

THE HISTORY OF YOGA FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN TIMES

Ammaji, Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani

Director- ICYER at Ananda Ashram,

Pondicherry, India. www.icyer.com

“YOGA” is an ancient Sanskrit word which, in only two syllables, encompasses the entire body of spiritual experiences and experiments of tens of thousands of Realised Masters. These Masters have discovered the **Ultimate Reality, Sat**, and in their infinite Karuna, compassion, have carefully marked a path for others to follow. The **Upanishads** exclaim: “*Lo! Ye who suffer know! A way has been found! A way out of all this darkness!*” That way is Yoga!

Yoga is as old as the Universe, for it is both the Path and the Goal. The Goal is realisation of the **Innate Nature of the Universe, the Highest Being: Atman, Purusha, Shiva, Devi, Sat...** whatever word we wish to use to describe its essence. In Sankhya and Yoga, that **Highest Being** is called **Purusha** – and the manifestation of That Spirit in the world of matter and senses is called **Prakrithi**. It is through experiences in the **Prakrithi**, or manifested world, that the **Jiva**, individual soul, returns to the **Paramatman**, or **Universal Soul**. Hence, **Purusha** and **Prakrithi** are one and the same: **Purusha** is the Goal and **Prakrithi**, the path to that Goal.

The word “**Yoga**” is often described as “**union**”. It implies that the individual is united with the Universe, the personality with the Universality. The root of the word “**Yoga**” is the Sanskrit Bija “**Yuj**” which means “**to join together.**” The English word “**yoke**” is directly derived from the Sanskrit “**Yuj**”. In fact, the English word “**Union**” has a sound similar to “**Yuj**”. Perhaps one could more correctly say, Yoga is “**re-union**”. The **Upanishad** says, “*That which was One became the many.*” **Purusha** unfolded into the multi-splendrous material creation through **Prakrithi**. The science of Yoga accelerates the “*return of the many to the One*”, the re-union of **Purusha** and **Prakrithi**, **Shivan** and **Shakti**, Ram and Sita. Thus, Yoga is both the Goal (Purusha) and the path to that Goal (Prakrithi).

In this Cosmic Drama, Play, Leela, the sense of Dwaitam, the sense of separateness rose. From this Dwaitam (duality, two-ness) rose Bhayam, fear. The **Upanishad** says, “*Where there are two, there is fear.*” This primordial fear rising from the sense of separateness is the root cause of all man’s sufferings. That primordial fear can be destroyed when the Highest Sense of Oneness is once more achieved. The sages call this “reunion”, **Moksha** , **Samadhi**, **Kaivalya**, **Jivana Mukta**. This is the true goal of Yoga.

Spurred by this miserable sense of separateness and its concomitant fear, the ancient Rishis delved deeply into the nature of the Universe and the cause of all suffering. They discovered Essential Truths which enabled the embodied soul to enjoy again the Blissful Union or Re-union with that Highest Self. All these experiences and experiments of the Rishis through thousands of years are collectively referred to under the term “Yoga”.

HISTORICAL UNFOLDING OF THE CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES OF YOGA

For the purpose of understanding the development of this great Yogic spiritual tradition, one may divide its unfoldment into three time frames:

- I : **PRE-HISTORIC:** Teachings transmitted orally from Guru to disciple in forest hermitages. Before the written word.
- II : **THE HISTORIC:** Teachings transmitted from Guru to disciple in forest hermitages, using both oral and written traditions.
- III : **MODERN:** Spiritual teachings gleaned from many sources, indiscriminately, often only through the written word and without the guidance of Guru.

I. THE PRE-HISTORIC PERIOD

The Indic Civilisation (the culture which grew up around the Indus Valley) is commonly accepted in modern times to be more than nine thousand years old. The town of Mehrgarh has been dated back to 6500 B.C. by Archeologists.

ORIGIN OF THE VEDAS: The origin of the **Vedas** is lost in antiquity. The **Vedas** were ancient hymns, sung in the forests, by Rishis who lived ascetic lives in hermitages. Yet, they were filled also with the joys and sorrows, gains and losses, fears and desires of worldly life. Originally, they were sung. They were not put in written form. Who knows for how many centuries or millennia these sacred chants were passed from Guru to disciple? Hindu tradition puts the **Vedas** as far back as 10,000 years. In this Vedic Period, the word “**Yoga**” was used occasionally, often in reference to Homas, fire ceremonies. The “practical aspects” of Yoga were not formalized, but were part and parcel of the Vedic seer’s life. To perform Homa, the sages had to sit immobile for days, weeks, even months in “Asanas”, straight, still, sitting positions of the body. The Mantras chanted required tremendous breath control (Pranayama). The ritualistic accuracy and purity required intense Dharana (concentration). The senses had to be controlled, as fasting and other physical disciplines were part of the ritual. Hence, the ritualistic worship of the Vedic seers implied a very strong practice of Yoga Sadhana, even without the word “Yoga” being applied to this Sadhana.

Even so, the word “**Yoga**” does appear in the Vedas. According to Dr.K.H. Kumar Kaul, author of *YOGA IN THE HINDU SCRIPTURES*, in the prayers of the RIG VEDA to Indra, the Rishis advise the aspirant to follow the path of Yoga for obtaining energy from the “Divine Person”. In the RIGVEDA, (V, 81.1) the Mantra repeats the word “**Yoga**” and implies different types of Yoga related to all kinds of human existence. In YAJURVEDA according to Dr. Kaul, some references directly or indirectly related to Yogic systems are found. The same reference “*Yujate man...*” of the RIGVEDA is found in YAJURVEDA for the sake of putting emphasis on mental Yoga. Dr. Kaul says the ATHARVAVEDA is the most important for the study of Yoga practices. In the ATHARVAVEDA references are found to Prana, the vital energy of the Universe, and also to Chakras (eight Chakras in the Pranic body and nine apertures (gates) in the body”. “Astachara navdvara devanam pruyodhya tasyam hiranyayah kosha o kosha svargo

‘jyotisavrth’ (ATHARVAVEDA 10.2.31). **Pranavidya** or the **Science of Prana** is referred to in the ATHARVAVEDA in which the meaning is that Prana is the essence of the Universe. According to the ATHARVAVEDA, all senses and motor organs can stop their functioning when they are tired, but only Prana is always working and active as long as the body lives. Further ATHARVA VEDA, to a large extent, carried similar references of RIG VEDA, in which “**Yoga**” has not yet acquired its technical meaning. However, ATHARVAVEDA gives importance to the practice of Yoga. Dr. Kumar Kaul observes:

“All the four Vedic Samhitas refer directly or indirectly to the Yoga system and the Yoga traditions. In the first three Samhitas there are direct as well as indirect references to Yoga. But the ATHARVAVEDA gives the clear conception of Yoga describing the eight mystical circles (Chakras) and the nine gates of the human body-the golden sheath and the mystical wheel containing the thousand spokes. Therefore, it may be held that the Vedic seers and sages were aware of the nature, importance and implication of the practical aspects of Yoga. Their supernatural knowledge also tells us they were practical Yogis. By following the path of Yoga, they had become successful in revealing divine knowledge within their minds. It is also suggested that even gods could not have achieved their divinity without the knowledge of Yoga.”

The Vedas came to be written down, and passed from an oral tradition to the written tradition. They were organised and systematized by Ved Vyasa, the author of the **Mahabharatha**.

