UNIT 5: YOGA: THE CONCEPT OF CHITTA - VṚITTI

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Brief Description on Yoga philosophy

5.4 Concept of Citta-Vṛitti

5.5 Astāṅga Yoga

5.6 Let us Sum Up

5.7 Further Readings

5.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.9 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- describe Yoga philosophy,
- analyse Citta-vritti,
- explain Astāṅga Yoga.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the concept of Citta-vritti in Yoga philosophy. Yoga philosophy is one of the six astika or Vedic schools of Indian philosophy. Literally the word 'Yoga' means union i.e. spiritual union of the individual soul with the Universal soul. According to the Gitā, Yoga is that state, where there is nothing higher or worth realizing than it and the state free from all pain and misery is Yoga. Patanjali is the founder of Yoga philosophy. He stated that Yoga does not mean union but spiritual effort to attain perfection through the control of the body, senses and the mind. Yoga is the cessation of the modification of Citta. The cessation can be attained through meditation which is also called Yoga.

5.3 BRIEF DESCRIPTION ON YOGA PHILOSOPHY

The Yoga philosophy is closely related to Sāṅkhya system. Yoga is the application of the theory of the Sāṅkhya in practical life. Yoga mostly accepts the Sāṅkhya epistemology and admits the three pramānas of perception, inference and testimony. Again, Yoga philosophy accepts the metaphysics of Sāṅkhya with its twenty five principles too. But, unlike Sāṅkhya, Yoga believes in God as the Supreme self distinct from other selves. Yoga system gives importance to the practice of yoga as the sure means of attaining discriminative knowledge.

Patanjali's 'Yoga Sūtra' is the first work of Yoga system. Yoga Sūtra is divided into four parts. The first is called Samādhipāda which deals with the nature and aim of concentration. Sādhanāpada, the second part explains the means to realize the end. The third is called Vibhutipāda, which deals with the supra-normal powers that can be acquired through yoga. The fourth is Kaivalyapāda, describes the nature of liberation and the reality of the transcendental self.

Vyasa's commentary on the 'Yoga Sūtra' known as 'Yoga-Bhāsya' is the most important and authoritative work of Yoga system. Generally, the word 'Yoga' is used in variety of senses. It may simply mean 'method'. The root of all sin and suffering is separation, disunion, estrangement. To get rid of sorrow and sin, we must attain spiritual unification, the consciousness of two in one or yoga. According to Patanjali, yoga is the methodical effort to attain perfection through the control of the different elements of human nature, physical and psychical. The physical body, the active will and the understanding mind are to be brought under control.

Yoga system makes a special study of the nature and forms of yoga, the different steps in yoga practice and other important things connected with these. Yoga system believes that liberation is to be attained through the direct knowledge of the self's distinction from the physical world including our body, mind and the ego. It lays down a practical path of self-realisation for the religious aspirant. It emphasizes the importance of the practical

methods of purification and concentration for realizing the self's distinction from the body and the mind, and thereby attaining liberation.

Yoga philosophy advocates the theory of 'Satkâryavâda'or Parināmavāda. According to this theory, there is neither production of a non-existent thing nor destruction of an existent thing. A non-existent thing cannot be produced. For example, milk turned into curd which it contained in a potential condition.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether the following statements are true or false:

(a) Yoga Philosophy accepts three sources of valid knowledge. (True/False)

(b) Yoga is the cessation of the modification of Citta. (True/False)

(c) The 'Yoga Sūtra' is the first work on Yoga philosophy. (True/False)

(d) Buddha is the founder of Yoga system. (True/False)

(e) Patanjali is the author of 'Yoga Bhāsya'. (True/False)

Q 2: What does Yoga mean?.

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Q 3: What is God according to Yoga system ?

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5.4 CONCEPT OF CITTA-VRITTI

Citta means the three internal organs namely, buddhi or intellect, ahankâra or ego and manas or mind. Citta is mahat or buddhi which includes ahankâra and manas. Citta is the first product of Prakṛti. It is subject to the three guṇas, and undergoes various modifications according to the predominance of the guṇas. It is essentially unconscious, though it becomes conscious by the reflection of the self. It undergoes modifications when it is affected by the objects through the senses. The consciousness of Puruṣa reflected in it leads to the impression that it is the experiencer. In reality, Citta is the spectacle of which the self is by reflection the spectator. As cause, Citta is all-pervading like akâsa and we have as many Cittas as

there are Puruṣas, since each Puruṣa has a Citta connected with it. Citta when gets related to any object, it assumes the 'form' of the object. This form is called Vritti or modification.

