

## Yoga in Vedic Literature

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### Abstract:

Yoga is a very special part of Indian way of life and Vedas are the most ancient texts of Indian culture. In the beginning of creation, God gave the knowledge of Vedas to the four sages *Agni*, *Vāyu*, *Āditya* and *Angirā*. Along with this, *Yoga Vidyā* was also described. Those rishis also must have done yoga practice before having *darshan* of Vedic mantras, that's why yoga has been discussed at many places in *Veda*. Vedas are the storehouse of knowledge and science of the world. The main theme of the *Vedas* is to make spiritual progress. That's why *Yajna Upāshnā Pūjā*, rituals and other rituals have been described. Before all this, the law of yoga practice has been made.

The present study based on the review of Vedic literature aims to find the yogic knowledge which is there in different forms. Yoga has a special place in the study of all Vedic literature. From this point of view also an attempt has been made to find the points of Yoga.

### Introduction:

The *Veda* itself means knowledge and Vedic literature is filled with sublime knowledge. It is one of the most ancient scripture of Indian culture; as it is said that Lord *Brahmā* (The creator of the universe) Himself created the Vedas. Vedas are universally accepted by the scholars of all ages as the most ancient treaties of knowledge. Spiritually enlightened seekers, seers and sages have revered the *Vedas* as the origin and ultimate end of human knowledge and culture.

*Vedas* are not confined to any cult, religion or school of philosophy; they are neither for that matter, doctrines nor for principles preached in a specific period of history. *Vedas* have been the reputed sources of not only some of the world's richest and profound religions, but the subtlest metaphysical philosophies as well. Their

recognition as the paramount sources of ultimate spiritual knowledge and elevated culture has remained unchallenged in the history of mankind. No critiques have been able to challenge this fact.

Not only the sages and seers of the modern times, but also some of the greatest scientists, the founders of modern civilization have acclaimed *Vedas* as magnum opus of subtlest depths of knowledge, Ultimate truth, and sublime illumination and evolved self-culture.

It also is a well-known fact that the language of the *Veda* is *Śruti*, a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heard, a divine word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man, who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge.

It is said that the power to receive that vibrations – the inner audience, the only way was *Sādhanā*, which is one of the path of Yoga. As in every context the *Veda* itself focuses over the practice of Yoga.

To be very specific to the word ‘Yoga’ is mentioned in all four *Veda Samhitās*. As for the sec of knowledge the mantras of Vedas are compiled in four parts i.e. *Ṛg-Veda*, *Yajurveda*, *Atharvaveda* and *Sām Veda*. Now the question arises why the Veda was divided into four *Samhitā*. It is quite difficult to answer this question; the seer and saints explains that the purpose behind the division was some how specializations of *Mantra*. They further suggests that spiritual well being, self realization, peace of mind, *Brahma-Nirvāna*, dutifulness, love, penance, compassion, generosity and service etc have been kept under *Ṛg-Veda*. The knowledge of generosity, velour, courage, gallantry, leadership, fame, victory and power dignity etc came under *Yajurveda*.

*Sām Veda* deals with games and sports, amusement, recreation, music, arts, literature, sensual enjoyment, beauty, harmony, poetic imagery, refined taste and gratification etc. As well as *Atharvaveda* deals with wealth, prosperity, accumulation of money and resources, medicines, food grains, materials, buildings and vehicles etc.

The *Veda* has been classified into three *Kāṅd* (mode of classification); first is *Karmakāṅda*, the second is *Upāsnākāṅda* and the third one is *Jnānkāṅda*. According to the *Karmakāṅda* the art of right working is Yoga, as per the *Upāsnākāṅda* the method of stopping the modification of the mind-stuffs is Yoga and according to the *Jnānkāṅda* the union of human consciousness with divine consciousness is Yoga.

### Discussion:

Vedic science deals with the deep knowledge of Yoga in various contexts. Since it deals with *Yajna* (sacrifice), *Upāsnā* (worship) and *Karmakāṅds* (rituals) but in between there are enough references where it deals the different steps of Yoga.

