UNIT 3 – APPLIED PHILOSOPHY III

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives
3.2 Introduction
3.3 Concept of Consciousness,
3.4 Yogic Method of elevation of human consciousness
    3.4.1 Bhakti Yoga,
    3.4.2 Jnana Yoga,
    3.4.3 Karma Yoga,
    3.4.4 Ashtanga Yoga
3.5 Let Us Sum Up
3.6 Further Readings
3.7 Check Your Progress
3.8 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, the learners will be able to

- Get knowledge about Yogic method at elevation at human consciousness in Jnana Yoga.
- Get Knowledge about yogic method at elevation ad human Consciousness in Karma Yoga.
- Get Knowledge about Yogic method at elevation of human, Consciousness in Ashtanga Yoga

3.2 INTRODUCTION

The applied philosophy of the Yogic method for the elevation of human consciousness is rooted in the ancient wisdom of the yogic tradition, a practice that seeks to harmonize the mind, body, and spirit to foster a deeper connection with one's true nature. At its core, Yoga is not merely a system of physical postures, but an integrated approach to living a balanced, purposeful, and awakened life. The Yogic method emphasizes self-awareness, discipline, and

the cultivation of inner peace through various practices such as meditation, breath control (pranayama), ethical guidelines (yamas and niyamas), and physical postures (asanas).

The elevation of human consciousness, from the perspective of Yoga, is a gradual process of transcending the limitations of the ego and the material world, leading to a higher state of awareness, clarity, and spiritual insight. By engaging in these practices, individuals are encouraged to move beyond the distractions of the external world, quiet the restless mind, and develop a deep sense of presence and mindfulness. The ultimate goal is to experience a profound shift in consciousness, where the practitioner moves from a state of identification with the limited self to an awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings and the universe at large. This transformation is seen as the key to unlocking one's potential, fostering compassion, and realising the true purpose of life – living in harmony with oneself and the world.

In the modern world, where individuals often grapple with stress, disconnection, and the challenges of daily life, the applied philosophy of Yoga offers a path to mental clarity, emotional balance, and spiritual fulfilment. The integration of these practices into daily life allows for a holistic approach to wellness, not just for the individual, but for society as a whole, creating a ripple effect of healing and positive transformation.

The Yogic tradition offers a multifaceted approach to spiritual growth, encompassing various paths or "Yogas" to suit different temperaments and life situations such as, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga.

3.3 CONCEPT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In both modern science and yogic philosophy, the concept of consciousness is explored as a complex and often elusive phenomenon. However, the understanding of consciousness within yogic science is unique and multidimensional, offering profound insights into the nature of the self, reality, and the ultimate purpose of human existence.

In yogic science, consciousness is not just a byproduct of brain activity, as in some Western scientific models, but rather a fundamental and all-

encompassing principle of existence. It is seen as the universal, eternal, and omnipresent essence that underlies and connects all things. Yogic teachings, particularly in the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and other Vedantic texts, define consciousness as the essential nature of the Atman (the Self) and as part of a broader, universal consciousness (often referred to as Brahman).

3.4 YOGIC METHOD OF ELEVATION OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

The yogic method of elevating human consciousness is centered around practices that harmonise the body, mind, and spirit. According to ancient texts like the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, these practices include meditation (Dhyana), breath control (Pranayama), ethical guidelines (Yamas and Niyamas), and physical postures (Asanas). By quieting the mind and transcending the ego, individuals can awaken higher states of awareness and experience oneness with the divine. The ultimate goal is self-realisation or *Samadhi*, where the individual consciousness merges with universal consciousness, leading to spiritual liberation (*Moksha*).

3.4.1 Bhakti Yoga

The Path of Bhakti Yoga: Elevation of Human Consciousness

The Path of Devotion (Bhakti Marg) is one of the primary paths to *moksha* (liberation) and is considered simpler and more accessible compared to the intellectual and introspective path of knowledge (Jnana Marg). Bhakti is especially suitable for emotional individuals, as it involves connecting to the divine through love and devotion. The essence of Bhakti lies in selfless service and an unwavering love for God, which transcends ego, attachments, and desires.

Meaning of Bhakti :

The word **"Bhakti"** comes from the Sanskrit root *bhajsevayam*, which means "to serve" or "to worship." Bhakti, therefore, is the act of serving or loving God with devotion, transcending the self and offering one's entire being to the divine. Devotees on this path believe that through loving worship and surrender, they

can experience the vision of God. Love is regarded as the manifestation of divinity, which is why Bhakti is often called the path of love.

