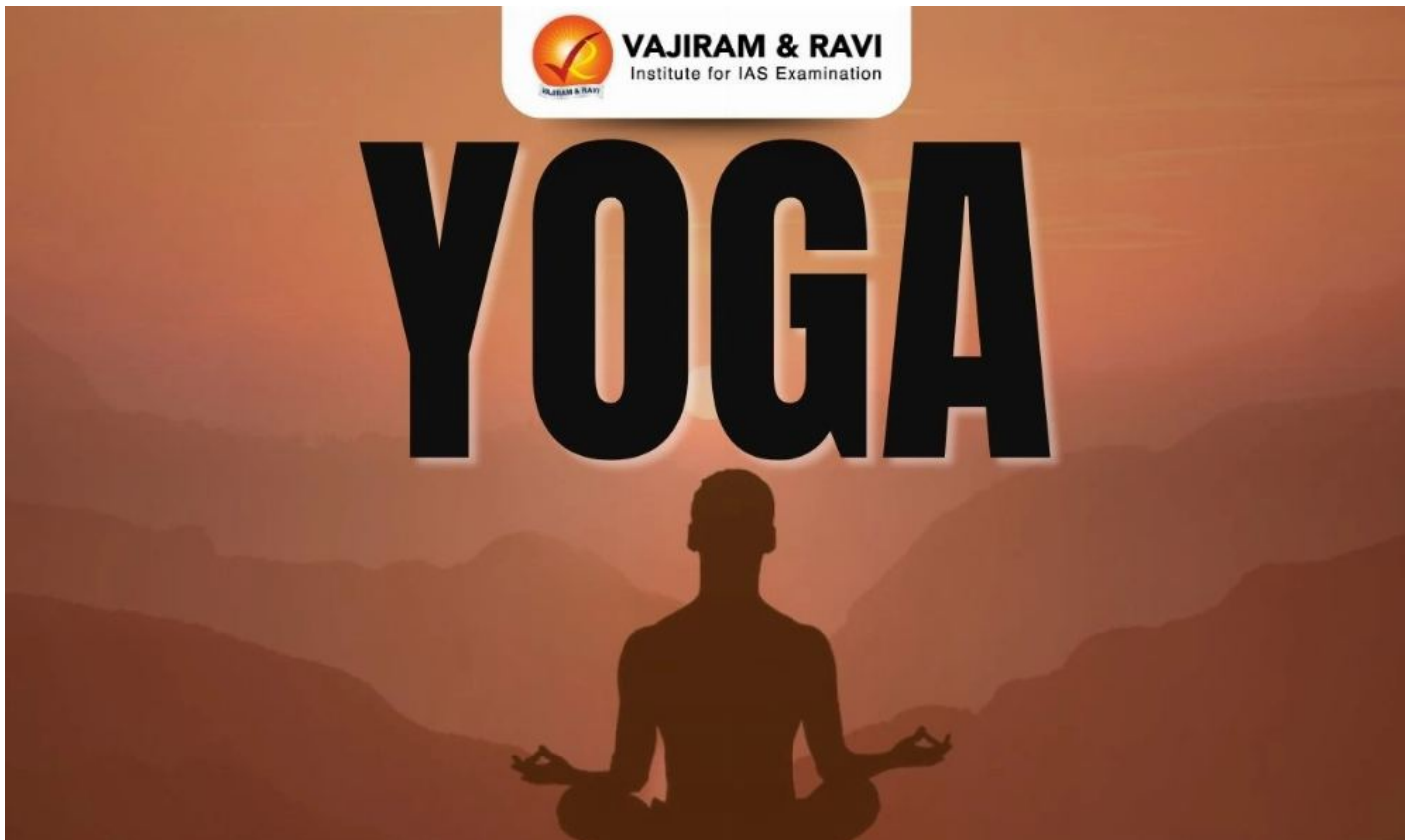


Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Yoga Schools, Philosophy

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Yoga, as outlined by **Patanjali** in the second century B.C., is a comprehensive system aimed at achieving mental control and spiritual liberation. His foundational text, the **Yogasutra**, presents the techniques and practices that guide individuals on this path.

Patanjali's Yogasutra, describes the **eight limbs of Yoga**, which cover moral, external, and internal disciplines, ultimately leading to spiritual absorption. He emphasizes the existence of **Isvara** (God) as omniscient and distinct from **Prakṛti** (primordial matter) while recognizing three core realities including God, soul, and matter.

