

# Exploring the Notion of Yoga is the Trilogy of Mind, Body, and Soul: With Special Reference to Indian Philosophy

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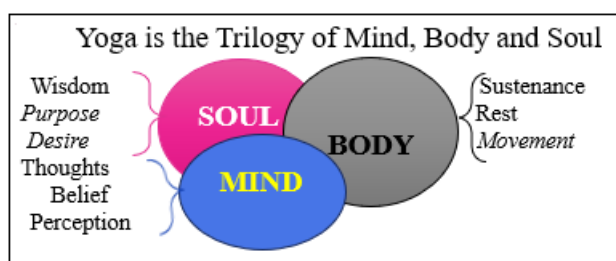
**Abstract:** *Life of a being these days is very tough and rough. So, the wellbeing of our life is to take some time out for ourselves; to slow down, to respire. If you want to move, it is more appealing to most than ever before. In today's fast-paced world, a holistic approach of wellbeing is more crucial than ever. The wellbeing of our life lies a trilogy of yoga that is composed of the main triple factors; mind, body, and life/soul. Let us delve a deeper understanding into the harmonious relationship of these triple factors; mind, body, and life/soul, such kind of relationship is considered as Yoga which is nothing but the Macro-trilogy of mind, body and soul. Yoga, really is for everyone which positively impact all mentally, physically, and spiritually to generate a balanced life. The study of yoga is based upon a profound philosophy of life and consciousness. It is not just a system of mere practices devoid of any theoretical background. Rather, it is one of the greatest philosophies in the world which can be studied as an important subject for a lifetime. The main contention of this paper is to explore the trilogy of mind, body and soul in the realm of Indian philosophy. According to the Indian Philosophy of Yoga (hereafter, IPoY), we feel best when our mind, body and soul maintain a harmonious relationship. But, how does it possible? Even if it's possible often but does it possible forever? According to IPoY, there are nine essential elements of the trilogy of mind, body and soul which generates the harmony. The macro trilogy of mind, body and soul realizes its full potential when you nurture the essential elements of each which seems some Micro-trilogy; Mind: beliefs, perceptions, thoughts Body: sustenance, rest, movement and Soul: desire, wisdom, purpose.*

**Keywords:** Yoga, Trilogy, Macro-trilogy, Micro-trilogy, Balanced life and Wellbeing

## 1. Introductory remarks

Everything in life about the trilogy (harmonious relationship) of mind, body and soul what we call it Yoga. Yoga teaches us that all people should be free from fear and feelings of antagonism. But all should enjoy a joyful life with the feelings of love of divine (Paul, 1882). Besides, Yoga teaches us Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Meditation. Yama and Niyama are our strength through which we can generate a happy world while Asana, Pranayama and Meditation make us energetic and free from worries (Hariharānanda, 1984). Thus, Yoga brings heaven to earth and makes the world a family (Frawley, 2014).

Let us all adopt the path of Yoga with seeking unity for making our body, mind and life, healthy, prosperous, successful and peaceful. Let us represent the Macro-trilogy of mind, body and soul in the below diagram:



## 2. A Brief Historical Background of Yoga in Indian Philosophy

In the Pre-Vedic period, *Indus-Saraswati Civilization* (dates around 2700 BC), found several seals and fossils with figures performing Yoga through meditation (Mallinson & Singleton, 2017). In the Vedic-Period, Rig Veda (dates back to around

