



# अभिनवधार

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### Relevance of Yoga

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2018 marks the fourth International Yoga Day since its inception in 2015 by the United Nations. It has now become an important annual global event and special day in India overall. Each year marks additional progress in spreading the practice and study of Yoga and its entrance into schools, businesses, and all walks of life. It is important to keep this momentum going as Yoga holds the key to the transformation of human life to a higher level of awareness.

India is not just a country but a great dharmic civilization rooted in Yoga practice and Yoga philosophy since the most ancient times. It looks back to great Yogis and Rishis as its gurus and guides and highest role models. The teacher or deity in a sitting meditation pose, whether Lord Shiva or Lord Buddha, is the dominant art form or image in India that has spread throughout Asia and to the entire world.

Yoga is India's great civilizational gift to the world, and it is important for India to continue to nourish its yogic roots. Yoga of some sort can be found pervading the entire culture of India, from a local village level to a broad national and international level. This includes a yogic influence on music, dance, art, science, medicine, philosophy, politics, and economics, including in the spiritual realm where Yoga always excels. Skill in action, focus in perception, steady direction of energy, determination of effort, and excellence in achievement, along with inner composure and calm are all aspects of Yoga. Such yogic attitudes can help us grow and develop in life and unfold our highest personal and human potential. We should instil this at a young age as an important part of personal and social development.

All aspects of Yoga should go together. Our body is a temple for the deity that is our own inmost consciousness. Everything we do should play a proper role in the cosmic order.

Yoga is important as a way of life, self-education and character building. It helps us properly use and master our body, senses and mind, including control of our attention, thoughts and emotions. Yoga should be an integral part of our daily lives and our educational systems and sustained

learning for the whole of our lives, starting when we are young. A yogic discipline is ideal to prepare us for all the challenges of life.

Yoga arises originally from nature and teaches us to live in harmony with the Earth and the universe. It is not simply a manmade or historical invention, but a means of integration into the cosmic life. Yoga is inherently an ecological pursuit and promotes ecological awareness, concern for the environment, respecting the Earth and all its creatures, large and small. It affords us a planetary vision in which we look at the world, not as divided into conflicting countries and communities.

### **The Different Aspects of Yoga**

Each of the eight limbs of traditional Yoga has its value and relevance. We will discuss these briefly for a broader understanding of the scope of what Yoga can do for us.

Yoga begins with yogic values and principles in our attitudes and behaviour, which means kindness, compassion, humility, respect, courage and detachment. Yoga has its specific dharmic code of yamas and niyamas, principles and practices of dharmic living. This is the ideal foundation for the human values that we should develop in life, starting at a young age.

**For a quick overview of the yamas:** Ahimsa or non-harming reducing the harm going on in the world; Satya or promoting truth in thought, word and deed; Brahmacharya or control of our senses and bodily urges; Asteya or not wrongly expropriating anything for us; Aparigraha or not craving what other people have. Such attitudes bring clarity and harmony to the mind and heart.

**For a quick overview of the niyamas:** Tapas or self-discipline and self-control; Svadhyaya or Self-study and study of the works of the great teachers; Ishvara Pranidhana or consecrating ourselves to the Divine within and around us; Saucha or purity in thought, word and deed; and Santosha or contentment within ourselves. These dharmic ways of living form not only the foundation of Yoga they also form its goal. Such yogic values guarantee that we will have a meaningful life of integrity. They form the ideal value based education for the schools.

The next aspect of Yoga are the popular asanas which constitute the ideal form of exercise for giving strength, flexibility, purity and calm to the body, relieving stress, tension, blockages and difficulties in circulation and movement. Yoga asanas help relax the body overall so that we can move into a state of stillness and access the inner dimensions of our deeper energy and awareness. They bring us into harmony with the Earth and her ability to support and nourish the whole of life. If we have Yoga asanas as part of our exercise routine, rather than just working out at a gym, we will find better physical health, capacity and endurance that brings us inner calm as well.

Next, Yoga practices of pranayama and yogic breathing are very important for providing us energy for both body and mind. All healing comes through the power of prana and pranayama allows us to develop that in a simple and direct manner. Those who develop this power of prana become natural healers and a source of inspiration for all. Don't forget developing the power of prana as the true source of strength in your life. While we have a lot of energy in youth, we too easily dissipate it, and are left disturbed or exhausted. Pranayama helps us consolidate our energy for the best possible actions.

Then through pratyahara, or internalizing our senses, Yoga teaches us to be mindful of how we use our senses. Our senses usually go outward and cause us to lose our energy and focus to the external world.

