



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Tracing the origins and evolution of yoga darshana: A critical historical analysis

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Abstract

One of India's six classical philosophical traditions, Yoga Darshana, has its origins traced through this article's analytical and empirical research. From its inception in ancient times to its modern interpretations, this inquiry delves into the origins, evolution, and fundamental concepts of Yoga Darshana. Also included in the study is the origins of Yoga Darshana. The study's overarching goal is to fill gaps in our understanding of Yoga Darshana's place in Indian philosophy. To do this, we will look at important texts, have philosophical conversations about them, and consider how religious and cultural factors play a role. The study also delves into the ways in which yoga's fundamental principles have evolved and been reinterpreted throughout the years and how these changes have impacted traditional spiritual practices as well as contemporary health movements. The study aspires to contribute to the continuing discussion on the relevance and usefulness of yoga in both contemporary and traditional settings through its critical historical research.

Keywords: Yoga darshana, Indian philosophy, Historical background, Yoga sutras, Patanjali, Evolution of yoga, Ancient Indian texts, Spiritual practices, Modern wellness, Indian thought.

Introduction

The philosophical and physical aspects of yoga have had a profound impact on Indian philosophy and society for millennia. The global spread of yoga as a discipline and way of life attests to the fact that its influence extends well beyond the Indian subcontinent. In order to offer a thorough account of the origins and development of yoga darshana, this research endeavors to place it within the broader framework of Indian philosophical practice and religious traditions.

As one of India's six traditional philosophical traditions, Yoga Darshana provides a systematic framework for contemplating such fundamental questions as what life is, what awareness is, and how to achieve enlightenment.

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The Sanskrit word "drish," from which the English word "darshana" originates, can signify either "to see" or "to perceive." Understanding this is crucial. So, yoga darshana may be viewed as a way of seeing things, providing a theoretical framework and practical tools for reaching one's spiritual potential.

Because it has fused with several Indian systems of thought over the course of several centuries, the historical trajectory of Yoga Darshana is complicated and multi-faceted. Throughout its history, Yoga Darshana has shown to be remarkably flexible and long-lasting. It has evolved from its pre-Vedic and Vedic roots to its classical form in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and beyond. The ancient Indian yoga practice is where it all began.

At a time when yoga is experiencing an unprecedented worldwide popularity boom despite frequent detachment from its intellectual foundations, this study takes on further significance (Bhavanani, A. B. 2011). By tracing the origins and development of yoga darshana, we may gain a deeper understanding of the complexity and depth of this ancient practice and how it has evolved to remain relevant in modern society.

Keep in mind that studying ancient Indian philosophy has its own set of obstacles, especially in light of the fact that we are about to go out on this historical expedition. The symbolic and sometimes confusing character of early texts, the lengthy period of time these ideas evolved over, and the

oral history of knowledge transfer all serve to complicate our endeavor. Regardless, we may piece together a tale of yoga darshana's extensive history and massive impact on human thinking and practice if we examine the facts with attention and consider the numerous academic viewpoints.

Pre-Classical Origins

Indus valley civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization may have been the birthplace of yoga and related practices, according to archaeological finds. The "Proto-Shiva" seal has prompted some academics to wonder where yogic traditions came from, as it depicts a person in a position similar to conventional yoga. (Feuerstein, G., 2001) The caveats of using this form of archaeological evidence must be carefully considered, though.

Vedic period

It is possible that yoga darshana had its origins in the Vedic period. The Rigveda, the holiest book in the world, alludes to ancient meditation techniques. The idea of tapas, sometimes known as ascetic heat, started to form during this period. The idea that this practice paved the way for subsequent yoga styles has gained widespread acceptance (Bryant, E. F., 2009).

Upanishadic era

The Upanishads are a watershed moment in the evolution of yoga's intellectual foundations. The foundational ideas that would be crucial to the growth of yoga darshana first surfaced during this time. As a structured practice, "yoga" may have its origins in the Kathopanishad.