The Nature of True Devotion

Devotion is deeply intertwined with love and is, therefore, inherently selfless. Only those who are free from ego can truly engage in devotion. As per Narada, devotion is the highest form of love directed toward God, and in the Shandilya Sutra, it is referred to as the worship of God. True devotion is unconditional, seeking nothing but the divine presence itself. The Bhagavad Gita emphasises this as "Ananya Bhakti" (exclusive devotion), where one surrenders entirely to God without seeking any material gains.

In the Gita describes the true devotee as someone who:

- Surrenders to God without attachment to the results of their actions.
- Seeks neither joy nor sorrow and is detached from worldly desires and material possessions.
- Remains indifferent to auspicious or inauspicious outcomes.

Such devotion is selfless, free from ego, and rooted in unwavering faith in the divine. The devotee acts out of pure love for God, focusing on offering all actions to Him without concern for worldly outcomes.

Forms of Devotion

Devotion can be divided into several categories based on its nature, level of purity, and motivation.

1. Conditional (Hetuki) or Material Devotion (Gouni Bhakti)

This form of devotion is motivated by personal desires, such as the wish for success, wealth, or relief from suffering. It is considered impure because it is based on seeking material rewards rather than unconditional love for God.

2. Unconditional (Ahetuki) or Supreme Devotion (Para Bhakti)

This represents the highest form of devotion, where the devotee seeks nothing from God except His love and presence. This selfless devotion is characterised by complete surrender to God, as illustrated by the example of a kitten relying entirely on its mother for care. Devotees who embody **Ahetuki Bhakti** offer everything to God, leaving behind all desires and attachments.

3. Devotion Based on the Three Gunas (Qualities of Nature)

- **Sattvic Devotion**: Worshiping God with purity, simplicity, and selflessness.

- **Rajasic Devotion**: Devotion motivated by desires for material success or worldly gains.
- **Tamasic Devotion**: Worshiping God with evil or selfish intentions, such as seeking power or harming others.

The Concept of Surrender in Devotion

Devotion reaches its zenith when it transforms into self-surrender. Surrender involves the complete abandonment of one's ego, desires, and individual will, fully depending on God for protection and guidance. This is similar to the helplessness of a child in the arms of its mother, completely trusting and dependent on her.

Self-surrender in the Bhagavad Gita is described as an act of unconditional trust in God. It is considered the highest form of devotion and has six key components:

1. **Resolve to Act Favourably** – The determination to act according to God‘s will.
2. **Rejection of Unfavourable Acts** – Avoidance of actions contrary to God‘s wishes.
3. **Firm Faith in Protection** – A strong belief in God as the ultimate protector.
4. **Exclusive Dependence** – Considering God as the sole refuge.
5. **Humility** – Acknowledging one‘s limitations and submitting humbly before God.
6. **Self-Surrender** – Complete surrender to God with unwavering faith.

The Two Forms of Devotion

Devotion can be classified based on the **object of worship**:

- **Symbolic Devotion**: Worshiping God through symbols or representations (e.g., natural objects).
- **Idol Worship (Murti Puja)**: Worshiping God in the form of idols or images. This form remains valid as long as it inspires devotion. However, when idols are no longer inspirational, their worship turns symbolic.

Classification of Devotees

According to the **Bhagavata Purana**, devotees can be classified into three categories:

- **Ordinary Devotees**: Those who worship God through idols or symbols.

- **Intermediate Devotees**: Those who cultivate love for God and compassion for others.
- **Supreme Devotees**: Those who see no distinction between their own possessions and those of others, remaining free from pride and maintaining equanimity in all situations.

The highest form of devotion is achieved when a devotee sees God in all beings and events and remains fully devoted through thought, word, and action.

Nine Means of Devotion

The practice of devotion is cultivated through **nine means**, each fostering a deeper connection with the divine:

1. **Hearing (Shravana)** – Listening to the divine stories and glories of God.
2. **Chanting (Kirtana)** – Singing or chanting God's names and praises.
3. **Remembrance (Smarana)** – Constantly meditating on the divine.
4. **Service at God's Feet (Pada-Sevana) –** Devotional service towards God.
5. **Worship (Archana)** – Performing rituals and offerings to God.
6. **Prayer (Vandana)** – Reciting prayers and hymns.
7. **Servitude (Dasya)** – Cultivating an attitude of servitude towards God, as exemplified by **Hanuman**.
8. **Friendship (Sakhya)** – Developing a personal and friendly relationship with God.
9. **Complete Surrender (Atma-Nivedana)** – Surrendering oneself fully to God, as done by **Prahlada** and **King Bali**.

