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## **A Study on Yoga: From its origin to current status**

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### **Abstract**

*Yoga is an ancient Indian practice and all ancient scriptures including the Vedas have accepted the importance of yoga. Yet despite of its popularity the Origin of yoga remains shrouded in mystery. There was a time when yoga was confined to sages meditating in the Himalayan caves for a long time. Yoga's long rich history can be divided into four main periods Pre-Classical (2700B.C.), Classical (500B.C.-800A.D.), Post classical (800A.D.-1700A.D.) and Modern Period (1700A.D.-Now) of innovation. In these time periods many sages increases the popularity of different types of yoga. This paper reveals how yoga originated and become a global industry and how this popular "lifestyle" is produced and disseminated across boundaries in India. Yoga's history has many places of inconspicuous and hesitancy due to its oral transmission of sacred texts and the contractive nature of its teachings. The early writings on yoga were transcribed on fragile palm leaves that were easily damaged, destroyed or lost. Because of this reason some of early writings on yoga were easily damaged, destroyed or lost. The development of yoga can be traced back to over 5,000-10,000 years ago.*

*Keywords: Yoga, Origin, Period, Vedas, Tradition, Development.*

### **Introduction**

Yoga has been gaining acceptance in India. That is why before 3 years, The United Nations declared 21 June as the International Day for Yoga. This year, more than 45,000 people participated in the International Day of Yoga in Lucknow. Today, there is hardly any country where there is no attraction or awareness about yoga. Yet despite its popularity the Origin of yoga remains shrouded in mystery. Yoga is an ancient Indian practice and all ancient scriptures including the Vedas have accepted the importance of yoga. There was a time when yoga was confined to sages meditating in the Himalayan caves for a long time<sup>1,2</sup>.

This paper reveals how yoga originated and become a global industry and how this popular "lifestyle" is produced and disseminated across boundaries in India. Yoga's long rich history can be divided into four main periods Pre-Classical (2700B.C.), Classical (500B.C.-800A.D.), Post classical (800A.D.-1700A.D.) and Modern Period (1700A.D.-Now) of innovation. In these time periods many sages increases the popularity of different types of yoga<sup>4,5,6</sup>.

### **Evolution of Yoga**

**Pre-Classical Period:** The beginnings of Yoga civilization were developed by the Indus-Sarasvati civilization in Northern India over 5,000 years back.<sup>7,8</sup> The word Yuj was first mentioned in the sacred text, the Rig Veda. The Vedas were a collection of texts containing songs and mantras to be used by Brahmans, the Vedic priests. Yoga was slowly refined and

developed by the Brahmans and mystic seers, who documented their practices and beliefs in the Upanishads.

**Classical Period:** Tentatively, the period between 500 BC - 800 A.D. is considered as the Classical period which is also considered as the most fertile and prominent period in the history and development of Yoga. During classic period, commentaries on Yoga Sutras and Bhagawadgita etc. came into existence. This period can be mainly dedicated to two great religious gurus of India –Mahavir and Buddha. The concept of Five great vows – Pancha mahavrata- by Mahavir and eightfold path by Buddha - can be well considered as early evolution of Yoga sadhana<sup>10,11</sup>. We find its more explicit explanation in Bhagawadgita also. These types of yoga are still the highest example of human wisdom and even to day people find peace by following the methods as shown in Gita. Patanjali's yoga sutra is mainly identified with eight path of Yoga. The very important commentary on Yoga sutra by Vyasa . During this very period the aspect of mind was given importance and it was clearly brought out through Yoga sadhana, Mind and body both can be brought under control to experience equanimity. The period between 800 A.D.

**Post-Classical Period:** Tentatively, the period between 800 BC - 1700 A.D. is considered as the Post Classical period. A few centuries after Patanjali, yoga masters created a system of practices designed to rejuvenate the body and prolong life. They rejected the teachings of the ancient Vedas and embraced the physical body as the means to achieve enlightenment.

