

## YOGA: A HOLISTIC WAY OF HARMONY IN LIFE!

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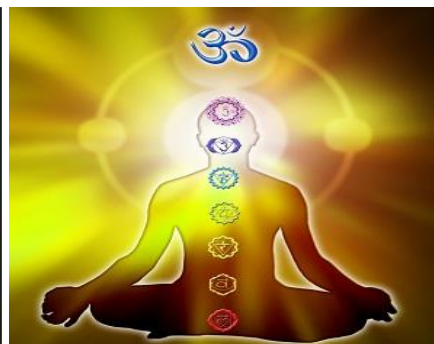
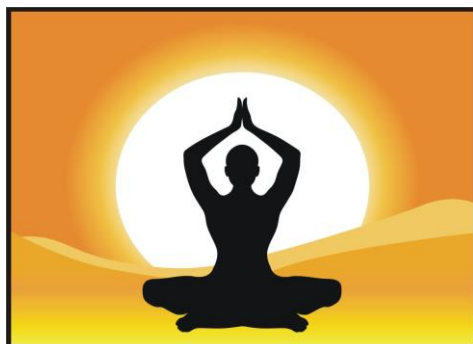
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### ABSTRACT

*The ultimate goal of Yoga is moksha (liberation) though the exact definition of what form this takes depends on the philosophical or theological system with which it is conjugated. "Yoga has five principal meanings:*

*(1) yoga as a disciplined method for attaining a goal (2) yoga as techniques of controlling the body and the mind (3) yoga as a name of one of the schools or systems of philosophy (darśana) (4) yoga in connection with other words, such as "hatha-, mantra-, and laya-," referring to traditions specialising in particular techniques of yoga (5) yoga as the goal of yoga practice."*



*Yoga as an analysis of perception and cognition. Yoga as the rising and expansion of consciousness. Yoga as a path to omniscience. Yoga as a technique for entering into other bodies, generating multiple bodies and the attainment of other supernatural accomplishments.*

*"Yoga" is a complete way of life including - Gyan Yoga or philosophy, Bhakti Yoga or path of devotional bliss, Karma Yoga or path of blissful action and Raja Yoga or path of mind control. Raja Yoga is further divided into eight parts, of which only one part is Asana or*

*postures. Derived from the Sankrit word "yuj" which means "to unite or integrate"; yoga is a 5000 year old Indian body of knowledge. Yoga is all about harmonizing the body with the mind and breath through the means of various breathing techniques, yoga postures (asanas) and meditation. Pranayama is the extension and control of one's breath. Practicing proper techniques of breathing can help bring more oxygen to the blood and brain, eventually helping control prana or the vital life energy. Pranayama also goes hand in hand with various yoga asanas. The union of these two yogic principles is considered as the highest form of purification and self-discipline, covering both mind and body. Pranayama techniques also prepare us for a deeper experience of meditation.*

**KEYWORDS:** Pranayam, Asana, Kundalini Yoga, Gyan Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Raj Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Meditation.

### **Yoga for Health and Wellness**

*Health is not a mere absence of disease. It is a dynamic expression of life – in terms of how joyful, loving and enthusiastic you are*

*- Sri Sri Ravi Shankar*

One who is stable and established in the self is healthy. That is to say that identifying a healthy person doesn't only entail physical fitness, but what's even more crucial is one's mental fitness. One cannot say that 'I'm healthy, but not interested in life'. The enthusiasm in life shows how healthy you are. Causes of sickness or ill health are generally noted as impurities on the level of mind, body and speech. Your own speech can create distress in you as well as other people around you. Even distress or discomfort should be treated as an illness. Body, mind and spirit are like a tripod – even if one aspect isn't functioning properly, our life will not be balanced and that will lead to ill health. Yoga is that link which creates a harmony by aligning all the three components (body, mind and spirit) into one. This harmony, in turn exists to support life.<sup>[1]</sup> Yoga is an integral part of our lifestyle. It removes the impurities from the level of mind and unites everything with the spirit. For instance, insomnia could be connected to stress, anxiety or depression. You have to address that issue instead of merely taking medication. This way, you have a wider perception of your own mind, body, thoughts and emotions and there's more clarity and you are able to guide your *prana* (life force) in a positive way to progress in life. One can start practicing Yoga at any given moment of time and you may start with meditation or directly with pranayama without even doing the *asanas* (postures). Make sure that when you practice yoga *asanas*, you don't

just stretch the body because the mind has to be with the body. You can't be watching television or reading the newspaper because if your awareness isn't there, the *asanas* won't have much effect on you. But if each stretch is synchronized with the breath and awareness, your practice will become a yogic practice.<sup>[1]</sup>



