

Yoga in the online media as a form of Diffused New Religiosity

By Loukia Rодitou*

Introduction

It is a fact that we live in the information age and our everyday life is now inextricably linked to Internet use. Most of us open our mobile phones or computers to catch up on the latest news. And amid other articles, we come across headlines in respected online newspapers: “All you need to know before you start yoga”, “Yoga Guide: choose the type of yoga that suits you”, or “Yoga for better mental health”¹. Seeking some relaxation after a long day, we may find some refuge in television –the usual one or Web TV– for entertainment. Suddenly we are bombarded with a variety of advertising messages for products that –according to the advertisers– are good for us, such as *vipaśyanā* meditation², which offers us harmony and inner balance, that changes our mood or is a healthy

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1. K. Nanopoulou, «Όλα όσα πρέπει να γνωρίζεις πριν ξεκινήσεις γιόγκα», 29/1/2015, https://www.huffingtonpost.gr/2015/01/29/-kalezoe-yoga-daskalos-pliorefories_n_6544526.html. An. Kokori, «Yoga Guide: Διάλεξε τό είδος γιόγκα που σου ταιριάζει», 16/2/2022, <https://www.lifo.gr/tropos-zois/health-fitness/yoga-guide-dialexe-eidos-giogka-poy-soy-tairiazei>. F. Vakrinou, «Γιόγκα για καλύτερη ψυχική υγεία», 15/3/2023, <https://www.vita.gr/2023/03/15/body-mind/giogka-gia-kalyteri-psyxiki-ygeia/> [accessed at 18/3/2023].

2. The *vipaśyanā* meditation of penetrating insight is a Buddhist technique. For a more detailed presentation of *vipaśyanā*, see Y. Bentor, “The Tibetan Practice of the Mantra Path According to Lce-sgom-pa”, in: D. G. White (ed.), *Tantra in Practice*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, U.S.A. 2000, p. 331; S. Geoffrey, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra. Indie Religions to the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, United States of America 2008, p. 137.

way of life which strengthens the immune system³, advertisements, in general, referring directly or indirectly to yoga, while at the same time presenting the performance of some *āsana* (physical exercises)⁴.

We understand from the above that contemporary yoga, as an idea and practice, beyond the official organizations that, theoretically at least, own and possess it, i.e. the various Yoga Schools, moves freely and unorganized in online applications, from informational websites to social media, and is expressed in many areas of life and culture, which we will examine below.

The Yoga phenomenon: an overview

But what is yoga, for which there is a great deal of talk nowadays and has invaded the Greek online media as a fashionable word?

The term *yoga* is a common word in the Sanskrit language, but also one of the most versatile terms, as it has a wide range of uses and meanings, such as: “union”, “group”, “aggregate”, “equipment”, “link”, “constellation”, “coupling”, “profession”, “magic”, “grammatical rule”, etc. It is derived from the verbal root *yuj* meaning “to link”, “to clamp”, “to couple/to harness”, “to pair”, “to subordinate”, “to prepare”, and “to equip”⁵. However, these definitions are of little use when looking for the

3. «NOYNOY Στραγγιστό», <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbgtTBjd-EQ>. «Inventor άφυγραντήρες», <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W89YM3o-JAg>. “ION Protein (YOGA)”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wk6CWyt9PbY>. «NEF-NEF Homeware Spring - Summer 2022 | 61 Χρόνια Λευκά Εϊδη ποῦ σοῦ ἀλλάζουν τῆ διάθεση!», https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yy_MTo4nnfM. «Centrum Women γιὰ ἐνίσχυση ἀνοσοποιητικοῦ & ἐνέργεια. Εἰδικὴ σύνθεση γιὰ τῆ γυναίκα», <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31v9H2ljOYo> [accessed at 18/3/2023].

4. The word *āsana*, ἄσ Γudrun Bühnemann notes, can be translated as a) seated, stable, b) seat or throne, c) seated position or posture. In yoga, however, it denotes a technical term that refers to the body’s posture. See G. Bühnemann, *Eighty-four Āsanas in Yoga. A Survey of Traditions (with Illustrations)*, D. K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi 2011, p. 17.

5. G. Feuerstein, *The Yoga Tradition. Its History, Literature, Philosophy and Practice*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi 2002, p. 8.; *The Path of Yoga. An Essential Guide to Its Principles and Practices*, Shambhala, Boston & London 2011, p. 2; *The Encyclopedia of Yoga and Tantra*, Shambhala, Boston & London 2011, p. 416.

meaning of yoga within the context of Indian philosophical-scientific thought, as it represents a specific tradition extremely rich in theory and practice and by no means uniform.

The term “yoga” appears in the earliest known text of South Asian literature, the *Rig Veda Saṃhitā* (c. 15th century BC), originally meaning the yoke placed on a bull or war horse to be harnessed to a plow or chariot. However, the same text’s meaning is broadened through a metonymy; thus, the word defines the whole vehicle. In the *Taittirīya-Upanishad* (6th century BC) the word *yoga* was used to denote control of the mind (*manas*) and senses (*indriya*) and later in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (4th or 3rd century BC) it acquired the widely used concept of spiritual discipline⁶.

But yoga as a “philosophical system” first appeared in Patañjali’s *Yoga-Sūtra*, treatise (100-300 AD, as most scholars agree)⁷. In this work, Patañjali defines yoga as the “suppression of states of consciousness” (“*Yogaḥ citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ*”, *Yoga-Sūtra*, I, 2)⁸. the means of attaining to Being, the effectual techniques for gaining liberation (*mokṣha*, *mukti*)”, notes the religious scholar Mircea Eliade, and argues that it designate any ascetic technique and any method of meditation⁹.

According to Georg Feuerstein, we can trace five phases in Yoga’s historical development: 1) the “Archaic” or “Proto-Yoga”, which dates back to the Veda and earlier; 2) the “Pre-classical”, from the Brāhmaṇa to Patañjali’s era, 3) the “Classical Yoga” or “Yoga-darśana”, codified by Patañjali, 4) “Post-classical”, which refers to the teachings after Patañjali and especially to the Purāṇa, literature; and finally 5) “Modern Yoga”, a term referring to the yogic teachings from the 19th century onwards, when many Indian teachers came to the West¹⁰. “Modern Yoga’s” formation, according to Elizabeth De Michelis, is mainly due to Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) and his seminal text *Raja Yoga*, published in 1896. In his work, Vivekananda heavily revised the yoga history,

6. G. Feuerstein, *The Encyclopedia of Yoga and Tantra*, *ibid.*, pp. 416-417.

7. St. Papalexandropoulos, *Ανατολικές Θρησκείες*, Gutenberg, Athens 2016, p. 251.

8. M. Eliade, *Yoga. Immortality and Freedom*, transl. from the French W. R. Trask, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1958, p. 36.

9. M. Eliade, *Yoga...*, pp. 21-22.

10. G. Feuerstein, *The Encyclopedia of Yoga...*, *op cit.*, pp. 415-420.

beliefs, and practices; thus, this “reformed” yoga differs greatly from the Hinduist classical approaches¹¹.