The Yogic Method of Elevating Human Consciousness through Bhakti Yoga

Bhakti Yoga, as the path of devotion, is not merely a ritualistic practice; it is a transformative process that elevates human consciousness. The yogic method involves gradually purifying the heart and mind through constant devotion, meditation, and surrender. In Bhakti Yoga, the focus is on unwavering love and surrender to the Divine, which leads to the realisation of the oneness between the self and God.

Through regular practice of devotion, whether through chanting, prayer, or selfless service, the devotee transcends ego, attachments, and desires. This

purification of the heart is essential for the elevation of consciousness. The more a devotee surrenders their personal desires and ego, the closer they come to experiencing divine presence in every aspect of their life. The ultimate goal of Bhakti Yoga is not only liberation (moksha) but also experiencing divine love as an integral part of existence.

Bhakti Yoga serves as a powerful and accessible means of spiritual awakening. It transforms the devotee‘s consciousness, purifies the heart, and leads to the realisation of divine love. The practice of surrender, coupled with constant devotion, becomes the path to liberation, leading one to experience the divine in all aspects of life. This, in turn, allows the devotee to attain moksha, the ultimate liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

3.4.2 Jnana Yoga

The Path of Jnana Yoga: Elevation of Human Consciousness

Jnana Yoga is a path dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and self-realisation, suitable for intellectually inclined individuals. It involves rigorous practices designed to discriminate between the real and the unreal, leading one toward liberation (Moksha). The practices of Jnana Yoga can be divided into external practices (Bahiranga Sadhana) and internal practices (Antaranga Sadhana), all of which contribute to the elevation of human consciousness.

External Practices (BahirangaSadhana)

1. Viveka (Discrimination)

Viveka refers to the discernment between the eternal and the transient. The only unchanging entity is Brahman, the absolute reality, while everything in the world is impermanent and illusory, subject to change and decay. Understanding this truth leads to the realisation that the world's phenomena are mere projections of Maya (illusion), and Brahman alone is the eternal truth. Discerning this is called Viveka.

2. Vairagya (Detachment)

Vairagya is the renunciation of all attachments to worldly pleasures. It is the deep realisation that both material and spiritual enjoyments are transient. True detachment arises when one perceives the futility of sensory pleasures, whether in the material world or heavenly realms, and thus abandons all desires

for them. Vairagya is the essence of recognising the impermanence of everything and turning inward.

3. Shat-Sampatti (Six Virtues)

The six virtues are essential for attaining spiritual progress:

- **Shama (Mind Control)**: The practice of restraining the mind and inner senses. As the mind is a powerful force, controlling it is essential for spiritual development. The Bhagavad Gita emphasises this: "The mind is extremely fickle, but with practice and detachment, it can be brought under control."
- **Dama (Sense Control)**: The restraint of the external senses, preventing them from wandering toward distractions. A skilled person guides their senses away from worldly attachments, focusing on higher knowledge.
- **Uparati (Withdrawal)**: Detaching from distractions and worldly concerns, even after acquiring material possessions. True renunciation involves focusing on essential duties without engaging in unnecessary worldly distractions.
- **Titiksha (Forbearance)**: The ability to endure hardships, be it physical, mental, or emotional suffering, with steadfast determination and patience.
- **Shraddha (Faith)**: A deep and unwavering faith in the teachings of the scriptures and the Guru. Doubts hinder spiritual progress, while true faith paves the way for inner realisation.
- **Samadhana (Concentration)**: The ability to focus the mind entirely on Brahman, allowing one to achieve mental clarity and spiritual fulfilment.

4. Mumukshutva (Intense Desire for Liberation)

The world is full of suffering in its various forms—physical, mental, and spiritual. Mumukshutva is the intense, burning desire to attain liberation (Moksha) from this suffering and the cycle of birth and death. A true seeker longs for eternal bliss and freedom from the limitations of the material world.

Internal Practices (Antaranga Sadhana)

While the external practices prepare the seeker by disciplining the mind and senses, the internal practices focus on deepening the understanding of the self (Atman) and Brahman.

