

Renaissance Of Yoga

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The term “renaissance” was used in Italy, particularly in Florence, and means the revival of the humanistic arts. And when we talk about revival it is related to the history as well as to the development.

Yoga, an ancient heritage of Indian culture, is much older than the archaeological record available to us today.

Indian sages have achieved notable results in various branches of science, literature and art but so far as chronological development of these different branches are concerned, there is hardly any certain data which gives us pertinent information for determining even the exact date of Rigveda and therefore, we find controversial view points in this regard. Till today there is a controversy. We have not reached a decisive point.

The development of yoga can be traced back over 5000 years but some researchers think that yoga may even be 10,000 years old and some of them say it is 3000 years old. The earlier writings on yoga found transcribed on fragile palm leaves were easily damaged, destroyed or lost.

I'll give you an example from Bhagavad Gita where Lord Krishna says: The knowledge of yoga was handed over to the sun – surya, to manu, to iksvaku and to Arjuna. The knowledge was lost in between. In the fourth chapter the first four verses make this clear.

Now the second point I want to highlight for you is that the Vedas are said to be, and Mr. Bögle I want to interact with you on that point, people who have seen the vedic mantras, these people have developed this kind of vision. In this vision they could see the mantras, because they are not created by men, what ever they have seen, they have written. It means that pre-Vedic period also this was prevalent and on the basis of that some evidence it can be proven that this yoga was prevalent in the Indus valley civilisation also. So yoga has a long history. It was also found in the pre-Vedic period. In Vedas we find frequent mention of various concepts of yoga examples quoted here:

- Yoga should be followed for achieving knowledge of past and future (Rigveda 1/5/3), Samaveda 1/2/10, Atharvaveda 20/69/1.).
- Moreover, in Rigveda (1/15/7) it is mentioned that no sacrificial acts will be successful without Yoga.
- We also find the word “kshem” along with the term yoga in Rigveda (7/86/8).
- In Atharvaveda the concept of body awareness as well as the term “asandhi” which is used for a wooden dais for sitting is also available.

Atharvaveda has the concept of body awareness as well as the term “asandhi“. You will be surprised, in vedic literature you will not find the term asana, but we find the word “asandhi” and it is used to refer to sitting. It is used for a wooden dais. Similarly, in Brahman literature particularly in Shatpath Brahmana we find the references (shavaasam ninudhya juhuyaat) that is you have to retain the prana - breath and then only do the sacrifices. Meaning that the antar kumbhaka is given too much importance during that period.

Indeed, from principal Upanishads we find the full-fledged development of yogic concepts and practices wherein “moksha” – liberation or emancipation, whatever you want to call it, is considered to be the ultimate goal of yoga or the turyavastha, i.e., the highest level of consciousness and also, in Sutra literature, Smriti literature, Epic period, Jainism, Buddhism, Puranas and the Yogopanishads, etc.

We can divide the historical development of yoga on the basis of available literature into:

- Pre- Vedic Period (10000 – 5000 BC)
- Vedic Period (4500- 2500 BC)
- Post Vedic / Upanishadic Period (1500-1000 BC)
- The Pre-Classical or Epic Period (1000-100 BC)
- Classical Age or Sutra Period (100-500 AD)
- Smrti Period (500-1000 AD)
- Pauranik Period (300-1600 AD)
- Medieval Period (700-1200 AD) (Tantra, Mantra, Natha, Bhakti)
- Modern Period (1700 AD onward)
- Contemporary

And one by one we can find out how yoga developed during that time.

1. Pre-vedic Period

From the excavation of the Indus Valley we find that yoga in some form was prevalent during that period. John Marshall found some plates and from that we can find that yoga was there in this period. A tangible evidence of archaeological significance in favour of founding of the Veda in yoga alluded to here, is the equivalence of the content of RV.I. 64.7 -8 to the Pashupati Seal of Mohenjodaro. This is also available in our library in Lonavla.

Yoga had a special place during the Indus Valley civilization (3000 BC) as the excavated stone seals depict figures in yogic postures. The phallic symbols and idols of Mother Goddess also suggest the existence of Tantric Yoga during that period.