Yoga History

Yoga was originated and developed by ancient Indian rishis to overcome all kinds of suffering of human beings and its root causes. The history and development of Yoga can be divided into the following periods.

- **Pre-Vedic Period:** Yoga is widely considered as an 'immortal cultural outcome' of **Indus Valley Civilisation** dating back to 2700 B.C., it has proved itself catering to both material and spiritual upliftment of humanity.

- The stone seals excavated from the sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation depicting figures in yogic postures indicated that Yoga was being practiced even during 3000 B.C.
- The human figure of the **Pashupati seal**, shown in **yogic posture**, exemplifies the ancient practice of yoga
- **Vedic and Upanishadic period:** The Vedas contain the oldest known yogic teachings called Vedic Yoga.
 - The Yoga in **Upanishads** describes the inner vision of reality resulting in intense self-inquiry. **Jnana-yoga**, **Karma-yoga**, and **Dhyana-yoga** are the main outcomes of the Upanishadic teachings.
- **Classical period:** The classical period is defined by **Maharishi Patanjali's yoga sutras**, the first systematic presentation of Yoga.
 - The period between **500 B.C.- 800 AD** is considered as the **Classical period**, which is also the prominent period in the history and development of Yoga.
 - The concept of five great vows i.e., **Pancha Mahavratas by Mahavir** and **eightfold path by Buddha** can be well considered as the early nature of Yoga Sadhana.
- **Post-Classical Period:** The post-classical period, which lasted until **1700 AD**, saw significant contributions from various yoga teachers who helped shape and develop the practice.
 - Prominent figures include Acharya Traya-**Adi Shankaracharya**, **Madhvacharya**, Ramanujacharya, **Meera Bai**, and Purandara Dasa.
 - Adi Shankaracharya played a key role in advancing **Jnana and Raja Yoga**, emphasizing meditation to clear negative thoughts.
 - Other yogis, such as **Tulsidas** and **Purandara Dasa**, contributed to the **evolution of Hatha Yoga**, which focused on physical postures and breathing techniques.
- **Modern Period:** In the modern period, from 1700 AD to the present, **Swami Vivekananda** was instrumental in promoting yoga, particularly for physical strength and well-being.
 - Figures like Ramana Maharshi, **Ramakrishna Paramahansa**, BKS Iyengar, and **Paramhansa Yogananda** also contributed to the spread of **Hatha Yoga**, Vedanta, and **Bhakti Yoga**.
 - Despite evolving theories and adaptations over the centuries, the core of yoga continues to be the pursuit of harmony between the mind, body, spirit, and nature.
- **Soft Power of India:** In 2014, the **United Nations General Assembly** designated **June 21st** as '**International Yoga Day**,' following a proposal from India.
 - This initiative is regarded as a demonstration of India's soft power through Yoga on the global stage.
 - The Indian government seeks to harness Yoga's popularity to showcase the nation's contributions to health, well-being, and spirituality while boosting tourism.

Yoga Philosophy

According to Patanjali, the founder of the Yoga Philosophy, yoga is a spiritual effort to achieve perfection through the control of sense organs, gross body, subtle mind, intellect, and ego. Yoga philosophy comes under the **orthodox school** of Indian Philosophy.

- The '**Yoga-sutras**' of Patanjali are authoritative presentations of yoga in both theoretical and practical aspects.

- **Commentaries:** *Yoga-bhasya* of Vyasa and Vacavpati Mishra's *Tattva-vaisharadi* are good additions to Yoga philosophy after Patanjali. These two works are regarded as Yoga-sutra commentaries.
- **Samkhya Philosophy and Yoga:** Samkhya provides a **theoretical framework** centred on the dualism of Purusha (consciousness) and Prakriti (matter), explaining existence and liberation. It emphasises the separation of the self from material existence.
 - In contrast, Yoga offers **practical methods and disciplines** to achieve the liberation described by Samkhya, helping individuals realize this distinction and attain spiritual liberation (moksha).
- **Three Pramanas of Yoga:** Perception, inference, and verbal testimony.

Four Parts of Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras	
Samadhi Pada	Introduces the nature and methods of yoga in its various forms.
Sadhana Pada	- Describes the reasons for suffering and how to eliminate them. - It discusses the law of karma as well as human bondage.
Vibhuti Pada	Elucidates the concept of how to achieve the supra-normal powers and in which ways yoga helps it.
Kaivalya Pada	Describes the nature of liberation and spiritual union with the supreme soul/self.