**Modern Period:** The period between 1700 - 1900 A.D. is considered as Modern period . At this time the great Yogacharyas like Baba Ramdev, Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Paramhansa Yogananda, Vivekananda etc. have contributed for the development of modern evolution of Yoga. This was the period when Vedanta, Bhakti yoga, Hatha-yoga polished. Now in the competitive times, everybody has aware about yoga practices, maintenance and promotion of health<sup>3</sup>. Yoga has spread all over the world by the teachings of great personalities like Baba Ramdev, Swami Shivananda, Shri T.Krishnamacharya, Swami Kuvalayananda, Shri Yogendara, Swami Rama, Sri Aurobindo, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Acharya Rajanish, Pattabhijois, BKS. Iye For many, the practice of yoga is restricted to Hatha Yoga and Asanas (postures). However, among the Yoga Sutras, just three sutras are dedicated to asanas. fundamentally, hatha yoga is a preparatory process so that the body can sustain higher levels of energy. The process begins with the body, then the breath, the mind, and the inner self.

Yoga is also commonly understood as a therapy or exercise system for health and fitness. While physical and mental health are natural consequences of yoga, the goal of yoga is more far-reaching. "Yoga is about harmonizing oneself with the universe. It is the technology of aligning individual geometry with the cosmic, to achieve the highest level of perception and harmony." Yoga does not adhere to any particular religion, belief system or community; it has always been approached as a technology for inner wellbeing. Anyone who practices yoga with involvement can reap its benefits, irrespective of one's faith, ethnicity or culture. Traditional Schools of Yoga :These different Philosophies, Traditions, lineages and Guru-shishya paramparas of Yoga lead to the emergence of different Traditional Schools of Yoga e.g. Jnana-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Karma-yoga, Dhyana-yoga, Patanjala-yoga, Kundalini-

yoga, Hatha-yoga, Mantra-yoga, Laya-yoga, Raja-yoga, Jain-yoga, Bouddha-yoga etc. Each school has its own principles and practices leading to ultimate aim and objectives of Yoga. Yogic Practices for Health and Wellness: The widely practiced Yoga Sadhanas (Practices) are: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana (Meditation), Samadhi /Samyama, Bandhas & Mudras, Shat-karmas, Yukta-ahara, Yukta karma, Mantra japa, etc. Yama's are restraints and Niyama's are observances. Asanas, brings about stability of body and mind ' kuryat-tad-asanam-sthairyam...' , consists in adopting various body (psycho-physical) patterns, giving ability to maintain a body position (a stable awareness of one's structural existence) for a considerable length and period of time as well.

Different postures of Pranayama consists in developing awareness of one's breathing followed by willful regulation of respiration as the functional or vital basis of one's existence. It helps in developing awareness of one's mind and helps to establish control over the mind. In the modern time this idea is modified, through regulated, controlled and monitored inhalation (svasa) leading to the awareness of puraka kumbhaka rechaka during regulated, controlled and monitored exhalation. Pratyahara indicates dissociation of one's consciousness (withdrawal) from the sense organs which helps one to remain connected with the external objects. Dharana indicates broad based field of attention (inside the body and mind) which is usually understood as concentration. Dhyana (Meditation) is contemplation (focussed attention inside the body and mind and Samadhi integration.

Bandhas and Mudras are practices associated with pranayama These further facilitates control over mind and paves way for higher yogic attainment. Shat-karmas are detoxification procedures, help to remove the toxins accumulated in the body and are clinical in nature. Yuktahara (Right Food and other inputs) advocates appropriate food and food habits for healthy living -ngar, Swami Satyananda Sarasvati and the like.<sup>9,12</sup>

## Conclusion

However, the past few decades we have seen a large transformation in yoga practise. From being frowned upon to being hailed as one of the best natural therapies out there, yoga has come a very first way. The obstacles like caste, creed and social status have been uprooted from yoga to bring it to every home. The benefits of yoga have not gone unnoticed in the international community that is why the United Nations has passed a resolution to celebrate June 21st as the International Yoga Day.

Yoga is not just exercise, it also tells us is how to skillfully communicate, and act in any given situation. So here, yoga is described more as a mind skill. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says, " Yoga karmsu kosham" which means to do any work with perfection is a sign of yoga. The ability to remain calm and quite in all situations is Yoga. Whatever brings us back to our nature, which is happiness and satisfaction is Yoga. While postures make the body healthy, pranayama makes sharp minded and meditation take the mind deep within. In modern time millions and millions of people across the World have promoted Yoga. This unique yoga religion has been preserved by the great eminent Yoga Masters from ancient time to this date. The practice of Yoga is blossoming, and growing more vibrant every day and everywhere.<sup>13</sup>



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