

THE  
Little Book  
*of*  
YOGA

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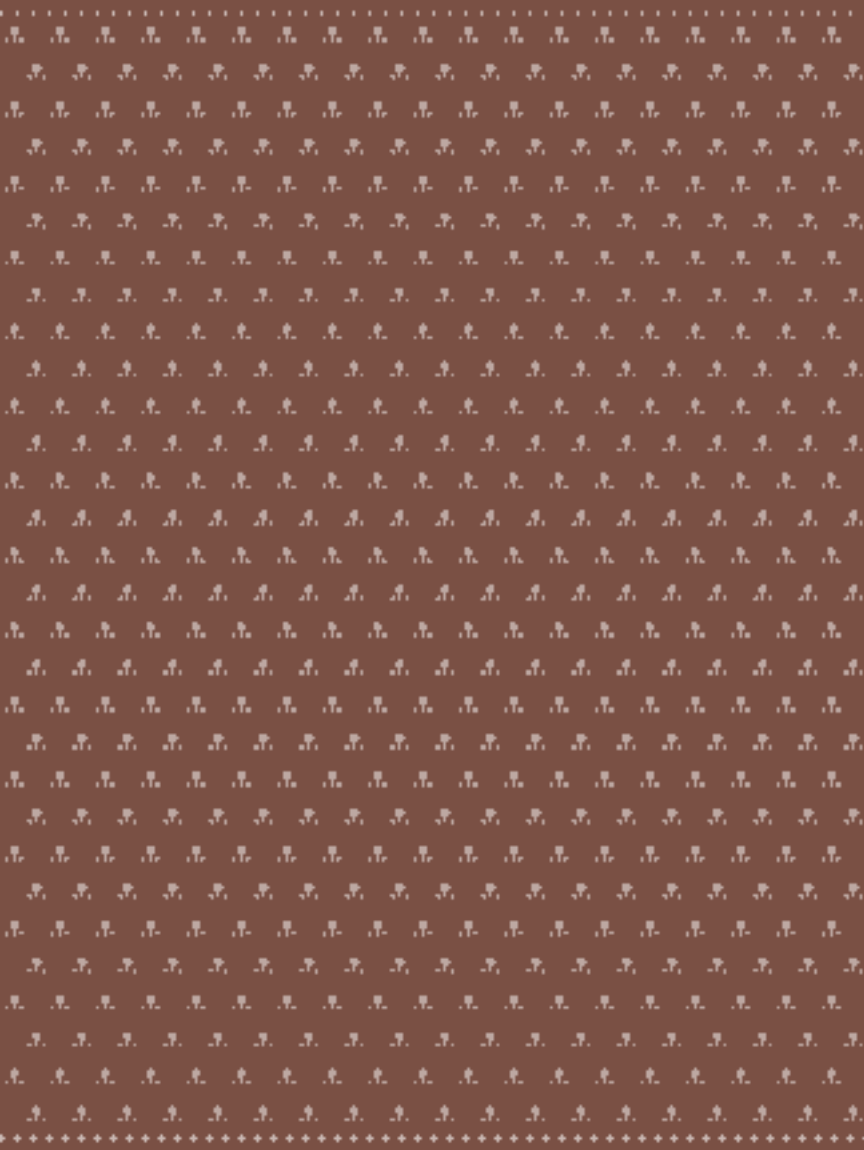












Part One

# The Foundation

## A Brief History of Yoga

The history of yoga is a complex web of branches and schools that twist and turn, leading to what is considered to be today's modern yoga. No one can pinpoint precisely when yoga was invented, but here's what we do know: Yoga hails from India. The language of yoga is called Sanskrit, an ancient priestly tongue. A pose is called an *asana*, based on the Sanskrit word for "seat." The yoga lifestyle has changed quite a bit since ancient times, when yogis lived in secluded caves or forests and practiced ways to master their bodies, such as stopping their heartbeat. But the essence of yoga remains the same, as does the ultimate goal: to find harmony with yourself and the world.





## • 15<sup>TH</sup>–18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES •

### The Foundational Texts on Yoga's Physical Poses

There are three key texts that describe yoga asanas, breathing techniques, and meditation, which are the main practices of hatha yoga, the most popular form of yoga practiced today. These foundational texts are the *Yoga Yajñalkya* (from the fifteenth century), the *Shriyoga Samhita* (from the seventeenth century), and the *Shiva Samhita* (from the eighteenth century).







# The Branches of Yoga

What opens your heart? What makes you feel receptive to new ideas, creative, and compassionate? The many branches of yoga reflect the diversity of our temperaments, goals, and individual personalities. Whether it's rigorous exercise that opens one's heart, or music, or service to others, there's a branch of yoga for everyone, be it a traditional branch or a unique combination of many. Here are the modern forms of today's most relevant branches:

- BHAKTI YOGA (Devotion)
- HATHA YOGA (Physical Exercise)
- JNANA YOGA (Wisdom)
- KARMA YOGA (Service)
- MANTRA YOGA (Sound)
- RAJA YOGA (Meditation)







# Yoga Styles

When yoga hit the West in the late nineteenth century, a natural evolution occurred. Teachers trained by Indian masters began taking what they had learned and making it their own. Some instructors opened schools that followed closely in their particular lineage, while others used their knowledge as a starting point to develop their own creative styles. These days, there's a wide range of yoga styles suited to all personalities and skill levels, with variations in speed, levels of exertion, purposes, benefits, and environment (such as temperature of the room and noise level, for example).

Today's most popular styles include:

- ANUSARA YOGA
- ASHTANGA YOGA
- BIKRAM YOGA
- IYENGAR YOGA
- JIVAMUKTI YOGA
- KRIPALU YOGA
- KUNDALINI YOGA
- POWER YOGA
- RESTORATIVE YOGA
- VINIYOGA







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