

## Tracing the Trajectory of Yoga: A Cultural Review

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### Abstract

Yoga is the strongest soft power India wields today. Hitherto, it has been the most inclusive Indian knowledge system. This inclusivity coupled with globalisation, commercialisation, neo-liberalism, and neo-colonisation renders it the status of a dynamic, living cultural artifact moulding and re-moulding with time. The paper is a historical exposition of development and blossoming of yogic tradition in India from pre-classical to the modern times. Debunking yoga as a mere school of Indian philosophy frozen in time to establish it as a cultural site of grapple between powerful ideas is the vision of the paper.

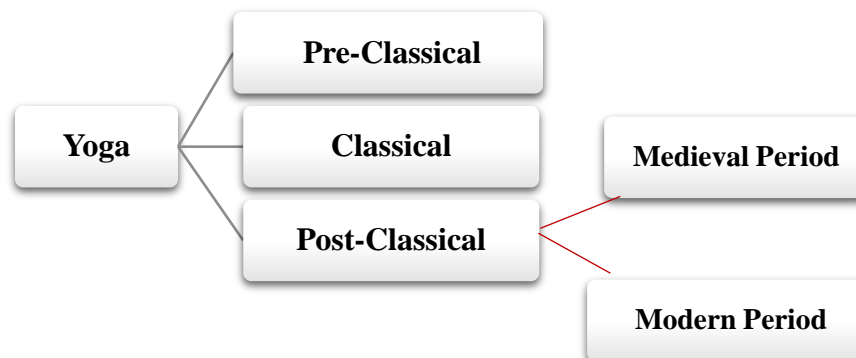
**Keywords:** Yoga, cultural artifact, neo-colonisation, neo-liberalism and globalisation.

Yoga can be likened to a rolling stone that has gathered no moss of extra meaning, but, has changed its form, shape, and colour with time under the effect of neo-colonisation and globalisation. The most basic and the most authentic definition of yoga comes from its Sanskrit root word yuj which means ‘to yoke,’ ‘to unite’ or ‘to connect.’ Most of the scholars of yoga define it as the union of the individual self with the Supreme Self. Mircea Eliade defines yoga in *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, as: “the means of attaining to Being, the effectual techniques for gaining liberation. This corpus of means constitutes Yoga properly” (3). An intense desire to attain ultimate freedom by a transcendence of the ego-memory complex marks the cornerstone of all practices of yoga.

Yoga, as we know today, is in a state of flux as the traditional and the counter-cultural yogic trends re-packaged from the West interact and clash on the global scenario. The broad meaning of union attributed to yoga obfuscates simplification on the one hand by riddling it with questions like—Is yoga a discipline, philosophy or the state of union that is attained after a certain tapasyā ? On the other hand, it paves way for an over-dilution of its practices due to the inclusive embrace inherent in its broad definition.

Vachaspati Mishra points out in his gloss to *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* that the term Yoga is derived from the root ‘yuja’ which means ‘concentration’, and that the most commonly attributed meaning of the derivation of the term yoga as a yoking together or a conjunction would have been possible if the root was ‘yujir’ and not ‘yuja’ (3). The classists prefer to make this distinction between the roots ‘yuja’ and ‘yujir’ to mark the transition from dualism to non-dualism in Yoga.

Attempting a historical survey of Yoga is a herculean task because the linear way of viewing history doesn't suffice to trace its trajectory. For ease of comprehension, an attempt would be made to understand Yoga under the categories of Pre-Classical Yoga, Classical Yoga, Post Classical Yoga consisting of Medieval Yoga and Modern Yoga:



**Fig.1. Historical Model of Yoga**

### Pre-Classical Yoga

Yoga is as old as civilization itself. The earliest traces of yoga are found in the Indus Sarasvati Civilization that flourished between 3300 B.C. and 1800 B.C. Over two thousand terracotta seals depicting horned deities seated in a manner resembling the later yogins have been excavated. The pashupati seal depicting an enthroned divine being, seated on a low pedestal surrounded by four animals namely, an elephant, a tiger, a rhinoceros and a buffalo and beneath the seat is a pair of antelope-like creatures. This divine figure has been identified as Lord Shiva who is considered Adiyogi.

The yogic lore of Adiyogi, with certain modifications, appear as an oral legacy in almost all the major schools of yoga. According to this lore, Adiyogi attained the state of yoga over 15000 years ago and passed on the jewels of his wisdom to the Seven Sages, called the Saptarishis on the banks of the lake Kantisarovar in the Himalayas. The rishis took this yogic science to different parts of the world, including Asia, the Middle East, Northern Africa and South America. Hence, one can inevitably see the close parallels between the different ancient cultures of the world. Yoga blossomed to its fullest in India. Agastya, one of the saptarishis, is credited with propagating this yogic culture in India.

The pre-classical Vedic literature dealing with Yoga can be sub-divided into four types- Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads. Vedas contain archetypes of developing consciousness of humans that often figured in literature of other periods. It is a repository of symbolic psycho-spiritual analogies. The oldest written scripture, *Rig Veda*, illumines many yogic practices and processes. Yoga has been defined as the realisation of one's higher self, in verses 20-22, mandala 1, hymn 164 of the *Rig Veda*:

dvā suparnā sayujā sakhāyā samānam vṛkṣam pari śasvajāte  
 tayoranyah pippalaṃ svādvattyanśannanyo abhi çākṣīti  
 yatrā suparnā amṛtasya bhāgamanimeśam vidhābhisvaranti  
 ino viśvasya bhuvanasya gopāḥ sa mā dhīraḥ pākmatrā viveśaḥ

yasmin vṛkṣe madhvadah suparṇā niviśante suvate çādhi viśve  
tasyedāhuḥ pippalaṁ savādvagre tanōnśadyah pitaram na veda  
(Sarasvati 3.151-154).

These verses speak of the process of Yoga through an analogy of two birds that are perched on the same Peepal tree. The birds enjoy a cordial relationship. The bird perched on the upper branch has been described as steadfast, calm and absorbed in supreme consciousness. This bird is in a state of animéśa or steadfastness and constancy, delectably drinking of the amrit of the union with the Supreme Consciousness.

The bird sitting on the lower branch represents all human beings or jivātma that are trapped in the bonds of passion and dispassion—happy now, sad then. Fervently eating the fruits of the tree yet lacking the exuding brilliance of the calmness of the bird above. The bird on the upper branch represents one's higher self and the bird on the lower branch is a symbol for one's lower self. The tree is a symbol of the world.

Georg Feuerstein identifies that there are elements of Proto-Yoga in the Rig Veda. In 4.58 of *Rig Veda*, the sage-poet gives some analogies to depict yogic union and the resultant brilliance of knowledge that pours forth benefitting all. When ghee is added to fire, light exudes from it, similarly, wherever the receiver of knowledge and the guru unites, brilliant light of knowledge comes to life. Likewise, when a yogi becomes one with the eternal consciousness, he works for the benefit of all without any force or compulsion. Georg Feuerstein opines that this hymn “reveals the esoteric symbolism of the ghee(ghrit) used in the fire sacrifice” (103).

In mandala 5, hymn 81, verse 1 of the *Rig Veda*, dharaṇā has been described as the concentration of mana or mind and buddhi or intellect on the cosmic unity, called devasyah, that is the cause of all creation and that illumines the whole world.