1500 BC), found the word 'Yoga' which means a body of knowledge. In the Atharva Veda, (dates around 1200-1000 BC), it is found that yoga means control of breath (Anand, 2002). In the pre-classical period, out of the 108 Upanishads, there are 20 Upanishads stressed on Yoga, for them yoga is a teaching of mind and spirit (Saraswati, 2002). Besides, it's about meditation and mantra for attaining enlightenment. In the Classical-Period (around 500 BC to 800 AD), in Jainism, yoga is for attaining salvation and freedom through meditation (Chapple, 2015) while in *Buddhism*, yoga is meant for enlightenment through meditation (Levine, 2011). In *The Bhagavad Gita*, yoga as quoted as "Samatvam Yoga Uchyate" which means yoga for calmness in the mind to remain centered in antagonistic situations of life. It is the union of Divine Consciousness and Human consciousness. Besides, in the Gita, it has been demarcated that there are four categories of yoga; *Dharma yoga*, *Karma yoga*, *Bhakti yoga* and *Jnana yoga*. Further, yoga is a union of *Vichara* and *Viveka*, *Atman* and *Brahman* (Dasgupta, 1930). Maharshi Patanjali (dates around 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC), considered as the founder of *Yoga*, systematizes and emphasises the practices of yoga (Patañjali, 1907). According to the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, there are *Astanga yoga* or the Eight Limbs of Yoga which includes; *yamas*, *niyamas*, *asanas*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi* (Sarbacker & Kimple, 2015). In the Samkhya Darshana, it has been emphasized about the importance of the mind in yoga. In the post-classical period, philosopher *Adi-Shankaracharya* contributed a lot to the field of Yoga Darshana. He emphasises on the Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. He says that everyone should adopt the teachings and techniques of *Yoga*. He claims that we can have a wealthier mind through meditation. Moreover, he argues that one can attain Nirvana through *Jnana Yoga*. In this period, *Tulsi Das*, also contributed to the science of yoga mainly Hatha yoga. As we know that the 'Asanas' that we practice today are

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part of the Hatha yoga (Werner, 1998). In the Modern period (1700 AD to 1900 AD), philosopher Swami Vivekananda, introduced the philosophy of Yoga to the western world which discussed about focusing on physical well-being (Stone, 2018). He says, "Health is Wealth". For him, Yoga is scientific, rational and therefore, Universal (Vivekananda, 2016). He had suggested about Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga but he more focused on Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga (DeLuca, 2010). Because, Bhakti Yoga is meant for the realisation of the divinity through devotion to, and love of, a Personal God. It shows a spiritual path for fostering love, utter faith and surrender to God. While, Karma Yoga is meant for the manner in which a man realises his own divinity through works and duty. It is for mental discipline that allows a person to carry out his/her duties as a service to the entire world and a path towards enlightenment (Malhotra, 2017). Besides, he stressed on the Powers of the Mind and

argued that concentrating the powers of the mind is the only way to knowledge. He emphasised on the concentration of mind that occurred in two different ways; external and internal (Kenny, 1992). In case of external, mind concentrates on body while in the case of internal mind concentrates on self. The concentration of mind causes the union of body and soul. Hence, we call it the concentration of Mind Yoga. In this period, Raja yoga was further developed by Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and so on (Jois, 2015).

### 2.1 A Periodic Table of the notion of Yoga in Indian Philosophy:

A tabular representation of the above discussion as below which will help us to understand the origin and developments of Yoga in Indian Philosophy:

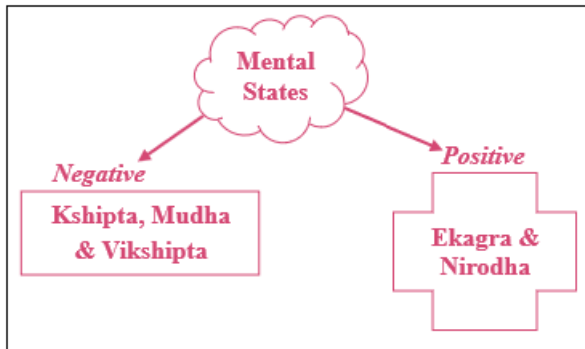
| Period                | Philosophy / Philosophers                                  | Yoga                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Focus                      |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Pre-Vedic period      | Indus-Saraswati Civilization                               | Tantric Yoga, Meditation, Sadhana                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Mind and Soul              |
| Vedic period          | Rig Veda                                                   | Body of knowledge.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Mind and Body              |
|                       | Atharva Veda                                               | Control of breath.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Mind and Body              |
| Pre-Classical period  | 20 Yoga Upanishads                                         | Teaching of Mind and Soul, Meditation and mantra for enlightenment.                                                                                                                                                                    | Mind and Soul              |
| Classical-Period      | Jainism                                                    | Attainment of salvation and freedom through meditation                                                                                                                                                                                 | Mind and Soul              |
|                       | Buddhism                                                   | Attainment of enlightenment through meditation                                                                                                                                                                                         | Mind and Soul              |
|                       | <i>The Bhagavad Gita</i>                                   | <i>Calmness in the mind to remain centered in antagonistic situations. Union of Divine Consciousness and Human consciousness. Dharma yoga, Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga and Jnana yoga. Union of Vichara and Viveka, Atman and Brahman.</i> | <i>Mind, Body and Soul</i> |
|                       | <i>Patanjali Yoga</i>                                      | <i>Astanga yoga or the Eight Limbs of Yoga includes; yamas, niyamas, asanas, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi.</i>                                                                                                  | <i>Mind, Body and Soul</i> |
|                       | Samkhya Darshana                                           | Importance of the Mind and Soul                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Mind and Soul              |
| Post-Classical period | Adi-Shankaracharya                                         | Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. Wealthier mind through meditation. Nirvana through Jnana Yoga.                                                                                                                                               | Mind and Soul              |
|                       | Tulsi Das                                                  | Hatha yoga: Asanas                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Mind and Body              |
| Modern period         | <i>Swami Vivekananda</i>                                   | <i>Physical well-being. Health is Wealth. Scientific, Rational and Universal. Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga.</i>                                                                                                   | <i>Mind, Body and Soul</i> |
|                       | Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and so on | Raja Yoga                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Mind and Soul              |

