Critical Analysis on Ashtanga Yoga

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ABSTRACT

Yoga is knowledge of life accepted by worldwide originated in India having a history of long back. It is one of the most important practices used extensively to keep body and the mind in balanced condition and make a person physically, mentally and socially healthy. Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root YUJA also YUJIR meaning to unite or to integrate, union refers to jeevatma with Paramatma i.e union of individual consciousness with cosmic or divine consciousness. Integration refers to physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual aspects of human personality. Integration also refers to adjustment of an individual with his environment or the society. Yoga is getting recognition among world because of its therapeutic value and also one of the non pharmacological method to treat the diseases. In this review article attempt as been made to collect and compel available references on Ashtanga Yoga and analyze importance of Ashtanga Yoga for present day.

KEYWORDS

Ashtanga Yoga, Health, Hatha Yoga, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi, Moksha
INTRODUCTION

Yoga is philosophy originated in India which is having long back history; dated 5000 years back science which taught right living. Yoga bestow effect when it is integrated in our daily life, it works on all aspects of human personality like physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional. The word yoga is derived from Sanskrit root Yuj or Yujir which denotes union; the union refers to union of Jeevatma with Paramatma, which is union of individual consciousness with divine consciousness.

युजि योगे॥
युज्यतेअनेनइजतयोगः॥

The process one which unites, combines, integrates refers to body and the mind. That which unites soul with the god is refers to Yoga.

मनःप्रशमनोपायःयोगइत्याजिधीयते।

Acharya Yogavasishta clears Yoga is a technique which pacifies thoughts of the mind. When mind is detached from worldly objects could maintain desire free state. With desire free mind person will not be influenced with gain or loss, succeed or defeat and pleasure or misery in life.

योगःचित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः॥

Acharya Patanjali defines Yoga as stoppage of functions of chitta or manah or dividing of chitta from its functions or cessation of mental functions or Chittavrittis due to mind, intellect and ego.

प्रमाणविषयविकल्पनिद्रास्मृतम्॥

Pramana, Viparyaya, Vikalpa, Nidra and Smrithi are the Chittavrittis mentioned by Patanjali in Yoga sutras of Patanjali. Pramana is a source of knowledge, again three types are there, prathyaksha pramana one which is having direct evidence. Anumana pramana is one which is understood by Inference. Aagama pramana is gained by reading Holy texts or vedas. Viparyaya is wrong interpretation or wrong diagnosis, Vikalpa is imagination or fantasy, Nidra denotes Sleep, Smrithi is memory or remembering experience of past.

योगःकर्मसुकौशलम्॥

In Bhagavadgeetha it has explained Yoga is skilled performance, person who performs action with balanced mental status will able to diffuse the effect of Sanchitakarma and Prarabdakarma. Such state of mind will make the way to achieve state of super consciousness; in concise yoga is procedure to perform action devoid of the attachments.

समत्वंयोगमुच्यते॥

Acharyas mentions state of balance between failure and win or body and mind is Yoga; person should engage oneself in action with mind persistent in Yoga.
Individual should dispose of attachments and be tranquil in success and failure this state of circumstance is called as *Yoga*.

तंजवद्यात्ुःखसंयोगजवयोगंयोगसंजितं॥

Individual should remain unrestrained with contentment and miseries of world is considered as *Yoga*, separation of association with pain is designated as *Yoga*. It has to be practiced diligently with determination.

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Aim of this study is to collect all available references from classical texts of *Yoga* and other ancient texts regarding *Ashtanga Yoga* to make easy understanding of topic. Analyze the importance of *Ashtanga Yoga* in classical text of *Yoga*, and also discuss the significant role of *Ashtanga yoga* in promotion and maintenance of health and also achieve super consciousness state.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This article is conceptual, all the available references from Ancient literature have been searched, collected and compiled also available current literature for *Ashtanga Yoga* have been searched for this article and analyzed for better understanding of topic. To conclude the study, all available *Yogic* literature referred, and a humble effort has been made to draw conclusion.

