

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOGIC SCIENCE FOR HUMANITY IN TODAY'S ERA

Aung Than

Research Scholar, Manipur International University, Manipur.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18771132>

ABSTRACT:

The escalating crises of the 21st century – psychological distress, ecological collapse, social fragmentation, lifestyle imbalance, and existential disorientation, underscore a significant disparity between swift technological advancement and the development of inner human consciousness, suggesting a crisis that transcends mere systems to touch upon the essence of consciousness itself. In this framework, yogic science, anchored in the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and Patanjali's Yoga Sutras provides a thorough and practical approach to holistic human flourishing by merging physical health, mental regulation, ethical discipline, and spiritual insight.

This study explores the philosophical underpinnings and contemporary significance of yogic science through a detailed analytical and interpretative review of classical Sanskrit texts in conjunction with modern research in psychology, neuroscience, and preventive healthcare. It illustrates how yogic principles such as equanimity, disciplined action, ethical conduct, and self-awareness effectively tackle the fundamental causes of contemporary suffering while resonating with modern notions of emotional regulation, resilience, and wellbeing. Backed by citations from Sanskrit verses, thematic charts, and conceptual frameworks, the analysis emphasizes yogic science as a preventive and transformative human science with considerable potential for incorporation into education, healthcare, environmental ethics, and public policy, thereby providing sustainable avenues for both individual and global wellbeing.

KEYWORDS:

Yoga, Gita, Upanishad, Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Healthcare, Education.

1. Introduction

The twenty-first century presents a significant paradox: while humanity has made extraordinary technological advancements and achieved global connectivity, it simultaneously faces rising levels of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and ecological instability (Smith, 2020; World Health Organization [WHO], 2024). Recent research published in 2024 indicates that stress-related disorders impact millions around the world, with chronic stress leading to elevated cortisol levels and weakened immune function (Kanchibhotla et al., 2024). The National Depression Blue Book 2022 China Mental Health Survey reveals that nearly 95 million individuals in China are affected by depression, whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 280 million people globally suffer from depression, with instances of major depression and anxiety disorders increasing by 28% and 26% respectively in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These issues highlight a critical imbalance between external technological advancements and internal human growth, implying that the current crisis is not solely material but also existential—a crisis of consciousness itself. The remarkable material progress of modern civilization has been paralleled by an increase in mental health disorders, lifestyle-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular issues, along with a widespread feeling of existential disorientation.

In this scenario, yogic science emerges as a structured approach for inner transformation that tackles the fundamental causes of human suffering (*duḥkha*). It transcends being merely a physical exercise routine or cultural practice; yogic science embodies a universal discipline of mind, ethics, and consciousness, articulated with exceptional psychological clarity in classical Indian philosophical literature.

2. Yogic Science in Sacred Texts

2.1 The Science of Mental Cessation

The essential definition of yoga is found in Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras 1.2:

yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ

“Yoga is the cessation of the modifications of the mind” (Bryant, 2009)

This sūtra establishes that the primary focus of yoga is mental regulation and the development of inner tranquility, from which clarity, insight, and liberation arise. As Feuerstein (1989) elucidates in his authoritative translation and commentary, citta refers to the mind-field or consciousness, vṛtti indicates the modifications or thought-waves that circulate like a wheel, and nirodhaḥ denotes complete restraint and control over mental fluctuations.

The eight-limbed path (aṣṭāṅga yoga) described by Patañjali systematically incorporates ethical, physical, and contemplative aspects: ethical restraints (yama), observances (niyama), physical postures (āsana), breath control (prāṇāyāma), sensory withdrawal (pratyāhāra), concentration (dhāraṇā), meditation (dhyāna), and absorption (samādhi). This all-encompassing framework addresses the human being in its entirety rather than dividing experience into separate domains (Feuerstein, 1998).

2.2 Yoga as Equanimity and Skillful Action

The Bhagavad Gītā provides complementary insights into the essence and objectives of yoga. In verse 2.48, Lord Kṛṣṇa characterizes yoga as equanimity:

yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya

siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṁ yoga ucyate

“Remain steadfast in yoga, O Arjuna, letting go of attachment to success and failure. Carry out your responsibilities with equanimity. This state of equanimity is referred to as yoga.” (Bhagavad Gītā

2.48)

This definition highlights the importance of nurturing a balanced awareness amidst the ups and downs of life. The equanimity that allows us to embrace all situations with calmness is so commendable that Kṛṣṇa designates it as yoga, or union with the Supreme.