1. Shravana (Listening)

The first internal practice is listening attentively to the teachings of the Guru. One must absorb the wisdom imparted in the scriptures, particularly those related to Brahman. The sacred texts, such as the Upanishads, guide the seeker to the knowledge of the ultimate truth.

2. Manana (Contemplation)

After listening, contemplation allows one to internalise the teachings. Through reflection, the seeker removes doubts and strengthens their understanding of Brahman, achieving clarity and certainty regarding spiritual truths.

3. Nididhyasana (Deep Meditation)

Deep meditation is the final internal practice, where the seeker focuses their entire being on Brahman. This meditative absorption culminates in self-realisation (Samadhi), wherein the seeker transcends all duality and experiences oneness with the ultimate reality. The process involves several components, including moral restraints, breath control, withdrawal of senses, concentration, and meditation.

Yogic Method of Elevation of Human Consciousness in Jnana Yoga

The path of Jnana Yoga offers a structured and disciplined approach to elevating human consciousness. By cultivating discernment (Viveka) and detachment (Vairagya), and by practicing the six virtues (Shat-Sampatti), the seeker refines their mind and senses, preparing for deeper knowledge. The internal practices of listening (Shravana), contemplation (Manana), and meditation (Nididhyasana) lead to the realisation of the non-dual nature of Brahman, breaking the bonds of illusion and ego.

Ultimately, Jnana Yoga facilitates the elevation of human consciousness from the mundane realm of material existence to the eternal and transcendental reality. The seeker, through this disciplined practice, reaches a state of profound wisdom and liberation, transcending suffering and attaining union with the supreme truth. This elevation is not just intellectual but spiritual, leading to a state of peace, equanimity, and bliss, free from the distractions of the world.

3.4.3 Karma Yoga

Karma Yoga: The Path of Selfless Action and Consciousness Elevation

Karma Yoga, often known as the Yoga of Action, is a central concept in the spiritual philosophy of Hinduism. It involves the transformation of one‘s

consciousness through the performance of righteous action. The word "karma" is derived from the Sanskrit root "कृ" (kṛ), which means action, trade, movement, effort, and fate. In its essence, karma is action that is inherently linked to its result— an action whose outcome is determined by natural law or divine will. Karma Yoga, therefore, teaches us to engage in the world without attachment, performing our duties and actions as offerings to the Divine.

The Concept of Karma in Different Philosophical Systems:

Karma is interpreted in various ways by different schools of thought, particularly in **Vedanta**, **Yoga Sutras**, and the **Bhagavad Gita**.

Types of Karma in the Vedas

In the Vedic tradition, karma is classified primarily into **Vihita Karma** (prescribed actions) and **Nishiddha Karma** (prohibited actions). These categories define how actions should be approached and the consequences of neglecting or performing them wrongly.

Vihita Karma is further divided into four subcategories:

- **Nitya Karma** (Obligatory Daily Duties): Actions such as daily prayers or rituals essential for spiritual growth.
- **Naimittika Karma** (Occasional Ritualistic Actions): Special ceremonies for specific life events like birth, marriage, and death.
- **Kamya Karma** (Desire-Driven Actions): Actions motivated by personal desires, such as seeking wealth, prosperity, or success.
- **Prāyaścitta Karma** (Expiatory Actions): Actions meant for atonement or cleansing from sin.

Nishiddha Karma refers to forbidden actions—those that violate natural or divine laws, leading to negative consequences.

Types of Karma in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali present another perspective, categorising karma into:

- **Shukla Karma** (Pure Actions): Actions that are virtuous, prescribed by the scriptures, leading to spiritual benefits.

- **Krishna Karma** (Dark Actions): Sinful actions that lead to suffering and negative outcomes.
- **Shukla-Krishna Karma** (Mixed Actions): Actions that contain both good and bad elements, leading to rebirth in the human realm.
- **Ashukla-Krishna Karma** (Neither Pure nor Sinful Actions): These actions transcend the duality of good and bad, representing **Nishkama Karma**, selfless action performed without attachment to the result.

The practice of **Nishkama Karma** is central to Patanjali's teaching, as it leads to the purification of the mind and spiritual enlightenment.

