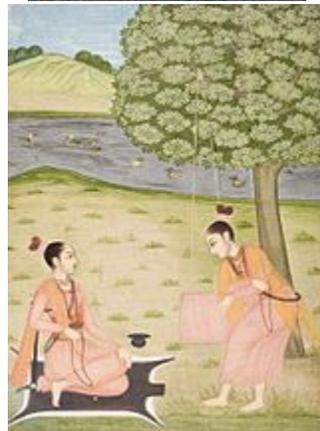
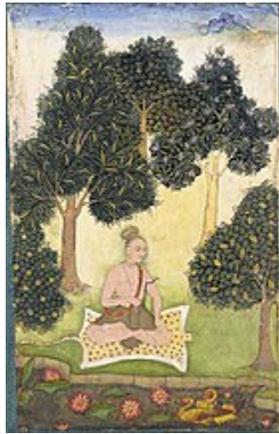


Yoga



Male and female yogis from 17th- and 18th-century India

This article contains Indic text. Without proper rendering support, you may see question marks or boxes, misplaced vowels or missing conjuncts instead of Indic text.

Yoga (/ˈjoʊɡə/^[1] Sanskrit: योग; ⓘ pronunciation) is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. Yoga is one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy.^[2] There is a broad variety of yoga schools, practices, and goals^[3] in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.^{[4][5][6]} Among the best-known types of yoga are Hatha yoga and Rāja yoga.^[7]

The origins of yoga have been speculated to date back to pre-Vedic Indian traditions; it is mentioned in the Rigveda,^[note 1] but most likely developed around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE,^[9] in ancient India's ascetic and śramana movements.^{[10][note 2]}

The chronology of earliest texts describing yoga-practices is unclear, varyingly credited to Upanishads.^[11] The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali date from the first half of the 1st millennium CE,^{[12][13]} but only gained prominence in the West in the 20th century.^[14] Hatha yoga texts emerged around the 11th century with origins in tantra.^{[15][16]}

Yoga gurus from India later introduced yoga to the West,^[17] following the success of Swami Vivekananda in the late 19th and early 20th century.^[17] In the 1980s, yoga became popular as a system of physical exercise across the Western world.^[16]

Yoga in Indian traditions, however, is more than physical exercise; it has a meditative and spiritual core.^[18] One of the six major orthodox schools of Hinduism is also called Yoga, which has its own epistemology and metaphysics, and is closely related to Hindu Samkhya philosophy.^[19]

Many studies have tried to determine the effectiveness of yoga as a complementary intervention for cancer, schizophrenia, asthma, and heart disease.^{[20][21]} The results of these studies have been mixed and inconclusive.^{[20][21]} On December 1, 2016, yoga was listed by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage.^[22]

Etymology

Statue of Shiva in Bangalore, Karnataka, India,

performing yogic meditation in the Padmasana posture.

The Sanskrit noun *yoga* translates to (and is cognate with) English "yoke". It is derived from the root yuj "to attach, join, harness, yoke".

The spiritual sense of the word yoga first arises in Epic Sanskrit, in the second half of the 1st millennium BCE, and is associated with the philosophical system presented in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, with the chief aim of "uniting" the human spirit with the Divine.^[23] The term kriyāyoga has a grammatical sense,

meaning "connection with a verb". But the same compound is also given a technical meaning in the *Yoga Sutras* (2.1), designating the "practical" aspects of the philosophy, i.e. the "union with the supreme" due to performance of duties in everyday life^[24]

According to Pāṇini, the term yoga can be derived from either of two roots, *yujir yoga* (to yoke) or *yuj samādhau* ("to concentrate").^[25] In the context of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, the root *yuj samādhau* (to concentrate) is considered by traditional commentators as the correct etymology.^[26] In accordance with Pāṇini,

Vyasa who wrote the first commentary on the *Yoga Sutras*,^[27] states that yoga means samādhi (concentration).^[28]

According to Dasgupta, the term yoga can be derived from either of two roots, *yujir yoga* ("to yoke") or *yuj samādhau* ("to concentrate").^[25] Someone who practices yoga or follows the yoga philosophy with a high level of commitment is called a yogi (may be applied to a man or a woman) or yogini (traditionally denoting a woman).^[29]

Definition in classic Indian texts

The term yoga has been defined in various ways in the many different Indian philosophical and religious traditions.

Source Text	Definition of Yoga ^[30]
<u>Katha Upanishad</u>	"When the five senses, along with the mind, remain still and the intellect is not active, that is known as the highest state. They consider yoga to be firm restraint of the senses. Then one becomes un-distracted for yoga is the arising and the passing away" (6.10-11)
<u>Bhagavad Gita</u>	"Yoga is said to be equanimity" (2.48); "Yoga is skill in action" (2.50); "Know that which is called yoga to be separation from contact with suffering" (6.23).
<u>Yogacarabhumi - Sravakabhumi</u>	"Yoga is fourfold: faith, aspiration, perseverance and means" (2.152)
<u>Yoga Sutras of Patanjali</u>	"Yoga is the suppression of the activities of the mind" (1.2)
<u>Vaisesika sutra</u>	"Pleasure and suffering arise as a result of the drawing together of the sense organs, the mind and objects. When that does not happen because the mind is in the self, there is no pleasure or suffering for one who is embodied. That is yoga" (5.2.15-16)
Kaundinya's <u>Pancarhabhasya</u> on the <u>Pasupatasutra</u>	"In this system, yoga is the union of the self and the Lord" (1.1.43)
<u>Linga Purana</u>	"By the word 'yoga' is meant nirvana, the condition of Siva." (1.8.5a)
<u>Brahmasutra-bhasya</u> of <u>Adi Shankara</u>	"It is said in the treatises on yoga: 'Yoga is the means of perceiving reality.'" (2.1.3)
<u>Yogabija</u>	"The union of apana and prana, one's own rajas and semen, the sun and moon, the individual soul and the supreme soul, and in the same way the union of all dualities, is called yoga. " (89)

Goals

The ultimate goal of Yoga is *moksha* (liberation), although the exact definition of what form this takes depends on the philosophical or theological system with which it is conjugated.

According to Jacobsen, "Yoga has five principal meanings:^[31]

1. Yoga, as a disciplined method for attaining a goal;
2. Yoga, as techniques of controlling the body and the mind;
3. Yoga, as a name of one of the schools or systems of philosophy (*darśana*);

4. Yoga, in connection with other words, such as "hatha-, mantra-, and laya-," referring to traditions specialising in particular techniques of yoga;

5. Yoga, as the goal of Yoga practice."^[31]

According to David Gordon White, from the 5th century CE onward, the core principles of "yoga" were more or less in place, and variations of these principles developed in various forms over time:^[32]

1. Yoga, is a meditative means of discovering dysfunctional perception and cognition, as well as overcoming it for release from suffering, inner peace and salvation; illustration of this principle is

found in Hindu texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Yogasutras*, in a number of Buddhist Mahāyāna works, as well as Jain texts;^[33]

2. Yoga, as the raising and expansion of consciousness from oneself to being coextensive with everyone and everything; these are discussed in sources such as in Hinduism Vedic literature and its Epic *Mahābhārata*, Jainism Praśamaratiprakarana, and Buddhist Nikaya texts;^[34]

3. Yoga, as a path to omniscience and enlightened consciousness enabling one to comprehend the impermanent (illusory,

delusive) and permanent (true, transcendent) reality; examples are found in Hinduism Nyaya and Vaisesika school texts as well as Buddhism Mādhyamaka texts, but in different ways;^[35]

4. Yoga, as a technique for entering into other bodies, generating multiple bodies, and the attainment of other supernatural accomplishments; these are, states White, described in Tantric literature of Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as the Buddhist Sāmaññaphalasutta;^[36] James Mallinson, however, disagrees and suggests that such fringe practices are far removed from the mainstream Yoga's goal as meditation-

driven means to liberation in Indian religions.^[37]

White clarifies that the last principle relates to legendary goals of "yogi practice", different from practical goals of "yoga practice," as they are viewed in South Asian thought and practice since the beginning of the Common Era, in the various Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain philosophical schools.^[38]

Schools

The term "yoga" has been applied to a variety of practices and methods, including Jain and Buddhist practices. In

Hinduism these include Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Laya Yoga and Hatha Yoga.