Puruṣa is essentially pure consciousness and is free from the limitations of Prakṛti. But it wrongly identifies itself with its reflection in the Citta and appears to be undergoing change and modification. Therefore, Citta is the physical medium for the manifestation of the spirit. For example, in a red-hot iron ball, formless fire appears spherical and cold iron appears hot. Similarly, on account of its reflection in the Citta, Puruṣa appears changing and Citta appears conscious. Just as the moon appears as moving when seen reflected in the moving waves and waves appear as luminous, similarly, Puruṣa appears as undergoing modifications and Citta appears as conscious due to Puruṣa's reflection in it. When the Puruṣa realizes that it is completely isolated and is only a passive spectator beyond the play of Prakṛti, it ceases to identify itself with its reflection in the Citta. As a result the light is withdrawn and the modifications of the Citta fall to the ground. This cessation of the modifications of the Citta through meditation is called 'Yoga'. It is the return of the Puruṣa to its original perfection.

It is advocated by the Yoga system that the modifications of Citta(Citta-vritti) are of five kinds: (i) Right cognition (prāmna), (ii) Wrong cognition (viparyaya), (iii) Verbal cognition or imagination (vikalpa), (iv) Sleep (nidrā) and (v) Memory (smṛti). Right cognition is of three kinds: (a) Perception (pratyaksa), (b) Inference (anumāna) and Verbal testimony (sabda). When the Citta through the sense organs comes into contact with the external object and assumes its form, or comes into contact with the internal mental state, then it is called perception. Again, when the Citta cognizes the generic nature of things, then it is called inference. Further, viparyaya is the wrong knowledge of objects as what they really are not and it includes doubt, e.g. the wrong knowledge like that of a rope-snake. Vikalpa is the mere verbal idea caused by words, to which no real facts correspond, i.e. a hare's horn. Sleep or nidrā is another kind of mental modification. It is due to the predominance of tamas in Citta and the consequence cessation of waking consciousness and dream experience. Smṛti is the recollection

of past experience through the impressions left behind. All cognitive mental states and processes may be included in these five kinds of modifications.

In fact Puruṣa is the eternally pure and transcendental consciousness. But when the Citta is modified into any kind of vritti, the self or Puruṣa is reflected in it. Puruṣa appears to pass through different states of the mind and stages of life. It considers itself to be the subject to birth and growth, decay and death. It believes that it sleeps and wakes up, imagines and remembers. In reality the self is above all the happenings of the body and the mind. It is only the Citta that really performs these functions of sleeping and waking, imagining and remembering. The self appears to be concerned in these functions, because it is reflected in Citta which is held up before it as a mirror before a person. Puruṣa also appears to be the subject of the five kinds of sufferings or kleṣas. These are : (a) Ignorance or wrong knowledge of the non-eternal as eternal, (b) Asmitâ or egoism that is the false notion or perception of the self as identical with buddhi or the mind, (c) Rāga or attachment i.e. the desire for pleasure and the means of its attainment, (d) Dvesa or aversion to pain and causes thereof and (e) Abhinivesa or clinging to life and instinctive fear for death in all creatures.

The bondage of the self is due to its wrong identification with the mental modifications. Therefore, liberation means the end of these wrong identification through proper discrimination between Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Due to the modifications of the Citta, the self is reflected there and feels pleasure or pain out of the objects in the world. It means the bondage of the self or Puruṣa. So, to attain liberation human beings should restrain the activity of the body, the senses and the mind. Finally, human beings should suppress all the modifications of Citta. It may be added here that Yoga is considered as the cessation of mental functions or modifications. The aim of Yoga is to prevent the self from identifying itself with mental modifications.

Vyāsa stated about five different conditions or levels of mental life (Citta bhumi). The differences in the levels are due to the predominance of the different guṇas. Concentration is a quality of the Citta in all its five stages. The lowest stage is called Ksipta or restless. When the Citta has an excess of rajas and is tossed about by objects, it is known as Ksipta. The second

level is Mūdha or blinded. When the Citta has an excess of tamas and it has the tendency towards vice, ignorance, sleep and the like, it is called Mûdha. The third stage is called Viksipta or distracted. When the Citta is unstable on account of natural defects or accidental troubles, then it is called viksipta. In this state, sattva predominates, but rajas also asserts itself at times. Here, the ordinary mind pursues the pleasant and avoids the unpleasant. These three stages are considered as imperfect since they are associated with the three guṇas – Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. The fourth level is called Ekāgra or single-pointed. When the Citta is devoted to our object of meditation and is entirely filled with sattva, then it is called Ekāgra. This prepares the mind for its greatest efforts. The fifth and the highest level is called Nirūddha or restricted. When the developments of the Citta are checked, it is called Nirūddha. Here, the mental modifications are asserted though their latent impressions remain. The Yoga psychologists mention that concentration is a general characteristic of all states of mind, though it is found in its intense form of Samādhi.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Mention whether the following statements are true or false :

(a) Citta is the first product of Prakṛti. (True/False)

(b) Right cognition is of three kinds. (True/False)

(c) Wrong cognition does not include doubt. (True/False)

(d) Rāga or attachment is a kind of the modification of Citta. (True/False)

(e) Yoga states six conditions of the mental life. (True/False)

Q 5: What is Citta?

