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“Timeless Wisdom of Yoga: Bridging Philosophy, Science, and Liberation”

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Abstract: This research paper explores Yoga as a holistic system that unites philosophy, science, and liberation (mokṣa). By analyzing foundational texts such as the Ṛgveda, Kaṭhapaniṣad, Yoga Vāsiṣṭha, Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā, Śiva Samhitā, and the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras, the study traces Yoga’s historical evolution, etymology, and its role as a comprehensive epistemological system. Examining the Bhagavad Gītā and Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras, the research highlights Yoga’s integrative worldview, harmonizing metaphysics, ethics, and self-realization. It also explores its scientific dimension through Samyama (Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi), demonstrating its structured approach to acquiring knowledge beyond sensory perception and logical inference. Employing a qualitative, interpretive methodology—incorporating hermeneutical analysis and textual exegesis—the study illustrates how Yoga bridges existence’s gross (Apara) and subtle (Para) dimensions, offering a holistic understanding of reality. Beyond its contemporary portrayal as a tool for health and well-being, Yoga emerges as both a timeless philosophy and a scientific discipline. Integrating philosophical inquiry, scientific exploration, and spiritual discipline serves as a transformative path to self-realization and universal harmony. This paper ultimately positions Yoga as an enduring heritage of wisdom that provides a comprehensive framework for understanding existence and attaining life’s ultimate truths.

Keywords: Yoga Philosophy, Yogic Epistemology, Gyan and Vigyan, Samyama and Knowledge Acquisition, Union and Dissolution in Yoga, Sādhana and Sādhyā, Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras, Bhagavad Gītā and Yoga, Spiritual Liberation (Mokṣa), Apara and Para Prakṛti, Timeless Heritage of Yoga, Pancha Kosha and Consciousness, Ṛtambharā Prajñā, Indian Knowledge Systems, Philosophy and Science Integration, Historical Evolution of Yoga

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Introduction

Yoga, at its core, is a spiritual discipline rooted in a profound understanding of human existence. It seeks to harmonize the mind and body, aspiring to unite individual consciousness with Universal Consciousness, as articulated in yogic scriptures. This union symbolizes a deep alignment between the individual and the cosmos. However, modern interpretations often reduce Yoga to “an art and science of healthy living” (Ministry of External Affairs, 2015). Contemporary research emphasizes its physical and mental health benefits, contributing to its commercialization as an industry promoting seemingly miraculous outcomes. This trend frequently overlooks foundational practices such as Yama and Niyama, which cultivate mental stability, resilience, and harmonious living. The commercialization of Yoga risks diluting its profound essence, emphasizing the need to rediscover and uphold its true meaning and purpose.

This research paper examines whether Yoga is merely an art and science of healthy living or if it is, in fact, a timeless wisdom that bridges philosophy, science, and liberation. To understand its profound essence, it is essential to explore its historical roots, etymology, and conceptualization as presented in ancient scriptures. This involves examining Yoga as both a philosophy and a science, particularly through the lens of the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras, while contrasting its approach to knowledge acquisition with modern scientific methodologies. This exploration seeks to reveal Yoga’s enduring legacy as a holistic system of wisdom that transcends time and cultural boundaries.

Yoga: An Eternal Legacy Through Time

Yoga is not merely a practice but a profound tradition rooted in cosmic knowledge, transcending time and cultural boundaries. Its origins trace back to the dawn of civilization, predating organized religions or belief systems (Ministry of AYUSH, 2023). According to yogic lore and the Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (Yogacharya Swami Kripalvanand, 2017), Śiva, revered as the first yogi (Ādiyogi) and the first guru (Ādi Guru), imparted his profound knowledge to the Saptarṣis (seven sages) near Lake Kanti Sarovar in the Himalayas. These sages spread the yogic science across regions, including Asia, the Middle East, Northern Africa, and South America. Śrī Swami Omanand Teerth (Gita Press) in his book Pātañjal Yoga Pradīpa identifies Hiranyagarbha as the Ādi Ācārya (first teacher) of Yoga. It is believed that Maharṣi Patañjali formulated the Yoga Darśana based on the now-lost Hiranyagarbha Sūtras. Additionally, the Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (1.1) describes Lord Śiva as the “Pioneer and Prime Mover” of Yoga. According to the Bhagavad Gītā (10.6), the cosmic order and knowledge originated from a divine source:

“महर्षयः सप्त पूर्वे चत्वारो मनवस्तथा। मद्भावा मानसा जाता येषां लोका इमाः प्रजाः ॥”

Maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve catvāro manavas tathā |
Mad-bhāvā mānasā jātā yeṣaṃ loka imāḥ prajāḥ ||

This verse highlights the emergence of the seven great sages (Saptarṣis), the four ancient Kumaras, and the fourteen Manus, all born from the cosmic consciousness of the Supreme Being. According to Vyas Bhāṣya on the Bhagavad Gītā, as interpreted by Swami Mukundananda (2014), this sequence signifies the unfolding of cosmic knowledge and order. The concept of Hiranyagarbha, or the “Golden Egg,” symbolizes the primordial essence from which the universe (Prakṛti) emerged. Hiranyagarbha is regarded as the cosmic womb, containing within it the potential for all creation. From this cosmic source, Prakṛti, the material world, manifested, bringing with it the inherent knowledge that governs

existence. This knowledge is not merely intellectual but is deeply embedded in the fabric of creation itself, guiding the natural order and the evolution of consciousness.

Following this cosmic origin, Brahmā, the creator, emerged from Hiraṇyagarbha. As the architect of the universe, Brahmā initiated the process of creation by manifesting the Four Kumaras eternally liberated souls renowned for their mastery of yogic sciences. These sages played a crucial role in disseminating spiritual wisdom, guiding souls on the path to liberation. Subsequently, the Saptarṣis, or seven great sages, emerged to transmit this yogic wisdom across different regions and epochs. Their teachings preserved the knowledge of Yoga as a means of self-realization and spiritual growth.

The creation of the fourteen Manus followed, each governing human affairs and cosmic administration during their respective epochs, known as Manvantaras. The Bhagavad Gītā (10.6) acknowledges the existence of these fourteen Manus, emphasizing their role in maintaining cosmic order and guiding humanity. The current era is the Vaivasvata Manvantara, presided over by the seventh Manu, Vaivasvata Manu. Yoga, originating from this cosmic knowledge, represents an unbroken tradition preserved through ages. Scholars like Kapil et al. (2023) note that Yoga began at the dawn of civilization, even before the establishment of organized religions or belief systems. Yoga was practiced as a way of life, a method for acquiring knowledge, and a science of self-realization and liberation, continuously evolving across eras. This ancient tradition has been passed down from the Saptarṣis, the Kumaras, and the Manus, maintaining its relevance as a guide for human consciousness.

Etymology & concept of yoga

According to Yoga (2025), the term Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root Yuj, explained in the phrase: “युज्यते अनेन इति योगः” (yujyate anena iti yogaḥ), meaning “Yoga is that which unites or joins.” Swami Adganand Ji, in his work Maharshi Patañjali’s Yog-Darshan: Yogic Interpretation Based on Self-Realisation (2019), elaborates that the word Yoga is formed by combining the root Yuj with the suffix dhan. According to Pāṇini’s grammar, the root Yuj is found in three Gaṇas (groups): “युज् समाधौ दिवादिः आत्मनेपदी” (yuj samādhau divādiḥ ātmanepadī) referring to trance or absorption, “युजिर् योगे रुधादिः उभयपदी” (yujir yoge rudhādiḥ ubhayapadī) signifying union, and “युज् संयमने चुरादिः परस्मैपदी” (yuj saṃyamane curādiḥ parasmaipadī) implying self-restraint. This understanding extends to the definition “योगः संहनोपायः ध्यानसंगतियुक्तिषु” (yogaḥ samhanopāyaḥ dhyānasamgatīyuktiṣu), meaning “Yoga is a method of integration, encompassing meditation, harmony, and appropriate techniques.” Swami Ramsukhdas, in Sādhak Sanjīvanī (2024), explains that the Bhagavad Gītā uses the term Yoga in various contexts, aligning with the three meanings of the root Yuj as outlined in Pāṇini’s Aṣṭādhyāyī. For instance, “युज् समाधौ” (yuj samādhau) in Bhagavad Gītā 6.20 refers to trance or absorption, “युज् संयमने” (yuj saṃyamane) in Bhagavad Gītā 9.5 denotes self-restraint, and “युजिर् योगे” (yujir yoge) in Bhagavad Gītā 2.48 indicates union. These varied uses highlight the multidimensional aspects of Yoga, reflecting its depth and complexity. To truly appreciate this, it is essential to explore the historical evolution of Yoga, tracing its roots from Vedic traditions to its contemporary interpretations.

