



K. Ramakrishna Rao's *Patañjali's Yogasūtra*: A Psychological Study

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Abstract:

K. Ramakrishna Rao's *Patañjali's Yogasūtra: A Psychological Study* offers a scholarly exploration of *Patañjali's Yogasūtra* from a psychological perspective. It talks about the eight aṣṭāṅgas set forth by Patañjali, along with aphorisms, various pādas and their impact on the human mind. Blending classical Indian thought with modern psychology, Rao examines the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of yoga, highlighting its relevance to contemporary mental health and self-regulation. The main focus is on yoga psychology, its effect on an individual's psyche and the role of the self or personality in an Indian context.

This paper evaluates the book's key arguments, methodology, and contributions to both psychology and Indic philosophy along with the discussion of universality of Indian psychology, its historical background, various theories, showing the dynamic nature of Indian psychology, psychological aspects of various indigenous texts and the difference in approach of Indian and Western psychologists. It also discusses the book's implications for modern psychological practices, particularly in mindfulness, cognitive therapy, and well-being.

Keywords: psychology, cognitive therapy, collective behaviour, consciousness.

1. Introduction

Dr K. Ramakrishna Rao, a distinguished psychologist and philosopher, is known for his interdisciplinary approach that bridges Indian and Western thought. In *Patañjali's Yogasūtra: A Psychological Study*, Rao reinterprets the ancient text through the lens of modern psychological theories. He presents Patañjali's system as a structured psychological framework that explains human consciousness, cognitive processes, emotional control, and self-realisation. This book contributes to the growing field of yoga psychology, offering insights relevant to both scholars of Indic traditions and contemporary psychologists.

Mahārṣi Patañjali, an ancient Indian sage who is also called Gonardiya or Gonikaputra, is considered prominent amongst the great intellectuals of the past; the man behind *Yoga Darśana* (a philosophical system that examines the nature of reality through disciplined practice.). Mahārṣi Patañjali must have been quite a wonderful sage as he has given us:

Yoga in order to deep cleanse the mind (as Patañjali);

Grammar in order to deeply cleanse the bhāṣā and speech (as Pāṇini);

Ayurveda in order to deeply cleanse the human body. (as Caraka).

The above mentioned aspects of his character are reflected in a traditional śloka attributed to bhoja in his commentary on the Yogasūtra, which reads as follows: “Yogena cittasya padena vācām malaṁ śarīrasya ca vaidyakena / yo'pākarottaṁ pravaraṁ munīnām Patañjalim prāñjalir anato'smi”. It is truly astonishing to think of such a great person who existed just for the well-being and spiritual heightening of others. Mahārṣi Patañjali had attained the psychological, emotional, spiritual awakening and reached the highest state but he still preferred to stay as he wished to guide others and wanted them to undergo that heavenly Darśana and achieve the supreme objective of 'Kaivalya'. The everlasting notions of the Yoga Darśana have been summed up through his Yogasūtras.

It is also not certain that Patañjali is the sole writer of the Yogasūtra since many other contributors might have contributed to its writing, which probably originated from centuries ago. However, regardless of the exact time period, we find in it an empirical and technique based matter of psychology which is yet quite ancient than 'The Principle of Psychology' by William James (1890). The Indian Knowledge System inspired a combined standpoint to the attainment of understanding. To put it simply, it appears to be more sensible to accept that the innermost self of the human psyche is the pinnacle of the bodily and metaphysical constituents of survival. The Yogasūtra does not just see an individual in their wholeness; in fact, it goes far beyond this. This historical sacred text, which should at present be officially restored under academics as the initial psychological exposition, offers a detailed account of the state of life of an individual. It also formulates techniques related to human behaviour and points out the significance of freedom from psychopathologies.

Patañjali's Yogasūtra; the initial work on yoga, comprises brief Sūtras that blend as if they are making a garland of flowers on a thread. Such distinctive practice, familiar to the yoga's word of mouth tradition, aids in having a grip of complicated details of yoga, such a prominent branch of knowledge of internal experiences which are explained by Mahārṣi of Yoga, Dr Swami Gītānanda Giri, stating it the 'mother of all sciences'. For their tendency to be acquired, remembered, along with chanting, the Yogasūtras are quite brief with high regard and comprehension to enable the smooth growth of serenity, internal meditation or inspection. Yogasūtras are quite helpful for the upāsaka to recollect and appreciate the subtleness of the creative activity and branch of knowledge of yoga, as it is not just a book of directions or specifications.

