

## From Vedic Roots to Global Practice: A Holistic Study of the Evolution of Yoga

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article History:</b> Received: 17<sup>th</sup> January 2026 Accepted: 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026 Published: 02<sup>nd</sup> February 2026</p>	<p>Yoga, an ancient practice with roots in Indian philosophy, has evolved significantly over millennia. It has been practiced for centuries, with a focus on spirituality and mental, bodily, and social well-being. The practice has been influenced by various traditions, including the Buddhist, Jain, Vedic, Upanishad, and Indus Valley Civilisation. The science behind yoga predates the formation of the earliest religions or belief systems. This paper explores yoga's historical origins, philosophical foundations, and its transformation into a global phenomenon. It also examines contemporary trends, scientific perspectives, and the impact of modern adaptations on traditional practices. Recent research indicates that yoga is growing in popularity as a therapeutic approach to addressing physical and mental health issues. Yoga teaching and practices are influenced by various clinics, treatment centers, wellness centers, medical institutions, and therapeutic settings. People practice yoga to maintain their health and lifestyle.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p><i>Health, Lifestyle, Modern Yoga, Spirituality, Vedic Yoga</i></p>	

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**How to Cite:** Deokate, R. S. (2026). From Vedic Roots to Global Practice: A Holistic Study of the Evolution of Yoga. IIP: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal (IIPIMRJ), 3(1), 441–445.

**Introduction:**

The science of leading a healthy lifestyle is yoga. It works well when integrated into our daily life. It also has an impact on one's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Both the conscious and subconscious self are influenced by this science. Yoga, which originated thousands of years ago in India, covers every aspect of life and holistic wellness. Involving the body, mind, and spirit, it is the oldest personal development method in the world. Ancient yoga had a thorough understanding of the basic nature of man and what he needed to live in harmony with his environment and self.

The Sanskrit basis of the word "Yoga," which denotes oneness or unity, is "Yuj," which means to unite or link. Despite more than a century of research, we still don't completely grasp the roots of yoga. It's about five thousand years old. However, a lot of Western scholars thought that yoga evolved much later, maybe about 500 BC. The story of yoga's origins is an amazing and captivating journey. Some academics have suggested that yoga may have originated in the Indus Valley of civilisation because of the finding of pictures that closely resemble yoga carved on soapstone seals found in the remnants of the great towns of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa.

**Objective of Research:**

- To find out the origins and evolution of yoga
- To analyse yoga's philosophical traditions and norms.
- To understand how yoga has spread over the world and how it has changed in recent years.

**Research Materials & Methods:**

The present article's aims are to look at the history of yoga evaluation, emphasise its impact on modern life, and explain how yoga has changed over time while bringing attention to current concerns. The Internet databases Pro-Quest, Google Scholar, and Pub-Med Literature are used to assess the literature from Vedic, classical, and contemporary yoga. This search was not limited to any particular year because the article's objective is to present a thorough chronological picture of yoga's history.

**History and Developments of Yoga:**

According to some accounts, yoga has been practiced since the beginning of civilisation. Even before the first religions or belief systems were developed, the science of yoga was developed. A few thousand years ago, Adiyogi imparted this enormous wisdom to the fabled "Saptarishis" on the shores of Lake Kantosarovara in the Himalayas. This divine knowledge was established by the Sages in different parts of the world. Nonetheless, the yogic system reached its pinnacle of development in India. Agastya, Saptarishi, who had a mostly yogic lifestyle, passed through this town. Numerous fossilised seals from the Indus Saraswati Valley civilisation, objects with yogic motifs, and pictures of people conducting yoga sadhana all attest to the practice of yoga in prehistoric India. The phallic symbols and seals on the mother goddess sculptures represent Tantra Yoga. Yoga is mentioned in Shaival's theistic traditions, the epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana, folklore, and Darshana.

