



ISSN: 2456-0057

IJPNPE 2018; 3(1): 554-557

© 2018 IJPNPE

www.journalofsports.com

Received: 25-11-2017

Accepted: 27-12-2017

Pushpinder Singh

Research Scholar, Department of
Physical Education, Punjabi
University Patiala, Punjab,
India

A glimpse at yoga history

Pushpinder Singh

Abstract

When we utter the word yoga, people think it is about sitting in some impossible posture. Postures are just a minuscule aspect of yoga. Yoga is not just about twisting your body, standing on your head or holding your breath – a circus artist can do all these things better than most yogis. Yoga is not just an exercise. It is a process and system through which human beings can find their highest possible potential. The word “Yoga” literally means “Union.” What does union mean? The union is with the whole life that is happening around us and within us. Today it is a scientific fact that the whole existence is just one energy manifesting itself in a million different ways.

Keywords: Glimpse, yoga history

Introduction

When we utter the word yoga, people think it is about sitting in some impossible posture. Postures are just a minuscule aspect of yoga. Yoga is not just about twisting your body, standing on your head or holding your breath – a circus artist can do all these things better than most yogis. Yoga is not just an exercise. It is a process and system through which human beings can find their highest possible potential.

The word “Yoga” literally means “Union.” What does union mean? The union is with the whole life that is happening around us and within us. Today it is a scientific fact that the whole existence is just one energy manifesting itself in a million different ways. For ages the religions of the world have been saying, “God is everywhere.” Whether you say “God is everywhere” or “Everything is one energy,” it is not different. Einstein called it energy, you call it God. It is the same thing being expressed in two different ways. It is just that a scientist has never experienced it; rather he has arrived at it through mathematical deductions. A religious person has not experienced it either; he believes it because it has been written in some scripture or declared by someone. If you are a hard case, who is not willing to settle for deductions or belief systems, you want to know it for yourself. Then you become a Yogi.” If you learn to use this body as an instrument, it is the most fantastic and powerful instrument on the planet. Yoga is towards realizing this (Sadhguru, 2017) [6].

People say that yoga is Hindu, is yoga fundamentally a religious activity. Yoga is Hindu just the way gravity is Christian. Just because the law of gravity was propounded by Isaac Newton, who lived in a Christian culture, does it make gravity Christian? No, Yoga is a technology. Anybody who is willing to make use of it can make use of it.

Why the yogic sciences have gotten labeled as Hindu by a few ignorant people is because this science and technology grew and prospered in this culture, so naturally it has gotten associated with the Hindu way of life. “Hindu” is a problematic term; the word “Hindu” has come from the word “Sindhu”, which is a river. Because this culture grew from the banks of the river Sindhu or Indus, this culture got labeled as Hindu. Hindu is not an “ism” – it is not a religion. It is a geographical and cultural identity.

It is said that the Persians used to refer to the Indus River as Sindhu. Indus is a major river which flows partly in India and partly in Pakistan. However, the Persians could not pronounce the letter “S” correctly in their native tongue and mispronounced it as “H.” Thus, for the ancient Persians, the word “Sindhu” became “Hindu.” The ancient Persian refers to the word “Hindu” as a geographic name rather than a religious name (Sadhguru, 2017) [6]

Correspondence

Pushpinder Singh

Research Scholar, Department of
Physical Education, Punjabi
University Patiala, Punjab,
India

Everything Becomes One

Is such a thing possible? The individual experience of who you are has its basis on the boundaries of your sensation. Whatever is within these boundaries is you, and whatever is outside is not you—this is your experience of life. For example, once you drink a glass of water, you experience the water as you. Everything that makes up your body right now was somewhere outside as food or water. Once you put this into the boundaries of your sensation, you experience it as “myself.”

At any moment in your life, if you have known an extreme sense of joy or ecstasy, if you had placed your hands about eight or nine inches over your body, you would have felt the sensation of touching the body. Similarly, it is a medical fact that even when a physical leg is amputated, the sensory leg is still intact. The sensory body has its own presence beyond the physical body. There is a way to enlarge your sensory body.