Yogasūtra is a brief exposition which sets forth the conception, skills, and styles of yogic exercises in almost 195 maxims- short assertions, few of them are not more than two words. It is believed to be written near or prior to the ending of the 2nd century BCE, its

actual date of being composed remains unknown. Yoga existed way before Patañjali; it was not developed by Patañjali. For instance Gautam Buddha, the founder of Buddhism religion, had engaged himself in yogic exercises for a very long period of time, which clearly states that yoga was being exercised even prior to the 6th century, which is before the emergence of the Common Era. It is believed that Patañjali has put forth some set of instructions derived from the modus operandi which were so far completely determined. The ancientness of yoga is not a crucial matter or subject to be talked about, in fact it is the importance of yoga as an alive heritage which carried on itself up to the contemporary time period.

Arrangement of the Sūtras:

The 196 or 195 Sūtras (with some versions including an additional sūtra as an extension of a preceding one) have been put in an order of rationality and set down in pādas which are four in total.

These pādas constitute chapter wise distribution of the Sūtras, however we should also see the word pāda as feet, which may refer to the suggestion of a step wise approach that is set forth by Mahārṣi Patañjali. The pādas are as follows-

- Samādhi Pāda: This section is basically an investigation of various facets of samādhi and introduces the practice of self-analysis/inward looking observation.
- Sādhana Pāda: This section sets down the pathway of yogic sādhanā, particularly bahiraṅga sādhanā, which comprises the initial five aṣṭāṅga.
- Vibhūti Pāda: This section discusses antarāṅga yoga along with an explanation of siddhis or psychic achievements, which are attained through the exercise of samyama on various aspects of the cosmos.
- Kaivalya Pāda: This section talks about the achievements of the elevated state of liberation, which is called Kaivalya (liberation), which develops when we ultimately

surpass the Kleśas (afflictions) and karmas (action-reaction entwinement) in order to get 'ONE WITH THE DIVINE'.

Patañjali lists the sūtras in a quite deductive and rational way, along with various cross references to many significant notions such as- siddhis, antarāya, karma, guṇas, and kleśas. As the maxims are extremely concise, no explanation is to make their meaning obvious. Around the 1st century Vyāsa undertook the earliest, completely genuine, trustworthy or reliable job of interpreting these maxims. His explanation is necessary for the apprehension of Patañjali. Also, his commentary serves as a foundation for various other explanations that followed including those by Bhaṭṭa (ca.1775), Raja Bhoja (11th century), Vācaspati Miśra (9th century), Bhikṣu (ca. 1550), these are among the most prominent commentators. This practice has been continued in the 20th century as well, with significant contributions from Śrī Aurobindo (1872-1950), Āraṇya (1869-1947). The works of the thinker, Dasgupta (1973; 2001) offer an insightful account, describing the yogic framework in English. Furthermore, a distinguished person in this tradition is Krishnamacharya, a mentor of yogic practice who has mentored several eminent yoga masters such as, Pattabhi Jois, TKV Desikachar and BKS Iyengar. The practice of transcendental meditation developed by Mahesh Yogi (1918-2008), a great sage is an illustration of ongoing transformation, following the teachings of Patañjali, whereas Sudarśana Kriyā developed by Śrī Śrī Ravi Shankar represents a modern continuation of yoga into contemporary time period also.

The differences in opinion between Indian and Western psychology leads to psychology being perceived as an abstract idea when defined from an Indian standpoint. Culture greatly influences Indian Psychology. Indian Psychology mainly addresses the functional understanding of the development of psychology in relation to religious, divine, sacred and other worldly aspects. In earlier times, psychology was not an independent concept; many

ideas/beliefs like religiosity or spirituality have been contemplated in many altered points of views. There is a misconception that Indian psychology deals with the study of the mind of the people living in India, or it is specifically related to some ethnic groups or any civilisation or tradition of India. It is very well discussed and defined in our sacred and holy works that Indian psychology directly deals with the human mind or higher consciousness and sometimes goes beyond it. Indian psychology is so versatile that it applies to all individuals, spheres and situations.

Our philosophers of the old time have done a very in depth study of every aspect; for example, the treatise written by Chanakya that deals with statesmanship, economic policies, and military strategies. There are many more examples. Western psychologists differ from Indian psychologists in various terms, their ideas or set of beliefs are very different from each other in terms of aliveness, loss of life, consciousness, righteousness. The Western standpoint seems to be quite acquisitive due to which they are perceived to be impractical when evaluated with the outlook of Indian psychological domain. Indian psychology mainly gains its strength from spirituality, culture, religion and most importantly from scriptures and ancient texts. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism have similar roots; they have almost the same characteristics when it comes to religiosity and togetherness. Basically, Indian psychology takes culture as its source or origin. For a very long period of time, the idea of paying attention to the natural wants or needs has been passed on to us by our Indian norms.