The so-called Raja Yoga refers to Ashtanga Yoga, the eight limbs to be practiced to attain samadhi, as described in the Yoga Sutras of Pantajali.^[39] The term *raja yoga* originally referred to the ultimate goal of yoga, which is usually *samadhi*,^[40] but was popularised by Vivekananda as the common name for Ashtanga Yoga.^[41]

Hinduism

Classical yoga

Yoga is considered as a philosophical school in Hinduism.^[42] Yoga, in this context, is one of the six āstika schools of Hinduism (those which accept the Vedas as source of knowledge).^{[43][44]}

Due to the influence of Vivekananda, the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* are nowadays considered as the foundational scripture of classical yoga, a status which it only acquired in the 20th century.^[41] Before the twentieth century, other works were considered as the most central works, such as the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Yoga Vasistha*,^[41] while Tantric Yoga and Hatha Yoga prevailed over Ashtanga Yoga.^[41]

Ashtanga yoga

Swami Vivekananda equated raja yoga with the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.^[45]

Yoga as described in the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* refers to Ashtanga yoga.^[41] The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* is considered as a central text of the Yoga school of Hindu philosophy,^[46] It is often called "Rāja yoga", "yoga of the kings," a term which originally

referred to the ultimate, royal goal of yoga, which is usually *samadhi*,^[40] but was popularised by Vivekananda as the common name for Ashtanga Yoga.^[41]

Ashtanga yoga incorporates epistemology, metaphysics, ethical practices, systematic exercises and self-development techniques for body, mind and spirit.^[47] Its epistemology (*pramanas*) is same as the Samkhya school. Both accept three reliable means to knowledge – perception (*pratyākṣa*, direct sensory observations), inference (*anumāna*) and testimony of trustworthy experts (*sabda*, agama). Both these orthodox schools are also strongly

dualistic. Unlike the Sāṃkhya school of Hinduism, which pursues a non-theistic/atheistic rationalist approach,^{[48][49]} the Yoga school of Hinduism accepts the concept of a "personal, yet essentially inactive, deity" or "personal god".^{[50][51]} Along with its epistemology and metaphysical foundations, the Yoga school of Hindu philosophy incorporates ethical precepts (yamas and niyamas) and an introspective way of life focused on perfecting one's self physically, mentally and spiritually, with the ultimate goal being *kaivalya* (liberated, unified, content state of existence).^{[47][52][53]}

Hatha yoga

A sculpture of Gorakshanath, a celebrated 11th century yogi of Nath tradition and a major proponent of Hatha yoga.^[54]

Hatha yoga, also called hatha vidyā, is a kind of yoga focusing on physical and mental strength building exercises and postures described primarily in three texts of Hinduism:^{[55][56][57]}

1. Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Svātmārāma

(15th century)

2. Shiva Samhita, author unknown (1500^[58]

or late 17th century)

3. Gheranda Samhita by Gheranda (late

17th century)

Many scholars also include the preceding

Goraksha Samhita authored by

Gorakshanath of the 11th century in the

above list.^[55] Gorakshanath is widely

considered to have been responsible for

popularizing hatha yoga as we know it

today.^{[59][60][61]}

Vajrayana Buddhism, founded by the Indian Mahasiddhas,^[62] has a series of asanas and pranayamas, such as tummo (Sanskrit *caṇḍālī*)^[63] and trul khor which parallel hatha yoga.

Shaivism

In Shaivism, yoga is used to unite kundalini with Shiva.^[64] See also 'tantra' below.

Buddhism

16th century Buddhist artwork in Yoga posture.

Buddhist meditation encompasses a variety of meditation techniques that aim to develop mindfulness, concentration, supramundane powers, tranquility, and insight.

Core techniques have been preserved in ancient Buddhist texts and have proliferated and diversified through teacher-student transmissions. Buddhists

pursue meditation as part of the path toward Enlightenment and Nirvana.^[note 3]

The closest words for meditation in the classical languages of Buddhism are *bhāvanā*^[note 4] and *jhāna/dhyāna*.^[note 5]

Jainism

Jain meditation has been the central practice of spirituality in Jainism along with the Three Jewels.^[65] Meditation in Jainism aims at realizing the self, attain salvation, take the soul to complete freedom.^[66] It aims to reach and to remain in the pure state of soul which is believed to be pure conscious, beyond any

attachment or aversion. The practitioner strives to be just a knower-seer (*Gyata-Drashta*). Jain meditation can be broadly categorized to the auspicious *Dharmya Dhyana* and *Shukla Dhyana* and inauspicious *Artta* and *Raudra Dhyana*.

Tantra

Samuel states that Tantrism is a contested concept.^[67] Tantra yoga may be described, according to Samuel, as practices in 9th to 10th century Buddhist and Hindu (Saiva, Shakti) texts, which included yogic practices with elaborate deity visualizations using geometrical arrays

and drawings (mandala), fierce male and particularly female deities, transgressive life stage related rituals, extensive use of chakras and mantras, and sexual techniques, all aimed to help one's health, long life and liberation.^{[67][68]}

History

The origins of yoga are a matter of debate.^[69] There is no consensus on its chronology or specific origin other than that yoga developed in ancient India.

Suggested origins are the Indus Valley Civilization (3300–1900 BCE)^[70] and pre-Vedic Eastern states of India,^[71] the Vedic

period (1500–500 BCE), and the śramana movement.^[72] According to Gavin Flood, continuities may exist between those various traditions:

[T]his dichotomization is too simplistic, for continuities can undoubtedly be found between renunciation and vedic Brahmanism, while elements from non-Brahmanical, Sramana traditions also played an important part in the formation of the renunciate ideal.^[73][note 6]

Pre-philosophical speculations of yoga begin to emerge in the texts of c. 500 – c. 200 BCE. Between 200 BCE and 500 CE, philosophical schools of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism were taking form and a coherent philosophical system of yoga began to emerge.^[75] The Middle Ages saw the development of many satellite traditions of yoga. Yoga came to the attention of an educated western public in the mid 19th century along with other topics of Indian philosophy.

Pre-Vedic India

Yoga may have pre-Vedic elements.^{[70][71]}
Some state yoga originated in the Indus Valley Civilization.^[76] Marshall,^[77] Eliade^[11] and other scholars suggest that the Pashupati seal discovered in Indus Valley Civilization sites depict figures in positions resembling a common yoga or meditation pose. This interpretation is considered speculative and uncertain by more recent analysis of Srinivasan^[11] and may be a case of projecting "later practices into archeological findings".^[78]

Vedic period (1700–500 BCE)

According to Crangle, some researchers have favoured a linear theory, which attempts "to interpret the origin and early development of Indian contemplative practices as a sequential growth from an Aryan genesis",^{[79][note 7]} just like traditional Hinduism regards the Vedas to be the ultimate source of all spiritual knowledge.^{[80][note 8]} Thomas McEvilley favors a composite model where pre-Aryan yoga prototype existed in the pre-Vedic period and its refinement began in the Vedic period.^[83]

Ascetic practices, concentration and bodily postures described in the Vedas

may have been precursors to yoga.^{[84][85]}

According to Geoffrey Samuel, "Our best evidence to date suggests that [yogic] practices developed in the same ascetic circles as the early sramana movements (Buddhists, Jainas and Ajivikas), probably in around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE."^[10]

According to Zimmer, Yoga philosophy is reckoned to be part of the non-Vedic system, which also includes the Samkhya school of Hindu philosophy, Jainism and Buddhism:^[71] "[Jainism] does not derive from Brahman-Aryan sources, but reflects the cosmology and anthropology of a

much older pre-Aryan upper class of northeastern India [Bihar] – being rooted in the same subsoil of archaic metaphysical speculation as Yoga, Sankhya, and Buddhism, the other non-Vedic Indian systems."[86][note 9]

Textual references

The first use of the root of word "yoga" is in hymn 5.81.1 of the Rig Veda, a dedication to rising Sun-god in the morning (Savitri), where it has been interpreted as "yoke" or "yogically control".[89][90][note 10]

The earliest evidence of Yogis and Yoga tradition is found in the Keśin hymn 10.136 of the Rigveda, states Karel Werner.^[8]

The Yogis of Vedic times left little evidence of their existence, practices and achievements.