II. THE WRITTEN TRADITION

Hindu tradition holds that Lord Rama lived in Treta Yoga and thus the **Ramayana**, the story of his life, was written by Sage Valmiki, about 7,000 years ago. The **Ramayana** is also an allegory for the principles of Yogic living. Lord Rama was the supreme Yogi: firmly wedded to Dharma, or Righteous Living; an upholder of Satya, or Truth at all costs. A supreme ascetic, or Tapasin, he was firmly in control of his senses. His one-pointed mind manifested itself in his “Skill in action” as a warrior, a king, a husband, a son, a friend and a companion. Lord Rama is the role model for all Yogic qualities. The **RAMAYANA** is a “practical Yoga manual” showing mankind how to live a spiritual life. Proper attitudes to take towards all the challenges of worldly life are elaborated in detail in the work. The **MAHABHARATHA** is the second great “Yogic allegory” of Hindu literature, written by sage Ved Vyasa. It tells the story of the struggle of every human soul to overcome the animalistic passions (symbolized by the Kauravas) and enable the triumph of the divine qualities of the God nature (symbolized by the Pandavas). The **Mahabharatha** is also the story of Krishna, who, it is believed, lived in Dwapara Yuga, about 5,000 years ago. It is said that when Lord Krishna died, and the date is postulated at about 3125 B.C., Kali Yuga began.

Embedded within the **Mahabharatha** is the world famous scripture of Hinduism **THE BHAGAVAD GITA** which is the ultimate text book of Yoga. In eighteen chapters of the discourse between Lord Krishna and Arjuna, the proper “**Yoga Bhava**” or “**Yogic attitude**” towards every human crisis is given. The word “Yoga” is frequently used in the **Bhagavad Gita**. In fact, every one of the eighteen chapters is entitled as a “Yoga”. Lord Krishna carefully leads Arjuna out of **Vishadha**, or depression, into a positive state of mind where he is able to fulfill his duties as a warrior. The famous Yogic concepts of the **Gita** include: “*Yoga Karmasu Kaushaam*” (Yoga is skill in action) and” *Yoga Uchayati Samatva*” (Yoga is equal mindedness in all circumstances). Concepts that were very much part of Hindu Culture from Vedic times, such as

Karma Yoga, Bhakthi Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Dhyana Yoga were codified and elaborated in a systematic way for the first time in the **Bhagavad Gita**. The emphasis was on Vairayga or detachment and Viveka or discrimination. No practical instruction is given, other than the instruction to “sit straight” with head and neck erect. The word “**Asana**” is used, but mainly in reference to the “seat” on which the Yogi is to sit to perfect his “meditation”.

The concept of “Yoga” as an attitude towards living which could embrace the entire spectrum of man’s existence was first formulated clearly and boldly by Maharishi Ved Vyasa in his magus opus, THE BHAGAVAD GITA which forms a part of the MAHABHARATHA. In these eighteen chapters, each chapter of which is entitled a “Yoga”, Lord Krishna instructs his disciple Arjuna that Yoga is cultivating the “proper attitude” of mind in all of life’s circumstances. Yoga is not just a “withdrawal from the world and practice of extreme asceticism” but rather a Yogi is he who is “moderate in both eating and fasting, sleeping and waking”.(Chapter Six) (16). “Yoga is not possible for him who eats too much or for him who abstains too much from eating. It is not for him, O Arjuna, who sleeps too much or too little.” Even “Dejection and Despair” can be a “Yoga” in the sense that often such despair is the starting point of the spiritual life. Thus the author of the BHAGAVADGITA has entitled his first chapter, THE YOGA OF THE VISHADA OF ARJUNA”, or the “YOGA OF THE DESPONDENCY OF ARJUNA”.

It is interesting to note that in the other great spiritual work on Yoga, the YOGA VASHISHTHA authored thousands of years ago by Maharishi Valmiki, that Lord Rama also started his spiritual search when his mind was in a state of utter dejection at the futility of the worldly life. It was only when the Sadhak or seeker understood totally the impermanent and painful nature of the world, that he broke his attachment to worldly life and true spiritual instruction could begin. The qualification of a spiritual aspirant is given in Yoga Vashistha in Chapter I, V.29.

“He is entitled to study this scripture who has the firm belief, “I am bound; let me be liberated”, and who is not much ignorant, and not much wise either”.

Sage Ved Vyasa must have codified much of the prevailing spiritual wisdom of his time in composing the BHAGAVAD GITA. A few passages from the BHAGAVAD GITA which serve as example of the attitudes of mind necessary for progress in Yoga are given below.

In Chapter Six, DHYANA YOGA, the following verses occur. (V.11) “Having firmly fixed in a clean place his seat, neither too high nor too low and having spread over it the kusa grass, a deer skin and cloth, one over the other”.

(V.12) “Sitting there on his seat, making the mind one pointed and restraining the thinking faculty and the senses, he should practice Yoga for self purification”.

(V.13) “Let him hold the body, head and neck erect and still, gazing at the tip of his nose without looking around”.

These three verses contain the only “practical physical techniques of Yoga” taught in the entire **Gita**. The balance of the **Gita’s** spiritual instruction on Yoga is primarily on cultivating the proper attitude towards oneself and the world. Lord Krishna defines Yoga as “a balanced mind.” “Perform action, O Dhananjaya, being fixed in Yoga, renouncing attachments and being even-minded in success and failure. Equilibrium is verily Yoga”. (Chapter Two V. 48).

Yoga is skill in action “The one fixed in equanimity of mind frees oneself in this life from vice and virtue alike. Therefore, devote yourself to Yoga. Work done to perfection is verily Yoga.” (Chapter Two. 50).

The Yogi is one who has controlled his senses. “The Yogi, having controlled them (the senses) sits focused on Me, as the Supreme Goal. His wisdom is constant whose senses are under subjugation”. (Chapter Two 61).

A Yogi is a man who rises above the duality of action and non-action “He who sees action in inaction and inaction in action, he is wise among men, he is a Yogi and accomplisher of everything”. (Chapter Four 18).

The Yogi is not attached to the fruits of action “Abandoning the fruit of action, the Yogi attains peace born of steadfastness; impelled by desire, the non-Yogi is bound, attached to fruit”. (Chapter Five 12).

The **Upanishads**, or the **Vedanta** (that which came “at the end of the **Vedas**”) are equally ancient. The various **Upanishads** were elaborated at different times. Some may be as old as 3,000 to 5,000 years and others are much more recent. The **Upanishads** were explanations of the mystic concepts of the **Vedas** in more concrete, less abstract form. Next to the **VEDAS**, the **UPANISHADS** are the most important repositories of ancient Hindu mystic Yogic thought. They represent a body of spiritual realizations based upon individual experience which was transmitted from the Guru to the student who literally “Sat at the Guru’s feet”. Several **Upanishads** contain nuggets of golden Yogic truth. THE **KATHOPANISHAD** teaches, “*The Creator of the Universe opened the gate of the senses outside, therefore, external senses perceive the external phenomena and not the Internal Atman. The wise Yogis turn their faces inside with the desire of immortality.* (KATHOPANISHAD (II, I.I). In this **Upanishad** Lord Yama also teaches Nacheketas that there are one hundred and one nerves in the heart, and among them, one goes upward through the head and if the Yogi raises himself to the head through this particular nerve, he attains immortality, (KATHOPANISHAD II, 3.16).