We can easily equate it with the idea given by Maslow, which talks about the conceptualisation of the wants, needs or goals that are analysed under the study of Western psychology. Our culture and tradition posits that when all these wants/needs are fulfilled, our intellectual capabilities start working hard to grasp the needs which are higher in order than those fulfilled earlier. When we reach such a state of mind, can associate with congenital impressions, cerebration advances, and one could also notice the feeling of being repelled yet

attracted towards materialistic desires. A person learns from his/her individual experiences, which helps him/her to be associated with the spiritualist way of flourishing, advancing and potential power; an idea almost identical to the idea of psychology of the contemporary world that is the existential or the humanistic outlook.

Indian and the Western psychology, they both have contrasting notions on the idea of life and death. It is not just life and death; on many ideas/beliefs they both have dissimilar philosophical thought processes. Western psychology believes in the theory of Survival of the Fittest given by Charles Darwin which talks about evolution by the process of natural selection, which tries to prove that we humans are the most dominant as we survived and evolved with passage of time; which restricts its further exploration with research point of view. This belief of Western psychology is totally in contrast with the belief of Indian psychology, as they have the notion that aliveness and loss of life or passing away are part of a continuous nonstop activity; in short, they believe in the concept of birth and rebirth in various life forms, not compulsorily of a human being. It is also related to the concept of karma. It is believed that whatever we are in this course of life or whatever we are doing all these are the consequences of karma of our prior life. Our life form (in the form of human, animal, insect) also depends upon that. Western psychology and Indian psychology if compared, it could be analyzed that Western psychology does not believe much in linking psychology with spirituality.

In the beginning, Western psychologists only laid emphasis on three conditions: being awake, being asleep, and being in the dreaming zone. However, now the Western psychologists have diagnosed the fourth state of being that is, consciousness. Whereas, Indian psychologists believe that accomplishing or arriving at a complete condition of awareness is what we should consider as consciousness or elevated consciousness. According to Yogasūtra also awareness is regarded as free from intellectual conceptions and pursuits. We can see a

complete distinction amongst consciousness and mind, which makes it feasible to perform intellectual pursuits with full consciousness. Consciousness is believed to be a power which illuminates only the existence of physical matter. They both jointly develop in the emergence of sūkṣma along with the kāraṇa śarīra which carry on with the revival in an evolving way. A few of these notions are also apparent in the literature of Buddhists and the Jains. In spite of the fact that Jīva as claimed by Jains goes on changing and evolving because of karma, and the idea of Ātmān and Brahman are believed to be peculiar thoughts. Whereas the Buddhists who follow Gautam Buddha refuse the concept/notion of Ātmān.

Contemporary factual growth portrays that Śrīmad Bhagwad Gītā's psychological outlook has thorough details regarding the greatest epic of ancient India by Ved Vyāsa that is Mahabharata. Most psychologists acknowledge its overarching and psychological standpoints. The point of view of most of them is that this work is the perfect example of spiritual needs laced up with religion. The utmost importance of this holy work is so much that it is interpreted in various languages and has multiple spiritual significance in a very positive way. Śrīmad Bhagwad Gītā shows and teaches us that how one should- carry out his/her own responsibilities, should have acceptance in every terms, battle for virtuousness, fight for their own rights and never step back with cowardice, have self-discipline or control, have instinct and behaviour, have consciousness, have sensitiveness, have outlook of way of conduct.

These things have a critical/crucial part in an individual's existence. It could be explained with example; like when Sanjay exerted influence on Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest Pāṇḍava to ponder upon the fact that when it comes to Dharma, battle is an immoral act which would be counted under sin, he was persuaded to such a level that he started thinking, it would be completely immoral if he carry on a battle against his brothers. An additional example could be of Arjuna as he was unwilling to accomplish his responsibility to fight in the battle front. It

completely portrays that there is consciousness as well as inner unwillingness; although it was all tackled by Lord Krishna as he passed on the teaching of functioning of an individual's communal commitment along with keeping religiosity and spirituality concept of understanding unharmed.

2. Key Themes of the Book

2.1 Yoga as a Psychological Science

Rao positions Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* as an ancient yet scientifically structured psychological system. He argues that yoga is not merely a spiritual discipline but a science of the mind, offering techniques for cognitive control, emotional stability, and self-awareness. Drawing parallels between Patañjali's concept of *citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ* (cessation of mental fluctuations) and modern cognitive-behavioural theories, Rao highlights yoga's potential in mental health interventions. Concerning all the transformations and explications, Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* goes on with putting forward an eternal initiator of motivation or the fundamental configuration for yoga. Patañjali sets forth Aṣṭāṅga pathway of yoga (total eight). These eight limbs include:

- Yama- a set of manneristic non-indulgence, like pacifist, restraining from falsehood etc.
- Niyama- a set of conventions, like tidiness, raising a feeling of satisfaction, hermit customs, education on one's own and giving in the positive results of events or happenings to the Almighty.
- Āsana- a constant, stable and relaxed position.
- Prāṇāyāma- breathing techniques.
- Pratyāhāra- pulling back focus from the entity of the sensory faculty.
- Dhāraṇā- limiting the extent of attentiveness or close thought.