Fundamentally, it is very crucial to understand that yoga is the union of mind, body and soul (Dasgupta, 2013). In other words, we can argue that yoga is the trilogy of mind, body and soul. Conclusively, from the above table we find out that in the Classical-period, The Bhagavad Gita and Patanjali Yoga has qualified the yoga with the trilogy of mind, body and soul while in the Modern-period, yoga philosophy of Swami Vivekananda also qualified the yoga with the trilogy of mind, body and soul (Vivekananda, 2023). But rest of the philosophies in the rest of the periods has not qualified the yoga with the trilogy of mind, body and soul. Moreover, we found that there are different names of Yoga such as Tantric Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Dharma yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Mind Yoga, Astanga Yoga, Hatha yoga and Raja Yoga (Paul, 1882).

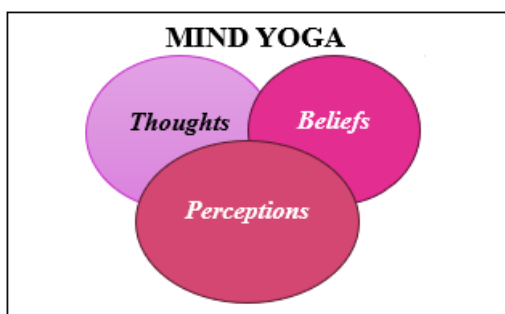
### 3. Mind Yoga is a Micro-trilogy of Thought, Perception and Belief:

According to the trilogy of yoga, yoga activates your mind and makes a wealthier mind. The benefits of yoga can help with a range of things including calming an overactive mind

and improving sleeping problems. In a fast paced of modern life, the benefits of Meditation and Mindfulness have been used as an instrument for focussing on work, decreased anxiety and stress (Farias et al., 2021). Besides, it brings a deeper connection with consciousness of oneself for the things that we can do, rather than we can't do. According to the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, there are five states of mind which are important among many other states of the mind; in the mental state of Kshipta, the mind is totally disseminated and inept to attentiveness, in the mental state of Mudha, the mind is inactive, tired and inert, in the mental state of Vikshipta, the mind is able to focus for short periods but easily distracted, in the mental state of Ekagra, the mind is focused and concentrated on a single point and in the mental state of Nirodha, the mind is mastered, free from fluctuations and is in a state of deep stillness. The first three mental states are the negative thesis of the mind while the last two are positive thesis of the mind (Gokhale, 2020).