And such evidence as has survived in the Vedas is scanty and indirect. Nevertheless, the existence of accomplished Yogis in Vedic times cannot be doubted.

— *Karel Werner, Yoga and the R̥g Veda*^[8]

Rigveda, however, does not describe yoga and there is little evidence as to what the practices were.^[8] Early references to practices that later became part of yoga, are made in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the earliest Hindu Upanishad.^[note 11] For example, the practice of pranayama (consciously regulating breath) is mentioned in hymn 1.5.23 of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (c. 900 BCE), and the practice of pratyahara (concentrating all of one's senses on self)

is mentioned in hymn 8.15 of Chandogya Upanishad (c. 800–700 BCE).^{[93][note 12]}

Vedic ascetic practices

Ascetic practices (tapas), concentration and bodily postures used by Vedic priests to conduct yajna (sacrifice), might have been precursors to yoga.^[note 13] *Vratya*, a group of ascetics mentioned in the Atharvaveda, emphasized on bodily postures which may have evolved into yogic asanas.^[84] Early Samhitas also contain references to other group ascetics such as munis, the keśin, and vratyas.^[96]

Techniques for controlling breath and vital

energies are mentioned in the Brahmanas (texts of the Vedic corpus, c. 1000–800 BCE) and the *Atharvaveda*.^{[84][97]} Nasadiya Sukta of the *Rig Veda* suggests the presence of an early contemplative tradition.^[note 14]

Preclassical era (500–200 BCE)

Yoga concepts begin to emerge in the texts of c. 500–200 BCE such as the Pali Canon, the middle Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharata*.^{[100][note 15]}

Upanishads

The first known appearance of the word "yoga", with the same meaning as the modern term, is in the Katha Upanishad,^{[11][103]} probably composed between the fifth and third century BCE,^{[104][105]} where it is defined as the steady control of the senses, which along with cessation of mental activity, leading to a supreme state.^{[96][note 16]} *Katha Upanishad* integrates the monism of early Upanishads with concepts of samkhya and yoga. It defines various levels of existence according to their proximity to the innermost being *Ātman*. Yoga is therefore seen as a process of interiorization or ascent of

consciousness.^{[107][108]} It is the earliest literary work that highlights the fundamentals of yoga. White states:

The earliest extant systematic account of yoga and a bridge from the earlier Vedic uses of the term is found in the Hindu Katha Upanisad (Ku), a scripture dating from about the third century BCE[...] [I]t describes the hierarchy of mind-body constituents—the senses, mind, intellect, etc.—that comprise the foundational

categories of Sāmkhya philosophy, whose metaphysical system grounds the yoga of the Yogasutras, Bhagavad Gita, and other texts and schools (Ku3.10–11; 6.7–8).^[109]

The hymns in Book 2 of the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, another late first millennium BCE text, states a procedure in which the body is held in upright posture, the breath is restrained and mind is meditatively focussed, preferably inside a cave or a place that is simple, plain, of silence or

gently flowing water, with no noises nor harsh winds. [110][108]

The *Maitrayaniya Upanishad*, likely composed in a later century than *Katha* and *Shvetashvatara Upanishads* but before Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, mentions sixfold yoga method – breath control (*pranayama*), introspective withdrawal of senses (*pratyahara*), meditation (*dhyana*), mind concentration (*dharana*), philosophical inquiry/creative reasoning (*tarka*), and absorption/intense spiritual union (*samadhi*). [11][108][111]

In addition to the Yoga discussion in above Principal Upanishads, twenty Yoga Upanishads as well as related texts such as Yoga Vasistha, composed in 1st and 2nd millennium CE, discuss Yoga methods.^{[112][113]}

Sutras of Hindu philosophies

Yoga is discussed in the ancient foundational Sutras of Hindu philosophy. The Vaiśeṣika Sūtra of the Vaisheshika school of Hinduism, dated to have been composed sometime between 6th and 2nd century BCE discusses Yoga.^{[114][115][note 17]} According to

Johannes Bronkhorst, an Indologist known for his studies on early Buddhism and Hinduism and a professor at the University of Lausanne, *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra* describes Yoga as "a state where the mind resides only in the soul and therefore not in the senses".^[117] This is equivalent to *pratyahara* or withdrawal of the senses, and the ancient Sutra asserts that this leads to an absence of *sukha* (happiness) and *dukkha* (suffering), then describes additional yogic meditation steps in the journey towards the state of spiritual liberation.^[117]

Similarly, *Brahma sutras* – the foundational text of the Vedanta school of Hinduism, discusses yoga in its *sutra* 2.1.3, 2.1.223 and others.^[118] *Brahma sutras* are estimated to have been complete in the surviving form sometime between 450 BCE to 200 CE,^{[119][120]} and its sutras assert that yoga is a means to gain "subtlety of body" and other powers.^[118]

The *Nyaya sutras* – the foundational text of the Nyaya school, variously estimated to have been composed between the 6th-century BCE and 2nd-century CE,^{[121][122]} discusses yoga in sutras 4.2.38–50. This ancient text of the Nyaya school includes a discussion of yogic ethics, dhyana

(meditation), samadhi, and among other things remarks that debate and philosophy is a form of yoga.^{[123][124][125]}

Macedonian historical texts

Alexander the Great reached India in the 4th century BCE. Along with his army, he took Greek academics with him who later wrote memoirs about geography, people and customs they saw. One of Alexander's companion was Onesicritus, quoted in Book 15, Sections 63–65 by Strabo, who describes yogins of India.^[126] Onesicritus claims those Indian yogins (*Mandanis*) practiced aloofness and "different

postures – standing or sitting or lying
naked – and motionless".^[127]

Onesicritus also mentions his colleague *Calanus* trying to meet them, who is initially denied audience, but later invited because he was sent by a "king curious of wisdom and philosophy".^[127] Onesicritus and Calanus learn that the yogins consider the best doctrine of life as "rid the spirit of not only pain, but also pleasure", that "man trains the body for toil in order that his opinions may be strengthened", that "there is no shame in life on frugal fare", and that "the best place to inhabit is one with scantiest equipment or outfit".^{[126][127]}

These principles are significant to the history of spiritual side of yoga.^[126] These may reflect the ancient roots of "undisturbed calmness" and "mindfulness through balance" in later works of Hindu Patanjali and Buddhist Buddhaghosa respectively, states Charles Rockwell Lanman,^[126] as well as the principle of Aparigraha (non-possessiveness, non-craving, simple living) and asceticism discussed in later Hinduism and Jainism.

Early Buddhist texts

Werner states, "The Buddha was the founder of his [Yoga] system, even though,

admittedly, he made use of some of the experiences he had previously gained under various Yoga teachers of his time."^[128] He notes:^[129]

But it is only with Buddhism itself as expounded in the Pali Canon that we can speak about a systematic and comprehensive or even integral school of Yoga practice, which is thus the first and oldest to have been preserved for us in its entirety.^[129]

The chronology of completion of these yoga-related Pali Canons, however, is unclear, just like ancient Hindu texts.^{[130][131]} Early known Buddhist sources like the *Majjhima Nikāya* mention meditation, while the *Anguttara Nikāya* describes *Jhāyins* (meditators) that resemble early Hindu descriptions of *Muni*, *Kesins* and meditating ascetics,^[132] but these meditation-practices are not called yoga in these texts.^[133] The earliest known specific discussion of yoga in the Buddhist literature, as understood in modern context, is from the third- to fourth-century CE scriptures of the Buddhist Yogācāra

school and fourth- to fifth-century
Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa.^[133]

A yoga system that predated the Buddhist school is Jain yoga. But since Jain sources postdate Buddhist ones, it is difficult to distinguish between the nature of the early Jain school and elements derived from other schools.^[129] Most of the other contemporary yoga systems alluded in the Upanishads and some Pali canons are lost to time.^{[134][135][note 18]}

The early Buddhist texts describe meditative practices and states, some of which the Buddha borrowed from the

śramaṇa tradition.^{[137][138]} The Pali canon contains three passages in which the Buddha describes pressing the tongue against the palate for the purposes of controlling hunger or the mind, depending on the passage.^[139] However, there is no mention of the tongue being inserted into the nasopharynx as in true khecarī mudrā. The Buddha used a posture where pressure is put on the perineum with the heel, similar to even modern postures used to stimulate Kundalini.^[140]