Scriptural Interpretations of Yoga

Yoga, as a concept, is deeply rooted in ancient texts, with varied interpretations emphasizing its philosophical, spiritual, and practical dimensions. James Mallinson and Mark Singleton, in their book Roots of Yoga (2017), along with Arya, P. (2024), provide a comprehensive compilation of definitions of Yoga drawn from diverse scriptural sources. Presented below are these definitions, along with others directly sourced from the scriptures, summarized in a tabular format:

Table 1

Source	Key Concept	Explanation
Rgveda (10.114.9) (Wisdom Library, 2021; Arya, R. K., 2024)	"Yojan" or "Upyog"	कश्छन्दसां योगमा वेद धीरः को धिष्ण्यां प्रति वाचं पपाद्। कमृत्विजामष्टमं शूरमाहुर्हरी इन्द्रस्य नि चिकाय कः स्वित्॥ "kaś chandasāṃ yogamā veda dhīraḥ ko dhiṣṇyāṃ prati vācaṃ papāda kam ṛtvijām aṣṭamaṃ śūram āhur harī indrasya ni cikāya kaḥ svit "
Kāthopaniṣad (2.3.11) (VivekaVani, 2020)	Firm restraint of the senses	तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम्। अप्रमतस्तदा भवति योगो हि प्रभवाप्ययौ "tām yogam iti manyante sthirām indriyadhāraṇām apramattas tadā bhavati yogo hi prabhavāpyayau "
Mahābhārata (12.304.2ab)	Unmatched power for control and empowerment	नास्ति सांख्यसमं ज्ञानं नास्ति योगसमं बलम्। तावुभावेकचर्यौ तु उभावनिधनौ स्मृतौ "nāsti sāṅkhyasamaṃ jñānaṃ nāsti yogasamaṃ balam tāv ubhāv ekacaryau tu ubhāv anidhanau smṛtau "
Yogācārabhūmi Śrāvakahūmi (Ulrich Timme Kragh, 2013)	Mindfulness and self-discipline	Discusses mindfulness and disciplined living as essential components of the yogic path.
Pañcārthabhāṣya (1.1.43) (Kaundinya, 1970), translation by Haripada Chakraborty	Union between oneself and the divine	Describes the connection of self with divine consciousness.
Vaiśeṣikasūtra (1.1.5 & 6) (Kanda, 1973) translation by Debasish Chakraborty	Interplay between senses, mind, objects leading to cognition ("Sannikarṣaḥ saṃyogo jñānasya hetuḥ")	Cognition arises from the contact between the senses, mind, and objects; explains experiences of pleasure and suffering.
Śiva Saṃhitā (Mallinson, 2007) and Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā (Swami, 2015)	Unifying process for body, mind, and spirit	Presents holistic yoga practices for physical, mental, and spiritual harmony.
Yoga Vāsiṣṭha (3.9.32) (Subramanian, K. N., 2011)	Skilful means to calm the mind	मनः प्रशमनोपायः योग इत्यभिधीयते "manaḥ praśamanopāyaḥ yoga ity abhidhīyate."
Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā (Swami Muktibodhanand, 1998; Yogacharya Swami Kripalvanand, 2017)	Systematic practice of physical postures, breath control, and meditation	Aimed at spiritual enlightenment and union with the divine.
Yājñavalkya Smṛti (Pushpalatha, n.d.; Yājñavalkya, 2018)	Self-discipline, meditation, and sensory control	Essential for spiritual growth and liberation (moksha).
Yoga Mala by K. Pattabhi Jois (2022)	Yoga as "relations, means, union, knowledge, matter, logic, a method (upaya)"	Portrays yoga as a methodical and holistic approach to knowledge, tranquillity, and liberation.

These examples collectively portray Yoga as a holistic and multifaceted discipline, emphasizing self-control, ethical conduct (युज् संयमने yuj saṃyamane), meditation, mindfulness (युज् समाधौ yuj samādhau), and the pursuit of spiritual liberation (युजिर् योगे yujir yoge). They illustrate Yoga's role as a holistic path to knowledge and liberation through a calm and tranquil mind. Within these diverse interpretations, two distinct aspects of Yoga emerge: Union and Dissolution. The next section explores these dimensions, laying the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of Yoga's philosophy and practice.

