoga (ज्ञान योग) - the path of wisdom through reasoned knowledge about the self and the cosmos. The *Jñāna yogi* requires *vairagya* (वैराग्य) dispassion- ability to detach oneself from unreal and the temporary world and *vivek* (विवेक) discrimination - ability to discern between what is unreal and what is real and eternal, *shad-sampat* (षडसंपत्) practicing of six virtues: control of mind, control of senses, renunciation of all motivation for rewards in this life and hereafter, endurance, faith, and focus, and *mumukshutava* (मुमुक्षुत्व)- a powerful desire to achieve liberation from suffering and the cycle of birth and death.

Vijai Singhal

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