

## FINANCIAL PLANNING THROUGH YOGIC APPROACH

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### Abstract:

*The time-honoured practice of yoga has transcended its spiritual origin, and like the sweetest elixir, has assimilated itself into the daily lives of millions over the globe. The reason yoga sustains as a way of life is the fact that its basic tenets are timeless and resonate with everyone and in all spheres of life, helping them attain a healthy body and mind apart from emotional clarity and stability. Yoga definitely has the ability to inundate the many aspects of our lives with positivity, including financial health. So, let's find out what yoga can teach us about the art of investing.*

### INTRODUCTION

The first International Yoga Day, on June 21 millions of people across the world practiced yoga. Yoga that is practiced generally today is a complete form of exercise that focuses on building physical, mental and spiritual strength. It contributes to the overall wellbeing of a person. A strong flexible body, glowing and healthy skin, peaceful mind and good health - whatever you may be looking for, Yoga offers it all and much more. While often Yoga is partially understood as being limited to asanas (Yoga poses), Yoga

is the art of uniting your body, mind and inner harmony. A combination of health and peace, combined with financial stability, leads to a calmer, happier and fulfilling life (Bhagwad Gita).

Financial planning aims at ensuring a person is comfortable financially. Yoga and financial planning may be taken up as two entirely disparate concepts, which are ways apart but interestingly, they do share certain unforeseen similarities when it comes to personal growth, development, contentment and well-being. Yoga is a holistic approach that strengthens the body, mind, and spirit. Likewise, financial planning aims to bring comfort and stability to our lives.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM YOGA AND FINANCIAL PLANNING

### 1. Acquiring Physical & Financial Fitness

Just as yoga helps us to achieve physical and mental fitness, financial planning ascertains our financial well-being. Regular yoga practice enhances our stamina, flexibility, and strength, contributing to a healthier life. Similarly, consistent financial planning helps us organize our finances, prepare for long-term goals, and build wealth. Both ensure that we are physically, mentally and financially fit and can comfortably navigate through life's challenges.

### 2. Constructing an Impeccably Disciplined Inner Self

Becoming proficient in yoga or achieving financial success requires discipline. Yoga mastery is not attained overnight; it requires and consequently demands dedication, resilience, perseverance and discipline demanded for successful financial planning. We need to create budgets, follow them, save and invest consistently to grow our income and wealth. Without discipline, our financial well-being is bound to regress, just like inconsistent yoga practice impedes progress.

### 3. A Better Lifestyle for Better Outcomes

Both yoga and financial planning require consistency. In yoga, many postures need constant effort to be executed correctly and derive maximum benefits. Similarly, financial planning is most effective when done on a regular basis. Remember, those who take a step a day, are never led astray. The key to unlocking the many benefits of yoga, including centering attention, relieving pain and stress and bringing mental clarity, is to practice it regularly. Discipline and regularity are very important. If you stop doing yoga and then try to resume later, you will find that you have lost a lot of flexibility and other benefits you had built up. This principle also applies to investing. Just as the benefits of yoga compound over time, your corpus also benefits from regular and systematic investing.

### 4. Slow and Steady Wins the Race

Mastering advanced yoga poses demands time, practice and patience, so does successful financial planning. It's irrational to expect high and instant financial gains as well as an immediate physical recovery. Patience allows our money to work for us and wealth over the long term. Anyone who has had to hold a yoga pose for several minutes knows that yoga teaches patience (Dhairyra). The principle of patience can be applied to long-term investing as well. It is important to tie your investments with your goals, whether it is a short-term goal or a long-term one. When it comes to long-term goals, it is especially important to inculcate patience in yourself, so that you can stay invested till your goal is achieved. We live in a time when instant gratification has become a way of life, and the temptation to spend what you earn, rather than saving, can be very strong. Internalizing the tenet of patience can help you bring discipline into your financial life, so that you can invest for what you need rather than spend on what you want.

### 5. Being a person of few means

Yoga enlightens us about not really necessitating extravagant equipment or settings for its practice; it can be done anywhere and anytime. Similarly, frugality plays a role in financial planning. Resisting impulsive expenditure and maintaining a mindful approach to our money matters can secure a comfortable and secure financial future. Staying thrifty certainly helps us to resist unnecessary splurges and focus on our long-term goals.

