INTRODUCTION

Today Yoga has spread across the world, breaking through barriers of religion, culture and creed. Yoga is a worldwide phenomenon today. The declaration of June 21 as World Yoga Day by the United Nations General Assembly is in itself an indicator of how the world has embraced Yoga. Around 21 million adults and 1.7m children practice yoga in the USA according to a study conducted in 2012 (NCCIH 2012). Research on Yoga in Education (RYE) has prompted France and the UK to adopt Yoga as part of education in schools. Thousands of researches are establishing the truth of Yoga and its effectiveness.

How and why Yoga became a worldwide phenomenon? There are many factors, which are responsible for the spread of yoga. Both science and masters of yoga have helped in presenting it for modern day life. Science and technology gave scientific bases to the hitherto unknown secrets of yoga. Earlier, yoga was considered mainly as a spiritual practice. Today, it has come out of the realms of secrecy to become part of every day life for practical use such as therapy, management of diseases, building up immunity, managing psychosomatic illnesses, increasing mental prowess, peace, joy etc.

“Yoga is not an ancient myth buried in oblivion. It is the most valuable inheritance of the present. It is essential need of today and the culture of tomorrow.” Swami SatyanandaSaraswati

These were the prophetic words of ParamhamsaSatyanandaSaraswati which are eternalized as opening epithet in the introductory chapter of the book, “Asana Pranayama, Mudra Bandha”, first published in 1969 by Bihar School of Yoga. Swami SatyanandaSaraswati was a great realised soul of the 19th century who came on the world's stage of Yoga driven by his Guru Swami Sivananda'sdictactto spread yoga, “door-to-door-shore-to-shore.” (SwamiSatyanandaSaraswati.)

The title of the research compels for a thorough research on the subject because
preliminary research has revealed that there is not much research on Swamiji or his contribution to Yoga. Not only that, but although there is much work on what he has contributed to Yoga, it is rarely acknowledged that he is the Father of those practices. This is a grievous flaw. This research will try to do justice to this aberration which is important in the historical context and for the benefit of posterity.

This research will identify the pioneering, innovative contribution made by Swami Satyananda in both practical and spiritual aspect of yoga. His pioneering work in yoga will be studied in the following practices and areas of Yoga:

1. Yoga Nidra
2. PawanMukta Asana series, I, II, III.
3. Shankprakshalan
4. Women as Sanyasins

He was also one of the few Yoga and spiritual gurus who took Samadhi in recent times. This research will chronicle this rare spiritual happening through eye witness accounts. Also, it will analyse and study his writings on Samadhi with a spiritual and scientific prospect.

Yoga Nidra finds mention in many ancient texts. One can find the earliest mention of Yoga Nidra in the BhagwatPuran, (Gita Press, 2068 Samvat), where it is written that Lord Vishnu lay in yoga nidra whence a lotus immersed from his navel from which Brahma emerged to create the universe. However, Yoga Nidra as a part of yogic practice is nowhere to be found in any texts. It is Swami Satyananda’s innovative work of adding Yoga Nidra as a practice to the body of ancient and modern work on Yoga. How he came to derive this is worth chronicling for posterity. While preparing the Literature Review for this research paper, it was found that there are many research papers on Yoga Nidra, the practice and its benefits, but many do not acknowledge that Swami Satyananda was its founder. Yoga Nidra today is being used clinically for managing stress, BP, Heart, psychosomatic illnesses and many other therapeutic uses.
However, he also showed that Yoga Nidra was also a spiritual practice. This unique combination of worldly and spiritual which is the touchstone of his work, will be analysed both as literature review and collating scientific research on it.

Similarly, he contributed the PawanMukta asana series I, II, III to the body of Yoga practice. These are 3 sets of asanas which are also known as limbering up asanas. They are a unique compilation of practices which can be practiced by healthy, young and old and not so healthy, with benefits varying from the bones, muscles, digestive system to energy centres. For this, this research will go into the yet another pioneering contribution of Swamiji to Yoga.

This research will also delve into Swamiji’s conceptualization of Shankprakshalan as a cleansing practice with many therapeutic uses. This method derived mainly from Hatha yoga, as well as other works. In Hatha Yoga, there are several cleaning techniques. But, Swamiji derived this practical, easy system of entire cleaning of the body, mind, emotions, which is being administered today not only for cleansing but several therapeutic uses like for Diabetes, digestive issues, weight problems. But, for the mind and emotions, he spoke of the importance of the vega nerve which gets activated during this cleaning practice. For this too this research will put together to bring forth the importance of this nerve as emphasized by Swamiji which the scientific world earlier was hesitant to accept but then established the truth of it through experiments and lab tests.

This research will also bring forth the modern, practical approach to all things by Swamiji. Although an erudite scholar on the ancient texts and scriptures, this research will attempt to show how an aware mind places the scriptural knowledge in contemporary context. To bring this out, Swamiji’s modern, practical approach to role of women in the world and even in spiritual world is worth a study. This is especially important today, when mis-representation, mis-interpretation of the scriptures, religious texts have caused havoc in society and the world in general.
Finally, but most significantly, this paper will trace his own spiritual practice which culminated in Samadhi on Dec. 5, 2009.

In this context, this research is dedicated to the life and work of Swami Satyananda. This researcher found during extensive literature review that there is a paucity of research on Swami SatyanandaSaraswati and his pioneering, innovative work in yoga and giving the scientific, modern, practical approach to it.

The research scholar’s qualification to do justice to this subject is a double edged sword as he has been a disciple of the Bihar School of Yoga from where he did MSc in Yogic Sciences and had direct interactions with Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjananda was the precept of the Course. The scholar has been teaching Yoga for the past 15 years and he dedicated to teach the system of Bihar School of Yoga.

However, the methodology the researcher have used, that is Literature review, analysis of Swamiji’s books, and collate it with independent research done in India and abroad which collaborate Swamiji’s assertions will take care of any such doubts. Also, it is the belief that any bias, deviation from truth, exaggeration will hurt and the ultimate outcome of the research.