2. Vedic Period (4500 BC to 2500 BC)

Vedas were collection of texts containing songs, mantras and rituals to be used by the Vedic rishis. The word “yoga” was first mentioned in Rig Veda. But it is not used in the sense which we understand today. It is just for the joining of bulls, the joining of horses that that word was used. But certain concepts of yoga which developed later are seen in their rudimentary form in Vedas. There were significant developments made in this period. The Vedic people, developed a unique system of knowledge known as yoga. This system was further developed by the most auspicious, industrious and intelligent people who were practising, known as tapasvins, who dedicated themselves wholly to its pursuit not for any material gain but for the spiritual uplifting of humanity. Their dedication to the kind of knowledge they were in search of was so exclusive that one of them, Dadhyan – nowadays it is used as Dadiji for instance, even agreed to make a gift of his backbone. It is Dadhyan who has envisioned the device of a highest kind of yogic sadhana known as “ajapajapa” through perusal of the sound produces the sound “so” while breathing in and while breathing out the sound produced takes the form of “ham”. Both combined sound like “so” and “ham”. In Sanskrit “so” is equivalent to “sah” meaning “that”, the Ultimate Reality, while “ham” is the shortened form of “aham” meaning “I”. I am that.

The acts of breathing in and breathing out during twenty-four hours of life in a day and night have even been counted at 21600 which is the norm. Especially in Hatha Yoga this is said. If you remain agitated you breathe more and your longevity can be decreased. That is mentioned in our literature. Therefore, we have to understand that this breathing pattern, and breathing is a bridge between the two, that is the cosmic energy and the individualised energy. And this breathing is a bridge. What happens to us when the breathing increases? There are so many causes. When we became angry we can observe that our

breathing becomes fast. Because you have developed this kind of heat inside and this heat has to evaporate and your breathing becomes fast, your heart rate becomes fast, and everything, and this is the problem. So the longevity can be decreased if you increase the number to 21600 but if you decrease the number, the longevity can be increased. That is what is said.

Seers laid down the formula for universal yogic sadhana which is based not on sheer speculation but on practical use and experience of the result. So basically we have to say that before Patanjali it was scattered in the scripture, people were practising yogasana but whatever the texts mention they have mentioned on the basis of their concrete experience. It is not on the basis of speculation. So it is said: This is obvious from his direct statement to this effect as follows: *Mitrasya ma cakshusha sarvani bhutani samikshantam/ Mitrasyaham cakshusha sarvani bhutani samikshe//* May all the living beings of the world look at me with friendly eyes, as I myself look at all of them with the friendly eyes.

*Dyauh santir antariksam santih prthive,
santir osadhayah santih vanaspatayah santir/
visve devah santih brahma santih sarvam,
santih santir eva santih sa ma santir edhi//*

May the heaven be at peace; may the intermediate space be at peace; may the earth be at peace; may the herbs be peace-giving; may the trees be peace-giving; may all the gods bring peace; may the word of knowledge prove peace-giving; may all be peaceful; may only peace prevail; may that peace be available to me. That is given in the Vedas.

Surprisingly the words “Yoga“ and “Yogin“ are not seen used in their technical sense in Vedas. There are three terms used in the Vedas “yajna“, “tapas“ and “yoga“ relate to three different strata of the Vedic literature which are the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanisads. Brahmanas they deal with the yajnas, Aranyakas they deal with the tapas, and Upanishads they concentrate on yoga. So these three strata of the Vedic literature are part and parcel of one and the same basic source, namely, the Brahmanas. Vedic Samhitas mainly consist of mantras of prayer, addresses to gods and goddesses associated predominately with the forces of nature such as the sun, moon, dawn, earth, ocean, rivers, air, fire, etc.

'Juhu' is a female seer, refers to seven primeval seers, who sat in a particular pose engaging themselves in tapas and became as wise and as powerful as gods, almost equivalent to gods. Sitting in tapas for the acquisition of highest wisdom and divine on part of the seers is sufficient to bear out the fact of origin of Vedic wisdom in some sort of Yoga. Taittiriya Aranyaka gives many such references. The mental-spiritual fire works in the form of determination to act in keeping with the provisions of Rta – rta is a law, the principle of universal dynamics so as to bring to the fore the spiritual fire, that is, the fire of making user of internal fire in up gradation of the course of life from the physical to the spiritual came to be known as “tapas“.

