**Yoga-Vidya:**
The Science of Yoga

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INTRODUCTION
Yoga is the science of the SELF. Yoga can also be termed the science of man in depth, the science of conscious evolution or the science of human possibilities. Yoga not only has the concepts but also the tools and technology needed to find OUR SELF. While the modern science looks outward the Yogi searches the depth of his own self. According to Yogamarishhi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj who was one of the foremost authorities on Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga in the last century, Yoga is a science and not only is it a science but is the mother of Science. Dr. I K Taimni, another learned scholar known for his great analytical works on Yoga, even goes to the extent of calling Yoga the "Science of Sciences".

YOGA AS A SCIENCE
The characteristic of a science or Vidya is the approach and not merely content or quality of knowledge. Though Yoga has its foundations more than 5000 years ago and is principally an oral tradition, the verbal basis of Yoga-Vidya (Yogic Science) is found in the Upanishads (especially the Katha-Upanishad, Shvetashvatara-Upanishad and Maitrayaniya-Upanishad), the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the Bhagavad Gita. According to Prof. TR Anantharaman, President of the Indian Academy of Yoga, all of these Yoga scriptures are pre Buddhist in nature and share a systematic and broad scientific basis. Katha Upanishad, one of the first written works on Yoga mentions the Yoga-Vidya (science of Yoga) and Yoga-Vidhi (the technological know how) of Yoga. The pure science of Yoga is Adhyatma Vidya (science of man in depth) while the technology or applied science (rules of Yoga practice) that is, the technology of unification or integration, is called Yoga-Vidhi. The scientific attitude of Yoga can be seen from the firm insistence on Pariprasna (enquiry or dialogue) as a pre requisite to higher knowledge as enunciated in the Bhagavad Gita (IV.34). Similarly the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali display a scientific attitude towards the acquisition of Pramana (true knowledge). Patanjali says that true knowledge can be acquired (Yoga Sutra: Chapter I, Verse?) by direct perception (Pratyaksha), rational inference (Anuman) and from reliable testimony (Agama). This use of the intellect (Buddhi) endowed with discrimination (Viveka) is typical of all Yoga traditions and their teachings. The Bhagavad Gita, which is sometimes referred to as the Yoga Shastra, shows the exchange between Arjuna and Yogeshwar Krishna to be of a genuine spirit of enquiry and a keen desire for truth, as one would expect from a modern scientist and his guide. The Shiva-Samhita (V.26-30) lists the characters of a fully qualified disciple (shishya) as follows. "Endowed with great energy and enthusiasm, intelligent, heroic, learned in the scriptures, free from delusion..." Aren't these very same qualities required by a true scientist (a seeker of true knowledge)?

TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY OF YOGA (YOGA-VIDHI)
The process of Yoga is one of the understanding and achievement of Mind Control. The Yogis discovered that the mind has many levels such as Mudha (dull and inert mind), Kshipta (distracted mind), Vikshipta (partially distracted mind), Ekagratha (concentrated mind) and Niruddha (controlled mind). They also found that the thought waves (Chitta-Vritti) were five fold and are Pramana (conception), Viparyaya (miscoception), Vikalpa
(imagination), **Nidra** (sleep) and **Smrthi** (memory). They realized that without controlling these mental fluctuations there was no hope of spiritual evolution. This is why Maharishi Patanjali says, “Yoga is the stilling of the whirlpools of the mind (Yogash chittavritti nirodhah).” Once this is achieved the Yogin rests in his essential self (Tada drishtu swarupeva sthanam). The method to achieve this state is through dedicated and determined practice and dispassion (Abyasa vairagabhyaam tannirodhah).

The Yogi views his being as a manifestation of the Divine and realizes that he is not only the physical body but also has four other bodies; the energy body, the mental body, the body of wisdom and the body of eternal bliss. This concept is known as the *Pancha Kosha*. He follows a systematic practice (*Abyasa*) of the eight fold path of Ashtanga (Raja) Yoga consisting of the moral restraints (*Yama*), ethical observances (*Niyama*), firm and comfortable postures (*Asana*), expansion of the vital life force (*Pranayama*), control of the senses (*Pratyahara*), concentration (*Dharana*) leading into meditation (*Dhyana*) and ultimately transcending the individual self in cosmic consciousness (*Samadhi*). This conscious evolution may take years and years (even lifetimes) of disciplined and dedicated practice (*Abyasa*), detachment or dispassion (*Vairagya*) and loads of discrimination (*Viveka*). Through such a systematic manner the Sadhak (seeker of Truth) attempts to unite (*Yuj*) his individual self (*Jivatma*) with the universal self (*Paramatma*).

**VIEWS ON YOGA-VIDYA BY EMINENT YOGIS AND SCIENTISTS**

Swami Vivekananda said, “Yoga is really one of the grandest sciences...take up the study of this science as you would any other science of material nature and remember there is no mystery and no danger in it.”

Dr. I K Taimni, an eminent scholar known for his excellent work on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (*The Science of Yoga*) says, “This science of sciences is too comprehensive in its nature and too profound in its doctrine to be fitted into the framework of any particular philosophy—either ancient or modern. It stands in its own right as a science based upon the eternal laws of the higher life and does not require the support of any science or philosophical system to uphold its claims. Its truths are based in the experiences and experiments of an unbroken line of mystics, occultists, saints and sages, who have realized and borne witness to them through the ages.”

