

**Name of the element:** Yoga

**Community:** Presently Yoga is practised across the length and breadth of India. Being a process it involves active participation of the Guru-Teacher and Shishya-Pupil who comprise a wide spectrum of individuals, general public groups, members of societies and communities, educational institutions, from schools to universities and any others interested without any restrictions of gender, age, nationality, class or religious dispositions.

**Region:** Yoga is a Pan-Indian holistic physical and mental wellness system practiced throughout the geography of India. The ancient system of Yoga originated well before the Indus valley civilization. This fact is evidenced on the one hand by archaeological finds across Indian sub-continent and on the other by an almost unbroken textual tradition of Indian literature on the subject, which deals with its physical, practical, metaphysical and holistic aspects. Yoga element has permeated every aspect of Indian life including philosophical thought, medicine, education, literature, health and traditional Indian dance and theatre techniques all of which draw heavily from Yogic practices.

**Brief Description:** Yoga is a time honoured Indian holistic system of personal, physical, mental and spiritual wellness focused on all-round unification of body, mind and soul. Traditionally handed down over the centuries from teacher –Guru to disciple –Shishya, who after attaining mastery become a Guru to teach others. While Indian mythology traces the origin of yoga to the God Shiva as the first teacher its presence is well documented in Indian textual tradition from the Rigveda dated between c. 1500–1200 BCE to Satapatha Brahmana texts of 300 BCE to the philosophical treatises of the Upanishads – Mundaka and the Bhagvad Gita dated before fifth or fourth century BCE.

The sage Patanjali systematised the text in his treatise -Yogasutras dated 400 CE while many other great sages and Yoga masters contributed to the furtherance of the system and its practice through their writings. The practice of Yoga leads to the union of individual consciousness with universal consciousness to attain harmony between the elements. The aim of Yoga is to realize the inner self, to mitigate all kinds of sufferings and to pave way for attaining the state of liberation. Yoga practices include Yama or five abstentions, Niyama-five observances, Asana –postures, Pranayama -Suspending Breath, Pratyahara –Abstraction, Dharana –Concentration, Dhyana –Meditation, Samadhi - Full integrated consciousness, Bandhas –Lock, Mudras – Gestures,, Shat-karmas - Cleansing practices, Yukta-ahara - Holistic food, Yukta Karma -Right Action and MantraJapa -Chanting sacred words. Yogic practices have helped many millions learn to maintain a balanced way of life.

Yoga- Inscribed in 2016 on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, UNESCO