Uncertainty with chronology

Alexander Wynne, author of *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation*, observes that formless meditation and elemental meditation might have originated in the Upanishadic tradition.^[141] The earliest reference to meditation is in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, one of the oldest Upanishads.^[96] *Chandogya Upanishad* describes the five kinds of vital energies (*prana*). Concepts used later in many yoga traditions such as internal sound and veins (*nadis*) are also described in the Upanishad.^[84] *Taittiriya Upanishad* defines yoga as the mastery of body and senses.^[142]

Bhagavad Gita

Krishna narrating the Gita to Arjuna

The *Bhagavad Gita* ('Song of the Lord'), uses the term "yoga" extensively in a variety of ways. In addition to an entire chapter (ch. 6) dedicated to traditional yoga practice, including meditation,^[143] it introduces three prominent types of yoga:^[144]

- Karma yoga: The yoga of action.^[145]

- Bhakti yoga: The yoga of devotion.^[145]
- Jnana yoga: The yoga of knowledge.^{[146][147]}

The Gita consists of 18 chapters and 700 *shlokas* (verses),^[148] with each chapter named as a different yoga, thus delineating eighteen different yogas.^{[148][149]} Some scholars divide the *Gita* into three sections, with the first six chapters with 280 *shlokas* dealing with Karma yoga, the middle six containing 209 *shlokas* with Bhakti yoga, and the last six chapters with 211 *shlokas* as Jnana yoga; however, this is rough because elements

of *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* are found in all chapters.^[148]

Mahabharata

Description of an early form of yoga called *nirodhayoga* (yoga of cessation) is contained in the Mokshadharma section of the 12th chapter (*Shanti Parva*) of the *Mahabharata*. The verses of the section are dated to c. 300–200 BCE. *Nirodhayoga* emphasizes progressive withdrawal from the contents of empirical consciousness such as thoughts, sensations etc. until *purusha* (Self) is realized. Terms like *vichara* (subtle reflection), *viveka*

(discrimination) and others which are similar to Patanjali's terminology are mentioned, but not described.^[150] There is no uniform goal of yoga mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. Separation of self from matter, perceiving *Brahman* everywhere, entering into *Brahman* etc. are all described as goals of yoga. Samkhya and yoga are conflated together and some verses describe them as being identical.^[151] Mokshadharma also describes an early practice of elemental meditation.^[152]

Mahabharata defines the purpose of yoga as the experience of uniting the individual

ātman with the universal Brahman that pervades all things.^[151]

Classical era (200 BCE – 500 CE)

This period witnessed many texts of Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism discussing and systematically compiling yoga methods and practices. Of these, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are considered as a key work.

Classical yoga

During the period between the Mauryan and the Gupta eras (c. 200 BCE–500 CE) philosophical schools of Hinduism,

Buddhism and Jainism were taking form and a coherent philosophical system of yoga began to emerge.^[75]

Yoga as a philosophy is mentioned in Sanskrit texts dated to be completed between 200 BCE–200 CE. Kauṭilya's Arthashastra in verse 1.2.10, for example, states that there are three categories of *anviksikas* (philosophies) – Samkhya (nontheistic), Yoga (theistic) and Cārvāka (atheistic materialism).^{[153][154]}

Samkhya

Many traditions in India began to adopt systematic methodology by about first

century CE. Of these, Samkhya was probably one of the oldest philosophies to begin taking a systematic form.^[155]

Patanjali systematized Yoga, building them on the foundational metaphysics of Samkhya. In the early works, the Yoga principles appear together with the Samkhya ideas. Vyasa's commentary on the *Yoga Sutras*, also called the *Samkhyapravacanabhasya* (*Commentary on the Exposition of the Sankhya Philosophy*), describes the relation between the two systems.^[156] The two schools have some differences as well. Yoga accepted the conception of "personal god", while Samkhya developed

as a rationalist, non-theistic/atheistic system of Hindu philosophy.^{[48][157][158]}

Sometimes Patanjali's system is referred to as *Seshvara Samkhya* in contradistinction to Kapila's *Nirivara Samkhya*.^[159]

The parallels between Yoga and Samkhya were so close that Max Müller says that "the two philosophies were in popular parlance distinguished from each other as Samkhya with and Samkhya without a Lord."^[160]

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

Traditional Hindu depiction of Patanjali as an avatar of the divine serpent Shesha.

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali^[161]

Pada (Chapter)	English meaning	Sutras
Samadhi Pada	On being absorbed in spirit	51
Sadhana Pada	On being immersed in spirit	55
Vibhuti Pada	On supernatural abilities and gifts	56
Kaivalya Pada	On absolute freedom	34

In Hindu philosophy, yoga is the name of one of the six orthodox (which accept the testimony of Vedas) philosophical schools.^{[162][163]} Karel Werner, author of *Yoga And Indian Philosophy*, believes that the process of systematization of yoga which began in the middle and Yoga Upanishads culminated with the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.^[note 19]

There are numerous parallels in the concepts in ancient Samkhya, Yoga and Abhidharma Buddhist schools of thought, particularly from 2nd century BCE to 1st century AD, notes Larson.^[165] Patanjali's Yoga Sutras is a synthesis of these three

traditions. From Samkhya, Yoga Sutras adopt the "reflective discernment" (*adhyavasaya*) of *prakrti* and *purusa* (dualism), its metaphysical rationalism, as well its three epistemic methods to gaining reliable knowledge.^[165] From Abhidharma Buddhism's idea of *nirodhasamadhi*, suggests Larson, Yoga Sutras adopt the pursuit of altered state of awareness, but unlike Buddhist's concept of no self nor soul, Yoga is physicalist and realist like Samkhya in believing that each individual has a self and soul.^[165] The third concept Yoga Sutras synthesize into its philosophy is the ancient ascetic traditions of meditation and introspection, as well as

the yoga ideas from middle Upanishads such as Katha, Shvetashvatara and Maitri.^[165]

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are widely regarded as the first compilation of the formal yoga philosophy.^[166] The verses of *Yoga Sutras* are terse. Many later Indian scholars studied them and published their commentaries, such as the *Vyasa Bhashya* (c. 350–450 CE).^[167] Patanjali's yoga is also referred to as Raja yoga.^[168] Patanjali defines the word "yoga" in his second sutra:

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः

(yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ)

- *Yoga Sutras 1.2*

This terse definition hinges on the meaning of three Sanskrit terms. I. K. Taimni translates it as "Yoga is the inhibition (*nirodhaḥ*) of the modifications (*vṛtti*) of the mind (*citta*)".^[169] Swami Vivekananda translates the sutra as "Yoga is restraining the mind-stuff (*Citta*) from taking various forms (*Vrittis*)".^[170] Edwin Bryant explains that, to Patanjali, "Yoga essentially consists of meditative practices culminating in attaining a state of consciousness free from all modes of

active or discursive thought, and of eventually attaining a state where consciousness is unaware of any object external to itself, that is, is only aware of its own nature as consciousness unmixed with any other object."^{[47][171][172]}

If the meaning of yoga is understood as the practice of nirodha (mental control), then its goal is "the unqualified state of *niruddha* (the perfection of that process)",^[173] according to Baba Hari Dass. In that context, "yoga (union) implies duality (as in joining of two things or principles); the result of yoga is the nondual state", and "as the union of the

lower self and higher Self. The nondual state is characterized by the absence of individuality; it can be described as eternal peace, pure love, Self-realization, or liberation."^[174]

Patanjali's writing also became the basis for a system referred to as "Ashtanga Yoga" ("Eight-Limbed Yoga"). This eight-limbed concept is derived from the 29th Sutra of the Book 2 of Yoga Sutras. They are:

1. Yama (The five "abstentions"): Ahimsa (Non-violence, non-harming other living beings),^[175] Satya (truthfulness, non-

falsehood),^[176] Asteya (non-stealing),^[177] Brahmacharya (celibacy, fidelity to one's partner),^[177] and Aparigraha (non-avarice, non-possessiveness).^[176]

2. Niyama (The five "observances"): Śauca (purity, clearness of mind, speech and body),^[178] Santosha (contentment, acceptance of others and of one's circumstances),^[179] Tapas (persistent meditation, perseverance, austerity),^[180] Svādhyāya (study of self, self-reflection, study of Vedas),^[181] and Ishvara-Pranidhana (contemplation of God/Supreme Being/True Self).^[179]

3. Asana: Literally means "seat", and in Patanjali's Sutras refers to the seated position used for meditation.
4. Pranayama ("Breath exercises"): *Prāna*, breath, "āyāma", to "stretch, extend, restrain, stop".
5. Pratyahara ("Abstraction"): Withdrawal of the sense organs from external objects.
6. Dharana ("Concentration"): Fixing the attention on a single object.
7. Dhyana ("Meditation"): Intense contemplation of the nature of the object of meditation.
8. Samadhi ("Liberation"): merging consciousness with the object of

meditation.