**Figure-1: Yoga**

### **Role of Food In Keeping One Healthy**

Yogis in The Himalayas can survive without food because they don't need to eat as their body survives on *prana*. But we need to eat and maintain a healthy diet. Did you know that your next day starts from your dinner? What you eat, what time you eat and how much you eat affects your sleep, the morning and your entire day. Needless to say, *ahaar* (food) makes a profound impact on your body and mind. Imbalance of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha* (three prime energies in the body) lead to most health-related issues. For instance, if someone's *pitta* (fire element) is high, certain foods can aggravate the *pitta* and cause restlessness, lack of sleep and anxiety, which makes it a necessity to know what foods are suitable for the body and mind by consulting an Ayurvedic doctor.

### **Second Most Important Aspect of Health**

*Vihaar* (Daily Routine) plays a tremendous role in measuring how healthy an individual is. A *sadhak* should know what is suitable for his/her living. There is a tendency in our body towards health. At one level, our body intelligence signals that what we are doing is not alright, but we all have our excuses because we are following our mind and emotion. That intelligence fails when you become a slave to your mind and creates problems on a physical level. And soon, it becomes a pattern. A headache is not a disease, but a signal for something

bigger and when we suppress that sign with painkillers, the real cause soon surfaces on a much bigger scale.

**Yoga** is the physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines that aim to transform body and mind. The term denotes a variety of schools, practices and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism (including *Vajrayana* and Tibetan Buddhism) and Jainism, the best-known being *Hatha yoga* and *Raja yoga*. The term yoga is derived from the literal meaning of “yoking together” a span of horses or oxes, but came to be applied to the “yoking” of mind and body. The origins of Yoga may date back to pre-vedic Indian traditions. The earliest accounts of yoga-practices are to be found in the Buddhist Nikayas. Parallel developments were recorded around 400 CE in the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, which combines pre-philosophical speculations and diverse ascetic practices of the first millennium BCE with *Samkhya*-philosophy. *Hatha* yoga emerged from *tantra* by the turn of the first millennium. Gurus from India later introduced yoga to the west, following the success of Swami Vivekananda in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1980s, yoga became popular as a system of physical exercise across the Western world. This form of yoga is often called *Hatha yoga*. Yoga physiology described humans as existing of three bodies and five sheaths which cover the *atmman*, and energy flowing through energy channels and concentrated in *chakras*. Many studies have tried to determine the effectiveness of yoga as a complementary intervention for cancer, schizophrenia, asthma, and heart disease.<sup>[2]</sup>



**Figure-2: Asana**

### Terminology

In Vedic Sanskrit, the more commonly used, literal meaning of the Sanskrit word *yoga* which is "to add", "to join", "to unite", or "to attach" from the root *yuj*, already had a much more

figurative sense, where the yoking or harnessing of oxen or horses takes 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 Epic Sanskrit. There are very many compound words containing *yog* in Sanskrit. *Yoga* can take on meanings such as "connection", "contact", "method", "application", "addition", and "performance". In simpler words, *Yoga* also means "**combined**". For example, *gunā-yoga* means "contact with a cord"; *chakrá-yoga* has a medical sense of "applying a splint or similar instrument by means of pulleys (in case of dislocation of the thigh)"; *chandrā-yoga* has the astronomical sense of "conjunction of the moon with a constellation"; *pun-yoga* is a grammatical term expressing "connection or relation with a man", etc. Thus, *bhakti-yoga* means "devoted attachment" in the monotheistic *Bhakti* movement. The term *kriyā-yoga* has a grammatical sense, meaning "connection with a verb". But the same compound is also given a technical meaning in the *Yoga Sūtras* (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 Panini, a 6th-century BCE Sanskrit grammarian, the term *yoga* can be derived from either of two roots, *yujir yoga* (to yoke) or *yuj samādhau* (to concentrate). In the context of the *Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali*, the root *yuj samādhau* (to concentrate) is considered by traditional commentators as the correct etymology. In accordance with Panini, Vyasa (c. 4th or 5th century CE), who wrote the first commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras*, states that *yoga* means *samādhi* (concentration). In other texts and contexts, such as the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the word *yoga* has been used in conformity with *yujir yoge* (to yoke).