Yoga as Union & Dissolution

Yoga as union, as explained in the Patanjali Yoga Sutras (4.34) and the Bhagavad Gita (6.29), involves the merging of the individual soul (Atman) with the universal consciousness (Brahman), culminating in

liberation or Kaivalya (Saraswati, 2005). This union reflects a deep interconnectedness, where the yogi realizes oneness with all beings. Conversely, dissolution refers to the removal of obstacles that hinder this union. These obstacles include the dissolution of Chitta Vrittis (mental fluctuations) (Patanjali Yoga Sutras 1.2), Vasanas (desires) (Bhagavad Gita 2.70), Karmashayas (accumulated karmas) (Bhagavad Gita 4.37, Patanjali Yoga Sutras 2.12), Avidya (ignorance) (Bhagavad Gita 5.16, Patanjali Yoga Sutras 3.50), the senses (Indriyas) (Kathopanishad, Bhagavad Gita 2.58), Samskaras (mental impressions) (Bhagavad Gita 6.15), and the transcendence of Gunas (qualities of nature) (Bhagavad Gita 14.20, Patanjali Yoga Sutras 4.34).

This dual approach of union and dissolution forms the foundation of yogic practice, guiding practitioners towards self-realization and liberation.

Yoga as Sādhana (Journey) and Sādhyā (Destination)

Yoga, as described in the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras and the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, encompasses both the path (Sādhana) and the goal (Sādhyā). As a journey, Yoga involves disciplined practices aimed at self-purification and spiritual growth. In Patañjali's framework, this journey is outlined through Kriyā Yoga and Aṣṭāṅga Yoga, emphasizing self-discipline, mindfulness, and concentration.

Similarly, the Bhagavad Gītā elaborates on diverse paths such as Karma Yoga (selfless action), Bhakti Yoga (devotion), and Jñāna Yoga (knowledge). Each of these paths contributes to the purification of the mind and soul. These practices collectively facilitate spiritual perfection, as emphasized in Bhagavad Gītā 18.46 (Saraswati, 2005; Mallinson & Singleton, 2017).

The destination of Yoga is liberation (Kaivalya), where the practitioner transcends mental fluctuations and realizes union with the Self (Puruṣa), as outlined by Patañjali. Similarly, the Bhagavad Gītā describes Brahma-bhūta, a state of blissful liberation marked by a calm and detached mind, united with the Divine (Bhagavad Gītā 6.27). This represents the ultimate goal of Yoga: the realization of oneness with the universe (Saraswati, 2005).

Yoga as Process in Various Scriptures

Beyond its conceptualization as a journey and destination, Yoga is also depicted as a dynamic process facilitating either union or dissolution. This perspective is emphasized across various yogic traditions and scriptures, which describe numerous paths and practices tailored to suit different temperaments and spiritual goals. Examples include: Laya Yoga as elaborated by Goswami (2016), Mantra Yoga by Swami Yogatirthananda Saraswati (2023), and Kuṇḍalinī Yoga by Maharṣi Yatīndra (2015). Furthermore, the classical paths are detailed as follows: Jñāna Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Rāja Yoga are discussed by Vivekananda (2022), Dhyāna Yoga and Aṣṭāṅga Yoga are explored by Swami Veda Bhāratī (2015), Haṭha Yoga is as detailed by Bhāratī (2022) and Yogacharya Swami Kripalvanand (2017).

These varied interpretations reflect how different philosophers and sects have proposed multiple approaches to attaining liberation. However, in modern discourse, these diverse terms and practices often create confusion among the general public regarding the true nature of Yoga whether it is one specific path or an umbrella term encompassing various disciplines.

Yoga as a Philosophy

While the concept and historical evolution of Yoga lay the foundational understanding, the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā and the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras elevate it beyond mere concept, firmly establishing Yoga as a profound philosophy. These scriptures not only codify yogic practices but also provide

a comprehensive worldview that integrates metaphysics, ethics, and self-realization. The Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras, compiled between 200 BCE and 400 CE (Bryant, 2009; Larson, 1998), stand as the quintessential guide to Yoga, systematically detailing its what, how, and why. Patañjali presents Yoga as a powerful tool for attaining true knowledge of both the material and spiritual realms, ultimately leading to Kaivalya (Ultimate Union). Rooted in Sāṅkhya philosophy, it offers a clear path to transcendence.