**CONCEPT OF ASHTANGA YOGA**

*Ashtanga Yoga* is one of the ancient systems of *yoga*; literal meaning of this is eight limb of *yoga* as explained by sage *Patanjali* in yoga sutras of *Patanjali*. *Ashtanga Yoga* is internal purification and integration of body and mind for revealing universal self consists of eight spiritual practices those are

यमनियमासनप्राणायामप्रत्याहारधारणाध्यानसांभोजनसान।

1. **YAMA** – Ethical practice or moral codes
2. **NIYAMA** – Ethical practice and self-purification
3. **ASANA** – Physical practice or postures
4. **PRANAYAMA** – Vital practice or breath control
5. **PRATYAHARA** – Sensorial practice
6. **DHARANA** – Mental & spiritual practice (concentration)
7. **DHYANA** - Mental & spiritual practice (Meditation)
8. **SAMADHI** - Mental & spiritual practice (Integration)

**YAMA (Ethical practice):**

*Yama* is one which induces *Vairagya* on *Deha* and *Indriya*, first and foremost step in *Patanjali* *Ashtanga Yoga* is *Yama*, the literal meaning of *Yama* is abstinence or self-discipline or self-control, in *Patanjali yoga darshana* five types of *Yama* has been
explained which beginners should follow without deviating are mentioned beneath.

अहिःसास्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्या परिग्रहायमः।

Yama is ethical discipline to regulate positive personality, hence practice of right conduct or ethical discipline are necessary to achieve success in yoga. There is a purposeful arrangement in five Yamas those are Ahimsa, Sathya, Astheya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha.

Ahimsa otherwise non violence is first and foremost step in Yama, one must remove brutal nature and individual must become non violent and extend enormous love towards every living beings. Individual should avoid injuring any living creature; this is the first step in spiritual path to eliminate appalling nature only then person will become able to practice Yoga hence one should practice Ahimsa in its purest form.

Sathya is second step in order of Yama which denotes truthfulness, thought should agree with word and word with action is called as pure form of truthfulness, otherwise doing opposite is called as crookedness. Through speaking lies one will pollute there subconscious mind, in other words self is truth it is realized only by speaking, observing truth in thought, speech and action.

Third and important step of Ashtanga yoga is Astheya denotation of this is non-stealing, this is a form of self restraint or self control. While individual needs to full fill his requirements and he will not get it by rightful way then only he will indulges in stealing further desire will cause for stealing. Without the knowledge of possessor captivating his petite belongings and wants others not to recognize this act is called as stealing. The yogic scholar should away from these types of acts to achieve siddhi in yoga.

The fourth Yama is put into practice of continence that is Brahmacharya; most of the great spiritual aspirants will follow celibacy hence they are able to stimulate whole world by command of their knowledge. Sexual continence or celibacy is not only by means of physical contact in other words it includes all types of sex and thinking about sex, watching sex and talking about sex should also be avoided by yogic practitioner.

The final and extremely important step in Yama is Aparigraha; Parigraha is having greediness, and immediately opposite to this word is Aparigraha means not having any type of greediness. Aparigraha is a mental condition in which the sensual desire is absolutely dead. Aparigraha puts to end to all activities of brain like nervousness, fear, hatred, annoyance, and
stealing and dishonesty extras, enhances peace and contentment.

**NIYAMA:**
शौिसन्तोषतपःस्वाध्यायेष्वरप्रजणधानाजनजनयमाः।

Second step in the path of Ashtanga Yoga is Niyama also consists of five limbs, specifically Shoucha, Santosha, Tapa, Swadhyaya and Eswara pranidana. Niyama is also code of conduct and ethical practice for internal and external purification of body. The foremost and primary limb in Niyama is Shoucha which is purity together internally and externally. External purification will produce purity in internally as well and through practice of Shoucha individual gradually gives up attachment and affection to the body and it is easy to attain higher qualities in the path of Yoga. Internal purity is more significant than external one, internal purity contains taking away of annoyance, lust, greediness and jealousy. Hence developing of internal purity is extremely difficult but can be achieved by vigilant attempt.

