

= Yoga =

Yoga (/ ʃoʊ / ; Sanskrit , योग Listen) is a physical , mental , and spiritual practice or discipline which originated in ancient India . There is a broad variety of Yoga schools , practices , and goals in Hinduism , Buddhism , and Jainism . Among the most well @-@ known types of yoga are Hatha yoga and R?ja yoga .

The origins of yoga have been speculated to date back to pre @-@ Vedic Indian traditions , it is mentioned in the Rigveda , but most likely developed around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE , in ancient India 's ascetic and ?rama?a movements . The chronology of earliest texts describing yoga @-@ practices is unclear , varyingly credited to Hindu Upanishads and Buddhist P?li Canon , probably of third century BCE or later . The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali date from the first half of the 1st millennium CE , but only gained prominence in the West in the 20th century . Hatha yoga texts emerged around the 11th century with origins in tantra .

Yoga gurus from India later introduced yoga to the west , following the success of Swami Vivekananda in the late 19th and early 20th century . In the 1980s , yoga became popular as a system of physical exercise across the Western world . Yoga in Indian traditions , however , is more than physical exercise , it has a meditative and spiritual core . 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 .

Many studies have tried to determine the effectiveness of yoga as a complementary intervention for cancer , schizophrenia , asthma , and heart disease . The results of these studies have been mixed and inconclusive , with cancer studies suggesting none to unclear effectiveness , and others suggesting yoga may reduce risk factors and aid in a patient 's psychological healing process .

= = Etymology = =

In Vedic Sanskrit , yoga (from the root yuj) means " to add " , " to join " , " to unite " , or " to attach " in its most common literal sense . By figurative extension from the yoking or harnessing of oxen or horses , the word took on broader meanings such as " employment , use , application , performance " (compare the figurative uses of " to harness " as in " to put something to some use ") . All further developments of the sense of this word are post @-@ Vedic . More prosaic moods such as " exertion " , " endeavour " , " zeal " , and " diligence " are also found in Indian epic poetry .

There are very many compound words containing yoga in Sanskrit . Yoga can take on meanings such as " connection " , " contact " , " union " , " method " , " application " , " addition " and " performance " . In simpler words , Yoga also means " combined " . For example , gu?áyoga means " contact with a cord " ; chakráyoga has a medical sense of " applying a splint or similar instrument by means of pulleys (in case of dislocation of the thigh) " ; chandráyoga has the astronomical sense of " conjunction of the moon with a constellation " ; pu?yoga is a grammatical term expressing " connection or relation with a man " , etc . Thus , bhaktiyoga means " devoted attachment " in the monotheistic Bhakti movement . The term kriy?yoga 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

According to P??ini , a 6th @-@ century BCE Sanskrit grammarian , the term yoga can be derived from either of two roots , yujir yoga (to yoke) or yuj sam?dhau (to concentrate) . In the context of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali , the root yuj sam?dhau (to concentrate) is considered by traditional commentators as the correct etymology . In accordance with P??ini , Vyasa who wrote the first commentary on the Yoga Sutras , states that yoga means sam?dhi (concentration) .

According to Dasgupta , the term yoga can be derived from either of two roots , yujir yoga (to yoke) or yuj sam?dhau (to concentrate) . 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) .

= = 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 :

Yoga , as a disciplined method for attaining a goal ;

Yoga , as techniques of controlling the body and the mind ;

Yoga , as a name of one of the schools or systems of philosophy (dar?ana) ;

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

Yoga , as the goal of Yoga practice . "

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 :

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 Mah?y?na works , as well as Jain texts ;

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 Mah?bh?rata , Jainism Pra?amaratiprakarana , and Buddhist Nikaya texts ;

Yoga , as a path to omniscience and enlightened consciousness enabling one to comprehend the impermanent (illusive , delusive) and permanent (true , transcendent) reality ; examples are found in Hinduism Nyaya and Vaisheshika school texts as well as Buddhism M?dhyamaka texts , but in different ways ;

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 S?maññaphalasutta ; 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 .