According to Dasgupta, the term *yoga* can be derived from either of two roots, *yujir yoga* (to yoke) or *yuj samādhau* (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 male or a female) or *yogini* (traditionally denoting a female).<sup>[3]</sup>

### Goal of Yoga

The ultimate goal of *Yoga* is *moksha* (liberation) though 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:

1. *yoga* as a disciplined method for attaining a goal;

2. yoga as techniques of controlling the body and the mind;
3. yoga as a name of one of the schools or systems of philosophy (*darśana*);
4. yoga in connection with other words, such as "*hatha*-, *mantra*-, and *laya*-, " referring to traditions specialising in particular techniques of yoga;
5. yoga as the goal of yoga practice."

According to David Gordon White, from the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE onward, the meanings of the term "yoga" became more or less fixed, but having various meanings:

1. Yoga as an analysis of perception and cognition;
2. Yoga as the rising and expansion of consciousness;
3. Yoga as a path to omniscience;
4. Yoga as a technique for entering into other bodies, generating multiple bodies, and the attainment of other supernatural accomplishments;



**Figure-3: Kundalini yoga**

### **Schools of Yoga**

The term "yoga" has been applied to a variety of practices, the best-known Hindu practices being *Raj Yoga* and *Hatha Yoga*, but also including Jain and Buddhist practices.

### **Hinduism**

#### ***Raja Yoga***

The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* are often labelled as *Rāja yoga*. It defines yoga as *citta-vritti-nirodha-sacca* (the cessation of the perturbations of the mind). The aim is to still the mind in order to reach *Kaivalya*, the "isolation" of purusha (the motionless consciousness "essence") from *prakriti* (the primordial matter from which everything is made, including mind and



emotions).<sup>[4]</sup> In Hinduism, *Raja yoga* is considered as one of the six *āstika* schools (those which accept the authority of the *Vedas*) of Hindu philosophy. Meditation is one of the keys for *Raja Yoga*.

### Tantra

*Tantra* is the name given by scholars to a style of meditation and ritual which arose in India no later than the 5th century CE. The earliest documented use of the word "Tantra" is in the Rigveda (X.71.9). Tantra has influenced the Hindu, Bon, Buddhist, and Jain traditions and Silk Road transmission of Buddhism that spread Buddhism to East and Southeast Asia.

### Hatha yoga

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

1. *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, Svātmārāma (15<sup>th</sup> century)
2. *Shiva Samhita*, author unknown (1500 C.E. or late 17<sup>th</sup> century)
3. *Gheranda Samhita* by Gheranda (late 17<sup>th</sup> century).

Many scholars also include the preceding *Goraksha Samhita* authored by Gorakshanath of the 11<sup>th</sup> 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*) and *trul khor* which parallel *hatha yoga*.

### Modern wellness

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.

### History

The origins of yoga are a matter of debate. It may have pre-Vedic origins. Several seals discovered at Indus Valley Civilization sites depict figures in positions resembling a common yoga or meditation pose. Ascetic practices, concentration and bodily postures used by Vedic priests to conduct Vedic ritual of fire sacrifice may have been precursors to yoga. 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.

### **Vedic period**

#### **Ascetic practices**

Ascetic practices (*tapas*), concentration and bodily postures used by Vedic priests to conduct *yajna* (Vedic ritual of fire sacrifice), might have been precursors to yoga. Vratya, a group of ascetics mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*, emphasized on bodily postures which probably evolved into yogic *asanas*. Early Vedic Samhitas also contain references to other group ascetics such as, Munis, the Keśin, and Vratyas. Techniques for controlling breath and vital energies are mentioned in the Brahmanas (ritualistic 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. The Vedic Samhitas contain references to ascetics, and ascetic practices known as (*tapas*) are referenced in the Brāhmana as (900 BCE and 500 BCE), early commentaries on the Vedas. The Rigveda, the earliest of the Hindu texts mentions the practice. Yoga *asanas* were first prescribed by the ancient Vedic texts thousands of years ago and are said to directly enliven the body's inner intelligence.

