

# Study Guide 1

DVD series vol.1

Overview and History of Yoga  
The Secret Teachings of the Upanishads

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The Wisdom of Yoga

# History and Overview of Yoga

## 1. Welcome to the Study of Yoga

Dear friend,

Welcome to this series, The Wisdom of Yoga.

It is our belief that yoga has a lot to offer to our lives and we are happy to present here the essence of the most important yoga traditions that India has produced throughout its rich history.

Enjoy!

Carlos Pomedá and the Yogakula team

## 2. About this DVD series

This series is designed to provide a complete course of study that covers the major systems of yoga in their chronological development.

The first volume includes an overview of the history of yoga, followed by an exploration of the upaniṣadic teachings and practices. The second volume delves into the Bhagavad Gītā and its innovations, followed by the tradition of Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of devotion. The third examines the yoga of Patañjali and his Yoga Sūtras, whereas number four looks at the system of Advaita Vedānta. Finally, volume five explores Tantra and the last one in the series, volume six, takes a look at Kuṇḍalinī Yoga and Haṭha Yoga, completing the historical perspective the series provides.

At the same time, each volume provides practices representative of the particular system of yoga examined in that volume. This design provides the opportunity of focusing on one specific school or exploring the entire spectrum. In either case, we recommend that you take your time with each volume, considering not only the teachings of each, but particularly their application and practice over at least a period of a month for each system.

## 3. How to use this study guide

The purpose of this study guide is to guide you through the study of yoga. Here you will find suggestions that may help you to draw the most out of your study. The DVDs are designed to break down each topic into smaller segments that can be more easily followed in one sitting, although their duration varies.

We advise that you read the study guide first and then apply the steps for each section in sequence. Or, if you want to zero in on only one or two topics, just go directly to those

sections. Then watch the appropriate segments and complete any other assignments or recommended exercises.

#### **4. Introduction: The Method of Scriptural Study**

Your first task is to familiarize yourself with:

- Objectives of this series
- Overview of contents
- Method of study

Before you start, please take a moment to reflect on the following questions:

- What is your learning style? Depending on the nature of the topic and on our own characteristics, we all have various approaches to learning that are more effective than others.
- Since yoga is primarily practice and not theory, what do you think will be the most effective approach for you in the study of the yoga tradition?

Then, please watch the first segment of the DVD, titled "Introduction"

After you've finished watching, consider these elements:

- What: Data vs. interpretation
- So what: Interpretation and relevance
- How: practical applications

Ask yourself:

Do I need to make any adjustments to this method to make it more effective for me?

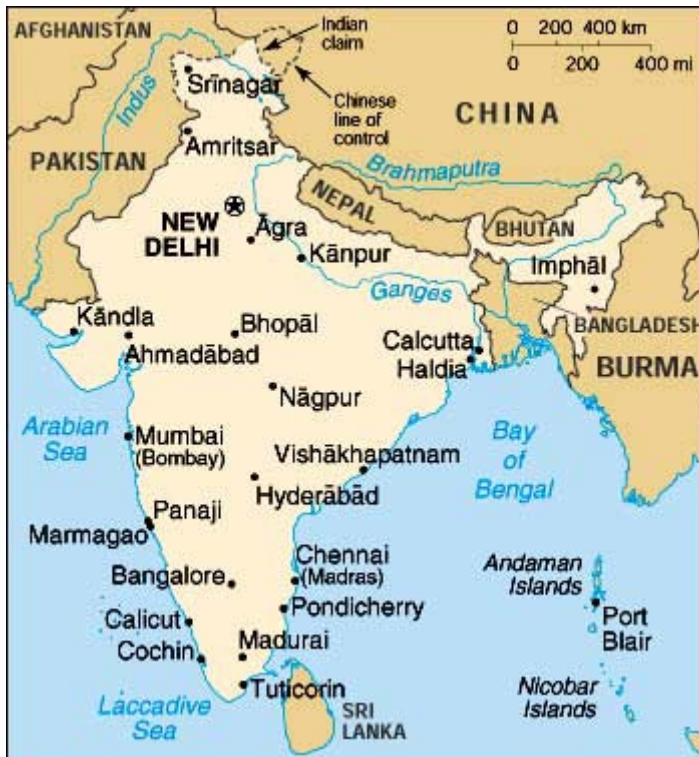
#### **5. Overview of the History of Yoga**

Your objectives for this segment are:

- Establishing a basic chronology for at least the three major phases of the development of yoga (Classical, Vedānta and Tantra)
- Acquiring an understanding of what we know about the origins of yoga
- Identifying the major developments in the history of yoga
- Identifying the major distinguishing features of each system of yoga

Before you start, please take a moment to examine the following map of India and chronological table:

### a) Map of India



### b) Basic Chronology

Indus Valley Civilization	C3000 - 1700 BCE
Vedic Culture	C1700 - 800 BCE
Upaniṣads (oldest)	C800 - 500 BCE
Life of Buddha	C485 - 405 BCE
Epic period (Bhagavad Gītā)	C4 <sup>th</sup> cent. BCE - 4 <sup>th</sup> cent. CE
Philosophical schools	C4 <sup>th</sup> cent. BCE - onwards
Rise of devotional traditions	early centuries CE
Patañjali	C2 <sup>nd</sup> cent. CE
Rise of tantrism	6 <sup>th</sup> cent. onwards
Śaṅkara's Vedānta	8 <sup>th</sup> cent.
Kashmir Śaivism	9 <sup>th</sup> - 11 <sup>th</sup> centuries onwards

Take a moment to contemplate the following questions:

- If the goal of yoga is the awareness of the transcendental ground of being, what does one need to do in order to facilitate that experience?