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 .

= = Schools of Yoga = =

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 Patanjali . The term raja yoga originally referred to the ultimate goal of yoga , which is usually samadhi , but was popularised by Vivekananda as the common name for Ashtanga Yoga .

= = = Hinduism = = =

= = = Classical Yoga = = = =

Yoga is considered as a philosophical school in Hinduism . Yoga , in this context , is one of the six ?stika schools of Hinduism (those which accept the Vedas as source of knowledge) .

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 . Before the twentieth century , other works were considered as the most central works , such as the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Vasistha , while Tantric Yoga and Hatha Yoga prevailed over Ashtanga Yoga .

===== Ashtanga Yoga =====

Yoga as described in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali refers to Ashtanga Yoga . The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is considered as a central text of the Yoga school of Hindu philosophy , It is often called " R?ja yoga " , " yoga of the kings , " a term which originally referred to the ultimate , royal goal of yoga , which is usually samadhi , but was popularised by Vivekananda as the common name for Ashtanga Yoga .

Ashtanga Yoga incorporates epistemology , metaphysics , ethical practices , systematic exercises and self @-@ development techniques for body , mind and spirit . Its epistemology (pramanas) is same as the Samkhya school . Both accept three reliable means to knowledge ? perception (praty?k?a , direct sensory observations) , inference (anum?na) and testimony of trustworthy experts (sabda , agama) . Both these orthodox schools are also strongly dualistic . Unlike S??khya school of Hinduism which pursues non @-@ theistic / atheistic rationalist approach , Yoga school of Hinduism accepts the concept of a " personal , yet essentially inactive , deity " or " personal god " . Along with its epistemology and metaphysical foundations , 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) .

===== Hatha yoga =====

Hatha yoga , also called hatha vidy? , is a kind of yoga focusing on physical and mental strength building exercises and postures described primarily in three texts of Hinduism :

Hatha Yoga Pradipika , Sv?tm?r?ma (15th century)

Shiva Samhita , author unknown (1500 or late 17th century)

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 . Gorakshanath is widely considered to have been responsible for popularizing hatha yoga as we know it today .

Vajrayana Buddhism , founded by the Indian Mahasiddhas , has a series of asanas and pranayamas , such as tummo (Sanskrit ca???) and trul khor which parallel hatha yoga .

===== Shaivism =====

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

===== Buddhism =====

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 . The closest words for meditation in the classical languages of Buddhism are bh?vana and jh?na / dhy?na .

===== Jainism =====

Jain meditation has been the central practice of spirituality in Jainism along with the Three Jewels .

Meditation in Jainism aims at realizing the self , attain salvation , take the soul to complete freedom . 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 . 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 .

= = = Modern health application = = =

Apart from the spiritual goals , the physical postures of yoga are used to alleviate health problems , reduce stress and make the spine supple in contemporary times . Yoga is also used as a complete exercise program and physical therapy routine .

While the practice of yoga continues to rise in contemporary American culture , sufficient and adequate knowledge of the practice 's origins does not . According to Andrea R. Jain , Yoga is undoubtedly a Hindu movement for spiritual meditation , yet is now being marketed as a supplement to a cardio routine . This scope " dilutes its Hindu identity . " Contemporaries of the Hindu faith argue that the more popular yoga gets , the less concerned people become about its origins in history . These same contemporaries do state that while anyone can practice yoga , only those who give Hinduism due credit for the practice will achieve the full benefit of the custom .

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 , with the caveat that " Reviewers were limited in drawing definite conclusions , not only due to a lack of studies for some clinical conditions , but also due to the lack of information reported in the reviews and potentially in the primary studies . "

= = History = =

The origins of yoga are a matter of debate . 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) and pre @-@ Vedic Eastern India , the Vedic period (1500 ? 500 BCE) , and the ?rama?a movement . 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 .