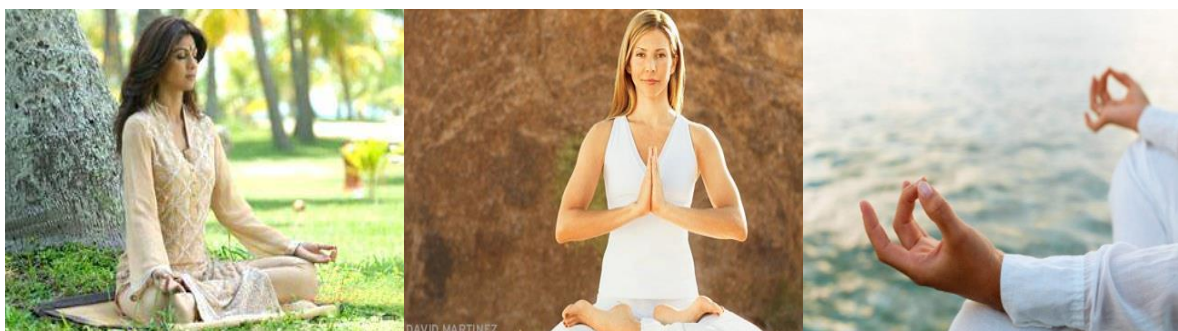
#### **Preclassical era (500-200 BCE)**

Diffused pre-philosophical speculations of yoga begin to emerge in the texts of c. 500–200 BCE such as the Buddhist Nikayas, the middle Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gita* and Mokshadharma of the *Mahabharata*. The terms *samkhya* and *yoga* in these texts refer to spiritual methodologies rather than the philosophical systems which developed centuries later.<sup>[5]</sup>

The *Bhagavad Gita* ('Song of the Lord'), uses the term "yoga" extensively in a variety of ways. In addition to an entire chapter 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.





**Figure-4: Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga, Jnana yoga**

In Chapter 2 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna explains to Arjuna about the essence of yoga as practiced in daily lives:

**योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय । सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥**

(*yoga-stha kuru karmani sanyugam tyaktvā dhananjay siddhy-asiddhyo samo bhutvā samatvam yoga ucyate*)

- *Bhagavad Gita*

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada translates it as "Be steadfast in yoga (*yoga-stha*), O Arjuna. Perform your duty (*kuru karmani*) and abandon all attachment (*sangam*) to success or failure (*siddhy-asiddhyo*). Such evenness of mind (*samatvam*) is called yoga." Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (b. circa 1490) divided the *Gita* into three sections, with the first six chapters dealing with *Karma yoga*, the middle six with *Bhakti yoga*, and the last six with *Jnana yoga* (knowledge). Other commentators ascribe a different 'yoga' to each chapter, delineating eighteen different yogas. Aurobindo, a freedom fighter and philosopher, describes the yoga of the *Gita* as "a large, flexible and many-sided system with various elements, which are all successfully harmonized by a sort of natural and living assimilation".

### **Mahabharata**

Description of an early form of yoga called *nirodha-yoga* (yoga of cessation) is contained in the Mokshadharma section of the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter (Shanti Parva) of the *Mahabharata* epic. The verses of the section are dated to c. 300–200 BCE. *Nirodha-yoga* 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.

### Classical era (200 BCE–500 CE)

#### Raja 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.<sup>[6]</sup>



**Figure-5: Raj yoga**

#### Samkhya

Samkhya emerged in the first century CE. When Patanjali systematized the conceptions of yoga, he set them forth on the background of the metaphysics of samkhya, which he assumed with slight variations. In the early works, the yoga principles appear together with the samkhya ideas. Vyasa's commentary on the *Yoga Sutras*, also called the *Samkhyapravacanabhāṣya* (*Commentary on the Exposition of the Sankhya Philosophy*), brings out the intimate relation between the two systems. Yoga agrees with the essential metaphysics of samkhya, but differs from it in that while samkhya holds that knowledge is the means of liberation, yoga is a system of active striving, mental discipline, and dutiful action. Yoga also introduces the conception of god. Sometimes Patanjali's system is referred to as *Seshvara Samkhya* in contradistinction to Kapila's *Nirivara Samkhya*.

#### Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

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

**Table-1: Treasures of Yoga**

<b>Yoga Sutras of Patanjali</b>		
<i>Pada (Chapter)</i>	English meaning	Sutras
<i>Samadhi Pada</i>	On being absorbed in spirit	51
<i>Sadhana Pada</i>	On being immersed in spirit	55
<i>Vibhuti Pada</i>	On supernatural abilities and gifts	56
<i>Kaivalya Pada</i>	On absolute freedom	34

Patanjali's writing also became the basis for a system referred to as "Ashtanga Yoga" ("Eight-Limbed Yoga"). This eight-limbed concept derived from the 29<sup>th</sup> Sutra of the 2<sup>nd</sup> book, and is a core characteristic of practically every Raja yoga variation taught today. The Eight Limbs are:

1. *Yama* (The five "abstentions"): *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Satya* (Truth, non-lying), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (non-sensuality, celibacy), and *Aparigraha* (non-possessiveness).
2. *Niyama* (The five "observances"): *Shaucha* (purity), *Santosha* (contentment), *Tapas* (austerity), *Svadhyaya* (study of the Vedic scriptures to know about God and the soul), and *Ishvara-Pranidhana* (surrender to God).
3. *Asana*: Literally means "seat", and in Patanjali's Sutras refers to the seated position used for meditation.
4. *Pranayama* ("Suspending Breath"): *Prāna*, breath, "āyāma", to restrain or stop. Also interpreted as control of the life force.
5. *Pratyahara* ("Abstraction"): Withdrawal of the sense organs from external objects.
6. *Dharana* ("Concentration"): Fixing the attention on a single object.
7. *Dhyana* ("Meditation"): Intense contemplation of the nature of the object of meditation.
8. *Samadhi* ("Liberation"): merging consciousness with the object of meditation.
9. In the view of this school, the highest attainment does not reveal the experienced diversity of the world to be illusion. The everyday world is real. Furthermore, the highest attainment is the event of one of many individual selves discovering itself; there is no single universal self shared by all persons.

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 his wife Gargi, a renowned female 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*. In the *Yoga Yajnavalkya*, yoga is defined as *jivatmaparamatmasamyogah*, or the union between the individual self (*jivatma*) and the Divine (*paramatma*).<sup>[7]</sup>

### **Middle Ages (500–1500 CE)**

Middle Ages saw the development of many satellite traditions of yoga. *Hatha yoga* emerged as a dominant practice of yoga 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 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> 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**

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

Tantrism is a practice that is supposed to alter the relation of its practitioners to the ordinary social, religious, and logical reality in which they live. Through Tantric practice, an individual perceives reality as maya, illusion, and the individual achieves liberation from it. Both Tantra and yoga offer paths that relieve a person from depending on the world. Where yoga relies on progressive restriction of inputs from outside; Tantra relies on transmutation of all external inputs so that one is no longer dependent on them, but can take them or leave them at will. They both make a person independent. This particular path to salvation among the several offered by Hinduism, links Tantrism to those practices of Indian religions, such as yoga, meditation, and social renunciation, which are based on temporary or permanent withdrawal from social relationships and modes. During tantric practices and studies, the student is instructed further in meditation technique, particularly chakra meditation. This is often in a limited form in comparison with the way this kind of meditation is known and used by Tantric practitioners and yogis elsewhere, but is more elaborate than the initiate's previous meditation. It is considered to be a kind of Kundalini yoga for the purpose of moving the Goddess into the chakra located in the "heart", for meditation and worship.

## Vajrayana

While breath channels (nādis) of yogic practices had already been discussed in the classical Upanishads, it was not until the eighth-century Buddhist Hevajra Tantra and *Caryāgiti*, that hierarchies of chakras were introduced.<sup>[8]</sup>