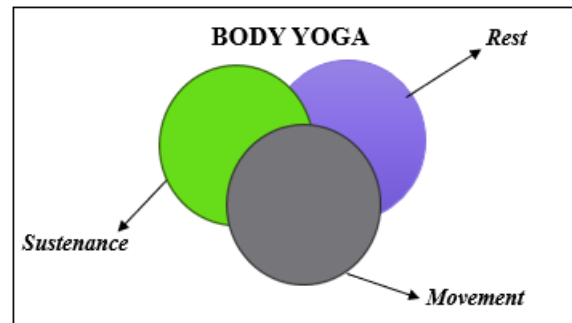
According to the survey of the background study of the paper, we have estimated that nearly all of the Indian philosophy in all the period have focused on mind though they have not qualified the trilogy of yoga (Mallinson, Singleton, 2017). This undertakes that there is no way to understand the notion of Yoga without understanding the nature of mind. Mind is the elementary facet of yoga. Apart from this there is another way of observation of yoga, which claims about the Mind Yoga, it is very important to understand that there is possibility of the trilogy of Mind Yoga which includes; thoughts, beliefs and perceptions (Kenny, 1992). The trilogy of Mind Yoga has been represented in the diagram below:



#### 4. Body Yoga is a Micro-trilogy of Sustenance, Movement and Rest

The physical side of yoga emphasises on the physical fitness which is equally important factor like the fitness of our mind (Stone, 2018). According to the trilogy of yoga, body is another important organ of the trilogy that includes; “asanas” or “poses”, however, there are so many more physical benefits to the asanas or poses. These include: Building muscle and strengthening the body, creating a better posture, encouraging circulation, restoring energy and revitalizing, increasing mobility and flexibility, boosting our circulation and digestion, while encouraging our internal organs to eliminate waste i.e., detoxing (Slingerland, 2019).

Likewise, the basic nature of the trilogy of yoga, body can be understood in the realm of yoga like this that there is possibility of body yoga that is represented through the spectrum of the tripartite nature of body yoga. The tripartite nature of the body yoga has been represented in the below diagram:

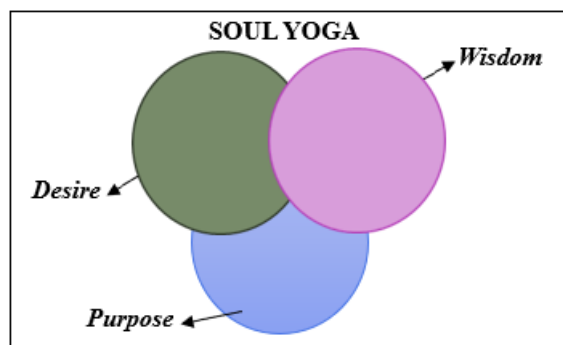


According to the survey of the background study of the paper, we have estimated that The Bhagavad Gita and Patanjali Yoga in the Classical period and Swami Vivekananda in the Modern period have qualified the criterion of the trilogy of yoga and accepted the body as an important part of it (Werner, 1998). Besides, Rig Veda and Atharva Veda in the Vedic period and Tulsi Das in the Post-classical period have not only qualified the criterions of the trilogy of yoga but also accepted that the body is an important part of it but, in the rest of the cases, body has been ignored. Moreover, this undertakes that there is no way to understand yoga without understanding body and without the notion of body the notion of yoga is unentitled. Body is the elementary facet of yoga (Sunil, 2021).

#### 5. Soul Yoga is a Desire, Purpose and Wisdom

There is a reason we come out of feelings and become more grounded with a clearer mind. Guided by a series of ancient principles or modern-day “rules for life” we will be encouraged to leave our ego at the door and to bring connection and awareness to our body and our actions. What is unique about yoga is the encouragement to ‘take our practice off the mat’ and incorporate and integrate that into our day-to-day lives. In the most basic of forms, this can mean using simple guides such as “non-harming” and “truthfulness”, and in a world of constant pressure to achieve, the “non-attachment” of our own happiness to a possession or outcome can help make a huge shift in mindset (Kenny, 1992). Understanding, quite simply, to take the rough with the smooth and to strive for contentment rather than looking for happiness in something or someone else. The path to happiness is a long one with many obstacles along the way. If we can understand the difference between contentment and happiness, knowing that one can lead to the other but to strive for a more balanced, contentedness or even-mindedness, it can help to manage the highs and lows of modern life. This is something that takes work and doesn’t at all happen overnight, but the principles and philosophical aspects encourage us to make more considered choices and to have an awareness of our actions. It is important to be aware that it is a long-term practice; a lifestyle, holistic and ever-evolving with commitment and consistency (Slingerland, 2019). The philosophical and the spiritual dimension of yoga is soul. The principal aim of the yoga is to unite the individual soul with the universal soul, or atman with brahman, leading to self-realization and liberation. There is a possibility of Soul yoga that is generally focused on connecting with one’s inner self, promoting spiritual growth, and fostering a deeper sense of well-being. It often incorporates meditation, mindfulness, and breathwork alongside physical postures (asanas) to cultivate a holistic approach to health and self-discovery (Cusack,

