



Mapping Yoga

YOGA IS THE CURRENT of spirituality that has developed on the Indian peninsula over a period of some five thousand years. Its three major *forms* are Hindu Yoga, Buddhist Yoga, and Jaina Yoga. Within each of these great spiritual cultures, Yoga has assumed various forms. Hindu Yoga is the most diversified branch of the yogic tree, and its most important branches are:

- Rāja-Yoga (Royal Yoga), also known as Pātanjala-Yoga or Classical Yoga
- Hatha-Yoga (Forceful Yoga)
- Karma-Yoga (Yoga of Action)
- Jñāna-Yoga (Yoga of Wisdom)
- Bhakti-Yoga (Yoga of Devotion)
- Mantra-Yoga (Yoga of Potent Sound)
- Tantra-Yoga (Continuity Yoga), which includes Kundalinī-Yoga (Yoga of the Serpent Power), Laya-Yoga (Yoga of Absorption)

For explanations of these and other forms of Yoga, please refer to chapters 12 (“Forty Types of Yoga”) and 13 (“The Tree of Hindu Yoga”) in this volume. Other groupings are possible. For instance, in Buddhism Mantra-Yoga and Tantra-Yoga are often equated.

Underlying all forms and branches of Yoga is the understanding that the human being is more than the physical body and that, through a course of discipline, it is possible to discover what this “more” is. Hindu Yoga speaks of a transcendental Self (*ātman*, *purusha*), which is eternal and inherently blissful, as our true identity. Buddhism and Jainism have their own distinct ways of describing the goal of the transformative path of Yoga.

Yoga entered the Western hemisphere mainly through the missionary work of Swami Vivekananda, who represented Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions in 1893. Since then Yoga has undergone a unique metamor-

phosis. In the hands of numerous Western Yoga teachers, most of whom have learned (Hatha-)Yoga from other Western teachers rather than native Indian gurus, Yoga has been tailored to suit the specific needs of their countrymen and -women. Thus, by and large and under the protest of but few purists, Yoga has been secularized and turned from a rigorous spiritual discipline into an “instant” fitness system. However, there also has been a continuous influx of Indian teachers, who, with varying degrees of success, have tried to communicate the traditional teachings of Yoga.

Among the best known Indian gurus spreading Hindu Yoga in the Americas and Europe are the following:

- Swami Rama Tirtha (no organization)
- Paramahansa Yogananda (Self-Realization Fellowship)
- Swami Satchidananda (Satchidananda Ashram, Yogaville)
- Swami Venkatesananda (Divine Life Society)
- Swami Muktananda (Siddha Yoga Dham)
- Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (Transcendental Meditation)
- Swami Satyananda Saraswati (Bihar School of Yoga)
- Swami Rama (Himalayan International Institute)
- Shrila Prabhupada (International Society for Krishna Consciousness)
- Bhagwan Rajneesh (later “Osho,” Osho International Foundation)
- Swami Vishnudevananda (Sivananda Yoga Centers)
- Swami Jyotirmayananda (Yoga Research Foundation)
- Sri Chinmoy (Chinmoy Mission)
- B. K. S. Iyengar (Iyengar Yoga Association)
- Jiddu Krishnamurti (Brockwood Park)

A century after Swami Vivekananda’s successful mission in the United States and Europe, the Western Yoga movement can claim perhaps 30 million members. Most of them are practitioners of one or the other system of Westernized Hatha-Yoga, with those who are spiritually motivated in their Yoga practice forming a small minority. Whatever the inherent problems of the Western Yoga movement may be, it has grown steadily over the past hundred years, and more rapidly since the late 1960s. This is undoubtedly due to a combination of factors, not least the Baby Boomers’ interest in alternative healthcare and their spiritual and moral confusion.

Whether or not the Western Yoga movement will continue to hold appeal for Westerners depends on the degree of integrity and authenticity with

which practitioners pursue it. Not only must Western Yoga be informed by the knowledge of modern science and medicine, but, above all, it must properly secure its roots in the traditional psychospiritual teachings of India. I venture to suggest that Yoga, having survived the vicissitudes of at least five millennia, will hold its own in our modern world.

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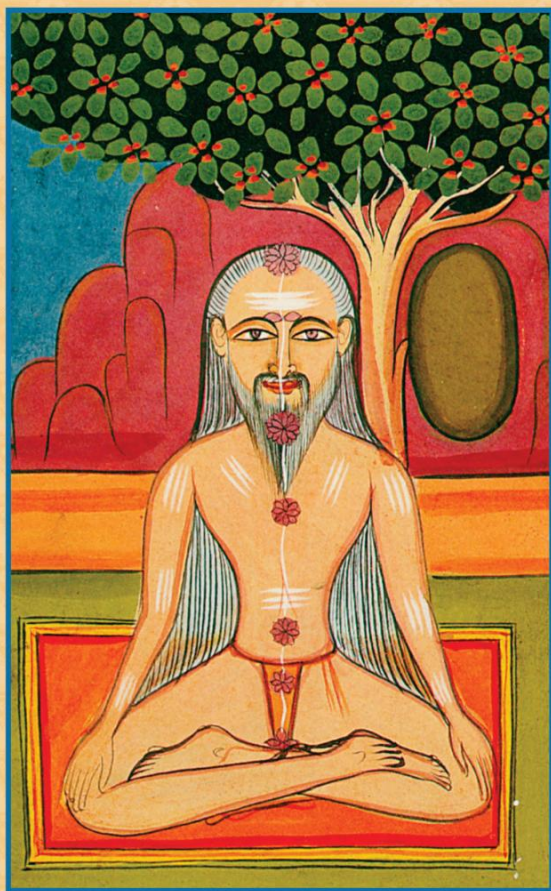
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