Pre @-@ philosophical speculations of yoga begin to emerge in the texts of c . 500 ? 200 BCE . Between 200 BCE ? 500 CE philosophical schools of Hinduism , Buddhism and Jainism were taking form and a coherent philosophical system of yoga began to emerge . 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 . Some state yoga originated in the Indus Valley

Civilization . Marshall , Eliade 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 and may be a case of projecting " later practices into archeological findings " .

= = = Vedic period (1700 ? 500 BCE) = = =

According to Crangle , Indian researchers have generally 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 " , just like traditional Hinduism regards the Vedas to be the source of all spiritual knowledge .

Ascetic practices , concentration and bodily postures described in the Vedas may have been precursors to yoga . 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 . "

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 : " [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 . "

= = = 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 " .

The earliest evidence of Yogis and Yoga tradition is found in the Ke?in hymn 10 @. @ 136 of the Rigveda , states Karel Werner .

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 .

Rigveda , however , does not describe yoga and there is little evidence as to what the practices were . Early references to practices that later became part of yoga , are made in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad , the earliest Hindu Upanishad . 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) .

= = = Vedic ascetic practices = = =

Ascetic practices (tapas) , concentration and bodily postures used by Vedic priests to conduct yajna (sacrifice) , might have been precursors to yoga . Vratya , a group of ascetics mentioned in the Atharvaveda , emphasized on bodily postures which may have evolved into yogic asanas . Early Samhitas also contain references to other group ascetics such as munis , the ke?in , and vratyas . Techniques for controlling breath and vital energies are mentioned in the Brahmanas (texts of the Vedic corpus , c . 1000 ? 800 BCE) and the Atharvaveda . Nasadiya Sukta of the Rig Veda suggests the presence of an early contemplative tradition .

= = = 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 .

===== Upanishads =====

The first known appearance of the word " yoga " , with the same meaning as the modern term , is in the Katha Upanishad , composed about fourth to third century BCE , where it is defined as the steady control of the senses , which along with cessation of mental activity , leading to a supreme state . 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 ?tman . Yoga is therefore seen as a process of interiorization or ascent of consciousness . 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 [?] [1] t describes the hierarchy of mind @-@ body constituents ? the senses , mind , intellect , etc . ? that comprise the foundational categories of S?mkhya philosophy , whose metaphysical system grounds the yoga of the Yogasutras , Bhagavad Gita , and other texts and schools (Ku3.10 ? 11 ; 6 @.@ 7 ? 8) .

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 .

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) .

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 .

===== 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 . Onesicritus claims those Indian yogins (Mandanis) practiced aloofness and " different postures ? standing or sitting or lying naked ? and motionless " .

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 " . 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 " . These principles are significant to the history of spiritual side of yoga . 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 ; 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 . " He notes :

" 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 . "

The chronology of completion of these yoga @-@ related Pali Canons , however , is unclear , just like ancient Hindu texts . Early known Buddhist sources like the Majjhima Nikaya mention meditation , while the Anguttara Nikaya describes Jhanyins (meditators) that resemble early Hindu descriptions of Muni , Kesins and meditating ascetics , but these meditation @-@ practices are not called yoga in these texts . 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 Yogachara school and fourth- to fifth @-@ century Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa .

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 . Most of the other contemporary yoga systems alluded in the Upanishads and some Pali canons are lost to time .

The early Buddhist texts describe meditative practices and states , some of which the Buddha borrowed from the Rama tradition . 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 . However , there is no mention of the tongue being inserted into the nasopharynx as in true khecar mudra . The Buddha used a posture where pressure is put on the perineum with the heel , similar to even modern postures used to stimulate Kundalini .

== == 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 . The earliest reference to meditation is in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad , one of the oldest Upanishads . 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 . Taittiriya Upanishad defines yoga as the mastery of body and senses .

== == Bhagavad Gita == ==

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 , it introduces three prominent types of yoga :

Karma yoga : The yoga of action .

Bhakti yoga : The yoga of devotion .

Jnana yoga : The yoga of knowledge .

The Gita consists of 18 chapters and 700 shlokas (verses) , with each chapter named as a different yoga , thus delineating eighteen different yogas . 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 .

== == 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 . 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 . Mokshadharma also describes an early practice of elemental meditation .