Jeanine Miller observes practices of meditation in the form of mantric meditation, visual meditation and absorption in mind and heart in the Rig Vedic period. The mention of internal ambrosia in Tantra and Hatha Yoga can be likened to the madhu-kāśa which is said to have been generated by the Gods in the *Atharva Veda*. Another resonance of the later development in Yoga is found in the Vratya lore found in Book 15 of *Atharva Veda* where Vratyas are depicted as observing austerities and performing prāṇāyama along with having knowledge of seven prāna, apāna and vyāna.

From the Vedas to the Upanishads, the external sacrificial ritualism transitioned gradually into an internal ritual involving a psycho-cosmic reality. Although no mention of Yoga is found in the *Brahmanas*, yet its ritualism seemed to have formed an integral part of Yoga tradition formed later. The layered fire altar comprising six layers of bricks and six layers of mortar represent twelve months of a year. The first layer of bricks symbolises prāna, the second apāna, third vyāna, fourth udāna, fifth samāna and the sixth layer is associated with vāç or speech.

The concept of transcendental self was never before clearly delineated in the Vedas until the Upanishads. Self-realisation and liberation from the cyclical samsara become integral to the discussions of Yajnavalka in *Brihadaranyak Upanishad*. Prayers became internal, tapasyā and upāsana became integral to the life of Upanishadic sages and external ritualism started losing its sheen. The practice of initiatory passing down of knowledge also became pronounced in the Upanishadic period which would later become pronounced in the guru-shishya paramparā of yoga. Of significance is the ecological idea of interconnectedness of all things, inherent in the idea that all things come from food and go back into it is evident in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. In expostulating the different levels of bliss, a human being is capable

of experiencing, *Taittiriya Upanishad* posits the absolute divine as a blissful reality. The cosmogenic creation of Nāsadiya Sukta of *Rig Veda* finds some extension in *Aitareya Upanishad*. In the final act of creation, the self is shown as entering the human body from the cleft that bears similarity to sahsrāra chakra of later Tantra tradition.

*Katha Upanishad* is considered the oldest Upanishad to be dealing explicitly with Yoga in its explication of the path of adhyatm yoga that Nachiketa walks on. Self-realisation is considered an act of grace that cannot be attained, but is granted, though a spiritual aspirant can prepare for receiving that grace through penance and austerity. *Katha Upanishad* also recounts spiritual practice as the process of involution or retracing of the evolutionary stages or levels from indriya, vishaya, manas (lower mind), buddhi, higher mind, mahat (great self), avyakta (Unmanifest) and to purusha or the self. It metaphorically represents the Self as the charioteer, body as the chariot, buddhi as the driver, mind or Manas as the reins, senses as the horses and sense objects as pastures on which feeds the senses.

Although, Jainism and Buddhism came into existence as a reaction against the stranglehold of Vedic ritualism and priesthood, yoga flowered in these religions too as Buddhist Yoga and Jain Yoga. *Yoga Drishti Samuccaya* is one of the most celebrated commentaries on Yoga in Jainism. The eightfold path of Buddhism resonates with the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali. A further development of Yoga in Buddhism happens in the fourth century with the emergence of Vijnananvada and Yogacara schools of Vasubandha and Asanga. Chanting of mantras became prominent in third century with the Mantrayana tradition of Buddhism. Parittas, mantras, kavachas, dharanis and bija mantras developed in Buddhism.

The Epic Age spans from 1000. to 100 B.C. E. *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Yoga Vashishtha*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Anu Gita* and *Rama Gita* are some of the works that directly deal with the development of the concept of yoga during this period. *Ramayana* portrays Rama as a renouncer and a focus is laid on delineating his ascetical aspects. The ascetism of *Ramayana* forms an archaic feature of yoga. *Yoga Vashishtha* is one of the most celebrated texts of non-dual aspect of Yoga. Consciousness is regarded as the ultimate reality, enmeshed within which is the world that the mind conjures up in bits and pieces through kalpana. The Self is described as kevala or singular essential point of origin of the tripartite world. The motif of the world as a dream is often harped upon in the text. The spiritual path expounded in the *Yoga Vashishtha* is that of Jnana Yoga, much like the Upanishads, and although *Ramayana* does insinuate at Karma Yoga, primacy is given to Jnana Yoga.

Although *Bhagavad Gita* does not contain an organised treatise exclusively on Yoga, yet all the features of Yoga found compiled in classical yoga figure in it. *Bhagavad Gita* calls itself a yogashāstra at one place. Infact, Georg Feuerstein opines that the Yoga of *Bhagavad Gita* is the earliest variant of purna yoga. It is in here that the idea of Yoga as an integration of all its path first develops. *Bhagavad Gita* becomes the source of most modern exposition on Karma Yoga wherein inaction is admonished and action that is unaffected by the consideration of success or failure of its consequence is considered the better kind of action. Yajna is treated as the highest liberating action.

In chapter 2, verse 48, Lord defines yoga as a state of equanimity, “samatvaṁ yoga uchyate” (Prabhupada 2.48) In chapter 6, the Lord states that equal vision or ‘samadarshan’ is also a consequence of being in a state of yoga. Some other characteristics exhibited in a yogi are inner joy, inner light, and inner rejoicing. Bhakti is a seminal element of the Gita’s teachings. Love is the essence of Krishna’s personality and in chapter 6 verse 47, Lord favours Bhakti Yoga over all other paths of Yoga.

In the *Anu Gita*, there seems to be a deliberate attempt to subtract Bhakti from the discourse, that is the reason why some scholars attribute the text to Shankara in its attempts to align all discourse to non-dualistic philosophy.

The *Mandukya Upanishad* details the four stages of existence or consciousness concurrent with the four parts of the cosmic vibration Om. Gaudapada in his commentary on the *Mandukya Upanishad* expounds the idea of Asparsha Yoga or Intangible Yoga, which literally means that which is untouched by the world, a practice of remaining absorbed in the Self, untouched by the objective world, the highest ideal of Jnana Yoga in the light of Advaita philosophy.

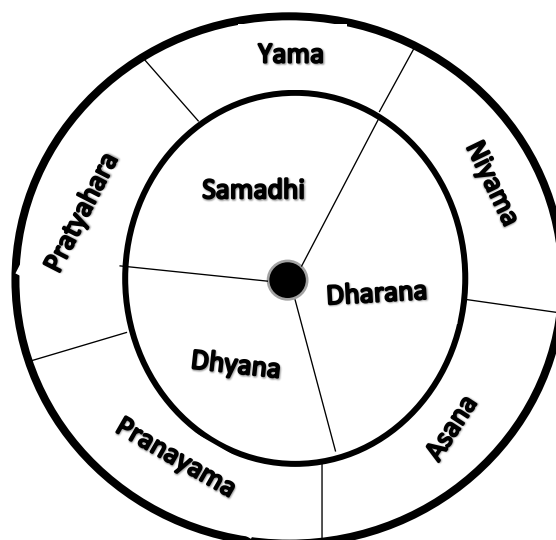
### Classical Yoga

Classical yoga dates back to the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali composed somewhere around 2 Century C.E. The book contains 195 sutras distributed over four chapters—samādhi pada, sādhanā pada, vibhūti pada and kaivalya pada. Samadhi pada enlists the aim, nature and different methods of attaining Yoga. Sadhana pada is popular for its exposition on Kriya Yoga as a means of attaining samādhi, cessation of suffering from kleshas and karma. Vibhuti pada deals with the powers attained due to the practice of Yoga and kaivalya pada as the term kaivalya (aloneness) itself makes clear, describes the forms of liberation and the transcendental reality of puruṣa.