- What role does the body play in such a search?
- What role does the mind play?
- What about the world? What is the best way of relating to the world in order to facilitate that search?

Now, please watch the second segment of the DVD, titled "Overview to Yoga Philosophy". As you watch this segment, notice how various traditions have answered the above questions throughout history. Also, please pause as appropriate and gradually fill out the chart below, summarizing in one or two key words the teachings of each system for each category:

	Ultimate Reality	World	Individual
Śramaṇas: ascetics			
Upaniṣads			
Bhagavad Gītā			
Patañjali: Yoga Sūtra			
Śaṅkara: Advaita Vedānta			
Tantrism			

Do not worry if you cannot fill out all the spaces just now; the important thing is to start identifying the main features of each system. As you become more familiar with them, this chart will become easier and clearer.

## 6. The Secret Teachings of the Upaniṣads

Your objectives for this segment are:

- Obtain a basic understanding of the context, geographical and scriptural, for the Upaniṣads
- Understand the upaniṣadic method of study and practice
- Identify the major teachings of the Upaniṣads regarding the supreme, the world and the individual
- Recognize the qualities of a disciple in the tradition

Some people prefer to read sources before the presentation, whereas others prefer to go through the presentation first and then read the sources. If you would like to read the Upaniṣads first, there is a suggested version given below, in the section "Suggestions for Further Study"

If you have read some passages from the Upaniṣads, before you watch the segment, contemplate the following questions:

- What characteristics should an ideal student of yoga have that would allow him or her to make steady progress?
- From the viewpoint of the Upaniṣads, how do I know I am making progress?
- From the viewpoint of the Upaniṣads, how does meditation work?

Now, please watch the third segment of the DVD, titled "Teachings of the Upaniṣads". As you watch this segment, please pause as appropriate and take notes. You may also want to refer to the following points:

### a) Background:

Upa - ni - sad ("sitting down near")

Geographical spread: Indus to lower Ganges; Himalayas to Vindhya range

Caste system:

- Brāhmaṇa (priest),
- kṣatriya (warrior),
- vaiśya (merchants, etc.),
- śūdra (menial worker)

Stages (āśrama) of life:

- brahmacārya (student);
- gṛhastha (householder);
- vanaprastha (forest retirement);
- saṃnyāsa (renunciation)

Each Veda includes:

- Saṃhitā (hymns and invocations)
- Brāhmaṇa (ritual contents)
- Āraṇyaka (ritual interpretation)
- Upaniṣad (esoteric teachings)

### b) Principal Upaniṣads:

*Īśa kena kaṭha praśna muṇḍa māṇḍūkya tittiri  
aitareyaṃ ca chāndogyaṃ bṛhadāraṇyakaṃ tathā (Muktika Up. 1.30)*

Aitareya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Chāndogya, Īśa, Kaṭha, Kena, Māṇḍūkya, Muṇḍaka, Praśna, Taittirīya (plus Śvetāśvatara), commented on by Śaṃkara.

### c) Method:

Mukhya - antaraṅga - sādhana (principal aids to liberation):

1. Śravaṇa (listening)
2. Manana (reflecting)
3. Nididhyāsana (meditating)

### d) Teachings:

Ātman (individual self) = Brahman (Supreme Self)

Four mahāvākyas ("great statements"):

- Ayam ātma Brahma, "this self is Brahman" (Bṛ.U. ii.5.19)
- Prajñānam Brahma, "consciousness is Brahman" (Ai.U. iii.1.3)
- Tat tvam asi, "you are That" (Ch.U. vi.8.7)
- Aham brahmāsmi, "I am Brahman" (Bṛ.U. i.4.10)

Four aspects of the Absolute: Brahman, Īśvara, Hiraṇyagarbha and Virāṭ

Mukti (liberation) and jīvanmukti (liberation while living)

Five sheaths: Annamaya (food covering), prāṇamaya (covering of vital energy), manomaya (mind covering), vijñānamaya (covering of the intellect), ānandamaya (covering of bliss)

## 7. Meditation

Choose a quiet place where you can follow the meditation instructions from the DVD and also sit comfortably for meditation.

As you follow the instructions, be ready to either pause your DVD player or stop it at the end of those instructions. Otherwise, the DVD will return to the main menu and the background music may distract you.

Meditate as long as you wish (anywhere between 20 minutes and 1 hour is a good duration) and allow yourself plenty of time to come out of meditation gently.

Then, take a few moments to reflect on your meditation process and experience, and take a few notes reflecting what worked, what was challenging, what you learned, what you experienced, what insights you had, etc.

## 8. Q&A

Take look at the Q&A submenu and explore any or all themes you may be interested in, for additional information.

## 9. Suggestions for Further Study

**For early history of yoga:** Read Flood, Gavin. *An Introduction to Hinduism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. (Chapter 4, "Yoga and Renunciation," pp. 75-102)

**For the upaniṣads:** Read some selections from the upaniṣads, so that you have at least a general sense of their contents. A good edition to start is: Prabhavananda, Swami and Frederick Manchester. *The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal*. Signet Classics, 2002

### Items for reflection:

- Review the study method outlined here and consider how you are going to use it in order to integrate yoga philosophy into your practice and into your life
- Looking at the chronological table, consider what was happening in the rest of the world at the times when these systems were developing
- Review each of the systems outlined in the seminar. From each system choose one teaching that inspires you particularly. Apply the three steps of the study method and write down the results. What understandings and insights can you apply to your practice of haṭha yoga?

### Practices:

- Take one meditation method from the ones practiced in the seminar and practice it daily. Keep a journal with the results, challenges, questions, insights, etc. that arise from your practice.