As for Modern Yoga’s presence in Greece, in 1962 –one year after Maharishi Mahesh Yogi visited Athens– the Association “Spiritual Regeneration Movement” was founded, which organized weekly courses-seminars on Deep Meditation¹². Then, in the 1970s, it began the study of Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda’s teachings under the title: “Vedanta Study Circle”, while at the same time, the first Yoga Centre appeared in Thessaloniki and the “Hellenic Yoga Association” (now “Hellenic Hatha Yoga Association Toula Mavridou”), the “Greek Satyanandashram” and the non-profit organization “Himalayan Yoga Meditation of Hellas” were founded. From 2000 onwards, however, there has been an explosion of the yoga phenomenon in the country, as numerous Yoga Schools, Centers, Yoga Houses, Studios, and Yoga Institutes have started to operate; at the same time, many gyms have included yoga in their programs¹³.

Yoga-related ideas scattered on the Greek Internet

The Yoga Associations and Schools in Greece are yoga’s official representative bodies in the country, so it is expected to find on their websites beliefs about what yoga is and what its benefits are, beliefs that are not the subject of this article. Nevertheless, as initially mentioned,

11. Eliz. De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga. Patañjali and Western Esotericism*, Continuum, London 2008, p. 3.

12. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi founded “Transcendental Meditation”. Having started his worldwide tours in 1957, he named his movement “Spiritual Regeneration Movement”; in 1959, when he went to the USA, his movement was renamed “Transcendental Meditation”. Regarding Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, see G. Chryssides, “Maharishi Mahesh Yogi”, in: D. Cush, Cath. Robinson & M. York, (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Routledge, U.S.A. and Canada 2008, pp. 481-482; “Mahesh Yogi, Maharishi”, in: C. A. Jones, Constance & J. D. Ryan, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Facts On File, New York 2007, pp. 273-274.

13. For further information about Modern Yoga in Greece, see Loukia Roiditou, *Η προβολή της Γιόγκα στον ελληνικό διαδικτυακό χώρο*, M.A. diss., National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens 2023.

“yoga” as a buzzword has flooded the Greek online media. News and information portals, online newspapers, and magazines of varying or specialized content occasionally publish articles on yoga-related ideas and practices. However, how do these articles present yoga?

After carefully reading posts related to it, we observed that it is possible to classify them into the following categories of articles that combine it: a) with sports, b) with nutrition, c) with healing and mental health, d) with self-awareness and personal development, e) with the arts, and finally f) with various commercial activities.

a) Yoga and Sport/Fitness

As far as sports are concerned, online magazines focused on running training claim that, for those who include the practice of yoga in their weekly schedule, its benefits are many, as its practice: 1) it strengthens the body and improves flexibility; 2) it helps with body coordination; 3) it is an excellent form of recovery; 4) it trains the mind and reduces stress; and 5) it teaches how to breathe¹⁴. In fact, regarding yoga’s contribution to the improvement of sports performance in general, the online magazine *SiderAl Sport* adds that in recent years more and more athletes have been carrying out yoga sessions as a complement to their training and cites as a typical example those athletes, who, in their preparation for the 2010 Winter Olympics, included *āsana* (physical exercises), *prāṇāyāma* (breathing techniques) and meditation as methods for medal-winning performance¹⁵.

14. «Yoga για δρομείς-Άσκήσεις αποκατάστασης με τη βοήθεια της γιόγκα», 31/5/2016, <https://runnermagazine.gr/proponisi/endynamosi-evlygisia/19518/yoga-gia-dromis/>. «Γιατί όλοι οι δρομείς πρέπει να κάνουν yoga;», *Runster* online θύρα για τὸ τρέξιμο, 6/5/2019, <https://www.runster.gr/stoires-yoga-giati-oloi-oi-dromeis-prepei-na-kanoun-yoga/>. «Πώς μπορεί τὸ γιόγκα νὰ βοηθήσει τοὺς δρομείς», 8/3/2021, <https://www.runningincyprus.com/runners-yoga/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

15. M. Lysandrou, «Γιόγκα: “Ένα “ἐργαλειό” για βελτίωση τῆς ἀθλητικῆς ἀπόδοσης», <https://www.sideralsport.gr/train-better/%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1-%CE%AD%CE%BD%CE%B1-%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%BF-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CE%B2%CE%B5%>

However, apart from the specialized online magazines on sports, we also find many articles on political news websites and fashion and lifestyle magazines, which recommend yoga as a form of exercise. Thus, the website Capital.gr, reports that yoga offers body control to achieve greater efficiency. In addition, improved blood circulation increases strength and endurance¹⁶. In the Greek *Vogue*, *Madame Figaro*, *Shape Magazine*, *Ow on wellness (Now. Slow. Flow)*, and *Natura NRG Green & Healthy Life*, we found various headlines, of which we indicatively refer the following: “5 simple yoga exercises for toned abs”, “Yoga + Running: their combination makes a difference”¹⁷, “Aerial Yoga: Learn about this fun fitness method”¹⁸, “The 30-minute Power Yoga program that will change your body”, “4 Face Yoga exercises for anti-aging”¹⁹, “Yoga and winter sports”²⁰, “Six yoga exercises for the beach”²¹. A common feature of all the above publications is the fact that they focus on the relationship between yoga and fitness and well-being.

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16. M. Doubakis, «4 λόγοι που ή yoga θα σάς κάνει καλύτερο αθλητή – ακόμη κι αν απλά πηγαίνετε στο γυμναστήριο!», 14/12/2018, <https://www.capital.gr/health/3332386/4-logoi-pou-i-yoga-tha-sas-kanei-kalutero-athliti-akomi-ki-an-apla-pigainete-sto-gumnastirio> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

17. Γ. Mastrogiannopoulou, «Yoga+Τρέξιμο: Ό συνδυασμός τους κάνει τη διαφορά», 6/3/2021, <https://vogue.gr/beauty/yoga-treximo-o-syndyasmos-toys-kanei-ti-diafora/>. Ή ίδια, «5 απλές ασκήσεις yoga για γραμμωμένους κοιλιακούς», 17/8/2021, <https://vogue.gr/beauty/5-aples-askiseis-yoga-gia-grammomenoys-koiliakoys/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

18. ΕΙ. Kokkinou, «Aerial Yoga: Μάθε για την τόσο διασκεδαστική μέθοδο γυμναστικής», 5/8/2021, <https://madamefigaro.cy/aerial-yoga-mathe-gia-tin-toso-diaskedastiki-methodo-gymnastikis/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

19. Μ. Antonopoulou, «Τò 30λεπτο πρόγραμμα Power Yoga που θα αλλάξει τò σώμα σου», <https://www.ow.gr/video/to-30lepto-programma-power-yoga-pou-tha-allaxei-to-soma-sou/>. Π. Ίορδανίδου, «4 ασκήσεις Face Yoga για αντιγήρανση», <https://www.ow.gr/omorfia/4-askiseis-face-yoga-gia-antigiransi/> [accessed at 11/3/2023]

20. «Γιόγκα και χειμερινά σπόρ», <https://www.naturanrg.gr/yoga-xeimeirina-sport-ski-zestama-asanas-askiseis/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

21. «Έξι ασκήσεις γιόγκα για την παραλία», 22/5/2022, <https://www.shape.gr/fitness/programmata-askiseon/askiseis-yoga-paralia/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

b) Yoga and Nutrition

Regarding nutrition, *Wefit*, an online health and wellness magazine, states in an article it published that the types of food a person chooses to consume reflect their level of consciousness. Yogis, it continues, recommend a vegetarian diet, believing that food is the creator of *prāṇa*, the life force²². The AthensTrainers website, as well as the online magazines *Esoterica.gr* and *Savoir Ville*, support the same views. The latter even adds that the yogic diet's goal is the development of *sattva*, i.e. the concept of love, peace, and consciousness, and the maintenance of a clean and flexible body²³.