Furthermore, the Gītā describes yoga as skillful action in verse 2.50:

buddhi-yukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛta-duṣkṛte

tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam

“A person who possesses wisdom discards both good and bad actions in this life. Hence, commit yourself to yoga. Yoga is the skill in action.” (Bhagavad Gītā 2.50)

This verse clarifies that engaging in work without attachment to outcomes does not diminish the quality of the work; rather, practitioners enhance their skills, executing their duties at the highest level of proficiency without experiencing anxiety, restlessness, or tension (Mukundananda, 2024).

2.3 Yoga as Steady Control of the Senses

The Kaṭha Upaniṣad, recognized as one of the earliest texts to explicitly address yoga as a practice, articulates its definition in verses 2.6.10–11:

yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha

buddhiś ca na viceṣṭate tām āhuḥ paramām gatim

tām yogam iti manyante sthirām indriya-dhāraṇām

apramattas tadā bhavati yogo hi prabhavāpyayau

“When the five senses of knowledge are stilled together with the mind, and when the intellect does not waver, they call it the highest state. This steady control of the senses is called yoga. Then one

becomes vigilant, for yoga is both creation and dissolution.” (Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.6.10–11)

This passage signifies one of the earliest references to yoga in ancient Sanskrit literature, positioning it as a means to self-realization through meditation and the regulation of the senses. The Upaniṣad further introduces the renowned chariot metaphor:

ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi śarīraṁ ratham eva tu

buddhiṁ tu sārathiṁ viddhi manaḥ pragrahaṁ eva ca

“Know the Ātman (Self) to be the master of the chariot, the body as the chariot itself, the intellect (buddhi) as the charioteer, and the mind (manas) as the reins.” (Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.3.3)

This metaphor exemplifies the hierarchical relationship among consciousness, intellect, mind, senses, and material reality, offering a nuanced framework for comprehending human nature and the journey towards liberation.

3. Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing

Recent scientific research increasingly supports the effectiveness of yogic practices in tackling modern health issues. Three studies published in 2024 revealed that yoga significantly alleviated stress and enhanced overall wellbeing, with participants exhibiting higher social connectedness scores and markedly lower levels of mental distress (Kanchibhotla et al., 2024).

A meta-analysis examining mindfulness yoga interventions for depression indicated that positive yoga practice is comparably effective to antidepressant medications, leading to a decrease in the severity of depressive symptoms and an increase in treatment remission rates (Brinsley et al., 2021). Furthermore, a recent systematic review and meta-analysis demonstrated that yoga resulted in moderate reductions (SMD = 0.41) in depressive symptoms in a dose-dependent manner among individuals experiencing depressive symptoms across various psychiatric disorders, including

schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and anxiety.

Evidence suggests that yoga can effectively alleviate symptoms associated with numerous psychiatric conditions, such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD, surpassing the benefits provided by conventional pharmacological treatments alone. However, it is important to note that the majority of this evidence is of poor to moderate quality, indicating a need for further rigorous research (Bridges & Sharma, 2017).

4. Yoga as a Universal Science of Consciousness

Georg Feuerstein (1998), a leading authority on yoga, characterizes yoga as a “remarkably complex phenomenon” that includes much more than just physical postures. In his book, *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, Feuerstein provides an extensive overview of all yogic traditions, addressing various elements of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina yoga, such as history, philosophy, literature, psychology, and practice.

Feuerstein (1996), in *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, offers “one of the most significant and original insights into the comprehension of classical yoga” (as remarked by Mircea Eliade), contending that Patañjali’s *Yoga Sūtras* should be viewed as the foundation of the entire structure of classical yoga rather than simply a recapitulation of earlier developments. His examination underscores yoga’s psycho-integrative and experiential framework, illustrating how essential concepts delineate routes to authentic transformation rather than just intellectual comprehension.

Edwin Bryant (2009), in *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali: A New Edition, Translation, and Commentary*, provides a scholarly analysis rooted in traditional commentarial practices while ensuring the text is approachable for modern readers. Bryant’s work illustrates the lasting significance of classical yoga philosophy in confronting timeless human issues such as suffering, ignorance, and the search for meaning.

