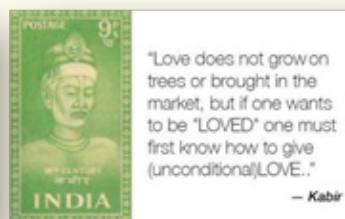


# 4

## India's original contribution to Global systems of

- **Science of Yoga: Wholeness and Hygiene**



*The philosophy behind the ancient Indian practice of yoga has influenced various aspects of how society in India functions, whether it be in relation to areas such as health and medicine or education and the arts. Based on unifying the mind with the body and soul to allow for greater mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing, the values of yoga form a major part of the community's ethos. Yoga consists of a series of poses, meditation, controlled breathing, word chanting and other techniques designed to help individuals build self-realization, ease any suffering they may be experiencing and allow for a state of liberation.*

*It is practiced by the young and old without discriminating against gender, class or religion and has also become popular in other parts of the world. Traditionally, yoga was transmitted using the Guru-Shishya model (master-pupil) with yoga gurus as the main custodians of associated knowledge and skills.*

*Nowadays, yoga ashrams or hermitages provide enthusiasts with additional opportunities to learn about the traditional practice, as well as schools, universities, community centres and social media. Ancient manuscripts and scriptures are also used in the teaching and practice of yoga, and a vast range of modern literature on the subject available.*

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: UNESCO

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/yoga-01163>

The practice of yoga can be dated to early Vedic Indian traditions; and possibly these practices were also prevalent in the Indus valley civilization around 3000 BCE or even earlier. Yoga is mentioned in the Rigveda and all the other Vedas, and it has been referred vividly in the Upanishads. The ancient schools of Dattatreya, and that of Kashmir Shaivism and the Natha tradition precedes the Yoga tradition of Patanjali Yoga Sutra.

Yoga is one amongst the six schools of thought developed by our ancients and a great tradition is evident in Yoga Yājñavalkya, an ancient, authentic treatise on Yoga. The text gives the definition of the term Yoga (Yoga Yājñavalkya. I.44) in accordance with this supreme goal:

## संयोगो योग इत्युक्तो जीवात्मपरमात्मनोः।

True Yoga is the communion or interconnection (*Samyoga*) between the interplay of the immanent small self (*Kshetrgya or Jivatman*) in the microcosm and the vast transcendental self (*Paramatman*) governing the macrocosm.

*“The Microcosm and the Macrocosm are therefore built on the Same Plan”*

Swami Vivekananda

The startling explanation of a comprehensive and complete system of Yoga combined with right living (jivan darshana), right work (Karma), right devotion (Bhakti), and right practice of neural breathing and right meditation (Dhyana, Kriya and Raja Yoga) had come alive in the life of a single personality, Sri Ramakrishna of Dakshinewsar. His simple words of wisdom linking the two extremes, i.e., the material world and its aspiration for the divine, and in return, the traces of a convincing divine response to foster the transformation of the material order, are forerunning in the system of Yoga. From these words, Sri Aurobindo advanced his idea of ‘Synthesis of Yoga’, ‘Integral Yoga’, and finally, ‘Purna Yoga’.



Today yoga has garnered a systematic study of human evolution based on practice of green health and hygiene processes, and it has ramified into different paths of meditation around the 600 BCE, with the Buddha and the *Tirthankra -Śramaṇa* movements.

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali date are very popular now, and they have gained prominence in the West in the 20th century after the book on 'Raj Yoga' was first introduced by Swami Vivekananda.

Subsequently, the treatise of 'Kriya Yoga' by Paramhansa Yogananda; 'The Synthesis of Yoga' by Sri Aurobindo; and 'Chid-Vilasa driven Yoga as per Kashmir Shaivism' by Swami Muktananda have added to quantum of principles and practices of Yoga in the West. The progression has to acknowledge the initiation by American Philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson even preceding the forerunning movement of Swami Vivekananda.

Different social and altruistic dimensions of Yoga have evolved and influenced the progress of humanity. The key contributions are the living experiments and works of World Poet Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahesh Yogi, Jiddu Krishnamurthy and of late, other Gurus of recent times.

*What exploded in the 1960s, following the Beatles trip to India for an extended stay with their new guru, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, actually began more than two hundred years earlier, when the United States started importing knowledge--as well as tangy spices and colorful fabrics--from Asia. The first translations of Hindu texts found their way into the libraries of John Adams and Ralph Waldo Emerson. From there the ideas spread to Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and succeeding generations of receptive Americans, who absorbed India's "science of consciousness" and wove it into the fabric of their lives. Charismatic teachers like Swami Vivekananda and Paramahansa Yogananda came west in waves, prompting leading intellectuals, artists, and scientists such as Aldous Huxley, Joseph Campbell, Allen Ginsberg, J. D. Salinger, John Coltrane, Dean Ornish, and Richard Alpert, aka Ram Dass, to adapt and disseminate what they learned from them. The impact has been enormous, enlarging our current understanding of the mind and body and dramatically changing how we view ourselves and our place in the cosmos.*

From THE AMERICAN VEDA: Philip Goldberg