Later on when we go to the other literature, this tapas is nothing but a purification process. The examples can be given when the ornaments, you know, when they become diluted, the dust particles come, then we go to the goldsmith and the goldsmith puts them into the fire and purifies it. So it is a kind of process of purification. Angirasa experimented with pranava (om sound) in the course of his sadhana has come to be delineated with allegorically in the Chandogya Upanishad. This om is considered to be the prime sound. It is accepted by all. In Christianity it is accepted that there was a sound in the beginning and the sound is nothing other than “om“. It is a primary sound. We call it anahata nada, unstrucked sound. You are listening to me at this moment, this is not anahata nada. The unstrucked sound is going on in and out. But the thing is that strucked sound, when two objects come together they produce sound. Now you are listening to me, the air is touching different parts of the vocal system and producing certain sounds. And this is called strucked sounds. Our ears are not attuned to listen to that sound. Therefore, we are listening

om and after some time we may try to say now listen the same sound without reciting this sound. Once you understand, once you listen to that sound what happens? You don't recognize a object on the basis of its name and form. You recognise it on the basis of its frequency, its vibrations. That is the beauty. Basically in the Hathayogic literature it came in a different manner as nada. When apana and prana meet together it produces a different kind of sound and particularly in Hathayoga Pradipika there are four stages mentioned, later Gheranda Samhita gives eight stages of sounds you can hear after prana and apana met.

Bhrigu discovered the spiritual fire "agni". Bhrigu and Varuna discovered five sheaths of the human personality. This body is called the sthula body and it is called annamaya kosa. And this annamaya kosa is regulated by the pranamaya kosa. And the pranamaya kosa is regulated by the manomaya kosa. And this manomaya kosa is regulated by vijanamaya kosa. And this vijanamaya kosa is regulated by anandamaya kosa.

The intimacy between vak and agni in the Vedic tradition is evident from the Chandogya Upanishad's observation that it is the heat conserved in the body which besides contributing to formation of bone and marrow in its gross forms, serves as the cause of the vac in its subtlest form.

3. Post Vedic/ Upanishadic Period (1500 to 1000 BC)

So the Upanishads are said to be the culmination of the Vedas and hence it is called Vedanta. Once I asked a famous Swami, what is this jagat? This my jagat, my world this gives me air to breathe, heat and light, this gives me stability. This jagat is not created by us. So the jagat which I have created that jagat is mithya – wrong, false. That is the problem. It gives me pain and therefore this jagat is said to be false. They have been written in poetic form. The contents are simple and sometimes just stories. They are an attempt to know and understand consciousness. They equate this consciousness to the highest of all principles (Purusha). In trying to understand this consciousness, they actually contain many yoga techniques in order to achieve the goal of self-realization. Yoga was slowly developed and refined by the Rishis who documented their practices and beliefs in Upanishads, a huge work containing over 200 scriptures. Earliest Upanishads like Chandogya and Brhadaranyaka give us the basis of Kriyayoga. Today we are talking about the Kriyayoga and there are two types of traditions. The Yogananda tradition you can say and the Patanjali tradition. Both traditions are a bit different. But they came out of that tradition. In Kathopanisad the word yoga has been used in this sense.

Stability of the senses is said to be yoga. That is the first definition of Kathopanisad which goes in accordance with the Patanjali Yogasutras. The Svetasvatara is perhaps the most important from yogic point of view. How to sit, how to do this, how to do that.

4. Pre-classic or Epic Period (1000-100 BC)

The two great Indian epics, namely Ramayana and Mahabharata, are rich sources of information about various kinds of Yogic practices prevalent then. Yoga as a system seems to be quite popular in the age of Ramayana. The most important section dealing with yoga in the Mahabharata is the famous Bhagavadgita. Lokamene was a great freedom fighter, when you go through his Gheeta he has said, the purpose of Bhagavadgita is to set force the karma yoga but it is rooted in jnana and developed by bhakti. That is mentioned. So karma, jnana, bhakti cannot be separated. So it deals with three paths of yoga namely, jnana, bhakti and karma.

5. Classical Age (100 BC to 500 AD) (Sutra Period)

Here I want to say if we talk about Renaissance this is the actual period. Patanjali has given us a gift to

the world in the form of yogasutras. Before Patanjali this wisdom, this knowledge was scattered and he took all the references and on the basis of his own personal experiences he systematised and this is the actual renaissance of yoga you can say. The yogasutras of Patanjali have been commented upon by several commentators. The first commentator was Vyasa. These commentaries also reflect on the development of different yogic concepts and techniques of that period. The first commentary is known as Vyasabhasya.