Patanjali's yoga is commonly referred to as Ashtang Yoga owing to its eight limbs: yama, niyama, āsana, prānāyama, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇa, dhyāna, samādhi.

Yama and niyama constitute the ethical foundation of yoga. As with all spirituality, ethics and morality go hand in hand, so with yoga. Yama can be further divided into-ahimsa or non-harming, satya or truthfulness, asteya or non-stealing, brahmacharya or chastity and aparigraha or non-acceptance of gifts. Niyama are five in number: 1) shaucha or cleanliness of both mind and body, 2) santosha or contentment, 3) tapas or austerity, 4) svādhyaya or self-study and 4) Ishvara pranidhi or devotion to the Lord.

The discipline of yama and niyama seem to have a psychological impact on the human system. All these practices are based on the idea of not forming karmic bonds. Vivek Sharma in his book, *Beejankuri: The Seed of Bhagwad Gita* links karma to a neuron that when reinforced a number of times creates a neural pathway. At a psychological level, yoga attempts to make conscious this neuron activity to escape the unwanted karmic bonds. Neuroscience today corroborates this in the emerging field of neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity explores the possibility of forming new neural pathways through a disciplined practice to change the way one thinks, behaves or even approaches life. The whole world view could be modified based on modifying, through conscious effort, the habit of the brain. While yama connotes a positive practice of ethical discipline, niyama is based on the concept of self-restraint to channelise the hard-wired survival instinct into higher possibilities.



**FIG. 2. Ashtang Yoga**

Asana or body posture in classical yoga aimed at holding the body steady for as long as possible comfortably. In sadhana pada, sutra 46 of *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali opines that asana should be stable, comfortable, and pleasant.

From sutra 49 to 51 of sadhana pada details the practice of pranayama. Pranayama or control of breath is an intense subtle activity of controlling the mind. Four aspects of breath control have been delineated in Patanjali's Yoga—i) rechak/bahya or exhalation, ii) purak/abhyantara or inhalation and iii) kumbhak/stambha or holding of breath iv) caturtha or breath control beyond exhalation and inhalation.

Pratyāhāra can be defined as the effort of withdrawing senses from their respective objects. It is a preparatory stage for the following dhāranā and dhyāna. Once the instinctual movement of senses towards its object is brought under the control of the mind, the mind becomes receptive to the next steps of sadhana. The yogi comes alive in his internal world. This detachment of senses from its object cannot be likened to a coma or numbness because there is a simultaneous attempt to redirect one's senses onto a point. Yama, niyama, āsana, prānāyama, pratyāhāra constitute the bahir-anga or outer circle of yoga and the last three, dhyāna, dhāranā and samādhi constitute the antar-anga or the inner circle of Ashtanga Yoga.

Dhāranā means holding the attention of the mind on a particular desired object or single spot. It could be any part of the body, sound, touch or smell. Up until dhāranā, the process lies in the hands of the sādhak. Dhyāna and samādhi are a consequence of the tapasyā or preparation done so far. Dhyāna or meditation is a natural state attained when one-pointed focus of consciousness is maintained on the desired object. Georg Feuerstein notes that dhāranā, dhyāna and samādhi are “a continuous process of mental deconstruction or unification” (*The Yoga Tradition* 252).

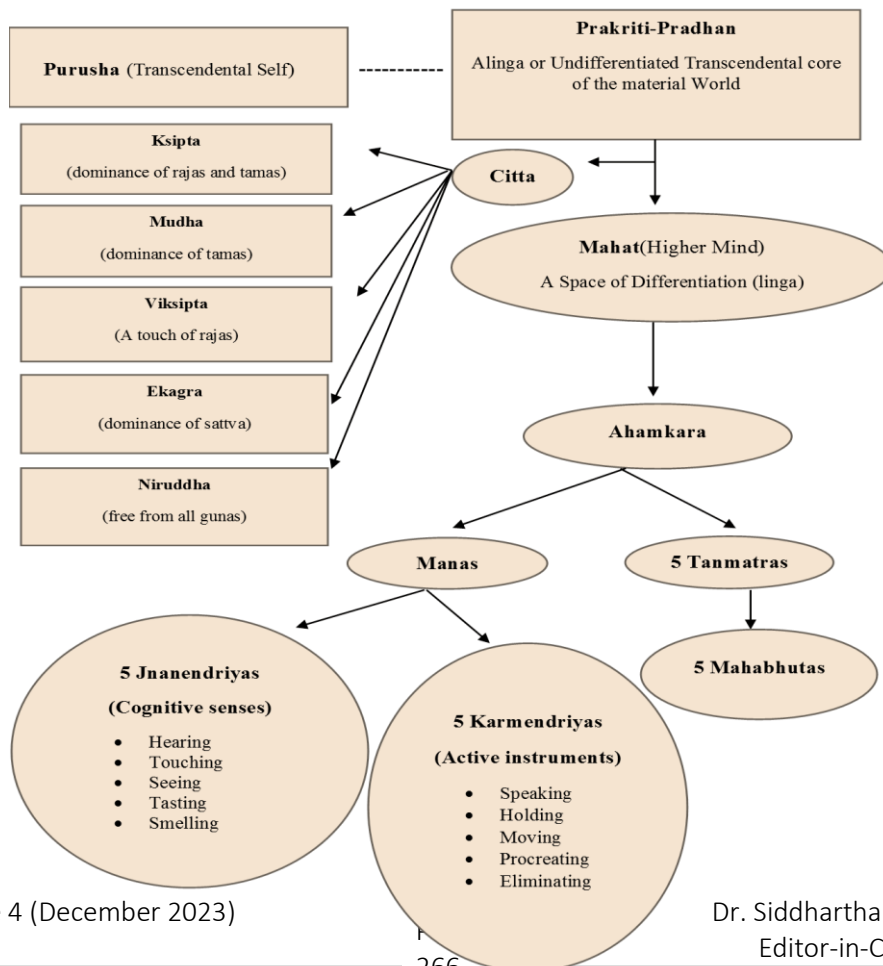
The purpose of yoga is to stop the incessant cessations of the citta. Samadhi Pada of *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* deal in detail with the types of whirls—klishta and akliishta. Klishta vrittis lead to suffering and akliishta are conducive to liberation. Knowledge, misconception, conceptualisation, sleep and memory are recognised as five kinds of fluctuations or vrittis. Reality is constructed in the light of these vrittis and the puruṣa remains inactive, but once these vrittis are disciplined, the real Self shines through. The term smṛiti is used to denote both genetic unconscious memory and conscious memory that contains the seed of survival

instinct embedded in the unconscious through centuries of evolution. Abhyāsa or practice and vairagya or dispassion towards the outcome of the practice are proposed as tools for disciplining the vrittis.