In **PRASNA UPANISHAD**, the Guru Pippalada in answering questions from six disciples, propounds the concept of Prana as the “mother-father of all created things”, and the concept of polarity, or movement between Creator and Created, as a sustenance of the manifested world. He also elucidates in detail the idea of Prana, as the Supreme Moving Force of Creation, in the famous verse, “*And when the queen bee rises, all the bees with her arise, and when she comes to rest, again, then all come to rest. Even so it happened to the senses. They realized that Prana was supreme and made obescience to it*”. (PRASNA UPANISHAD). The Guru sketches the intimate relationship of mind and Prana, and teaches the importance of meditation on the sacred **PRANAVA AUM**. The **MUNDAKA UPANISHAD** begins with the famous question of all spiritual seekers, “*Master, what is That, which when known, one knows all?*”. Saunaka, a householder, asks his Master Angiras. Sage Angiras also stresses the importance of meditation on **AUM** and also following the Yama and Niyamas, or morality and ethics in life. Both the **MUNDAKA** and the **PRASNA UPANISHADS** belong to the **Atharvaveda**.

THE **CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD** also stresses the importance of chanting and meditating upon the Sanskrit syllable **AUM**, which it describes as **UDGITA**, the “sacred word which is sung”. This **Upanishad** also describes the greatness of Prana. It also beautifully describes the concept of **Dhyana**, or meditation, and says that “*whatever great thing is known to men is known through meditation... the whole earth, middle space, the heaven, waters and even mountains are engaged in Dhyana*”.

In the BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD sage Yajnavalkya, teaches there are three means of liberation, i.e. **Sravana**, or study; **Manana**, rational thinking and **Nididhyasan Meditation**. THE SHVETASVTARA UPANISHAD is the last among the main Upanishads. The second chapter is devoted to an explanation of Yoga philosophy. The sage says persons practicing Yoga and Dhyana must unite their mind with God. God, then with His Grace, unites their intellect with Him, and they then perceive His Light. Moksha is possible only with purity of heart (SHVETASVTARA UPANISHAD (2.1). This Upanishad explains Yoga with the help of the Vedic Samhita Mantras.

The concept of Yoga in the UPANISHADS is that the spiritual life starts with mental purity, control and devotion to the Divine Spirit. A sense of sacredness and reverence for the Higher Self is an essential. The **Upanishads** wonderfully advocate consummate virtues like devotion, dedication, service, austerity, truthfulness, continence, self restraint, faith, generosity, etc. though not in proper order, but which are definitely included in the system of Yoga. In KATHOPANISHAD, the word “Yoga” has been used in its technical sense and has been defined as “*controlling and stabilizing the senses*”. “*This, they consider to be Yoga, the steady control of senses. Then one becomes undistracted, for Yoga comes and goes*”. (Tr. S. Radhakrishnan). This Upanishad further gives stress on ADHYATMA YOGA which leads to Self-realisation.

Scriptural study, renunciation, enjoyment, knowledge and freedom in action are the motto of Karmayoga which is defined in the opening verse of ISAVASYOPANISAD. “*The actions done with an attitude of renunciation do not become binding*”. In KENOPANISAD the trans-psyched nature of Self-Realisation has been explained which gives indirect hints to such a Karmayoga. The SVETASYATAROPANISAD prepares a long list of Yogic practices. The realization of the mystic power of God through the Yoga of meditation (DHYANAYOGA) is recommended (su.a.3). The divine power, known as Kundalini in Yogic culture, is produced by meditation. For the first time, the posture and the place for Pranayama and meditation is described, in detail, in this **Upanishad**.

In order to explain the essence of Yoga, the KATHOPANISAD refers to the metaphor of a **charioteer**. Here the Self is said to be the driver of the chariot; the mind; the reins; the senses; the horses; the sense-objects the paths on which chariot goes. The chariot reaches its proper goal if the horses are properly controlled by the Charioteer (Higher Consciousness, Manas) keeping full control over the reins. The goal is said to be the highest abode of Lord Vishnu. This simile used to expound Yoga is understood as one of the finest examples found in the Upanishads of the Nature of Spiritual Living.

The MUNDAKOPANISAD represents further a development of Yoga techniques, narrating ‘OM’ as the main object of meditation. For this purpose, truth, penance, study of scripture and continence are recommended as the preliminary practices.

The **YOGA VASHISHTA** is another Yogic scripture which is very difficult to date. Many traditionalists believe it to be the work of Valmiki, who is also the author of the Ramayana. If this is so then it would have to be 7,000 years old. The setting of the **Yoga Vashista**, however, is the teaching of the young prince Rama by the Raja Guru Vashishta. Some of the earliest concepts of Yoga also are found in the YOGA VASHISHTA. This beautiful scripture must also predate the MAHABHARATHA and the BHAGAVAD GITA by millennia. If it was indeed composed by Valmiki, for Valmiki preceded Ved Vyasa. Yet its actual date is hotly debated, some placing it only 1000 years ago! Few practical techniques or suggestions are given for Yoga

Sadhana. Emphasis is primarily on the proper attitude towards one's body, mind, emotions and senses. Without mentioning the word "Yoga" extensively, still the Yogic attitudes and suggestions for Sadhana are found.

The Vedas, the Upanishads, YOGA VASHISHTA and the BHAGAVAD GITA all put much emphasis on a firm conviction of the unreality of the material world; non attachment to things of the world; control of the senses; equal mindedness; transitory nature of phenomenal objects; concentration of mind; solitude as necessary for spiritual advancement; transcendence of dualities. They also propound moral and ethical qualities as the bedrock of all Sadhana. It is interesting to note in the YOGA VASHISHTA, the instruction given by Sage Vashishtha to Lord Rama, the Yuvraj, as written by Sage Valmiki, and in the BHAGAVAD GITA, that extreme asceticism is decried, derided, even ridiculed. Instead, both Sage Vashishta (as recorded by Rishi Valmiki) and Lord Krishna (as recorded by Rishi Ved Vyasa) stress the "path of moderation" instead of extreme asceticism. Both also stress that while it is necessary to retire to a lonely place to practice **Dhyana** (meditation) it is equally important to establish oneself in "Yoga" (equilibrium) and then, carry out one's duties in the world. Stories of enlightened kings and queens abound in the tales of Sage Vashishta and Raja Janaka is held up as a role model of the Enlightened Yogi-cum-Kingly Sage. Thus, even in those ancient days, which must have been between five thousand and seven thousand years ago, the powerful teaching was: "live in the world but be not of the world". The suitable metaphor for this ideal is the lotus which has roots in the mud, but rises in beauty above its earthly origin, untouched.

The first complete, detailed, well organised, technical presentation of practical Yoga as a SCIENCE OF SPIRITUALITY was made by Maharishi Patanjali in his famous work THE YOGA SUTRAS. Devotees believe this work to be at least 2500 years old, composed about 600 B.C. to 800 B.C. Traditionalists feel the **Yoga Sutras** pre-dates the Buddha, but the Western scholars often place it after Buddha. There is little trace of Buddhist influence in Patanjali's writings. There surely would have been some reflection had he come after Lord Buddha. The attempt to refute Buddhist thought occurs in Hindu writings after the time of Buddha.