Also, BizzBucket, an online periodical, informs its readers that there is a correlation between what we eat and our overall well-being, so what we consume shapes who we are. Therefore, since the first *yama* is the *ahimsā*, rule, i.e. non-violence to all living beings, the diet cannot include meat and fish but must be predominantly vegetarian²⁴. The *ahimsā* (non-violence) rule is also the basis of an article in *VeganWorld.gr*, arguing that it is the connective link between yoga and veganism - a diet based on plant-based foods is an act of non-violence towards the earth and

22. Regarding *prāṇa*, see G. Feuerstein, «Prāṇa», in: L. Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religions*, Thomson Gale, U.S.A. 2005, pp. 7362-7363. «Τί τρώνε οί yogi και είναι τόσο αδύνατοι;», 19/4/2016, <https://www.wefit.gr/el/news/nutrition/ti-trone-oi-yogi-kai-einai-toso-adyntatoi/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

23. According to Patañjali (*sūtra* 2.18), *sattva* (luminosity, intelligence), is one of *prakṛti*'s three "existential properties", its three qualities or *guṇa*. See G. Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali. A New Translation and Commentary*, Inner Traditions, U.S.A. 1979, pp. 71-72. «Οί τρείς διατροφικές Γκούνας», <https://www.athenstrainers.gr/blog/yoga-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%84%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%86%CE%B7/>. «Γιόγχα και Διατροφή. Κατάταξη τών τροφών σε σχέση με τίς τρείς γκούνας», http://www.esoterica.gr/articles/eastern/yog_nutr/yog_nutr.htm. Kl. Dimitriadou, «Η διατροφή τής γιόγχα», <https://www.savoirville.gr/i-diatrofi-tis-yoga/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

24. *Yama* constitutes one of the first five parts of Patañjali's eight-part *aṣṭāṅgayoga*. See G. J. Larson, "Pātanjala Yoga in Practice", in: D. G. White, (ed.), *Yoga in Practice, ibid.*, pp. 79-80. «Yoga & Διατροφή – Βρίσκοντας τὸ Μονοπάτι πρὸς Ἐνα Νέο Τρόπο Ζωῆς», <https://www.bizzbucket.org/wellness/yoga/%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BF%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%84%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%86%CE%B7/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

ourselves, as we consume foods with which we thrive and are full of vitality²⁵.

c) Yoga and Therapy – Mental Health

In terms of treatment, many Yoga Centers specialize in Yoga Therapy, which, as they claim on their official websites, is a holistic therapeutic approach through yoga's clinical application. Therapeutic Yoga programs are also provided by various Yoga Studios, although they are not Yoga Therapy specialist venues. A feature that is common to all of them is the fact that they present yoga as a health therapy²⁶.

However, apart from Yoga Centers and Studios, it is worth noting that, according to posts on the internet, yoga is used in the treatment of addicted persons. The Psychiatric Hospital of Attica, KETHEA STROPHI [Treatment Center for Addicted Persons], and OKANA [Organization against Drugs], among the sports activities for their patients, include yoga programs. In fact, as OKANA's official website states, "the program aims to improve the physical and mental health of the treatment programs' members through yoga and meditation techniques, in particular through exercises in relaxation techniques, contact with a healthy way of life and better self-knowledge"²⁷.

25. "Γιόγχα και Βιγχανισμός – Πώς συνδέονται;», <https://veganworld.gr/yoga-kai-veganismos-pos-syndeontai/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

26. «Τί είναι η Yoga Therapy», <https://yogatherapygreece.com/el/%cf%84%ce%b9-%ce%b5%ce%af%ce%bd%ce%b1%ce%b9-%ce%b7-yoga-therapy/>. «Άρχικη», <https://beyonhome.gr/>. «Ήπια Θεραπευτική Γιόγχα», <https://beyonhome.gr/gentle-therapeutic-yoga-el/>. «Θεραπευτική Bahiranga Yoga®», <https://www.nadayoga.gr/sessions/yoga-therapy/>. «About», <https://www.mandalastudio.gr/about/>. «Θεραπευτική Yoga», <https://aenaonyoga.gr/therapeutiki-yoga/>. L. Kapetaniou, «Η Γιόγχα σαν έναλλακτική θεραπεία», <https://www.lotosyoga.gr/yoga-san-enallaktiki-therapeia.html>. «Θεραπευτική Γιόγχα», <https://www.lotosyoga.gr/therapeftiki-yoga.html>. «Yoga Therapy», <https://www.gingeryoga.gr/yogatherapy.html>. «Θεραπευτική Βινιάσα Γιόγχα», <https://polichoros-syros.com/therapeftiki-viniasa-giogka/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

27. «Γυμναστική και εξαρτημένη μητέρα», <https://www.18ano.gov.gr/%ce%b3%cf%85%ce%bc%ce%bd%ce%b1%cf%83%cf%84%ce%b9%ce%ba%ce%ae-%ce%ba%ce%b1%ce%b9-%ce%b5%ce%be%ce%b1%cf%81%cf%84%ce%b7%ce%bc%ce%>

However, yoga's relationship to healing and mental health is also mentioned in various articles in online magazines and news websites. *Shape Magazine Greece* informs its readers that Therapeutic Yoga is an alternative approach to illness, which is complementary to conventional therapy. In *Madame Figaro* and *PositiveLife.gr* articles, similar views are mentioned by Christina Tzelepoglou Tzelepoglou²⁸. *Health Web* magazine claims that clinical trials have shown that yoga practice can significantly improve pain in cases of backache and fibromyalgia. Furthermore, it states that yoga could be effectively integrated as an adjunctive therapy in migraine patients, as it has been shown to reduce headache episodes²⁹.