The Vedas, Upanishads, Epics, Jainism, Panini, and Smritis are among the texts that document yoga's historical practice, which dates back to the pre-Vedic era (2700 B.C.) and persisted until Patanjali's time. Yoga is used as a tactic in the traditional yoga approach described by Patanjali in the Yoga sutras. Yama and Nivama, Asanas (Postures), Pranayama (Breathing exercises), Pratyahara (Controlling one's senses), Dharana (Concentration), Dhyana (Meditation), and Samadhi (Self-Realization) are all part of Patanjali's eightfold (Ashtanga) System of Yoga, which emphasises a holistic approach to spiritual development.

**The History Of Yoga Divided Into Four Main Groups:**

1. Vedic Yoga
2. Pre-Classical Yoga
3. Post Classical Yoga
4. Modern Yoga

**1. Vedic Yoga:**

The word "Dhyana," which means intellect or Buddhi, is the root of the word meditation. The continuous flow of ideas (Ekatana) across the concentrated point (focused section of Dharana) is, in general, what is meant by Dhyana. Vedic yoga, sometimes referred to as archaic yoga, was closely linked to ceremonial life in ancient India. Its central idea was that sacrifice served as a bridge between the material world and the invisible spiritual realm.

**2. Pre-Classical Yoga:**

The Vedas are the earliest religious writings that are known to exist. The word "knowledge" in Sanskrit

is "veda." The hymns in the Rigveda are devoted to a higher power. The other three Vedas include the worldly knowledge that the sages in the Atharva and Yajur Vedas conveyed. During the Vedic era, knowledge—which the universe revealed to a sage via meditation—was viewed as the path to greater success. It falls into three categories: Prana yoga, which energises life; Dhyana yoga, which energises life energy while focussing the entire mind on one thing or concept; and Mantra yoga, which uses mantra to alter mental power. From the second century AD until more than 2,000 years ago, this yoga covers an expansive time period. One of the best and most well-known books on yoga is the Bhagavad-Gita, which was composed about 5000 B.C. The Upanishads were also written at this time. The Bhagavad Gita states that Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Jnana Yoga are the three ways one might develop a relationship with the Supreme Being. A collection of 195 wise sayings, the Yoga-Sutra was composed by Maharshi Patanjali in antiquity. Through the eight levels of Ashtanga Yoga, the ultimate aim of human existence is to achieve emancipation from the anguish that persists from conception to death. This description alludes to the Yoga of Patanjali. "Raja-Yoga" is another name for Ashtanga Yoga (eightfold Yoga), which is found in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra. The following list includes the four paths to spirituality:

- **Karma Yoga:**

This is a way of serving others without thinking about how the service will turn out. By letting go of his strong attachments, a person might achieve mental steadiness. It serves as a tool for clear conduct and comprehension. Because he has demonstrated to the world that one may discover the truth by working diligently at their profession. Mahatma Gandhi is known as the "Karma Yogi".

- **Bhakti Yoga:**

The devotional route aids in emotional regulation. This stage of life is known to psychologists as the "age of feeling and concern." They strive for a deeper relationship with their gods via commitment. Such emotional awareness can only be attained by unwavering dedication. The Bhakti path is beneficial for people who have emotional instability. The person who does Bhakti Yoga is the true devotee.

- **Jnana Yoga:**

This is the way to self-realization via the application and understanding of Gnostic knowledge. More specifically, it is the ability to distinguish between the real and the unreal. Everyone requires wisdom, insight, and knowledge to lead successful lives. People may find God or the ultimate truth with the use of knowledge.

- **Raja Yoga:**

Patanjali acknowledged Raja Yoga as a proper and streamlined type of yoga, and the sutras mention it. There are eight distinct periods of Raja Yoga. In essence, it is a comprehensive method of practicing yoga that combines Ashtanga with the study of human conduct and personality.

