



Yoga History, Literature and Philosophy, and the Psychology of Yoga

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
General Time Line of Yoga.....	2
Vedic Yoga Period and Literature.....	4
Pre-Classical Yoga Period and Literature.....	4
Classical Yoga Period and Literature.....	6
Post-Classical Yoga Period.....	8
Hatha Yoga.....	8
Modern Hatha Yoga Period.....	10
Modern Wellness and Use of the Term “Yoga”	11
Yoga Links to Traditional Indian Philosophy.....	12
Psychology of Yoga.....	15
Yoga and Western Psychology.....	16
Yoga and the Positive Psychology Movement.....	18
Activities.....	20

Introduction

Yoga has an immense and deep rooted history. To properly examine the entire history of yoga and the impact it has had on modern thought and psychology would take many books and years of study. In this section, you will find an overview of the history of yoga, focusing on the important literature of each time period, and following the branches that lead to modern hatha yoga. In previous materials, we explored the general history of yoga and its philosophical framework. In this section, we will focus specifically on important literature from each period. We will then examine the psychology of yoga, as based on both the Yoga Sutras and more modern hatha yoga, and how it relates to the development and ideas of western psychology.

Yoga is usually defined as meaning union. In a more restricted sense, the term yoga stands for the system of classical yoga that was proposed by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras nearly 2,000 years ago. According to Vedanta, the individual self is alienated from the universal Self, or Absolute and the practice of yoga is the rejoining of these two selves. The general term yoga refers to the various Indian paths of self transcendence, or of liberation from the ego in which the mechanics of the mind are temporarily transcended.

General Time Line of Yoga

BC = before common era

CE = common era

1500-1000 BC – The Vedas are composed and handed down through oral tradition.

500-400 BC – The Bhagavad Gita is written. It is part of the present edition of the Mahabharata and is the oldest known full fledged yoga scripture. The Gita is presented as a dialogue between the God man Krishna and Prince Arjuna (who lived much earlier around 1450 BC). It emphasizes the yoga of devotion (bhakti) and the yoga of action (kriya).

400 BC – The Buddhist text, the Dhamma Pada, is written. Like the Hindu Bhagavad Gita, it can also be viewed as a textbook of yoga.

400 BC – The teachings of Samkhya Yoga are given in the Moksha Dharma passages of the Mahabharata

200 BC – 400 CE – Era of the greatest influence of Buddhism in India

100-200 CE – Composition of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and of the Brahma Sutra of Badarayana, one of the fundamental works of the Vedanta tradition.

200 CE – The Dharma Sutra by Manu is written, which contains a chapter that defines yoga as the restraint of the senses.

200-300 CE – Composition of the Vishnu and Vayu Puranas

450 CE – The Yoga Bhashya is written; the oldest commentary on the Yoga Sutras.

850 CE – Composition of Vacaspati Mishra's Tattva Vaisharadi; commentary on the Yoga Bhashya

900-1200 CE – Composition of the Amrita-Bindu, Amrita-Nada-Bindu, and Nada Bindu Upanishads.

1025 CE – The Arab scientist and philosopher, Alberuni, published a paraphrase of the Yoga Sutras in Arabic.

1150-1250 CE – Composition of the Yoga Upanishads

1200-1300 CE – Composition of the first Hatha Yoga texts, such as the Yoga Yajnavalkya, Ananda Samuccaya, and Carpata Shataka

1350 CE – Composition of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Composition of the Samkhya Sutra written by Kapila.

1350 CE – Composition of the Yoga Vasishtha Sara Samgraha by Vidyanaraya

1550 CE – Vijnana Bhikshu writes the Yoga Varttika, a commentary on the Yoga Sutra.

1750 CE – Composition of the well known Mahdnirvana Tantra and the Shiva Samhitd, an important work on Hatha yoga.

1772-1833 CE – Rammohun Roy, the founder of the Brahma Samaj organization and the "father of modern India."

1861-1941 – Rabindranath Tagore, the poet laureate of Bengal and a representative of modern India humanism.

1862-1902 – Swami Vivekananda, founder of the Ramakrishna mission, and a key figure in the dissemination of Hinduism and yoga in Europe and America.

1875 CE – Founding of the Theosophical Society in Adyar, India. This organization was responsible for translating many Sanskrit texts into English for the first time.

Vedic Yoga Period and Literature (1500-500 BCE)

The Vedic period of yoga spans from 1500 BCE to 500 BCE. The recognized literature pertaining to yoga during this time are the Vedas. The Vedas are sacred scriptures that are the basis of modern-day Hinduism. The Vedas contains the oldest known Yogic teachings and as such, teachings found in the Vedas are called Vedic Yoga. This is characterized by rituals and ceremonies that strive to surpass the limitations of the mind. The Vedas include: The Samihitas, The Brahmanas, and The Aranyakas. The Samihitas are collections of metered texts (hymns and mantras) and include the RigVeda, the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda, and the Atharva Veda. The Rig Veda is the oldest of the Vedas and is thought to be the oldest text in any Indo-European language. It contains many mythological accounts of the origin of the world, and ancient prayers for life and prosperity. The Brahmanas are prose texts that explain the process for specific rituals and their meanings. The Aranyakas or “forest treaties” were composed by people who meditated in the woods as recluses and contain discussions and interpretations related to the Samihitas and the Brahmanas.

