



The History of Yoga

**Timeline | Texts |
Honouring the Roots of Yoga**

A timeline...

Indus Valley
Civilisation
7000 – 600
BCE

Vedic
Period
1500 – 500
BCE

Pre-classical
Period
700 – 300
BCE

Ancient
Greece
800 BCE –
31 BCE

Classical
Period
200 BCE

Roman
Empire
27 BCE –
476 CE

Post
Classical
Period
800 CE –
1700 CE

Modern
period
1700 CE >

500 BCE -
200 BCE

Colonialism
1757 - 1947



Archaeology
Stone Seal
3000 BCE

Vedas

Upanishads

Bhagavad
Gita

Yoga
Sutras

HYP 1400 CE
Gheranda
Samhita 1700 CE

Yoga travels
to the West
1893



All dates are subject to variations and debate!

Indus Valley Civilisation

- Also known as the Harappa civilisation
- Region spanned over 900 miles, incorporating areas of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India
- Ancient and sophisticated civilization: urban planning, drainage and irrigation systems, trade.
- Written language discovered on artefacts has not yet been deciphered.
- Skeleton (right) dated 2700 BCE
- Still much that is unknown – archaeological digs began 1827



ध्या ४

देवापुता जुषिता वापय वापव वा रा आशा स्महा उरुं हुता सारवापुसा राता
जुरि० च्यः॥ ६६२॥ अस्माकां शिप्रिणीनां सामं पाः॥ सामं पात्रां सखा वज्रिनां स
खीनां। तथामतत्। अस्त्रा सामं पाः। सखा वज्रिनां तथा। ह्युयथा ता उष्मि सि इष्टाय
रवतीः। नः। सुधुमादा इन्द्रा संतु। उविं वाजाः। हुं मत्रः। यातिः। मदमा आ। घ्रायां वान्।
त्मना आ त्तः। स्त्रा० च्यः। धृक्च्यो इति। इयानः। रुणाः। अक्षान। वक्रिः। आ। यत्। डवः। श
तुक्रुता इति शतं क्रुता। आ। कामं जुरि० च्यः। रुणाः। अक्षान। शवीलिः। ३० शश्वत्। शश्व
तं। इन्द्रः। पौत्रुयत्। जिगायानानदत्। शश्वत्। धनानि। सः। नः। हिरंण्यं
यं। दंसनां वान्। सः। नः। सनिता। सनाय। सः। नः। अदात्। आ। अश्विनो। अश्वं वत्या। इषा।

इतरे

रुमर्क

Vedic Period

- Vid = knowledge / wisdom
- 4 texts: Rig, Sama, Yajur, Atharva
- 'Revealed scriptures' heard by rishis in deep meditation
- 'Shruti' – knowledge that is heard from a divine source
- Hymns, chants, philosophy, ritual & offerings
- "The Vedas cover the entire universe and all its activities" Sri Swami Satchidananda
- Traces of yoga can be found in the Veda – concepts rather than distinct practices
- Gayatri mantra appears in the Rig Veda

Gayatri Mantra

Om bhur bhuvah svah
tat savitur varenyam
bhargo devasya dhimahi
dhiyo yo nah prachodayat

The eternal, earth, air, heaven
That glory, that resplendence of the sun
May we contemplate the brilliance of that light
May the sun inspire our minds.

*Translation by Douglas Brooks

The Upanishads

- Upanishad - 'to sit close by': to receive sacred teachings
- Upanishads contain the essence of the Vedas
- Yoga becomes more defined and emerges as a distinct concept
- How many? 108 – over 200 (20 Yoga Upanishads)
- 12 Major Upanishads, 4 of which include reference to yoga; Taittiriya, Katha, Svetasvatara, Maitri
- Explanation of yoga, meditation, pancha koshas, mantra, mastery of the senses, role of the breath, knowledge, samadhi.



Bhagavad Gita

- Sanskrit – the Song of the Blessed One / God
- A portion of the Mahabharata - authored by Vyasa
- “Vedic truths presented as a story” Sri Swami Satchidananda
- A dialogue between the incarnate god Krishna and warrior prince Arjuna
- A tale of inner and outer conflict
- Distinction between the temporary material body & the eternal true Self
- Yoga embedded throughout the text
- Dharma, karma, detachment from outcome, meditation, samadhi, the paths of yoga, 3 gunas
- Ghandi’s ‘personal guidebook’. Significant text of Hinduism

Image: <https://www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/bhakti>



The Yoga Sutras

- Written by Patanjali around 200 BCE
- Sutra = thread
- 195 short sutras – condensed teachings
- The first definitive and comprehensive text focused on yoga
- 8-limbed path
- Ch 1: Yoga's meaning and purpose, obstacles faced and solutions
- Ch 2: Outlines practices, and includes the first 5 of the limbs of yoga
- Ch 3: Last of the 3 limbs. Experiences that may arise and how to avoid getting side-tracked
- Ch 4: The culmination of yoga practice. Liberation and freedom