The second step in Niyama of Ashtanga Yoga is Santosha which means contentment; Santosha does not mean satisfaction, it is a keenness to acknowledge things as they are and make the best of them. A contended person is feels happy in all circumstances he is satisfied through what he is having never craved for things he does not have. Contentment is powerful antidote or solution for poisonous covetousness, by adopting Santosha individual can achieve Moksha in the path of Yoga.

In path of Ashtanga yoga third step in Niyama is Tapa means austerity or practice of penance. Tapa also means self-control of the senses and meditation, which leads to control of the mind. Tapa also means Swadarma or profession; individual has to strictly follow their profession without deviating from path of Yoga or achieving of Samadhi. Psychological Tapas is more powerful than physical one to make mind stable as it is unbalanced in nature. Swadhyaya is subsequent step in Niyama which is also called as self study. Swadhyaya is not only studying of books or scriptures it is also knowing one self and asking question to self is also considered as Swadhyaya. Apropadesha is in addition can be considered under Swadhyaya as listening to Aptha is another approach of receiving knowledge. Swadhyaya can also be achieved by Satsanga, while individual cannot obtain essential companionship of realization, Swadhyaya helps in strengthening flickering mind.

Surrendering to the god is Iswara pranidana which is last step in Niyama; this
is the put into practice where individual will consecrate the whole thing to superior force. Self surrendering of each and every work as supreme god and results are fruits given by the same is called as Iswara Pranidhana. This surrendering to the supreme lord make individual to achieve self realization and reach Moksha which highest level of yoga in Patanjalis Ashtanga Yoga.

ASANA:
Asana is a third and important step in Ashtanga Yoga, Asana is a physical posture word meaning is sitting position. Asana is a Sanskrit word materialize in many contexts signifies a static physical position, in Patanjali yoga sutras Asana is defined as a firm and comfortable posture for prolonged period. In same context Patanjali explains Asana as third step in eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga, but in Hatha Yoga Pradeepika Asana is mentioned in first step further Acharya explains Asana will provide steadiness to body, enhances health and lightness in body.

स्थिरंसुखंआसनं॥¹¹
हठस्यप्रिमाङ्गत्वा्ासनंपूवयमुच्यते।
कु यायत्त्ासनंथिैययमारोग्यंिाङ्ग
लाववं॥¹²

Patanjali Yoga sutra simply classifies characteristics of excellent Asana however not single Asana in a name mentioned. Later on Yoga texts however mentioned 84 classical Asanas and associated them with lord Shiva. Different classical texts mentions number of Asanas dissimilar in Hatha yoga Pradeepika 84 numbers of Asanas are mentioned in that four are extremely important for Yogi, few classical texts opines that Asanas are infinite. It is also mentioned in Gheranda Samhitha that asserts of Shiva taught 8,400,000 Asanas, out of which 84 are most excellent and 34 are useful for yogis to attain Moksha. Asana is well known for western people, few regard as it is entirety of Yoga. However Asana is simple postures which are firm and comfortable for Yogi to prepare the body for meditation for longer period. Hence individual who wants to control the mind proficiently they have to get control over physical body primarily, this can be achieved by regular practice of Asana. These physical postures will develop mental equilibrium, endurance and immense vitality. Thus Asanas helps in controlling the mind to attain Moksha spiritually, protect the health and alleviate an assortment of diseases.

PRANAYAMA:
Pranayama is made up of two words ‘Prana’ and ‘Ayama’ suffix Prana denotes breath, life, respiration, vitality extra, prefix Ayama denotes controlling, stretching, expanding by these words we can understand that controlling the breath will
controls our mind also, stretching and expanding breath will expands or enhances our lifespan.

