Conclusion:
Yoga & Spirituality Today

When the word 'Yoga' is mentioned nowadays, people think of a set of physical practices that are beneficial to flexibility, physical health, and overall well-being. Unfortunately, many people who call themselves Yoga teachers and instructors know very little about what the term 'Yoga' actually means.

Many (but not all) people who claim to be experts in Yoga philosophy (Sāṅkhya) know little to nothing about Yoga's origins, or why this school of yogic practices was formed. Numerous beliefs and superstitions have also developed within this school. In addition, many fake gurus exist, who take advantage of people by purporting to have supernatural powers from yogic practices while knowing nothing about what authentic Yoga is.

Yoga has recently gained popularity all around the world. There are numerous yoga instructors and practitioners in many nations, but the vast majority of them overlook the essence of yoga – Divine Union. In the Katha Upanishad, there is a fantastic phrase that refers to these types of teachers and their followers: "*the blind leading the blind*. (अन्धेन नियमाना यथा अन्धाः ।)"

A true yoga practitioner must understand what Yoga is and why this school was created in the first place. Who were the philosophers who founded this school, and what exactly did they intend to share with the rest of the world?

Many individuals confuse physical activities with spirituality; some believe that practicing some āsana and breathing exercises makes them spiritual and superior to others; some like to blame others for their eating choices, claiming to know what true spirituality is. It is quite unfortunate to see people engaging in all manner of nonsense in the name of spirituality.

In Rishikesh, where I live, hundreds of commercial Yoga training centers can be found. Rishikesh is a small town in the Indian Himalayas that serves as a hub for the study of Yoga and Vedānta. Here reside yogis and brahmacāris who are

familiar with Sāṅkhya and the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali. Personally, I haven't found a single individual teaching at the commercial Yoga centers who has formally studied Yoga philosophy – Sāṅkhya – or has any in-depth knowledge of it. In most situations, Yoga has become a means of making money and gaining followers. False teachers just pretend to know about Yoga while focusing on physical health benefits and the appearance of being spiritual.

Many people who profess to understand Yoga philosophy are only familiar with Sāṅkhya from Patañjali's book, the Yoga Sutras. This text borrows Kapila's Sāṅkhya philosophy but expands its principles very little. If we ask them (current commercial yoga teachers) what Sāṅkhya truly is, most have little to no idea. Furthermore, when you ask them about the real purpose of the Yoga Sutras, they also miss the mark. Very few will reply, "divine-union", by which we actually mean "Yoga".

Even the vast majority of 'advanced yoga teacher training' courses barely cover the Yoga Sutras, and none that I am aware of incorporates the Sāṅkhya Kārikā as a core component of the program. There are well-respected teachers who, unfortunately, know very little about the subject. False teachers, those who teach Yoga without knowing its spiritual basis, are indeed the *"blind leading the blind"*.

How are physical activities spiritual? If this is the case, why aren't all physical activities spiritual? Gymnastics or calisthenics, in my opinion, can have an equivalent or much better effect on strength, flexibility, and balance than any āsana practice. The spiritual foundation must be there to differentiate Yoga.

People believe that wearing white clothes, wearing rosaries and crystals around their necks, and being vegetarian or vegan make them spiritual. Those; who are confused in this manner live their lives in complete ignorance or worse, grow arrogant and even competitive with their spirituality, unknowingly developing a spiritual ego. This is what it means to be spiritually ignorant! The knowledge gained through Sāṅkhya is a remedy to this.

Let us try to understand fully what yoga or spirituality actually means. The word *'Yoga'* is derived from the Sanskrit root *yujir* (युजिर्), which means *'joining'* or *'attainment'*. Let us look into a few classical definitions of the term Yoga:

योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्

Yoga is skillfulness in action.

— Bhagavad-Gītā

Master Kṛṣṇa explains how to transcend the suffering caused by emotional fluctuations; the term 'skillfulness' here refers to not being emotionally impacted by the outcome of any activity. When a yogi acts with full engagement and dedication, yet without longing for its result, it leads to inner satisfaction, and thus the yogi overcomes frustration.

समत्वं योग उच्यते

Yoga is equanimity.

— Bhagavad-Gītā

Nature (Prakṛti) and its collective product have three qualities: sāttva, rājas, and tamas, whereas Spirit (Puruṣa) is free from any qualities. Yoga is the equanimity attained through this realization of Self (Spirit) and not-Self (Nature). Yogis realize the distinction between Self and not-Self. All actions, reactions, changes, and fluctuations are a product of Nature, not Spirit, and hence yogis overcome all afflictions, frustrations, and suffering and realize equanimity.

योगः चित्तवृत्ति निरोधः

Yoga is cessation of mental afflictions.

— Yoga Sutras of Patañjali

Yoga, according to Sāṅkhya, is the understanding of Spirit and Nature. Yoga, according to certain other philosophers, is the realization of the supreme-Self. Kapila is Sāṅkhya philosophy's great grandmaster. True freedom, according to Kapila, is only possible by having a correct comprehension of Self (Spirit) and not-Self (Nature). Later in history, master Patañjali taught several disciplines and practices that were highly beneficial in preparing for the realization of Spirit and Nature. True spirituality is a correct understanding of Spirit – Spirit that is unaffected by Nature and its qualities and effects. Know that the body-mind organism is a part of Nature, ever-changing, yet mistaken for Self due to ignorance and error. Spirit, the true-Self, is ever free of all phenomena.