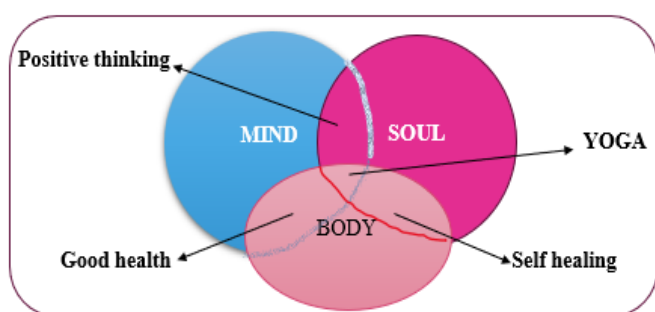
2020). The Soul Yoga has been represented in the diagram below:



The diagram represented the tripartite nature of the soul yoga which fulfils our purpose of life, desire and wisdom which is considered as the highest knowledge. As per the survey of the background study of the paper it has been projected that Indus-Saraswati Civilization in pre-Vedic period, 20 Yoga Upanishads in the pre-classical period, Jainism, Buddhism, The Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali Yoga, Samkhya Darshana in the classical period, Adi-Shankaracharya in the post-classical period and Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and so on are in the modern period that have accepted that the soul is an important organ of the trilogy of yoga. Without the notion of soul, the notion of yoga is unentitled. Although, only The Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali Yoga and Swami Vivekananda have qualified the criterions of the yoga while rest of them are not so (Patañjali, 1907).

## 6. Assessments of the Macro-trilogy of Mind, Body and Soul:

This section of this paper has focused on the tripartite nature of Mind, Body and Soul which has reflected that the output of the yogic nature of mind, body and soul in the realm of trilogy (Cusack, 2020). Primarily, it has been represented in the below diagram:



As we know that human beings are made out of the trilogy of mind, body, and soul. Let us estimate tripartite nature of Mind, Body and Soul in the realm of the trilogy. When we get good health perhaps our mind and body are harmonious in their relationship (Kenny, 1992). We gain self-healing due to the amalgamation of body and soul while mind and soul are maintained in a harmonious relationship, through which we can achieve a positive thinking. Consequently, yoga is the union of mind, body and soul (Slingerland, 2019). But, neither just the union of mind and body nor just the union of body and soul and just the union of mind and soul. Therefore, in order to achieve good health, self-healing and positive

thinking, we must have to practice yoga which means we have to maintain harmonious relationship among mind, body and soul. In other words it has been uttered that the trilogy of mind, body and soul (Cusack, 2020).

## 7. Concluding Remarks

The trilogy of mind, body and soul is yoga. It is a holistic, comprehensive approach to harmonious life and well-being. Each organ of the trilogy supports and amplifies the others by providing a sturdy framework for good health, positive thinking and self-healing etc. Embracing this trilogy also means striving for perfection and adoption of an integrated approach to well-being and harmonious life. We can see that the mind, body, and soul progressed to match up with the universal indication which has been represented in the trilogy.

Yoga in Indian Philosophy has been in the object of mainly academic interest. It also became in recent decades and object of wide spread popular interest in the west. But from at the pre-Vedic period to the modern period has been an important source of inspiration to philosophy in Indian and philosophy in turn has often provided an initial incentive and enthusiasm for the practice of yoga and has produced various interpretations of Yogic experiences. It is therefore most appropriate that Yoga and Indian philosophy be given equal attention both in the context of academic research and in the framework of popularising Yoga in practice.

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