In contrast, the Bhagavad Gītā unifies diverse philosophies, resolving conflicts and bridging gaps between them. It emphasizes that every path—whether Bhakti (devotion), Jñāna (knowledge), or Niṣkāma Karma (selfless action)—ultimately leads to liberation. Each chapter is named ‘Yoga,’ signifying that every aspect of life, when pursued with the spirit of Yoga, becomes a means to liberation. By integrating various philosophies into a unified vision, the Gītā boldly proclaims that any sincere and disciplined approach leads to the Ultimate Union (Mokṣa). Building on this comprehensive perspective, the Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā, also known as Brahmavidyā (the science of the Absolute) and Yogāsāstra (the scripture of Yoga), stands as one of the most revered texts on Yoga. Delivered by Yogeśvara Lord Kṛṣṇa to his disciple Arjuna, it contains several defining verses that encapsulate the essence of Yoga, including:

1. योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय।

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥2.48॥

Yoga-sthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhanañjaya |
Siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṃ yoga ucyate ||
Taking success and failure as equal, is yoga.

2. बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते।

तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥2.50॥

Buddhi-yukto jahātiha ubhe sukṛta-duṣkṛte |
Tasmād yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam ||
Yoga is the art of working skillfully (in proper consciousness).

3. युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु |

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥ 6.17॥

Yuktāhāra-vihārasya yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu |
Yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā||

But those who are temperate in eating and recreation, balanced in work, and regulated in sleep, can mitigate all sorrows by practicing Yoga.

4. तं विद्याद् दुःखसंयोगवियोग योगसञ्ज्ञितम् |

स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ॥ 6.23॥

Taṃ vidyād duḥkha-samyoga-viyogaṃ yoga-sañjñitam |
Sa niścayena yuktavyo yogo’nirviṇṇa-cetasā ||

Yoga implies both 1) attainment of bliss, and 2) freedom from misery.

The Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras, regarded as a manual of Yoga, outline the practice and philosophy of Yoga through 196 aphorisms divided into four chapters. According to Srinivasan (2021) in the article

“Maharishi Patañjali: The Ancient Thinker of a Living Tradition” published in Chintan, these Sūtras provide a comprehensive guide to the “what: path to liberation,” “how: the process,” and “why: the objective” of Yoga. A concise summary in tabular form presents the key concepts, with explanations of the Sūtras drawn from Ranganathan’s Yoga Philosophy: A Translation of the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali (2019) and Śrī Swami Omanand Teerth’s commentary in Pātañjala Yogapradīpa (Samvat 2028, Gita Press).

Path to Liberation through Meditation

Table 2

Aspect	Details
Definition of Yoga: Sutra 1.2	"योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोध" (yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ) Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind.
Result of Yoga: Sutra 1.3	Then the seer rests in its true nature.
Ideal Seeker (Adhikari)	Mumukshu: A person with intense longing for liberation (Moksha).
Essential Ingredients: Sutra 1.13, 1.15	1) Abhyasa (Practice): Consistent, disciplined effort "Effort to maintain steadiness of mind". 2) Vairagya (Detachment): Mastery over desires
Stages of Yoga Sutra 1.15-1.17	From Apar Vairagya to Nirvitarka, Nirvichara, Asmita-anugata, Ananda-anugata, Sampragyata Samadhi, and Asampragyata Samadhi.
Challenges (Obstacles): Sutra 1.30, 1.31	Antarayas: Disease, doubt, carelessness, laziness, lack of perseverance, delusion, non-achievement, instability. Vikshepas: Mental disturbances like anxiety, depression, and emotional turbulence.
Solutions to Obstacles: Sutra 1.33, 1.28	1) Develop friendliness, compassion, joy, equanimity to purify the mind. 2) Sutra 1.28: Repeat "Om" and meditate upon its meaning.
Benefits of Asamprajnata Samadhi: Sutra 1.47, 1.48	Clarity of inner spiritual light arises. Sutra 1.48: Truth-bearing wisdom manifests. Sutra 1.49: Wisdom surpasses inference or testimony.

The Process of Yoga

The second chapter, Sādhana Pāda, elaborates on the process of attaining Yoga through Kriyā Yoga and Aṣṭāṅga Yoga.

Table 3

Type of Yoga	Components	Description
Kriya Yoga	1. Tapa (Self-discipline)2. Swadhyaya (Self-study)3. Ishwarapranidhana (Surrender to God)	A practice focused on action and dedication to self-discipline, learning, and devotion.
Ashtanga Yoga	1. Yama (Ethical restraints)2. Niyama (Personal observances)3. Asana (Physical postures)4. Pranayama (Breath control)5. Pratyahara (Withdrawal of senses)6. Dharana (Concentration)7. Dhyana (Meditation)8. Samadhi (Absorption)	A comprehensive system of eight limbs for spiritual growth and integration of body, mind, and spirit.