At the pinnacle of yogic hierarchy is the puruṣa or Self. Self is pure consciousness while Nature is completely unconscious. The meeting point between the Self and Nature is described as a process of samyog. Patanjali posits this correlation of samyog as the source of dukkha and the resultant avidya because it conjures up the illusion of being an individuated self, misidentified with mind-body particular, rather than the transcendental Self.

Prakriti is made up of tripartite gunas—sattva, rajas and tamas and classical yoga envisions a transcendental prakriti or Prakriti Pradhan, a state where all gunas are in balance and from this state of status quo, creation or manifestation of prakriti in various permutations and combinations leads to the creation of the world. Citta is the first creation of prakriti and it is through its identification with citta that the Self falls under the trap of five kleshas: i) avidya or wrong knowledge ii) asmita or the wrong perception of the self as buddhi iii) raga or longing for pleasure and the means of actualising pleasure iv) dvesa or aversion to pain v) abhinivesa or the fear of death in all creatures. Patanjali further expounds five stages of citta: kṣipta or restless, mudha or torpid, vikṣipta or distracted, ekagra or concentrated and niruddha or disciplined based on the dominance of one or a combination of gunas.

While this metaphysical dualism of yoga is akin to that of Samkhya tradition, the emphasis laid on the discerning capacity or vivek, a quality of the intellect or buddhi in Self-Realisation in Samkhya tradition is revised in Yogic philosophy. The only way to self-realisation is through samādhi in Yogic philosophy. Rational knowledge of Samkhya is replaced by true knowledge or gnosis in Yoga tradition which cannot be attained by any function of the higher mind or buddhi. The ontological classification is well defined to aid attainment of self-realisation in Yoga philosophy:



### Fig. 3. Dual Metaphysics of Classical Yoga

Another point of departure that Yoga takes from Samkhya is its theistic stance that contradicts the atheistic stance of Samkhya tradition. Samkhya denies the presence of a supreme power apart from puruṣa. Ishvar pranidhan or devotion to the Lord is an integral aspect of Patanjali's Yoga. Ishvara is considered a special kind of Self unaffected by karma and its fruition in classical yoga. Citta is the first product of prakriti in Yoga while mahat is the first product of prakriti in Samkhya

#### Post-Classical Yoga

While classical yoga is based in dualist metaphysics, post-classical yoga bears an impression of vedantic non-dualism. Patanjali's yoga recognises puruṣa and the transcendental aspect of prakriti at the apex of the hierarchy, but it doesn't envision liberation in prakriti. Though it recognises a possible mystical dissolution at the level of Nature which is called prakriti-laya but resolving back into the state of kaivalya in puruṣa is its ultimate aim. Body-mind complex becomes an impediment to the final realisation of the original self in puruṣa in classical yoga for it is also a manifestation of prakriti. Non-dualist schools of post-classical yoga do not recognise this duality and thus shedding body-mind complex does not always connote death in this tradition. In fact, the concept of jivanmukta envisions a transcendence of the body-mind complex while retaining the body.

Post-classical yoga is not a time-based linear category, in fact it refers to the schools and practices of yoga that during Patanjali's time and after him believed in non-dual metaphysics as opposed to the metaphysical stance of dualist classical yoga. The trajectory of post-classical Yoga can be seen distributed over diverse literature in the Samhitas, Agamas of Shaiva literature, Tantra of Shakti tradition, Vaishnav literature, Purana literature, tenth-century Yoga Vasishtha and Yoga Upanishads. Of note are schools of Hatha Yoga, Siddha movement and Naths prevalent between seventh century to seventeenth century C.E. based on kaya-sadhana, who treated body as a site of spiritual transformation and realisation which stands in stark contrast to many schools of yoga that treated body as an impediment to spiritual realisation.

#### Shaiva Schools of Yoga

Some of the earliest Shaivite schools were extremely radical and toed the line between civility and barbarity. They often lived on the margins of the society and were labelled vamacaris or left-hand followers of Shiva. They adopted the terrible, eccentric, ostracized and marginalised as a part of their routine to acknowledge the non-dual divine in the ghastly and the repulsive.

The earliest vāmacāra tradition is the Pashupata school of Shaivism. The order of the Pashupatas is commonly acknowledged to have been founded by an ascetic by the name of Lakulisha in the second century C.E. The earliest documented reference to this sect is found in the Mahabharat which recognises the prominence and prevalence of Pashupata sect along with Vedas, Yoga, Samkhya and Pancaratra.

The followers of this tradition revere Lakulisha as the last incarnation of Lord Shiva. The yogic lore around this mysterious saint is orally passed down among the followers of the tradition. Lakulin, literally means the "carrier of club", and so the practitioners of this tradition carry clubs with them all the time. The legend states that Lakulin was born in a



brahmin family. He wielded extra-ordinary powers since his birth and died at the age of seven months. His body was dumped into the river and was carried to the holy site of Jaleshvara-Linga by the tortoises in the river where he came back to life and lived a life of an ascetic and tutored four principal disciples—Kushika, Gargya, Kurusha and Maitreya. Their eccentric practice of shocking the common people with their behaviour is done with an aim of liberating others from bad karma by transferring their good karma onto them when they censure or disapprove of their behaviour. Peter Connolly in his *A Student's Guide to the History and Philosophy of Yoga* summaries five common tenets of this tradition:

1. the lord (pati), sometimes called the cause (kāraṇa);
2. the effect (kārya), which has three subclasses:
  - i)“the stuff of the universe (pasa or kalā)
  - ii)“the soul (pasu)
  - iii)“cognition or knowledge (vidyā);
3. contemplative exercise (yoga);
4. conduct or religious activity (vidhi);
5. the end of suffering (dukhānta) (184).

Commonly known as the skull bearers, the Kapālikas can be seen carrying skulls which served the double purpose of a tool in their ritual and bowl for their meals. The Kapālikas embrace death as reality and are unruffled by it. The Kapālika sect still survives in parts of Assam and Bengal, but no historical evidence of their origin or development is found in literature. The Kapālikas along with Kalamukhis worshipped the terrible aspect of Shiva as Bhairav. Georg Feuerstein is of the opinion that this sect might have begun in Kashmir. The label of Kalamukhis, which literally meant black-faced, was earned probably because they wore a black mark on their forehead as a declaration of their renunciation.

The aghoris are often feared by people of the society for they break every social, moral convention and constructs that facilitate meaning in a society. Etymologically the term aghori can be traced back to ‘aghora’ which literally mean ‘non-terrifying.’ Their sadhana include living in crematory grounds, drinking urine, liquor and eating corpses. They tread deep into darkness to transform it into light. Being an aghori demands exceptional fortitude of the mind.

The practitioners of Lingayat sect worship Shiva as linga, as the principle of creative process, and they are often seen wearing linga as an ornament or carrying them in small cases. The Lingayats are also called the Virasavas which literally translates as the heroic followers of Shiva. Most historic record point to the beginning of this tradition in twelfth century C.E. with its founder Basava. Their belief system is monistic as they believed that the world and soul all resolved back into Shiva. Shiva as sachchidānanda. Six phases of this sect are: i) bhakti or devotion to Lord Shiva in the form of worship at the temple, ii) mahesha which entails disciplining oneself through tapasyā, iii) prasād refers to the peaceful state attained through the grace of Lord Shiva iv) prānalinga is the state when the devotee starts experiencing the Divine at a subtle level within oneself, v) sharana or the state in which the sādhak yearns for refuge in his Lord, vi) aikya or the final union with the Divine. The Lingayats were relatively popular among the people for they questioned social inequality by denouncing caste distinction, approving widow remarriage, and deprecating the view that a menstruating woman was polluted.

