CHAPTER 3

OBJECTIVES

Yoga is an ancient tradition of the Vedic culture of India. Yoga was practiced and transmitted especially in traditional families in India through the guru shishya parampara or the tradition of teacher-pupil transmission, from time immemorial. In present times Yoga as a physical culture is very popular as a fitness technique. This is especially due to its popularity and adaptation by Western cultures. Yoga is more recently also being used as part of physical therapy and rehabilitation in certain medical conditions. This merely focuses on the physical aspects of yoga called asana and pranayama, and does not look at the bigger bio-psycho-socio-spiritual and holistic concept of Yoga. There may be several reasons for this. In the modern medical culture, the body is given more importance. There is a disease oriented approach to treatment in modern medicine focussing on only the part or system of the body that is disordered and efforts are directed to repairing the particular part or system and restoring its function. A change in the mind set and paradigm shift is required if we are to look at the concept of suffering the disease is producing in the individual and its effect on the whole person.

The Patanjali Yoga Sutras is the classical and authoritative text on Yoga. This is widely acknowledged and accepted by experts and practitioners. With the current emphasis and trend in modern medicine on the Evidence-Based approach called Evidence Based Medicine (EBM) there has come a need for a good understanding of the Patanjali Yoga Sutras re-interpreted with the knowledge available from medical science and particularly medical neurosciences, so as to understand and reinterpret the classical scripture in the light of current Evidence-Based Medicine. It would also help produce a paradigm shift in a holistic understanding of human suffering and a better approach to alleviating suffering.
Till date there are no specific studies looking at the entirety of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* from a medical neuroscience perspective and especially using the hermeneutic method of qualitative research.

The world is now looking at yoga with great interest and enthusiasm. The United Nations, in 2015 declared 21st June as International Yoga Day, to be celebrated every year all over the globe. This has been possible because of the wide acceptance and popularity of Yoga and the efforts of several practitioners all over the world and in particular India, including the present Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, who himself has acknowledged the benefits of Yoga that he has experienced through his daily practice. He has spared no efforts to popularise and motivate the youth of India to do the same. This past years, have seen the Yoga Day being celebrated with overwhelming enthusiasm by every country and culture of the world irrespective of colour, class, creed or religion and particularly so in India, the country of its origin.

The Western scientific community is showing increasing interest in the ancient spiritual and holistic medical traditions of India as means towards a healthier and harmonious living and a move towards a more peaceful world community.

It is pertinent that we look systematically and scientifically at our ancient traditional understanding of suffering, its causes and means of alleviating it as expounded in our classical *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* in the light of modern medical neuroscience. By doing so we can gain a fresh and new scientific interpretation of the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*. It is hoped that the study will contribute towards the following:

I. Authenticating and validating the ancient work of *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* through interpretation using medical neuroscience as the evidence-based tool by the qualitative research methodology of hermeneutics

II. Gaining new insights from the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* into neuropsychological processes and practices that promote healthy living and alleviating suffering
III. To develop practical program for incorporating relevant aspects of the Patanjali Yoga Sutras into Medical care and test its application

IV. To help lay the basic foundation and direction for future research in this subject

It is hoped that this work would become a trendsetter and a benchmark in further research into the ancient and noble knowledge of Vedic culture of India and revive the peaceful, prosperous and healthy co-existence of the people of our glorious Nation and of the world thus restoring the noble vision of \textit{vasudaiva kutumbakam}, the whole world as one family.