Types of Karma in Vedanta

Vedanta further explores the concept of karma through the classification of **Sanchita Karma**, **Prarabdha Karma**, and **Kriyamana Karma**:

1. **Sanchita Karma**: This refers to the accumulated karma from past lives—actions that have not yet borne fruit.
2. **Prarabdha Karma**: This is the part of Sanchita Karma that is ripe and ready to manifest in the present life, determining the individual's experiences of happiness or suffering.
3. **Kriyamana Karma**: These are the actions being performed in the present. The results of these actions can either be immediate or accumulate as Sanchita Karma for future lives.

Types of Karma in the Bhagavad Gita

The **Bhagavad Gita**—one of the most important texts in Hindu philosophy—describes karma in three forms:

1. **Karma (Righteous Action)**: These are the actions that align with divine law and are performed selflessly.
2. **Akarma (Inaction or Selfless Action)**: Inaction does not mean avoiding action but performing actions without attachment to their outcomes, which purifies the mind.
3. **Vikarma (Forbidden Action)**: Actions that deviate from the prescribed duties, sinful deeds that result in negative karmic consequences.

Furthermore, the Bhagavad Gita distinguishes between **Sakama Karma** (desire-driven actions) and **Nishkama Karma** (selfless actions), emphasising

that one should perform their duties without attachment to the fruits of their labor, surrendering the results to the Supreme.

Nishkama Karma and Selfless Action

The core teaching of **Karma Yoga** is **Nishkama Karma**—selfless action performed without attachment to the results. A person who practices Nishkama Karma does their duties without seeking personal gain. In doing so, they transcend the limitations of ego and desire, leading to spiritual growth and freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

The concept of **Nishkama Karma** teaches that true liberation (moksha) lies not in renouncing action but in renouncing the attachment to its fruits. The **Karma Yogi** performs their duties in the world but does so with a sense of detachment and surrender to the Divine. This path leads to inner peace, spiritual maturity, and, ultimately, union with the Supreme.

By practicing selfless action, an individual purifies their mind and emotions, transcends the ego, and realises their true nature as part of the Divine.

1. **Selflessness and Detachment**: The first step in this practice is to develop selflessness in all actions. This means that every action is done as an offering to the Divine, without expecting any return. The mind and heart remain unaffected by the results, whether they are positive or negative.
2. **Purification of the Mind**: Selfless actions gradually purify the mind, removing the impurities of greed, anger, and attachment. Through constant practice, the mind becomes still and focused, opening the door to spiritual wisdom and insight.
3. **Equanimity**: The practice of Karma Yoga brings about equanimity—the ability to remain unaffected by success or failure, pleasure or pain. This equanimity comes from the deep understanding that everything is happening according to divine will and cosmic law.
4. **Surrender to the Divine Will**: A Karma Yogi surrenders all actions to the Supreme, recognising that they are merely instruments of a higher power. This surrender fosters humility and wisdom, helping one detach from the ego and experience oneness with the universe.

5. **Awakening to the True Self**: Through constant selfless action and detachment, the Karma Yogi awakens to their true nature. They realise that the self (Atman) is beyond the physical body and mind, and is a part of the eternal, divine consciousness (Brahman).
6. **Attaining Liberation (Moksha)**: The ultimate goal of Karma Yoga is **Moksha**, or liberation from the cycle of birth and death (samsara). This is achieved through selfless action, where the individual transcends ego and desires, merging into the supreme consciousness.

Yogic Method of Elevation of Human Consciousness in Karma Yoga

Karma Yoga, through the practice of selfless action, offers a profound method for elevating human consciousness. It teaches us to engage with the world without attachment, to purify our hearts and minds, and to ultimately realise our divine nature. By performing duties with dedication and detachment, we purify the mind, transcend the limitations of ego, and attain spiritual enlightenment. In this way, Karma Yoga not only transforms individual lives but also leads humanity toward a collective state of peace, wisdom, and unity with the Divine.

In the end, Karma Yoga reveals the profound truth that in surrendering the results of our actions to the Divine, we attain true freedom, experiencing the highest state of spiritual fulfilment and oneness with all of existence.

3.4.4 Ashtanga Yoga

The Path of Ashtanga Yoga: Elevation of Human Consciousness

Ashtanga Yoga is a systematic and profound path toward the purification and elevation of human consciousness. It offers a disciplined approach to disciplining the mind, controlling its erratic nature, and leading it toward a state of true self-awareness and enlightenment. The ultimate goal of Ashtanga Yoga is not merely the improvement of physical health or mental clarity, but rather the transformation of the entire being—body, mind, and soul—toward the realisation of one‘s true essence, ultimately leading to liberation (moksha).