#### 6. Compete with Yourself

Yoga is an individual's personal approach, needless for competition. We all practice at our own pace, respecting our body's limits and requirements. Similarly, financial planning should be concerned with our own circumstances and goals, without comparing ourselves with others. It's quintessential to avoid unhealthy comparisons and instead focus on our unique financial path.

#### 7. Way to Eternal Wellness and Wealth

Yoga can prove to be beneficial throughout our lives, especially in the later period of life when health challenges come up. Likewise, financial planning too, is a lifelong activity. Consistent and precise financial planning helps us to achieve our goals and grow our wealth over time. It ensures our financial contentment in all realms of life.

#### 8. Tune out the noise

Focusing your mind and establishing a sense of calm is one of the first things yoga teaches you. The same, when applied to investing, can help you tune out the market noise which might distract you and push you to make impulsive decisions, thus helping you focus instead on your own financial goals.

#### 9. Build a strong foundation

In yogic practice, the path to self-realization is paved with knowledge. In order to internalize the practice of yoga, it is crucial to have knowledge and understanding of what the asanas and practices mean. Many people jump into doing yoga without educating themselves, but not only would this reduce the effectiveness of the practice, but

it can also result in injury. Knowledge is as much a cornerstone of investing as it is of yoga. The often-repeated advice of “don’t invest in what you don’t understand” can protect you from making bad investment decisions or buying into a product that does not fit your financial goals. If you want to do your own financial planning and investing, you have to start by educating yourself. Do your research and seek professional help if need be, in order to understand the places you plan to invest in. If you take the plunge without the knowledge, the wrong move in investing can hurt you as much as doing an asana wrong.

#### 10. Let go of your ego

Yoga seeks to conquer the “ego”, which can hold you back on your quest for self-realization. In investing, your ego can get in the way of admitting to investing mistakes and letting go of bad investments. Your ego is your identification with your thoughts and actions. Convincing yourself that you are right can lead to repeating your mistakes. When you let go of your ego, you become open to change. And sometimes such a change is necessary for your personal finance strategies.

#### THE EIGHT STEPS OF YOGA

The following are the eight steps of Yoga, put forward by Patanjali, also go hand in hand with the earlier mentioned aspects of Yoga and are equally effective:-

Yama: (moral behaviour) – Ashinsasatayastaybrahumcharyaprihrieti yama 1

This is the universal moral commandment. Perpetual Yama curbs the tendency towards violence and possessiveness. It inspires truthfulness, trustworthiness, goodness, non-stealing and honesty.

Niyama: (healthy habits) – Sochsantoshstapawadhayaeshwerprindhan eti niyama 1

This is the restraint of the mind by means of its own rules and regulations. It is purity, self contentment, self study and above all, the surrender of the self to God, self purification through discipline. It is also the study of scripts and holy texts.

Asana: (physical postures)- Sathir sukham asanam l

It is concerned with body postures which develop inner awareness and aid in calming the mind. There are so many asanas that can be completed in lying, in sitting and in standing positions.

Pranayama: (breathing exercises) this is the rhythmic control, prolongation and restraint of the breath. Its aim is to discover a subtle psychic force or a subtle cosmic element. Some important pranayamas are Anulom-vilom, Nadi-shodhan, Sheetli, Sheetkari, Bhastrika, Bhramari, Surya-bhedi, Chander-bhedi, Murchha & Plawani.

Pratyahara: (withdrawal of sense) this entails control of the senses of the human body. It is important to give up all emotions, sentiments and pleasures. The mind must be completely withdrawn from external attractions and objects.

Dharana: (concentration) this is the Sanskrit word for “to hold”. It is an intense, deep concentration which enhances the selected mental state.

Dhyana: (contemplation) This is meditation, contemplation and poised awareness.

Samadhi: (higher consciousness) profound meditation leads to a state of super consciousness. This state is called Samadhi. It is the union of the individual aspirant (sadhaka) with the object of his meditation. These limbs work as tools for achieving unity and harmony among various aspects of personality.