### 1. Post-Classical Yoga:

Buddha popularised meditation in the subcontinent in the 6th century BC, but there was a lot of disagreement about the idea that meditation cannot be the basis for spiritual practice. Buddhism declined during this time, and the two main conversational treatises produced during this period are Svatmarama's Hatha Yoga Pradipika and Sri Nivasa Yogi's Hatha Ratnavali. It also covers Yoga, the Shiva Samhita, Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati by Nitya Natha, and Ayurveda. Yoga was Among the works credited to Guru Gorksha Natha are the Goraksha Samhita, Gitta, and Yoga Chintamani. All of the important schools and variations of yoga that emerged in the years after Patanjali's Yo Sutra are covered in this extremely comprehensive category.

### 2. Modern Yoga:

One of the main tenets of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, also known as Purna Yoga, is opening up to the divine and submitting to it so that the divine energy might transform one's nature. Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa documented the path of Bhakti Yoga and deep love. Sri Ramakrishna's message of religious unity is among his most important contributions to modern civilisation.

#### Swami Vivekananda summarized the Vedanta's teachings as follows:

1. The potential for divinity exists in every soul.
2. The goal is to make this divinity evident within by controlling both the internal and external nature.
3. You can do this by action (Karma Yoga), devotion (Bhakti Yoga), philosophy (Jnana Yoga), or psychic confrontation (Raja Yoga).
4. The Congress of Religions was founded in Chicago in 1893, which marked the beginning of the current view of yoga. This same religious assembly was the site of Swami Vivekananda's significant impact on

Americans. Nowadays, everyone believes that yoga is beneficial for conserving, enhancing, and keeping health. Thanks to the teachings of notable figures like Swami Rana, BKS Iyengar, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and Shri Aurobindo, yoga has become popular around the world.

#### **Following are the Great Examples Of Yogis As-**

##### **1. Swami Vivekananda:**

During the World Assembly of Religions in Chicago in 1893, Swami Vivekananda, the first Hindu swami to travel to the West and present Eastern concepts, introduced the Vedanta philosophy and Indian spiritual culture to the United States. His final thoughts on the perennial springs that feed people's spiritual minds are Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Jnana Yoga. Swami Vivekananda was a prominent figure in the yoga community and brought Indian philosophy, also known as Neovedanta, a fresh viewpoint.

##### **2. Shri Aurobindo:**

Shri Aurobindo was an Indian patriot, a poet, a guru, an evolutionary philosopher, and a renounced scholar. Integral Yoga, also known as Purno Yoga, is a novel technique created by Sri Aurobindo. Whereas puma denotes totality, integral here refers to a special technique that incorporates all facets of yoga. For Puma Yoga, achieving "divine life" is the ultimate aim. His sense of freedom is palpable. Thus, according to him, "Yoga means not only the realisation of God but also a complete focus on and transformation of our inner and outer lives until it is suitable to manifest a divine consciousness and become a part of a divine task"

##### **3. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi:**

He developed, perfected, and popularised the Transcendental Meditation technique in India. He started instructing meditation techniques that he named Transcendental Meditation when he was living in Uttara Kashi, Himalayas, from 1953 to 1955. He embarked on his first world tour in 1958. He contributed to the global acceptance of transcendental meditation. Among his important writings are Maharshi Mahesh Yogi on Bhagavad-Gita, Ideal India, Transcendental Meditation, and The Art of Living. Maharishi founded the Spiritual Regeneration Movement in Madras in 1958 following two years of teaching and travelling around India. He then made his way east, teaching in Singapore and Hawaii until arriving in California in 1959. Spiritual movements have recently developed throughout California.

##### **4. Swami Ramdev:**

Swami Ramdev, popularly known as Baba Ramdev, is credited with popularising and spreading yoga around the world. He had been crippled since he was a toddler. After practicing yoga, his strength returned. He went to the Gurukul in Khanpur to study yoga and Sanskrit after finishing the eighth grade at Shahjadpur. He became famous as Baba Ramdev after deciding to become a saint. Several free yoga training camps have been established in India. Together with Acharya Karamveer and Acharya Balakrishna, he founded the Divya Yoga Mandir Trust. Several yoga campuses have been created by him outside of India. The TV series is broadcast in several countries, including America, Africa, and Australia. On August 6, 2006, the Patanjali Yoga Trust was established with the intention of constructing the largest Ayurvedic institution. He received several noteworthy accolades, including an honorary doctorate from KIIT University in 2007.