During this time, the Vedic people relied on rishis or dedicated Vedic Yogis to teach them how to live in divine harmony. Rishis were also gifted with the ability to see the ultimate reality through their intensive spiritual practice. The Vedas were primarily handed down through oral tradition until about 1000 CE (during the Post Classical period). They were first compiled into any form of text around 1000 BCE. Some of the verses from the Rig Veda are still recited as Hindu prayers, most likely making it the world’s oldest religious text that is still in use.

Pre-Classical Yoga Period and Literature (500 BCE - 50 BCE)

The main literature of the Pre-Classical Yoga Period includes the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. The creation of the Upanishads marks the Pre-Classical Yoga. The 200 scriptures of the Upanishads (the conclusion of the revealed literature) describe the inner vision of reality resulting from devotion to Brahman. These explain three subjects: the ultimate reality (Brahman), the transcendental self (atman), and the relationship between the two. The Upanishads further explain the teachings of the Vedas.

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 much of early Upanishads with concepts of samkhya and yoga. It defines various levels of existence according to their proximity to the innermost being Atman. Yoga is therefore seen as a process of the ascent of consciousness.

Yoga shares some characteristics not only with Hinduism but also with Buddhism that we can trace in its history. During the sixth century B.C., Siddharta Gautama achieved enlightenment and began teaching Buddhism. The Buddha stresses the importance of Meditation and the practice of physical postures in preparation for meditation.

Around 500 B.C., the Bhagavad-Gita or Lord's Song was created and this is currently the oldest known Yoga scripture. It is devoted entirely to Yoga and has confirmed that it has been an old practice for some time. However, it doesn't point to a specific time wherein Yoga could have started. The Gita was a conversation between Prince Arjuna and Krishna and it stresses the importance of right action and self-less service. The central point to the Gita is that to be alive means to be active and in order to avoid difficulties in our lives and in others, our actions have to be benign and have to exceed our egos.

Just as the Upanishads further the Vedas, the Gita builds on and incorporates the doctrines found in the Upanishads. In the Gita, three facets must be brought together in our lifestyle: Bhakti or loving devotion, Jnana which is knowledge or contemplation, and Karma which is about selfless actions. The Gita then tried to unify Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Karma Yoga and it is because of this that it has gained importance.

Classical Yoga Period and Literature (50 BCE – 1000 CE)

The Classical Period is marked by another creation - the Yoga Sutra. Written by Patanjali around the second century (common era, CE), it was an attempt to define and standardize Classical Yoga. The yoga of Patanjali is the culmination of a long development of yogic ideas. Patanjali's ideas and outline for yoga became the acknowledged authority on the subject. There are many parallels between Patanjali's yoga and Buddhism and it is unknown whether this is a coincidence of the times, or if it illustrates a special interest in Buddhism on the part of Patanjali.

Although yoga had been around for many years before his teachings, the Yoga Sutras were the first step-by-step manual for the practice of yoga. In Patanjali's time, many teachings were handed down orally, rather than written. This is probably one of the reasons that each sutra is short and fairly easy to remember. No one knows for sure who was the first person to put the sutras in written form.

The teachings and practices of the Yoga Sutras are based on three principles:

- 1) Suffering is not caused by forces outside of us but by our faulty and limited perception of life and of who we are. Suffering is not caused by the situation, but by our thoughts about the situation.
- 2) The unwavering peace we seek is realized by experiencing the unlimited and eternal peace that is our true identity. Though hidden by our ignorance, it exists within us, waiting to be revealed. Peace exists within us.
- 3) Peace and self-realization is attained by mastering the mind. Only a single-pointed, calm mind can reveal the true self.

The Yoga Sutras are divided into 196 sutras in four chapters (or padas). Each pada emphasizes a different aspect of the science of yoga, and include the following:

- Pada 1: Concentration (Samadhi Pada)
- Pada 2: Practice (Sadhana Pada)
- Pada 3: Experiences (Vibhuti Pada)
- Pada 4: Absolute Freedom (Kaivalya Pada)

The sutras explain that the main purpose of yoga is to learn to control our mind and not be controlled by our thoughts. Through yoga we learn to dissociate from our thoughts. The sutras explain that there are specific steps in yoga, a certain order of steps, that lead to enlightenment. It is here that the eight fold path is introduced; otherwise known as the Eight Limbs of Classical Yoga. The eight rungs include:

1. **Yamas:** codes of conduct towards others
2. **Niyamas:** self study, and self-training
3. **Asana:** physical postures
4. **Pranayama:** expansion of breath and prana
5. **Pratyahara:** withdrawal of the senses in preparation for meditation
6. **Dharana:** concentration (fixation, one point concentration on an object)
7. **Dhyana:** meditation (focus, becoming one with an object)
8. **Samadhi:** deep absorption (wisdom and bliss)

Samadhi is both the technique of unifying consciousness and the resulting state of bliss through union with the object of contemplation. Patanjali believed that each individual is a composite of matter (prakriti) and spirit (purusha). He further believed that the two must be separated first in order to cleanse the spirit. This is in contrast to Vedic and Pre-Classical Yoga that emphasize only the union of body and spirit. The sutras assert that only after the spirit is cleansed can the spirit and body truly become one.