Ashtanga Yoga, with its eightfold path, offers a comprehensive method for the evolution of human consciousness. It is a path that transcends mere physical discipline and takes the practitioner through a series of internal and external practices that purify the body, refine the mind, and elevate the soul. These

practices work synergistically to create a state of perfect harmony, allowing the individual to transcend the limitations of material existence and experience the ultimate union with the Divine.

1. Yama - Ethical Disciplines

The foundation of Ashtanga Yoga is laid by Yama, which teaches self-restraint and ethical behaviour. Yama represents a moral code of conduct, promoting harmony with others and the world. By following the principles of Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (celibacy), and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness), the practitioner purifies their actions, speech, and thoughts. This discipline lays the groundwork for mental stability and sets the stage for the deeper practices of meditation. In this way, Yama cultivates an attitude of inner peace, ensuring that the practitioner is not disturbed by external actions or thoughts, and begins the process of transcending the ego.

2. Niyama - Personal Observances

Niyama consists of five internal practices that serve to purify the mind and elevate consciousness on a personal level. Through Shaucha (purity), the individual clears the mind and body, removing impurities that cloud perception. Santosh (contentment) helps to cultivate a peaceful and joyful mindset, free from the constant pursuit of worldly desires. Tapas (austerity) instills the strength and discipline needed to overcome the distractions of the mind and body, forging a path toward spiritual growth. Swadhyaya (self-study) promotes introspection and the study of sacred texts, enhancing the understanding of one‘s true nature and the higher reality. Lastly, Ishwar Pranidhana (surrender to God) deepens one‘s connection with the divine, reinforcing the understanding that true liberation comes only through devotion and surrender.

3. Asana - Physical Postures

Asana refers to the physical postures practiced in yoga. These postures not only promote physical health and strength but also prepare the body for prolonged meditation by cultivating stability and comfort. When the body is healthy and flexible, it becomes an ideal instrument for the mind to concentrate. Asana practice helps to harmonise the energy flow within the body, promoting physical health while also clearing energetic blockages, which allows the practitioner to experience heightened awareness. The practice of asanas

fosters the essential quality of endurance, preparing the body for the intense concentration required for deeper spiritual practices.

4. Pranayama - Breath Control

Pranayama, the regulation and control of breath, is another crucial practice in Ashtanga Yoga. Breath is intimately connected with the mind, and through pranayama, one can regulate the restless nature of the mind. The practice of Puraka (inhalation), Kumbhaka (retention), and Rechaka (exhalation) trains the practitioner to control not just the breath but also the prana (life force) that governs mental and physical activity. By slowing and regulating the breath, the mind becomes more focused, calm, and attuned to the present moment, which prepares the practitioner for the deeper states of meditation and absorption.

5. Pratyahara - Withdrawal of the Senses

Pratyahara involves withdrawing the senses from external stimuli and turning the attention inward. This practice is crucial in the modern world, where distractions are constant. By practicing Pratyahara, one learns to detach from sensory experiences and external objects, preventing them from disturbing the mind. This withdrawal allows for a deeper connection with the inner self, as external influences no longer dictate one‘s state of being. With Pratyahara, the practitioner gains the ability to remain undisturbed, no matter the external circumstances, paving the way for true concentration and meditation.

6. Dharana - Concentration

Dharana is the practice of focused attention, where the mind is concentrated on a single object, thought, or point of focus. This stage of Ashtanga Yoga trains the practitioner to overcome mental distractions and sharpen their ability to maintain unwavering attention. By continuously focusing the mind on a chosen point—be it a mantra, breath, or an object—the practitioner develops mental stability and discipline. This concentration is the foundation of the next stage of meditation, where thoughts begin to flow in a continuous stream without interruption.

7. Dhyana - Meditation

Dhyana, or meditation, is the uninterrupted flow of focused attention. In Dhyana, the meditator remains fixed on the object of contemplation without distraction. This is a deeper state of concentration, where the mind becomes absorbed in the object of meditation. The practice of Dhyana allows the practitioner to

experience a profound state of inner peace and clarity, leading to a direct experience of the self. It is in this state that the practitioner begins to transcend the ego and its limitations, experiencing oneness with the object of meditation and the Divine.