Gleaning titles of articles from *Onmed*, *VITA*, *Holistic Life*, *NaturalSoul.gr*, *Alternative Action*, *Awakengr* and *Popaganda* magazines, which connect yoga with the healing process, we mention the following ones: “Yoga or psychotherapy? What to choose for the treatment of anxiety disorder”, “The benefits of yoga for those suffering from ulcerative colitis”³⁰, “The

e%ad%ce%bd%ce%b7-%ce%bc%ce%b7%cf%84%ce%ad%cf%81%ce%b1/. «Έλ. Ήλιο-πούλου - Δασκάλα yoga, έθελόντρια in ΚΕΘΕΑ ΣΤΡΟΦΗ, μιλά για την έμπειρία της», <http://www.kethea-strofi.gr/article.php?id=1444>. «“Άσκηση για την ψυχή και το σώμα” τὸ νέο ἀθλητικὸ πρόγραμμα γιὰ τοὺς θεραπευόμενους τοῦ OKANA», 26/9/2018, <https://www.okana.gr/el/news/askisi-gia-tin-psyhi-kai-soma-neo-athlitiko-programma-gia-toys-therapeyomenoys-toy-okana> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

28. S. Kostara, «Θεραπευτικὴ γιόγκα: Γιατί νὰ τὴν ἐπιλέξεις καὶ πῶς γίνεται;», 16/3/2021, <https://www.shape.gr/fitness/programmata-askiseon/therapeftiki-giogka-giatina-tin-epilekseis-kai-pos-ginetai/>. N. Zeniou, «Ἡ yoga therapist Νίνα Χατζηδημητρίου ἐξηγεῖ τὰ ὀφέλη τῆς θεραπευτικῆς yoga», 16/3/2021, <https://madamefigaro.cy/ti-einai-to-yoga-therapy-kai-pos-mporei-na-soy-allaxei-ti-zoi-synenteyxi/>. M. Dermata, «Ἡ Yoga ὡς Θεραπευτικὴ Προσέγγιση», <https://positivelife.gr/evexia/fitness/i-yoga-ws-therapeutiki-prosegkisi/> [accessed at 11/3/2023].

29. Afr. Nikolaou, «Ἀθλητισμός: Ἡ γιόγκα μπορεῖ νὰ βοηθήσει στὴ διαχείριση τοῦ μυοσκελετικοῦ πόνου», 29/11/2021, <https://www.healthweb.gr/perissotera/aytofrontida/athlitismos-i-giogka-mporei-na-voithisei-sti-diaxeirisi-tou-myoskeltikou-ponou>. Afr. Nikolaou, «Ἀθλητισμός ὀφέλη υγείας: Ἡ γιόγκα ὡς ἐπικουρικὴ θεραπεία σὲ ἀσθενεῖς μὲ ἡμικρανία», 2/12/2021, <https://www.healthweb.gr/nea-ygeias/athlitismos-ofeli-ygeia-i-giogka-os-epikouriki-therapeia-se-astheneis-me-imikrania>. Afr. Nikolaou, «Ἀθλητισμός: Ἡ γιόγκα ὡς διέξοδος ἀπὸ τὸ στρες καὶ ἐνισχυτικὸ τῆς καρδιαγγειακῆς υγείας», 7/12/2021, <https://www.healthweb.gr/nea-ygeias/athlitismos-i-giogka-os-diesodos-apo-to-stres-kai-enisxytiko-tis-kardiaggeiakis-ygeias> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

30. In *Onmed* –a magazine dedicated to health, psychology, and nutrition– the Yoga-related articles are at least 70. «Ἀποτελέσματα ἀναζήτησης γιὰ: Γιόγκα», <https://www>.

pedagogy of yoga and its role in the empowerment of prisoners”, “Yoga and meditation in individuals with PTSD, especially in the era of the Covid pandemic”³¹, “These 2 Yoga Exercises Help Restore and Maintain Thyroid Health”³², “Yoga and Rheumatoid Arthritis: What poses help and don’t put joints under pressure”³³, “How Yoga and Meditation Reverse DNA Damage that Causes Diseases and Depression”³⁴ and finally “There is an organization that paints, does yoga and reads books in a hospital, battling cancer”³⁵.

Similarly, articles in the online newspapers *Ethnos*, *Ta Nea*, *Lifo*, and *Athens Voice*, refer to the relationship between yoga and therapy, such as: “Sciatica: 5 yoga postures that relieve pain”, “Heroine of life: Suffering from Multiple Sclerosis and teaching yoga (vid)»³⁶, “Cigarettes and Yoga”³⁷, “Yoga and Cancer Management: A Pan-Hellenic Online Sympon-

onmed.gr/search?q=%CE%93%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1 [accessed at 12/3/2023].

31. «Αναζήτηση: γιόγκα» search/?searchword=%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1&start=40. «Αναζήτηση: yoga», <https://www.holisticlife.gr/component/search/?searchword=yoga&start=40> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

32. Το NaturalSoul.gr είναι μια ένημερωτική ιστοσελίδα για φυσικές και έναλλακτικές θεραπείες. «Αναζήτηση: γιόγκα», <https://naturalsoul.gr/?s=%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1>. «Αναζήτηση: yoga», <https://naturalsoul.gr/?s=yoga> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

33. NaturalSoul.gr is an informative website for natural and alternative therapies. «Αναζήτηση: γιόγκα», <https://enallaktikidrasi.com/?s=%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1>. «Αναζήτηση: yoga», <https://enallaktikidrasi.com/?s=yoga> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

34. Awakengr, as its website states, is a magazine about psychology, self-awareness, health, spirituality, and alternative knowledge. «SEARCH RESULTS FOR “ΓΙΟΓΚΑ”», <https://www.awakengr.com/?s=%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1>. «SEARCH RESULTS FOR “YOGA”», <https://www.awaken.gr/?s=yoga> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

35. «Αποτελέσματα αναζήτησης για “γιόγκα”», <https://popaganda.gr/?s=%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1>. «Αποτελέσματα αναζήτησης για “yoga”», <https://popaganda.gr/?s=yoga> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

36. «Τελευταία νέα και ειδήσεις σχετικά με: ΓΙΟΓΚΑ», <https://www.ethnos.gr/tag/15476/giogka> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

37. «Αποτελέσματα αναζήτησης», <https://www.tanea.gr/search/?q=%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

sium by “SATYANANDA MATH-Amba”³⁸ and finally, “Psychosis and Yoga”, “Yoga of Fearlessness”³⁹.

d) Yoga and Self-awareness – Personal Development

According to a certain view, however, in the online space yoga, beyond its perceived relevance to sports, nutrition, and therapy, is also perceived as a means of self-awareness and personal development.

In Vogue’s Greek edition -one of the most famous American fashion and lifestyle magazines- we came across the article “#stayhome: it’s time to look inwards and fix the outside”, where yoga, apart from being a form of physical exercise, is also an exercise in mindfulness, especially during the quarantine period due to the Covid-19 pandemic⁴⁰. Many articles, however, coincide with this view of yoga, as a method of personal development, as they describe it. We mention here the following relevant articles: “Yoga Nidra, aka Yoga of Awareness: Strengthen your Brain with this Ancient Practice!”, in the information website NaturalSoul.gr⁴¹, “4 Steps for a Mindful Day”, “The Relationship of Yoga to our Mental Health & Wellbeing”, “How to Get an Abundance Mindset in Your Life”, “I choose YOGA because I like to feel and be well”, “You Are the Boss of Your Life”, and “How to Free Yourself from your Limiting Perceptions” in the online magazine *PositiveLife*⁴².