Not all traditions of Shaivism were as radical and extreme as the vāmacāra. Some followed the path of moderation. One of them is Shaiva Siddhant which is a system that developed majorly in South India from the teachings of a group of poet-saints called the

Nayanmars. Their metaphysics was that of qualified nondualism much like Ramanujan's Vishishtha Advait. They rejected the idea of the world as *lilā* and illusion, infact they believed that acita or the insentient world was also the creation of Shiva's shakti. They rejected the authority of the Vedas and their teachings spring from an equivalent text called *Tiru-Murai* which is often called the Veda of Tamil. This is a collection of hymns composed and sung in praise of Lord Shiva. *Tiru-Murai* along with 28 Shaiva Agamas form the foundation of Shaiva Siddhant. Of note, in *Tiru-Murai* are the compositions of poet-sage Tirumular whose teachings were a combination of devotion, yogic techniques and jnana.

The tradition acknowledges 63 Nayanmars in all out of which of note are four saints namely, Appar, Sambandhar, Sundarar and Manikkavacakar. The element of Bhakti in Shaivism developed at the hands of these saints. According to a legend, Appar was born in Jain tradition, but soon converted to Shaivism after he miraculously got cured of his stomach ailment as the fruition of his tapsyā in the form of prayers he made to Lord Shiva. His relationship with Shiva was that of a servant and master. Sambandhar was Appar's young disciple and is documented as having performed many miracles in the Peria Puranam. Sundarar's Bhakti for Shiva made him view himself as Shiva's friend and so in many of his poetic outpourings one notices casual, informal and often insolent titles used for Shiva. The legend goes that his unconventional Bhakti revived his lost eyesight. Manikkavacakar, although, is not a Nayanmar, but is counted among the greats four Shaiva saints. The legend states that he encountered a teacher who was Shiva in disguise while on a royal duty to purchase horses for King Varaguna Pandya of Madurai. V. Daheja's translation of one of his hymns in *Slaves of the Lord: The Path of the Tamil Saints* demonstrate the mad ecstasy that the poet-saint was inebriated with whenever he thought of Lord Shiva. Shiva stood for unbound mercy and grace to him and his intense longing for a union with Shiva peers through his verses:

While unperishing love melted my bones,  
I cried  
I shouted again and again,  
louder than the waves of the  
billowing sea,  
I became confused,  
I fell,  
I rolled,  
I wailed,  
Bewildered like a madman,  
Intoxicated like a crazy drunk,  
So that people were puzzled  
And those who heard wondered (35).

Majorly, the Krama, Kula and Pratyabhijna systems constitute Kashmir Shaivism. The Krama order of Shaivism is the one of the oldest and it has two principal branches—One that worships Shiva and the other that worships Goddess Kali as the Divine. The system places emphasis on attainment of liberation through Raja yogic practices in gradual steps. While yama, niyama and āsana are collectively put under the category of moral discipline instead of as a separate part, unlike Patanjali's system, tarka or reasoning has been counted as a special practice for self-realisation. The Kramiks view the external world as a projection of the internal world.

The Kula system of Shaivism becomes distinct from other northern Shaiva traditions in its acceptance of attainment of liberation or ecstatic union through the grace of guru who is already one with the Divine. In spite of guru being placed on a high pedestal spiritually, the Kaulas belittle the importance of yogic practices. The Trika system of Shaivism acknowledged the divine trinity of Shiva, the masculine aspect; Shakti, the dynamic feminine aspect, and Nara, the misidentified aspect continuously seeking liberation.

The term yoga is nowhere to be found in the Shiva Sutras, but the treatise contains a detailed exposition of Yogic practices. It recognizes four upāyas or yogic ways: i) anupāya which literally means ‘no-means.’ It is characterized by a sudden onset of Self-realisation on the practitioner without effort, mainly through gurus’ transmission of jnana. ii) shambhava-upāya or iccha-upāya. The attainment of sachchidānanda aspect of Shiva through the journey of a perfectly still mind practiced through will. iii) shaktopāya- Not all people are capable of disciplining or stilling the mind without getting distracted into thinking about other things. This method focuses on directing attention towards pure or shuddha concepts or thoughts only like dwelling on the idea that one is not the ego- memory complex, but a transcendental reality. Vasugupta proposes mantra yoga to enable a state where the line between I-consciousness and sachchidānanda is blurred and later removed with constant chanting iv) anavopāya which literally means ‘limited means,’ proposes the use of breath control, concentration, and meditation to transcend limited I-consciousness.

Probably the most famous school of Northern Shaivism is the Pratyabhijna or “recognition” school which is said to have been founded by Somananda, a disciple of Vasugupta in ninth century C.E. They believe that the distance between oneself and self-realisation is one of recognition. Recognition of the fact that one is not the limited ego-memory or body-mind complex but a transcendental infinity, Shiva. Although its emphasis on recognition or discrimination as a way of self-realisation often puts the scholars to admit the predominance of Jnana Yoga in it, yet Georg Feuerstein notes in *The Yoga Tradition*: “It is evident from this and Abhinava Gupta’s own writings, as well as other related scriptures, that the Pratyabhijna practitioners were well acquainted with Yoga, not least Kundalini yoga. They are important sources for our understanding of the early developmental phase of Hatha-Yoga” (267).

Another poet-yogini of note in the yogic tradition of Kashmir Shaivism is Lalla, who lived in the fourteenth century C.E. Following the metaphysical foundation of Trika tradition, Lalla is said to have practiced Laya Yoga which focuses on awakening the coiled-up kundalini shakti.

### **Vaishnav Schools of Yoga**

The earliest example of Vishnu worship can be traced back to the five hymns dedicated to him in the *Rig Veda* and then after a long interval of many centuries, *Bhagavad Gita* appears on the Vaishnav literary scene expounding many yogic principles. A deep perusal of *Bhagavad Gita* led to the development of mystic traditions like the poetry of Alvars and Bauls, Bhagavata Purana and Gita Govind. Under the shadow of *Bhagavad Gita* flowered many literary works akin to itself like the *Anu Gita*, *Uddhava Gita* and *Ganesha Gita*.

Just like the Agamas of Shaiva tradition, Vaishnav schools have their own 108 Samhitas that belonged to the Pancaratra tradition of Vaishnavism. The *Vishnu Samhita*, a primary text of Vaishnavites recognises six-fold yoga or shadanga yoga, while *Ahirbudhnyya Samhita* acknowledges Patanjali’s ashtang yoga, but the dual metaphysics has been replaced by Vedantic non-dualism. It is indeed true that Bhakti Yoga flowered the most in the

Vaishnav tradition, but its seeds lie scattered in the *Rig Veda*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita* and Narad's *Bhakti Sutras*. It would be hasty to conclude that no other tradition bears the impression of Bhakti Yoga, both Shaiva Siddhant tradition of the South and few Shakta traditions have at the core of their teachings, devotion, and love.