Ayurveda also teaches us that wrong use of the senses is one of the main causes of disease, particularly running after what feels good or tastes good, rather than what is good and appropriate for us. We must remember that the senses are our instruments, and we should not let them dictate what we do. What may be pleasurable in the short term, may not make us happier or make us feel better in the long term. If we learn to use our senses in a focused manner, they can show us the boundless beauty of nature that is much more fascinating than any media screen.

These practices of Yoga then lead to the yogic factors of working on the mind. The Yoga practice of concentration helps us develop our power of attention, which is the foundation for all enduring learning. Today we are usually distracted by the many disturbances and stimulations around us that abound in the information-technology era.

While it is good to have many interests, it is also important that we are aware of the types of energies that we are bringing into our lives. Today our attention is largely under the sway of media and the new technology. Yoga teaches us to be able to direct our power of attention where and when we wish to, not to be driven by outside influences. This is very important at a young age so that we do not fall under the control of other people or mere societal influences and are able to decide what is truly best for us to do.

The essence of Yoga and the most important practice, which follows from these foundational disciplines, is meditation or Dhyana. It teaches us to take the attitude of a witness and observe not only the outer world and its events, but also what is happening inside our own minds that is of equal importance. Whatever we carefully meditate upon will reveal its secrets to us, starting with all forms of nature extending to our own thoughts. Meditation, though it does not require we do anything, is the most important activity of our lives and helps us best understand our life purpose, direction, and goal. While meditation may sound boring, it is the best way to move beyond all psychological afflictions. It should be part of any healthy lifestyle.

The ultimate goal of Yoga is to take us to a state of Samadhi or unitary awareness, in which is the highest inspiration, creativity, happiness and peace. True happiness comes from within and is enduring. Pleasure that comes from the outside however enticing should never be sought as a source of ultimate happiness. By bringing harmony and balance to body, prana, senses and mind, Yoga puts us in this place of ananda, so that we can share true happiness and well-being with all. If we can discover that inner ananda when we are young, we can hold it for the rest of our lives.

### **Ayurveda: The Yogic Healing Tradition**

Ayurveda and Yoga are not separate but have been related disciplines since the most ancient times. Ayurveda, India's natural healing tradition for body and mind, takes the principles and philosophy of Yoga and applies it to the realm of wellness and medicine at both physical and psychological levels. The same gurus like Patanjali who taught Yoga also taught Ayurveda. While Yoga is the Vedic system of sadhana and the pursuit of Self-realization, Ayurveda is the Vedic system of medicine, right living and self-healing. The two naturally go together.

Ayurveda teaches us that our best medicine is the food that we eat, which should be natural, harmonious and sattvic, full of prana. Ayurveda teaches us that just as we need our daily bread, so we need our daily herbs, which provide a higher and more powerful form of energy and nutrition. Ayurveda provides us many other important health guidelines and treatment recommendations based upon our natural temperament and individual constitution for which it has its own special methods to determine.

Yoga and Ayurveda teach us that there is a powerful healing force of Prana within each one of us, which is also connected to the prana or healing force of nature. We can heal ourselves if we learn the secrets of Prana and the breath. Having an Ayurvedic lifestyle from a young age is one of the best ways to ensure long term health and vitality.

**Conclusion:** Yoga at a Cosmic Level

Yoga teaches us that the universe is a formation of the light of consciousness - that behind matter is energy, behind energy is information, behind information is intelligence, and behind intelligence is consciousness.

There is a light of consciousness within each one of us that is boundless, vast and immortal. This yogic view of the universe is a cosmology of consciousness, compared to which the cosmology of modern physics, as it breaks through the barriers of time and space, is but an introduction.

It is important that we follow a yogic lifestyle and maintain a daily yoga practice from a young age, so it becomes part of our regular life regimen and natural way of action. Yoga is easy to integrate into our lives, with yoga asanas, pranayama and meditation both morning and evening, extending to special seasonal retreats or longer yoga sessions, but requires steady determination. Yoga can help you do whatever you need to do better, whether it is work, art, teaching or just enjoying the beauty and wonder of being alive. The important thing is to have Yoga as part of your life. Then Yoga can guide your life and bring greater harmony into all that you do. Yoga is the ultimate adventure in consciousness that should remain our highest pursuit in life. Its benefits are unlimited. The earlier we dedicate our life to Yoga, the more fulfilling and helpful to all, our lives are likely to be.