The Veda explores the importance of Yoga as –

यस्माद्रते न सिध्यति यज्ञो विपश्चितश्चन।  
स धीनां योगमिन्वति॥ ऋग्वेद – १/१८/७

//*Yasmadrte Nā Sidhyati Yagyō Vipaschitaschana /Sa Dhinām Yogamiṅvati*  
// - (*Ṛg-Veda* – 1/18/7)

Meaning: The action without which no *Yajna* (sacrifice) of a wise person gets completed is ‘Yoga’, because without Yoga nothing can be done as it exists in every *Karma* (action).

Vedic literature some how deals with the different steps of Yoga; it discusses the various *Yamas* and *Niyamas* as well as it also deals with *Āsana* and *Pranāyāmas*. The *Ṛg-Veda* contains several *Ślokas* like –

अमादेशां भियसा भूमिरेजति नौर्न पूर्णा क्षरति  
व्यथिर्यती।

दूरेदृशो ये चितयन्त एमभिरन्तर्महे विदथे येतिरे  
नरः॥ ऋग्वेद – ५/५९/२

//*amād eṣām bhiyasā bhūmir ejati naur na pūrṇā kṣarati vyathir yatī | dūredṛśo ye citayanta emabhir antar mahe vidathe yetire narah*// (*Ṛg-Veda* – 5/59/2)

This reflects nonviolence and truth like the *Satya* and *Ahimsā* of Yoga-Sutra. In other context we find the importance of *Brahmaçharya* (celibacy) as follows:

//*Brahmaçhāri Janyan Brahmayo Loke*//

To focus over the *Niyamas* as discussed in Yoga-sutra the *Ṛgveda* reflects *Śauçha* (cleansiness), *Santoshā* (contentment), *Tapa* (penance), *Swādhyāya* (self study) and *Iśwara Pranidhāna* (faith in God) as –

//*Punantu Mā Devajanāh Punantu Vasvodhiyā*// - (*Ṛg-Veda* – 9/67/27)

*Atharva-Veda* also focuses over *Iśwara Pranidhāna* as – //*Namaste Astu Vidyute*// (*Atharva Veda*- 1/13/1-4)

Moreover even the other steps or parts of Yoga have been very nicely described in Vedic literature.

*Pranayama* is one of the most important steps of Yoga. As it has been stated in a *Mantra* of *Atharvaveda* –

//*Ṙsthāt* *Ṙthivyā*  
*Ahamantaṛkśamārūhmantaṛkśad*  
*Divamarūham*//*Divo Nākasya Ṙsthāt*  
*Swajyotirgāmaham*//

(*Atharva Veda*- 4/14/3)

In this *Mantra* *Ṙthvi* (the Earth) *Antaṛkśa* (the space) and *Dyauh* (The air) are in the form of grains, *pranic* energy and mind and beyond that the *Vangamanas* is in the form of super intellect, while getting the cosmic power through *Prānāyāma* the *sādhaka* (practitioner) says – that he started inhalation from the depth of the Earth and up to space, and through this practice he has achieved the supreme place (*swarga loka* – the heaven) step wise through *Dyuloka* and *Ānandaloka*. Now he is on the seat of Divine light (*Jyoti dhāma*).

What we can achieve through yogic practice and how it comes to us is very nicely described in *Ṛg Veda* as –

//*Sa Dya Na Yoga Ābhuvat Sa Rage Sa Puram Dhyām*//*Gamad Vajebhira Sa Nah*// (*Ṛg-Veda* – 1/5/3)

Meaning: Through the grace of God, let us (Yoga *sādhakās*) achieve Yoga – the state of *Samādhi* through which we get the ultimate reality and the same God comes to us with the power of *Animā* (the power to become great). The Veda says that Yoga (*Samādhi*) can be attained only through the grace of God and when it is attained by the *Sādhakas* (Yoga practitioner) all the knowledge and power will come it self. This knowledge is the ultimate knowledge and this power is the supreme power.