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Q 6: What is called Citta-vritti ?

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Q 7: What is the essential nature of Puruṣa?

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Q 8: How many kinds of modifications of Citta are there? Mention.

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5.5 ASTĀNGA YOGA

It is advocated by Yoga philosophy that human being should have control over the body, the senses and the mind. Yoga does not accept the view of killing the body but it recommends its perfection. A sound mind needs a sound body. Though Physical health is not the end of human life, it is still one of its essential conditions. We cannot look upon man as a physical machine to which spiritual life is attached from outside. The body is the instrument for the expression of spiritual life. So, instead of renouncing the material basis, the Yoga accepts it as the part of the spiritual problem. To overcome the hindrances, the Yoga provides us the eightfold method (astāṅga yoga or yogāṅga) consisting of (i)Yama (abstention), (ii) Niyama (observance), (iii)[1]sana (posture), (iv)Prānāyāma (regulation of breath), (v) Pratyāhāra (withdrawal of the senses), (vi)Dhāranā (contemplation), (vii) Dhyāna (fixed attention) and (viii) Samādhi (concentration). The last three are direct or internal (antaranga) aids and the first three are indirect or external (bahiraṅga). These are known as the aids of Yoga i.e. Yogāṅga.

The concept of Astāṅga Yoga may be explained in the following way :

(i) Yama : Yama or abstention includes the five principles of Jainism. It is abstention from injury through thought, word or deed (ahimsā), from falsehood (satya), from stealing (asteya), from passions and lust (brahmacārya) and from avarice (aparigraha) or non-acceptance of gifts. Yoga philosophy insists that a yogin must strictly follow them. Ahimsā consists in the absence of cruelty to all creatures in all possible ways at all times. It is tenderness, good will and kindness for all living beings. Truthfulness consists in the harmony between true thoughts and words in

uniformity with the good of all creatures. The words should be spoken for the welfare of all creatures and not for doing harm to others. Non-stealing consists in not merely misappropriating the property of others, but also in the lack of greed. Human beings should control their passions, pleasures and sensual desires. Besides, non-acceptance of gifts consists in abstaining from acquiring objects of enjoyment. It consists in non-acquisition and non-possession. Hence, a man cannot concentrate his attention on any object if his mind is distracted by sin and crime. It explains the necessity of complete abstention from all evil courses and tendencies of life on the part of the Yogin who is eager to realize the self in Samâdhi or concentration.

(ii) Niyama (observance) : The second path is Niyama which consists in purification (saucca), contentment (santosa), austerity (tapas) and devotion (Ishvara-pranidhâna) to God. All human beings who resort to yoga are required to practice them regularly. Purification is of two kinds : External and Internal. External purification means the purification of the body by washing and taking pure food. Again, internal purification means the purification of the mind by cultivating good emotions and sentiments such as friendliness, kindness, cheerfulness for all. Contentment consists in the lack of desire to acquire anything. Austerities consist in the habit of enduring hunger and thirst, heat and cold, sitting and standing, non-speaking, non-communication of desires even through gestures. Study of the scriptures includes reciting the mystic syllable Aum and meditating on God. The Niyamas are positive virtues limited by time, place and other circumstances.

(iii) Āsana (posture) : According to Yoga philosophy, our body has a dignity of its own, as much as the mind. Hence, the third discipline is bodily posture. Āsana is a physical help to concentration. We cannot fix our attention on an object when we are running or sleeping. We must settle ourselves down in a convenient posture before we begin to meditate. Patanjali mentioned that the posture must be firm, pleasant and easy. It should not be painful and distract the mind. The control of the body is the basis of the Yoga discipline. We should careful about our food. We should not eat and drink things which set our nerves on edge. Yoga philosophy

suggests to control our body and not kill it. According to it, the perfection of the body consists in beauty, grace, strength and adamantine hardness. If the body is not completely free from diseases and other disturbing influences, it is very difficult to attain concentration. So, Yoga lays down various rules for maintaining the health of the body and making it a fit vehicle for concentrated thought.