38. «Αναζήτηση: γιόγκα», <https://www.lifo.gr/search?keyword=%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

39. «Αναζήτηση: γιόγκα», <https://www.athensvoice.gr/search/?q=%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1>. «Αναζήτηση: yoga», <https://www.athensvoice.gr/search/?q=yoga> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

40. Chr. Politi, «#StayHome: Ἦρθε ἡ ὥρα νὰ κοιτάξουμε μέσα καὶ νὰ φτιάξουμε τὸ ἔξω», 29/3/2020, <https://vogue.gr/living/opinion/stayhome-irthe-i-ora-na-koitaxoyme-mesa-kai-na-ftiaxyoyme-to-exo/> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

41. «Yoga Nidra, ἡ ἀλλιῶς Yoga τῆς ἐπίγνωσης: Ἐνισχύστε τὸν Ἐγκέφαλό σας μὲ αὐτὴ τὴν Ἀρχαία Πρακτικὴ!», 16/5/2018, <https://naturalsoul.gr/yoga-nidra-yoga-tis-epignosis/> [accessed at 12/3/2023].

42. «Αναζήτηση: γιόγκα», <https://positivelife.gr/?s=%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1>. «Αναζήτηση: yoga», <https://positivelife.gr/?s=yoga> [accessed at 3/9/2022].

e) Yoga and the Arts

However, apart from what has been mentioned above, an unexpected area is the association of yoga with the arts and more specifically with theatre, dance, music, and visual arts, as presented in internet posts.

1. Yoga and Theatre

People have been using yoga in the art of acting not as a system or a way of apprenticeship, but as a search for new options in the actor's training, introducing practices related to body, breathing, and concentration⁴³.

Articles in the online editions of magazines or newspapers –*Lifo*, *Ta Nea*, *Iefimerida*, *Athens Voice*– and the information website *in.gr* inform their readers about the practical relationship between yoga and theatre. These publications present the cycle of seminars entitled “Acting Yoga” by Ioli Andreadis, which took place at the Theatre of Odos Cyclades - Lefteris Voyatzis. According to the seminar's organizer, director, and yoga teacher herself, the courses are based on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Haṭha* and *Vinyāsa Yoga*, the Indian martial art *kalari*, as well as on texts by the French theatre theorist Antonin Artaud and the acting methods of Rudolf Laban and Konstantin Stanislavski. The director underlines: “Yoga balances, heals, and [...] theatre can also balance and heal the practitioner”⁴⁴.

43. Regarding yoga-acting relationship, see Heleni Danga, *Η χρήση της γιόγκα στην υποκριτική. Τρία παραδείγματα: Στανισλάβσκι, Γκροτόφσκι, Μ. Τσέχοφ*, Thesis Lecture, Theatre Department, School of Fine Arts, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2020.

44. LIFOTEAM, «Acting Yoga: Έξερευνώντας τη σχέση του θεάτρου και της yoga», 21/4/2017, <https://www.lifo.gr/guide/theater/news/acting-yoga-exereynontas-ti-shesi-toy-theatroy-kai-tis-yoga>. M. Theodorakou, «“Acting Yoga” με την Ίολη Άνδρεάδη», 11/5/2017, <https://www.tanea.gr/2017/05/11/lifearts/acting-yoga-me-tin-ioli-andreadi/>. «Έργαστήριο Acting Yoga από την Ίολη Άνδρεάδη, βασισμένο στον Άρτώ και τη Νευρο-επιστήμη», 26/10/2020, <https://www.in.gr/2020/10/26/life/culture-live/theater/ergastirio-acting-yoga-apo-tin-ioli-andreadi-vasismeno-ston-arto-kai-ti-neyroepistimi/>. «Acting Yoga στο διαδίκτυο: Έξάσκηση του σώματος σε συνδυασμό με θέατρο», 4/11/2020, <https://www.iefimerida.gr/poli/acting-yoga-sto-diadiktyo-me-theatro>. Al. Skaraki, «Ίολη Άνδρεάδη, τί είναι ή Acting Yoga;», 4/11/2020, <https://>

Additionally, the news provider *ERT Open* posted on its website information about the “Yoga Your Voice & Your Inner Self” seminar, hosted by the Horos Theatre. According to the seminar’s coordinators Gina Poulou and Raya Tsakiridis, this method is a modern practice, that seeks self-awareness by activating the body’s energy centers. It combines yoga and vocal techniques and, in this way, practitioners achieve mental and vocal balance, as they discover their authentic voice, awaken their self-consciousness, and activate their creative self while evolving into complete performer⁴⁵.

2. Yoga and Dance

The Fitness Vibes community, with active fitness bloggers, fitness YouTubers, and fitness influencers in Greece, published an article in its online magazine, that states that dance and yoga, albeit different means of body expression, nevertheless have common elements, as they develop balance, coordination of movements and focus on the body and mind. In particular, the Vinyāsa Yoga’s postures resemble the dancer’s movements or reflect the choreography description, as there is a synchronization of movement and breathing, where one *āsana* follows the other in a harmonious flow. A typical case of movement and flow’s dynamic interaction is the *naṭarājāsana* (dancer’s posture)⁴⁶, which in ballet is called *cambre*, a bend starting from the waist and moving backward⁴⁷.

On the internet, we came across several Dance Schools that offer yoga classes or workshops, such as Modulor Dance Space and Dance

www.athensvoice.gr/politismos/theatro-opera/689110/i-ioli-andreadi-paroysiazei-diadiktyako-seminario-acting-yoga/ [accessed at 13/3/2023].

45. «Σεμινάριο Yoga Your Voice & Your Inner Self στο θέατρο Χώρας», 2/12/2018, <https://www.ertopen.com/show/itemlist/tag/YOGA> [accessed at 13/3/2023].

46. B. K. S. Iyengar, *Light On Yoga. Yoga Dipika*, Foreword by Yehudi Menuhin, Schocken Books New York, New York 1966, pp. 419-422.

47. M. Prefitsi, «Ποιά είναι η σχέση του χοροῦ με τὴν yoga;», 20/2/2021, <https://fitnessvibes.gr/2021/02/20/%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%B7-%CF%83%CF%87%CE%AD%CF%83%CE%B7-%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85-%CF%87%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%8D-%CE%BC%CE%B5-%CF%84%CE%B7-yoga/> [accessed at 13/3/2023].

Drops –which focus on Vinyāsa Yoga practice– while *Dance Dream* Dance School delivers *Aerial Yoga*, classes, as their websites inform us⁴⁸. Finally, ArtsHub, a contemporary space for dance and expression, offers a course that (as its website tells us) combines the benefits of Vinyāsa Flow Yoga with a personal way of expression and movement⁴⁹.

However, the Anāsana Yoga Studio in Thessaloniki, on its official website, links yoga with dance in a completely different way, connecting it to a Woman’s primordial, mystical energy and her “creative potential”, as it says, by organizing a dance workshop entitled: “Holistic Dance for Woman”. The workshop uses techniques inspired by yoga, dance, and theatre traditions. It aims to connect participants more deeply with their feminine nature through dance movements and voice release techniques⁵⁰.