Bhakti becomes the dominant tone of their writings, practices and ascetism. Self-realisation gives way to God-realisation in bhakti yoga. Concentration and meditation were defined in relation to God, rather than the Self. There is a tendency to interpret Bhakti tradition in the light of dualism for it envisions a bhakta and his Ishta or personal God as different, but this distinction is superficial and, in most schools, ends in the realisation of God in oneself.

The Alvars can be traced back to the eight and the ninth century C.E. They wrote extraordinary devotional and inspirational poetry. The bhakti of this sect is evident in the collection of four thousand poems of its twelve saints in Nalayiradivya Prabandha. Namm alvar is the most famous saint out of them.

Their poetry has an indelible mark of Krishna mythology, depicting him often teasing and in communion with the gopis. Their longing for ecstatic union with Krishna is often expressed in delineation of his transcendental qualities. They worship Krishna as the eternal principle. Sometimes they are subsumed in the ecstasy of union, sometimes they suffer the pangs of separation or viraha. This constant state of flux underpins their poetry.

Two scriptures of note that inspired the path of bhakti yoga in Vaishnav tradition were the *Bhagavat Purana* and the *Gita Govind*. The motif of rasa-lila and the image of gopis dancing the divine dance with Krishna is first found in the *Bhagavat Purana*. While bhakti yoga is based in love, dvesa yoga, which also finds mention in the *Bhagavat Purana*, is based on the extreme and ultimate concentration of hate towards the divine.

The name Radha rarely appears in *Srimad Bhagavat*, it is in *Gita Govind*, a twelfth century poem composed by a Bengali writer Jayadeva that the intense and passionate love between Radha and Krishna is ornately sung of. This love has many overtly sexual and erotic overtones and it is with this that the sexual and the erotic find place in spirituality which is resonant of the later practices of Tantric schools of yoga. The richness of Indian spiritual tradition lies in acceptance and inclusion of different ways to the divine, be it through hatred, the erotic or the terrible which have often been looked down upon in other traditions of mysticism. Later schools of yoga, notably kundalini yoga, resonate this in acceptance of the idea that sexual energy can be sublimated into spiritual energy or ojas through constant tapas.

Bhakti yoga also inspired the intellectually gifted. Nathamuni, Ramanuja Madhva, Nimbaraka, Vallabha and Krishna Caitanya stand tall at the helm of this order. Saints like Jnanadeva, Eka Nath, Tukaram and Ramadasa enriched Indian literature through their poetic outpourings. Dilip Chitre notes in his *Says Tuka* that the Marathi devotional poets were conscious of the hegemonical structure of the society. They were often victims to caste discrimination and embodied the ability to transform humiliation into spiritual force. The aim of these saints was to bring the gems of spiritual literature to the common masses and so they wrote in vernacular and popularised folk tradition of performance like bharoods, ovis, abhangas, bhajan and kirtan.

Performed on streets with an aim to deliver a spiritual moral, bharood is an amalgamation of kirtan and tamasha. They were often composed in the form of riddles with a double purpose of entertaining the masses coupled with communicating a spiritual or philosophical message. Eka Nath composed around three hundred bharoods and often voiced by people from the disabled and deprived section of the class. In one of his bharoods titled

“The Scorpion”, he uses the metaphor of scorpion’s sting to denote the venomous quality of sense-driven life mired by lust and rage and proposes the yogic practice of disciplining the ego as cure for the sting: “The remedy for this scorpion –deflate ego and pride/Apply the holy ash of virtue/ Watch the scorpion’s venom rapidly subside” (Purohit <http://poetry.sangamhouse.org/2019/09/vinchu-the-scorpion/>).

Abhang, literally means unending or continuous. It is a form of devotional poetry set in quatrains written primarily to be sung, popularised by the saints of Maharashtra between the thirteenth and seventeenth century C.E. Sant Tukaram wrote abhangas in prolific numbers and devoted his life to curing people of illness with them.

A deluge of bhakti drowned Bengal in the medieval period. Beginning with Jayadeva’s *Gita Govind*, saints like Chandidas and Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and the bauls of Bengal sung of the pangs and pleasures of devotion. Following in the footsteps of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, modern saints like Shri Prabhupada started Krishna Consciousness movement in America around 1960’s. Modern bauls like Anandmayi Maa, Archanapuri Maa and Yogeshwari Maa have kept the baul tradition alive even today. The sufis are an Islamic counterpart of baul tradition in the medieval tradition. Dripping with the same ecstatic tone of bhakti, their songs also delineate the non-dual aspect of the divine and often a mention of Hindu Gods is also found. Religion is secondary to the non-dual Divine to them. One cannot talk of Bhakti movement without the names of the northern saints and poets, Kabir Das, Mira Bai, Tulsi Das and Sur Das. Their dohas, bhajans and poetic writings are highly lyrical and their lilting quality transports the listener to another state of consciousness.

#### Tantric School of Shakta Tradition

Many critics are of the opinion that Tantra is the gift of Buddhism to Hindu school of thought because of the precedence of Buddhist tantras like *Manjushri-Mula-Kalpa* and *Guhya Samaj Tantra* before the medieval tantric literature. It is indeed true that Tantra in its practical form blossomed in Buddhism first before coming to the medieval Shakta tradition, but on a deeper analysis it is evident that the oldest traces of Tantra can be found in the *Atharva Veda*.

Shakta tradition denies the dualistic metaphysics of Classical Yoga in revering non-dual as the ultimate reality, simultaneously distancing itself from the prakriti-negating attitude of Shankara’s Advaita Vedanta. The followers of this tradition revere Shakti, Devi or the feminine principle as the ultimate reality. They reiterate the idea ‘shivah shaktivichinshavah’ which literally means Shiva without Shakti is like a corpse. Overlapping with the Shaiva tradition, is the practice of revering both Shiva and Shakti as twin faces of the same reality. Devi is often depicted as the creator, sustainer and destroyer. Maya is considered an important aspect of Her. In the human body, Devi is depicted as kundalini shakti. In Georg Feuerstein’s opinion: “In Jungian terms, we can see this as a concerted attempt at reinstating anima, the feminine psychic principle” (*The Yoga Tradition* 344).

Tantra literally means technique. Since this school of thought was extensively pragmatic and focused on the techniques of realisation of the Ultimate, it treated samsāra as complimentary to sādhana and realisation. Ten forms of goddesses are generally revered in Tantra literature: 1) Kali, 2) Tara, 3) Tripura Sundari to whom Shankara dedicates his *Ananda Lahiri*, 4) Bhavaneshwari, 5) Bahiravi, 6) Chinnamasta, 7) Dhumravati, 8) Baglamukhi, 9) Matangi and 10) Kamalatmika. Being a practical and grassroots movement, it included in its practices aspect of sexuality that had been denied entry into mainstream traditions of yoga for long. Sādhana is aided by external forms like mandalas, symbols, icons and temples. The human body is also symbolically or iconically depicted as a microcosmic reality of the

macrocosmic world, an idea that predates the medieval period by its occurrence in the early Upanishads.

Following the guna system of classical yoga, Tantra identifies three types of human beings, *divya* characterised by a dominance of *sattva*; *virya*, characterised by a dominance of *rajas* and *tamasic*, characterised by a dominance of *tamas*; and proposes practices based on their nature.