If you make your life energies very exuberant and ecstatic, your sensory body becomes as large as you want it. Yoga is to expand the boundary of your sensation in such a way that you experience the whole universe as a part of yourself. Everything becomes one. That is union. (Sadhguru, 2017) ^[6]

History of Yoga

Adiyogi: The First Yogi

In the yogic culture, Shiva is not known as a god, but as the Adiyogi or the First Yogi – the originator of yoga. He was the one who first put this seed into the human mind. According to the yogic lore, over fifteen thousand years ago, Shiva attained to his full enlightenment and abandoned himself in an intense ecstatic dance upon the Himalayas. When his ecstasy allowed him some movement, he danced wildly. When it became beyond movement, he became utterly still.

People saw that he was experiencing something that nobody had known before, something that they were unable to fathom. Interest developed and people came wanting to know what this was. They came, they waited and they left because the man was oblivious to other people’s presence. He was either in intense dance or absolute stillness, completely uncaring of what was happening around him. Soon, everyone left.

Except for seven men: These seven people were insistent that they must learn what this man had in him, but Shiva ignored them. They pleaded and begged him, “Please, we want to know what you know.” Shiva dismissed them and said, “You fools. The way you are, you are not going to know in a million years. There is a tremendous amount of preparation needed for this. This is not entertainment.”

So they started preparing. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, they prepared. Shiva just chose to ignore them. On a full moon day, after eighty-four years of sadhana, when the solstice had shifted from the summer solstice to the winter solstice – which in this tradition is known as Dakshinayana—the Adiyogi looked at these seven people and saw that they had become shining receptacles of knowing. They were absolutely ripe to receive. He could not ignore them anymore. They grabbed his attention. He watched them closely for the next few days and when the next full moon rose, he decided to become a Guru. The Adiyogi transformed himself into the Adi Guru; the first Guru was born on that day which is today known as Guru Purnima. On the banks of Kanti Sarovar, a lake that lies a few kilometers above Kedarnath, he turned south to shed his grace upon the human race, and the transmission of the yogic science to these seven people began. The yogic science is not about a yoga

class that you go through about how to bend your body – which every new born infant knows—or how to hold your breath – which every unborn infant knows. This is the science of understanding the mechanics of the entire human system.

After many years, when the transmission was complete, it produced seven fully enlightened beings—the seven celebrated sages who are today known as the Saptarishis, and are worshipped and admired in Indian culture. Shiva put different aspects of yoga into each of these seven people, and these aspects became the seven basic forms of yoga. Even today, yoga has maintained these seven distinct forms.

The Saptarishis were sent in seven different directions to different parts of the world to carry this dimension with which a human being can evolve beyond his present limitations and compulsions. They became the limbs of Shiva, taking the knowing and technology of how a human being can exist here as the Creator himself, to the world. Time has ravaged many things, but when the cultures of those lands are carefully looked at, small strands of these people’s work can be seen, still alive. It has taken on various colors and forms, and has changed its complexion in a million different ways, but these strands can still be seen.

The Adiyogi brought this possibility that a human being need not be contained in the defined limitations of our species. There is a way to be contained in physicality but not to belong to it. There is a way to inhabit the body but never become the body. There is a way to use your mind in the highest possible way but still never know the miseries of the mind. Whatever dimension of existence you are in right now, you can go beyond that – there is another way to live. He said, “You can evolve beyond your present limitations if you do the necessary work upon yourself.” That is the significance of the Adiyogi (Sadhguru, 2017) ^[6].

Patanjali - The Father of Modern Yoga

Patanjali is known as the father of modern yoga. He did not invent yoga. Yoga was already there in various forms, which he assimilated into a system. Shiva, the Adiyogi or first yogi, transmitted yoga to the Sapta Rishis or the seven sages many thousands of years ago. He had the highest understanding of human nature, but he didn’t put anything down in writing. He was too wild to be a scholar. He found it was too difficult to put everything he knew into one person, so he chose seven people and put different aspects of yoga into them. These became the seven basic forms of yoga. Even today, though these have branched off into hundreds of systems, yoga has still maintained seven distinct forms.