The sutras look at the first truth; the truth of where our pain comes from. Our pain comes from our own thoughts and ignorance. We look for pleasure in things that will eventually end and cause pain, rather than realize that everything we really want, or see “out there” is within us, and is everlasting. It also encourages practitioners to distinguish between that which changes and that which is changeless, and that by recognizing those differences we can learn to distinguish between the individual self and the universal self. So even though yoga emphasizes union of the two parts, the Sutras argue that we must first be able to distinguish and separate these two parts before true union can occur.

The first part of Pada 1 of the sutras looks at the idea that many of our thoughts are colored by our judgments and expectations. Things aren't always as we think they are. We also tend to think of things as “mine” or “yours” and Patanjali would say that there is nothing that really belongs to any one person and that by releasing our attachments, we find more peace. The sutras say that the labels we give things create a false knowledge, in that we perceive something as being different than what it really is. We confuse facts with mental concepts and attachments. It says that thought patterns are mastered through the practice of non-attachment. This brings us to a more tranquil state. By letting go of the labels of “mine or yours,” we can acquire a state of peace.

The sutras examine how the mind can maintain a state of peace, regardless of the situation. To deal with obstacles, it suggests that we should use kindness and compassion in our thoughts and in our dealings with others, and focus on how we can help them. The sutras then discuss the importance of meditation for calming the mind and removing obstacles to our practice and to our peace.

After the initial circulation of the Yoga Sutras, many Indian scholars reviewed it, then published their Bhasya (notes and commentary) on it, which together form a canon of texts called the Patanjalayogasastra (“The Treatise on Yoga of Patanjali”). Since the Yoga Sutras are written in a way that makes many of its ideas ambiguous and open to interpretation, there have been many works of commentary regarding the Sutras. The most well known is probably the Yoga Bhashya of Vyasa. The term Vyasa means collector, so it was probably the author's title rather than name and would have been used by many different individuals.

Asana practice is only discussed briefly in the sutras and focuses on sitting properly in preparation for meditation. It emphasizes that postures should be held in an

effortless manner, so that a person can merge with the moment. It asserts that the physical part of yoga (asanas) helps to release blockages in our bodies and in the way we see things. By learning to control the body and keep it in balance, avoiding both sluggishness and hyperactivity, we learn to control the mind and keep it in balance. The focus on meditation slowly gave way to an increased focus on the physical body, and eventually led to the popularity of hatha yoga in the post classical period that followed. In Patanjali's concept, meditation was the dominant focus. It was only later that the belief of the body as a temple was rekindled and then attention to the importance of the asana was revived.

Post Classical Period (1000 CE - 1800)

At this point, we see a proliferation of literature as well as the practice of Yoga. Post-classical Yoga differs from earlier periods of yoga in that it is more based in the present reality. During this time, yoga no longer strives to liberate a person from reality but rather teaches one to accept it and live at the moment.

At this point, certain groups of yoga practitioners begin to shift the focus towards the physical body as a means towards enlightenment. They first developed Tantra yoga, with radical techniques for cleansing the body and mind to break the knots that bind us to our physical existence. The body became viewed as a vessel through which enlightenment could be discovered. The exploration of the connection between the physical and the spiritual led to the practice of hatha yoga. While it has its roots in early Indian philosophy and is based on part of the yoga sutras, hatha yoga begins to develop as its own entity during this time.

Although the Yoga Sutras describe asana and pranayama as two limbs of the practice of yoga, many assert that the sutras do not support the practice of asana as physical exercise. So, while hatha yoga can trace its beginnings back to the sutras, it definitely splintered off into its own path by way of its focus on making more use of the physical body.

Hatha Yoga

Hatha yoga refers to a set of physical exercises (known as asanas or postures), and sequences of asanas, designed to align your skin, muscles, and bones. The postures are also designed to open the many channels of the body—especially the main channel, the spine—so that energy can flow freely.

Hatha is also translated as ha meaning “sun” and tha meaning “moon.” This refers to the balance of masculine aspects—active, hot, sun—and feminine aspects—receptive, cool, moon—within all of us. Hatha yoga is a path toward creating balance and uniting opposites. In our physical bodies we develop a balance of strength and flexibility. We also learn to balance our effort and surrender in each pose.

Hatha yoga is a powerful tool for self-transformation. It asks us to bring our attention to our breath, which helps us to still the fluctuations of the mind and be more present in the unfolding of each moment.

Hatha Yoga Pradipika

The Haṭha Yoga Pradipika was written around the 14th Century CE and consists of four chapters which include information about asanas, pranayama, chakras, kundalini, bandhas, kriyas, sakti, nadis, and mudras, among other topics. It runs in the line of Hindu yoga (to distinguish from Buddhist and Jain yoga) and is dedicated to Sri Adinatha, a name for Lord Shiva (the Hindu god of destruction and renewal), who is believed to have imparted the secret of haṭha yoga to his divine consort Parvati.

The Haṭha Yoga Pradipika is a classic Sanskrit manual on hatha yoga, written by Svami Svatmarama, a disciple of Swami Gorakhnath. It incorporates older yoga concepts and is among the most influential surviving texts on the hatha yoga, and is one of the three classic texts of hatha yoga, the other two being the Gheranda Samhita and the Shiva Samhita. Another text, written at a later date by Srinivasabhata Mahayogendra, is the Hatharatnavali.