THE YOGA SUTRAS by Maharishi Patanjali have become the most authentic scripture detailing the principles of ASHTANGA YOGA. In 196 Sutras, or short succinct verses, the great sage gives an all encompassing picture of the principles of Yoga which must have been in vogue in his time. Many call Patanjali "The Founder of Yoga", but this is patently false. He was instead the first codifier of principles which must have been part and parcel of the spiritual life of his time. The First Chapter of the **Yoga Sutras** is SAMADHI PADA. The Second Chapter is SADHANA PADA; the Third Chapter is VIBHUTHI PADA and the Fourth Chapter is KAIVALYA PADA. This treatise of 196 Sutras covers the entire gamut of Yogic spiritual life step by step, in rational logical fashion. The **Yoga Sutras** give a brilliant analysis of the problems inherent in the "human condition" and shows how man may rise above the contradictions in his nature. The Ashtanga Yoga elaborated by Patanjali. begins with the code of conduct expected from a spiritual aspirant (**Yama** and **Niyama**) and then outlines the steps which lead to the final emancipation or **Mukti**. The first Chapter or **Samadhi Pada** is full of the religiousness of life, and cultivates in the seeker the desire for Samadhi. It shows the means to establish the Sadhak firmly in the path of righteousness, or Dharma. It also gives glimpses of the nature of the Highest Goal of Yoga, Samadhi, or meeting the Godhead face to face. Chapter Two is SADHANA PADA. It explains the ways and means of climbing the eight rungs of the ladder

of Yoga. **Yama, Niyama Asana, Poranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.** The Third Chapter or VIBHUTHI PADA explains the supernatural powers which come with the practice of Yoga. The Fourth Chapter or KAIVALAYA PADA describes the beatitude and the spiritual bliss of the accomplishment of Yogic goals. **Asanas**, or physical postures, were not given much importance, by Sage Patanjali. In his time “**Asana**” commonly meant “**a seat**” or a “**sitting position**” and was thought of primarily as a means by which the body could be held straight and still long periods of time for contemplation and meditation. In the YOGA SUTRAS, the word “**Asana**” is mentioned only four significant times in the 196 verses. It is named in the second chapter, SADHANA PADA, v. 29 as the third of eight limbs of Yoga. In Sutra 46, Chapter Two, Asana is defined simply as “*a seated pose*” which is “*steady and comfortable*”. In Verse 47, Chapter Two, it is said that “by letting go of one’s effort in the Asana (“implying that an Asana should be held with ease) one should “meditate on Infinity and achieve steadiness of posture”. In Verse 48, of the same Chapter, Sage Patanjali says that “*By perfecting Asana, a Yogi is not affected by the pairs of opposites*”. Other than these four verses, the concept of Asana is not deal with in the YOGA SUTRAS, the oldest and most authorative written scripture on Yoga. On the contrary much emphasis is placed on cultivating proper attitudes of mind, and especially, grounding oneself in the Yamas and Niyamas of Yoga, or the morality and ethics. Maharishi Patanjali devotes 15 Sutras, V. 30 through V. 45 of Chapter Two to a thorough discussion of each of the five Yamas and five Niyamas, and describes the spiritual reward of attaining perfection in each one. (Chapter Two, YOGA SUTRAS). In classical, traditional Yoga, as understood through a study of the **Vedas**, the **Upanishads**, the YOGA VASHISTHA, THE BHAGAVAD GITA AND THE YOGA SUTRAS, very little emphasis was placed upon the physical practices. Traditionalists believe that the **Yoga Sutras** were written between 600 – 800 B.C. though Western scholars often put the **Sutras** much later, at 300 B.C. or even 100 A.D!

One must mention the important role of Adi Sankara, the great Revivalist of the Hindu tradition, in any history of Yoga. The date of Sankara, who was born in Kerala, is generally placed around 800 A.D. Sankara is universally accepted as the greatest exponent of Advaita Vedanta, the non-dualistic philosophy inspired by the Upanishads, which constitute the concluding portion of Vedic revelation. Sankara wrote commentaries on the **Brahma Sutra**, the **Upanishads**, and the **Bhagavad Gita**. Adi Sankara’s views on Yoga can be found to a large extent in one of his most well known works, the **Viveka Chudamani (The Crest Jewel of Discrimination)**. This beautiful Sanskrit work has 580 verses. It is interesting to examine verses from the **Viveka Chudamani** which expound Sankara’s views of Yoga.

The first steps in yoga are control of speech, non covetousness, non-entertainment of expectations, non-involvement in worldly activities and constant cultivation of solitude. (367)

Sages have spoken here of four disciplines (to attain the highest). first enumerated is discrimination between the real and the unreal. (18)

Next comes renunciation of the enjoyment of fruits (of one’s actions) here as well as hereafter; (thereafter) come the six attributes (*sama*, calmness, *dama*, self-control, *uparati*, self-withdrawal, *titiksa*, forbearance, *sraddha*, faith, and *samadhana*, settling of the intellect); (the last) is clearly the yearning for the highest. (19)

These are Sankara’s renditions of the basic attributes necessary for Yoga Sadhana, his equivalent of Patanjali’s Yama and Niyama.

Sankara's idea of Yoga Sadhana was that the Sadhak, under the guidance of a Guru, could achieve the highest state of consciousness through Vichara, that is the intellectual process of reasoning, discrimination, reflection, contemplation.

Sankara's description of the process leading to final realization is **three-fold**, just as is the **Samyana** of Patanjali (**Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi**) with the difference that Sankara replaces **Dharana** (concentration) with **manana** (reflection, contemplation).

Sankara and Patanjali were separated in time by perhaps 1000 years. The word "**Samadhi**" is not used by Sankara to denote any specific or definite state of being. It stands for a wide range of super conscious states which culminates in Kaivalya (for Patanjali) and **Jivana Mukit** (for Sankara). The word "**Prajna**", higher consciousness or illumination, is associated with **Samadhi States** according to both Sankara and Patanjali. This Highest State of Consciousness is described beautifully, though in different manners, by both Sankara and Patanjali.

Patanjali, in **Yoga Sutra**, Chapter III, Vibhuti Pada, V.55 says:

The highest knowledge (in kaivalya) born of the Awareness of Reality, is truly liberating, includes cognition of all objects simultaneously, pertains to all objects and processes whatsoever (in the past, present and future) and also transcends the world process.

Sankara in Verse 542 of **Viveka Chudamani** describes the final liberation differently

Sometimes considered a fool, sometimes treated
as a sage, sometimes enjoying regal splendour,
sometimes wandering aimlessly, sometimes
wearing a benign expression, sometimes motionless
like a python, sometimes honoured, sometimes
insulted, sometimes unknown-thus
marches on the man of *prajna*(the *jivan-mukta*),
ever steeped in the supreme Bliss (of *Brahma-nirvana*). (542).

About 500 A.D. the emphasis of spirituality and Yoga started to shift more and more to physical practices and techniques in keeping with the materialistic, sensual, body-oriented nature of mankind in Kali Yuga. Certain "Yogic practices" were developed which it was taught would enhance one's ability to reach mystical states. Though these "techniques" were written down, they were written in a "coded language", making it impossible for the uninitiated to understand them. From about 500 A.D. to about 1500 A.D, several scriptures were recorded which are commonly known as the "Hatha Yoga Scriptures." These include the **Goraksasatakam**, the **Gheranda, Samhita** and **Hatha Yoga Pradipika**. These three are most prominent.