If you look at Patanjali, as an enlightened being, he can’t be more enlightened than someone else. There is no such thing. Realization is realization. But as a man and above all as an intellect, he is such an intellect that the great scientists of today look like kindergarten children in front of him. The breadth of his understanding of life is so big that you cannot believe that this is possible in one human being. In his mastery of language, mathematics and in his perception of astronomy, he is so fantastic. Today’s scholars argue that this is not one man’s work, that many people must have worked to make this happen because it is so big, it cannot fit into one man’s intellect. It is one man’s work. He is probably one of the greatest intellects ever on this planet.

Patanjali defined yoga as Chitta Vritti Nirodha, which literally means that if you still the modifications and activity of the mind, you are in yoga. Everything has become one in your consciousness. We may be pursuing many things in our lives and going through processes that we call achievements,

but to go beyond the modifications of the mind is the most fundamental and at the same time the highest achievement one can attain, because this releases a human being from what he is seeking – from what is within and what is outside – from everything. If only he stills his mind, he becomes an ultimate possibility. The mind becomes a plain mirror, not a wavy mirror. A wavy mirror will distort one's whole perception of life. At least if you don't look at it, you may have some idea how you are, but if you look at it every day, it will give you a completely distorted vision of everything.

Right now, most human beings are using their mind only between their memory and imagination. Memory and imagination are not two separate things. Memory is accumulated past, imagination is an exaggerated version of that. If you bring your mind to a state where you are neither contaminated by memory nor deluded by imagination, then it is a truly intelligent, penetrative mind. It sees everything there is to see – life and its source. For the survival process, your memory and imagination are good enough, but if you want to explore other dimensions of life, then memory and imagination are not sufficient because they are only a recycling of your past. Once you recycle your past, there is a pattern to your life. And it is an unbreakable pattern if your mind is just engaged in memory and imagination. Once you are trapped by a pattern, it does not matter who created the pattern, it is a kind of slavery. Essentially, realizing that one is trapped in psychological realities and missing out on the existential experience of the grandeur of creation is the first step towards liberation.

This is the reason why, of all the beautiful ways in which it could be expressed, Patanjali chose the description 'Yogas Chitta Vritti Nirodha' for yoga-A technology which can take you towards your liberation or realization (Ling Beisecker, 2018) [2]

The Patanjali's Yoga Sutras

Over the generations, the science of yoga took on a life of its own and branched off into hundreds of systems. A lot of people think Patanjali is the origin of yoga – he is not. When Patanjali came, yoga had evolved and developed into over 1800 schools. Over 1800 varieties of yoga were going on in India at that time. When Patanjali came, he saw that it had become too complex and diversified for anyone to grasp in a meaningful way. So, he codified all aspects of yoga into a certain format known as the Yoga Sutras. This is a collection of 196 sutras on yoga. And so, Patanjali is known as the father of modern yoga (Sadhguru, 2017) [6].

Sutra literally means a thread. Or in modern language we can say it is like a formula. Anyone who knows the English alphabet, even a kindergarten child can say $E=mc^2$, but there is an enormous amount of science behind that little formula, which most people do not understand. The sutras are like this, in thread form. Out of ignorance, people have just taken these sutras and are trying to implement it as it is. A thread is of no consequence by itself. There can never be a garland without the thread but no one ever wears a garland for the sake of the thread. The thread was given so that each master makes his own kind of garland. You can put flowers on it, or beads or pearls or diamonds. The thread is vital but that is not a goal by itself (Ling Beisecker, 2018) [2].

