

# The History of Yoga

## An Introductory Course for 200-hr YTT Programs

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“Let yoga be practiced within a cave protected from the high wind, or in a place which is level, pure, and free from pebbles, gravel, and fire, undisturbed by the noise of water or of market-booths, and which is delightful to the mind and not offensive to the eye.

When earth, water, fire, air, and akasa arise, that is to say, when the five attributes of the elements, mentioned in the books on yoga, become manifest, then the yogi's body becomes purified by the fire of yoga and he is free from illness, old age, and death.

As gold covered by earth shines bright after it has been purified, so also the yogi, realizing the truth of Atman, becomes one [with the non-dual Atman], attains the goal, and is free from grief. Knowledge of Brahman Leads to Immortality And when the yogi beholds the real nature of Brahman, through the Knowledge of the Self, radiant as a lamp, then, having known the unborn and immutable Lord, who is untouched by ignorance and its effects, he is freed from all fetters.”  
- Svetasvatara Upanishad (2.10-2.15)

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### Recommended reading:

- Amy Vaughn, *From the Vedas to Vinyasa*
- Hugh B. Urban, *The Power of Tantra: Religion, Sexuality and the Politics of South Asian Studies*
- James Mallinson and Mark Singleton, *Roots of Yoga*
- Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*
- Robert Love, *The Great Oom: The Improbable Birth of Yoga in America*
- Suhotra Dasa Tapovanachari, *The Six Systems of Vedic Philosophy*

### Websites

- Vedanta Library (for downloads of sacred texts), <https://www.shastras.com/>
- Yoga Encyclopedia (for clarifying concepts) <https://www.yogapedia.com/dictionary>
- The Yoga Poster <https://theyogaposter.com/>

## Introduction

There are many things we can quickly learn to do in life, like our multiplication tables, how to read or ride a bike.

Yoga is not one of those things.

Yoga is perhaps one of the most spiritually rich, philosophically complex, mentally challenging, emotionally enriching, and physically demanding set of practices and knowledge ever produced by human beings.

Yoga is paradoxically something you can teach a child to do, while also something that takes a hundred lifetimes to fully understand. One person could just take a small part of the entire yoga discipline and commit their entire life towards exploring this practice. The process of going deeper into yoga is infinite in both depth and possibilities.

For many practitioners in the West, yoga is a physical exercise that they do for about an hour, three times a week. But as soon as the curious student explores deeper into what yoga really is and what it can be, it becomes immediately apparent that most people have only dipped their toes into a deep and vast ocean of wisdom and understanding.

Talking about the history of yoga can be a bit like talking about the history of the guitar. Some of the oldest string instruments in the world go back thousands of years into antiquity. However, these instruments have continually changed and evolved over time. Different peoples and cultures have played their own unique songs and created their own interpretations of this beautiful instrument. A medieval musician might barely recognize the modern rockstar (just as many people might claim that what people are doing nowadays barely qualifies as yoga), but of course everything is connected in the continuing evolution of human consciousness.

While yoga certainly started and evolved in the land of what is now India, it is now a worldwide phenomenon that continues to innovate, change, and adapt. We say in the practice, “root to rise.” As you participate in this practice of yoga and how it is evolving, remember to stay rooted in its long and ancient history. Thousands of teachers have kept this tradition alive over countless generations, and now it is being passed on to you, so that you can pass it on to others.

Interestingly, yoga’s exact origin remains a mystery. There is some evidence to indicate that early forms of Yoga may have existed as far back as 2500BCE, in the Indus Valley region of

India. Sculptures of figures seated in what look like lotus postures have been found from this era, but because the script accompanying the figures is unknown, it is not possible to determine with any certainty if the sculptures are representations of a yoga posture, or simply one way of sitting on the floor.

What is clear is that since the earliest times there has existed an understanding that human consciousness is vast, can be explored, and from that exploration insights unfold as revealed wisdom about the human condition, the universe, and our place in it.

To find our way to the school of yoga and beyond, we will take a long course through thousands of years of philosophy, covering the Vedas, ancient Indian Epics, the fundamental philosophical schools, the birth of Hatha Yoga and the evolution of Modern Day Yoga.

Welcome and Namaste,

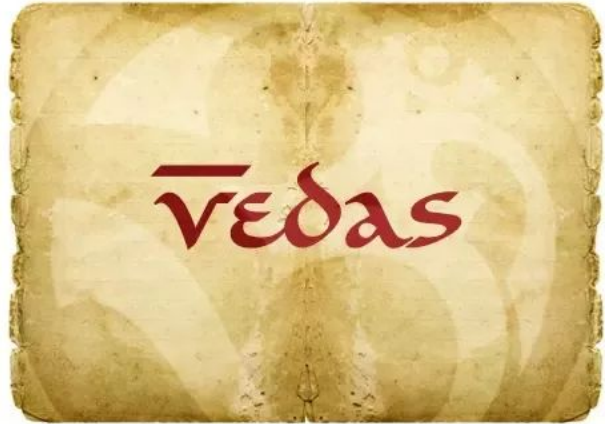
- Zach

## India's Philosophical Roots: The Vedas and The Upanishads

*"When the five senses, along with the mind, remain still and the intellect is not active, that is known as the highest state. They consider yoga to be firm restraint of the senses. Then one becomes un-distracted for yoga is the arising and the passing away" (6.10-11)*

If we are to look into history, we begin with verifiable, preserved records. And no record goes deeper into history nor contains such robust philosophical roots as to the texts known as The Vedas.

The Vedas are a collection of hymns and other ancient religious texts written in India between about 1500 and 1000 BCE. During this period of time, a large group of nomads called the Aryans, coming from central Asia, crossed the Hindu Kush Mountains, and migrated into the Indian subcontinent.