3. Yoga and Music

An article from the online music magazine *MusicHeaven* invites its readers to attend a concert on the stage of the Chora Theatre, organized by the International Organization Sahaja Yoga. In this concert, artists from the Nirmal Tarang music group will perform compositions inspired by Indian folk tradition accompanied by traditional Indian and Western instruments. As the article underlines, from the moment that Indian music distinctively touches our deeper spiritual nature by opening our energy centers, through this musical performance the audience will be able to wander into their “inner existence”⁵¹.

48. *Modular Dance Space*, <https://pilatesdance.business.site/>. «Μαθήματα ἑνηλίκων: Yoga», <https://www.sxolixorou.gr/yoga>. Dance School *Dance Dream*, <http://www.dance-dream.gr/programma-sxolis-xorou> [accessed at 14/3/2023].

49. St. Tzartou, “Dance-based Creative Flow Yoga (Yoga καὶ σύγχρονος χορός)”, 9/6/2017, <https://www.artshub.gr/dance-based-creative-flow-yoga> [accessed at 14/3/2023].

50. «Όλιστικός Χορός για τήν Γυναίκα», 10/10/2018, <https://www.anasana-yoga.gr/%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%82-%CF%87%CE%BF%CF%81%CF%8C%CF%82-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CE%B3%CF%85%CE%BD%CE%B1%CE%AF%CE%BA%CE%B1/> [accessed at 14/3/2023].

51. «Ίνδική Μουσική, Χορός & Διαλογισμός / 26 Μαΐου, Θέατρο Χώρα, Άθήνα», 17/5/2010, https://www.musicheaven.gr/html/modules.php?name=Splatt_Forums&file=viewtopic&topic=21206 [accessed at 15/3/2023].

On the internet, we came across two more publications about performances of the Sahaja Yoga International Organization, which took place in Kalamata and Volos; apart from music, it included an introduction to the Sahaja Yoga meditation method. The first publication comes from the *Kalamata IN* magazine, emphasizing that Indian music is particularly therapeutic and each musical note corresponds to one of man's seven energy centers. When the frequency of a note resonates with the corresponding energy center, it activates, empowers, and unblocks it⁵². The second post was on the website of the daily newspaper *Magnesia News*, which notes that Sahaja Yoga's unique method of meditation-self-awareness has beneficial effects for anyone interested in improving their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual level⁵³.

To conclude this section, it is worth noting that in Greece there are two yogic music bands, Bhakti Age Kirtan and Adi Shakti Kirtan Band, each maintaining a website on the social networking platform Facebook. Bhakti Age Kirtan is a musical ensemble created by a group of Satyananda Yoga teachers. The band's focus is *Nāda Yoga* (Yoga of Sound) and *kirtan* (repetition of melodic *mantras* accompanied by musical instruments). According to their statement on their website, *kirtan* is an art that helps express emotions, freeing them from stress, oppression, and phobias. Moreover, with the energy it creates, it reconstitutes the flow of *prāṇa* and leads beyond the conscious mind to the experience of our "inner universe"⁵⁴. The second yogic band, the Adi Shakti Kirtan Band, was formed due to its members' shared love for devotional chanting and music, as they point out on their website. This music ensemble also chants *kirtan* and –as its members claim– dedicates its song to the Cosmic Mother who is the source of everything, as she gave birth to all existence⁵⁵.

52. «Τὸ Καλλιτεχνικὸ Στέκι μᾶς προσκαλεῖ σὲ μιὰ βραδιά Ἰνδικῆς μουσικῆς, αὐτογνωσίας καὶ διαλογισμοῦ», 28/7/2014, <https://kalamatain.gr/new/dialogismos-kallitexniko-steki-kalamata/> [accessed at 15/3/2023].

53. «Ἰνδικὴ μουσικὴ καὶ διαλογισμός», 23/6/2017, <https://magnesianews.gr/perissotera/politismos/indiki-mousiki-ke-dialogismos.html> [accessed at 15/3/2023].

54. Bhakti Age Kirtan Group, <https://www.facebook.com/BhaktiAgeKirtanGroup> [accessed at 15/3/2023].

55. *Antaratma & Adi Shakti*, https://www.facebook.com/AdiShaktiKirtan?ref=py_c. See also, "ANTARATMA & ADI SHAKTI, Music & Kirtan Greece, Kirtan leads us on a

The bands participate in events organized by Yoga Schools and the annual Yoga Festivals, posting videos of their songs. Two of the bands' most recent posts are typical. The first one, by the Adi Shakti Kirtan Band, posted on 19/2/2023, is about an event dedicated to Mahāśivarātri, one of the most important initiation festivals in the yoga tradition, publishing the following psalm: "I am eternal Bliss, I am Shiva! I am that same soul which is Reality, Consciousness and Peaceful Bliss". The second post is about the Bhakti Age Kirtan on 28/2/2023, where the band chants the mantra "Aim Hreem Shreem", which is used to invoke blessings from the deities Sarasvatī, Pārvatī καί Lakṣmī.

4. Yoga and the Visual Arts

However, yoga is present not only in the fields of theatre, dance, and music but also in the visual arts. Here, of course, the word "yoga" is nowhere to be found; nevertheless, in the articles that will be presented below, the notion of prayer-meditation as a "spiritual path leading to the Self" or of painting-meditation identification as "a journey to other dimensions" is scattered throughout.

Thus, an article published by the Greek online art and culture magazine *Polis Magazine*, featured an interview with the painter Veronika Damianidou, in which the artist suggests that for her, painting is prayer and meditation, a spiritual path that leads her to the "center of her Self", while at the same time helping her to connect with what can be described as "Divine"⁵⁶. The same view, that painting is meditation, is expressed by the artist Milly Martionou, in an interview she gave to

magical inner journey full of joy, clarity and mental peace", <https://www.twelveom.com/speaker/adi-shakti-music-kirtan-greece/>. «Antaratma & Adi Shakti kirtan band στην Άθήνα», <https://el.yogavijaya.com/kirtan> [accessed at 15/3/2023].

56. «B. Δαμιανίδου: "Πιστεύω ότι όλες οι τέχνες συνδέονται μεταξύ τους σε μια κοινή βάση, πού είναι το σχέδιο και η άρμονία"», <https://www.polismagazino.gr/%CE%B2%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BD%CE%AF%CE%BA%CE%B7-%CE%B4%CE%B1%CE%BC%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%AF%CE%B4%CE%BF%CF%85-%CF%80%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%8D%CF%89-%CF%8C%CF%84%CE%B9-%CF%8C%CE%BB%CE%B5%CF%82/> [accessed at 15/3/2023].

Athens Voice.⁵⁷ The title “Nature and Meditation” was also found in an exhibition of paintings by George Pennas, which took place in Corfu⁵⁸.