An extensive knowledge of *prāna*, *mudrās*, *mantra*, symbolic representation of subtle body centres and *yantras* form the corpus of Tantra literature. A *yantra*, literally meaning device, is a geometric structure often depicting one's presiding deity used for meditation by the *sādhak*. Usually the structure contains triangles, square and *bindu* or circle at its centre. The square represents all directions, upward facing triangle represents *Shiva*, the downward moving triangle represents *kundalini shakti*. The ascent and descent are complimentary and neither is exclusive of the other and hence one finds equal numbers of upward and downward moving triangles in a *yantra*. *Yantra* is an ancient symbology based in the collective unconscious of the man. The practice of *bhūtshuddhi* is also a dominant ritual in Tantra school of yoga. Based on the idea of dissolution of the five elements after *kundalini* has been passed through the lower five *chakras* till it reaches *Ajna*, this ritual is symbolically performed as a purificatory process before one performs the worship of one's deity.

*Urdhva retas* or the channelisation of semen into *ojas* or spiritual energy through its upward movement and preservation of semen or vaginal fluid while in the act of sexual intercourse marks one of the practices. Sexual energy is considered an inevitable aspect of human existence, harnessing it to transform it into spiritual energy was the aim. Unlike many schools of Yoga that treat *siddhis* as impediments on the path of spiritual union, Tantra treats *siddhis* as aids on the path of spiritual realisation.

### Hatha Yoga

*Hatha* literally translates to 'done by force'. *Hatha Yoga* is also a medieval development like *Tantra Yoga*. Scholars like Peter Connolly are of the opinion that *Hatha Yoga* bears the mark of *Tantra* so much so that it seems like a refurbished version of *Tantra*. He notes overlapping concepts like *bindu-dharana*, *amritplavan*, *kundalini shakti*, *idā*, *pingalā*, *sushumnā* and seven energy centres between the two. *Hatha Yoga* proposes the process of *khecari mudra* to preserve one's semen or *bindu sādhnā* for its transformation into *ojas*. A *hath yogi* wants to achieve transcendence through a physio-spiritual method of training the body for the big event of *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is not just a mental experience, it is also a physical one, a *hath yogi* works at perfecting the body through *kayā sādhanā* aiming to achieve a *vajra deh* or adamant body and *divya sharira* or divine body. *Hatha Yoga* requires a steely will power and discipline, however the practitioner might easily fall into the trap of narcissism or develop an inflated sense of Ego and forget the larger picture engrossed in only the physical.

*Goraksha Satak*, *Gherand Samhita*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Shiva Samhita* form the core scriptures of *hatha yoga* tradition. All the teachings of *hatha yoga* can be classified into two kinds of practices: preparation and integration. Preparatory practices include majorly purificatory processes to cleanse subtle energy channels through which *prāna* flows. The aim of these processes is to make the body ready for spiritual realisation through purification. Since the grossest form of *prāna* in the body manifests in the form of breath, *prānāyama* becomes an important purificatory practice. *Hath Yoga Pradipika* recognises desire and *prāna* as the cause behind the activity of the mind. Control of one can lead to control of the other and in turn a disciplining of the mind. Hence, a lot of emphasis is laid on channelising

the prāna through sushumnā. Gherand compares human body to ghata or an earthen pot and proposes shatkarma or six purificatory practices for a hatha yogi: 1) dhauti or cleaning. There are four types of cleaning- i) antar dhauti, or inner cleaning. a practice of washing intestines for detoxification. ii) danta dhauti is the practice of cleaning teeth, gums, tongue, ears, and sinus. iii) hrid dhauti is the practice of cleansing heart by cleaning the throat through turmeric, stalk, or voluntarily induced vomiting. iv) mula dhauti is the practice of cleaning the anus manually through water or turmeric. 2) vasti or cleaning up the bladder through the contraction and dilation of sphincter muscle. 3) neti is a practice of inserting thin thread through nose on one end and taking it out from the mouth. This is said to remove excess phlegm in the practitioner. 4) lauli or nauli kriya is performed by moving the abdominal muscles in a circular motion. 5) trātaka is a practice of steadily gazing at a point, flame, or sun. It is a preparation for concentration and meditation. 6) kapālbhāti includes several practices undertaken to remove excess phlegm from the body.

*Goraksha Shatak* recognises six limbs of Yoga, however Gheranda acknowledges seven limbs and yama and niyama are combined as one, while asana and mudras find an individual space in his exposition of Yoga. In his commentary on Yoga, Gherand claims that Shiva taught eighty-four lakh asanas to his disciples out of which eighty-four are of prime significance to the Hatha Yogi. In his commentary, though, Gherand only enlists thirty-two asanas. Mudrās are hand gestures, but their positioning is said to activate various subtle nādis which makes it conducive to the practice of meditation taken on later. Bandha are locks aimed at holding the prāna in a particular area of the body. *Gherand Samhita* enlists twenty-five mudras inclusive of bandhas, and concentration or sharana on five elements which is reminiscent of the practice of bhuta shuddhi in Tantra. Pratyāhara forms the fourth limb of Gherand's Hath Yoga and is intentionally kept before prānāyama. Before expostulating the various practices of prānāyama, Gherand lays emphasis on creating right diet and environment before embarking on the journey of prānāyama. Purification of nādis through samanū, a meditative practice to invoke and install the deities of various chakras in the body, and nirmanū is the practice of chanting the seed mantra of each chakra for the installation of energy lord of each centre, is enlisted. Gherand proposes eight kinds of breath control all of which are aimed at attaining a state of stillness beyond the tugging of breath through kumbhak or retention of breath.

Dhyāna in hatha yoga is identified as having three kinds—1) sthula dhyāna, meditation through visualisation on an object 2) sukshma dhyāna, meditation through visualisation on a subtler object like a bindu 3) tejo dhyāna, meditation through visualisation of the absolute divine as effulgent light. Meditation in hatha yoga becomes synonymous with visualisation.

Samādhi is the seventh limb of Hatha Yoga. Gherand explains samādhi as a detachment of identity from ghata-like body to a re-identification with the paramātman. While *Hath Yoga Pradipika* uses the metaphor of salt that becomes one with water to define Samadhi as dissolution into pure consciousness. Ecstasy is defined as a state of samarasatva. Samarasatva is delectation of the state of balance or harmony when the mind and life force have merged into one and have identified with the primordial transcendental Self.

Siddha movement can be placed between the eight and the twelfth century. Siddha means 'perfected' or adept. Tirumular defines siddha as one who has realised the ultimate shakti or reality through yogic ecstasy. Siddha also has an alchemical characteristic pinned to it owing to their capacity of turning the impediment of impure body-mind into gold by developing in it the power of conduction of spiritual energy.

Nathas of Bengal and Maheshvaras of the Southern India are two most important sects of hatha yoga that developed in the medieval period. Scholars note that both these traditions bear the mark of Buddhist school of Tantra, apart from sharing the same siddhas on their list. Many Singhalese and Chinese siddhas also find a place on the list. Matsyendra Nath and Goraksha Nath are the two most important siddha of Nathism. The tradition holds Shiva to be the original source of Hatha Yoga teachings as is referred to as 'Adinath.' Natha literally means 'master' or 'lord,' they are often described as immortal beings living in the Himalayas.