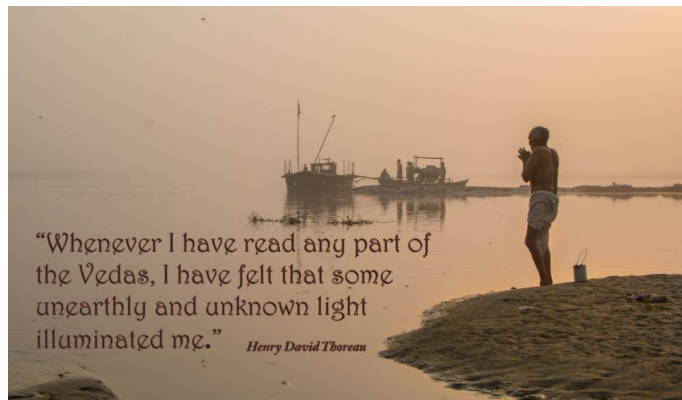
The language of the Vedas is Sanskrit, an ancestor of most of the modern languages spoken today in South Asia. The texts constitute the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism. Hindus consider the Vedas to be *apauruṣeya*, which means "not of a man, superhuman" and it is said that they were not thought up by a person, but merely "heard" by enlightened sages and written down.

### Content and Structure

The Vedas are divided into four sections: Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva.

#### **Rig-Veda "Knowledge of the Hymns of Praise", for recitation.**

The Rig-Veda is the largest and most important text of the Vedic collection; it includes 1028 hymns on various Vedic Gods and Goddesses. It has around 35,000 words, divided into ten books called mandalas.



It is a difficult text, written in a very obscure style and filled with metaphors and allusions that are hard to understand for a modern reader. The Rig Vedas mention asana, meditation, the Universal God, introduces Agni, super consciousness.

The most often addressed gods were nature gods like Indra (rain god; king of heavens), Agni (fire god), Rudra (storm god; the 'howler'), and Soma (the draught of immortality, an alcoholic brew).

### **Sama-Veda “Knowledge of the Melodies”, for chanting.**

The Sama-Veda has verses that are almost entirely from the Rig-Veda, but are arranged in a different way since they are meant to be chanted. This Veda contains the well known Gayatri mantra. There are painstaking instructions in Sama-Veda about how particular hymns must be sung; to put great emphasis upon sounds of the words of the mantras and the effect they could have on the environment and the person who pronounced them.

### **Yajur-Veda “Knowledge of the Sacrificial formulas” for liturgy (fire ceremony).**

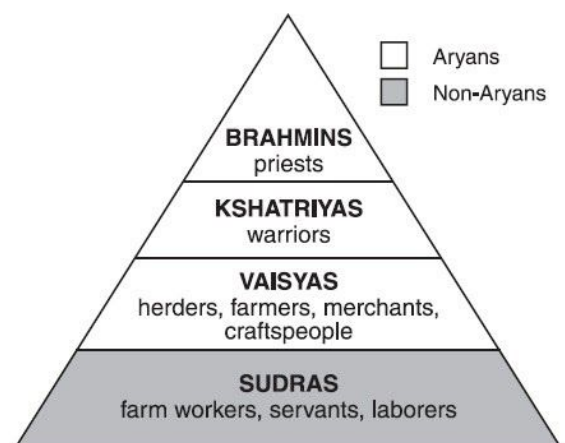
The Yajur-Veda lays down various sacred invocations (yajurs) which were chanted by a particular sect of priests called *adhvaryu*. They performed the sacrificial rites. The Veda also outlines various chants which should be sung to pray and pay respects to the various instruments which are involved in the sacrifice. The Yajur-Veda talks of white and black magic, it also mentions karma and how we are all in a cosmic ceremony.

### **Atharva-Veda “Knowledge of the Magic formulas”, named after a kind of group of priests.**

The Atharva-Veda contains charms and magical incantations and has a more folkloristic style. It is called Atharva because the families of the atharvan sect of the Brahmins have traditionally been credited with the composition of the Vedas.

### **Veda Subtypes**

Each Veda also has four major text types:



The Vedas established four distinct roles for people to play in society. This soon became the controversial caste system that was eventually abolished in 1950.

- **the Samhitas** (mantras and benedictions),
- **the Aranayakas** (text on rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices and symbolic-sacrifices),
- **the Brahmanas** (commentaries on rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices),
- and most importantly, **the Upanishads** (texts discussing meditation, philosophy and spiritual knowledge).

In the Vedas it is said that there are 3,339 deities, although only 33 are mentioned by name. The Vedas also elaborate on the four main *varnas*, or roles that a person can play in society. The *varnas* became known as castes and formed the caste system that was an important part of India until it was abolished in the 1950s.

### **The Upanishads**

*“Get up! Wake up! Seek the guidance of an  
Illumined teacher and realize the self!”*

- Katha Upanishad

The concepts of Brahman (ultimate reality) and atman (soul, self) are central ideas in all of the Upanishads and "know that you are the atman" is their thematic focus. More than 200 Upanishads are known, of which the first dozen or so are the oldest and most important and are referred to as the principal or main (mukhya) Upanishads. The mukhya Upanishads were, for centuries, memorized by each generation and passed down orally.

**When the senses are firmly reigned in,  
That is Yoga, so people think.  
From distractions a man is then free,  
For Yoga is the coming-into-being,  
As well as the ceasing-to-be.**

- Katha Upanishad

The word *upanishad* literally means “to sit down near,” implying that the student would learn the wisdom in the texts by sitting near a great teacher.

The span of a spiritual man’s life in India was divided into four stages: student, householder, forest dweller, and sannyasin, where one renounces material life and becomes a devoted spiritual seeker.

In the Upanishads, we find an explanation of the human psyche, “Above the senses is the mind, Above the mind is the intellect, above that is the ego, and above the ego is the unmanifested Cause.” We also find the four original *mahavakyas*, or great sayings:



Some other translations are:

- *Prajnanam Brahma* - Wisdom is Brahman, Brahman is intelligence
- *Aham Brahmasmi* - Atman is Brahman,
- *Tat Tvam Asi* - That art Thou, That you are
- *Ayam atma Brahma*- I am Brahman, My true self is Brahman, I am Divine

A few more *mahavakyas* include:

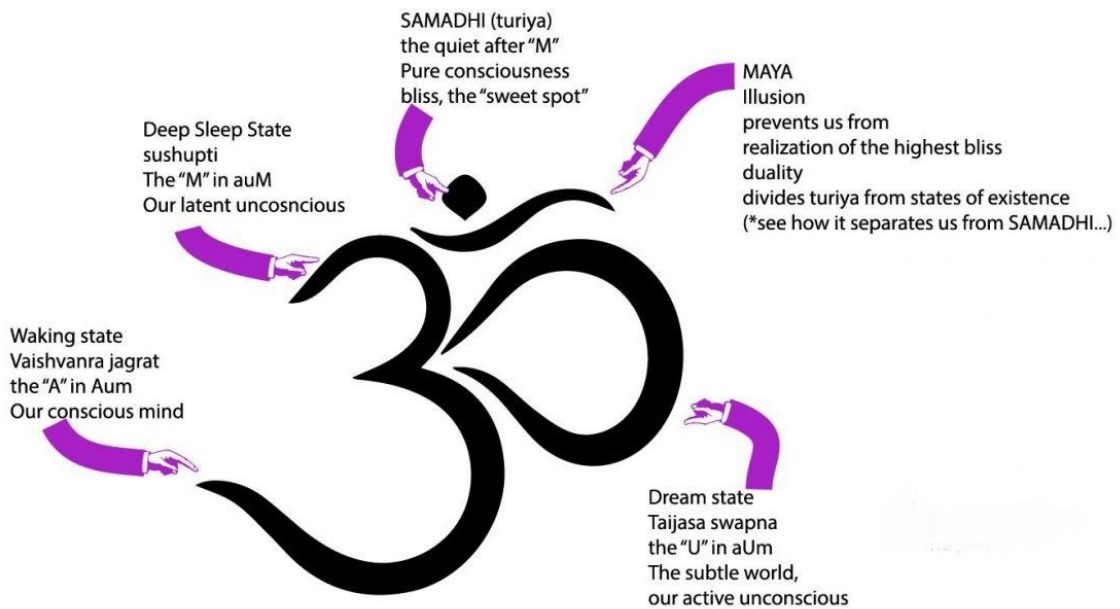
- *Isavasyam idam sarvam* - everything in the entire universe is enveloped by God
- *Prajnatma* - I am the intelligent Self
- *Pranosmi* - I am breath

We also see an explanation and reference of the sacred syllable, Om, or more succinctly, Aum, where:

1. A - waking state / *jagrat*
2. U - dreaming state / *swapna*
3. M - deep sleep state / *sushupti*
4. Silence - pure consciousness / *turiya*

These four states of consciousness are described in the Chandogya Upanishad and recur commonly in the literature of yoga.





**Key Concepts: Karma, Samsara, Moksha, Samskara, Mantra, Atman, Maya, Brahman, Pranayama, AUM.**

## Epic Hindu Literature: The Bhagavad Gita and The Four Paths

*"Yoga is said to be equanimity" (2.48);*

*"Yoga is skill in action" (2.50);*

*"Know that which is called yoga to be separation from contact with suffering" (6.23).*

All cultures throughout time create and tell stories. Myths, stories, legends, and folktales provide ways for people to perceive, think about, and order their world. They often explain how the world came to be, and what role humanity plays in the larger cosmos. They set standards of behavior and reflect cultural values and pass them along to future generations. Mythology can be thought of as the sum of the interconnected myths told by a specific cultural group to explain the world consistent with a people's experience of the world in which they live.

To understand the history of yoga we must try to understand what it means to live in a mythic culture, where the stories people are told shape the world they live in. Indian mythology is wrapped up into every aspect of life. Many people dismiss such cultural stories as spiritual hogwash or superstition, and often take them too literally. There is an important phrase to remember, "history is fiction wrapped in truth. Myth is truth wrapped in fiction." Cultural myths that have stood the test of time reflect more about being human than a simple historical timeline. As you learn more about epic culture, remember the words of Rumi:

*A story is like water  
That you heat for your bath.  
It takes messages between the fire  
and your skin. It lets them meet,  
and it cleans you!*

### **The Epic Age**

If the Vedas and Upanishads are the kings of Indian philosophy, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are the Queens. These stories are said to be India's two greatest and most important epics.

The Mahabharata is a massive and sprawling story (18 books long) about the five heroic and virtuous Pandava brothers and



their quest to gain and hold an empire against their wicked cousins, the Kauravas. The epic climaxes with a great battle which destroys all the world's armies. The Hindu god Krishna has a pivotal role in this epic as a guide to the heroes.

The Ramayana also revolves around a Hindu god: Rama. In this epic, Rama is a prince who must go into exile before he can claim his throne. While in exile, a demon named Ravana kidnaps his wife Sita. Rama and his brother Lakshman, aided by an army of monkeys must go and rescue her. They become friends and allies with a powerful monkey named Hanuman, also a Hindu deity, along the way.

While both epics portray Hindu dharma, or moral righteousness, many look to Rama in particular as a model of human morality.

These works introduced what is known as the trimurti, the three forms, featuring the three main deities of Hinduism:

1. Brahma - the Creator
2. Vishnu - The Preserver
3. Shiva - The Destroyer.

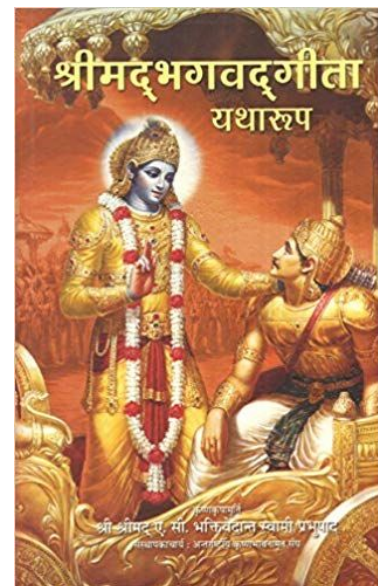
### **The Gita**

*Be steadfast in the performance of your duty, O Arjun, abandoning attachment to success and failure. Such equanimity is called Yoga. (2.48)*

A story incorporated into the Mahabharata became known as **the Bhagavad Gita (the Lord's Song)**, shortened by many to the Gita.

Whereas the Vedas were the property of the elite priestly caste, and the Upanishads were reserved for forest dwelling sannyasins, the Gita spoke to people who choose to play their roles in society while still following a spiritual path.

*“The yogi is superior to ascetics; he is also considered to be superior to those who have knowledge; and the yogi is superior to ritualists. Therefore, be a yogi, Arjuna! - 6.46*



In the Bhagavad Gita, Vishnu acquired a new incarnation: Krishna. Krishna was originally a non-Aryan god in northwestern India. In the old Mahabharata he was a secondary hero, a god who had appeared in human form. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna became the Supreme Deity in human form.