Yogi once reached mastery over Asanas he has to get control over breath; hence next step in Ashtanga Yoga is Pranayama. Here in this citation from Patanjali Yoga Sutras Tasmin stand for Asana as here in Pranayama any firm and comfortable posture is required, Vyasa defines Shwasa as ‘BAHYASYAVAYORACHAMANAM’ means sucking in the external air or inhalation and Prashwasa as ‘KOSHTASYAVAYORNISSARANAM PRASHWASA’ Exhalation is the driving out of air from the chest. Gativicheda means Literary meaning is ‘a break down in the moment’, i.e. a simultaneous break in the acts of forced inhalation and forced exhalation. Vyasa puts it as Udbhaya Bhava, which means cessation of both inhalation and exhalation and not of one only. We find that Vyasa is very clear in defining Pranayama. The term Pranayama can be used only when the whole respiration is brought to a standstill, there being neither inhalation nor exhalation. In synonyms of Pranayama many terms are used by authors those are Prana peedana, Prana Avarodha, Prana Samyam, Pranayama, Prana nigraha, Prana nirodha, Mahanirodha though all these terms mainly put forth the concept of total voluntary suspension of the respiratory reflex for a shorter or longer period a phenomenon called ‘Kumbhaka’. Hatha Yoga Pradeepika it is mentioned that mind is unstable when Pranavayu is moving; while it is accomplishing stability even mind becomes stable. Hence when Pranavayu and mind becomes stable then only yogi will attains steadiness therefore individual should control the Vayu through regular Pranayama practice.

**PRATHYAHARA:**

Ashtanga Yoga is divided in to two headings Antaranga Yoga and Bahiranga Yoga, initial four those are Yama, Niyama, Asana and Pranayama are incorporated under Bahiranga Yoga, last three those are Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are considered as Antaranga Yoga, Prathyahara acts as bridge between these two that is Antaranga and Bahiranga Yoga. Prathyahara is act of self control, it is one of the eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga it enhances power of concentration, with draw the senses by giving up the individual objects and established in unique state of mind.
Prathyahara is withdrawing of senses from all worldly objects and desires, observance of setting up in pure nature of Chitta or mind. Since sense organs are making contact with objects they imitate features of the mind, the sense organs become introvert.

This is the preliminary phase where Yogi will think about self, by regular put into practice of Prathyahara the sense organs are absolute control under the mind. This is the stage where control over the mind achieved and Yogi will get self realization.

**Dharana:**

Sixth and important phase in Patanjali Ashtanga Yoga is Dharana, once getting control over physical body by practicing of Bahiranga Yoga and crossing the bridge of Prathyahara the practitioner move in to Dharana first step in Antaranga Yoga.

Dharana is a procedure of withdrawal of mind from the senses and joining together with the soul. Here in this stage mind is in focused state, with concentration on selected object.

This stage is most essential to attain Atma Gnana, hence in this path mind will get focused and bring about the concentration on desired object. In this stage Yogi will bring his concentration different parts of the body are on specific region like umbilicus, heart, tip of the nose, centre of eye brows then combine his mind with particular aim this is known as Dharana.

**Dhyana:**

Dhyana is a stage of advancement over Dharana this is seventh step in Patanjalis eight limbs of yoga, after achieving stage of Dharana at the point of time mind will succeeded in holding concentration for a sufficient time on desired object.

Dhyana is continuous and constant thought regarding same object and there is no divergence even for a fraction in other words uninterrupted continuation of mental ability is termed as meditation.

Generally Dhyana is translated as meditation means imply a status of remaining calm by deep inward focus as practiced in many traditions. By regular practice of Dhyana Yogi will enjoys absolute blissfulness.
Dhyana is practiced to reach Vairagya or complete detachment, Dhyana is of three types Sthuladhyana, Jyothi Dhyana and Sukshma Dhyana. When Dhyana is of sthula that is particular object or picture such as ones guru is considered, Dhyana is on Brahma as contemplated as light is called Jyothisa Dhyana and when Brahma is considered as bindu or point and also kundalini force is called Sukshma Dhyana. All the types of Dhyana are having their own importance and benefits.

**SAMADHI:**
Final and ultimate stage of Patanjali Ashtanga Yoga is Samadhi, every school of Yoga are considered Samadhi as last stage. Samadhi is super conscious state where in Yogi obtains superlative intuitional or wonderful sensual knowledge and super sensual happiness.