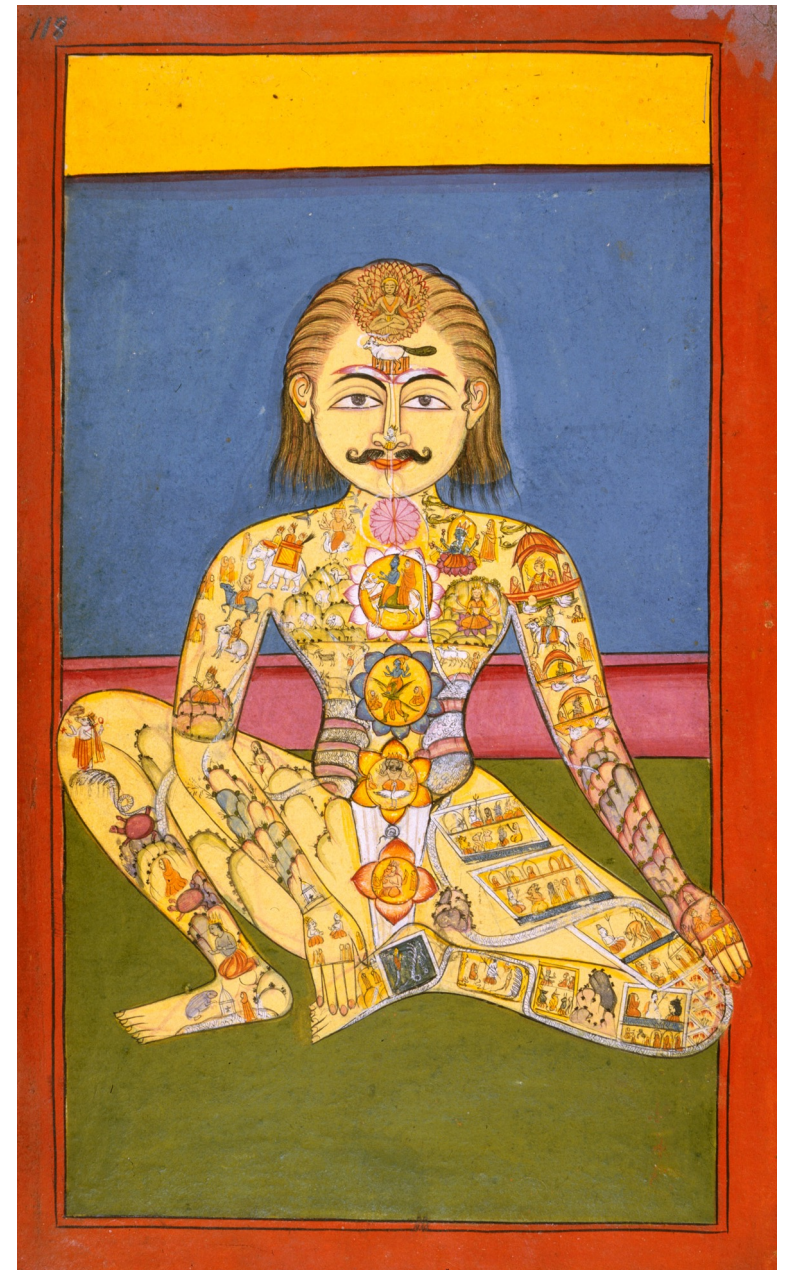
Verse 2

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः

yogaḥ cittavṛtti nirodhaḥ

Hatha Yoga Pradipika

- Hatha Yoga Pradipika - Light on Hatha Yoga
- Written by Swatmarama
- Greater detail on the practices of yoga, starting with the body;
 - asana, shatkarma (purifying practices), mudras (energy seals), bandhas (energy locks), pranayama
 - The energy body and awakening of kundalini
 - Advancement to Raja Yoga
 - Experience of samadhi



Modern Yoga

- Swami Vivekenanda is credited with bringing yoga to the West
- 1893 speech at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago sparked interest
- Largely spoke of yoga as a philosophical practice
- Yoga was then to grow throughout the 20th century, becoming a practice of traditional Indian yoga merged with modern forms with a more physical Western approach and a greater focus on asana.
- Key figures include Yogananda, Swami Satchidananda, BKS Iyengar, TKV Desikachar
- Yoga is far more accessible now, no longer the secret wisdom passed from guru to disciple.



*Swami Vivekananda, circa 1885.
Ramakrishna Mission Delhi/Public Domain*

The Yoga Strap...