#### WHAT DO YOGA AND FINANCIAL PLANNING HAVE IN COMMON?

The ancient wisdom of our country India, is becoming a part of the daily life routine of numerous people across the globe. Yoga is a way of life because it helps people from all spheres of life achieve a healthy body and mind, along with emotional clarity and stability. Asana and pranayama help to sharpen the focus, control the mind, build concentration, and lessen the stress that comes with day-to-day life. Due to its immense power, yoga is now widely accepted as a part of a healthy lifestyle. Yoga makes you more aware and conscious. Many studies show that mindfulness helps pay more

attention to details and stay focused. But how does yoga help with managing money anyway? On the surface, there doesn't seem to be any link between the two. But if you look deep into it, you can find a lot of connections. When you compare essential parts of yoga and investment planning, you'll realise they're linked. Yoga not only makes you a better person inside and out, but also helps you make fruitful decisions. Let's find out how you can apply yoga principles to maintain your finances.

### 1. Elevates your happiness and that of people around you

Inculcating Yoga in our everyday lives creates a calm state of mind and helps in eliminating any form of depression. It leads to a noteworthy boost in serotonin levels and a decrease in the levels of cortisol which is an anxiety promoting hormone. Regularly practicing yoga thus leads to greater levels of happiness and consequently, better immune mechanism. In a similar fashion, when you put a particular amount of money in savings, keep a regular check on your finances and take small steps towards financial security, it leads to long term happiness for all. This balancing act of Yoga can be related to an Insurance product that helps in cutting back on risks and enhancing happiness ensuing an absolute peace of mind.

### 2. Be in Good Shape

Yoga helps a person to be in the best shape from a physical and mental perspective. Financial planning aims at ensuring a person is comfortable financially. Practicing yoga regularly increases a person's stamina, flexibility and strength and contributes towards a healthy life. Regular planning of finances will help one to get finances in order and build on the wealth he/she has. It helps one to prepare for long-term financial goals

### 3. Increase Patience

Yoga teaches us patience. It takes a lot of time, strength, and control to achieve the right posture and allow it to make it work for the body. You cannot simply meditate once

and calm your mind. It needs to be practiced consistently to derive benefits from it. Similarly, to invest, one must have an investor mindset. Young investors often desire instant gratifications upon investing. To make money work for you, you need to be patient with your investments to see returns. A little patience in the beginning and a gradual process of learning will give you fruitful results at the end.

#### 4. Self-Discipline

Yoga teaches us discipline. Yoga is rooted in virtue. Ethical discipline is very necessary for success in Yoga. Ethical discipline is the practice of right conduct in life. The two moral back-bones of Yoga are Yama and Niyama, which the aspirant must practice in his daily life. Non-injuring (Ahimsa), truthfulness (Satyam), non-stealing (Asteya), continence (Brahmacharya) and non-covetousness (Aparigraha) are the component parts of Yama. Internal and external purification (Saucha), contentment (Santosha), austerity (Tapas), study of religious and philosophical books (Svadhyaya) and self-surrender to the Lord (Isvara-Pranidhana) come under Niyama. Practice of Yama and Niyama will eradicate all the impurities of the mind.

Financial discipline refers to a consistent habit of making sound monetary decisions about savings, investment, and spending money to achieve financial objectives, stability, and sustainability. For individuals or businesses, maintaining financial discipline involves effective expense management, consistent saving, over-debt avoidance, and sensible investment choices. For businesses, it is advisable to have and implement proper financial planning and budgeting.

#### 5. Maintain Balance

Yoga helps us achieve a balance in our body and creates a sense of fluid stability. The sustained effort to balance ourselves when doing a posture brings not only our body into balance but also our mind and spirit. Hence, we feel calm. Having good balance reduces our risk to fall or slip.



Similarly, it is important to bring about a balance in our portfolio. Having a good balance between equities and debts safeguards us against major losses and ensures financial safety in the long run. A well-balanced portfolio is a diversified one. Investing in multiple asset classes reduces the risk of investment. An experienced financial advisor like Solutions can help you improve your financial health and wellness.

#### 6. Increases the flow

Yoga is slow in comparison with other forms of exercises. However, it does not mean that it is ineffective. In fact, doing yoga consistently not only improves the blood flow but also helps in regulating the hormones and achieving mental peace. It is important for every part of our body to regularly receive a good amount of blood.

Similarly, regular cash flow is necessary for an individual to keep business and life running. It enables us to settle debt, reinvest, pay all expenses, and reserve funds for contingencies. It also helps us in attaining peace of mind because you will not run out of cash. One of the things that is hard about healthy cash flow is that setting it up once does not work. Every day is unique. Our lives continuously evolve; our money must evolve too. Consistently observing and tracking income and expenses helps us in attaining our financial goals

#### 7. Improve Concentration

Achieving the correct posture in yoga takes a high level of concentration. Hence, the practice itself is centered on concentration. By focusing your eye on one spot, you can internally find equilibrium. Your mental health improves, and you find it easy to focus on.