The Bhagavad Gita became Hinduism's most popular scripture and into modern times it would be read by many for daily reference – a work that Mahatma Gandhi would describe as an infallible guide to conduct.

The Gita offers 3 paths for the yogic practitioner: bhakti, karma, and jnana.



***Bhakti Yoga***  
*is the path of love and devotion*



***Jnana Yoga***  
*is the path of knowledge*



***Karma Yoga***  
*is the path of work, and service*

## **Bhakti Yoga**

*Arjuna:*

*Which way is sure and swift, love or knowledge?*

*Sri Krishna:*

*For those who set their hearts on me  
And worship me with unfailing devotion and faith,  
The way of love leads sure and swift to me.*

Bhakti is the yoga of devotion, ultimately to the Divine, but it can initially be a guru, your family, a friend, or anything that creates strong emotional ties. Bhakti is the path of love which removes jealousy, hatred, lust, anger, egoism, pride, and arrogance. It replaces those feelings with feelings of joy, divine ecstasy, bliss, peace, and wisdom.



Vedanta says there is a fine thread made of Pure Love (Prem), which connects your heart with the Divine. This thread is the essence of Bhakti. It's been lying dormant in your heart since the beginning of creation, hidden by layers of ignorance and suffering.

However, no matter what you do or where you go, this thread, our Divine connection, can never be broken. This is what creates the deep yearning of your Soul for joy and bliss. To be in love with someone or something creates separation. Bhakti is to be love—to be intoxicated with Divine Love. It is the Unity of being in love with Love Itself. Vedanta says, put the emphasis where it belongs—on the Divine Self within each person we encounter.

Again Krishna in the Gita tells us that Bhakti yoga is the path to salvation and freedom from the endless cycle of death and rebirth,

*I am easily attained by the person who always remembers me and is attached to nothing else. Such a person is a true yogi, Arjuna. Great souls make their lives perfect and discover me; they are freed from mortality and the suffering of this separate existence. Every creature in the universe is subject to rebirth, Arjuna, except the one who is united with me.*

The Bhakti Yogi:

- Asks what is it that I long for at the deepest level of my Being?
- Is pure in thoughts, words, and actions
- Looks for the Divinity in the ordinary
- Honors and respects all life
- Purifies the heart through devotion
- Sings, dances, chants, and listens to Divine verses
- Surrenders by being open to everything
- Acts as a servant, friend, or mother to the Divine in everyone

With Bhakti, all attachments end except the all-absorbing love for God—this is the only attachment that frees rather than limits. Once the Divine is re-established in the temple of your heart, Its Love will serve you for eternity. Bhakti is the journey to finally “rest in God.”

### **Karma Yoga**

*As the ignorant perform their duties with attachment to results,  
similarly the learned may also act, but without attachment,  
for the sake of leading people on the right path.*

*Let not the wise disrupt the minds  
of the ignorant who are attached to fruitive action.  
They should not be encouraged to refrain from work,  
but to engage in work in the spirit of devotion.*

3.25-6

Karma means “action,” and Karma Yoga is performing action without attachment to the outcome. It is the path of selfless service (Seva). You cease to identify with the ego and all action is seen as an offering to the Divine.

The heart is purified so egoism, hatred, jealousy, selfishness, and similar negative qualities vanish, creating space for humility, pure love, sympathy, tolerance, and compassion.

Karma Yoga is “doing the right thing,”—the process of achieving perfection in action. It



means following one's dharma (true purpose) and accepting whatever comes, without expectation of payment, thanks, or recognition.

The Karma Yogi:

- Lives life with passion but remains dispassionate about the outcome
- Is effortless and graceful in all things
- Has a loving, friendly nature
- Is sympathetic, compassionate, and tolerant
- Rejoices in the success and happiness of others
- Feels neither above nor beneath anyone
- Speaks and acts truthfully

Vedanta also says that Karma Yoga is the Warriors Path and the Yogi should:

- Maintain a strong healthy body
- Bear insults and compliments, comfort and pain, equally
- Have faith in him/herself, knowing that the Divine will always love him/her
- Be adaptable to any situation and able to mix with everyone
- Have a calm mind
- Be fearless

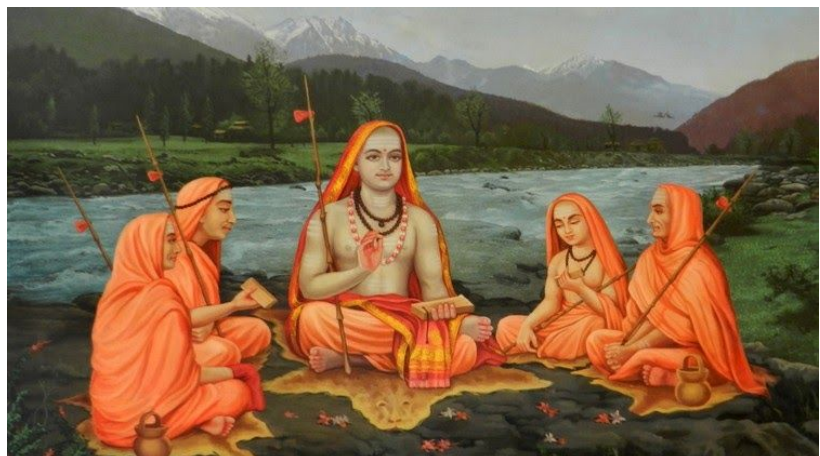
### **Gyana (Jnana) Yoga**

*Constantly engaged in the knowledge of the Self,  
keeping the goals of truth and Self-knowledge in sight;  
this is the path of wisdom. Anything opposed to this is ignorance.*

-13:11

Gyana Yoga is the path of knowledge or, more correctly, wisdom. It is the means to Enlightenment through the process of reason—particularly the process of discrimination between what is real and what is not real, what is true and untrue—through study and self-inquiry.

It is said to be the most difficult path because it uses the mind and intellect to go beyond themselves to finally realize you are One with the Divine.



The Upanishads call it the “razor’s edge,” where the ego is always trying to knock us off. It requires great strength of character, will power, and intellect.

When asked a question, Ramana Maharshi, a great Indian Saint and Gyana Yogi, would often reply, “First ask yourself who is asking the question.” Gyana Yoga is the study of the ancient texts and teachings of the Great Masters but, more importantly, it is the study of your own self.