- Dhyāna- encouraging attentiveness for a duration, or concentration.
- Samādhi- a set of progressively next-level stages of awareness.

Aṅga (aṣṭāṅga) has been called as 'limb' as the above mentioned eight paths of yoga, shapes an essential entity made up of mutually relying facet instead of merely bits to abide by series/order. Consequently, the starting two aṣṭāṅga primarily include moral recommendations for way of conduct, which should be pursued until the end of existence, these are not the commencing footsteps to be finished earlier than begging the remaining ones. Mostly, an individual begins with Yogic exercises by performing āsanas, which includes the 3rd one in the order of eight aṣṭāṅga. While doing so with no consideration to the moral exercises advised in the starting two aṣṭāṅga makes no logic. Patañjali puts forward that only the āsana one espouses should be steady and relaxing, can also be called sthira and sukha with no need of labeling the different āsanas. The evolution of various compound āsanas along with different respiratory exercises also known as prāṇāyāma, turned out to be drawn up largely in the custom of what could be termed as Haṭha yoga, which is basically an imitative in the very old and also transforming customs of yogic exercises. Whereas the beginning two aṣṭāṅga entails instructions for moral behaviour and the following two aṣṭāṅga entails the bodily facets of yogic exercises. The beginning four aṣṭāṅgas entirely primarily act as introductory base for the rest of the aṣṭāṅgas, which are altogether in the province of the brain. In fact, the beginning four aṣṭāṅgas are considered as the external characteristics of yoga, whereas the internal basis fit into the intellectual domain. They can also be termed as bahiraṅga and antaraṅga.

Patañjali begins its exposition, stating 'now begins the instruction (anūsāsanam) on yoga', suggesting its focus on exercise or application. In the next maxim, he states the motive of yogic exercises in the termination of the intellectual operations (citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ). The notion of citta-vṛtti basically entails two constituents- Citta indicating the human brain and

vṛtti indicating procedure. Activities related to mind associated in this situation incorporates a huge radius of empirical operations such that of contemplating, also visualizing, disbelief, investigating, determining etc. Consequently, this idea is quite identical to William James's idea of 'thinking' or Descartes's notion of cogito as stated earlier Vyāsa the leading and the initial commenter on the yoga maxims, talks about citta nadī that symbolizes 'mind-river', so far acknowledging the flowy feature of intellectual activities. It could be easily related to William James's idea of 'stream of thought'. In short, the foremost function of yogic exercises is to decrease the rate of stream of contemplation to a level that it almost comes to an end. In order to achieve this we need to remove our focus from the worldly desires and indulge in contemplation of the interior sphere of line of thinking just by switching the focus into 'inside'. Patañjali calls pratyāhāra as it is the fifth aṣṭāṅga, out of the total eight aṣṭāṅgas, also the initial footstep to the interior fundamentals of yoga, consisting the remaining four aṣṭāṅgas.

One who reads psychology can easily interpret that pratyāhāra is somehow similar to what they call 'introspection'. The approach through which Wundt formed the base for establishing the latest stage of Western Psychology. However, Watson (1913) stated that the technique of introspection is of no use, it is invalid, Watson gave this inference because of the certainty that disciple of Wundt and many other were unable to agree on the characters and figures of components of awareness. Idea of Wundt on finding the constituents of awareness entails noticing or examining the constituents of encounter that are fully conscious.

Talking of the technique of introspection by Wundt, James (1983, p.188) quoted Comte, whose views were that 'the thinker cannot divide himself into two, of whom one reasons while the other observes him reason' (p. 188). Talking of Yogasūtra, when noticed found that, it conveyed that, as Auguste Comte, who presented his views after many years, Patañjali had observed the struggle in dividing a thought between two parts where one observes and

the other keeps thinking (Patañjali, 4.20). It has also acknowledged that retrospection develops into atiprasaṅgah, which literally means never-ending regress, in which every recently developed idea follows its prior idea in an infinite trail. Patañjali also stated that such conditions, there arises an issue with recollection. (Patañjali, 4.21) Boring also states this in his history of introspection. With such issues related to retrospection as well as introspection, Patañjali stuck to its ancestors in acquiring quite a dissimilar methodology to tackle with the brain.

