

Texts and Traditions of Yoga: Handout for Vedas lecture

Ancient man abstracted from the stars the patterns of animals, men, and gods, and thereafter was unable to look at the sky without seeing such entities in it. Modern man knows that what is really behind this view is an immeasurable universe of stars, galaxies, galaxies of galaxies, etc., and that each person, having a particular place in this universe, obtains a certain perspective on it, which is what is seen in the night sky. Such a man does not see animals, gods, etc., in the sky, but he sees an immense universe there. But even the view of modern science is probably only true in a certain domain. So future man may form a very different notion of the invariant totality that is behind our view of the night sky, in which present notions will perhaps be seen as a simplification, approximation, and limiting case, but actually very far from being completely true.

-- David Bohm, physicist

Vedic religion in general revolved around the ideas that the wondrous marvels and powers of nature, the diverse personalities and behavior of the many gods and goddesses who gave form to and enlivened the world, the composition and dynamics of the human community, and the structure and destiny of the individual person are all somehow linked to one another through a transcendent universal order and harmony of being; that the power of this hidden principle could be harnessed and expressed in effective language; that, because of the interconnectedness of all being, actions performed in any one of such realms therefore affect the status of all others.

- William Mahoney, American scholar-practitioner

The Sanskrit term yoga, which is etymologically related to the English words "yoke" and "joust," is first encountered in the Vedas, where it referred to the act of yoking, the animal so yoked and the conveyance pulled by the yoked animal. Most often, the Vedic hymns used the term to refer to the yoking of a warhorse to its chariot, and so yoga as yoking had the extended meaning of "war" or "wartime." The Vedic poets also applied the term to their own efforts to yoke their minds to poetic inspiration in order to link the words of their hymns to their referents: the gods, sacrifice, and the universe. As such, yoga in this sense of the term was what permitted the minds of the Vedic poets to journey outward to the worlds they linked together in their hymns.

-- David Gordon White, American scholar of tantra

yoga [yóg-a] m. [root; yug] yoking; team; vehicle; equipment (of an army); performance, employment, use, application; remedy, cure; means, expedient; device, trick; spell, magic; fraud; opportunity; undertaking; union, contact; combination, mixture; connection, relation; connection with, acquisition of; gain, profit; order, succession; aggregate, sum; fitness, propriety; strenuousness, exertion, endeavor, zeal, assiduity; occupation; mental concentration, systematic abstraction, Yoga system of philosophy; follower of the Yoga system; unity of the soul and nature; connection of a word with its root, etymology, etymological meaning of a word; syntactical dependence of a word, construction; grammatical rule; conjunction (of stars); constellation: strenuously, assiduously.

<http://dsalrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/romadict.pl?query=yoga&display=simple&table=macdonell>