The Gyana Yogi:

- Studies the spiritual texts of his/her traditions
- Reads the words of the Great Masters
- Asks the heart the following questions and listens to the answers without judgement or evaluation:
  - Who am I
  - What do I want?
  - What is my purpose?
  - What am I grateful for?
- Is mindful of the surrounding world
- Listens, reflects, contemplates
- Practices discernment and detachment
- Meditates and takes time each day to be silent

The Gyana Yogi stops worrying about what is being seen but asks, “Why am I seeing it?” Life begins to be seen as a dream.

The Bhagavad Gita mentions yoga dozens of times and expands on its definition from the Upanishads. Now yoga refers both to perfect evenness of mind, as well as skill in action. It refers to various paths of spiritual pursuit, the act of meditation, and the equanimity we can achieve through spiritual practice.

Now Yoga is the path, the practice, and the state of consciousness associated with liberation.

**Key Concepts: Dharma, Bhakti, Jnana, Karma, Trimurti, Surya Namaskar, Gunas.**



## The Darshanas and Patanjali

*"Yoga is the suppression of the activities of the mind" (Patanjali 1.2)*

*"There is no knowledge equal to Shamkhya and no power equal to yoga (Mahabharata 12.304.2ab)*

So far Indian philosophy is mostly a unified whole, although different paths are being opened up and new pathways to Vedanta and Hinduism.

It was not until the years of 800 BCE and 200CE where not only did a number of philosophical schools become introduced, but also the competition and integration between these various schools was intense.

Some schools would survive this time and remain popular until today, while others would not and only remain of interest to historians and philosophers.

The schools are usually divided into two types, depending on whether or not they accept the authority of the Vedas.



### **Six Orthodox (Astika) Schools**

<u>Darshana/School</u>	<u>Author/Founder</u>	<u>Specialty</u>
Nyaya	Sage Goutama	Logic and Reasoning
Vaisheshika	Sage Kanada	Theories on matter/vedic atomic theory
Samkhya	Sage Kapila	Analysis of matter and spirit/origin of universe

Mimansa	Sage Jaimini	Analysis of fruitful work
Vedanta	Sage Vyasa	Science of realization of supreme-self
Yoga	Sage Patanjali	Self discipline and self-realization

#### Five Heterodox (Nastika) Schools

<u>Darshana/School</u>	<u>Author/Founder</u>	<u>Specialty</u>
Charvak	Sage Charvaka	Eat, sleep, rave, repeat.
Bouddha	The Shakyamuni Buddha	Nirvana, emptiness, impermanence
Jaina	Sage Vardhamana Mahavira	Non-violence
Ajivika	Makkhali Gosala	Fate (absolute determinism)
Ajnana	Unknown	Suspension of judgement.

Here we see the beginning of yoga as a separate and unified philosophy, as elaborated on by the great sage Patanjali.

While not the first mention of yoga in ancient scriptures, the yoga sutras of Patanjali are one of the first compendiums of yogic knowledge. The Yoga Sutras contain 196 Sutras, divided between four chapters, discussing the aims and practice of yoga, the development of yogic powers and finally, liberation.

Patanjali's system is known as the fourth path of yoga, Raja Yoga, the Royal path designed to discipline the body and mind. Since most 200-hr courses spend a significant amount of time covering Patanjali's Sutras, so they will not be expanded further upon here in this section.

**Key Concepts: Buddhism, Anatman, Purusa, Prakrti, Ashtanga: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranyama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. Siddhis, Ishwara**

## Let's Get Physical: Hatha Yoga

As philosophers and spiritual practitioners continued to debate the merits of their schools and evolve over time, the Indian subcontinent remained a land rich with spirituality. Eventually, the school of yoga evolved too, and a new discipline came about: Hatha Yoga.

Some scholars and practitioners argue that Hatha Yoga developed from the Tantra movements that had been happening over the last few centuries. After all, Hatha Yoga is a very physical practice that seeks to both purify and strengthen the body.

Earlier Indian spirituality largely viewed the body as something to overcome, while the tantra movements in Buddhism, Hinduism and Jain philosophy sought to include the body as an aspect of the Sacred.

Hatha yoga methods drew a lot from Patanjali's system as well as the tantric yoga that was being practiced at the time, but introduced a number of physical practices not seen in either. This is the first time we see a number of cleansing techniques, non-seated postures, complex methods of breath-control and physical means of manipulating the vital energy.

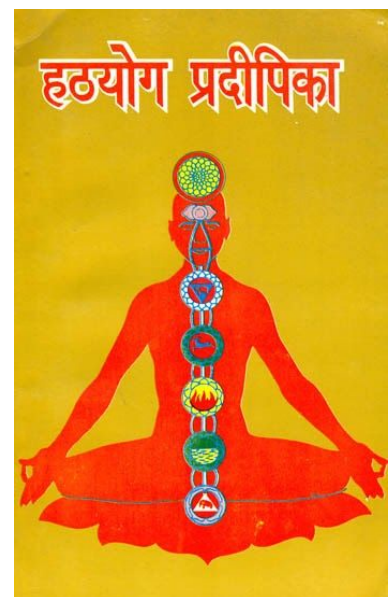
As the corpus of text on hatha yoga developed, asana went from being a simple way of sitting for meditation, mantra-repetition and breath-control -- taught in passing -- to one of its most important, complex, diverse and well-documented practices.

Although the first mention of hatha yoga is found in the 13th century Vaisnava text, *dattatreya yoga shastra*, there are considered to be 3 foundational texts of Hatha Yoga published since then. These are: the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, the Gheranda Samhita, and the Shiva Samhita.

### **The Hatha Yoga Pradipika**

The Hatha Yoga Pradipika is a medieval scripture written in 1350 by the Nath Yogi Swatmarama. The Hatha Yoga Pradipika is one of the most detailed manuals describing the techniques of Hatha Yoga.

Pradipika means "light" or "to illuminate." Hatha traditionally meant "force," referencing the strong force that was required to do Hatha Yoga.



Over time most commentators prefer to say that ha means “sun”, and tha means “moon,” with yoga or yug meaning to “join”. So the title suggests: light on how to join the sun and the moon, or another way we could say this would be: how to go beyond all limitations posed by living in a mundane reality where Nature and Spirit are kept separate.