(iv) Prānāyāma (breath control) : The fourth discipline of Yogāṅga is breath control. It is considered as a steady influence on the mind and it plays an important part in Hatha Yoga. Here, it is esteemed for its great efficiency in producing occult powers. But the physically weak persons should not follow the practices, as it is very dangerous for them.

Breath control consists in controlling natural breathing and subjecting it to a definite law. It consists in slow and deep inspiration, retention of breath and slow expiration. These three functions should be performed for definite periods. Breath control is conducive to concentration of the mind. It is the supreme austerity which purges the mind of impurities and generates illumination of knowledge. It can be learnt only under the guidance of experts.

(v) Pratyāhāra (withdrawal of the senses) : Withdrawal of the senses from their objects is the fifth discipline of Yogāṅga. The mind is to be definitely shut against all impressions from outside. If the mind is withdrawn from the external sensible objects, the external senses are automatically withdrawn from them. They do not follow their objects but they follow the mind. They are fixed on those objects only on which the mind is fixed. The restraint of the external senses depends upon the restraint of the mind. It can be acquired by repeated practice, determined will and sense control. In this state, the mind is not disturbed by sights, sounds and the like coming through the eye, the ear and other senses but eeps all of them under perfect control. This state is very difficult though it is not impossible to attain it.

Ethical preparation (Yama and Niyama), breath control and withdrawal of the senses from their natural functions are accessories to the Yoga and not themselves elements in it. So, they are considered as the external aids to Yoga (BahiraEga sâdhana).

(vi) Dhāranā (contemplation) : Dhāranā is the sixth discipline of Yogāṅga of Yoga philosophy. It is fixing the mind or Citta in a particular spot like the tip of the nose or the mid point of the eye brows. It is steadfastness of the mind. In normal life ideas come and go, but do not stay long. Concentration is normally sustained at its fullest for a very short time only. Bodily posture controls the body, breath control regulates the vital forces and withdrawal of the senses from their objects controls the senses and fixation of attention controls the mind. It requires withdrawal of the mind from other objects and prepares it for meditation.

(vii) Dhyāna (meditation) : The seventh discipline is Dhyāna or meditation. Meditation is the steadfast contemplation of the object without any break or disturbance. There is a continuous stream of similar cognitions of the contemplated object undisturbed by dissimilar cognitions which is called meditation. Meditation culminates in samādhi, where the sense of identity is lost. Here, the body and the mind become dead to all external impressions and only the object of meditation, whatever it be, remains shining out. Dhyāna reveals the reality of the contemplated object to the yogin's mind.

(viii) Samādhi (concentration) : The eighth discipline is Samādhi. It is the final step in the practice of Yoga. In this stage the mind is so deeply absorbed in the object of contemplation that it loses itself in the object and has no awareness of itself. Concentration is the name of the condition to be passed through before reaching liberation. Yoga insists on attaining freedom through concentration. It is the goal of the Yoga discipline, since it lifts the soul from its temporal, conditioned, changing experience into a simple, eternal and perfect life. Through this stage the Puruṣa regains the eternal status. There are degrees of Samādhi i.e. Samprajñâta or conscious and Asamprajñâta or superconscious. In the stage of Samprajñâta, the mind remains conscious of the object. In this state, the Citta is single in intent and fully illumines a distinct and real object. The Citta removes the afflictions and slackens the bonds of karma, and has for its goal the restraint of all modifications. In it there is a union between the knower and the known, the thought and the object of thought are the same. This state is accompanied

by deliberation (vitarka), reflection (vicâra), joy (ânanda) and sense of personality (asmitâ). Again, Asamprajñâta samâdhi is that concentration where there is no mental mode (Citta vritti), though the latent impressions may remain. In Samprajñâta Samādhi, there is a clean consciousness of the object reflected upon as distinct from the subject, where as this distinction disappears in Asamprajñāta Samādhi.

Thus, until we reach the stage of Samâdhi our effort is the negative one of discriminating Puruṣa from Prakṛti. When the distinction is realized, the positive nature of the spirit manifests itself. This manifestation of the nature of spirit on its own plane above all confusion with Prakṛti, is the highest form of Samādhi. Here all confusion between the self and the activity of Citta ceases. It is the highest means to realize the cessation of mental modifications. It is the ecstatic state in which the connection with the external world is broken and through which one has to pass before obtaining liberation.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 9: What is advocated by Yoga philosophy?

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Q 10: Mention the steps of Astāṅga Yoga.

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Q 11: What is Niyama?

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Q 12: What is called Prnāyāma?



5.6 LET US SUM UP

- Yoga system is one of the vedic schools of Indian philosophy.
- Literally, Yoga means union that is spiritual union of the individual soul with the universal soul.