Ashtanga Yoga (The Eight-Fold Yoga)

Yoga philosophy prescribes an **eight-fold path** that helps to control our passions and craving for worldly pleasures. These eight fold paths are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi.

Ashtanga Yoga	
Yama	- It is the control of mind, body, and speech. - Five Yamas: Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, and Aparigraha.
Niyama	- It discusses the guidelines for good behaviour. - Five Niyamas: • Saucha: It mentions cleanliness, which includes both internal and external cleaning. • Santosh: It means to be satisfied with yourself whatever you attain or possess. • Tapa: It includes the power of tolerance. • Swadhyaya: To develop spiritual knowledge, one must study religious scriptures. • Iswara Pranidhana: It says to always remember that God is the supreme authority and all-powerful. This is a practice that aids in the development of good behaviour as advocated by yoga philosophy.

Asana	- It is an advanced stage of yoga. It speaks about doing various bodily postures which helps to retain concentration of citta and even helps to control the body as well as mind. • The term 'Citta' refers to the three internal organs described in Samkhya philosophy: buddhi (intellect), ahamkara (ego), and manas (mind). - Types of asana: padma, sirsa, chakra, garuda, maura etc.
Pranayama	- Pranayama is understood as control of breath. It suggests that practising pranayama helps the agent control his/her inhaling and exhaling of breath.
Pratyahara	In this stage, the agent should control his/her sense organs to not be attracted by worldly objects. Hence, the craving for an object would be ceased.
Dharana	Our thoughts are constantly shifting from one object to another. Dharana is the practice of keeping our minds focused on one specific point and attempting to determine the frequency with which they shift from one object to another.
Dhyana	In this stage, the aspirant becomes successful in remaining concentrated on an object for a longer time. This step is known as meditation.
Samadhi	- Samadhi is the eighth and final step in the yoga practice. - Here, the process of concentration and the object becomes one and identical. This stage is known as the cessation of modification of the citta.

Yoga Schools

The different philosophies, traditions, lineages, and guru-shishya parampara of Yoga led to the emergence of different traditional schools.

- **Jnana Yoga:** Jnana means 'knowledge'. Jnana-yoga is the yoga of wisdom.
 - It depicts the path to self-realization by distinguishing the real from the unreal and distinguishing between right and wrong.
 - The main proponent of this practice is **Adi Shankaracharya**, an influential philosopher who established the principles of **Advaita Vedanta** in the 8th century CE.
- **Bhakti Yoga:** Bhakti Yoga is a Yoga of devotion.
 - Bhakti Yoga is defined as the path of devotion towards the realization of a personal God, with its roots in the **Bhagavad Gita**.
- **Karma Yoga:** Karma means action. Karma Yoga is the path of selfless action intended to overcome the desire which is the root cause of all miseries or sufferings.
 - The culmination of Karma Yoga lies in the devotee's diligent performance of his duty and offering the results thereof to God.
 - Moreover, Karma Yoga, also known as Karma Marga, is outlined in the Bhagavad Gita.
- **Patanjali Yoga:** The aim of Patanjali Yoga (popularly called '**Raja Yoga**') is to attain chitta-vṛtti-nirodha (cessation of mental modifications), leading to kaivalya (self-realisation).

- It is Yoga for mind management and to realise the self by the process of dhayana (Meditation).
- **Hatha Yoga:** Hatha Yoga is the yoga of establishing a balance between pairs of opposites.
 - Some Hatha yoga techniques date back to the 1st century CE, referenced in Hindu Sanskrit epics and the Pali canon of Buddhism.
 - The earliest known Hatha yoga text, the **Amṛtasiddhi**, comes from the 11th century and is rooted in tantric Buddhism, with early uses of Hatha terminology also found in **Vajrayana Buddhist texts**. Hindu Hatha yoga texts began to appear from the 11th century onward.
 - The main objective of Hatha-yoga is to have a healthy body and mind to accomplish the goal.

Yoga UPSC PYQs

Question 1: Which one of the following pairs does not form part of the six systems of Indian Philosophy? (**UPSC Prelims 2014**)

1. Mimamsa and Vedanta
2. Nyaya and Vaisheshika
3. Lokayata and Kapalika
4. Sankhya and Yoga

Answer: (c)

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