In place of noticing and examining the constituents of awareness, yoga mentors have come up with a technique of administering/managing the stream of thought and envisioning in order to decrease its rate and then gradually put a full stop to the stream of thoughts. Patañjali (1.12) puts forward some measures for how to bring it to an end: beginning with abhyāsa or we can say constant strive and then vairāgya which means development of the state of getting emotionally uninvolved. Constant striving in this technique is a long-standing task. It requires multiple attempts along with a long period of time. Patañjali puts forward a pragmatic series of steps termed as Kriyā yoga. Kriyā yoga has three constituents, first is Tapas which means getting down to austereness, second is svādhyāya which means auto didacticism, and the third is offering/ giving in the result of deeds to the almighty. Out of the above mentioned, austereness includes willingly opted constraints related to the time, quantity along with description of what to consume, opting for anything delightful to resist such as having a drink or agreeing for anything relatively awful such as keeping low degrees for a set duration. These austerities are also there in various religions, in the form of tradition, celebration. For instance, in Islam, people do not eat anything from dawn to dusk for at least a month when they have to keep Rōza. In short, the primary motive of austereness is to develop the ability to manage your emotions and seem tranquil by avoiding anger and fright, which is called self-control.

The other constituent of Kriyā yoga which is auto didacticism is a significant analytical inspection of the self. Patañjali, along with its analysers stated that auto didacticism includes the examination of works which should talk about the essence of personal identity or individuality, primarily the essence of arising above the self or what is higher in level than the self, which is the strength of the track of spirituality towards awareness (Jñāna yoga), which the Advaita approach acquired. The last constituent of Kriyā yoga suggests dual notions, one is the concept of the almighty, which is fundamental to the track of devoutness (Bhakti yoga), and the pathway of deeds (karma yoga) as narrated in Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, which calls for an aspirer to follow obligations suitable to a person's position in public (svadharma) with no supposition of prize or honour.

Consequently, what Kriyā yoga signifies is a blend of pathways (marga) towards boost of spirituality, they are karma yogas, Jñāna, and Bhakti. In spite of the fact that a particular pathway towards consciousness of the self, that Patañjali explains in the Yogasūtras, have focused contemplation (Dhyāna) at its centre. The exercise of contemplation embarks only when an aspirer has adhered to the three aṣṭāṅgas out of eight set forth by Patañjali, namely- Āsana, Pranayama, Pratyāhāra; whose pathway is known as Raja yoga or Dhayana yoga.

To put it simply, the aspirer is all set to proceed only if they have adhered to the moral set of instructions, excelled the exercise of being seated in a steady and relaxing position also called as prāṇāyāma, which mainly aids in managing intellectual activities, and has later pulled back focus internally. Right at this time, the aspirer moves on towards the sixth aṣṭāṅga out of the eight aṣṭāṅgas set forth by Patañjali, called Dhāraṇa, which requires them to centre concentration towards a confined sphere, meaning a particular site, such as the point of the nose or any other thing, such a photograph of any preferred God, or even a specific notion such, as that of a cow. To put it simply, the initial stair towards attentive/ focused contemplation demands for limiting the scope of the brain moving from one subject matter

towards another subject matter, or from one idea to another; this procedure was identified by Freud as Free Association. The second last Aṣṭāṅga named as Dhyāna needs an aspirer to concentrate only on one subject matter or notion for a longer duration. As it is achieved, the aspirer of yogic exercise is all set for the concluding Aṣṭāṅga, named Samādhi, which includes a set of progressively elevated levels of awareness.

The long established literary works, specifically the works of Vijñāna Bhikṣu, Vācaspati Miśra, and Vyāsa deeply explains and talks about the character of the modification of normal awareness to the elevated extent of Samādhi. Explaining the long established narratives of the phases of Samādhi in terms of present day psychology is totally a rigid task. It is quite obvious that the long established origins tackle with the psychological constituents of nearly all remarkably concentrated ideas at the top most state of attentiveness, which acts as the initial stage of the journey of a Yogi through the progressively elevated states of Samādhi. The method to explain the increase from this position is to see it, as a consecutive erasure of the intellectual constituents.

2.2 The Nature of Mind and Consciousness

The book extensively discusses Patañjali's classification of mental modifications (vṛttis) and their psychological implications. Rao explains how Patañjali's understanding of memory, imagination, perception, and misperception aligns with modern cognitive psychology. He draws comparisons between Patañjali's concept of citta (mind-stuff) and Western models of consciousness, particularly William James's stream of consciousness and Freud's subconscious mind. If we see yoga psychology with reference to the writings of Sigmund Freud, it is quite elementary as Sigmund Freud has clearly talked about yoga in his works. In *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Freud (1930) mentions:

“Another friend of mine, whose insatiable craving for knowledge has led him to make the most unusual experiments and has ended by giving him encyclopedic knowledge, has assured me that through the practices of yoga, by withdrawing from the world, by fixing the attention on bodily functions and by peculiar methods of breathing, one can in fact evoke new sensations and coenaesthesia in oneself, which he regards as regressions to primordial states of mind which have long ago been overlaid. He sees in them a physiological basis, as it were, of much of the wisdom of mysticism” (72).