Mahabharata defines the purpose of yoga as the experience of uniting the individual ?tman with the universal Brahman that pervades all things .

= = = 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 era (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 .

Yoga as a philosophy is mentioned in Sanskrit texts dated to be completed between 200 BCE ? 200 CE . Kau?ilya 's Arthashastra in verse 1 @.@ 2 @.@ 10 , for example , states that there are three categories of anviksikis (philosophies) ? Samkhya (nontheistic) , Yoga (theistic) and C?v?ka (atheistic materialism) .

= = = = = 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 . 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 . 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 . Sometimes Patanjali 's system is referred to as Seshvara Samkhya in contradistinction to Kapila 's Nirivara Samkhya .

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 . "

= = = = = Yoga Sutras of Patanjali = = = = =

In Hindu philosophy , yoga is the name of one of the six orthodox (which accept the testimony of Vedas) philosophical schools . 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 .

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 . 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 . 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 . 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 .

Patanjali 's Yoga Sutras are widely regarded as the first compilation of the formal yoga philosophy . 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) . Patanjali 's yoga is also referred to as Raja yoga . Patanjali defines the word " yoga " in his second sutra :

??? : ??? ? ? @-@ ??? ? ?? ????? : (yoga? citta @-@ v?tti @-@ nirodha?)

- 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 (nirodha?) of the modifications (v?tti) of the mind (citta) " . Swami Vivekananda translates the sutra as " Yoga is restraining the mind @-@ stuff (Citta) from taking various forms (Vrittis) . " 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 . "

If the meaning of yoga is understood as the practice of nirodha (mental control) , then it 's goal is " the unqualified state of niruddha (the perfection of that process) " , 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 . "

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 :

Yama (The five " abstentions ") : Ahimsa (Non @-@ violence , non @-@ harming other living beings) , Satya (truthfulness , non @-@ falsehood) , Asteya (non @-@ stealing) , Brahmacharya (celibacy , fidelity to one 's partner) , and Aparigraha (non @-@ avarice , non @-@ possessiveness) .

Niyama (The five " observances ") : ?auca (purity , clearness of mind , speech and body) , Santosha (contentment , acceptance of others and of one 's circumstances) , Tapas (persistent meditation , perseverance , austerity) , Sv?dhy?ya (study of self , self @-@ reflection , study of Vedas) , and Ishvara @-@ Pranidhana (contemplation of God / Supreme Being / True Self) .

Asana : Literally means " seat " , and in Patanjali 's Sutras refers to the seated position used for meditation .

Pranayama (" Suspending Breath ") : Pr?na , breath , " ?y?ma " , to restrain or stop . Also interpreted as control of the life force .

Pratyahara (" Abstraction ") : Withdrawal of the sense organs from external objects .

Dharana (" Concentration ") : Fixing the attention on a single object .

Dhyana (" Meditation ") : Intense contemplation of the nature of the object of meditation .

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 . Yoga disputes the monism of Advaita Vedanta . 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 .

===== 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 . The text contains 12 chapters and its origin has been traced to the period between the second century BCE and fourth century CE . Many yoga texts like the Hatha Yoga Pradipika , the Yoga Kundalini and the Yoga Tattva Upanishads have borrowed verses from or make frequent references to the Yoga Yajnavalkya . The Yoga Yajnavalkya discusses eight yoga Asanas ? Swastika , Gomukha , Padma , Vira , Simha , Bhadra , Mukta and Mayura , numerous breathing exercises for body cleansing , and meditation .

===== Jainism =====

According to Tattvarthasutra , 2nd century CE Jain text , yoga is the sum of all the activities of mind , speech and body . Umasvati calls yoga the cause of " asrava " or karmic influx as well as one of the essentials ? samyak caritra ? in the path to liberation . In his Niyamasara , Acarya Kundakunda , describes yoga bhakti ? devotion to the path to liberation ? as the highest form of devotion . 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 . 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 .