Yoga and Vedanta

Yoga and Vedanta are the two largest surviving schools of Hindu traditions. They share many thematic principles, concepts and belief in self/soul, but diverge in degree, style and some of their methods. Epistemologically, Yoga school accepts three means to reliable knowledge, while Advaita Vedanta accepts six ways.^[182] Yoga disputes the monism of Advaita Vedanta.^[183] Yoga school believes that in the state of moksha, each individual discovers the blissful, liberating sense of himself or herself as an independent

identity; Advaita Vedanta, in contrast, believes that in the state of moksha, each individual discovers the blissful, liberating sense of himself or herself as part of Oneness with everything, everyone and the Universal Self. They both hold that the free conscience is aloof yet transcendent, liberated and self-aware. Further, Advaita Vedanta school enjoins the use of Patanjali's yoga practices and the reading of Upanishads for those seeking the supreme good, ultimate freedom and jivanmukti.^[183]

Yoga Yajnavalkya

The *Yoga Yajnavalkya* is a classical treatise on yoga attributed to the Vedic sage Yajnavalkya. It takes the form of a dialogue between Yajnavalkya and Gargi, a renowned philosopher.^[185] The text contains 12 chapters and its origin has been traced to the period between the second century BCE and fourth century CE.^[186]

Many yoga texts like the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the *Yoga Kundalini* and the

संयोगो योग
इत्युक्तो
जीवात्मपरमात्
मनोः॥

saṁyogo
yoga ityukto
jīvātma-
paramātman
oḥ ॥

Yoga is
union of the
individual
self (*jivātma*)
with the
supreme self
(*paramātma*)

.

Yoga Tattva Upanishads

have borrowed verses

from or make frequent

references to the *Yoga Yajnavalkya*.^[187]

The *Yoga Yajnavalkya* discusses eight yoga

Asanas – Swastika, Gomukha, Padma,

Vira, Simha, Bhadra, Mukta and

Mayura,^[188] numerous breathing exercises

for body cleansing,^[189] and meditation.^[190]

– Yoga

Yajnavalkya^[184]

Jainism

Tirthankara Parsva in Yogic meditation in the Kayotsarga posture.

According to Tattvarthasutra, 2nd century CE Jain text, yoga is the sum of all the activities of mind, speech and body.^[6]

Umasvati calls yoga the cause of "asrava" or karmic influx^[191] as well as one of the essentials—samyak caritra—in the path to

liberation.^[191] In his *Niyamasara*, Acarya Kundakunda, describes *yoga bhakti*—devotion to the path to liberation—as the highest form of devotion.^[192] Acarya Haribhadra and Acarya Hemacandra mention the five major vows of ascetics and 12 minor vows of laity under yoga. This has led certain Indologists like Prof. Robert J. Zydenbos to call Jainism, essentially, a system of yogic thinking that grew into a full-fledged religion.^[193] The five yamas or the constraints of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* bear a resemblance to the five major vows of Jainism, indicating a history of strong cross-fertilization between these traditions.^{[194][note 20]}

Mainstream Hinduism's influence on Jain yoga can be seen in Haribhadra's Yogadrstisamuccaya which outlines an eightfold yoga influenced by Patanjali's eightfold yoga.^[196]

Yogacara school

In the late phase of Indian antiquity, on the eve of the development of Classical Hinduism, the Yogacara movement arises during the Gupta period (4th to 5th centuries). Yogacara received the name as it provided a "yoga," a framework for engaging in the practices that lead to the path of the bodhisattva.^[197] The yogacara

sect teaches "yoga" as a way to reach enlightenment.^[198]

Middle Ages (500–1500 CE)

Middle Ages saw the development of many satellite traditions of yoga. Hatha yoga emerged in this period.^[199]

Bhakti movement

The Bhakti movement was a development in medieval Hinduism which advocated the concept of a personal God (or "Supreme Personality of Godhead"). The movement was initiated by the Alvars of South India in the 6th to 9th centuries, and it started

gaining influence throughout India by the 12th to 15th centuries.^[200] Shaiva and Vaishnava bhakti traditions integrated aspects of *Yoga Sutras*, such as the practical meditative exercises, with devotion.^[201] *Bhagavata Purana* elucidates the practice of a form of yoga called *viraha* (separation) *bhakti*. *Viraha bhakti* emphasizes one pointed concentration on Krishna.^[202]

Tantra

Tantra is a genre of yoga that arose in India no later than the 5th century CE.^[203]^[note 21] George Samuel states,

"Tantra" is a contested term, but may be considered as a school whose practices appeared in mostly complete form in Buddhist and Hindu texts by about 10th century CE.^[67] Over its history, some ideas of Tantra school influenced the Hindu, Bon, Buddhist, and Jain traditions. Elements of Tantric yoga rituals were adopted by and influenced state functions in medieval Buddhist and Hindu kingdoms in East and Southeast Asia.^{[205][206]}

By the turn of the first millennium, hatha yoga emerged from tantra.^{[15][16]}

Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism

Vajrayana is also known as **Tantric Buddhism** and *Tantrayāna*. Its texts were compiled starting with 7th century and Tibetan translations were completed in 8th century CE. These tantra yoga texts were the main source of Buddhist knowledge that was imported into Tibet.^[207] They were later translated into Chinese and other Asian languages, helping spread ideas of Tantric Buddhism. The Buddhist text Hevajra Tantra and *Caryāgiti* introduced hierarchies of chakras.^[208] Yoga is a significant practice in Tantric Buddhism.^{[63][209][210]}

The tantra yoga practices include asanas and breathing exercises. The Nyingma tradition practices Yantra yoga (Tib. "Trul khor"), a discipline that includes breath work (or pranayama), meditative contemplation and other exercises.^[211] In the Nyingma tradition, the path of meditation practice is divided into further stages,^[212] such as Kriya yoga, Upa yoga, Yoga yana, Mahā yoga, Anu yoga and Ati yoga.^[213] The Sarma traditions also include Kriya, Upa (called "Charya"), and Yoga, with the Anuttara yoga class substituting for Mahayoga and Atiyoga.^[214]

Zen Buddhism

Zen, the name of which derives from the Sanskrit "dhyāna" via the Chinese "ch'an"^[note 22] is a form of Mahayana Buddhism. Yoga practices integrally exist within the Zen Buddhist school.^[note 23] Certain essential elements of yoga are important both for Buddhism in general and for Zen in particular.^[216]

Hatha Yoga

The earliest references to hatha yoga are in Buddhist works dating from the eighth century.^[217] The earliest definition of hatha yoga is found in the 11th century Buddhist

text *Vimalaprabha*, which defines it in relation to the center channel, bindu etc.^[218] Hatha yoga synthesizes elements of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* with posture and breathing exercises.^[219] It marks the development of asanas (plural) into the full body 'postures' now in popular usage^[220] and, along with its many modern variations, is the style that many people associate with the word *yoga* today.^[221]

Sikhism

Various yogic groups had become prominent in Punjab in the 15th and 16th

century, when Sikhism was in its nascent stage. Compositions of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, describe many dialogues he had with Jogis, a Hindu community which practiced yoga.^[222] Guru Nanak rejected the austerities, rites and rituals connected with Hatha Yoga.^[223] He propounded the path of Sahaja yoga or Nama yoga (meditation on *the name*) instead.^[224] The Guru Granth Sahib states:

Listen "O Yogi, Nanak tells nothing but the truth. You must discipline your mind. The devotee must meditate on the

*Word Divine. It is His grace
which brings about the union.
He understands, he also sees.
Good deeds help one merge into
Divination."*[225]

Modern history

Reception in the West

The Ustrasana, also known as the camel pose, is one of several yoga asana (pose).