However, of interest is the fact that in recent years the practice of yoga has been included in the activities of the museums. Initially, in 2017, in the context of the celebration of International Museum Day, the Industrial Museum of Fotaeros presented a series of activities, including, among other things, a Stress Yoga Workshop. This workshop was repeated the following year as part of the “Science without Borders” Festival, entitled: “Yoga in the Museum”⁵⁹. In 2017 also, at the Municipal Gallery of Larissa-Museum C. I. Katsigra, a lecture by Swami Sivamurti, founder of the Satyanandashram Greece, was given in the Museum of Art, 2017: “Yoga: The Science of Life”, followed by a yoga workshop. According to a newspaper article, the exercise aims to help the participants eliminate stress and free their bodies from muscular tension through specific exercises, surrounded by the masterpieces of the Gallery’s Collection⁶⁰.

57. V. Calliga, «Milly Martionou: Έκρηξεις χρωμάτων σὲ καμβά. “Ἡ ζωγραφικὴ γιὰ μένα εἶναι διαλογισμὸς, ἓνα ταξίδι σὲ ἄλλες διαστάσεις ὅπου δὲν ὑπάρχει χρόνος”», 16/3/2022, <https://www.athensvoice.gr/politismos/eikastika/749958/milly-martionou-ekrixeis-hromaton-se-kamva/amp/> [προσπελάστηκε στις 15/3/2023].

58. «Φύση καὶ Διαλογισμὸς. Ἐκθεση ζωγραφικῆς τοῦ Γιώργου Πέννα ἐγκαινιάζεται στὶς 10 Σεπτεμβρίου στὴν Κέρκυρα», 30/8/2010, <https://www.monopoli.gr/2010/08/30/showtimes/exhibitions/103445/%CF%86%CF%8D%CF%83%CE%B7-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BF%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CF%8C%CF%82/>. «Ἐκθεση Ζωγραφικῆς Γ. Πέννα “Φύση καὶ Διαλογισμὸς”, 10/9-15/10/2010», <https://www.corfuland.gr/el/politistika/ektheseis-zografikis/ekthesi-zografikis-g.-penna-fysi-kai-dialogismos-10-9-15-10-2010.html> [accessed at 15/3/2023].

59. «Τὸ Βιομηχανικὸ Μουσεῖο Φωταερίου γιορτάζει τὴ Διεθνῆ Ἡμέρα Μουσείων», 9/5/2017, <https://www.cityofathens.gr/event/to-viomichaniko-moyseio-fotaeriy-giortazeiti-diethni-imeramoyseion/>. «Athens Science Festival 2018. Science without borders “Ἐπιστῆμη χωρὶς σύνορα”. 24-29 Ἀπριλίου 2018. 94 διαδραστικὰ δρώμενα (50 διαδραστικὲς ἐκθέσεις καὶ 46 πειραματικὲς ἐπιδείξεις) | 35 ἐργαστήρια γιὰ παιδιὰ | 22 Workshop γιὰ ἐνήλικες | 45 ὁμιλίες | 5 διαγωνισμοὶ καὶ πολλὰ ἀκόμα πρωινὰ καὶ ἀπογευματινὰ καλλιτεχνικὰ δρώμενα γιὰ ὅλες τὶς ἡλικίες», 12/3/2018, <https://gasmuseum.gr/index.php/to-mouseio/to-orama-kai-i-apostoli-mas/itemlist/user/759-biomhchanikomoyseiofwtairiybiomhchanikomoyseioathhnasbiomhchanikomoyseiodhmoyathhnaiwngasmuseumgr?start=140> [accessed at 16/3/2023].

60. M. Mavrogianni, «Yoga στὸ Μουσεῖο!», *EPT news*, 3/10/2017, <https://www.ertnews.gr/%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BE%CE%B9%CE%BD%CF%8C%CE%BC%CE%B7%CF%84%CE%B1/yoga-sto-mousio/> [accessed at 16/3/2023].

Something similar happened in November 2019, when the Museum of the B. & E. Foundation's Museum of the B. & E. Goulandris Museum launched its weekly yoga classes against the background of paintings and sculptures of Modern and Contemporary Art, which still exists today. According to the Foundation's official website, "among works of art from the collection [...] body, mind and breath work together through yoga practice, enhancing mental well-being and concentration. Beginning with a flowing yoga posture sequence emphasizing breathing, awareness, and body alignment, we conclude with breathing and relaxation practices that promote the harmonious functioning of the bodily systems"⁶¹.

f) Yoga and Commercial Activities

In recent years, a trend has been observed in Greece –which is increasing, especially after the economic crisis's outbreak in 2009– whereby yoga as a consumer product is the main activity of wellness tourism but also spiritual tourism⁶².

Following this trend, several yoga teachers, yoga schools, and independent entrepreneurs offer yoga retreats for the weekend –the modern equivalent of religious pilgrimages, as Robert Fuller identifies

61. «Yoga στο Μουσείο», <https://goulandris.gr/el/events/yoga-sto-mouseio>. «Yoga στο Μουσείο: Ξεκινάνε τὰ πρωτότυπα μαθήματα στο Ίδρυμα Βασίλη & Ἐλίζας Γουλανδρή. Τὰ πιὸ πρωτότυπα μαθήματα γιόγκα τῆς Ἀθήνας», 11/11/2019, <https://www.lifo.gr/culture/yoga-sto-mouseio-xekinane-ta-prototypa-mathimata-sto-idryma-basili-elizas-goylandri>. «Γιόγκα ανάμεσα σὲ ἔργα τέχνης στὸ Μουσείο τοῦ Ἰδρύματος Βασίλη & Ἐλίζας Γουλανδρή», 12/11/2019, https://www.huffingtonpost.gr/entry/yiogyka-anamesa-se-erya-technes-sto-mouseio-toe-idrematos-vasile-elizas-yoelandre_gr_5dca8874e4b0fcfb7f6c5ed4 [accessed at 16/3/2023].

62. Chr. Pliakou, *Ἡ Γιόγκα στὸν Τουρισμὸ Εὐεξίας, Κίνητρα καὶ Ἀνάγκες Τουριστῶν, Τάσεις καὶ Προοπτικὲς στὴν Ἑλλάδα*, Mast diss., Postgraduate Programme of Studies "Tourism Business Administration", School of Social Sciences, Hellenic Open University, Patra 2018. Xanth., Papadopoulou, *Τουρισμὸς Εὐζωίας. Τάσεις καὶ Προοπτικὲς γιὰ τὴν Ἀνάπτυξη Ἐπώνυμων Προορισμῶν στὴν Ἑλλάδα*, Mast diss., Postgraduate Programme of Studies "Tourism Business Administration", School of Social Sciences, Hellenic Open University, Patra 2020.

them⁶³ but also three-day, four-day, or weekly yoga retreats, with prices ranging from 205 euros for a four-day retreat to 780 to 1300 euros for a week⁶⁴. The consumers' turn towards this "holistic" or "alternative" model of holidays is reinforced by many newspapers and magazines with various articles: "Yoga and holidays", "Yoga, relaxation, Euboea. Three yoga retreats in Evia show the way for a holistic holiday model" in the newspaper *Kathimerini*⁶⁵, "Molyvos, yoga's 'Mecca'" in the newspaper *Ta Nea*⁶⁶, "The magical experience of yoga retreat: a journey for relaxation and practice – 5 proposals in Mani and the islands, for the next period", "Delphi: Five-day painting exhibition and three-day yoga retreat at the navel of the earth", in *iefimerida*⁶⁷. Finally, the news service *CNN Greece* suggests the "best yoga and meditation retreats in Greece"⁶⁸.