Samadhi is state in which union of Jeevatma and Paramatma will occurs which is also an aim of Yoga. Union refers to individual consciousness with super consciousness; no much difference will be there in both consciousnesses. In this state Yogi will become engrossed in Parabrahman and the whole thing that hides the soul is detached.

Individual who achieves highest level of bliss that is reaching of Samadhi he will be free from all desires, disinterest from his own body, detachment from son, wife, kinsmen and being free from each and every one will obtain entirely Samadhi.22

**RESULTS**
Ashtanga yoga explained in Patanjali Yoga Sutra is traditional and accurate path to accomplish Samadhi stage for each and every Yogi. Ashtanga Yoga which starts from Ethical practice or code of conducts in the name of Yama and Niyama are most excellent practices for purification of body by internally and externally. Asana which makes body and mind stable which is very essential for Yogi. Pranayama is vital practice and breath control also helps yogi to strengthen psychological health. Prathyahara is sensorial practice acts as bridge in between Bahiranga and Antaranga Yoga. Finally three Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are very essential for yogi to attain Moksha.

**DISCUSSION**
Currently several schools refer to ancient text Patanjali Yoga Sutra as the philosophical resource and manuscript for describing yoga practice in comprehensible approach. According to Patanjali Yoga Sutra description of yoga is ‘ChittaVritti
Nirodha’ which means cessation of mind from its functions.

In the same context Acharya Patanjali explains regarding ChittaVrittis which comprise Pramana, Viparyaya, Vikalpa, Nidra and smrithi, individual wants to achieve highest level in path of Yoga one has to put these ChittaVrittis in accurate path.

In Hatha Yoga Pradeepika Acharyas explains obstacles in path of yoga which avoid individuals to achieve highest goal in yoga. Above mentioned citation elucidate person consuming more quantity of food and untimely food; carry out works which give physical exertion, individual more talkative regarding unnecessary, excessive or extreme adhering to rules, maintaining company of normal people and unsteadiness of mind and body these factors which leads to obstacles in Yoga, consequently individual wants to accomplish Moksha one has to stay away from these factors.

In Patanjali Yoga Sutras the eight fold path is termed as Ashtanga, the literal meaning of this is eight limbs of Yoga. These eight steps fundamentally acts as guiding principle on how to live determined and significant life. This Patanjalis Ashtanga Yoga serves as an instruction to accomplish ethical and principled conduct for self discipline also these practices will direct responsiveness towards health and help individual to distinguish spiritual aspects of our personality.

Patanjalis Ashtanga Yoga provides comprehensible deeper knowledge to put in to practice and also well describes procedure of performing Yoga. The foremost two stages of Ashtanga Yoga are Yama and Niyama are fundamental rules and regulations which are related to ethical code of conduct or preconditions to reach higher stages in Yogic path, these are extremely essential for Yogi to achieve Samadhi stage in Ashtanga Yoga. Asana and Pranayama are fourth and fifth stages of Ashtanga yoga consecutively physical practice and vital practices which are essential stages for Yogi to improve stability of body and mind further obtain control over body and breath. Further the fifth step is Prathyahara work as bridge between external and internal Yoga. Last three are Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are considered as internal parts of Yoga which are also considered as mental and spiritual practices to achieve realization in Yogic path. The meaning of word Yoga is combining, integrating; joining hence each and every step in Ashtanga Yoga is
beneficial in combining body and mind, also integrating of Atma with Paramatma that is individual consciousness with divine consciousness.

**CONCLUSION**

Subsequent to referring all accessible references on *Patanjalis Ashtanga Yoga* it can be concluded that stages described will increases the vital life force and channels them in accurate path, stimulates the *shatchakras*, exceptional to improve physical health, strength and endurance. There are various other benefits through *Ashtanga Yoga* those are increases mental clarity, flexibility and strength of body will improves, decrease stress furthermore balances body and mind. Individual who want to achieve highest level in *Yoga* they should stay enthusiastic, always be enterprising, individual should courageous, having discriminative knowledge, person should pledged for achievement and ready to Stay alone\(^{25}\).
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