2.3 Emotional Regulation and Mental Health

Rao explores how the *Yogasūtra* offers techniques for emotional regulation and stress management. He discusses pratipakṣa-bhāvanam (the practice of replacing negative thoughts with positive ones) in relation to cognitive restructuring in psychotherapy. The book also examines the role of prāṇāyāma (breath control) in regulating the autonomic nervous system, an area increasingly studied in neuropsychology.

Ayurveda also points to the significance or bodily configuration of the tridoṣaḥ or faults as body's typology in a person. They are classified as vāta, pitta and kapha. Vāta is the chief configuration of earth and air, generally with a body like that of an athlete or maybe slender, such people are rational and good communicators. These are energetic, operative outcome oriented labeled by motion and creativeness. The pitta governings are an amalgamation of water and fire. A stabilized, most probably to be of a medium constructed or its features are its intellectuality and courageousness. They may encounter irritation along with anger, though; they are quite dominant with development or changes and transcendence. Kapha consists of earth along with water components producing the native on plump area. Quite filled up with sympathy and fluidness, pliability and formation in their general nature, such persons are naturally merciful, lenient, and abundant in affection, along with

compliance. However, such persons are probably full of desolation, unhappiness, closeness and avarice, along with the propensity to stay in the similar pattern of thought to which an individual is accustomed.

2.4 Self-Realisation and Transpersonal Psychology

One of Rao's most compelling arguments is his comparison of yoga's samādhi (meditative absorption) with self-actualisation in humanistic psychology (Maslow, Carl Rogers). He suggests that Patañjali's framework corresponds to the highest stages of human development, emphasising self-awareness, mindfulness, and transcendence. The book also aligns yoga psychology with transpersonal psychology, which explores altered states of consciousness and spiritual experiences. Humanistic psychology appeared in the texts of Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Carl Rogers in the form of a 'third force' in psychology contrasting the dual controlling forces- psychoanalysis and behaviourism. The primary characteristic of this shift was the aim of the growth of personality in the direction of an elevated degree of performance as determined from the aim of pathological situations in psychoanalysis. Such sort of aim was demonstrated by Maslow's initial stress on the hierarchy of needs and the idea of self-actualization (Maslow, 1954). This concept was that the essential or the needs which are low in order, beginning with the physiological want for air to breathe or food to eat, that are to be fulfilled primarily and then the fulfillment of the wants for security or safety, then the wants of affinity or respect; ultimately moving ahead in the direction of fulfilling the want for self actualization at the peak of the need hierarchy. All in all the motive force was on the continuous opening up and actualization of human potentiality, a concept encapsulated in the idea of 'becoming', which was visible in the main title of Roger's (1961) work 'On becoming a person'. In the beginning 1960s Maslow (1962) was so far on the move towards an elevated stage of consciousness as visible in his text on

the 'peak experiences'. During the subsequent period of his work, Maslow (1969) found a fresh journal known as Transpersonal Psychology, a major break made by him; with this he flagged the unfolding of a new 'fourth force' in psychology. As encapsulated in the word transpersonal, the focus was especially on transcendence. Reviewing this transformation towards the fourth force in psychology, Koltko-Rivera (2006) stated in an article:

"The earlier model positions the highest form of motivational development at the level of the well-adjusted, differentiated, and fulfilled individual self or ego. The latter model places the highest form of human development at a transpersonal level, where the self/ego and its needs are transcended. This represents a monumental shift in the conceptualisation of human personality and its development" (306).

Koltko-Rivera goes on to state that: "At the level of self-actualization [there is] a certain self-aggrandizing aspect to this motivational stage.... At the level of self-transcendence, the individual's own needs are put aside ... in favour of service to others and to some higher force or cause conceived as being outside the personal self" (306–307).

It must be comprehensible that in the image of the humanistic nature, Maslow introduced in his turn to transpersonal psychology, he reached near to the standpoint of yoga that focuses on changing an individual from someone who is self-centered to an individual who is truly opposite of it, becomes self-sacrificing from self-centered. The notion of self-actualization suggests going well with or an eternal exercise of ongoing developments in individuality.