Mainstream Hinduism 's influence on Jain yoga is noticed as Haribhadra founded his eightfold yoga and aligned it with Patanjali 's eightfold yoga .

===== 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 . The yogacara sect teaches " yoga " as a way to reach enlightenment .

===== Middle Ages (500 ? 1500 CE) =====

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

===== 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 . Shaiva and Vaishnava bhakti traditions integrated aspects of Yoga Sutras , such as the practical meditative exercises , with devotion . Bhagavata Purana elucidates the practice of a form of yoga called viraha (separation) bhakti . Viraha bhakti emphasizes one pointed concentration on Krishna .

===== Tantra =====

Tantra is a genre of yoga that arose in India no later than the 5th century CE . 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 . 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 .

By the turn of the first millennium , hatha yoga emerged from tantra .

===== Vajrayana Buddhism =====

Vajrayana is also known as Tantric Buddhism and Tantrayana . 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 . They were later translated into Chinese and other Asian languages , helping spread ideas of Tantric Buddhism . The Buddhist text Hevajra Tantra and Caryagiti introduced hierarchies of chakras . Yoga is a significant practice in Tantric Buddhism .

===== Hatha Yoga =====

The earliest references to hatha yoga are in Buddhist works dating from the eighth century . 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 . The basic tenets of Hatha yoga were formulated by Shaiva ascetics Matsyendranath and Gorakshanath c . 900 CE . Hatha yoga synthesizes elements of Patanjali 's Yoga Sutras with posture and breathing exercises . Hatha yoga , sometimes referred to as the " psychophysical yoga " , was further elaborated by Yogi Swatmarama , compiler of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika in 15th century CE . This yoga differs substantially from the Raja yoga of Patanjali in that it focuses on shatkarma , the purification of the physical body as leading to the purification of the mind (ha) , and prana , or vital energy (tha) . Compared to the seated asana , or sitting meditation posture , of Patanjali 's Raja yoga , it marks the development of asanas (plural) into the full body ' postures ' now in popular usage and , along with its many modern variations , is the style that many people associate with the word yoga today .

It is similar to a diving board ? preparing the body for purification , so that it may be ready to receive higher techniques of meditation . The word " Hatha " comes from " Ha " which means Sun , and " Tha " which means Moon .

===== 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 . Guru Nanak rejected the austerities , rites and rituals connected with Hatha Yoga . He propounded the path of Sahaja yoga or Nama yoga (meditation on the name) instead . 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 . "

===== Modern history =====

===== Reception in the West =====

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 . The reception which

Swami Vivekananda received built on the active interest of intellectuals , in particular the New England Transcendentalists , among them R. W. 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 .

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

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 .

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 Sri Yogendra (1897 ? 1989) and Swami Kuvalayananda . Western medical researchers came to Swami Kuvalayananda 's Kaivalyadhama Health and Yoga Research Center , starting in 1928 , to study Yoga as a science .

The West , in the early 21st century typically associates the term " yoga " with Hatha yoga and its asanas (postures) or as a form of exercise . During the 1910s and 1920s in the USA , yoga suffered a period of bad publicity due largely to the backlash against immigration , a rise in puritanical values , and a number of scandals . In the 1930s and 1940s yoga began to gain more public acceptance as a result of celebrity endorsement . In the 1950s the United States saw another period of paranoia against yoga , but 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) . 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) . Yogi Bhajan brought Kundalini Yoga to the United States in 1969 . 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 .

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 . Numerous asanas seemed modern in origin , and strongly overlapped with 19th and early @-@ 20th century Western exercise traditions .

Since 2001 , the popularity of yoga in the USA has risen constantly . 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 " .

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 .