Objective of Yoga

The Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras offer profound insights into the objective of Yoga, addressing both its immediate applications and ultimate purpose. This is particularly explored in the third chapter (Vibhūti Pāda) and the fourth chapter (Kaivalya Pāda). Vibhūti Pāda explains how true knowledge of nature can be attained through deep concentration and meditation (Samyama), enabling a yogi to transcend ordinary perception. However, the ultimate goal of Yoga, as outlined in Kaivalya Pāda, is Kaivalya—a state of absolute freedom and self-realization, signifying liberation from all limitations.

“पुरुषार्थशून्यानां गुणानां प्रतिप्रसवः कैवल्यं स्वरूपप्रतिष्ठा वा चितिशक्तिरिति” (PYS 4.34)
 tam vidyād duḥkha-saṁyoga-viyogaṁ yoga-saṁjñitam |
 sa niścayena yoktavyo yogo'nirviṅṅa-cetasā ||

Kaivalya is the ultimate freedom in which pure consciousness stands in its own nature.

Acquisition of Knowledge: Modern & Yogic Perspective

Having explored Yoga from multiple dimensions—including its etymology, historical evolution, philosophical foundations, and scriptural interpretations—this section examines its scientific dimension and compares it with the modern perspective of science and scientific methodology. The inquiry seeks to determine whether Yoga aligns with the principles of systematic knowledge acquisition as understood in contemporary scientific discourse.

From a modern standpoint, science is regarded as a systematic discipline that organizes knowledge through testable hypotheses and predictive models about the universe (Heilbron et al., 2003). The Oxford English Dictionary defines science as the systematic study of the natural world through observation and experimentation, while the National Academy of Sciences describes it as a means of understanding reality based on empirical inquiry. Carl Sagan (1980) further emphasizes that science is not merely a collection of facts but a fundamental way of thinking.

In Yogic parlance, knowledge is categorized as Jñāna (theoretical knowledge) and Vijñāna (experiential knowledge), forming an integrated philosophy of life. Unlike modern science, which often separates physics from metaphysics, the Yogic tradition embraces a holistic approach. Prajapati (2024) highlights that Indian Knowledge Systems incorporate Jñāna (pure knowledge), Vijñāna (applied knowledge), and Jīvana Darśana (philosophy of life), developed through experience, observation, experimentation, and analysis. Bagchi (2021), drawing upon the teachings of Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahansa, illustrates this distinction with an analogy: knowing that fire exists in wood is Jñāna, but using that fire to cook rice, eat it, and derive nourishment is Vijñāna—a deeper, applied form of knowledge. He further explains that experiential wisdom surpasses theoretical knowledge, much like the difference between hearing about milk, seeing it, and actually drinking it. The one who merely hears of milk is ignorant, the one who sees it is a Jñānī (knower), but the one who drinks it is a Vijñānī—someone who has realized knowledge through direct experience.

By comparing these perspectives, this section explores whether Yoga, with its emphasis on direct experience and self-exploration, aligns with the empirical rigor of modern scientific methodology.

Bridging Yogic and Scientific Perspectives: The Interconnection of Aparā and Parā

Indian philosophy posits that nature evolves from the subtle (Para) to the gross (Apara), suggesting that every material element has a corresponding subtle counterpart. This idea is rooted in texts such as the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (2.1), the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras (2.26), and the Sāṅkhya Kārikā, emphasizing the holistic nature of Indian Knowledge Systems, where the physical and metaphysical are seen as different manifestations of the same underlying reality.

The Bhagavad Gītā (7.4–5) describes Prakṛti (nature) as having two aspects: Aparā and Parā. Integrated knowledge of these aspects reveals the universe's holistic nature, governed by Universal Consciousness (Brahman). Aparā Prakṛti, comprising material elements, can be understood through scientific methods, whereas Parā Prakṛti, representing the subtle, conscious essence, can only be realized in a deep state of consciousness known as Samādhi (Easwaran, 2007).

“भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च। अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥”

Bhūmir āpo'nalo vāyuḥ khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca |
Ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā ॥” (Bha.Gi. 7.4)

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect, and ego—these eight constitute My divided material nature (Aparā Prakṛti).

“अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम्। जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥”

Apareyam itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām |
Jīvabhūtāṁ mahābāho yayedaṁ dhāryate jagat ॥” (Bha.Gi.7.5)

O mighty-armed one, know that beyond this lower nature (Aparā Prakṛti), I have a higher nature (Parā Prakṛti), which is the very life force that sustains the universe

“विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥”

“Viṣṭabhyāham idaṁ kṛtsnam ekāṁśena sthito jagat ॥” (Bha. Gi.10.42)
I support this entire creation with a fraction of My being.