Advaita and yoga being the governing Indian frame of mind, somewhat focuses on 'stasis'- a phase where an everlasting and constant substructure is uncovered in the undergoing of the transcendentalist self in 'pure' or no content phase of awareness. Aiming on going well with or existing usually governs in the advancement of the West in agreement to that of India (Paranjpe, 1998). Yoga psychology acknowledges the exercise of 'becoming' as a fundamental characteristic of survival of a person within the domain of ever evolving

realm of Prakṛti, simultaneously acknowledging 'being' of the forever constant puruṣa undergone in without content stage of awareness. Respecting the surfacing of transpersonal psychology and with its concentration on transcendentalism, many intakes have been acknowledged or put forward by the Asian Spiritual Tradition (Stark & Washburn, 1997; Walsh, 1988). Scotton and Hiatt (1996) have specifically mentioned the involvement of yoga along with Hinduism towards transpersonal psychology. So far yoga Psychology has located itself in psychology of the present day, along with psychiatry.

2.5 Concept of Personality and Self

The notion of personality and self in Hinduism has been a constantly developing idea. From a very long period of time, the study of personality and self has been performed as a complimentary facet. The self is an individualistic idea/notion. In compliance with Yogic stand point, it is twofold in nature. Puruṣa is complete perception on the other hand Prakṛti is considered as unawareness which can also be termed as the state of unconsciousness. Prakṛti mainly has two constituents such as Buddhi or Ahaṁkāra which can also be termed as intelligence and ego. The Manas and Indri which can also be termed as brain and sensation evoke its essence from Puruṣa which can be termed as self. In order to reach the state of being enlightened or in the procedure of acquiring Samādhi or pure awareness, one should take on and exercise by going through or experiencing the series of taking birth, rejuvenation, deliverance, the end of life, the supreme form of deliverance, from real self, human figure and an everlasting soul, it all comes under karma.

Transcendent modifications move towards the track of spiritualness, chiefly in the procedure of making it up to a person's biggest potentiality. One can undergo the procedure of acquiring the state of pure awareness and self deliverance with the help of harmonizing reciprocation of puruṣa and prakṛti. Similarly, it could be attained with the help of the

procedure of Abhyāsa by which a track of virtuousness could be carved out. With the help of devoutness or yogic bhakti, the maximum level of consciousness could be achieved. Samskara has its significance in a way that it holds together one's existence, makes it satisfying, with no difficulty to operate on this track and accomplish the essence of survival or continuation.

The personality and self with a historical outlook can be considered as Guṇas, the individual is made up of. Guṇas acts as an inspiring factor or the binding block of personality of a person. The historical intellects or researchers have categorized Guṇas as- the tamas or the tāmasika guṇas, the sattva guṇas and the tamas, or the rajas or rājasika guṇas. The Mahārṣi of India were of the view that a completely functioning person is a stabilised configuration of the Guṇas, even if a single Guṇas is present in abundance, a disbalance is created in the fundamental Pravṛtti or the personality of a person.

A person whose tāmasika personality is in dominance is most probably argumentative, has problems related to anger, or might have tāmasika traits such as, strong sexual desire, avarice, or instant want of pleasure gained from satisfaction of desires. Tamas is an outcome of escapism from the responsibilities of this worldly existence, and being far from the awakening in the form of spirituality or changes in life. The rajas guṇas are responsible for the governing of deeds, activities, or motion in life. It has to do with the positive outcome of determination and accomplishment. Therefore, a disbalance of these significant guṇas may highlight fright or anxiety in the coming phases of life. The sattva guṇas highlights the sāttvika which is known as purity of deeds. Sāttvika guṇas are responsible for lessening the result of consequences of dominant tamas and the rajas and it is feasible to attain the final liberation from all worldly desires. A person who has these guṇas as dominant is most probably a person who has abundance of purity, stability, self harmony, and is not at all selfish.

3. Strengths of the Book

3.1 Interdisciplinary Approach

One of the book's greatest strengths is its interdisciplinary analysis. Rao successfully integrates Indian philosophy with modern psychological theories, making the *Yogasūtra* accessible to contemporary scholars. His comparisons with Freudian psychoanalysis, Jungian archetypes, cognitive psychology, and mindfulness-based therapy enrich the study of yoga psychology. There are many more things related to the standpoint of Freud on yoga despite his irreligious outlook as Freud has mentioned about his incompetence to undergo 'oceanic feeling' of the mystics in his communication with Romain Rolland. Romain Rolland is a French writer who has also won a Nobel Prize. Rolland while writing to Freud mentioned about 'oceanic feeling'- undergoing anything that is boundless, that mystics having elevated stages of awareness are considered to acquire and to this Freud had replied stating that he is unable to come across oceanic feelings on his own. Freud (1930) had many more things to talk about in relation to yoga. "The extreme form of this (of influencing the instinctual impulses) is brought about by killing off the instincts, as is prescribed by the worldly wisdom of the East and practised by yoga" (79).

Yoga assists those whose ego is so powerful that it can willingly handle austereness-one's own set of norms that refuses usual delight of consuming anything, or at any time; for instance it can be easily observed in various religious activities, when people keep fast. These types of customs eventually help the ego get strong, and an aspirer of yoga should definitely go along with such practices until and unless his/her ego gets sufficiently powerful in order to subdue desires. Ultimately, the aspirer should renounce the ego, almost possible for an individual with a powerful ego who can bear to pass out with it totally.