## 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.

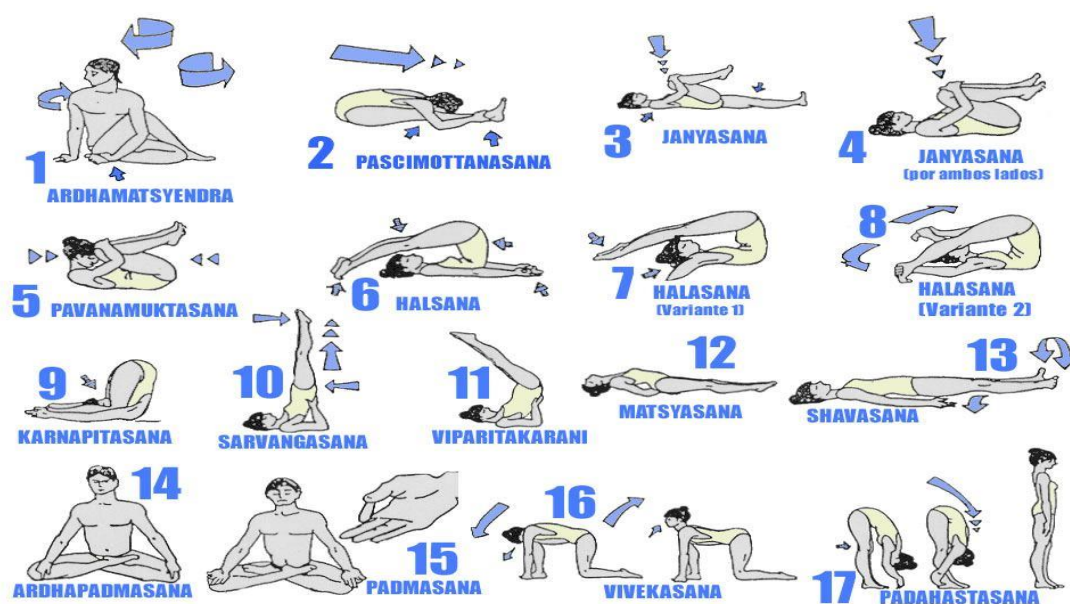


Figure-6: Hatha yoga



### Potential benefits for adults

While much of the medical community views the results of yoga research to be significant, others argue that there were many flaws that undermine results. Much of the research on yoga has been in 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 has been shown to improve mood and anxiety more than some other metabolically matched exercises, such as walking.<sup>[9]</sup> 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 pain medication use. 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 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.





**Figure-7: Pranayam**

### **Physical injuries**

Since a small percentage of yoga practitioners each year suffer physical injuries analogous to sports injuries; 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, so called "Yoga foot drop," etc. 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.<sup>[10]</sup> This can occur in a variety of contexts, for example, in a beauty shop while your hair is being rinsed, 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.



**Figure-8: Yoga & physiology**

## Yoga 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:

1. *Sthula sarira*, the Gross body, comprising the *Annamaya Kosha*
2. *Suksma sarira*, the Subtle body, composed of;
  1. the *Pranamaya Kosha* (Vital breath or Energy),
  2. *Manomaya Kosha* (Mind)
  3. the *Vijnanamaya Kosha* (Intellect)
3. *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 compared with other systems of meditation**

Pranayama is a Sanskrit word meaning "extension of the prāna or breath" or, "extension of the life force". The word is composed of two Sanskrit words, Prana, life force, or vital energy, particularly, the breath, and "ayāma", to extend or draw out. (Not 'restrain, or control' as is often translated from 'yam' instead of 'ayāma'). The origin of this yogic discipline lies in ancient Bharat (India) and what is known as present day Hinduism.<sup>[11]</sup>

### **Etymology**

#### **Breath, respiration**

The breath of life, vital air, principle of life (usually plural in this sense, there being five such vital airs generally assumed, but three, six, seven, nine, and even ten are also spoken of) Energy, vigor.

The spirit or soul: Pran

Pran is a subtle invisible force (high valence ion charged oxygenated air) - is the life-force that pervades the body. It is the factor that connects the body and the mind, because it is connected on one side with the body and on the other side with the mind. It is the connecting link between the body and the mind. The body and the mind have no direct connection. They are connected through Pran only.

### **Yog**

Yog primarily works with the energy in the body through the science of pranayam or energy-control. Pran also means 'breath.' Yog teaches how to still the mind through breath-control and attain higher states of awareness. The higher teachings of yog take one beyond techniques and show the yogi or yog practitioner how to direct his concentration in such a way as not only to harmonize human with divine consciousness, but to merge his consciousness in the Infinite. Of these meanings, the concept of "vital air" is used by Bhattacharyya to describe the concept as used in Sanskrit texts dealing with pranayama. Apte's definition of āyāma derives it from ā + yām and provides several variant meanings for it when used in compounds. The first three meanings have to do with "length", "expansion, extension", and "stretching, extending", but in the specific case of use in the compound pranayama he defines āyāma as meaning "restrain, control, stopping".