When viewed from this perspective, hatha yoga is a tantric practice as it attempts to bring about a harmony between the two energies of life: the pranic and the mental. This pair can also be described as the shakti, or female, cool current which travels through the ida nadi, and the mind, or male, hot current which travels through the pingala nadi. When their union takes place in the central channel (sushumna nadi) it is the union of body and mind, and this is the awakening of higher consciousness.

Contrary to the popular belief in our present era that defines Hatha Yoga as “easy yoga,” Hatha Yoga is anything but easy. It is certainly not for the faint of heart or those lacking will power. Hatha Yoga is the yoga that is attained through forceful means with difficult physical kriyas and cleansing, purifying actions as a beginning practice.

Its practice demands complete mastery of the physical and mental body, rendering the body and mind capable of withstanding prolonged ecstatic states of union with the infinite. Samadhi, or the enlightened state, is not just a mental experience; it is a psychokinetic or whole-body/mind event, involving every fiber, cell and tissue.

All of the methods of practice described in the text are means to attain Self-realization and so be freed of ego identification and the limitations of avidya.. The intention underlying the strenuous Hatha Yoga practices must be enlightenment for the sake of the Cosmic Self. If this elevated intention is not present, the practices could be binding as they bring about the attainment of supernatural powers, which in the body of one who has not developed humility and compassion, can result in arrogance, narcissism and egocentricity.

The Hatha Yoga Pradipika is composed of four chapters, with a relevant passage quoted below:

1. Asana

*“Paschimottanasana is the best among asanas. By this asana the pranic currents rise through sushumna, the digestive fire increases, the abdomen becomes flat, and the practitioner becomes free from dis-eases.”* I:29

2. Shatkarma and Pranayama

*“Perfection of hatha yoga is achieved when there is leanness of the body, tranquil countenance, manifestation of the inner sound, clear eyes, diseaselessness, control of bindu (semen/ova), active digestive fire and purification of nadis.” II:78*

### 3. Mudra and Bandha

*“The yogi who moves the shakti regularly, enjoys perfection or siddhi. He easily conquers time and death. What more is there to say?” III:120*

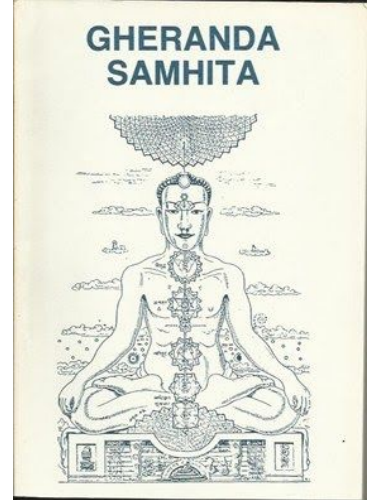
### 4. Samadhi.

*“When the mind ceases to be fickle and is united by fixing it in nada, it becomes immobile like a wingless bird.” IV:92*

## Gheranda Samhita

"Gheranda Samhita," or "Gheranda's Collection," was written in Sanskrit in the late 17th century and is sometimes considered to be the most comprehensive of the three texts as it forms a manual for yoga.

The text is divided into seven chapters with each chapter corresponding to a different part of the journey of yoga. It is focused on the shatkarmas and differs in a few respects from the path of yoga that is described by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras.



1. **Purification through Shatkarma** - includes six cleansing techniques
  - a. *Dhauti* - swallowing a long strip of cloth in order to cleanse the stomach
  - b. *Basti* - enema
  - c. *Neti* - nasal cleansing with thread or water
  - d. *Nauli* - rotating the abdominal muscles to stimulate digestion
  - e. *Trataka* - staring until the eyes water
  - f. *Kapalabhati* - vigorous breathing
2. **Strengthening through Asana** - includes 32 postures
3. **Steadying through Mudra** - includes 25 mudras (gestures)
4. **Calming through Pratyahara** - includes five concentration techniques
5. **Lightness through Pranayama** - includes 10 breathing techniques
6. **Perception through Dhyana** - dedicated to meditation
7. **Isolation through Samadhi** - uses different methods than those Patanjali teaches

Although there are only 32 postures in "Gheranda Samhita," Gheranda explains that there are as many asanas as there are species on the planet, but there are only 84 root asanas. It is stated that it is essential to include at least one inversion in every daily practice of yoga. In general, however, the Hatha yoga described in "Gheranda Samhita" is more seated and meditative than what is most commonly practiced as Hatha yoga today. In fact, tree pose (vrksasana) is the only standing posture mentioned.

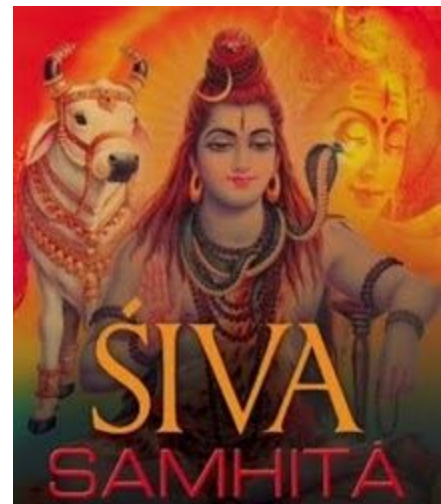
### **Shiva Samhita**

The "Shiva Samhita" translates to English as "Shiva's Compendium." The author of this text is unknown and the date of its writing is disputed. The most recent examinations have concluded that it was probably written before 1500 C.E. in or around the city of Varanasi, which is known as the spiritual capital of India.

The "Shiva Samhita" is written from the point of view of the Hindu god, Shiva, writing to his consort, Parvati, and is one of the oldest surviving texts based on Hatha yoga. It is regarded as being the most complete set of writings on Hatha yoga.

Eighty-four asanas are mentioned in the text, although only four of them are written down in detail. It also covers five types of prana and subjects such as meditation, tantra, mudras and yogic philosophy. 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, the "king of kings of yogas", and a global mantra.



**Key concepts: Shatkarma, Mudra, Bandhas (Mula, Uddiyana, Jalandhara), Nadis, Sushumna, Ida, Pingala, Padmasana.**

## The Birth of Modern Yoga

Modern Yoga almost seems to explode from nothing in the early 1900s, but Western interest in the practice and Eastern Philosophy as a whole had already been bubbling up for some time.

