

## Yoga and Music - The Synergy

Yogesh Sadashiv Prabhudesai<sup>1\*</sup> and Dr Sushama Suresh Kale<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>B.E - Electronics, MA Yogashastra (KKSU)

<sup>2</sup>PhD Yogashastra and Positive Psychology (Mumbai University) MA Yogashastra

\*Correspondence: <yogeshp77@gmail.com>

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### ABSTRACT

In the modern quest for holistic well-being, there remains a significant gap in the comprehensive understanding of the synergistic relationship between Yoga and Music. Most existing literature and contemporary practices treat these disciplines in strict isolation, overlooking their philosophical underpinnings and shared methodologies as interconnected paths to mental tranquility and spiritual realization. This white paper seeks to bridge that gap by utilizing a comparative qualitative methodology to systematically explore the profound intersections between Yogic science and ancient Indian musicology. Historically, Yoga and music were completely integrated during the Vaidika period, viewed collectively as a holistic art of living designed to elevate social, artistic, and spiritual life simultaneously. However, a historical divergence over centuries fractured this union, rendering Yoga an ascetic spiritual pursuit and relegating music primarily to public entertainment. This paper argues that despite this historical separation, the two disciplines are fundamentally unified. They share a divine origin rooted in the mythology of Lord Śiva, who serves as both the first Yogī (Ādiyogī) and the Lord of Dance and Music (Naṭarāja). They also share core operational concepts, relying entirely on Prāṇa (vital life energy) and Nāda (vibrations). Ultimately, both Yoga and Music converge on the exact same end goal: Samādhi, achieved through the cessation of mental modifications (Citta Vṛtti Nirodha). By illustrating how the eight limbs of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga are actively utilized by music practitioners, and how music acts as an active instrument for entering and sustaining meditative states, this paper demonstrates that music is not an accessory to meditation, but a Haṭha Yoga Sādhana in its own right.

**Keywords:** Yoga; Indian Classical Music; Nāda Yoga; Bhakti Yoga; Haṭha Yoga; Nāda-Brahman; Prāṇa; Cakras; Kuṇḍalinī; Samādhi; Citta Vṛtti Nirodha; Gātra Vīṇā; Svaras

### INTRODUCTION

In ancient India, the sages intuitively understood that the pursuit of human evolution required a cohesive balance of the physical, mental, and spiritual realms. During the Vaidika period, the scriptures provided excellent guidance on how to live and elevate social, artistic, and spiritual life simultaneously. In this rich context, Yoga and music were completely intertwined, developed together with the "art of living" as their central, unified theme.

However, around 200 BCE, this integrated approach began to diverge. Maharṣi Patañjali's Patañjali Yoga Sūtras defined Yoga through a purely spiritual lens focused specifically on self-realization, while Bharata Muni's Nāṭya Śāstra positioned music primarily as a social art oriented toward public expression. This division solidified over the centuries. In the 8th

century, Śārṅgadeva's Saṅgīta Ratnākara further cemented music as a popular art. By the 15th and 16th centuries, with texts like Svātmārāma's Haṭha Pradīpikā and Gheraṇḍa Muni's Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā, the belief that Yoga was solely for spiritual development became firmly established. Yoga practitioners retired to secluded forests, while musicians focused increasingly on public appeal, causing the vital connection between music and self-realization to wane. Today, it is essential to reconnect these disciplines and rediscover how they are entirely complementary to one another.

### *Synergy at the Level of Shared Origins*

The historical and mythological alignment between Yoga and Music is not a mere coincidence, but a reflection of a shared metaphysical ancestry anchored in the figure of Lord Śiva. In Indian scriptures, Śiva is revered as both Ādiyogī (the progenitor of Yoga) and Naṭarāja (the



purity, contentment, and austere discipline) to achieve excellence. They rely heavily on Āsanas (like Padmāsana, Dhanurāsana) to maintain spinal health, increase respiratory capacity, and sit comfortably for hours of rigorous practice. Most importantly, they utilize Prāṇāyāma (breath control). Techniques like Ujjāyī and Bhastrīkā are immense boons for singers, eliminating respiratory defects and maximizing lung capacity, while Bhrāmarī Prāṇāyāma produces sound vibrations that directly induce joy and dispel sorrow. Primordial sound, Omkara, forms the base for Music as well as Yoga alike.

