

Yoga Philosophy: History and Culture

Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, Darśanas

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The Upaniṣads **(aka Vedānta, “the end of the Vedas”)**

Over 200 known, including:

Brhadāranyaka

Chāndogya

Kaṭha

Īśa

Kena

Maitrī

Praśna

Mandukya

Śvetasvatara

Chāndogya Upaniṣad

The connection between the breath and the mind
(Roots of Yoga 4.2)

Just as a bird tied by a string flies off in all directions and, on not reaching any other place to stay, returns to where it is tied, in the very same way, dear boy, the mind flies off in all directions and, on not reaching any other place to stay, returns to the breath. for the mind, dear boy, is tied to the breath (6.8.2)



Kaṭha Upaniṣad
c. 3rd century BCE?

The Chariot (Kāṭha Upaniṣad)



- 1 Chariot=Body
- 1 Rider=self
- Charioteer=intellect
- 1 Reins=mind
- 1 Horses=senses
- 1 Paths=sense objects

Kaṭhopanishad, Definition of Yoga (Roots of Yoga 1.1.1)

(10) When the five senses (*jñānāni*), along with the mind, remain still, and the intellect (*buddhi*) is not active, that is known as the highest state (*paramām gatim*). (11) They consider yoga to be firm restraint of the senses (*indriya*). Then one becomes undistracted, for yoga is the arising and the passing away (*prabhavāpyayau*).

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad

The raft of Brahman (Roots of Yoga, 2.2.3)

(8) Having made the body straight with its three parts upright and used the mind to insert the senses into the heart, the wise man may cross all terrifying rivers by means of the raft of Brahman.

(9) With his actions controlled, the wise man should press the breaths in [the body]. When the breath is expended, he should exhale through one nostril. He should restrain the mind vigilantly, as if it were a chariot yoked to badly behaved horses.

(10) In a hidden, windfree, sheltered [spot], which is flat, clean, free from stones, fire and sand, by quiet, flowing waters and the like, agreeable to the mind, but not oppressive to the eye, he should practise yoga.

Bhagavadgītā



Definitions of Yoga in the *Bhagavadgītā*

(Roots of Yoga, 1.1.2)

—(2.48) Perform actions established in yoga! Abandon attachment, Arjuna, and be equanimous in success and failure. Yoga is said to be equanimity.

(2.50) Yoga is skill in action.

(6.23) Know that which is called yoga to be separation (*viyoga*) from contact (*saṁyoga*) with suffering. A person whose mind is not dejected should definitely practise it.

Bhagavadgītā on the Yogi

(6.1) He who does his **duty without regard to its result** is a renouncer [*saṁnyāsin*] and a yogi, not he who abandons the sacred fire and [Vedic] rituals. (6.2) Know that which they call “renunciation” (*saṁnyāsa*) to be yoga, o Son of Pāṇḍu (Arjuna), for **nobody becomes a yogi without having renounced desire**.

(6.46) The yogi is superior to ascetics (*tapasvin*); he is also considered to be superior to those who have knowledge (*jñānin*) and the yogi is superior to ritualists (*karmin*). Therefore, be a yogi, Arjuna!

The Yogas of the Bhagavadgītā

Karmayoga:

(5.2) Renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*) and the yoga of action both bring about ultimate bliss, but of the two the yoga of action is superior to the renunciation of action.

Bhaktiyoga:

(14.26) He who serves me steadfastly through the yoga of devotion (*bhaktiyoga*) crosses beyond these threads of material existence (*guṇas*) [which I have just told you about] and is ready to become *brahman*.

Buddhiyoga:

(2.49) O Arjuna, action is very much inferior to the yoga of the intellect (*buddhiyoga*). Seek refuge in the intellect! Wretched are they who are motivated by results.

Abhyāsayoga:

(8.8) Concentrating with a mind absorbed in the yoga of [repeated] practice (*abhyāsayoga*) and not diverting elsewhere, one reaches the divine supreme spirit (*paramaṃ puruṣam*), o Arjuna.

