

## Yoga History

### Teacher Training

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Note: When considering yoga history, keep in mind that prior to 300 BCE 'texts' existed in oral form only.

- 4000 – 2000 BCE: **PRE-VEDIC PERIOD**: Evidence found on seals of a person in seated meditative posture.
  - \* 3400 BCE: Split between Indo-Aryans and Iranians in Middle East region
  - \* **2700 – 1500 BCE: Indus valley civilization** (Mohenjodaro & Harappa)
- 2000 – 1000 BCE: **VEDIC PERIOD**: First references to yoga: in the form of breath control.
  - \* 1500 BCE: Indo-Aryans down from steppes (to Anatolia and Punjab: W. India)
  - \* 1300 – 900 BCE: Rig Veda (most ancient Indian text; 1028 Hymns)
  - \* **1200 – 800 BCE: Vedas or samhitas (Rig, Sama, Yajur, Atharva)**
- 1000 – 500 BCE: **PRE-CLASSICAL YOGA**: Early *Upanishads* written, but still no distinct yoga philosophy or practice formed.
  - \* **800 – 600 BCE: Upanishads (commentaries on the Vedas)**
  - \* 700 BCE: Sankhya Philosophy of Kapila (seed of both yoga & Buddhist philosophy)
  - \* 563 – 483 BCE: Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha), same time period as Confucius
- 500 BCE: **EPIC PERIOD**: *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavad Gita* written, and the later *Upanishads* are composed. Slowly yoga as a practice begins to take form.
  - \* 500 – 300 BCE: Beginning of caste system in India
  - \* 400 BCE – 400 CE: *Mahabharata* ('Great India') written
  - \* **300 BCE: Bhagavad Gita** (famous poem within *Mahabharata*)
  - \* 272 – 232 BCE: Ashoka Maurya, Indian emperor that advocated Buddhism
  - \* 200 BCE – 200 CE: 'The Laws of Manu' (duties for varying stages of life)
  - \* 32 BCE – 0: Christ lived
- 200 CE: **CLASSICAL PERIOD**: Patanjali compiles the *Yoga Sutra*.
  - \* **200 – 300 CE: Patanjali (Yoga Sutra: consciousness, practice, powers, liberation)**
  - \* 350 – 450 CE: Ishvara Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu
- 500 CE – 1900 CE: **POST CLASSICAL YOGA**: Patanjali's 'eight-limbed' yoga influences many forms of emerging yoga, including the development of hatha yoga and asana.
  - \* 788 – 822 CE: Shankara (Vedanta philosopher)
  - \* 900 CE: Gorakshanatha is said to have been the first hatha yoga master
  - \* **1300 CE: Hatha Yoga Pradipika written by Svatiarama**
- 1900 CE – present: **MODERN YOGA**: Several yoga masters come to the west and spread the eastern treasure of yoga. Hatha yoga is influenced greatly by British gymnastics.
  - \* 1869 – 1948 CE: Gandhi, used satyagraha (firmness of truth) in non-violence efforts
  - \* 1900 CE: Buddhism and yoga enter the West
  - \* 1893 CE: Vivekananda brought Vedanta and yoga to the United States

Jonathan has authored two books, *Poetic Listening* and *Learning To Listen: Simplifying Spiritual Practice*. He has also produced three practice CDs – one for meditation, another for Sanskrit Chant, and a third on vinyasa yoga. For permission to reproduce this work, send an email to: [jonathan@learningtolisten.info](mailto:jonathan@learningtolisten.info).