How can we achieve that state (Yoga)? The *Sādhaka* (Yoga practitioner) prays to Lord *Indra* and the prayer is repeated in all the four Vedas (*Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva*)

// *Yoge Yoge Tavastaram Vaje Vaje Havāmahe*/  
*Śakhaye Indra Mūtaye* //

(*Ṛgveda* 1/30/7;

*Śukla Yajurveda* 1/14; *Sam Purva* 2/2/7/8; *Sam Uttar* ½/11/1; *Atharvaveda* 18/24/7)

Meaning: “We (the Yoga *Sādhakas*) invite the most glorious Lord *Indra* in every ‘Yoga’ (coincidence) and every misfortune”. Here this prayer to Lord *Indra* is very common for all *Sādhakas* because in every *Sādhanā* (spiritual discipline) we feel disturbance and the only power of God can protect us from disturbance. Hence for uninterrupted achievement, one should pray to God first.

In the mantra of The Veda; there are enough references that there is a Supreme power

which has been called by several names like The Supreme Luster (*Abhed Jyoti*) The Ultimate position (*Param pada*) etc. through this power Yoga can be attained.

A man is free for every action; and according to his action (karma) he gets the fruit (result). The Veda says that Yoga is the only way through which one can be liberated from all the *Karmas* and all their effects (fruits).

The Veda also deals with the deep Philosophy of all the causes of manifestation. It also deals with the deep physical body and the subtle body where – there is the existence of cosmic energy (the *prāna*).

In Atharva –Veda we find the description of eight *Çakra* (the psychic centers) and the nine Subtle Paths of our subtle body.

**// Astaçakrā Navadwārā Devānām Purodhyā /  
/ Tasuām Hiranyamayah Kośah Swargo Jyotiśāvṛtah //  
(Atharva Veda – 10/1/31)**

Meaning: Human body is a spiritual city made up of eight *Çakras* and having nine doors, which is protected by Hiranyagarbha (Lord *Brahmā*) and which is full of divine light and bliss.

In the Vedic Science we also find the description of the *Nādies* (the subtle path or the way through prana moves) and the *Prāna* (the cosmic energy). While focusing over *Prāna*, *Çakras*, *Nādies* and *Mahābhutas* it has been said in *Ṛg-Veda* as

**// Ka Çitrakā Trivṛto Rathasya Kwa Trayo Bandhuro Yen Sanīlah /  
Kada Yogo Vajino Rasbhyasya Yen Yagyam Nastyopathayah //**

- (*Ṛg-Veda – 1/34/9*)

Meaning: This human body is a divine vehicle which is made up of five *Mahābhutas* i.e. *Prthvi* (earth), *Jala* (water) *Agni* (fire), *Vayū* (air) and *Ākaśa* (Ether). This vehicle has three wheels (*Çakras*) i.e. *Mūlādhāra*, *Swadhisthān* and *Manipur*. We are ignorant of their whereabouts. We also dont know the seat of that flower which is the essence of life (*Kandarpa Vayū*), which is red in colour. We dont know even the seat of Lord *Śiva* – the *Sahaśra Dal Kamal* (the thousand petal lotus) and three upper *Çakras* i.e. *Anāhata*, *Visuddhi* and *AJñānÇakra*. We even don't know the time of Leela (divine play) of Lord *Śiva* and Lordess *Śakti* i.e. *Kundalini*. 'O Lord' the father of the Universe gives us the grace of all these knowledge of Yogic Science, through which I can practice 'Laya Yoga'.

As we find that the deep knowledge of Yogic Science is widely explained in Vedic Literature. The aim of Yogic *Sādhanā* in the Veda is to unite the individual soul with the Supreme soul – the union of *Atman* and *Parmātman*; the intense desire of a 'Sādhaḥ' (the yoga practitioner) is very nicely described in the following Mantra of *Ṛg Veda*:

**// Yadagne Śyamaham Twam – Twam Vā Dhā Śyam Aham /  
/ Syušte Satya Ihaśīśah //  
- (*Ṛg-Veda – 8/44/23*)**

Meaning: 'O Lord *Agni*' (Fire) if I (through *sādhanā*) become you and You becomes me; only then your all blessings will become true for me.

**Conclusion:**

The entire Vedic Literature and the sages and savants of the *Śāstric* scriptures have given paramount importance to the Yoga and have discussed in detail the methods of

the *sāadhanā* of this System. There is no scripture, which does not sing paeans of the preeminent benefits and supramental effects

of the mantra that encompass the personal, global and the cosmic realms of existence.

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