Shiva Samhita

The Shiva Samhita, written around the 16th century, talks about the complex physiology, names 84 different asanas (only four of which are described in detail), describes five specific types of prana, and provides techniques to regulate them. It also deals with yogic philosophy, mudras, tantric practices and meditation. It emphasizes that even a common householder can practice yoga and benefit from it.

The first chapter mentions various methods of liberation and philosophical standpoints. The second chapter describes the nadis, the internal fire, and the working of the jiva. The third chapter describes the winds in the body, the importance of the guru, the four stages of the Yoga, the five elemental visualizations and four asanas in detail. The fourth chapter deals with the eleven mudras that can result in yogic attainments. The fifth chapter is the longest and most diverse—it describes obstacles to the liberation, the four types of aspirants, the technique of shadow gazing, the internal sound, the esoteric centers and energies in the body (such as the kundalini), the seven lotuses, and a global mantra.

Gheranda Samhita

The Gheranda Samhita, written in the late 17th century by Yogi Gheranda, is considered the most encyclopedic of the three classic hatha yoga texts. It presents a seven-fold yoga (rather than the eight-fold path of the yoga sutras). The seven steps include:

- Shatkarma (hygiene practices for purification)
- Asana (postures for toning the body)
- Mudra (hand and body seals to create steadiness)
- Pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses for calming)
- Pranayama (breath exercises for lightness)
- Dhyana (meditation for perception)
- Samadhi (unification through isolation)

Six Purifications

In traditional hatha yoga, a first stage of the discipline is the six purifications (ṣaṭkarmas), which include: 1) dhauti , cleansing the stomach by swallowing a strip of cloth, 2) basti , “yogic enema,” effected by sucking water into the colon, 3) neti , cleaning of the nasal passages with water and/or cloth, 4) traṭaka , staring at a small mark or candle until the eyes water, 5) nauli or lauliki , forcibly moving the rectus abdominus muscles in a circular motion (a form of uddiyana bandha), and 6) kapalabhati , forcefully expelling air through the nose.

Aim of Hatha Yoga

According to these texts, the human body is made up of networks of subtle channels called naḍis. The Shiva Samhita numbers these channels at 300,000 and the Hatha Yoga Pradipika at 72,000. According to the texts, purification and balancing of the naḍis is done through the process of ṣaṭkarma, asana, prāṇayama, mudra and meditation. The breath (prāṇa) becomes absorbed in voidness and the practitioner attains the condition of samadhi. The aims and results of Hatha Yoga are the same as those of some other varieties of yoga practice: liberation from suffering and the joining of the individual self with the universal self. Hatha yoga differs in the way it works towards this goal through the use of the physical body.

Other Hatha Yoga Texts

Some of the earliest textual evidence of vinyasa practice (yoga poses arranged into sequences and synchronized to breath) is a text called the Sritattvanidhi, from the Mysore Palace. A copy was recently discovered in the Mysore Royal Library containing 122 postures with descriptions. It is believed that its author, the Raja of Mysore, drew on other texts for the yoga system described. Some of the asanas listed also appear in chapter 8 of a wrestling manual from the 12th or 13th century called the Mallapurāṇa. Older teachings of vinyasa yoga are said to have existed in a book called the Yoga Korunta.

Modern Hatha Yoga Period (Late 1800s to Present)

Yoga was introduced in the West during the early 19th century. It was first studied as part of Eastern Philosophy. In 1893 at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda captured the audience’s attention with his speeches on yoga and the universality of the world’s religions, bringing an interest from many Americans to learn more about yoga. In the 1920s and 30s, Hatha yoga was promoted in India and in the West through the work of Krishnamacharya and Swami Sivananda. In 1936, Sivananda started the Divine Life Society in India, and he later opened schools in America and Europe. He developed the Five Principles of Yoga, which describe the main area of hatha yoga to include: savasana (proper rest), asana (proper exercise), prāṇayama (proper breathing), proper diet, meditation (proper focus of the mind). Krishnamacharya opened the first Hatha Yoga school in Mysore, India in 1924. Some of the students who were instrumental in popularizing

yoga in the West included: BKS Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois (founder of vinyasa ashtanga yoga), Indra Devi, AG Mohan, and TKV Desikachar (Krishnamacharya's son). (You can find many of their writings listed on the separate recommended readings page). By the 1960's, there was an influx of Indian teachers who expounded on Yoga, both hatha yoga and other forms. One of those teachers was Maharishi Mahesh, the Yogi who popularized Transcendental Meditation.

In the development of modern postural yoga from the classical hatha, the most prominent change is the importance given to asana as a system of health, fitness, and well-being, and the decreased emphasis of other key aspects such as pranayama and the śaṭkarmas (The six purifications). The term "haṭha yoga" is now a generic term, routinely used among postural yoga teachers and practitioners today to indicate an eclectic array of postural practices, and is used to distinguish it from meditative yoga.

Modern Wellness and the Use of the Term "Yoga"

Apart from the spiritual goals, today the physical postures of yoga are used to alleviate health problems, reduce stress and make the spine supple. 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 undoubtedly has its roots as a Hindu movement for spiritual meditation, yet is now being marketed as a supplement to a cardio routine. 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 practice.