So Patanjali's yogasutras are the oldest systematic treatise on yoga available to us. It is based on the previous and contemporary traditions of yoga and has exerted a great influence on later thinkers and practitioners of yoga. Buddhism and Jainism. There is a controversy whether Buddha was the first or Patanjali was the first. I do not want to go into all this. Buddhism has been greatly influenced by yoga and it has also contributed a great deal to the development of yoga. Buddha himself has practised yoga under the teacher Arada Kalam and Uddaka Ramaputta. There are great similarities and if you go to the buddhist terminology and Patanjali terminology and there is one book available: "Comparative Study of the Patanjali Yogasutra and Buddhism", in particular on the Samadhi. It is available in our library. Mahavira, the founder of Jainism was a contemporary of Gautam Buddha. There is a similarity in the description of Yamas by Patanjali and those vows followed by the Jains. All are talking about the mahavrtas – the great vows, ahimsa, satya, aparigraha, the universal laws.

Patanjali talks citta vritti nirodha, asana vritti nirodha, talks the Jainism. There is no difference.

6. Smrti Period (500 BC to 100 AD)

The period of Smrti literature starts from the times of Patanjali. Some Smrties had been composed before 500 BC. And they were written till about 100 AD. During this long period of Smrti literature we find the changes in the prevailing ideas, beliefs, worships and customs. Swami Kuvalyananda has edited one book. In this book you will find, when you are practising pranayama, you have to practice in the beginning with the gayatri mantra. It says that when you are inhaling you have to concentrate on Brahma, when you pause you have to concentrate on Vishnu and when you exhale you have to concentrate on Lord Shiva. So somehow they have associated the pranayama practice with the mantras. But later on when Gheranda came he has said, sa garbha and nir garbha. So with mantras it is sa garbha, without mantras it is agarbha or nir garbha.

The smrti tried to combine yoga with daily rituals. Thus we find Pranayama and certain purification techniques occupying an important place in every ritual. A collection of 27 Smrties is available in print. Our philosophy department is engaged in collecting the material and arranging it in book form.

7. Pauranic Period (300 AD to 1600 AD)

The Puranas are a class of literature of Hindu, Jain, Buddhist texts, notably consisting of narratives of the history of the universe from creation to destruction, genealogies of kings, heroes, sages and description of Hindu cosmology, philosophy and geography which existed from very ancient times. Many of these deal with Yogangas. Substantial additions were made from time to time in Puranas. There are also Upa-Puranas. The nature of these is sectarian and the philosophy and practices of different sects are usually described in them.

When you do pranayama you have to have the ratio. People used to say exhalation should be double. There was an experiment carried out by Swamiji and in this experiment it is said the exhalation should be double. You should develop this type of tolerance. This information is available in Skanda Purana. Swamiji has mentioned in his book on Pranayama.

8.1 Medieval Period (700 AD to 1200 AD) Tantra Stage

The Tantric works of Vaisnavas, Saivas and Saktas are called respectively Samhita, Agama and Tantra. These terms mean respectively collection, tradition and a set of doctrines. Another classifying Tantras in Visnukranta, Rathakarnta and Asvakranta or Gajakranta in accordance with the place of their origin. During this period we find a vast literature on Tantras. There are Buddhist Tantras, Hindu Tantras and Jain Tantras. Tantras are commonly associated with Sakti worship. It is difficult to say which Tantras are earlier. 7th to 12th century was the period of Tantrika works and cults of both the Hindu and the Buddhist. The Tantrikasa substituted a yoga of enjoyment for the yoga of abstinence and asceticism. The Tantric works of Vaisnavas, Saivas and Saktas are called respectively Samhita, Agama and Tantra. These terms mean respectively collection, tradition and a set of doctrines. Another classifying Tantras in Visnukranta, Rathakarnta and Asvakranta or Gajakranta in accordance with the place of their origin. During this period we find a vast literature on Tantras. There are Buddhist Tantras, Hindu Tantras and Jain Tantras. Tantras are commonly associated with Sakti worship. It is difficult to say which Tantras are earlier. 7th to 12th century was the period of Tantrika works and cults of both the Hindu and the Buddhist. The Tantrikasa substituted a yoga of enjoyment for the yoga of abstinence and asceticism.

8.2 Medieval Period (700 AD to 1200 AD) Mantra Stage

Mantra yoga is an exact science. *Mananat trayete iti mantrah* – by constant thinking of mantra, one is protected and released from the round of births and deaths. A mantra is so called because it is achieved by the mental process. The root “*man*” in the word Mantra comes from the first syllable of that word meaning to think and “*tra*” from “*trai*” meaning to protect or free from the bondage of the phenomenal world.