Both Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson had written about their love of Indian Scripture. The transcendentalist movement from the 1830s to the 1880s, of which both Emerson and Thoreau were big players, put further interest on exotic metaphysical ideas.



So far yoga has put its place in history as a system of disciplining the mind, purifying the body, and explaining the nature of consciousness and the greater cosmos.

The popularity of yoga would truly take off in the West when a number of extremely dedicated and passionate teachers synthesized and packaged yoga in a way to attract the Western mindset.

While countless yogis and yoginis contributed to the expansion of yoga in the Western world, some of the key players are listed below.

### **Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) - First Major Indian Philosophical tour of the Western World**

*"You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul."*

Swami Vivekananda was an Indian Hindu monk, a chief disciple of the 19th-century Indian mystic Ramakrishna. He was a key figure in the introduction of the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world and is credited with raising interfaith awareness, bringing Hinduism to the status of a major world religion during the late 19th century. He was a major force in the revival of Hinduism in India, and contributed to the concept of nationalism in colonial India.

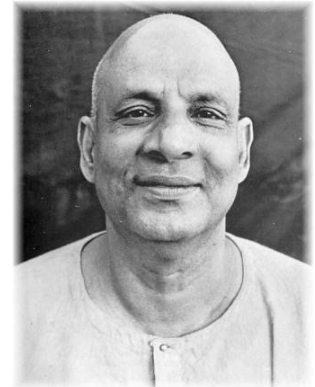


Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. He is perhaps best known for his speech which began with the words - "Sisters and brothers of America ...," in which he introduced Hinduism at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1893.

**Swami Sivananda (1867-1973) - Founder of Sivananda Ashrams**

*“Always do good to others. Be selfless. Mentally remove everything and be free. This is divine life. This is the direct way to Moksha or salvation.”*

Swami Sivananda began his yogic journey in 1923 after completing a 10 year medical practice in Malaysia during which time he felt the call to heal beyond the physical level and heal spirituality. He returned to India and began a devoted practice. Sivananda authored hundreds of books and articles on yoga and spirituality to maintain and introduce yogic values into the minds of the general public. His work inspired the establishment of over 30 yoga centers and ashrams worldwide which still operate today.



**Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1992) - Founder of Kriya Yoga, Self-Realization Fellowship**

*“Let my soul smile through my heart and my heart smile through my eyes, that I may scatter rich smiles in sad hearts.”*

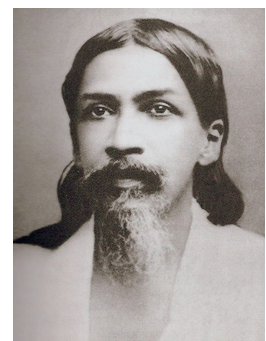
In 1920 Yogananda came to the US and toured and lectured extensively. He introduced millions of westerners to the teachings of meditation and Kriya Yoga through his book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Kriya yoga is union with the infinite through a certain action or rite (kriya). Yogananda emphasized the underlying unity of the world’s great religions, and taught universally applicable methods for attaining direct personal experience of God.



**Sri Aurobindo (1872 - 1950) - Influential leader of Indian Independence and Founder of Integral Yoga**

*“There is nothing the mind can do that cannot be better done in the mind's immobility and thought-free stillness. When the mind is still, then truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence.”*

From 1902 to 1910 Aurobindo partook in the struggle to free India from the British rule. As a result of his political activities, he was imprisoned in 1908. Two years later he fled British India and found refuge in the French colony of Pondichéry (Puducherry) in southeastern India, where he devoted himself for the rest of his life to the development of his “integral” yoga, which was characterized by its holistic approach and its aim of a fulfilled and spiritually transformed life on earth.

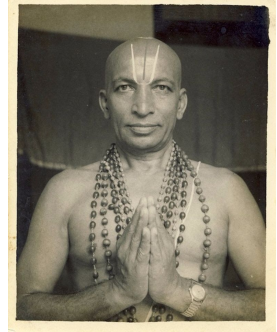




### **Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888-1989) - The Father of Modern asana-based Yoga**

*“Rid your body of its impurities, let your speech be true and sweet, feel friendship for the world, and with humility seek wealth and knowledge.”*

Widely regarded as one of the most influential yoga teachers of the 20th century, Krishnamacharya is credited with the modern revival of Yoga. His yoga instruction reflected his conviction that yoga could be both a spiritual practice and a mode of physical healing by using specific asanas for specific ailments. Through extensive lectures and demonstrations, Krishnamacharya spread the practice of yoga asana and yoga philosophy in India. He served as a teacher and doctor for the Royal Indian Family.



While Krishnamacharya never left India, he did teach a number of incredibly influential teachers that went on to become world famous, including Pattabhi Jois, BKS Iyengar, TKV Desikachar, and Indra Devi.

### **Students of Kirshnamacharya**

#### **Pattabhi Jois - The Father of Ashtanga Yoga**

*“Practice and all is coming.”*

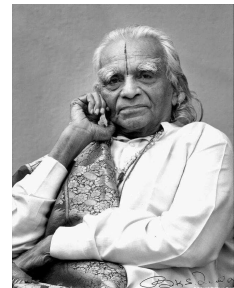
Sri Pattabhi Jois taught a structured flow through a series of poses to build inner heat. He developed an athletic gymnastics style of Asana called Ashtanga Yoga from which modern Vinyasa is derived.



#### **BKS Iyengar - Founder of Iyengar**

*“Yoga is a light, which once lit will never dim. The better your practice, the brighter your flame.”*

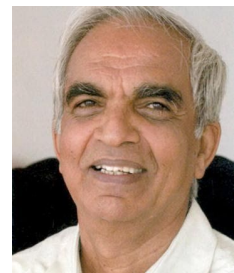
BKS Iyengar suffered from malaria, typhoid and tuberculosis in his childhood and was healed through yoga. Iyengar emphasized detailed alignment in postures and yoga as a therapeutic practice for healing. He introduced the use of props in the practice.