Similarly, focusing your efforts to attain your financial goals prevents you from getting deviated and sway away from your goals. Concentrating on your goals eventually helps you achieve financial freedom.

#### 8. Increase Flexibility

Improved flexibility is one of the major benefits of Yoga. If you are persistent with your yogic practice, you'll notice a gradual rise in the flexibility of your body, and eventually, your body will respond in ways incredible to you. Various seemingly implausible asanas will become possible. The same principle applies to investments. Initially, when you're commencing with it, you might not be able to invest a large sum. But it's all about developing a consistency of saving and investing. If you keep at it, gradually you'll notice you can be flexible and will get more comfortable with going slightly substantial with your investments.

#### 9. Frugality

Yoga does not need much. It can practice anywhere and at anytime. It does not require special equipment or gear for it except that a mat is preferred by some people. Frugality helps in our finances too. It is easy to splurge when you get your bonus or on a special event. But it takes mental strength to stay frugal now so that our financial future can be comfortable and secure.

#### 10. No Competition

In Yoga, you do not have to compete against other athletes or race against time or measure any other parameters. It depends on you and you have to practice only as much as your body allows you. Even when you plan your finances, you have to do it keeping in mind your current finances and your financial goals and not what other people have. You do not need to think about how much money or how many cars your neighbour has. In both cases, you can hurt yourself if you compare with others and try to imitate them without any thought.

#### 11. Help in relax the system

Yoga revitalizes you to relax, slow your breath, and focus on the present, shifting the scene from constantly chasing life to taking a breath and slowing down and reverting on oneself. As is life, the markets too are never stable. There are times when it shoots up,

other times it cascades down. In times like these, composing yourself and reining your mind and thoughts is vital. A calm mind helps you analyse the circumstances and take necessary measures.

## 12.A life-long journey

Yoga will help you more and more as you keep practicing it. It helps in old age as well when health troubles are usually more. Similarly financial planning is a lifelong activity and you will achieve your goals and your wealth can grow provided you do it continuously and properly.

### VARIOUS FINANCIAL YOGASANAS

Discipline Asana: Certainly, the first pillar of Yoga is Discipline. It begins with simple practices that can be mastered only when repeated every day. This holds true in the case of investment as well.

Self-Awareness Asana: Yoga highlights the importance of self-awareness and knowing about one's own ambitions and potential. Similarly, practicing financial mindfulness is essential to handle money management practices and can also guide to take well-informed financial decisions which are in alignment with our goals and aspirations.

Gratification Asana: We cannot achieve physical and mental well-being by practicing Yoga once. In fact, progress is often gradual and requires consistent dedication and effort over an extended period to attain satisfaction. In investing, the ability to stay focused on long-term goals and resist the temptation of impulsive decisions leads to overall financial well-being.

Flexibility Asana: Through different forms of stretching, regular Yoga practice leads to enhanced flexibility. Also, investors must be flexible with their investment choices and should be agile enough to adapt to structural changes that can have a large impact on their portfolios.

Patience Asana: Patience is an integral element of Yoga. Similarly, true Financial Siddhi (enlightenment) can be achieved only if we can tune out market noise and remain calm in the midst of volatility with the essence of patience and a strong credence in one's own abilities.

## CONCLUSIONS

Yoga and financial planning both require discipline, practice, patience, perseverance, determination, self-awareness and a focus on personal growth as well as potential. Incorporating these principles in our lives can help us accomplish physical and mental well-being through yoga, as well as financial steadiness and security through effective financial planning. By embracing these practices, we can foster our overall well-being and lead a fulfilling, contented life.

Yoga also proves successful in increasing our capacity to pay attention, be aware, be disciplined and be mindful. We can apply the mindfulness we develop through postures or meditation to other areas of our lives such as budgeting and financial planning for better outcomes.

And most importantly, by practicing yoga over time, we can develop greater awareness of the present moment, which can help us notice when, where and how we overspend and realize about purchasing things we do not really require instead of saving for things we will. Moreover, the choices we make regarding spending money for numerous causes, reflects on the values we have been nurtured with and how we want to live our lives.

Stay Healthy! Stay Financially Wise!

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