Some people feel upset that the word yoga has been somewhat hijacked and used to denote a strictly physical practice that is more like gymnastics. Personally, I think anything that gets people to feel more calm, centered and whole is wonderful and whatever they want to call it is their decision. Like it explains in the yoga sutras, labels are simply mental constructs that we create ourselves. Arguing about what to call something seems against the ideals of the practice. While we think of yoga as the practice of stilling the mind and connecting with our greater selves, if someone wants to practice gymnastic movements to contemporary music and call it yoga, it again is simply a label. I believe that it is our job as yoga teachers to teach people about the fullness of the yoga experience, so they can understand the goals of yoga from its hindu philosophical roots, and then allow them to decide for themselves which practices work best for them, and what they wish to call those practices. Whatever we label our practices is simply a label. According to the sutras, no one truly owns a label, so it can't be taken from you. If someone is surfing and they wish to call that yoga, it's still just a label; and the same is true if someone is practicing yoga and they wish to call it surfing. As teachers, we can introduce students to the Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita, the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, and other texts that introduce

the ideas of traditional yoga. What they do with that information and how they label their practice remains their choice. We are here to serve our students and to help expand their knowledge and their experiences, not to tell them which practices they can label as yoga and which ones they can not.

Yoga Links to traditional Indian Philosophy

In Indian philosophy, Yoga is among other things, the name of one of the six orthodox philosophical schools of Hindu philosophy. Hindu philosophy is traditionally divided into six astika "orthodox" schools of thought, or darsanam "view", which accept the Vedas as authoritative texts. The astika schools are:

- Samkhya, an atheistic and strongly dualist theoretical exposition of consciousness and matter.
- Yoga, a school emphasising meditation, contemplation and liberation.
- Nyaya, or logic, explores sources of knowledge. Nyaya Sutras.
- Vaisheshika, an empiricist school of atomism
- Mimamsa, an anti-ascetic and anti-mysticist school of orthopraxy
- Vedanta, the last segment of knowledge in the Vedas, or the 'Jnan' (knowledge) 'Kanda' (section). Vedanta came to be the dominant current of Hinduism in the post-medieval period.

The Yoga philosophical system is closely allied with the dualism premises of Samkhya school. The Yoga school accepts the Samkhya psychology and metaphysics, but is considered theistic because it accepts the concept of "personal god", unlike Samkhya. The universe is conceptualized as a dualism in Yoga school: Puruṣa (consciousness) and prakriti (matter); however, the Yoga school discusses this concept more generically as "seer, experiencer" and "seen, experienced", than does the Samkhya school.

A key text of the Yoga school is the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Hindu philosophy recognizes many types of Yoga, such as: Raja yoga, Jnana yoga, Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga, Tantra yoga, Mantra yoga, Laya yoga, and Hatha yoga.

The Yoga school builds on the Samkhya school theory that jnana (knowledge) is a sufficient means to moksha. It suggests that systematic techniques/practice (personal experimentation) combined with Samkhya's approach to knowledge is the path to moksha. Yoga shares several central ideas with Advaita Vedanta school of Hinduism, with the difference that Yoga philosophy is a form of experimental mysticism. Like Advaita Vedanta, the Yoga school of Hindu philosophy states that liberation/freedom in this life is achievable, and this occurs when an individual fully understands and realizes the equivalence of Atman (soul, self) and Brahman. Advaita Vedanta, and other schools of Hinduism, accept, adopt and build upon many of the teachings and techniques of Yoga.

Yoga school of Hinduism is mentioned in foundational texts of other orthodox schools such as the Vaisesika Sutras, Nyaya Sutras and Brahma Sutras, which suggests that the Yoga philosophy was in vogue in the 1st millennium BCE. It influenced, and was influenced by other schools and Indian philosophies. There are, for example, numerous parallels in the concepts in Samkhya school of Hinduism, Yoga and Abhidharma schools of thought, particularly from 2nd century BCE to 1st century CE. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali may be a synthesis of these three traditions, and is a systematic collection of ideas related to the Yoga School of Hinduism. From the Samkhya school of Hinduism, the Yoga Sutras adopt the "reflective discernment" (adhyavasaya) of prakrti and purusa (dualism), its metaphysical rationalism, as well its three methods to gaining reliable knowledge. From Abhidharma Buddhism's idea of nirodhasamadhi, Yoga Sutras adopt the pursuit of altered state of awareness, but unlike Buddhism which believes that there is neither self nor soul, Yoga is like Samkhya in believing that each individual has a self and soul. The third concept that the Yoga Sutras synthesize into its philosophy is the ancient ascetic traditions of isolation, meditation and introspection.

The Yoga school of Hindu philosophy is most closely related to the Samkhya school. In both, the foundational concepts include two realities: Purusha and Prakriti. The Purusha is defined as that reality which is pure consciousness and is devoid of thoughts or qualities. The Prakriti is the empirical, phenomenal reality which includes matter and also mind, sensory organs and the sense of identity (self, soul). A living being is held in both schools to be the union of matter and mind. The Samkhya-Yoga system espouses dualism between consciousness and matter by postulating two "irreducible, innate and independent realities: Purusha and Prakriti. Yoga philosophy allows the concept of God, unlike the closely related Samkhya school of Hinduism, which is atheistic/non-theistic. Hindu scholars such as the 8th century Adi Sankara, as well many modern academic scholars describe Yoga school as "Samkya school with God.