### **Synergy at the Level of Shared End Goals**

Ultimately, both Yoga and Music are distinct vehicles driving toward the exact same destination: Samādhi. The word Samādhi represents the perfect balance of body and mind at the intellectual level, where the Jīvātmā unites with the Paramātmā.

In Yoga, this ultimate goal is famously defined by Patañjali as:

योगि चत्तव ृत्त नरोधः ||

— the complete cessation of the modifications of the mind. When the mind is fragmented by thoughts and emotions, it causes suffering; Yoga calms these waves.

In Music, this identical goal is pursued through Nāda-Tanmayatā, which is complete and total absorption into sound. In the initial stages of musical practice, a singer exerts immense physical and mental effort (Prayatna) to control breath, hit microtones (Śrutis), and maintain rhythm (Tāla). However, once technical mastery is achieved, the true artist intentionally "lets go". The desire for audience applause or technical perfection is surrendered, and the singer enters a state of Asaṅga (detachment). In this moment, the Ahaṅkāra (ego) vanishes; there is no longer a "singer" and the "act of singing," there is only the music. As they say, "Dhyan starts when effort stops", when the "performer" effectively dies, the divinity in the Svaras expresses itself as profound Dhyānāvasthā.

Because music operates directly at the vibrational level where meditation unfolds, it is not merely an accessory to meditation, but an active instrument for entering and deepening it. Dr. Arun Apte beautifully describes music as a "power step-down transformer" that brings the tremendous, overwhelming energy of the divine down to a reasonable level that the human subtle system can safely absorb and withstand.

Svāmī Śivānanda Sarasvatī emphatically reinforces this synergy, arguing that music itself is a Haṭha Yoga Sādhana because it involves control of the breath and vital energy. He states that music breaks the three knots of ignorance

(Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Rudra Granthis), purifies the Nāḍīs, awakens the sleeping Kuṇḍalinī, and destroys lower cravings and desires. Ultimately, music brings about the exact thoughtless state of Citta Vṛtti Nirodha sought by traditional yogīs, allowing the practitioner to attain Ātma-Sākṣātkāra (Self-Realization).

### **CONCLUSION**

The comparative qualitative analysis of ancient texts and modern experiences reveals a profound, inseparable relationship between Yoga and Music. They are not merely parallel disciplines, but deeply synergistic paths that utilize the exact same physiological and metaphysical mechanisms to elevate human consciousness.

Both sciences recognize that the human body is a sacred instrument (Gātra Viṇā), and that the universe is fundamentally composed of vibration (Nāda and Prāṇa). By systematically applying the physical and ethical frameworks of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga—including Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, and Dhyāna—musicians can refine their art into a transformative spiritual practice. Conversely, Yoga practitioners can utilize the melodic and emotional power of music to effortlessly bypass the rigid striving of the ego, bringing harmonious coherence to the chaotic modifications of the mind.

This synergy is perhaps most powerfully observed in Bhakti Yoga, where saints like Mirā Bāī, Kabīr, and Tyāgarāja utilized devotional singing to completely transcend their egos, awaken their spirits, and summon the divine presence. As Paṇḍit Śārngadeva noted centuries ago, while rigorous physical Yoga can be arduous, music serves as a "Su-mārga"—an easy and beautiful path to the divine. By consciously embracing the synergy between the silence of Yoga and the sound of Music, modern seekers possess a complete, holistic methodology to achieve ultimate mental tranquility and spiritual liberation. In Svara Rāga Sudhārasa, saint Tyāgarāja explicitly states that the physical singing of Svaras, when combined with devotion (bhāva) and awareness of the Chakras, leads directly to liberation.

If Yoga is the union of the individual soul (Jīvātmā) and the universal soul (Paramātmā), then every path leading to this goal is also Yoga. Be it Bhakti Yoga, Jñāna Yoga, Karma Yoga, Rāja Yoga or Nāda Yoga. This journey of self-realization goes from Duality to Non-Duality, Gross to Subtle, from Tamas to Sattva, from Vaikhari to Parā, from Āhata to Anāhata.

In this journey of self-realization, Music and Yoga are not parallel lines that never meet but they are intricately intertwined. They ultimately lead the practitioner to the exact same destination: Chitta Vritti Nirodha or the

complete dissolution of the mind into cosmic consciousness.

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