3.2 Scientific and Empirical Basis

Unlike purely philosophical interpretations of the *Yogasūtra*, Rao's study is grounded in scientific reasoning. He discusses empirical research on meditation, neuroplasticity, and emotional regulation, demonstrating how yoga's psychological principles have measurable effects on mental health. His references to clinical studies on mindfulness and yoga-based therapy strengthen his arguments. Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* deals with the intellectual/ mental conceptions or approaches planned especially for directing or administering the activities of the human brain, which shapes the foundation of yoga psychology. *Yogasūtras* are not just explanations, in fact, an absolute guidance towards the state of being psychologically happy and healthy. *Vinyāsa* yoga, a part of *Yogasūtra*, has been accepted worldwide as a way of living.

The Yoga psychology can be said to be associated with constructivist perspective on cognition. In Patañjali's yoga psychology *prjñā*, which is known as cognition, is seen as an essential fragment of the usual wide awake stage of consciousness. A standpoint of constructivism of *prjñā* is implied in the theoretical organisation of Patañjali. This type of suggestion is visible distinctly with reference to Patañjali's standpoint of the development through the multiple phases of *Samādhi*, at which cognitive constituent is slowly lessened bit by bit in order that connotes and associated definition are descended from awareness together with their sensuous principles, eventually moving towards contentless consciousness.

3.3 Relevance to Modern Psychological Practices

Rao effectively shows how Patañjali's system can be applied in counselling, therapy, and stress management. His insights on yoga-based interventions for anxiety, depression, and PTSD highlight the therapeutic relevance of the *Yogasūtra* in modern psychology.

Performing yogic exercises not only aids an individual internally but also in having a wholesome, well shaped and an attractive body. The expansion of studios for yoga over many places, almost similar to a gym where one can perform physical activities in order to remain fit and acquire good health. There are also various studies/ investigations going on at global level which are dedicated to try out various positions and breath training techniques, in accordance with their advantages related to health or well-being. Aggregation of these studies aid in enhancing the universality of yogic exercises.

4. Limitations of the Book

4.1 Limited Discussion on Neuroscientific Correlations

While Rao discusses psychology extensively, his engagement with neuroscientific findings on meditation and brain function is somewhat limited. Given recent studies on neural plasticity and meditation, a deeper exploration of yoga's impact on brain structures like the amygdala, prefrontal cortex, and default mode network would have strengthened his arguments.

4.2 Philosophical Depth Could Be Expanded

The book primarily focuses on the psychological aspects of yoga, but it does not explore the metaphysical dimensions of Patañjali's teachings in depth. A more extensive discussion on Sāṅkhya philosophy, the role of Īśvara (God), and the interplay between puruṣa (pure consciousness) and prakṛti (material world) would have provided a more holistic perspective.

5. Implications for Future Research

Rao's work opens avenues for further exploration in yoga psychology, cognitive neuroscience, and contemplative studies. Some potential areas for future research include:

- Empirical validation of yoga-based cognitive therapy.
- Neuroscientific studies on prāṇāyāma and meditation.
- Comparative studies between Indian psychology and Western therapeutic models.

6. Conclusion

K. Ramakrishna Rao's *Patañjali's Yogasūtra: A Psychological Study* is a pioneering work that bridges the gap between classical yoga and modern psychology. By offering a structured psychological interpretation of the *Yogasūtra*, Rao highlights its relevance in cognitive science, mental health, and mindfulness-based therapy. While the book could expand its discussion on neuroscience and deeper philosophical themes, it remains an invaluable resource for psychologists, yoga practitioners, and scholars of Indian philosophy. Rao successfully reaffirms Patañjali's timeless wisdom, demonstrating its continued significance in understanding and transforming the human mind.

Yoga has always been taught as a constituent of philosophy, but the psychologists must recognize and value the vitality of psychological characteristics of yoga and launch it in the syllabus of psychology. It is important to acknowledge that the aim of yoga psychology is not at all towards earthly benefits; it offers methodologies and ideas for the betterment of a person, and any individual can avail the benefit of āsana and respiratory exercises by performing yoga. Yoga is beneficial for those who wish to achieve complete change of self by leaving behind the worldly desires with the help of self realization. With worldwide popularity of yoga there arises a notion amongst a few groups stating that yoga is related to and focuses on conversion to Hinduism from non-Hinduism. In fact, yoga is a branch of

applied psychology which does not deal with any conversion or any religion. It focuses on the understanding of a stage of consciousness, without any regard to the beliefs; to put it simply yoga is totally apart from religion.

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