Yoga school of Hinduism adopts the theory of Guṇa from Samkhya. Guṇas theory states that three gunas (innate tendency, attributes) are present in different proportions in all beings. These three are sattva guna (goodness, constructive, harmonious), rajas guna (passion, active, confused), and tamas guna (darkness, destructive, chaotic). These three are present in every being but in different proportions, and the fundamental nature and psychological dispositions of beings is a consequence of the relative proportion of these three gunas. When sattva guna predominates an individual, the qualities of lucidity, wisdom, constructiveness, harmonious, and peacefulness manifest themselves; when rajas is predominant, attachment, craving, passion-driven activity and restlessness manifest; and when tamas predominates in an individual, ignorance, delusion, destructive behavior, lethargy, and suffering manifests. The guṇas theory underpins the philosophy of mind in Yoga school of Hinduism.

In Yoga school of Hinduism, the unrestrained modification of the mind causes suffering. A way of life that empowers one to become ever more aware of one's consciousness and innate spirituality, is the path to one's highest potential and a more serene, content, liberated life.

References to the teachings of the Yoga school of Hinduism abound in ancient Indian texts of other orthodox schools of Hinduism. For example, verse of Vaisheshika Sutra by Kanada, belonging to the Vaisheshika school of Hinduism and dated to be from the 1st millennium BCE, states that "pleasure and pain results from contact of soul, sense, mind and object. Non-origination of that follows when the mind becomes steady in the soul. After it, there is non-existence of pain in the embodied soul. This is that Yoga."

Psychology of Yoga

Like other forms of psychology, Yoga deals first and foremost with the human mind and psyche. According to yoga philosophy, as outlined in the Yoga Sutras and still part of hatha yoga, our inner world parallels the structure of the cosmos itself; having the same fundamental layers and hierarchy. So, yoga becomes a guide for both the inner and outer universe.

Main points of the psychology of yoga:

- We can see the truth if we work by way of our self-awareness. By keeping a little independent corner of our mind that watches and observes the rest of the mind, even though the mind itself never sees anything correctly, we can become aware of this and get closer to the truth.
- Staying in the present moment by simply being the observing presence of that moment can be helpful to our mental health. Being present helps us lose the anxiety, resentments, disappointments, and other negative sensations that we bring on ourselves through our constant daydreams about the past and future.
- We create our own reality through our perception of the facts. The same situation can happen to many different people and they can all view it in a different way. The power to choose how we react to anything is within us. We choose how we label any event or circumstance.
- The labels we give to things create a false knowledge. We confuse facts with mental concepts and attachments. By letting go of the labels of “mine” or “yours” and practicing non-attachment, we can experience more inner peace and tranquility.
- Non attachment does not mean not caring. It is in our best interest to give our full effort and love to the things that matter to us, but to do so without expecting anything in return and without being attached to the outcome of our efforts.
- By meditating on desirable characteristics, we can obtain those characteristics for ourselves. By practicing samyama (the last three of the eight limbs) on a specific outcome, we can become that outcome. By having thoughts of love and kindness, we attract more love and kindness into our lives.
- To end our suffering, we must let go of attachments and aversions. Attachment is when we associate pleasure with some memory. Aversion occurs when we associate misery with some memory or object. It argues that the key to break the cycle of suffering is to set aside these associations and to set aside the association between observer and that which is observed, and instead simply objectively observe your thoughts and emotions. You have a thought in your mind, but who is listening to those thoughts.
- By training our minds through meditation, we learn to focus on one object and learn to control and management our own minds. By doing this, we can bring a sense of peace and tranquility to our minds whenever we choose.

Yoga and Western Psychology

Most forms of modern psychology focus on liberating individuals from undesirable character traits or neuroses. In yoga, there is an additional spiritual aspect, so the liberation process involves the human being as a whole, rather than one dysfunctional part. The yoga approach tends to be a bit more holistic and less specialized in one area of a person's life compared with most modern forms of psychology. Yoga seeks to expose the core of the human being behind the personality traits rather than focusing on improving those traits. Hatha yoga also focuses on how we can work with the physical body to promote greater mental stability and peace. The physical postures of yoga help to release energy blocks and help to stimulate the relaxation response and other positive hormonal responses that can improve our overall well-being.

In Western psychology, there is often a push to overcome emotions that we label as negative and to rally against those emotions. In yoga, the emphasis is on observing those so called negative emotions and calmly detaching from those emotions, realizing that our emotions are not ourselves. Emotions come and go and we are the presence that observes these changing emotions.

Over time, many Western therapeutic approaches in psychology have shifted towards a more yogic viewpoint. The early Western approaches (from Freud and into the first half of the 20th century) can be regarded as primarily dealing with maladaptations and the goal of restoring the person to normalcy (however this is understood). With Jung, this range widened to include those groping for existential meaning at a time when our culture was (and still is) riddled with uncertainty. After Jung, others—notably Melanie Klein, Erich Fromm, Victor E. Frankl, Karl Abraham, Anna Freud (Freud's daughter), and Abraham Maslow—claimed the limelight, and the focus began to shift to human potential and human development. At the outer edge of the psychotherapeutic band of the developmental spectrum for his time, was Roberto Assagioli (1965), whose humanistic orientation brought us towards positive psychology and the yogic band. Ideally, Yoga starts with the reasonably well-adjusted individual who is not suffering from psychoses or major neuroses, and it seeks to conduct him or her to the farther reaches of the developmental spectrum, particularly to the realization of the very essence of the human being (however this essence may be conceived). In Hindu yogic terms, this is the goal of liberation through Self-realization.

