



Subject Area : History of Yoga

# A REVIEW ARTICLE ON THE EVOLUTION OF YOGA FROM ANCIENT ROOTS TO MODERN PRACTICES

<sup>1</sup>Vd. Priyamvada Saraswat and <sup>2</sup>Dr. Sudesh Kumar Bhambu

<sup>1</sup>PG Scholar and <sup>2</sup>Associate Professor

Department of Swasthavritta evum Yoga, Sriganganagar College of Ayurvedic Science and Hospital, Tantia University, Sriganganagar.

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History:</p> <p>Received 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024</p> <p>Received in revised form 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2024</p> <p>Accepted 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2025</p> <p>Published online 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2025</p>	<p><i>Yoga</i>, an ancient practice rooted in Indian philosophy, has been documented in several sacred texts spanning thousands of years. Rooted in the <i>Vedic</i> traditions of <i>Yoga</i> were initially a spiritual and meditative discipline aimed at self-realization. <i>Yoga</i> has a deep-rooted history in Indian spiritual and philosophical traditions. It is mentioned in several ancient texts, like <i>Puranas</i>, <i>Darshanas</i>, <i>Samhitas</i> etc which outlines the principles, techniques, and goals of <i>Yoga</i>. These ancient texts collectively define <i>Karma Yoga</i>, <i>Mantra Yoga</i> &amp; other forms as a holistic discipline that integrates physical health, mental clarity, and spiritual awakening. <i>Yoga</i> provides a structured path to inner peace, mental clarity, and spiritual awakening through disciplined practice. As per <i>Yogic</i> scriptures the practice of <i>Yoga</i> leads to the union of individual consciousness with that of the Universal Consciousness, indicating a perfect harmony between the mind and body. This article explores the evolutionary journey of yoga, examining how traditional forms such as <i>Hatha</i>, <i>Bhakti</i>, and <i>Raja Yoga</i> have influenced contemporary adaptations of <i>Yoga</i>, and hybrid wellness practices. Additionally, it highlights the impact of globalization, and scientific research on <i>Yoga</i>'s transformation. By understanding the dynamic nature of <i>Yoga</i>, we can appreciate its timeless relevance and its ability to adapt to modern lifestyles while preserving its core essence.</p>
<p><b>Key words:</b></p> <p><i>Yoga</i>, <i>Moksha</i>, Mind, <i>Puranas</i>, <i>Karma Yoga</i>, Pre <i>Vedic</i> Era, <i>Kriya Yoga</i>, <i>Adiyogi</i>.</p>	
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## INTRODUCTION

In history Lord Shiva is seen as the *Adiyogi*, who poured the profound knowledge of *Yoga* to the legendary *Saptarishis* on the banks of the *Kantisarovar* in the Himalayas. The primary aim of *Yoga* is self-realization, salvation (*Moksha*) by achieving a balanced state of mind, body, and spirit. *Moksha* represents the ultimate goal of human life, where the soul (*Atma*) unites with the universal consciousness (*Parbrahma*). Ancient texts, provides different paths to achieve this liberation, each suited to different temperaments and life approaches.

## PRE VEDIC & VEDIC ERA

The word '*Yoga*' is derived from the *Sanskrit Dhatu* '*Yuj*', meaning to join or to unite. The union of soul with higher consciousness through self-realization. According to Rishi Patanjali's *Yogadarshan*, *Yoga* is cessation or restraint of the instincts or thoughts of *chitta* ( mind-intellect-aham ). There

are the 8 parts of *Yoga-Yama*, *Niyama*, *Aasana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyan*, *Samadhi*. In these, first four gathers to make *Hathyoga* & last three as *Rajyoga*, whereas the *Pratyahara* is the link which joins the two.

In *Shrimad Bhagwat Geeta*, being immutable i.e, remaining the same in success and failure is *Samatva* (equality) & *Samatva* in every situation is called *Yoga*. The sufferings existing in the world whether mental or physical pain, *Viyoga* (separation) from these sufferings is known as *Yoga*. The characteristic of *Sbeej Yoga* is purifying of mind and being happy in inclining towards the path of God, to follow the prescribed religious doctrines of texts, abandoning the contrary conduct, to be satisfied with whatever received & to worship the enlightened as per one's ability. In *Shrimad Bhagwat Purana*, *Yoga* in form of *Ashtanga Yoga* is mentioned in 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of 11<sup>th</sup> *Skand*. Where 12 types of *Yama* & 11 types of *Niyama* are mentioned. The *Yoga* which leads to self realization is the best faithful path to follow for a healthy & prosperous life.

*Vishnu Purana*, describes that there is nothing other than *Yoga* that can destroy the sufferings caused by *Avidya* or ignorance or not knowing the true self or the knowledge of higher consciousness. Coordinating the movement of mind with the

\*Corresponding author: Vd. Priyamvada Saraswat

Department of Swasthavritta evum Yoga, Sriganganagar College of Ayurvedic Science and Hospital, Tantia University, Sriganganagar.