Matsyendra or 'lord of fish,' might insinuate to his occupation of a fisherman. In *Kaula-Jnana-Nirnaya*, one finds the account of Matsyendra Nath saving the scriptures of Kaula tradition by fighting a large fish that had swallowed it. Seen as a saviour and reviver of Kaula system. While some scholars view the name as a title earned through attainment of mastery over breath through khechari mudrā. He is a proponent of Kaula sect. The term Kaula comes from the term kula which evokes the sense of a family and kundalini shakti simultaneously. He is referred to as Mina Nath in the Tibetan culture of yoga. The story around his spiritual journey describes him as a fisherman who got eaten by a fish and learnt of the yogic practices from Shiva himself while he was giving a discourse to his wife Uma. He diligently practised them for twelve years inside the belly of the large fish and on the completion of twelve years, the fish was caught and cut open to release Matsyendra who then became an adept.

Goraksha, or cow protector as the name suggests was the disciple of Matsyendra, and is credited with single handedly reviving many hatha yoga practices along with starting the order of kanphata yogis. The term kanphata characterizes a ritual of splitting the earlobe to wear large kundala-like earrings called the mudras or darshan that all the yogis of this order follow. They believe that this act stimulates important nādis or energy currents in the body. He lived around the tenth and the eleventh century and the accounts hold that he belonged to the lower class of the society. Other famous yogis of this order include Jaladhari, Bhartrihari, Gopichandra, Caurangi, Gahini, Carpati, Virupaksha, Anand Bhairav, Kanthadi, Nithya Natha, Kapalini, Bindu Natha, Kakacandishvara, Allama Prabhudeva and many more.

Maheshvaras of the South, on the other hand, acknowledge eighteen siddhas. Akkatiyyar or Agatsya, Tirumular, Bhogar and Civavakkiyar are some of the most celebrated siddhas of the south. Bhogar can be placed in the seventeenth century and is said to have come from China. He views God as residing in the body-temple of the yogi and so defiling or neglecting the body is treated as disrespecting God. Civavakkiyar came out strongly against the ritualism associated with spiritual realisation like idol worship and mantra chanting. The southern siddhas were more trenchant in their rejection of such empty ritualism which defeated the whole point of spiritual realisation. Devotion is equally prized in the hatha yoga tradition, Jnandeva who is said to have been initiated into hatha yoga by his brother, Nivritti Nath, viewed Hatha yogis without devotion as deviating from the path of spiritual realisation.

### Modern Yoga

Although for ease of comprehension, one might classify Yoga into various types depending on a particular principle of Yoga that informs the major practices in that school of Yoga, yet from an ontological aspect it is almost impossible to discern one from the other. In the deepest core of Hatha yoga, one finds seeds of Bhakti, Jnāna and Karma Yoga. An integration of all these various paths lies at the core of Modern Yoga. The term Modern Yoga as a labeling category has been accepted by most of the scholars of Yoga, except Mark Singleton who questions the utility of the tag in *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*:



Can we really refer to an entity called Modern Yoga and assume that we are talking about a discrete and identifiable category of beliefs and practices? Does Modern Yoga, as some seem to assume, differ in ontological status (and hence intrinsic value) from "traditional yoga"? Does it represent a rupture in terms of tradition rather than a continuity? And in the plethora of experiments, adaptations, and innovations that make up the field of transnational yoga today, should we be thinking of all these manifestations as belonging to Modern Yoga in any typological sense? (18-19)

Modern Yoga is a product of a complex cultural process following the interaction between the East and the West. The Indian philosophical thought had already reached the West in translation in the early years of the Empire, which flowered in the sporadic emergence of the Transcendentalists in America and in the literary output of W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot over a period of time. So much was the impact that Thoreau preferred to think of himself as a yogi and this observation informs Elizabeth de Michelis' claim that the beginning of Modern Yoga could be traced back to the late nineteenth century.

The first formal encounter of the West to the practice of Yoga and its inclusive philosophy happened in successive episodes—From the Chicago Speech of Swami Vivekananda at the World Parliament of Religions, his later lectures on Yoga, Madame Blavatsky's works and the works of various spiritual leaders of the first Vedanta Society established in 1894 can sum up the early encounters of the West with Yoga. In his later discourse, Swami Vivekananda focused on the practical aspect of Indian spirituality, giving shape to his books *Karma Yoga* and *Raja Yoga* published in 1896 and *Bhakti Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga* that were published posthumously in 1902. Swami Vivekananda's ideas inspired the establishment of Modern Yoga centres like Manibhai Haribhai Desai or Sri Yogendra's Yoga Institute established in 1918 and J.G. Gune or Swami Kuvalyananda's Kaivalyadham Yoga Ashrama in 1934 in India. Their teachings focused on a combination of Yoga and gymnastics and the process of treating Yoga as an exercise for therapeutic purposes had begun and this difference in approach to teaching Yoga compels J.S. Alter to reject the impact of Swami Vivekananda on these spiritual leaders, though his impact on the general body of Indian thought cannot be denied. This, in Alter's opinion, marks the beginning of Modern Yoga.

In *A History of Modern Yoga*, Elizabeth de Michelis proposes a four-point typology of Modern Yoga as a framework for categorising the various kinds of Yoga coming to limelight in the modern period—1) Modern Psychosomatic Yoga- Yogic practices based in body-mind-spirit training. The emphasis is on practical experience and is practiced in a private setting with little restriction on doctrine. 2) Modern Denominational Yoga- Each school has its own unique practices, beliefs and set of values. It resembles a cult. 3) Modern Postural Yoga, characterised by heavy emphasis on āsanās and prānāyama. 4) Modern Meditational Yoga focused on mental practices and discipline of concentration and meditation.

Peter Connolly in his *A Student's Guide to the History and Philosophy of Yoga* simplifies this categorising framework for he feels that the trends in Modern Yoga could be either leaning towards postures or towards meditation in practice giving the nomenclature of Modern Postural Yoga and Modern Meditational Yoga.

Ironically, though the earliest form of Modern Yoga tried to move away from rigorous practices of hatha yoga, the term yoga today calls to mind, men and women in contorted poses, bending and unbending their bodies. Owing to consumerism, neo-colonialism and a complex cultural process of assimilation, syncretism, and acculturation of yoga in a foreign culture, yoga, became a victim to reductionism and oversimplification. This constant tugging in a global postmodern market reduced yoga to an exotic, esoteric product to be sold in

spiritual markets and in a bid to garner more followers, a rat race between gurus ensued. Since yoga is a practice based in guru-shishya paramparā one sees a motley line of gurus emerging over a century, ranging from Krishnamacharya with his gymnastic approach, Pattabhi Jois and B. K. S. Iyengar teaching asanas, the tantra-based Kripalu Yoga of Swami Kripalvananda, the Siddha Yoga of Muktananda, Kriya Yoga of Paramhansa Yogananda, the Bhaktiyoga of Svaminarayana and cultic practices of Acharya Rajneesh to Inner Engineering of Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Yoga and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living and nation-building approaches of Eknath Ranade and of Swami Ramdev. Rampant consumerism and Yoga's affinity to religion also riddles the tradition with a parodic cult of godmen and comen confusing the scenario of modern yoga even more. On the one hand this encounter between the West and the East has narrowed the chiasm between science, psychology, and yoga. On the other hand, this inclusive embrace of yoga is also the cause of its dilution. Such is the double bind of modern yoga, today.

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