Yoga came to the attention of an educated western public in the mid-19th century along with other topics of Indian philosophy. In the context of this budding interest, N. C. Paul published his *Treatise on Yoga Philosophy* in 1851.

The first Hindu teacher to actively advocate and disseminate aspects of yoga to a western audience, Swami Vivekananda, toured Europe and the United States in the 1890s.^[226] The reception which Swami Vivekananda

received built on the active interest of intellectuals, in particular the New England Transcendentalists, among them Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), who drew on German Romanticism and the interest of philosophers and scholars like G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), the brothers August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845) and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), Max Mueller (1823–1900), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), and others who had (to varying degrees) interests in things Indian.^{[227][228]}

Theosophists also had a large influence on the American public's view of Yoga.^[229]

Esoteric views current at the end of the 19th century provided a further basis for the reception of Vedanta and of Yoga with its theory and practice of correspondence between the spiritual and the physical. ^[230]

The reception of Yoga and of Vedanta thus entwined with each other and with the (mostly Neoplatonism-based) currents of religious and philosophical reform and transformation throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. M. Eliade, himself rooted in the Romanian currents of these traditions, brought a new element into the reception of Yoga with the strong emphasis on Tantric Yoga in his seminal book: *Yoga: Immortality and*

Freedom. ^[note 24] With the introduction of the Tantra traditions and philosophy of Yoga, the conception of the "transcendent" to be attained by Yogic practice shifted from experiencing the "transcendent" ("Atman-Brahman" in Advaitic theory) in the mind to the body itself. ^[231]

The American born yogi by the name of Pierre Arnold Bernard, after his travels through the lands of Kashmir and Bengal, founded the Tantrik Order of America in 1905. His teachings gave many westerners their first glimpse into the practices of yoga and tantra. ^[232]

The modern scientific study of yoga began with the works of N. C. Paul and Major D. Basu in the late 19th century, and then continued in the 20th century with Shri Yogendra (1897–1989) and Swami Kuvalayananda.^[233] Western medical researchers came to Swami Kuvalayananda's Kaivalyadhama Health and Yoga Research Center, starting in 1928, to study Yoga as a science.^[234]

Outside of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain traditions in Asia, the term "yoga" has been usually synonymous with its asanas (postures) or as a form of exercise.^[235]

This aspect of Yoga was adopted as a

cultural trend in Europe and North America starting in the first half of the 20th century. There were periods of criticism and paranoia against yoga as well.^[229] By the 1960s, western interest in Hindu spirituality reached its peak, giving rise to a great number of Neo-Hindu schools specifically advocated to a western public. During this period, most of the influential Indian teachers of yoga came from two lineages, those of Sivananda Saraswati (1887–1963) and of Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888–1989).^[236] Teachers of Hatha yoga who were active in the west in this period included B.K.S. Iyengar (1918–2014), K. Pattabhi Jois

(1915–2009), Swami Vishnu-devananda (1927–1993), and Swami Satchidananda (1914–2002).^{[237][238][239]} Yogi Bhajan brought Kundalini Yoga to the United States in 1969.^[240] Comprehensive, classical teachings of Ashtanga Yoga, Samkhya, the subtle body theory, Fitness Asanas, and tantric elements were included in the yoga teachers training by Baba Hari Dass (1923–), in the United States and Canada.^[241]

A second "yoga boom" followed in the 1980s, as Dean Ornish, a follower of Swami Satchidananda, connected yoga to heart health, legitimizing yoga as a purely

physical system of health exercises outside of counter-culture or esotericism circles, and unconnected to any religious denomination.^[226] Numerous asanas seemed modern in origin, and strongly overlapped with 19th and early-20th century Western exercise traditions.^[242]

A group of people practicing yoga in 2012.

Since 2001, the popularity of yoga in the USA has expanded. The number of people

who practiced some form of yoga has grown from 4 million (in 2001) to 20 million (in 2011). It has drawn support from world leaders such as Barack Obama who stated, "Yoga has become a universal language of spiritual exercise in the United States, crossing many lines of religion and cultures,... Every day, millions of people practice yoga to improve their health and overall well-being. That's why we're encouraging everyone to take part in PALA (Presidential Active Lifestyle Award), so show your support for yoga and answer the challenge".^[243]

The American College of Sports Medicine supports the integration of yoga into the exercise regimens of healthy individuals as long as properly-trained professionals deliver instruction. The College cites yoga's promotion of "profound mental, physical and spiritual awareness" and its benefits as a form of stretching, and as an enhancer of breath control and of core strength.^[244]

Health effects

Yoga has been studied and may be recommended to promote relaxation, reduce stress and improve some medical

conditions such as premenstrual syndrome.^[245] Yoga is considered to be a low-impact activity that can provide the same benefits as "any well-designed exercise program, increasing general health and stamina, reducing stress, and improving those conditions brought about by sedentary lifestyles". It is particularly promoted as a physical therapy routine, and as a regimen to strengthen and balance all parts of the body.^[245]

Yoga may improve psychological health during cancer treatment, although more evidence is needed to confirm this possible benefit.^[20] Other research

indicated that yoga could be a useful in addition to other treatments in schizophrenia,^[21] and may have positive effects on mental health, although the quality of research to define these effects is low.^[246]

In 2015 the Australian Government's Department of Health published the results of a review of alternative therapies that sought to determine if any were suitable for being covered by health insurance. Yoga was one of 17 practices evaluated for which no clear evidence of effectiveness was found.^[247] Accordingly, In 2017 the Australian government named

yoga as a practice that would not qualify for insurance subsidy, saying this step would "ensure taxpayer funds are expended appropriately and not directed to therapies lacking evidence".^[248]

Adults

While some of the medical community regards the results of yoga research as significant, others point to many flaws which undermine results. Much of the research on yoga has taken the form of preliminary studies or clinical trials of low methodological quality, including small sample sizes, inadequate blinding, lack of

randomization, and high risk of bias.^{[249][250][251]} A 2013 review described the effectiveness of yoga for low back pain in the short-term, and moderate evidence that it was effective in the long-term.^[252] Another study found an incidence of back injuries from yoga.^[253]

Some clinicians have reported studies investigating yoga as a complementary intervention for cancer patients to decrease depression, insomnia, pain, and fatigue and to increase anxiety control.^[254]

Others have questioned the quality of research and uncertainty in proving this effect.^[255]

A 2016 systematic review and meta-analysis found no evidence that yoga was effective for metabolic syndrome.^[256]

Physical injuries

Some yoga practitioners suffer physical injuries analogous to sports injuries.^{[257][258][259][260]} A survey of yoga practitioners in Australia showed that about 20% had suffered some physical injury while practicing yoga.^[257] In the previous 12 months 4.6% of the respondents had suffered an injury producing prolonged pain or requiring medical treatment. Headstands, shoulder

stands, lotus and half lotus (seated cross-legged position), forward bends, backward bends, and handstands produced the greatest number of injuries.^[257]

Among the main reasons that experts cite for causing negative effects from yoga are beginners' competitiveness and instructors' lack of qualification.^[258] As the demand for yoga classes grows, many people get certified to become yoga instructors, often with relatively little training. Not every newly certified instructor can evaluate the condition of every new trainee in their class and recommend refraining from doing certain

poses or using appropriate props to avoid injuries.^[258] In turn, a beginning yoga student can overestimate the abilities of their body and strive to do advanced poses before their body is flexible or strong enough to perform them.^{[258][261]}

Vertebral artery dissection, a tear in the arteries in the neck which provide blood to the brain can result from rotation of the neck while the neck is extended. This can occur in a variety of contexts, but is an event which could occur in some yoga practices. This is a very serious condition which can result in a stroke.^{[262][263]}

Acetabular labral tears, damage to the structure joining the femur and the hip, have been reported to have resulted from yoga practice.^[264]

Children

It is claimed that yoga can be an excellent training for children and adolescents, both as a form of physical exercise and for breathing, focus, mindfulness, and stress relief: many school districts have considered incorporating yoga into their Physical Education programs. The Encinitas, California school district gained a San Diego Superior Court Judge's

approval to use yoga in Physical Education, holding against the parents who claimed the practice was intrinsically religious and hence should not be part of a state funded program.^[265]