Many people first think of Freud when they think of the early days of modern western psychology. Freud refined existing notions of that time, adapting Georg Groddeck's idea of Das Es (the It), turning it into the psychoanalytical concept of the id. This It is composed of inborn drives and instincts and is entirely unconscious. For Freud, the unconscious is something of an over spilling garbage can—containing material that the conscious individual would find difficult to live with and therefore represses. Because something is unconscious, however, does not mean it is ineffective. Repressed or suppressed impulses continue to have their undesirable

effect “underground,” emerging in the form of neuroses and psychoses, as well as psychosomatic illness. Through psychoanalytical intervention—comprising the methods of free association and dream analysis—the unconscious content is brought to full consciousness, which supposedly dissolves the underlying psychological problem between the id and the ego.

Carl Jung, a student of Freud, considered this notion too limited, and he expanded the concept of the unconscious to include what he called the “collective unconscious.” Jung saw this part of the unconscious as the storehouse of archetypes like anima (the image of the feminine); animus (the image of the masculine); the shadow (consisting of socially undesirable, repressed character traits); the old sage (male or female); and, not least, the Self (as a prime symbol of wholeness and integration). This is also the psychic location where we find the rich imagery of mythology and religion. Jung also was part of a new movement that focused more on human potential and development than focusing solely on fixing specific neuroses, disorders, and instincts.

The notion of the unconscious received a further significant revision at the hands of the Austrian psychiatrist Viktor E. Frankl (1997, 31). Where Freud, as he put it, “saw only unconscious instinctuality,” Frankl also attributed a spiritual side to the unconscious, which he felt ought to be sharply separated from the instinctual part. It is this spiritual force present in the unconscious that makes a person a “meaning-seeking” creature—the pivotal theme of Frankl’s system of logotherapy.

Maslow began exploring more deeply into the idea of self-actualization for people. Maslow’s approach, by his own admission, became something of a worldview—the “third force” within modern psychology. During the 1960s and 70s, three groups of psychologists became influential in the west—that of behavioristic-mechanistic psychologists, psychotherapists, and humanistic psychologists. Instead of looking only at the ground floor (behaviorism) or the cellar (psychoanalysis), Maslow was willing to boldly break with conventional psychology and, inspired by Jung, look at the higher human potential. He cast his conceptual net as wide as possible, using an evolutionary perspective and asking fundamental philosophical questions. Thus, he invented his important theory of metamotivation—the superior values and attitudes cultivated by physically and mentally healthy self-actualizing, self-transcending people. Maslow explained that self-actualizing people are gratified in all their basic needs (of belongingness, affection, respect, and self-esteem) and, as such, can dedicate part of themselves to something outside of themselves, some vocation, duty or beloved job. The attitudes of self-actualizers correspond with what Maslow identified as meta-needs, or B-values (Being-values): truth, goodness, beauty, unity, wholeness, aliveness, perfection, justice, order, simplicity, playfulness, meaningfulness, and so on. These values are also at a premium in spiritual traditions like Yoga.

Yoga and Positive Psychology

Positive psychology officially began as a new area of western psychology in 1998 when Martin Seligman chose it as the theme for his term as president of the American Psychological Association. It is rooted in the work of past humanist psychologists, such as Maslow, Carl Rogers, Erich Fromm, and Assagioli, as well as the New Thought Movement of the late 1800s, and it focuses on positive human development and self-realization.

The practices of hatha yoga provide a foundation for positive psychology practices. In positive psychology, the main focus is on creative visualizations and positive affirmations. In hatha yoga meditation, we also focus on creating more control over our thoughts and developing a more positive outlook, but it is done through one-point meditation and a focus on the present moment. By focusing on the breath, a silent mantra, or another specific object, we learn to control our own minds and gain the ability to focus and concentrate on what we want. In this way, hatha yoga can form a foundation for positive psychology techniques, such as creating alternative positive self-talk for ourselves. Both hatha yoga and positive psychology focus on the development of an ordinary person to greater points of happiness and fulfillment, rather than simply treating a mental disorder or problem to help a person function.

Yoga is a foundation for positive psychology in other ways. The physical aspects of hatha yoga tame the nervous system. When the mind and body are calm and integrated, we can engage in the well-being and happiness practices of positive psychology. If the mind and body are “charged up,” and we are anxious, often our thoughts, feelings and actions do not create the outcomes we’d like to experience in life. So, yoga helps us create a moment-by-moment mindset of calm that allows us to lead a life where your actions are reflective of your values.