8. Samadhi - Ultimate Absorption

Samadhi is the highest state of consciousness in Ashtanga Yoga. In this state, the distinction between the meditator, meditation, and the object of meditation disappears. It is a state of pure absorption, where the mind merges with the object of contemplation, and the practitioner experiences a profound sense of unity with the universe. Samadhi can be divided into two types:

- **Samprajnata Samadhi** (Conscious Absorption): The meditator is aware of the object of meditation, but their mind is absorbed in it, experiencing bliss, peace, and insight.
- **Asamprajnata Samadhi** (Superconscious Absorption): This state goes beyond any object of meditation, where even the sense of individual self vanishes, and the practitioner experiences a state of pure consciousness. This is the state of liberation (moksha), where the practitioner transcends all dualities and realises their true nature as the eternal, unchanging Self.

The Yogic Method of Elevation of Human Consciousness in Ashtanga Yoga

The eightfold path of Ashtanga Yoga is a comprehensive method for the elevation of human consciousness. It systematically purifies the body, mind, and spirit through ethical discipline (Yama and Niyama), physical postures (Asana), breath control (Pranayama), sensory withdrawal (Pratyahara), concentration (Dharana), meditation (Dhyana), and finally, deep absorption (Samadhi).

Through this method, the practitioner learns to control the restless mind, reduce distractions, and purify all aspects of the self. As the practitioner progresses along this path, they gradually transcend the limitations of the ego, recognising the interconnectedness of all beings and the underlying divine nature of existence. This path ultimately leads to self-realisation, where the practitioner experiences oneness with the infinite, eternal truth, achieving liberation (moksha).

Ashtanga Yoga is thus not just a physical discipline but a transformative spiritual journey. Through consistent practice, the practitioner elevates their consciousness, shedding ignorance, attachment, and delusion, and culminating in the highest state of inner peace, wisdom, and ultimate freedom.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Fill up the blanks:

A. ……in the Bhagavad Gita is described as an act of unconditional trust in God.

B. ……..is the essence of recognising the impermanence of everything and turning inward.

C. ……Yoga facilitates the elevation of human consciousness from the mundane realm of material existence to the eternal and transcendental reality.

D. A person who practices ……Karma does their duties without seeking personal gain.

E. ……is the practice of focused attention, where the mind is concentrated on a single object, thought, or point of focus.

3.5 LET'S US SUM UP

- The yogic path to elevating human consciousness can also be understood through the lenses of Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Ashtanga Yoga. Each of these paths offers a unique approach to harmonising the body, mind, and spirit while guiding individuals toward self-realisation and spiritual liberation (Moksha).
- The practices of Bhakti Yoga include chanting (Kirtan), prayer, worship (Puja), and meditation on the divine, fostering a deep connection with the Supreme.
- Jnana Yoga involves the study of sacred texts, deep contemplation, and the practice of discerning the nature of the self (Atman) and the universe (Brahman).

- The key tenet of Karma Yoga is to act with a sense of offering the results of one's actions to the divine, without any expectation or desire for personal gain. This selfless action helps transcend the ego and fosters a sense of interconnectedness with all beings.
- The disciplined practice of Ashtanga Yoga helps in quieting the mind, transcending the ego, and attaining higher states of awareness, culminating in Moksha or spiritual liberation.
- Each of the paths offers a distinct yet complementary approach to elevating human consciousness. Whether through devotion, knowledge, selfless action, or disciplined practice, they all lead to the same ultimate goal: self-realisation and the experience of oneness with the divine.

3.6 FURTHER READINGS

- Human Consciousness and Yogic Science by Kamakhya Kumar, Ajay Bharadwaj.
- Manav Chetna (Human Consciousness) by Dr. Ishwar Bharadwaj.
- MEA Official Guidebook .

3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers:

A. Self-surrender

B. Vairagya

C. Jnana

D. Nishkama

E. Dharana.

3.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. What do you understand by consciousness?

Q2. Write a short note on Yogic Method of elevation of human consciousness.

Q3. Elaborate Yogic Method of elevation of human consciousness throughKarma Yoga and Bhakti yoga.

Q4.Discuss the various forms of Devotion (Bhakti).

Q5. Explain the concepts of Bahiranga Sadhana and Antaranga Sadhana.

Q6. Describe the relationship between Karma and consciousness.

Q7. Explain the principles and practices of Ashtanga Yoga.

Q8. Elaborate Yogic Method of elevation of human consciousness through Jnana Yoga and Raja yoga.

*** ***** ***