Ātmasaṃyamayoga:

(4.27) Others sacrifice all the actions of the senses and the actions of the *prāṇa* in the fire of the yoga of self-control (*ātmasaṃyamayoga*) which is kindled by knowledge (*jñāna*).

Sāṃkhyayoga

(5.4) The foolish declare that Sāṃkhya and yoga are separate, not the wise. He who performs even one of them correctly obtains the fruit of both. (5.5) The state attained by followers of Sāṃkhya is that reached by yogis too. Sāṃkhya and yoga are one: who sees this [truly] sees.

Bhagavadgītā (Roots of Yoga 1.2.1)

How to practise yoga:

- 1 (6.10) The yogi should meditate constantly on the self, in private, alone, with mind and self under control, free from desire and not acquiring possessions (*aparigrahaḥ*).
- 1 (11) In a clean place set up a firm seat for oneself, neither too high nor too low, with cloth, deer skin, and *kuśa* grass on top.
- 1 (12) Sitting there on his seat, with his mind concentrated on a single object, and the thoughts and senses under control, he should practise yoga in order to purify the self.

(13-14) Steady, holding body, head and neck and head straight and unmoving, gazing at the tip of his nose and not looking in (any other) direction, calm and fearless, established in the celibate's vow, with the mind under control and his thoughts on me, he should sit practising yoga, intent on me.

(15) Keeping himself thus constantly under control, the yogi whose mind is restrained attains peace and nirvana, and abides with me.

Schools of Philosophy within Hinduism

Yoga as Philosophy (Six Darśanas)

Vs.

Yoga as Practice (independent of Philosophy)

The Six Darśanas (“Views”) of Orthodox (āstika) Indian Philosophy:

1. Nyāya (Logical procedure)
2. Vaiśeṣika (Epistemology, categories of existence)
3. Sāṃkhya (“Enumeration”)
4. Yoga (Method)
5. Mīmāṃsā (Vedic ethics and rituals)
6. Vedānta (aka Uttarā Mīmāṃsā:
Interpretation of Upaniṣads)

HETERODOX (NĀSTIKA) SCHOOLS

--Śramana (ascetic renouncers)

--Jain

--Buddhist

--Cārvāka (“materialists”)

--Tantra

SĀṂKHYA

Sāṁkhya is an ancient, dualistic system of philosophy which proposes that that all existence is divided into two eternal principles:

1. The material principle (prakṛti)
2. The spiritual principle (puruṣa)

SĀṂKHYA

THE THREE GUṆAS (CHARACTERISTICS) OF PRAKṚTI

1. Rajas

2. Tamas

3. Sattva

THE BIG PROBLEM

According to the Sāmkhya Philosophy

Puruṣa confuses itself with the Ego (actually a
part of Prakṛiti)

THEREFORE: *SUFFERING*

PRIMORDIAL MATTER

PRAKRITI

INTERNAL CAUSATION

INTELLECT (Buddhi)
EGO (Ahamkara)
MIND (Manas)

EXTERNAL CAUSATION

FIVE SENSE ORGANS (Jñānendriya)
FIVE ACTION ORGANS (Karmendriya: Tongue, feet, hands, digestive organs, generative organs)

SUBTLE ELEMENTS

SOUND (shabda), TOUCH (Sparsha), FORM (Rupa),
TASTE (Rasa), SMELL (Gandha)

GROSS ELEMENTS

SKY (Ākāśh), AIR (Vāyu), FIRE (Agni), WATER (Jala),
EARTH (Prithvi)

VEDĀNTA

Realisation through Inquiry

BRAHMAN: absolute reality, eternal, self-existent, transcendent,
ground of being (sometimes identified as Īśvara)

ĀTMAN: the individual soul

MĀYĀ: illusion, causes phenomenal world to arise. Ignorance of
māyā is cause of all suffering

THREE VARIANTS OF VEDĀNTA

1. Advaita (Shankara): Non-Dual. All is One, Monism (Jñāna)
2. Dvaita (Mādhava): Dual. Brahma and Jiva are separate, (Bhakti)
3. Viśiṣṭādvaita (Ramānuja): Qualified Non-Dual. Different and not different

End of Unit 1.3