===== Medicine =====

===== Potential benefits for adults =====

While much 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 . Long @-@ term yoga users in the United States have reported musculoskeletal and mental health improvements , as well as reduced symptoms of asthma in asthmatics . There is evidence to suggest that regular yoga practice increases brain GABA levels , and yoga has been shown to improve mood and anxiety more than some other metabolically @-@ matched exercises , such as walking . The three main focuses of Hatha yoga (exercise , breathing , and meditation) make it beneficial to those suffering from heart disease . Overall , studies of the effects of yoga on heart disease suggest that yoga may reduce high blood @-@ pressure , improve symptoms of heart failure , enhance cardiac rehabilitation , and lower cardiovascular risk factors . For chronic low back pain , specialist Yoga for Healthy Lower Backs has been found 30 % more beneficial than usual care alone in a UK clinical trial . Other smaller studies support this finding . The Yoga for Healthy Lower Backs programme is the dominant treatment for society (both cheaper and more effective than usual care alone) due to 8 @.@ 5 fewer days off work each year . A research group from Boston University School of Medicine also tested yoga 's effects on lower @-@ back pain . Over twelve weeks , one group of volunteers practiced yoga while the control group continued with standard treatment for back pain . The reported pain for yoga participants decreased by one third , while the standard treatment group had only a five percent drop . Yoga participants also had a drop of 80 % in the use of pain medication .

There has been an emergence of studies investigating yoga as a complementary intervention for cancer patients . Yoga is used for treatment of cancer patients to decrease depression , insomnia , pain , and fatigue and to increase anxiety control . Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs include yoga as a mind @-@ body technique to reduce stress . A study found that after seven weeks the group treated with yoga reported significantly less mood disturbance and reduced stress compared to the control group . Another study found that MBSR had showed positive effects on sleep anxiety , quality of life , and spiritual growth in cancer patients .

Yoga has also been studied as a treatment for schizophrenia . Some encouraging , but inconclusive , evidence suggests that yoga as a complementary treatment may help alleviate symptoms of schizophrenia and improve health @-@ related quality of life .

Implementation of the Kundalini Yoga Lifestyle has shown to help substance abuse addicts increase their quality of life according to psychological questionnaires like the Behavior and Symptom Identification Scale and the Quality of Recovery Index .

Yoga has been shown in a study to have some cognitive functioning (executive functioning , including inhibitory control) acute benefit .

===== Physical injuries =====

A small percentage of yoga practitioners each year suffer physical injuries analogous to sports injuries ; therefore , caution and common sense are recommended . Yoga has been criticized for being potentially dangerous and being a cause for a range of serious medical conditions including thoracic outlet syndrome , degenerative arthritis of the cervical spine , spinal stenosis , retinal tears , damage to the common fibular nerve , " Yoga foot drop , " etc . An exposé of these problems by William Broad published in January , 2012 in The New York Times Magazine resulted in controversy within the international yoga community . Broad , a science writer , yoga practitioner , and author of

The Science of Yoga : The Risks and the Rewards , had suffered a back injury while performing a yoga posture . Torn muscles , knee injuries , and headaches are common ailments which may result from yoga practice .

An extensive survey of yoga practitioners in Australia showed that about 20 % had suffered some physical injury while practicing yoga . 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 .

Some yoga practitioners do not recommend certain yoga exercises for women during menstruation , for pregnant women , or for nursing mothers . However , meditation , breathing exercises , and certain postures which are safe and beneficial for women in these categories are encouraged .

Among the main reasons that experts cite for causing negative effects from yoga are beginners ' competitiveness and instructors ' lack of qualification . 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 . 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 .

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 .

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

= = = = = Pediatrics = = = = =

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 P.E. programs . The Encinitas , California school district gained a San Diego Superior Court Judge 's approval to use yoga in P.E. , holding against the parents who claimed the practice was intrinsically religious and hence should not be part of a state funded program .

= = Physiology = =

Over time , an extended yoga physiology developed , especially within the tantric tradition and hatha yoga . It pictures humans as composed of three bodies or five sheaths which cover the atman . The three bodies are described within the Mandukya Upanishad , which adds a fourth state , turiya , while the five sheaths (pancha @-@ kosas) are described in the Taittiriya Upanishad . They are often integrated :

Sthula sarira , the Gross body , comprising the Annamaya Kosha

Suksma sarira , the Subtle body , composed of ;

the Pranamaya Kosha (Vital breath or Energy) ,

Manomaya Kosha (Mind)

the Vijnanamaya Kosha (Intellect)

Karana sarira , the Causal body , comprising the Anandamaya Kosha (Bliss)

Within the subtle body energy flows through the nadis or channels , and is concentrated within the chakras .