Classical Formulation

Bhagavad gita

An all-inclusive guide to yoga, the Bhagavad Gita harmonizes and combines many yogic techniques. Its significance in the evolution of yoga philosophy cannot be overstated. For yoga philosophies to progress, it is crucial (Dasgupta, S., 1922). It offers a wealth of information about the principles and practices of yoga, which is why it is considered a foundational text. Additionally, it provides a synthesis that has impacted several intellectual discussions and spiritual traditions.

The Bhagavad Gita has left an indelible mark on yoga philosophy with its all-encompassing treatment of many yogic disciplines, such as Karma Yoga (the action yoga), Bhakti Yoga (the devotional yoga), and Jnana Yoga (the knowledge yoga). Without favoring one way over another, the literature offers various methods as complementary practices that may be utilized to attain inner serenity and spiritual enlightenment.

“योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय।
सिद्धयसिद्धयोःसमो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते॥”

This highlights the second basic principle of yogic philosophy,

which is to separate oneself from the results of one's work. Regardless of the outcome, Arjuna should approach his yoga obligations with unwavering dedication and an open mind, according to Lord Krishna in this verse. (Iyengar, B. K. S., 1993) The core principle of yoga is equanimity, which is defined as the ability to remain balanced and calm irrespective of one's degree of success or failure.

The followers of the ideology known as karma yoga are encouraged to carry out their actions independently of the results they may bring about. The conceptual level of this lesson is really fundamental. In addition to fostering emotional and mental steadiness, this concept teaches people to put their egos aside and behave in service of a higher goal. (Mallinson, J., 2017) The larger yogic goal is to achieve inner balance and harmony by overcoming the duality of pleasure and pain, success and failure, and by focusing on detachment and tranquility.

The idea of equanimity, or “समत्वं योए उच्यते” as it is stated in the Bhagavad Gita, is a crucial part of yoga darshana. Because of this shift in emphasis, yoga is no longer seen as a practice limited to the mind or body but rather as a discipline that permeates every facet of existence. (Warah, J. S. 2022) The idea behind this method is to live in harmony with nature while protecting oneself from the fleeting ups and downs that everyone else experiences.

Consequently, the Bhagavad Gita offers instructions on how to live a yogic life in practice and adds to the theoretical foundations of yoga darshana. Anywhere in the world, there are yoga practitioners and seekers of spirituality who will find this message to be relevant and meaningful. (Shankar, S. S. R., 2014) The importance of maintaining an equilibrium between active participation and passive observation is highlighted in this message.

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

When it comes to the traditional yoga darshana formulation, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras is widely considered a must-read and a seminal text. This venerable book, which is said to have been written by Maharshi Patanjali, is a detailed manual on the principles and practices of yoga. (Amin, H. D., Sharma, R., Vyas, H. A., & Vyas, M. K., 2014) It was with this effort that the present yoga tradition, classical yoga, was laid the groundwork. The Yoga Sutras consist of a collection of brief yet deep sayings. (Larson, G. J., & Bhattacharya, R. S., 2008) They give a methodical way to purify and regulate one's thoughts, which in turn leads to emancipation from spiritual slavery.

Each of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras is organized into one of four sections, or padas. Each pada emphasizes a different facet of yogic practice, such as:

- Samadhi Pada (51 sutras)
- Sadhana Pada (55 sutras)
- Vibhuti Pada (56 sutras)
- Kaivalya Pada (34 sutras)

In addition to providing a practical guide to understanding and mastering one's own mind, the yoga sutras lay out a straightforward and methodical path to spiritual enlightenment. (Sastri, S. S., 2002). To summarize Patanjali's account of yoga, which is the basis of yoga darshana, one may say: At its core, yoga is about mastering one's own mind waves in pursuit of serenity and enlightenment. For yoga to be truly about liberation from the ego and entering a state of oneness of awareness, this kind of mental discipline is essential.

The many branches of yoga, from theory to practice, may trace their roots back to Patanjali's canon. His methodical approach offers a comprehensive framework that unites ethical behavior, physical exercise, mental concentration, and spiritual wisdom. This paradigm is applicable to practitioners of all experience levels. (Phillips, S., 2009) Anyone interested in yoga and its teachings who wishes to find their own way to enlightenment and self-discovery has found the Yoga Sutras to be an invaluable resource ever since they were published.