Reception in other religions

Christianity

Some Christians integrate yoga and other aspects of Eastern spirituality with prayer and meditation. This has been attributed to a desire to experience God in a more complete way.^[266] In 2013, Monsignor Raffaello Martinelli, servicing Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,

having worked for over 23 years with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI),^[267] said that for his Meditation, a Christian can learn from other religious traditions (zen, yoga, controlled respiration, Mantra), quoting Aspects of Christian meditation: "Just as "the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions," neither should these ways be rejected out of hand simply because they are not Christian. On the contrary, one can take from them what is useful so long as the Christian conception of prayer, its logic and requirements are never obscured. It is within the context of all of this that these bits and pieces should

be taken up and expressed anew."^[268]

Previously, the Roman Catholic Church, and some other Christian organizations have expressed concerns and disapproval with respect to some eastern and New Age practices that include yoga and meditation.^{[269][270][271]}

In 1989 and 2003, the Vatican issued two documents: Aspects of Christian meditation and "A Christian reflection on the New Age," that were mostly critical of eastern and New Age practices. The 2003 document was published as a 90-page handbook detailing the Vatican's position.^[272] The Vatican warned that

concentration on the physical aspects of meditation "can degenerate into a cult of the body" and that equating bodily states with mysticism "could also lead to psychic disturbance and, at times, to moral deviations." Such has been compared to the early days of Christianity, when the church opposed the gnostics' belief that salvation came not through faith but through a mystical inner knowledge.^[266] The letter also says, "one can see if and how [prayer] might be enriched by meditation methods developed in other religions and cultures"^[273] but maintains the idea that "there must be some fit between the nature of [other approaches

to] prayer and Christian beliefs about ultimate reality."^[266] Some fundamentalist Christian organizations consider yoga to be incompatible with their religious background, considering it a part of the New Age movement inconsistent with Christianity.^[274]

Another view holds that Christian meditation can lead to religious pluralism. This is held by an interdenominational association of Christians that practice it. "The ritual simultaneously operates as an anchor that maintains, enhances, and promotes denominational activity and a

sail that allows institutional boundaries to be crossed." [275]

Islam

In early 11th century, the Persian scholar Al Biruni visited India, lived with Hindus for 16 years, and with their help translated several significant Sanskrit works into Arabic and Persian languages. One of these was Patanjali's Yogasutras. [276][277]

Al Biruni's translation preserved many of the core themes of Patañjali 's Yoga philosophy, but certain sutras and analytical commentaries were restated making it more consistent with Islamic

monotheistic theology.^{[276][278]} Al Biruni's version of Yoga Sutras reached Persia and Arabian peninsula by about 1050 AD. Later, in the 16th century, the hath yoga text *Amritakunda* was translated into Arabic and then Persian.^[279] Yoga was, however, not accepted by mainstream Sunni and Shia Islam. Minority Islamic sects such as the mystic Sufi movement, particularly in South Asia, adopted Indian yoga practises, including postures and breath control.^{[280][281]} Muhammad Ghawth, a Shattari Sufi and one of the translators of yoga text in 16th century, drew controversy for his interest in yoga and was persecuted for his Sufi beliefs.^[282]

Malaysia's top Islamic body in 2008 passed a fatwa, prohibiting Muslims from practicing yoga, saying it had elements of Hinduism and that its practice was blasphemy, therefore haraam.^[283] Some Muslims in Malaysia who had been practicing yoga for years, criticized the decision as "insulting."^[284] Sisters in Islam, a women's rights group in Malaysia, also expressed disappointment and said yoga was just a form of exercise.^[285] This fatwa is legally enforceable.^[286] However, Malaysia's prime minister clarified that yoga as physical exercise is permissible, but the chanting of religious mantras is prohibited.^[287]

In 2009, the Council of Ulemas, an Islamic body in Indonesia, passed a fatwa banning yoga on the grounds that it contains Hindu elements.^[288] These fatwas have, in turn, been criticized by Darul Uloom Deoband, a Deobandi Islamic seminary in India.^[289] Similar fatwas banning yoga, for its link to Hinduism, were issued by the Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa in Egypt in 2004, and by Islamic clerics in Singapore earlier.^[290]

In Iran, as of May 2014, according to its Yoga Association, there were approximately 200 yoga centres in the country, a quarter of them in the capital Tehran, where groups can often be seen

practising in parks. This has been met by opposition among conservatives.^[291] In May 2009, Turkey's head of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, Ali Bardakoğlu, discounted personal development techniques such as reiki and yoga as commercial ventures that could lead to extremism. His comments were made in the context of reiki and yoga possibly being a form of proselytization at the expense of Islam.^[292]

International Day of Yoga

On 11 December 2014, the United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution

establishing 21 June as "International Day of Yoga",^[293] following the call for its adoption by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address to UN General Assembly on 27 September 2014.^{[294][295][296][297][298]} In suggesting one of the two solstices, Modi noted that it is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and that it has special significance in many parts of the world.^[299]

The first International Day of Yoga was observed worldwide on 21 June 2015. About 35,000 people, including Modi and many dignitaries, performed 21 yoga

asanas for 35 minutes at Rajpath in New Delhi. The day devoted to yoga was observed by millions across the world.^[300] The event at Rajpath established two Guinness records – largest Yoga Class with 35,985 people and the record for the most nationalities participating in it— 84.^[301]

See also

- List of asanas
- List of yoga schools
- Yoga series
- Yogis

Notes

1. *Karel Werner states that the existence of accomplished Yogis in Vedic times cannot be doubted, citing the Kesin hymn of the Rigveda as evidence of a yoga tradition in the Vedic era.* ^[8]

2. *Buddhists, Jainas and Ajivikas* ^[10]

3. *For instance, Kamalashila (2003), p. 4, states that Buddhist meditation "includes any method of meditation that has Enlightenment as its ultimate aim."*

Likewise, Bodhi (1999) writes: "To arrive at the experiential realization of the truths it is necessary to take up the practice of meditation.... At the climax of such

contemplation the mental eye ... shifts its focus to the unconditioned state, Nibbana...." A similar although in some ways slightly broader definition is provided by Fischer-Schreiber et al. (1991), p. 142: "**Meditation** – general term for a multitude of religious practices, often quite different in method, but all having the same goal: to bring the consciousness of the practitioner to a state in which he can come to an experience of 'awakening,' 'liberation,' 'enlightenment.'" Kamalashila (2003) further allows that some Buddhist meditations are "of a more preparatory nature" (p. 4).

4. The Pāli and Sanskrit word *bhāvanā* literally means "development" as in "mental

development." For the association of this term with "meditation," see Epstein (1995), p. 105; and, Fischer-Schreiber et al. (1991), p. 20. As an example from a well-known discourse of the Pali Canon, in "The Greater Exhortation to Rahula" (Maha-Rahulovada Sutta, MN 62), Ven. Sariputta tells Ven. Rahula (in Pali, based on VRI, n.d.) :
ānāpānassatiṃ, rāhula, bhāvanaṃ bhāvehi.
Thanissaro (2006) translates this as:
"Rahula, develop the meditation [bhāvana] of mindfulness of in-&-out breathing."
(Square-bracketed Pali word included based on Thanissaro, 2006, end note.)

5. See, for example, Rhys Davids & Stede (1921–25), entry for "jhāna¹" ; Thanissaro

(1997) ; as well as, Kapleau (1989), p. 385, for the derivation of the word "zen" from Sanskrit "dhyāna." PTS Secretary Dr. Rupert Gethin, in describing the activities of wandering ascetics contemporaneous with the Buddha, wrote:

"...[T]here is the cultivation of meditative and contemplative techniques aimed at producing what might, for the lack of a suitable technical term in English, be referred to as 'altered states of consciousness'. In the technical vocabulary of Indian religious texts such states come to be termed 'meditations' ([Skt.:] dhyāna / [Pali:] jhāna) or 'concentrations' (samādhi); the

attainment of such states of consciousness was generally regarded as bringing the practitioner to deeper knowledge and experience of the nature of the world." (Gethin, 1998, p. 10.)