5. The Yogic Anthropology: A Multidimensional Model of Human Nature

Classical yogic texts offer a nuanced comprehension of human nature that encompasses physical, energetic, mental, intellectual, and spiritual aspects. The five-sheath model (pañca-kośa) outlines:

1. Physical body (annamaya-kośa): The tangible material aspect that necessitates adequate nutrition, exercise, and rest.
2. Vital-energy body (prāṇamaya-kośa): The subtle energetic functions that regulate physiological processes, influenced by breath and lifestyle choices.
3. Mental-emotional body (manomaya-kośa): The realm of thoughts, emotions, and habitual behaviors that require nurturing through ethical practices and meditation.
4. Intellectual body (vijñānamaya-kośa): The capacity for discernment, wisdom, and elevated understanding cultivated through study and reflection.
5. Bliss body (ānandamaya-kośa): The most profound spiritual aspect, experienced during moments of deep peace and unity.

This comprehensive model stands in stark contrast to reductionist approaches that divide human experience into isolated physical, psychological, and social categories. Yogic anthropology acknowledges that disruptions at any level impact the entire system, necessitating holistic interventions that address multiple dimensions concurrently (Feuerstein, 1998).

6. Addressing Mental and Physical Health

The crisis surrounding mental health represents one of the most urgent issues of our time. The clinical guidelines from the Canadian Network for Mood and Anxiety Treatments for managing adults with major depressive disorder suggest yoga as a second-line adjunctive therapy for mild-to-moderate MDD, indicating an

increasing clinical acknowledgment of the therapeutic benefits of yoga.

Yogic practices provide evidence-based strategies to tackle psychological distress through various means:

Metacognitive awareness: Meditation enhances the ability to observe thoughts and emotions without immediate reactivity, thereby diminishing rumination and catastrophizing.

Physiological regulation: Breathing techniques help transition the autonomic system from a state of stress to one of relaxation.

Embodied presence: Physical postures alleviate muscular tension and enhance body awareness, addressing dissociation that is often seen in trauma.

Positive psychology: These practices nurture self-compassion, equanimity, gratitude, and a sense of purpose, serving as protective factors.

In addition to alleviating symptoms, yogic practices promote true flourishing, progressing from simply the absence of disorder to achieving genuine wellbeing.

Sedentary lifestyles, poor dietary habits, and chronic stress contribute to epidemic levels of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, and metabolic syndrome. Yogic science addresses these conditions through integrated interventions:

- Regular āsana practice provides moderate physical activity accessible to individuals across fitness levels.
- Yogic lifestyle principles promote balanced nutrition, adequate rest, and stress management.
- Meditation and prāṇāyāma reduce chronic stress, lowering inflammatory markers and supporting immune function.
- Ethical frameworks encourage moderation, self-care, and

awareness of bodily signals.

Importantly, yogic approaches address psychosomatic dimensions of illness, recognizing bidirectional influences between psychological states and physiological processes. This integrated perspective proves valuable for conditions involving stress–disease interactions and mind–body dysregulation.

7. Conclusion

The current research has shown that the challenges facing humanity in the twenty–first century such as increasing mental health issues, diseases related to lifestyle, ethical confusion, and environmental instability cannot be sufficiently resolved through technological or material progress alone. In spite of unparalleled global connectivity and advancements in science, modern societies still grapple with rising levels of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and psychosomatic disorders, indicating a significant disparity between external advancements and internal human development. This situation signifies not just a medical or social issue, but a more profound crisis of awareness.

Utilizing both ancient yogic texts and modern scientific findings, this article contends that yogic science provides a thorough and organized approach to remedying this imbalance. The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali characterize yoga as the cessation of mental disturbances, emphasizing mental regulation as the cornerstone of clarity, wellbeing, and liberation. The Bhagavad Gītā broadens this perspective by depicting yoga as a state of equanimity and skillful action in the world, allowing individuals to participate fully in life without falling prey to attachment, anxiety, or emotional upheaval. The Upaniṣads further position yoga as consistent sensory control and self–realization, presenting a deep anthropological framework that harmonizes body, mind, intellect, and consciousness.

Contemporary empirical evidence increasingly supports these classical insights. Research indicates that yogic practices significantly

alleviate stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms, enhance social connectedness, and improve overall wellbeing. While further high-quality research is necessary, current findings imply that yoga serves as a valuable adjunctive intervention for mental health conditions and a preventive strategy for lifestyle-related diseases.