Sri RR Diwakar, who was one of the founding fathers of the modern Indian political state, has the following to say. “While modern science (that is of an experimental nature) has brought us to the brink of a nuclear war, the Yoga-Vidya (that is experimental in nature) on the other hand brings about peace, harmony, love, friendliness and cooperation.”

This experiential nature of Yoga is well brought out by Vyasa’s *Yoga-Bhashya* wherein he says, “Yoga must be known through Yoga. Yoga grows through Yoga. He who is attentive towards Yoga long delights in yoga.”(III.6). Similarly the *Yoga-Shikha-Upanishad* warns of the “snare of textbooks” (*Shastra-Jala*) referring to bookish learning without accompanying experience.

Dr. Georg Feuerstein Ph.D., Director of the Yoga Research Centre USA says in his excellent book ‘The Shambala Guide to Yoga’, “Long before physicists discovered that matter is energy vibrating at a certain rate, the Yogis of India had treated this body-mind as a playful manifestation of the ultimate power (Shakti), the dynamic aspect of Reality. They realized that to discover the true Self, one had to harness attention because the energy of the body-mind follows attention. A crude example of this process is the measurable increase of blood flow to our fingers and toes that occurs when we concentrate on them. The yogis are very careful about where they place their attention, for the mind creates patterns of energy, causing habits of thought and behavior that can be detrimental to the pursuit of genuine happiness”.

Dr Dean Ornish, an eminent American medical doctor who has shown that Yogic lifestyle can reverse heart disease says, “Yoga is a system of perfect tools for achieving union as well as healing.”

Dr VSSM Rao writes that, “The tradition of Yoga is so perfect that we have to seek ways of expounding it in modern scientific terminology instead of simply evaluating it in terms of current concepts of science, which is expanding so rapidly that a time may come when man would like to live by his intuition rather than by scientific planning, bristling with conflicts and balancing a number of variables not completely understood.”

According to the late Padma Bhushan Dr. B Ramamurthy, eminent neurosurgeon, Yoga practice re-orient the functional hierarchy of the entire nervous system. He has noted that Yoga not only benefits the nervous system but also the cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, endocrine systems in addition to bringing about general biochemistry changes in the yoga practitioners.

Professor Dr SV Rao, an eminent medical doctor and Yoga Scientist says, “Yoga is a science because it is verifiable. Yoga as a science of living is also an art. Yoga,
therefore, may be defined as the science and art of optimum living. Yoga has the capacity to move, either side by side with medical science or independently. This is because Yoga has a sound system of etiology, diagnosis and pathogenesis of disease. Thus we have a complete system by itself in Yoga.”

Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj, one of the foremost authorities on classical yoga in the last century says, “Yoga is scientific and many of its practices can be measured by existing scientific methods. As a science of mind it offers a safe method of concentration and meditation educating a practical application of the power of the human mind. Its entire process is centered in awareness, that is why I call it the science of awareness.”

PRESENT STATUS OF YOGA-VIDYA

Institutions such as AIIMS, BHU, NIMHANS, DIPAS, JIPMER, VK Yogas, Kaivalyadhama, Bihar School of Yoga and our own ICYER have done vast amounts of work in bringing forth the scientific methods of Yoga Vidya. Universities such as BHU, Sagar, Himachal, Venkateshwar and Andhra University have created Centers for Yoga education and Research and are doing great service. Scientists such as Dr BK Anand, Dr KK Datey, Dr KN Udupa, Dr B Ramamurthy, Dr W Selvamurthy, Dr T Desiraju, Dr Nagendra, Dr Nagaratna, Dr Shirley Telles, Dr MV Bhole, Dr Rajapurkar, Dr Mitimohan, Dr Lajpat Rai and Dr Madanmohan have contributed extensively towards the scientific understanding of Yoga Vidya and Yoga Vidhi. The Central Government has created the Central Council for Research in Yoga and Naturopathy (CCRYN) that is the governing body for Yoga research and education in our country under the Ministry of Health. Various private institutions are running in our country and doing their best to propagate Yoga-Vidya. Yoga therapy is being used both in conjunction with modern medicine or alternative systems of medicine as well as on its own in various centers. Various conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, mental depression, bronchial asthma etc have been found to be relieved by Yoga Therapy and centers such as sVYASA, Kaivalyadhama, National Institute of Naturopathy (Pune), Manipal Institute and the Moraji Desai National institute are doing a great deal of work in this field.

WHY HAVEN'T WE MADE BETTER USE OF THIS MAGNIFICENT SCIENCE?

Because, even fifty years after independence we still suffer from a 'colonial hangover' believing that 'the west is best' and that all our ancient knowledge is hocus-pocus. We do not see and understand this great Yoga-Vidya until westerners come and certify that it is OK!!.

Though the interest for Yoga-Vidya in the west is growing day by day and more and more people are turning towards Yoga, this is not the same in our country. Lack of proper infrastructure and absence of a proper systematized approach in the propagation of Yoga are still drawbacks in our nation. The youngsters are being drawn away from our culture and blindly ape the hedonistic western lifestyle.

Unless we change our mindset we cannot understand our wonderful culture and the great science of Total Man that has arisen from it. This is why it is imperative that the youth of our nation are awakened to the greatness inherent in our beloved nation and given the proper and systematic training in Yoga and our cultural heritage. Catch them young must be our aim if we are to educate them about the greatness of our cultural heritage.

I conclude my presentation with a favorite statement of Pujya Swamiji Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj,

“Health and happiness are your birthright. Do not forsake your golden culture for the plastic playthings of the western world. Learn and live Yoga for then you will know health and happiness”.

REFERENCES