GORAKSASATAKAM: This scripture was composed in 100 verses by the **Rishi Goraksa** who perhaps lived about 1500 years ago. Rishi Goraksa was a widely traveled Yogi with a towering personality who greatly influenced the masses of his day. He traveled the country challenging his country men to "breathe, breathe, and live". He is a representative of the Natha school and in his

work, are many practical techniques of Yoga written down for the benefit of seekers. He preached the ideal of “**Samaradhya**”, or the *sweetest and most perfect adjustment and harmony in one’s life experience.*” Verse 4 defines the subject matter of Yoga: “Asanam pranasamyamah pratyaharoath dharana dhyanam samadhiretani yoganjgani bhavanti sat.” “*The six limbs of Yoga are Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyanam and Samadhi*”. The entire text describes how these limbs may be achieved. Goraksha comes close to the Vedic ideal by emphasizing complete control of the physical organism and mental steadiness as the prelude to experiencing non-duality on the highest spiritual plane. He says there are 84 lakhs of Asanas (THE SHIVA SAMHITA says that the particular form of each living creature is an “Asana”, as Lord Shiva holds still for a moment in his Cosmic Dance and thus, there are 84 lakhs of species. Shiva has enumerated 84 important Asanas.) Sage Goraksha says that of these, two Asanas are important, namely, **Siddhasana** and **Kamalasana**, which are both sitting meditative poses. Rishi Goraksha gives detailed information on the Chakras, or vortexes of spiritual energy located in the human energy field. He also teaches that there are thousands of Nadis, which serve as the pathways for Prana. Of these pathways, he says 72 are important. The three most important Nadis are **Ida** (left side and diety is moon); **Pingala** (right side with diety as sun) and **Sushumna** (centre with diety as Agni or fire). He also describes the types of Prana, circulating in various parts of the human force field.

Rishi Goraksa also teaches of Kundalini, “*She lies above the Kanda, folded eight times, always closing up by her mouth the entrance to the Brahmastrandhra*”. “Kandordhava kundalisaktirsatadha kundalikrita brahmdrarmukham nityam mukhenavrtya tishtati. (G.S. 30) Rishi Goraksa also describes Pranayama practices, emphasizing **Purvakha**, **Rechaka** and **Kumbhaka**. This is also dealt with in the system of concentration or Dharana taught by Rishi Goraksha which includes contemplation on the various Mandalas for the Pancha Maha Bhutas of earth, water, fire, air and ether. Samadhi or Cosmic Consciousness is also dealt with by the sage. He defines this highest spiritual state as, “*When the Prana becomes stilled and the mind is absorbed, there result the identification of Jivatma and Paramatma which is called Samadi*”. “Yada sanksiyate prano mausam ca vitiyate, tada a samarsaikatvam samadhirdhidiyate. (G.S. 94). The measurements of the time duration needed for the state of Dharana to slip into Samadhi is also given in detail.

THE GHERANDA SAMHITA: The basis of Indian spirituality is the negation of the **Ahamkara**, the ego, the sense of self, I-ness and mine-ness. Thus it is that for many of our greatest works of art in temples, sculptures, and scriptures, the author or creator’s name is unknown. So it is with the GHERANDA SAMHITA. This self-abnegation of the Indian spiritual mind has made it very difficult for historians to accurately pinpoint time and place of both the various scriptures and the lives of the Masters. This scripture is in the form of a dialogue between Gheranda, the Preceptor, and Chandakapali, the disciple. Though it is a treatise of Hatha Yoga, it does not use the word “**Hatha**”. Instead, it calls the type of Yoga discussed in the treatise, “**Ghatthaayoga**”. This term is not found in any other text on Yoga. “**Ghata**” in this sense refers to the “**body**”, and its literal meaning in Sanskrit also is “**a pot**”. This suggests that the malleable “clay of the body” can be formed and fired by the practices of Yoga to make it a fit container to hold the “**waters of liberation**”.

A beautiful statement by this Rishi occurs in G.S.1.4 “*There are no fetters like those of illusion (Maya); No strength like that which comes from discipline (Yoga); there is no friend higher than knowledge (Jnana) and no greater enemy than egoism (Ahamkara).*”

Whereas Yogamaharishi Patanjali calls Yoga as “**Ashtanga**”, (Eight Limbs) and Rishi Goraksa calls Yoga as “**Shatanga**”, (Six Limbs) Rishi Gheranda enunciates “**Saptayoga**” or “Seven Limbs” of Yoga. According to this Rishi the seven exercises for making the body fit for Divine Wisdom include: purificatory, strengthening, steadying, calming and those leading to lightness, perception and isolation. (Sudhanain dradhata caiva sthairyam dhairyam cal lagharam, pratyaksam ca nirilipatm ca ghatasya sapta sadhnam. G.S.1:9). Rishi Gheranda classifies the Yoga practices as 1. Kriyas: Dhautis, Bastis, Neti, Trataka, Nauli, Kapalbhatis 2. Asanas 3. Mudras 4. Pratyahara 5. Pranayama 6. Dhyana 7. Samadhi. Great emphasis is given to the purificatory practices which are quite elaborate.

Asanas have been described in great detail in this work. Again we find the concept of 84 lakhs of Asanas described by Lord Shiva. There are as many Asanas as there are creatures on earth. “Asanani samasthani yavante jivajantavah, caturasiti laksaru sivena kathithanica” (G.S.2.1). Among these, says the Rishi, eighty-four are best, and of those eighty-four, thirty-two have been found useful for mankind. The thirty-two Asanas recorded by Rishi Gheranda are:

1. Siddham (Perfect Posture); 2. Padmam (Lotus Posture); 3 Bhadram (Gentle Posture); 4. Muktam (Free Posture); 5. Vajram (Adamant Posture); 6. Swastika (Prosperous Posture); 7. Sinham (Lion Posture); 8. Gomukha (Cow-mouth Posture); 9. Vira (Heroic Posture); 10. Dhanur (Bow Posture); 11. Mritam (Corpse Posture) 12. Guptam (Hidden Posture); 13. Matsyam (Fish Posture); 14. Matsendra; 15. Goraksha; 16. Paschimottana; 17. Utkatam (Hazardous Posture); 18. Sankatam (Dangerous Posture); 19. Mayuram (Peacock Posture); 20. Kukkutam (Cock Posture); 21. Kurma (Tortoise Posture); 22. Uttana Manduka; 23. Uttana Kurmakam; 24. Vriksha (Tree Posture); 25. Manduka (Frog Posture); 26. Garuda (Eagle Posture); 27. Vrisham (Bull Posture); 28. Salabha (Locust Posture); 29. Makara (Dolphine Posture); 30. Ushtram (Camel Posture); 31. Bhugangam (Snake Posture); 32. Yoga Mudra.

Twenty five Mudras are discussed, and afterward, Lord Shiva is quoted as telling Devi, “*O Devi. I have told you all the Mudras. Their knowledge leads to adeptship. It should be kept secret with great care and should not be taught indiscriminately to everyone. This gives happiness to the Yogis*”. Again we see the idea that Yoga knowledge should be kept secret.

This great Rishi also discusses **Pratyahara** and **Pranayama** techniques laying emphasis first on the purification of the Nadis, asking, “*Vayu cannot enter the Nadis so long as they are full of impurities. How then can Pranayama be accomplished? First, the Nadis should be purified*”.

Sage Gheranda also discusses **Dhyana** and **Samadhi** in detail. He divides **Dhyana** into three types: “*Dhyana or meditation is of three kinds; gross, subtle and luminous. When a particular figure, such as one’s Guru or Diety is contemplated, it is Sthula or gross; when Brahman or Prakriti is contemplated as a mass of light it is called Jyothi meditation; when Brahman as a Bindu (point) and Kundali force is contemplated, it is Sukshma or subtle meditation*”. (G.S. 6:1).

HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA: The HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA is of later authorship, perhaps written about 500 – 700 years ago. Even today, **Hatha Yoga Pradapika** is claimed to be the source book of instruction by many Yoga teachers. It was authored by Yogi Swatmarama Suri. It is divided into four Chapters. The first chapter is on **Asanas**; the Second Chapter is on **Pranayama**; the third chapter is on **Mudras** and the fourth chapter on **Samadhi**. Sage

Svatmarama Suri in his second verse, proclaims that “*Svatmarama Yogin, having saluted his Lord and Guru, teaches the Hatha Vidya solely for the attainment of Raja Yoga. (Chapter I, V.2)*” In 389 verses the sage gives fairly detailed instruction in Asanas, Pranayama, Mudras and means of attaining Samadhi. Sage Swatmarama Suri describes only fifteen Asanas, of which a few resemble those common in today’s Hatha Yoga. He describes four of these Asanas, as the “best among postures”. They are: **Siddha Asana; Padma Asana; Simha Asana and Bhadra Asana** (Verse 33 Chapter One).

The Asanas described by Swatmarama Suri in Verse 19 through 32 of Chapter One are as follows: *Swastika Asana, Gomukhasana, Vira Asana, Kurma Asana, Kukkut Asana, Uttana Kurma, Dhanur Asana, Matsyendra Asana, Paschimotana Asana, Mayura Asana and Shava Asana*. In Verse 33 of Chapter One he says, “*The Asanas propounded by Lord Shiva are eighty-four in number. Of these I shall describe four which are the quintessence*”. In Verse 34 he continues, “*These four are Siddha, Padma, Simha and Bhadra (Asanas) are most excellent. Of these four, the most comfortable, Siddha Asana, can always be assumed. In the remaining verses of the first chapter, the Guru also discusses which foods are to be eaten. He recommends, filling half the stomach with food, one quarter with water and leaving one fourth of the stomach free as an offering to Lord Shiva*”. (H.Y.P. Chapt, I, V.58).

In Chapter Two entitled PRANAYAMA the Shat Karmas, or “Six Purificatory Acts” are described. They include **Dhauti, Vasti, Neti, Trataka, Nauli and Kapalabhati**. However, the Guru says in Verse 21. Chapter II “... *One who is flabby and phlegmatic should first practise these six acts. Others who do not have these defects should not practise them*”. In Verse 44 of Chapter Two, he lists eight kinds of **Kumbhakas** (Pranayamas). “*The different Kumbhakas are now described: There are eight Kumbhakas, namely Surya Bhedana, Ujjayi, Sitkari, Sitkali, Bhastrika, Bhramari, Murcha and Plavini*”.

In Verse 76 of Chapter II, he says, “One cannot obtain perfection in Raja Yoga without Hatha Yoga, nor perfection in Hatha Yoga without Raja Yoga, so both should be practised till perfection (in Raja Yoga) is obtained.” In Chapter Three, Sage Swatmarama Suri describes the Mudras in Verses 6 and 7. “Maha Mudra, Maha Bandha, Maha Vedha, Khecari, Uddiyana, Mula Bandha, Jalandhara Bandha, Viparitaranai, Vajroli and Shaktichalana, these are the ten Mudras. They destroy old age and death”. He also gives instructions in rousal of Kundalini. Chapter Four is devoted to instructions in obtaining Samadhi. In Verse Five of Chapter Four, he says, “Samadhi is explained: As salt in water unites and dissolves with it, a likewise merging of mind and self is Samadhi”. Verse 6. “When Prana is without any movement in Kumbhaka and the mind is absorbed in the Self, the state of harmony is called Samadhi”.

Swatmarama Suri also mentions 72,000 **Nadis** and claims only **Sushumna Nadi** is of importance. He describes many methods of achieving the Samadhi state. He puts most emphasis on the use of **Nada**, or Inner Sound. He says in Verse 66, Chapter Four, “*The primeval Lord Shiva has expounded one crore and a quarter of effective ways for the attainment of Laya (absorption) but we think that one thing, devotion to Nada, alone is the most important of all these ways*”.

Again in Verse 94, Chapter Four he says, “*Nada is like the net which ensnares the deer (the mind) and it is also the hunter who slays the deer within (the mind).*” He describes many aspects of Nada Yoga and also Samadhi. Swatmarama Suri concludes his work with Verse 114 of the Fourth Chapter, “*As long as the Prana does not flow in the central way (through Sushumna) and*

enter the Brahmastrandha, as long as the semen does not become steady through restraint of breath, so long as the mind does not in meditation reflect the natural state (of the object contemplated upon, i.e. Brahman), so long as those who talk of spiritual knowledge indulge only in boastful and false prattle” (there is no success in Yoga).

In the HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA, unlike other texts discussed thus far, much practical instruction is given in Asanas, Pranayama, Mudras and even in methods of attaining Samadhi. Yet, the instruction given is couched in difficult and deliberately obscure language. It is not a textbook on Yoga and Yoga practices could not be undertaken merely on the basis of studying the text. The references are far too obscure and too ambiguous. The Guru himself makes many references throughout the work, for the need for the practices to be kept secret. If he intended his work to be used as a practical guide to practices, he would never have written them down, violating his own cautions. Like all ancient Gurus, the written aspect of the teaching was only the tip of the iceberg, a “jolt” to the memory of the student, a reminder of the whole and not containing the whole within itself.

In Chapter One, V.11, for example, he says “*The Yogic desirous of obtaining Siddhi should keep the Hatha Yoga very secret. For it is potent when kept secret and ineffective when injudiciously revealed*”. In Chapter III, V.9, he says, “*This should be kept secret like a casket of precious gems. It should not be spoken of to anybody as in the case of intercourse with a well born woman*”. This theme of secrecy runs throughout his work. He also stresses time and again, the need for the direct guidance of the Guru. Verse 78 of Chapter Three: “*There is an excellent Karana by which the sun is duped. This should be learnt from the Guru and not through the study of the Shastras*”. In Chapter Four, V.8 he says, “*Who really knows the greatness of Raja Yoga? Jnana, Mukti, Sthiti and Siddhi are obtained through the teaching of the Guru*”.

Thus though this text does appear to give quite detailed instructions in Asanas, Pranayama, Mudras and means of practicing Dhyana, in reality the references are very obscure and deliberately kept ambiguous, forcing the sincere aspirant not to rely on the text alone, but to seek the guidance of a qualified Master.

III. YOGA IN MODERN TIME

The **Modern Yoga Period** which coincides with the movement of Yogic concepts to the West in a powerful wave, is usually traced back to Sept 11, 1893 when Swami Vivekananda made his historic address to the World Parliament of Religious in Chicago, U.S.A. In a very brief overview of the history of Yoga in modern times, one may divide the period into three cycles and name several prominent World Teacher who actively taught in each period.

The cyclical nature of history has been acknowledged, both in the East and the West. The concept of **Yugas** is well established in Hinduism, but even Western Philosophers recognize these “waves of events and personalities” which seem to crest at certain moments and break upon the shores of time, disperse, and crest again. In tracing the history of modern Yoga, we may recognize major “waves” which crested since the appearance of Swami Vivekananda on the world stage.