Evolution of Yoga Darshana

Developing yoga darshana continued for quite some time after Patanjali's foundational work, the yoga sutras, was completed. Over the course of several centuries, this laid the framework for a rich and varied heritage. At the time of their writing, Patanjali's yoga sutras offered a systematic organization of yoga philosophy and practice. (Singleton, M., 2010) However, subsequent generations of scholars, sages, and practitioners expanded upon, clarified, and improved the tradition. The result was the intricate web of yogic philosophy and practice that is still shaping modern times.

Extending and interpreting Patanjali's brief aphorisms, the yoga sutras became the subject of several comments. Here are a few interesting points to note:

- Yoga Bhashya by Vyasa (5th–6th century CE)
- Tattva Vaisharadi by Vachaspati Mishra (9th century CE)
- Raja Martanda by Bhoja (11th century CE)
- Yoga Vartika by Vijñanabhikshu (16th century CE)

These comments helped to define key points in the Yoga Sutras, which in turn made them more accessible and flexible enough to accommodate different historical and cultural settings.

Yoga Darshana eventually included ideas and practices from other Indian philosophical and religious schools. The Presence and Impact of Advaita Vedanta More and more people are turning to non-dualist yoga philosophies. (Pandey, A. K., & Chowdhury, K., 2023) Tantric meditation's impact on the subtle body and chakra systems. An Uprising in Bhakti The meditative and contemplative components of yoga are receiving more attention.

Hatha yoga was developed in subsequent schools and emphasized physical postures (asanas) and breathing exercises (pranayama). However, traditional yoga darshana,

which primarily aimed to educate the mind, was different. Among the most seminal works in this canon are:

- Hatha Yoga Pradipika (15th century CE)
- Gheranda Samhita (17th century CE)
- Shiva Samhita (17th–18th century CE)

The theoretical underpinnings of traditional yoga darshana were integrated with the physical practices in these writings.

Modern Interpretations and Global Spread

Modern understanding and practice of yoga may trace its roots back to the 19th and 20th centuries when the practice underwent profound changes and spread over the world. During this time, several influential people came into their own, notably Swami Vivekananda, who was instrumental in bringing yoga to the West and encouraging its widespread adoption. It was a watershed moment in 1893 when Vivekananda addressed the yogis at the Chicago Parliament of World Religions. (Wujastyk, D., 2003) His presentation of yoga was groundbreaking, and it struck a chord with Western viewers. His focus on yoga's inherent simplicity and its applicability to everyone, especially the mind-control and meditation components of Raja Yoga, made the discipline more palatable and accessible as a means to enlightenment.

At the turn of the twentieth century, there was an attempt to unify and standardize the many yoga traditions so that a modern audience might better understand them. (Pradhan, B., & Pradhan, B., 2015) Paramahansa Yogananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Swami Sivananda were among the prominent teachers who played an instrumental role in this transition. They integrated aspects of Karma, Jnana, Hatha, and Bhakti yogas to form comprehensive systems that addressed the psychological, physiological, and spiritual dimensions of being human. (White, D. G., 2014) When Yogananda's "Autobiography of a Yogi" came out in 1946, for example, it brought the yogic tradition and Kriya Yoga teachings to the attention of millions of individuals all over the globe. Eastern mysticism and Western concepts of self-realization were brought together in this book.

Conclusion

Yoga Darshana has a long and complex history that began in Vedic times and has since spread all across the globe. Its amazing adaptability throughout the years has been on display in the way it has absorbed new ideas and approaches without compromising its foundational philosophical principles. Scholars and practitioners alike must have an in-depth familiarity with yoga's history if the practice is to continue to grow in popularity in the modern world.

An example of how interrelated Indian philosophical traditions are is the connection between Ayurveda and yoga darshana, another Indian intellectual tradition. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the likes of Patanjali and Charaka for the lasting impact they had on shaping the yoga and Ayurvedic traditions into what they are today.

As we move forward, the challenge is to maintain yoga darshana relevant and accessible while preserving its depth and authenticity in light of our dynamic environment. Our knowledge of this complex discipline will be enhanced by more study on yoga's historical growth, its connections to other Indian philosophical systems, and its periodic adaptation to different cultural situations.

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