Importantly, yogic science does not merely relieve symptoms; it cultivates metacognitive awareness, physiological regulation, emotional balance, ethical sensitivity, and a sense of meaning, core dimensions of human flourishing. The yogic model of human nature, articulated through frameworks such as the *pañca-kōśa*, challenges reductionist approaches by acknowledging the interdependence of physical, energetic, psychological, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. By addressing disruptions across these levels simultaneously, yogic science offers an integrative response to psychosomatic illness and stress-related disorders that dominate modern healthcare systems.

In conclusion, yogic science is not a peripheral wellness practice but a universal science of consciousness with profound relevance for contemporary life. As humanity faces escalating mental, physical, and existential challenges, the integration of yogic principles into healthcare, education, and social policy provides a sustainable path toward resilience, balance, and genuine wellbeing. Far from being optional, yogic science emerges as essential for the survival, flourishing, and ethical maturation of individuals and societies in the modern era.

References:

1. Bridges, L., & Sharma, M. (2017). The Efficacy of Yoga as a Form of Treatment for Depression. *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine*, 22(4), 1017–1028. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156587217715927>
2. Brinsley, J., Schuch, F., Lederman, O., Girard, D., Smout, M., Immink, M. A., & Rosenbaum, S. (2021). Effects of yoga on depressive symptoms in people with mental disorders: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 55(17), 992–1000.
3. Bryant, E. F., & Patañjali. (2009). *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali: A New Edition, Translation, and Commentary with Insights from the Traditional Commentators (First edition)*. ISBN: 9780865477360. North Point Press. New York.
4. Dienlin, T., & Johannes, N. (2020). The impact of digital technology use on adolescent well-being. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, 22(2), 135–142. <https://doi.org/10.31887/DCNS.2020.22.2/dienlin>
5. Feuerstein, G. (1989). *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali: A New Translation and Commentary*. Inner Traditions International. Rochester, Vermont.
6. Feuerstein, G. (1996). *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*. ISBN: 0892816031, Inner Traditions International, Rochester, Vermont.
7. Feuerstein, G. (1998). *The Yoga Tradition: Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*. Hohm Press. Prescott, Arizona.
8. <https://www.anugrahayogatt.com/blog/interlude-definitions-of-yoga-5> (Retrieved on 10/01/2026)
9. Kanchibhotla, D., Harsora, P., & Subramanian, S. (2024). Influence of yogic breathing in increasing social connectedness among Indian adults. *Acta Psychologica*, 243, 104164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104164>
10. Lam, R.W., Kennedy, S.H., Adams C, et al. (2023). Canadian Network for Mood and Anxiety Treatments (CANMAT) 2023 Update on Clinical Guidelines for Management of Major Depressive Disorder in Adults: Réseau canadien pour les traitements de l'humeur et de l'anxiété (CANMAT) 2023 : Mise à jour des lignes directrices cliniques pour la prise en charge du trouble dépressif majeur chez les adultes. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. 2024;69(9):641–687. doi:10.1177/07067437241245384
11. Mukundananda, S. (2024). *Spiritual Secrets from Hinduism – Essence of*

- Vedic Scriptures. ISBN: 9789361562624. Rupa & Co.
12. Prabhupada, A. C. (1973). *Bhagavad Gita As It Is* (3rd ed.). London: Collier-Macmillan Publishers.
 13. Ross, A., & Thomas, S. (2010). The health benefits of yoga and exercise: A review of comparison studies. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 16(1), 3–12.
 14. Saraswati, S. S. (2013). *Four Chapters on Freedom*. Munger, Bihar, India: Yoga Publications Trust.
 15. Smith, J. (2020). The Impact of Technology Addiction on Mental Health. *Journal of Digital Health*, 15, 45–52.
 16. Wang, F., Szabo, A., & Pasco, J. A. (2020). The effect of yoga on stress, anxiety, and depression in women. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(18), 6740.
 17. World Health Organization. (2024). *Global Health Statistics: Mental Health and Wellbeing Report*. WHO Publications.
 18. Yati, B. P. (2001). *Twelve Essential Upanishads* (2nd ed.). Chennai, India: Sri Gaudiya Math.