1. THE PERIOD OF 1893 to 1920

Sri Ramakrishna, Dakshineswar, Bengal
Sri Ramana Maharishi, Thiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu
Swami Vivekananda, Calcutta, Bengal
Lahiri Mahasaya, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
Sri Kakananda, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh and Bengal

2. THE PERIOD OF 1920 to 1960

Swami Yogananda, Bengal (Later California, U.S.A)
J. Krishnamurthi
Sri Swami Sivananda, Rishikesh, Uttar Pradesh
Sri Krishnamacharya, Madras, India
Sri Aruobindo and The Mother, Pondicherry, India
Sri Kuvalayananda, Kaivalyadhama, Pune, Maharashtra
Dr. Ananda Bhavanani, Vancouver, Canada
Sri Yogendra, Bombay, Maharashtra
Smt Indra Devi, Russia (Later Argentina, South America)

3. FROM 1960 TO PRESENT TIMES

Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri, Pondicherry, India
Yogacharya BKS Iyengar, Pune, Maharashtra
Sri Pattabhi Jois, Mysore City, Karnataka State
Swami Paramhansa Swami Satyananda, Monghyr, Bihar
Swami Vishnu Devananda, Valmorin, Canada
Swami Satchitananda, Yogaville, VA, U.S.A.
Sri Amrit Desai, U.S.A.
Sri T.K.V. Desichachar, Chennai, India
Sri Jayadev Yogendra, Bombay
Swami Rama, Honesdale, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.
Shri Dharendra Brahmachari, New Delhi, India
Mahesh Yogi, Rishikesh

One of the peculiarities of this movement of Yoga science from East to West is that many of the early adherents were products of Lord Macaulay's "British system of education" in India. They

were well versed not only in English, but also in the British cultural life style. This “British veneer” made the Yogic messengers eminently attractive to the Western public.

The Masters of the first period of Modern Yoga, Sri Ramakrishna, and his disciple Swami Vivekananda and Ramana Maharishi were very much in the Vedantic, Advaitic tradition of Adi Sankara. They did not put much emphasis on Asana, Pranayama or other Yogic practices. Vichara, inquiry, especially using the Upanishadic device, “**Koham**” – “**Who Am I?**” was heavily favoured by Ramana Maharishi, the Sage of Arunachala. Ramakrishna was a Bhakti – drenched devotee of Devi, an eclectic who claimed to have practised the “methods of all religions”. Swami Vivekananda was a powerful writer, orator and charismatic leader, who advocated Karma Yoga, selfless service, along with Manasa, Vichara, and Dhyana. Out of the combination of these two great souls, has risen the powerful social force of the Ramakrishna Mission. Lahiri Mahasaya was a Bengali mystic, who was the Guru of Yuktेशwar, the Guru of Swami Yogananda. Lahiri Mahasaya was the brother disciple of Ram Gopal Majumdar, who later became known as Swami Kanananda.

In this Bengali Tantric tradition, followed by Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Yuktेशwar, Swami Kanananda and later, Swami Yogananda and Swami Gitananda, certain esoteric practices of Kundalini arousal were emphasized, which also included certain Asanas and Pranayama. Swami Yogananda went to the U.S.A. and founded the Self Realization society. He was one of the major forces bringing awareness in a widely popular level. His classic book the **Autobiography of a Yogi** has arguably introduced more English speaking people to the concepts of Yoga than any other book in the 20th Century, so wide was its appeal. Swami Yuktेशwar was not so well known, and his fame is due primarily as that of the Guru of Swami Yogananda. Swami Kanananda was custodian of a great body of Bengali Tantric teachings. His encounter with Swami Yogananda is described in the book “**Autobiography of a Yogi**”. Though widely known for his Siddhis (Vak Siddhi) and the ability to go without sleep which earned him the epithet of the “Sleepless Saint”. Swami Kanananda, like Swami Yuktेशwar, later become known world wide as the Guru of his famous disciple Dr. Swami Gitananda. Swami Kanananda was also a master of an intricate system of Hatha Yoga Asanas, Kriyas, Mudras, Pranayamas and an elaborate system of Chakric concentration – meditation. He was also an expert in the Yantra, the Science of Number, Name and Form.

The second wave of Modern Yoga Masters was also heavily dominated by English speaking, Western educated Indians who were predominately Vedantic, Advaitic, in the tradition of Adi Sankara. Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh was the dynamic force which unleashed scores of young Sanayasis around the world, who set up Yoga Vedanta Centres in nearly every country. Swami Sivananda a Medical doctor, was primarily a Vedantist in the tradition of Adi Sankara. A genial, loving man, he advocated a simple life style, pure living, Bhakti and Karma Yoga, Japa and scriptural study. When Hatha Yoga adepts came to his Divine Life Society headquarters in Rishikesh, he had them teach his young disciples the art of Asanas and Pranayama, but he himself practised very little of those techniques himself. The intellectual path of Vichara and Jnana Yoga was very much the essence of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and Jiddu Krishnamurthi. Sri Aurobindo was a great scholar, and his analysis and commentaries, on the ancient Sanskrit texts contain invaluable insights. He was a visionary who carved his own path called **Integral Yoga**, in which he tried to “spiritualize the material”. He himself remained a recluse for the last 25 years of his life, but his vision was made manifest through the work of

Mira Alfanzo, later simply called “The Mother”. She was a French woman who was his Shakti in Pondicherry. The classical Hindu approach to Yoga, including Asanas, Pranayama, Mantra and traditional spiritual practices were not important in their world view. Work was worship and Karma Yoga was to bring consciousness into the material world. J. Krishnamurthi carved a lonely path to the Divine, insisting that man must discard all traditions, all practices, and delve deep within himself to find that Ultimate Truth. Swami Kuvalyananda of Lonavla and Sri Yogendra of Bombay, though Swami Malsaraj carved quite different trajectories in the field of Yoga. The world famous Kaivalyadhama at Lonavla, founded by Kuvalayananda, emphasized modern scientific validation for the ancient Yogic practices of Asanas, Pranayama, Kriyas and Shat Karmas. Scholarly academic analysis of ancient Sanskrit literature was also Swami Kuvalayananda’s contribution. Practical Yogic techniques, presented in a medically oriented, scientific fashion together with scholarly study of ancient texts were the Sadhana at Kaivalyadhama, which took on the atmosphere of a college. Sri Yogendra was known as the “Householder Yogi” as he married a student Sita Devi and raised a family. His aim was to make the concepts, practices and techniques of Yoga available to all, especially to ordinary family people. He felt Yoga could be used to create a better life style. Yogic attitudes, simple Asanas, Pranayama, relaxation and health oriented techniques, were systematically devised to help people solve the problems of daily living. From the 1930’s Dr. Ananda Bhavanani who had gone to England to study medicine at the age of 16, also spread the teachings of his Guru Swami Kanakananda as a complete system of physical, mental, and emotional practices leading to spiritual realization. With his scientific medical back ground and multi-cultural experience, Dr. Bhavanani (who later became known as Swami Gitananda) did much to put the ancient concept of Yoga into a modern language easily acceptable to the Western mind. Indra Devi, a Russian born woman, studied in India with Patabhi Jois, later became a devotee of Sai Baba and set up many Yoga centres in U.S.A, Mexico and South America. As a charismatic personality, she attracted many to the basic concepts and practice of Yoga.

Krishnamacharya was a Sanskrit scholar and Yoga tutor in the palace of the Maharaj of Mysore. He developed a unique approach to Yoga Asana, based on an ancient manuscript called the Yoga Korunta. His very vigorous, athletic, acrobatic approach to Yoga Asanas was attractive, especially to Westerners and those who enjoyed physical challenges.

The recent Masters of Yoga have put more emphasis on the practices of Asana and Pranayama, sometimes even neglecting the higher spiritual and morally based aims of the ancient science. Of course, the most famous Yoga Master in the world is BKS Iyengar whose “**Light on Yoga**” remains the classic definition and categorization of Yoga Asanas. Iyengar and K. Pattabhi Jois, (who in the last decade has begun to equal Iyengar in global popularity, were both disciples of Krishnamacharya. They both follow a vigorous, rigorous system of strong body discipline. The disciples of Swami Sivananda have fanned out across the world, building huge Ashrams and global Yoga networks, teaching a mixture of Vedanta and Yogic Asanas and Pranayama Most famous amongst them have been Swami Vishnudevananda (Canada); Swami Satchitananda and Swami Jyothirmayananda (U.S.A) and Swami Satyananda (India).