In the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali writes of the need to detach from the conditional world in order to end one’s suffering. By controlling the mind, we improve its quality. “Freedom from emotions” has often been misconstrued to mean “without emotions,” whereas the position of Yoga is that the adept is simply free in relationship to the affects that arise in the mind. Ever since the Rig-Veda appeared, so-called negative emotions like anger, greed, and lust have been singled out as obstructions on the spiritual path. What is negative about them is that they automatically limit awareness to a narrow position. So-called positive emotions have been recommended for conscious cultivation, and they are positive because they do not bind consciousness. Whether or not one recognizes the Vedic teachings as an archaic form of Yoga, they were definitely antecedent even to Buddhism and would have had to contribute to the evolution of the yogic teachings.

Patanjali tells us clearly in aphorism 2.33 that if our practice of the moral disciplines is threatened by undesirable mental states (*vitarka*) based in negative effects, we should immediately cultivate their opposites—a practice known as *pratipaksha*-

bhavana. Thus, when our heart is filled with anger and we are on the verge of breaking the virtue of non-harming (either in deed, word, or thought), then we should at once engender thoughts of kindness and love toward the object of our anger.

Positive psychology follows a similar principle. It asserts that positivity opens us. The first core truth about positive emotions is that they open our hearts and our minds, making us more receptive and more creative. Further, positive psychology believes that positivity transforms people and helps them become their best. What can we do when an intense emotional response is triggered in us? Yoga is clear that we must not just “let it rip.” Unchecked expression of intense emotions—especially anger—is manifestly disruptive, harmful, and also physically and psychologically debilitating. But neither do the Yoga masters expect us to repress anything, which is unproductive and damaging. Instead, both positive psychology and yoga encourage people to cultivate the opposite emotions. In yoga, this technique is known as pratipaksha-bhavana. Yoga practitioners are not expected to excise all emotionality. Rather they must, step by step, transcend the false identity of the ego-personality and thereby overcome negative emotions and refine their emotional life. In this way, they also effectively contribute to greater social harmony and world peace.

We can get students started on connecting their yoga experience to positive psychology by doing the following simple exercise. For 5 minutes a day, over the next 30 days encourage your students to develop breath awareness; watching the breath whenever possible. Then, the following 5 minute daily practice to move the spine in directions, unlocking tensions and stored energy, and helping to develop a connection between mind, body and breath awareness.

- 1) Standing, pay attention to your breathing – let go of your thoughts and feelings and gently pay attention to your breathing.
- 2) Forward Bend: Standing or sitting, place arms at sides, inhale, and very slowly bend forward from the hips (rather than the waist, to protect the back), slowly releasing the breath, allowing your knees to bend slightly as you fold forward and gently let your finger tips touch the floor.
- 3) Backward Bend: Standing, place your hands on your waist above your buttocks, watching your breath, bend backward slowly and gently arching your back – avoid straining your back.
- 4) Side Bend: Standing, place your hands on your waist, watching your breath, slowly and gently bend to your left – after a breath, slowly and gently bend to your right.
- 5) Twist: Sitting on the floor, or in a chair, watching your breath, slowly and gently twist your upper body around to your left – after a breath, slowly and

gently twist your upper body around to your right.

- 6) Legs Up: Lay on the floor next to a wall, flat on your back, swing your legs up against the wall so your legs are elevated above you, watch your breath. Stay there for a minute.

When you complete this exercise, notice how you feel. The calm and quiet mind from this body practice allows us to think clearly. From this place of calm and quiet, we can engage one of the positive psychology interventions or activities.

Activities:

Below are some positive psychology activities that relate well to our yoga practice. Try the following to help your students boost their positive outlook.

Exercise 1: Gratitude

A simple intervention is to journal for 2 minutes about the things that have happened in the last day or two you are grateful for. These can be simple things, such as someone smiling and saying thank you to you, or going to the post office and having no line to wait in.

Exercise 2: Funny things

Write down three funny things that you experienced or witnessed during the past week and what made them funny. When you can laugh at yourself or the circumstances around you, you don't take life too seriously, and that lightness can clear the way for your meditation practice and non-attachment.

Exercise 3: Loving Kindness meditation

Sit comfortably and begin by taking a few slow deep breaths. Think of someone you love. Picture that person clearly. With that person in your mind, silently repeat to their image, "May you be well. May you be happy. May you be at ease." Continue silently repeating this statement to that person a few times, feeling your love for them. Next, picture someone who is neutral to you; someone you don't really know, but may see at regular times. It may be a cashier at your local grocery store, or someone who lives in your neighborhood, who you don't really know, but sometimes see. With that person in your mind, silently repeat to their image, "May you be well. May you be happy. May you be at ease." Continue silently repeating this statement to that person a few times, feeling your love for them. Next, picture someone who is difficult for you. It may be someone who you just had an argument with or who frequently treat you with disrespect. With that person in your mind, silently repeat to their image, "May you be well. May you be happy. May you be at ease." Continue silently repeating this statement to that person a few times, feeling your love for them and realizing that you can't change them; you can only control

your reaction to them. Finally, picture yourself. See yourself in your mind's eye. With a clear image of yourself in your head, silently repeat to yourself, "May I be well. May I be happy. May I be at ease." Continue silently repeating this statement to yourself until you feel the love for yourself that you deserve, and feel at ease.

Exercise 4: Successes

Write down three successes, or three things that you achieved in the last day or two. Like the exercise on gratitude, these can (and should) be simple things. Some examples of successes might be finishing a project for work, cleaning a bathroom at home, cooking a meal that tasted good, or learning a new idea. Write down these successes and focus on your strengths and abilities.