#### **TKV Desikachar - Founder of Viniyoga**

*“The success of Yoga does not lie in the ability to perform postures but in how it positively changes the way we live our life and our relationships.”*

TKV Desikachar was one of six children of Krishnamacharya. Desikachar devoted himself to teaching yoga and making it relevant to people from all walks of life and with all kinds of abilities. His teaching method is based on Krishnamacharya's fundamental principle that yoga must always be adapted



to an individual's changing needs in order to derive the maximum therapeutic benefit.

### **Indra Devi**

*“Yoga is a way to freedom. By its constant practice, we can free ourselves from fear, anguish, and loneliness.”*

Indra Devi is considered the first westerner to study with Krishnamacharya. She is also considered the first woman to become a yoga teacher. Indra Devi opened the first yoga studio in the US in Los Angeles in 1950.



**Key Concepts: Kriya, Vinyasa, Ashtanga, Iyengar, Sivananda.**

**Modern Yoga Types/Forms/Styles/Brands/Franchises**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Founder(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Main tenets</u></b>
<b>Acroyoga</b>	Jenny Sauer-Klein Jason Nemer	Combination of acrobatics, Thai massage, and partner yoga.
<b>Aerial / Anti-Gravity</b>	Christopher Harrison	Postures resembling yoga asana on a loop/hammock of aerial silks.
<b>Anusara</b>	John Friend	Specific sequences around Friend’s “Universal Principles of Alignment” No longer practiced after accusations of abuse by Friend.
<b>Bikram</b>	Bikram Choudhury	26 specific poses in a heated room. Becoming less popular, also after abuse and illegality by Bikram.
<b>Forrest</b>	Ana Forrest	Forrest yoga is designed to help release tension and pain—both physical and emotional—through a series of challenging, dynamic sequences based on yogic teachings, indigenous ceremony, and emotional healing.
<b>Integral</b>	Sri Satchidananda, or Sri Aurobindo	A gentle hatha style of yoga, designed to integrate mind, body, and spirit, by including pranayama, chanting, and meditation.
<b>Jivamukti</b>	David Life Sharon Gannon	Jivamukti means "liberation while living." This is a vinyasa-style practice with themed classes, often including chanting, music, and scripture readings.
<b>Kripalu</b>	Amrit Desai	Both a yoga style and a retreat center in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.
<b>Kundalini</b>	Yogi Bhajan	Emphasis on breathing, mantra, and chanting to awaken kundalini
<b>Nidra</b>	Satyananda Saraswati	Known as yogic sleep, the intention is for the body to become completely relaxed, as the practitioner becomes systematically and increasingly aware of the inner world by following a set of verbal instructions.
<b>Power</b>	Beryl Bender Birch, Bryan Kest Baron Baptiste	More vigorous vinyasa in a heated room.
<b>Restorative</b>	Judith Lasater	Restorative yoga is all about healing the mind and body through simple poses often held for as long as 20 minutes,

		with the help of props such as bolsters, pillows and straps.
<b>Rocket</b>	Larry Schultz	Specific sequences “designed to get you there faster.”
<b>Shadow</b>	Shandor Remete	A hatha yoga system that utilizes three Standing Prelude Forms, rhythmic breathing, bandhas (energetic locks), and the system of marma (trigger points).
<b>Therapy</b>	Dr. Dean Ornish IAYT	The specific application of yogic tools—postures/exercises, breathwork, meditation techniques, and more—to address an individual’s physical, mental, and emotional needs.
<b>Yin</b>	Paulie Zink, Paul Grilley, Sarah Powers.	Comes from the Taoist tradition and focuses on passive, seated postures that target the connective tissues in the hips, pelvis and lower spine. Poses are held for anywhere between one and 10 minutes.

**And even more:** Bowspring, Buti, Cannabis, Chair, Danyasa, Dharma Dru, Kids, Kemetic, Laughter, Mandala, Postnatal, Prenatal, Sculpt, Shiva, Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP), Disco/Beer/Goat/Dog/Nude yoga...

## Conclusion

*O great king, one should reflect upon the marks of one who has attained yoga.*

*The mark of tranquility is that he sleeps happily, as if content.*

*The wise say that one who has attained yoga is like a lamp full of oil burning in a windless place, its flame steady and upright.*

*The mark of one who has attained yoga is that, like a rock struck by raindrops, he cannot be made to move.*

*The sign of one who has attained yoga is that he does not flinch when the sounds of conch shells and kettledrums and various types of singing and music are performed.*

*One should reflect upon the signs of the sage who has attained yoga thus: rising up with his mind focused as a result of the steadiness and stillness of his senses, he is exactly like a man who, holding in his hands a bowl full of oil, climbs a stairway while being threatened by men with swords in their hands, but having controlled himself out of fear of them does not spill a drop from the pot.*

*The man who has attained yoga sees Brahman, which is the supreme imperishable, located in the middle of the great darkness looking like a fire.*

*By means of this he reaches liberation, having abandoned the body, which is not a witness.*

*This, O king, is the ancient everlasting Vedic teaching.*

- Mahabharata 12.304.18-26

## Appendices

### Summary of Yogic Timelines

- 2500-1500 BCE - Indus Valley civilization
- 1000 BCE The Vedas
- 700 BCE The Upanishads
- 500 BCE - The Bhagavad Gita
- 200 CE Yoga Sutras of Patanjali
- 800 CE Sankara's Advaita Vedanta
- 1100s First references to Hatha Yoga
- 1300s Hatha Yoga Pradipika
- 1500s Shiva Samhita
- 1700s Gheranda Samhita
- 1900 Birth of Modern Yoga:
  - 1863-1902 Swami Vivekananda
  - 1867-1973 Swami Sivananda
  - 1888-1989 Krishnamacarya
  - 1893-1992 Paramahansa Yogananda
  - 1899-2002 Indra Devi
  - 1915-2009 Pattabhi Jois
  - 1918-2014 BKS Iyengar
  - 1938-2016 TKV Desikachar

Timeline of the ages (according to another source):

- 7500 - 4500 BCE - Pre-Vedic Age
- 4500 - 1500 BCE Vedic Age
- 1500 - 1000 BCE Upanishadic Age
- 1000 - 100 BCE Epic Age
- 100 BCE - 500 CE Classical Age
- 500 - 1300 CE Tantric Age
- 1300 - 1800 CE Empiric Age
- 1800 - Present Modern Age



Credit : Arvind Bhagwath.