= = Yoga and specialized meditation = =

= = = Zen Buddhism = = =

Zen , the name of which derives from the Sanskrit " dhy?na " via the Chinese " ch 'an " is a form of Mahayana Buddhism . The Mahayana school of Buddhism is noted for its proximity with yoga . In the west , Zen is often set alongside yoga ; the two schools of meditation display obvious family resemblances . This segregation deserves attention because yogic practices integrally exist within the Zen Buddhist school . Certain essential elements of yoga are important both for Buddhism in general and for Zen in particular .

= = = Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism = = =

In the Nyingma tradition , the path of meditation practice is divided into nine yanas , or vehicles , which are said to be increasingly profound . The last six are described as " yoga yanas " : " Kriya yoga " , " Upa yoga " , " Yoga yana " , " Mah? yoga " , " Anu yoga " and the ultimate practice , " Ati yoga . " The Sarma traditions also include Kriya , Upa (called " Charya ") , and Yoga , with the Anuttara yoga class substituting for Mahayoga and Atiyoga .

Other tantra yoga practices include a system of 108 bodily postures practiced with breath and heart rhythm . The Nyingma tradition also practices Yantra yoga (Tib . " Trul khor ") , a discipline that includes breath work (or pranayama) , meditative contemplation and precise dynamic movements to centre the practitioner . The body postures of Tibetan ancient yogis are depicted on the walls of the Dalai Lama 's summer temple of Lukhang . A semi @-@ popular account of Tibetan yoga by Chang (1993) refers to ca??al? (Tib . " tummo ") , the generation of heat in one 's own body , as being " the very foundation of the whole of Tibetan yoga . " Chang also claims that Tibetan yoga involves reconciliation of apparent polarities , such as prana and mind , relating this to theoretical implications of tantrism .

= = Yoga 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 . 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) , 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 . " 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 .

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 . 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 . The letter also says , " one can see if and how [prayer] might be enriched by meditation methods developed in other religions and cultures " but maintains the

idea that " there must be some fit between the nature of [other approaches to] prayer and Christian beliefs about ultimate reality . " 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 .

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 . "

= = = 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 . 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 . 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 . 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 . 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 .

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 . Some Muslims in Malaysia who had been practicing yoga for years , criticized the decision as " insulting . " Sisters in Islam , a women 's rights group in Malaysia , also expressed disappointment and said yoga was just a form of exercise . This fatwa is legally enforceable . However , Malaysia 's prime minister clarified that yoga as physical exercise is permissible , but the chanting of religious mantras is prohibited .

In 2009 , the Council of Ulemas , an Islamic body in Indonesia , passed a fatwa banning yoga on the grounds that it contains Hindu elements . These fatwas have , in turn , been criticized by Darul Uloom Deoband , a Deobandi Islamic seminary in India . 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 .

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 . In May 2009 , Turkey 's head of the Directorate of Religious Affairs , Ali Bardako?lu , 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 .

= = International Day of Yoga = =

On 11 December 2014 , The 193 @-@ member United Nations General Assembly approved by consensus , a resolution establishing 21 June as ' International Day of Yoga ' . The declaration of this day came after the call for the adoption of 21 June as International Day of Yoga by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address to UN General Assembly on 27 September 2014 . In suggesting 21 June , which is one of the two solstices , as the International Day of Yoga , Narendra Modi had said that the date is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and has special significance in many parts of the world .

The first International Day of Yoga was observed world over on 21 June 2015 . About 35000 people , including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a large number of dignitaries , performed 21

Yoga asanas (yoga postures) for 35 minutes at Rajpath in New Delhi . The day devoted to Yoga was observed by millions across the world . The event at Rajpath established two Guinness records ? largest Yoga Class with 35985 people and the record for the most nationalities participating in it- eighty four .