6. *Gavin Flood: "These renouncer traditions offered a new vision of the human condition which became incorporated, to some degree, into the worldview of the Brahman householder. The ideology of asceticism and renunciation seems, at first, discontinuous with the brahmanical ideology of the affirmation of social obligations and the performance of public and domestic rituals. Indeed, there has been some debate as to whether*

asceticism and its ideas of retributive action, reincarnation and spiritual liberation, might not have originated outside the orthodox vedic sphere, or even outside Aryan culture: that a divergent historical origin might account for the apparent contradiction within 'Hinduism' between the world affirmation of the householder and the world negation of the renouncer. However, this dichotomization is too simplistic, for continuities can undoubtedly be found between renunciation and vedic Brahmanism, while elements from non-Brahmanical, Sramana traditions also played an important part in the formation of the renunciate ideal. Indeed there are

continuities between vedic Brahmanism and Buddhism, and it has been argued that the Buddha sought to return to the ideals of a vedic society which he saw as being eroded in his own day.^[74]

7. See also Gavin Flood (1996), *Hinduism*, p.87–90, on "The orthogenetic theory" and "Non-Vedic origins of renunciation".^[69]

8. Post-classical traditions consider Hiranyagarbha as the originator of yoga.^{[81][82]}

9. Zimmer's point of view is supported by other scholars, such as Niniam Smart, in *Doctrine and argument in Indian Philosophy*, 1964, p.27–32 & p.76,^[87] and S.K. Belvakar

& Inchegeri Sampradaya in *History of Indian philosophy*, 1974 (1927), p.81 & p.303–409.^[87] See Crangle 1994 page 5–7.^[88]

10. Original Sanskrit: **युञ्जते मन उत युञ्जते**
धियो विप्रा विप्रस्य बृहतो विपश्चितः। वि होत्रा दधे
वयुनाविदेक इन्मही देवस्य सवितुः परिष्टुतिः ॥ १ ॥^[91]

Translation 1: Seers of the vast illumined
seer yogically [युञ्जते, yunjante] control their
minds and their intelligence... (...)^[89]

Translation 2: The illumined yoke their mind
and they yoke their thoughts to the
illuminating godhead, to the vast, to the
luminous in consciousness;
the one knower of all manifestation of
knowledge, he alone orders the things of

the sacrifice. Great is the praise of Savitri, the creating godhead.^[90]

11. Flood: "...which states that, having become calm and concentrated, one perceives the self (atman), within oneself."^[92]

12. Original Sanskrit: स्वाध्यायमधीयानो

धर्मिकान्विदधदात्मनि सर्वेन्द्रियाणि

**संप्रतिष्ठाप्याहिंसन्सर्व भूतान्यन्यत्र तीर्थेभ्यः स खल्वेवं
वर्तयन्यावदायुषं ब्रह्मलोकमभिसंपद्यते न च पुनरावर्तते न
च पुनरावर्तते ॥ १ ॥ – Chandogya Upanishad,**

VIII.15^[94]

Translation 1 by Max Muller, The

Upanishads, The Sacred Books of the East

– Part 1, Oxford University Press: (He who

engages in) self study, concentrates all his senses on the Self, never giving pain to any creature, except at the tîrthas, he who behaves thus all his life, reaches the world of Brahman, and does not return, yea, he does not return.

[95]

13.

- *Jacobsen writes that "Bodily postures are closely related to the tradition of tapas, ascetic practices in the Vedic tradition. The use by Vedic priests of ascetic practices in their preparations for the performance of the sacrifice might be precursor to Yoga."^[84]*

- *Whicher believes that "the proto-Yoga of the Vedic rishis is an early form of sacrificial mysticism and contains many elements characteristic of later Yoga that include: concentration, meditative observation, ascetic forms of practice (tapas), breath control..."^[85]*

14. * *Wynne states that "The Nasadiyasukta, one of the earliest and most important cosmogonic tracts in the early Brahminic literature, contains evidence suggesting it was closely related to a tradition of early Brahminic contemplation. A close reading of this text suggests that it was closely related to a tradition of early Brahminic contemplation. The poem may*

have been composed by contemplatives, but even if not, an argument can be made that it marks the beginning of the contemplative/meditative trend in Indian thought."^[98]

- *Miller suggests that the composition of Nasadiya Sukta and Purusha Sukta arises from "the subtlest meditative stage, called absorption in mind and heart" which "involves enheightened experiences" through which seer "explores the mysterious psychic and cosmic forces..."* ^[99]
- *Jacobsen writes that dhyana (meditation) is derived from Vedic term*

*dhih which refers to "visionary insight",
"thought provoking vision".^[99]*

15. Ancient Indian literature was transmitted and preserved through an oral tradition.^[101] For example, the earliest written Pali Canon text is dated to the later part of 1st century BCE, many centuries after the Buddha's death.^[102]

16. For the date of this Upanishad see also Helmuth von Glasenapp, from the 1950 Proceedings of the "Akademie der Wissenschaften und Literatur"^[106]

17. The currently existing version of Vaiśeṣika Sūtra manuscript was likely finalized sometime between 2nd century

BCE and the start of the common era.^[116]

Wezler has proposed that the Yoga related text may have been inserted into this Sutra later, among other things; however,

Bronkhorst finds much to disagree on with Wezler.^[117]

18. On the dates of the Pali canon, Gregory Schopen writes, "We know, and have known for some time, that the Pali canon as we have it – and it is generally conceded to be our oldest source – cannot be taken back further than the last quarter of the first century BCE, the date of the Alu-vihara redaction, the earliest redaction we can have some knowledge of, and that – for a critical history – it can serve, at the very

most, only as a source for the Buddhism of this period. But we also know that even this is problematic... In fact, it is not until the time of the commentaries of Buddhaghosa, Dhammapala, and others – that is to say, the fifth to sixth centuries CE – that we can know anything definite about the actual contents of [the Pali] canon."^[136]

19. Werner writes, "The word Yoga appears here for the first time in its fully technical meaning, namely as a systematic training, and it already received a more or less clear formulation in some other middle Upanishads....Further process of the systematization of Yoga as a path to the ultimate mystic goal is obvious in

subsequent Yoga Upanishads and the culmination of this endeavour is represented by Patanjali's codification of this path into a system of the eightfold Yoga."^[164]

20. *Worthington writes, "Yoga fully acknowledges its debt to Jainism, and Jainism reciprocates by making the practice of yoga part and parcel of life."*^[195]

21. *The earliest documented use of the word "Tantra" is in the Rigveda (X.71.9).*^[204]
The context of use suggests the word tantra in Rigveda means "technique".

22. *"The Meditation school, called 'Ch'an' in Chinese from the Sanskrit 'dhyāna,' is best*

known in the West by the Japanese pronunciation 'Zen' "[215]

23. Exact quote: "This phenomenon merits special attention since yogic roots are to be found in the Zen Buddhist school of meditation." [216]

24. Eliade, Mircea, Yoga: Immortality and Freedom, Princeton, 1958: Princeton Univ. Pr. (original title: Le Yoga. Immortalité et Liberté, Paris, 1954: Libr. Payot)

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3. White 2011.

4. Denise Lardner Carmody, John Carmody (1996), *Serene Compassion*. Oxford University Press US. p. 68.

5. Stuart Ray Sarbacker, *Samādhi: The Numinous and Cessative in Indo-Tibetan Yoga*. SUNY Press, 2005, pp. 1–2.

6. *Tattvarthasutra* [6.1], see Manu Doshi (2007) *Translation of Tattvarthasutra*, Ahmedabad: Shrut Ratnakar p. 102

7. *Kimberly Lau (2000), New Age Capitalism, University of Pennsylvania Press, ISBN 978-0812217292, page 100*
8. *Karel Werner (1977), Yoga and the R̥g Veda: An Interpretation of the Keśin Hymn (RV 10, 136), Religious Studies, Vol. 13, No. 3, page 289–302*
9. *Yoga isn't an all-Hindu tradition – it has Buddhist, even Sufi, influences*
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12. *Whicher*, pp. 1–4, chronology on pp. 41–42

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17. *White 2011, p. 2.*

18. * *Marek Jantos (2012), in Oxford Textbook of Spirituality in Healthcare (Editors: Mark Cobb et al.), Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0-19-957139-0, pages 362–363*

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56. See *Burley*, page 73.

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59. On page 140, David Gordon White says of Gorakshanath: "... hatha yoga, in which field he was India's major systematizer and innovator."

60. Bajpai writes on page 524: "Nobody can dispute about the top ranking position of

Sage Gorakshanath in the philosophy of Yoga."

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making the breath enter the central channel

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