Krishnamacharya’s son Desikachar has also become a global Guru in his own right. His style of teaching is quite different from his father’s two other famous disciples, BKS Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois. Swami Rama, who claimed a Himalayan Master as his Guru, set up the Himalayan Institute in the USA and taught basic Yoga Asanas, Pranayama and Vedanda. Yogi Amrit Desa, disciple of Swami Kripalananda, formulated a modern “Yoga Mixture” of New Age Therapies

and Yogic concepts which has come to be known as Kripalu Yoga. Swami Gitananda, formerly known as Dr. Ananda Bhavanani, propagated his Guru's system of Bengali Tantra with an elaborate system of Asanas, Kriyas, Mudras, Pranayama and concentration and meditation techniques. This system was set within the structure of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga concepts. As well Swami Gitananda insisted that his students understand the ethic of the culture of the Vedic Rishis, the restraints and observances which are part of a cultural spiritual life. Hence the Paramparai he represented was termed. "Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga".

Many other charismatic energetic personalities have emerged in the last several decades, propagating different forms of "Yoga". What their contribution to the great stream of Yogic consciousness will be, will be ascertained only in the years to come. Time is the final test of the value of the teachings. Those which withstand this "test of time" will surely also enter the portals of "The History of Yoga".

The entire concept, structure and basis of Yoga has undergone tremendous change in modern times. Many factors affected the Yoga movement. Travel had become easy. The Westerners appetite for the "Exotic East" had been whetted; "hippy movements" in the 1960's rebelled against the traditional religious and social values; Rising modern problems in dealing with physical, emotional and mental health; and the vastly increased leisure time and global communication network cultivated a fertile garden for the thousands of "New Age Gurus", eager to take the "Spiritual Message of the East" to the "decadent" West. It is not in the scope of this essay to chronicle the immense number of Indian Gurus, Yogic and otherwise, who made the pilgrimage to the "Mecca of Materialism on Western Shores", during this time. Thousands of charlatans took advantage of the gullibility of the disillusioned youth. Hundreds more succeeded in making "Big Names" for themselves, building gigantic organizations which resembled big business corporations; amassing fortunes and collecting hundreds of thousands of "followers" in the name of Eastern mysticism or Yoga. The new "Jet Age Guru" came into being. Gone was the ascetic ethos. Gone was the simple living and the humble manner. Gone was the mastery of desires and the discipline of body, mind and emotions. Gone were the moral and ethical restraints. "Peace at any price" was the modern Mantra. A great appeal was made to the "emotional vacuum" the "angst" which is so prevalent in the industrial, urbanised society. Huge fortunes and spiritual empires were built in the West". The new Gurus lived in five star hotels, owned private jets, occupied castles and mansions, rode in Rolls Royces. They hired advertising agencies to present a "marketable image" and used all the promotional gimmicks of the commercially minded West to lure disciples and followers. Inevitable problems and scandals also rose, and many of the major "Indian Gurus" were involved in huge sexual and financial scandals, accused by their women disciples of sexual seduction. Many other Gurus were embroiled in financial scams. Some organizations even broke into schisms using violent methods against each other. "Yoga" became a commodity to be "sold" and the fees for "Yoga instruction" were high. Mantras were sold by Mahesh Yogi's TM for as much as US dollars 300 "per mantra" in the 1970's. Communes were set up in which educated, intelligent followers gave their professional services freely to the institutions, allowing their Gurus and leaders to live in unparalleled luxury. Courses in Yoga and other "New Age Therapies" were structured and packaged attractively and weekends such as "Finding Your True Self" could cost as much as 1000 dollars (with attached bath). The Gurus carefully cultivated their images, and kept themselves secluded and isolated from their followers, allowing only a chosen few into the inner circle. Yoga and Hindu spirituality took on the aura of a "cult". The old Western Christian prejudice against things of the East, made it easy for the modern mind to "accept emotionalism"

and “permissiveness” in lieu of the true rigour and restraint of the Yogic science, which is extremely disciplined, rational and value-based. In an effort to woo followers, most Gurus did not interfere at all in the personal lives of their students. The students were “customers” and the “customers are always right”. The “blind” led the “blind”, all the way to the bank. Some of the Indian Gurus did not originally realize the decadence of the Western Culture and life style and taught Yoga practices to people who were not ready for them. The Christian attitude towards spirituality contains a dichotomy between body and mind. Therefore, one can smoke, drink alcohol, even be sexually promiscuous and still “be a good Christian”, especially if one expresses contrition for one’s “sins”. Values such as a regulated life style, Karma, Moksha, reincarnation, devotion to Guru, allegiance to one path of spiritual endeavour which are the spiritual bedrock of Hindu culture were foreign to the Western mind. Indian Gurus, eager to create large followings, encouraged an eclectic approach to aspects of Hinduism. Many Ashrams became known as “churches” and the teachers called “Rev. Fathers”. Even the structure of many ceremonies took on a Christian flavour. On the one hand, other Swamijis gave “Diksha” to all and sundry, and the title “Swami” to anyone ready to pay a hefty Dakshina. Thus one could see a man and woman, wearing the orange Gurva, walking down the street, holding hands and smoking cigarettes. Drugs also became entwined with Yoga in the Western mind. The hippies justified their use of hashish with the idea that “Shiva smoked a chillum”. Mind – expanding drug experiences, chemical highs, were confused with Samadhi. The shallow materialistic mind jumped here and there, always seeking “new highs” and “new experiences” operating out of the Judeo Christian conditioning. They sought a “new saviour” to replace Jesus Christ whom they had crucified on the cross, a “Yoga guru” to “Save them”, to “give them enlightenment” with the glance of an eye, the touch of a peacock feather. Another development was the primary association of Yoga with Asanas. Earlier it was shown that Asanas as such have never been too important a part of classical Yoga. In modern times the role of Asana took predominance in the body conscious, materialistic minded West. The new Gurus had “movie star” appeal and flashed their credentials in spectacular advertisements in glossy magazines. Keeping fit with Asanas and curing body problems with Asanas became the main motivation. Though Sage Patanjali lists “Asana” only four significant times in his 196 Sutras, the modern Yoga scene has made the “Asana” the end-all and be-all of Yoga. The “Cult of Flexibility” has risen. One’s value is rated according to one’s physical flexibility. The terrific clash of the Judeo-Christian materialistic and intellectual tradition with the ascetic, intuitive Yoga of the East, produced the most immense amount of misinformation, confusion, distortion imaginable. Truly, the ancient Rishis would turn over in their graves if they could see the advertisements in modern Yoga journals, promising “power over others”, “magnetic personalities”, “enhanced sexuality” etc. through “Yoga” in exchange for a few dollars. The modern Guru has no compunction about self promotion and the serene usually bearded faces, of hundreds of “Gurus” of all varieties can be seen smiling from paid-advertisements everywhere.

Thus, one can see that in the 20th century the ancient word “Yoga” has taken on thousands of new associations, some of them enlightened and some of them, self-seeking and even, hedonistic!. The meeting of the materialistic West with spiritual East has created a huge number of cross currents in regard to this ancient science, a shaking up and a mixing up of concepts, life styles and practices. One thing is for certain. “Yoga” is a household word internationally in this, the close of the 20th century. But what that word means for those who utter it, is a matter for intense and thoughtful speculation and introspection.