Contents (Pada) of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras

Patanjali divided his Yoga Sutras into four chapters or books ('Pada' in Sanskrit), containing in all 196 Sutras, divided as follows

Samadhi Pada

The first chapter is about enlightenment, focusing on concentration and meditation. The 51 sutras discuss the process to become one. The sutras define yoga, obstacles to achieving yoga, the purpose of yoga, the importance of abhyasa (constant practice), and vairagya (detachment from material experiences).

Sadhana Pada

The second chapter is about the practice. The Yamas and Eight-Limbed system of yoga are introduced. The 54/55 sutras outline Karma, Kriya yoga, Ashtanga yoga, and the first six parts of the Eight Limbs of Yoga are discussed in-depth

Vibhuti Pada

The third chapter is about the results, power, and manifestation once union is achieved. The 56 sutras clarify the last two Limbs, dhyana and samadhi, as well as introduce the power of simultaneously activating the last three limbs. The chapter begins to highlight the ability of yoga to empower the mind.

Kaivalya Pada

The last chapter is about liberation, or moksha. The 34 sutras clarify liberation and what is achieved by the mind. This final chapter is devoted to complete, unconditional, and absolute liberation (Ling Beisecker, 2018) [2]

Ashtanga: The Eight Limbs of Yoga

In Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, the Ashtanga is called eightfold path, which literally means "Eight Limbs" (ashta=eight, anga=limb). The core of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra is 'Ashtanga' that forms the structural framework for yoga practice. The practice of Ashtanga yoga comes from second section of Yoga Sutra called the Sadhana Pada. As there are eight limbs of yoga. They are not steps – they are limbs. If we had eight limbs, which one to move first is our choice, according to our need.

In brief the eight limbs of yoga, are as follows:

1. **Yama:** Universal morality for daily living
2. **Niyama:** Ethics for self-discipline
3. **Asanas :** Body postures
4. **Pranayama:** Breathing exercises
5. **Pratyahara :** Control of the senses
6. **Dharana:** Concentration
7. **Dhyana:** Meditation
8. **Samadhi:** Oneness

Conclusion

The field of yoga is very vast but we can conclude this article with following quote of Sadguru Jaggi Vasudeva for the hope of further explorations.

This is not about Being Superhuman

This is about Realizing that Being Human is super."

(Sadguru, 2015) [4]

References

1. Guru Nanak dev Ji. (n.d.) ਅਪੁ ਤੇਜੁ ਬਾਇ ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੀ ਆਕਾਸਾ ॥ ਤਿਨ ਮਹਿ ਪੰਚ ਤਤੁ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸਾ ॥ Guru Granth Sahib Ji, Raag Maaroo: Line, 44070, 1031.
2. Ling Beisecker. What are Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, 2018. [webpage]. Retrieved August. 08, 2018, from <https://www.doyouyoga.com/ask-a-yogi-what-are->

- patanjalis-yoga-sutras-57749/
3. Singh Devinder Pal. Panch Tattva-A Perspective from Various Religions [Blog Post], 2013. Retrieved July 28, 2018, from <https://www.sikhphilosophy.net/threads/panch-tattva-a-perspective-from-various-religions.9895/>
 4. Sadguru Jaggi Vasudeva. Pancha Bhutas–The Possibility of the Five Elements [webpage], 2012. Retrieved Jan. 09, 2018, from <https://isha.sadhguru.org/in/en/wisdom/article/pancha-bhutas-the-possibility-of-the-five-elements>
 5. Sadguru Jaggi Vasudeva, Devi Shetty. Unlocking Human Capability [Transcript] Isha Foundation, 2015. Retrieved May 01, 2018, from <https://isha.sadhguru.org/in/en/wisdom/video/unlocking-human-capability>
 6. Sadguru Jaggi Vasudeva. Adiyogi–The First Yogi [webpage], 2017. Retrieved May 01, 2018, from <https://isha.sadhguru.org/yoga/history-of-yoga/the-first-yogi-adiyogi/>
 7. Willis Roy. World Mythology, New York: Metro Books, 2012, 62. Retrieved July 31, 2018 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Empedocles&oldid=851978440>.