##### **5. Shree Shree Ravishankar:**

A well-known spiritual and humanitarian figure is Shree Shree Ravishankar. He contributed to the development of a society free from stress and violence by promoting the advancement of human values. His parents, Venkata Ratnam and Vishalakshi, were born in Tamil Nadu on May 13, 1956. Shree Shree Ravishankar founded the nonprofit organisation The Art of Living in 1981, and it now has operations in 140 nations. After spending 10 days in isolation on the banks of the Bhadra River in 1982, he conceived the idea for Sudarshana Kriva Yoga, a rhythmic breathing technique. According to him, breathing serves as the conduit between the body and the mind. In the wake of the World Trade Centre attacks on September 11, 2001, the Art of Living Foundation offered free stress-reduction workshops to New Yorkers.

#### **Results:**

In addition to spirituality, this study found that yoga is presently being employed in a number of areas of life, such as health, research, disease, education, and the workplace. Ashtanga Yoga is based on yoga scriptures that explain mental and physical well-being, such as the Yoga Sutra, according to many studies. The eight Ashtanga Yoga steps—Yama & Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi—are explained in depth in Patanjali Yoga Sutra 24. Physical health is promoted by Asana, mental health by Niyama and Pramayama, social health by Yama, and spiritual health by Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. Hatha Yogic books are the only sources of most yoga practices. However, the Yoga sutra only has three sutras that

discuss asanas. Essentially Hatha Yoga is a pre-exercise that supports the body's ability to sustain higher energy levels. We find that the Veda and Bhagwat-Gita offer concise explanations of spirituality and health after looking at a number of books and research studies about yoga. 26 It is possible to argue that yoga is a panacea for all ailments. Even though yoga consists of hundreds of poses and breathing techniques, it is more than just postures and mantras. The goal of this age-old method is to achieve holistic health, which encompasses spirituality.

#### Discussion:

Our examination of a number of books and research papers revealed that yoga has a lengthy history. Yoga has a big influence on keeping your health in check. All of the yogic practices and belief systems are based on yoga. As a result, the yoga tradition is quite scientific and sophisticated. In the present world, yoga is becoming more and more significant in fields like education, health, and living a healthy lifestyle. The practice of yoga is growing in popularity both domestically and internationally, and it is becoming more vibrant every day.

The popularity of yoga is demonstrated by the fact that June 21 is observed as World Yoga Day each year worldwide. June 21 was designated as International Yoga Day by the UN General Assembly on December 11, 2014, and it was celebrated globally in 2015 by 192 nations, the most ever. Not just in India but increasingly in other nations, yoga is being practiced for its health advantages. At the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that yoga is more than simply bodily workout and physical wellness.

#### Conclusion:

Yoga is essential for sustaining health and encouraging a healthy lifestyle, and it has a long history. It is a profound and scientific tradition that forms the basis of all yogic practices and belief systems. With June 21 being designated as World Yoga Day every year, yoga is becoming more and more popular both domestically and internationally. In 2014, the UN General Assembly declared June 21 to be International Yoga Day, and in 2015, 192 countries celebrated the day. Yoga is becoming more and more popular outside of India due to its health benefits. As said by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, yoga is more than just physical training and body workout. In order to get true life knowledge, the Yoga technique was developed under the direction of ancient seers. It entails changing one's lifestyle and focusing on the traditional approach that Swami Vivekananda introduced to the West. Numerous distinguished organisations, such as Yoga University, colleges of naturopathy, Yoga & Ayurveda Hospitals, and private groups, have an effect on yoga teaching today. Global yoga popularity has been greatly aided by yoga gurus such as Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramdev, Shri Aurobindo, and Shree Shree Ravishankar.

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