*Prabrahma* by following the rules of *Atmaprayatan* (*Yama, Niyama...*) is known as *Yoga*. According to *Mahabharat*, the knowledge gained by *Sankhya Darshan* & the strength gained by *Yoga* is unparalleled. Wise man says that in *Vedas* there is description of two types of *Yoga*, the *Sukshma* (subtle) & *Sthula* (gross) where the gross *Yoga* includes *Ashatsidhis* (like *Anima, Laghima, etc*) and subtle *Yoga* includes *Yama, Niyama*, and the eight parts. *Vaisheshik Darshan* mentions the cause of happiness & sufferings as union of *Atma*, senses, mind and the meaningful things of surroundings. When the mind concentrates itself within *Atma*, it leads to absence of sufferings in body and life. Whereas *Acharya Charak* says that association with *Artha* is the causative factor of sufferings and with *Yoga* there is no existence of suffering in mind & body. He says that *Yoga* is promoter of *Moksha* i.e, Salvation and selfrealization.

## CLASSICAL & POST CLASSICAL ERA

This time period includes *Karma Yoga, Laya Yoga & Japa Yoga* with other forms. *Gheranda Samhita* describes *Saptasadhana* of *Yoga* & to acquire *Siddhi* in these - *Shatkarma, Aasana, Mudra, Pratyahara, Pranayama, Dhyana, Samadhi* are used. In *Karma Yoga* by *Swami Vivekanand*, *Karma* is the manifestation of the will of man which is caused by the character and this character is a result of the past *Karmas*. Whereas *Lord Krishna* says that, working with all of your will & energy without worrying about the result is real *Karma Yoga*. The form of prayer in which person surrenders oneself under God's aura and completely bows his/her heart towards higher self is explained as *Bhakti Yoga* according to *Maharishi Narada*.

*Dhyana Yoga* details about *Dhyana* the 7th stair of *Ashtanga Yoga*, which aims to focus all the thoughts of mind toward higher consciousness & eliminate all other distractions. For *Japa Yoga* it is said, among all the *Yagya Japa Yagya* is the best. Even in *Manusmriti* it is believed to be surpass & beneficial of soul upliftment. *Rishi Vyas* defines *Laya Yoga* as rhythmed dissolution of mind by conquers sufferings & distractions while concentrating the thoughts.

## MODERN ERA

In this dynamic era *Kriya Yoga*, an advance *Yogic* technique was widely popularized by *Paramhansa Yogananda*, which involves *Pranayama*, meditation and repetition of *Mantra* to accelerate spiritual growth and awakening of *Kundalini*. Whereas *Vinyasa Yoga* is a spirited form of *Yoga* that synchronizes breath with bodily movements, creating a flow between poses. It is also called *Flow Yoga* because of smooth transitions in poses. This form was developed by *Sri K. Pattabhi Jois* from *Ashtanga Yoga*.

*Pragya Yoga* is system of spiritual and holistic *Yoga* developed by *Pandit Shri Ram Sharma Acharya*. Here *Pragya* is the "divine intellect" developing wisdom and spiritual awareness through physical, mental and spiritual *Yoga* practices and meditation. It integrates *Gayatri Mantra* and *Yagya* along with 8 stairs of *Yoga* which is an unique aspect of this form. *Iyengar Yoga* is a precise and alignment focused style of *Yoga* developed by *B.K.S. Iyengar*. It emphasizes postural alignment, breath control and use of props to help practitioners achieve correct posture and prevent injuries. Chinese Taoist form *Yin Yoga*, the art of deep stretching and relaxation. This

was developed by *Paul Grilley*; it is a slow, meditative style of *yoga* that involves holding poses up to 3 to 5 minutes or longer to target deep connective tissues like fascia, ligaments and joints. It promotes flexibility, mobility, relaxation and inner awareness by reducing stress, anxiety like mental disorders.

*Christopher Harrison* created a modern form of *yoga* *Aerial Yoga*, this combines traditional *yoga* poses with acrobatics, *Pilates* and dance, using a silk hammock suspended from the ceiling. It allows practitioners to perform poses in mid-air, reducing strain on joints while increasing flexibility, strength, and balance. Hammock used to reduce pressure on spine and joints. It increases flexibility by allowing deeper stretches without strain. Enhances core and upper body strength by using the body's weight against gravity.

## DISCUSSION

*Yoga* evolved from an ancient spiritual practice into a global movement focused on physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. It originated in Vedic period in different forms in *Darshans*, later systematized by *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*. In 19th and 20th century, figures like *Swami Vivekanand, Shri Ram Sharma Acharya*, and *Pramhansa Yogananda* introduced *Yoga* to West, leading to its wide spread popularity. With the timely evolution *yoga* blended from traditional form to contemporary form, while maintaining its authenticity and commercialization.

## CONCLUSION

Transformation of *Yoga* forms with time reflects humanity's changing needs, from spiritual enlightenment to physical health and mental well-being. While its ancient roots remain significant, modern adaptations have made *yoga* accessible to people worldwide. As scientific research continues to validate its benefits, *yoga* will likely keep evolving, blending traditional form with innovation. However, maintaining its authenticity while adapting to contemporary lifestyles remains a key challenge. Ultimately, *yoga's* core essence - union of body, mind, and spirit- continues to inspire millions, making it a timeless and ever-relevant tradition.

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