### ***Hatha and Raja Yoga Varieties***

Some scholars distinguish between hath and rāj yog varieties of pranayam, with the former variety usually prescribed for the beginner. According to Taimni, hath yogic pranayam involves manipulation of pranic currents through breath regulation for bringing about the control of chitt-vritti and changes in consciousness, whereas rāj yog pranayam involves the control of chitt-vritti by consciousness directly through the will of the mind. Students qualified to practice pranayam are therefore always initiated first in the techniques of hath pranayam. According to Bhagavad-Gītā As It Is, pranayam is translated to "trance induced by stopping all breathing", also being made from the two separate Sanskrit words, prān and āyām. Pranayama is the fourth 'limb' of the eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga mentioned in verse 2.29 in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Patanjali, a Hindu Rishi, discusses his specific approach to pranayama in verses 2.49 through 2.51, and devotes verses 2.52 and 2.53 to explaining the benefits of the practice. Patanjali does not fully elucidate the nature of prana, and the theory and practice of pranayama seem to have undergone significant development after him. He presents pranayama as essentially an exercise that is preliminary to concentration, as do the earlier Buddhist texts.



**Figure-9: Meditation**

Many yoga teachers advise that pranayama should be part of an overall practice that includes the other limbs of Patanjali's Raja Yoga teachings, especially Yama, Niyama, and Asana.<sup>[12]</sup>

### **Forms of Pranayama**

There are over 50 particular Pranayama techniques and forms, these include:

Anuloma pranayama- Alternate Nostril Breathing, a.k.a. 'Nadi Shodhana Pranayama'

Ujjayi Pranayama - aka "Ocean Breath"

Bhastrika Pranayama - "Bellows Breath" - Long and deep diaphragmatic breathing

Kumbhaka Pranayama - "Breath retention"

Viloma Pranayama - "the air is inhaled and exhaled with pauses"

Udgeeth Pranayama - "Chanting Pranayam" - often done with the chanting of the Om mantra.

Kapalabhati pranayam - "Skull shining breath"

Shitali Pranayama - "Cooling breath" - Breathing is done through the mouth with the tongue extended.

### **Shitkari Pranayama**

Surya Bhedana Pranayama & Chandra Bhedana Pranayama - Single nostril breathing, right nostril is associated with the Sun (Surya) and left nostril with the moon.

Sama Vritti Pranayama - "Equal Breathing"

Agnisar Pranayama - focuses on the Navel region/Stomach

Bhramari Pranayama - "Bee Breath" - The yogin makes a humming sound while breathing

Agni-Prasana - "Breath of Fire".

### **Medical**

Several researchers have reported that pranayama techniques are beneficial in treating a range of stress-related disorders, improving autonomic functions, relieving symptoms of asthma (though a different study did not find any improvement) and reducing signs of oxidative stress. Practitioners report that the practice of pranayama develops a steady mind, strong will-power, and sound judgement, and also claim that sustained pranayama practice extends life and enhances perception. Alternate nostril breathing (ANB) pranayama, also known as Nadisuddhi pranayama, is one of the beneficial pranayama for cardiopulmonary functions. Regular practice of ANB (Nadisuddhi) increases parasympathetic activity and lowers systolic blood pressure as well as respiratory rate. In fact there are a number of studies indicating that pranayama causes changes in the cardiorespiratory system including a lowering of blood pressure and of heart rate.<sup>[13]</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

Many yoga teachers recommend that Pranayama techniques be practiced with care and that advanced pranayama techniques should be practiced under the guidance of a teacher. For example, people with low blood pressure must perform it cautiously or may even have to avoid it. On the other hand pranayama may be helpful for someone with high blood pressure as the practice has been shown to lower resting blood pressure and heart rate (see the Medical section this article). These cautions are also made in traditional Hindu literature. Pregnant

women may have to forgo pranayama. Exercises which incorporate the Valsalva maneuver, a moderately forceful attempt to exhale against a closed airway, usually done by closing one's mouth, pinching one's nose shut while pressing out as if blowing up a balloon, have been medically associated in emergency room practice with subcutaneous emphysema, development of pockets of air in the body outside the lungs, for example under the skin or in the abdomen. An incidence of rectus sheath hematoma which required emergency surgery to repair a ruptured inferior epigastric artery and removal of 750 ml of blood from a woman's abdomen occurred during vigorous pranayama practice by an older woman with high blood pressure.

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