- We assume that many of the yoga postures and props are a modern invention, but are they?
- Seth Powell, Harvard University, suggests possible sculptural evidence of yoga straps (yogapatta) as early as 100 BCE – 200CE.
- As well as yogapatta, there are also ancient text references to yoga mats (deer skin or kusha grass)
- BKS Iyengar introduced the use of props for widespread use in asana practice

Image ref: The Mahasiddha Chandragomin. 12th Century

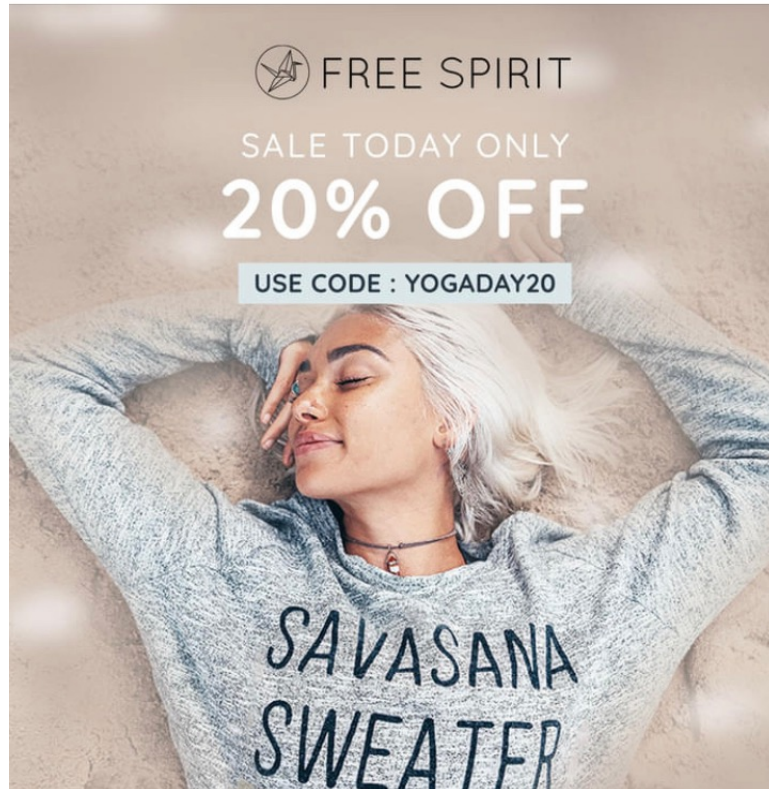
<https://collections.lacma.org/node/173626>



How can we honour the roots of yoga?

🌟 1 day Flash Sale for International Yoga Day 🌟

The offer ends at midnight, so hurry! ⌚



How can we honour the roots of yoga?

- **Cultural exchange/appreciation:** the intent and effect are 'forces for good'. Equality. Respect. Harmony. Balance. "Uplifts the source culture" (Susanna Barkataki)
- **Cultural appropriation:** "Cultural appropriation is when someone uses someone else's culture, including practices, symbols, rituals, fashion, or other elements from a target or "minority" culture, without considering the source, origins or people of that culture". Susanna Barkataki

Some points for reflection...

In your enquiry remember ahimsa – non harm: free from judgement and comparison

- Is yoga a spiritual practice, or yoga for health & wellbeing? Or can it be both?
- Do the teachings become diluted as they merge into other cultures? Is this ok (making yoga more accessible)?
- Seeing yoga as a marketable commodity? (Figures between \$66 - \$80bn globally)
- What was the role of colonialism in adapting yoga for the Western cultures?
- Are asana a more modern construct to appeal to a different (Western) culture? Modern asana have evolved over time. Tradition and innovation?
- Are people of colour or indigenous people represented widely on the internet/social media? Is there diversity in gender, age, disability, race? How inclusive is yoga now versus yoga in ancient times?
- What do we know about other possible ancient sources of yoga? Kemetic Yoga?

What can we do? Some ideas...

- Keep learning – educate ourselves
- Keep practicing
- Stay curious – when using symbols, mala, chants find out what they mean
- Explore and practice all aspects of yoga – the 8 Limbs
- Study the texts
- Acknowledge and appreciate those who have come before us and paved the way, connecting to the ancestry of yoga
- “Have a sincere intention at your heart” Susan Barkataki

“Although Hatha Yoga is several thousand years old, it never becomes outdated.

The truths of it are always current. They are like gold. Although other things lose their value according to time, gold is always the same”

Sri Swami Satchidananda

Sources of Inspiration & References

- <https://www.susannabarkataki.com/post/what-is-the-difference-between-cultural-appropriation-and-cultural-appreciation>
- Yoga Teacher Central
- Yoga International
- Colin Hall, The Yoga History Podcast
- Alistair Shearer
- Sarah Harris, BWY Foundation Course Tutor
- Many various translations of the Yoga Sutras and Bhagavad Gita
- Seth Powell, Harvard University:
- Swamij.com
- British Library: bl.uk
- 'Yoga – The Early Story', Gill Lloyd
- Inspiration on making yoga accessible and inclusive: Jivana Heyman, Dianne Bondy, Amber Karnes, Matthew Sanford
- Global financial worth of yoga – Allied Market Research: <https://www.alliedmarketresearch.com/yoga-market-A06967>

Image Resources where available and not referenced:

Indus Valley seal: <https://www.harappa.com/indus/33.html>