The epistemological framework of the Nyāya Sūtra identifies two types of perception (Pratyakṣa): Laukika (ordinary perception), linked to Aparā Prakṛti, which relies on sensory-based knowledge and aligns with modern scientific observation (Chatterjee & Datta, 1984); and Alaukika (extraordinary perception), associated with Parā Prakṛti, which transcends ordinary senses and involves intuitive, yogic insights accessible through Yoga, Tapas (austerity), and Samyama (the integration of concentration, meditation, and absorption) as elaborated in the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras (Vyāsa, as cited in Woods, 1914). This dual framework ensures a comprehensive understanding of both the observable and the experiential, seamlessly integrating scientific exploration with yogic wisdom.

In the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras, Maharṣi Patañjali outlines a method of acquiring knowledge that transcends sensory perception and logical reasoning, bridging the Aparā and Parā dimensions of reality. This is achieved through Samyama, the combined practice of Dhāraṇā (concentration), Dhyāna (meditation), and Samādhi (absorption), which refines consciousness and enables direct experiential knowledge. Through this practice, the yogic mind gains expanded perception, allowing it to perceive both the atomic (Paramāṇu) and the infinitely great (Mahattva), as stated in Yoga Sūtras 1.40. It also attains Samāpatti, a state of unity where the distinction between observer and observed dissolves (1.41), leading to Ṛtambharā Prajñā (1.48), or truth-bearing knowledge, which transcends ordinary sensory and logical understanding. Such knowledge is intuitive and universal, surpassing conventional cognition (1.49).

Patañjali's approach integrates empirical observation with intuitive insight, offering a holistic understanding of reality. The following examples demonstrate the remarkable alignment between Patañjali's insights and modern scientific understanding, revealing how ancient yogic practices provide profound perspectives on complex phenomena, suggesting a shared quest for understanding the fundamental nature of reality.

These insights align with modern scientific concepts across various fields, including Linguistics, Optics, Quantum Physics, Cosmology, and Celestial Mechanics, highlighting the timeless relevance of Patañjali's approach. The parallels suggest that yogic wisdom and modern science, despite their distinct methodologies, both seek to explore the fundamental nature of reality and the interconnectedness of existence. Modern science relies on external observations and experiments, which can be limited and lead to changing theories. In contrast, yogic wisdom is based on deep inner insights, leading to

Table 4

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Details</i>
Sound (Sutra 3.17)	When sound, its meaning, and associated knowledge appear interconnected, they seem unified. Practicing Samyama on these distinctions grants knowledge of all beings' speech. (Resonates with Semantics, Linguistics, Cognitive Science)
Optics (Sutra 3.21)	Mastery of Samyama on the body and the light falling on it disrupts the reflection required for others to perceive it. (Parallels modern Optics, reflection, and perception theories)
Quantum Entanglement (Sutra 3.25)	Samyama on the luminous tendencies of the mind grants the ability to perceive hidden or distant objects. (Conceptually aligns with electromagnetic wave-based observation and quantum entanglement)
Interconnection of Space, Matter, and Energy (Sutra 3.26)	Samyama on the Sun grants knowledge of cosmological realms (lokas), as described in Vyāsa Bhāṣya. (Reflects modern ideas of space, matter, energy interconnection, gravitational order, and $E=mc^2$)
Astronomy & Astrophysics (Sutra 3.27)	Samyama on the Moon provides insight into the arrangement of stars (nakṣatras). (Comparable to celestial mechanics and observational astronomy)
Celestial coordinate systems (Sutra 3.28)	Samyama on the Polestar (Dhruva) grants insight into stellar motions. (Related to axial rotation, celestial navigation, and astronomy)

timeless, absolute truths. Rather than being opposing systems, they complement each other in their pursuit of knowledge and understanding.

Discussion

This research highlights Yoga as a profound epistemological system that bridges philosophy, science, and liberation (mokṣa). Far beyond its modern portrayal as a tool for health and well-being, Yoga integrates intellectual inquiry, empirical investigation, and spiritual discipline to provide a holistic framework for understanding existence (Ranganathananda, 2005). Unlike conventional scientific methodologies that rely on external observation and logical analysis, Yoga extends beyond these limitations by incorporating direct experiential knowledge, offering an integrative approach to reality (Kumar, 2020).