A mantra generates the creative force and bestows eternal bliss. A mantra when constantly repeated awakens the consciousness. How it protects is an applied part, this is to be understood properly. When you recite certain mantras according to Sanskrit literature, it is like the alphabet all the 52 alphabets are mantras, and if you recite all the mantras are in the body also, and they are on the outside. So all the mantras are imprinted in all cakras. So when you recite a particular mantra the vibrations are generated and the vibrations give you a sort of calmness and quietness of the mind and you will be able to remain aware.

8.3 Medieval Period (700 AD to 1200 AD) Natha Cult

Tantrism developed, into Rajayoga and Shajayana of Buddhists. As an aid to Rajayoga, Hathayoga was evolved and became very popular through the Natha Cult. Many of the Hathayogic practices seem to have their origin in Tantrism. Nathayoga laid a great emphasis on preparing the body as a great vehicle for the higher spiritual experiences. It is this yoga which has become so popular now throughout the world.

8.4 Bhakti Cult (1300 AD to 1900 AD)

Yoga also had its impact on Bhakti literature. There is a set of works in sutras on yoga devoted exclusively to Bhakti Yoga. These are Sandilya Sutra, Narad Sutra, Bhakti Mimansa and Para Bhakti Sutra. The saints have profusely written on Bhakti and depending on their background. they refer to yoga practices now and then. The definition of bhakti is given. Param prem rupa – the highest kind of love, this is called bhakti. There is one book on bhakti marg. I wrote my PhD on bhakti.

9. Modern Period (1700 AD to Present, 1700 AD to 1800 AD)

The book named “Bhaktisagar”, a classical text of yoga, was written by Swami Charandas Ji, born in Rajasthan, the disciple of Shukdev Ji Maharaj. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, yoga masters began to travel to the West, attracting attention and followers. The tradition of yoga continues even today without

break. 1893 Swami Vivekananda mesmerised the attendees with his lecture on yoga and universality of the world's religions at parliament of religions in Chicago. Swami Ramkrishan Paramhansa popularized yoga and established Velloe math in West Bengal.

1920 to 1990 AD

Swami Kuvalyananda established the first Research and Training Institute on Yoga named Kaivalyadham SMYM Smiti at Lonavla. He was the first man in the world who could think and investigate the applicability of yoga in the laboratory. Yesterday I have discussed this with you already, –he was the man.

Hatha Yoga was promoted and popularized by T. Krishnamacharya and Swami Shivananda. T. Krishnamachary opened the first Hatha Yoga School in Mysore. 1936 Swami Shivananda founded the Divine Life society on the banks of Ganga. 1970 to 1990: B.K.S. Iyengar, T.K.V. Desikachar, Pattabhi Jois promoted and popularized yoga particularly the therapeutic potential of yoga. Swami Yogananda, Swami Ramatirtha Ramana Maharisi Sri Aruobindo, Swami Satyananda Saraswari, Maharishi Mahesh Yoga popularized yoga in India as well as internationally. Swami Dhirendra Brahmchari established Vishwavayatan Yogshram and Aparna Ashram in Delhi and Mantalai in Jammu Kashmir. Swami Gitananda promoted and popularized yoga.

10. Contemporary 2000 AD and onwards

Swami Ramdev popularized yoga and established Patanjali Yoga Peeth in Kankhal Haridwar for promoting training, research and therapeutic aspect of Yoga. Sri Sri Ravishankar popularized Art of Living, a concept of living healthy and happy.

QUESTIONS

Question: I just have seen the history of yoga with so many influences. Do you have an idea, what is the next step?

Answer: I was taking about that yesterday. We will organize one conference and we will organize one session on secularism. Then one person asked, “Why your are organizing this secularium? Yoga is a science. It is established that it is a science.” I said; No. When we established this Yoga day, that point of time we where supposed to practice Suryanamaskar as well as the om chanting. But this was restricted. This was dropped from the program, Why? Because there is a rigidity in the society. Therefore, there is a need to do such programs.” Unless we understand similarities and dissimilarities from each and every religion we can not come to a common platform. Therefore, there is a need to establish this common platform. This is one part and the other part is, no doubt yoga is a science, it is not only an objective science, it is a spiritual science. It was carried out by Swami Kuvalyananda, have you heard the name?

Answer: Yes.

Continued: He was the first man in 1920 who, with the help of Western methods, established that the Indian sciences can be investigated. East and West meeting. He was the first man who did this job. Now the consequences: 177 countries celebrating the yoga day. UNESCO has a proposal, so everywhere it is going on. Not only for the spiritual point of view, is it for the psychological point of view. All aspects have been developed. So the credit goes to the people who have systematised that. I think the future will be of yogic culture.

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