- According to Patanjali, Yoga does not mean union but spiritual effort to attain perfection through the control of the body, senses and the mind.
- Yoga is the cessation of the modification of Citta.
- Yoga philosophy admits the three pramanas of perception, inference and testimony.
- The 'Yoga Sūtra' is the first work on Yoga philosophy.
- Vyasa's commentary on the 'Yoga Sūtra' known as 'Yoga-Bhāsya' is the most important and authoritative work of Yoga system.
- Citta means the three internal organs namely, buddhi or intellect, ahankâra or ego and manas or mind. Citta is mahat or buddhi which includes ahankāra and manas.
- It is subject to the three guṇas, and undergoes various modifications according to the predominance of the guṇas.
- When Citta gets related to any object, it assumes the 'form' of the object. This form is called Vritti or modification.
- Puruṣa is essentially pure consciousness and is free from the limitations of Prakṛti.
- The bondage of the self is due to its wrong identification with the mental modifications.
- Liberation means the end of the wrong identification of the self with the mental modifications through proper discrimination between Puruṣa and Prakṛti.



5.7 FURTHER READINGS

1) Chatterjee, S.C. & Datta, D.M. (1984). *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. University of Calcutta.
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3) Radhakrishnan, S. (192à). *Indian Philosophy* (2Volumes). Oxford: University Press.
4) Sharma, C.D. (1997). *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: M otilal Banarasidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

5) Sinha, J. N. (201à). *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. Kolkata: New Central Book Agency Pvt. Ltd.



5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: a) True, b) True, c) True, d) False, e) False.

Ans. to Q.No. 2 : Yoga means union i.e. spiritual union of the individual soul with the universal soul.

Ans. to Q. No. 3 : According to Yoga system, God is the supreme self distinct from other selves.

Ans. to Q. No. 4 : a) True, b) True, c) False, d) False, e) False.

Ans. to Q. No. 5 : Citta means the three internal organs namely, buddhi or intellect, ahankāra or ego and manas or mind.

Ans. to Q. No. 6 : When Citta gets related to any object, it assumes the 'form' of the object and this form is called Vritti or modification of the Citta.

Ans. to Q. No. 7: The essential nature of Purusa is pure consciousness and is free from the limitations of Prakṛti.

Ans. to Q. No. 8: There are five kinds of modifications of Citta. These are : (i) Right cognition (pramâna), (ii) Wrong cognition (viparyaya), (iii) Verbal cognition or imagination (vikalpa), (iv) Sleep (nidrâ) and (v) Memory (smṛti).

Ans. to Q. No. 9 : It is advocated by Yoga philosophy that human being should have control over the body, the senses and the mind.

Ans. to Q. No. 10 : The steps of Astāṅga Yoga are - (i) Yama (abstention), (ii)Niyama (observance), (iii) Āsana (posture), (iv) Prānāyāma (regulation of breath), (v) Pratyāhāra (withdrawal of the senses), (vi) Dhāranā (contemplation), (vii) Dhyāna (fixed attention) and (viii) Samādhi (concentration).

Ans. to Q. No 11: Niyama is the second path of Astāṅga Yoga which consists in purification (saucca), contentment (santosa), austerity (tapas) and devotion (Ishvara-pranidhâna) to God.

Ans. to Q. No. 12 : Prānāyāma or breath control is the fourth discipline of Astāṅga Yoga that consists in controlling natural breathing and subjecting it to a definite law. It consists in slow and deep inspiration, retention of breath and slow expiration.



5.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q.1. Who is the founder of Yoga system?

Q.2. Who is the author of 'Yoga Bhāsya'?

Q. . What is the first work on Yoga philosophy?

Q.4. Is Citta essentially unconscious?

Q.5. What is the first discipline of Yogāṅga?

B) Short Questions (Answer in about 100-150 words)

Q.1. What is Yoga as mentioned in the Gita?

Q.2. What is Patanjali's view regarding Yoga?

Q.3. Why does Citta undergo modifications?

Q.4. What is asana?

Q.5. In which stage of Yoga the connection with the external world is broken?

C) Write Short Notes on (Answer in about 100-150 words)

a. Pratyāhāra

b. Dhyāna

c. Five kinds of sufferings

d. Citta-bhumi

e. Āsana.

D) Long Questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q.1. Discuss elaborately the concept of Citta-vritti.

Q.2. Give a brief description of Yoga philosophy.

Q.3. Explain the stages of Yogāṅga.

Q.4. Describe the stage called Samādhi.

Q.5. Briefly explain the levels of mental life (Citta-bhumi)

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