A key insight emerging from this study is Yoga's dual framework of knowledge—Aparā Prakṛti (gross, material reality) and Parā Prakṛti (subtle, conscious essence). The Bhagavad Gītā (7.4–5) and Taittirīya Upaniṣad emphasize that while empirical methods explore the former through sensory perception and logical inference, the latter can only be accessed through heightened states of awareness attained in Samādhi and Ṛtambharā Prajñā (truth-bearing knowledge) (Easwaran, 2007). This distinction aligns with contemporary scientific paradigms that now recognize the role of observer consciousness in quantum physics and neuroscience, suggesting an intersection between Yogic insights and modern scientific thought (Mehta, 2021).

The study also reinforces the relevance of Yogic epistemology, which integrates Pratyakṣa (perception), Anumāna (inference), and Śabda (authoritative testimony) (Puligundla, 1997). Unlike Western epistemologies, which often confine truth to empirical validation and analytical reasoning, Yoga accommodates both objective analysis and subjective realization. This holistic model bridges the limitations of Cartesian dualism, positioning Yoga as a sophisticated system that unifies material and non-material aspects of reality (NCERT, 2018).

Furthermore, the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras illustrate an advanced cognitive methodology through Samyama—the integration of Dhāraṇā (concentration), Dhyāna (meditation), and Samādhi (absorption).

This practice refines cognitive faculties, expanding the scope of perception beyond conventional scientific observation (Vyāsa, as cited in Woods, 1914). The correlation between Samyama and modern explorations of consciousness, neuroplasticity, and altered states of awareness suggests that Yogic methodologies can significantly contribute to contemporary research in cognitive science and psychology (Kumar, 2020).

The interdisciplinary relevance of Yoga extends beyond philosophy and consciousness studies into applied sciences, such as holistic medicine, cognitive neuroscience, and quantum mechanics. Vedic literature encompasses diverse scientific fields, including Mathematics (Gaṇita), Astronomy (Jyotiṣa), Medicine (Āyurveda), and Logic (Nyāya), reflecting a long tradition of systematic knowledge exploration (NCERT, 2018). By integrating Yogic principles with modern scientific frameworks, future research can unlock new pathways for understanding human consciousness, healing methodologies, and the fundamental nature of existence (Mehta, 2021).

This research affirms that Yoga is not merely an ancient spiritual discipline but a timeless knowledge system that unites scientific inquiry, philosophical depth, and spiritual realization. It provides a structured pathway toward mokṣa—transcending physical and mental limitations to attain absolute freedom (Ranganathananda, 2005). By blending traditional wisdom with modern methodologies, Yoga remains an evolving and transformative force, guiding humanity toward self-realization and cosmic harmony.

Inferences & Conclusion

This research reaffirms that Yoga is far more than just an art and science of healthy living—it is a comprehensive system of knowledge that integrates philosophy, science, and liberation (mokṣa). It provides a structured yet holistic approach to understanding reality by combining intellectual inquiry, empirical exploration, and experiential wisdom. Unlike conventional scientific methodologies that rely solely on observation and reasoning, Yoga transcends these limitations through direct inner experience and expanded states of consciousness.

By bridging the gross (Aparā) and subtle (Parā) dimensions of existence, Yoga unites external observation with inner realization, offering profound insights into consciousness, reality, and the human experience. The Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras, through Samyama, illustrate a methodical approach to acquiring knowledge beyond sensory perception and logical inference. Moreover, Yoga's epistemological framework—integrating Perception (Pratyakṣa), Inference (Anumāna), and Testimony (Śabda)—presents a more comprehensive model of understanding compared to Western epistemologies, which often limit knowledge to Justified True Belief (JTB).

The Bhagavad Gītā and the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras emphasize that the ultimate goal of Yoga is Kaivalya or Mokṣa—a state of absolute freedom where individual consciousness merges with the universal. This is achieved through Sādhana (disciplined practice), Samyama (integration of Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi), and Ṛtambharā Prajñā (truth-bearing knowledge).

Yoga not only aligns with contemporary scientific paradigms but also expands them by integrating metaphysical depth. While modern science seeks knowledge through external observation and evolving theories, Yoga offers timeless wisdom through direct inner experience. Its integration with modern methodologies can foster new advancements in holistic healing, consciousness studies, and well-being. This research affirms that Yoga is not merely a practice or a tool for well-being, but an enduring wisdom tradition that transcends cultural and temporal boundaries, guiding humanity toward self-realization and cosmic unity.

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