63. R. C. Fuller, *Spiritual, But Not Religious. Understanding Unchurched America*, Oxford University Press, United States of America 2001, p. 7.

64. «Yoga Retreats Έλλάδα 2022-2023», <https://el.yogavijaya.com/yogaretreatsgreece>. «Τὰ ἐπόμενα Yoga Retreats τῆς Φωτεινῆς Μπήτρου 2023», <https://www.purefitness.gr/upcoming-yoga-retreats/>. «Γιόγκα καὶ Ἴστιοπλοΐα», http://www.sitaram.gr/yoga_and_sailing.php. «Γιόγκα Retreat & Βιολογικὴ Διατροφή», <https://capsis.com/el/yogaretreat-organicfood.html>. «Ὄργανῶστε Retreat», <https://amorgos-aegialis.com/el/host-retreat/>. «Νοόςφαιρα Wellness & Retreat Center», <https://www.noosfera.gr/>. «Τὰ καλύτερα ξενοδοχεῖα γιὰ γιόγκα στὴν Ἑλλάδα» <https://www.travelmyth.gr/%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%B1%CE%B4%CE%B1/%CE%BE%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%BF%CE%B4%CE%BF%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BF%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1> [accessed at 24/3/2023].

65. Nt. Kourellou, «Καὶ γιόγκα καὶ διακοπές», 3/5/2018, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/k/travel/962306/kai-giogka-kai-diakopes/>. P. Lapsati, «Γιόγκα, χαλάρωση, Εὐβοία. Τρία yoga retreats στὴν Εὐβοία δείχνουν τὸν δρόμο γιὰ ἓνα ὀλιστιλὸ μοντέλο διακοπῶν», 7/7/2022, <https://www.kathimerini.gr/k/travel/561943792/giogka-chalarosi-eyvoia/> [accessed at 24/3/2023].

66. P. Giakoumi, «Ὁ Μόλυβος, "Μέκκα" τῆς γιόγκα», 9/6/2009, <https://www.tanea.gr/2009/06/09/greece/o-molybos-mekka-tis-giogka/> [accessed at 24/32/2023].

67. V. Athanasiadou, «Ἡ μαγικὴ ἐμπειρία τοῦ γιόγκα retreat: Ταξίδι γιὰ χαλάρωση καὶ ἄσκηση – 5 προτάσεις σὲ Μάνη καὶ νησιά, γιὰ τὸ ἐπόμενο διάστημα 10/10/2021, <https://www.iefimerida.gr/travel/magiki-empieria-toy-giogka-retreat>. «Δελφοί: Πενθήμερη ἔκθεση ζωγραφικῆς καὶ τριήμερο yoga retreat στὸν ὄμφαλό τῆς γῆς», 17/5/2022, <https://www.iefimerida.gr/politismos/delfoi-ekthesi-zografikis-yoga-retreat-omfalo-gis> [accessed at 24/3/2023].

68. M. Grammatikou, «Οἱ καλύτερες ἀποδράσεις γιὰ γιόγκα καὶ διαλογισμὸ στὴν Ἑλλάδα», 19/3/2018, <https://www.cnn.gr/taksidi/protaseis/story/122166/oi-kalyteres-apodraseis-gia-giogka-kai-dialogismo-stin-ellada> [accessed at 24/3/2023].

However, yoga is not only related to tourism, as we found that ideas related to yoga and its practices are also found in other areas of commerce. Ancient Asian concepts - such as the notion of “spirituality” as a renaming of religion - and guru names are now used to dress products “with a veneer of mystical authenticity”, as Jeremy Carrette and Richard King⁶⁹ characteristically mention. Thus, it is not uncommon anymore to find “Samsara”, “Zen”, “Spiritual”, or “Maharishi” perfumes on the Greek market⁷⁰. In addition, the sale of yoga items -such as mats, bags, clothing, books, and accessories (bracelets, aromatic sticks, sound pads, cymbals, thermos, etc.)- is also common and is mainly carried out online, either on the websites of the Yoga Schools themselves or on other websites specialized in the sale of these items⁷¹. Characteristically, large sportswear and clothing companies have clothes and accessories specifically for yoga in the Greek market⁷². The sale of yoga (and wellness) products has grown so much that they can be found on pharmacy websites⁷³, technology, and home appliance stores⁷⁴, as well as

69. J. Carrette & R. King, *Selling Spirituality. The silent takeover of religion*, Routledge, U.S.A. 2005, pp. 16-17.

70. «Samsara Eau de Parfum Guerlain για γυναίκες», <https://www.fragrantica.gr/perfume/Guerlain/Samsara-Eau-de-Parfum-55.html>. «Zen Eau de Parfum για γυναίκες», <https://www.notino.gr/shiseido/zen-eau-de-parfum-gia-gynakes/>. «Spiritual M. Micalef για γυναίκες και άνδρες», <https://www.fragrantica.gr/perfume/M-Micalef/Spiritual-51035.html>. «Maharishi Rich Hippie για γυναίκες», <https://www.fragrantica.gr/perfume/Rich-Hippie/Maharishi-11014.html> [accessed at 26/3/2023].

71. “Yogashop.gr, Upgrade your practice”, <https://www.yogashop.gr/el/>. “Niyamas Yoga. Yoga Mats, Accessories, Lifestyle!”, <https://niyamas-yoga.com/>. “My karma. Path to inner self voice”, <https://mykarma.gr/>. “Simplygreen”, <https://simplygreen.gr/>. “Gökotta.gr”, <https://gokotta.gr/>. “Mr.East”, <https://mreast.gr/>. «Η τέχνη της yoga», <https://coya.gr/>. «Χείρωνας, Holistic Shop», <https://chironasholisticshop.gr/> [accessed at 24/3/2023].

72. «Γιόγκα και Πιλάτες», <https://www.adidas.gr/%CE%B3%CE%B9%CF%8C%CE%B3%CE%BA%CE%B1>. «Γιόγκα», <https://www.nike.com/gr/w/yoga-anrlj>. «Γυναίκετα ροῦχα για γιόγκα», https://www2.hm.com/el_gr/yinaikia/agora-ana-kategoria/athlitika-idi/yoga.html [accessed at 24/3/2023].

73. «Yoga – Διαλογισμός», <https://www.ofarmakopoiou.gr/athlitis-mos-gymnastiki/yoga-dialogismos>. “Yoga – Pilates – Crossfit”, <https://www.dpharmacy.gr/gr/athlisi-kai-euexia/spor-drastiriotites/yoga-pilates-crossfit.html> [accessed at 25/3/2023].

74. «Healthy Living. Υγεία τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω τῆς ζωῆς μας!», https://www.plaisio.gr/Campaign/2022/04-April/202204-Healthy-Living?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=Post&utm_campaign=20220428-Healthy-Living&fbclid=IwAR22cmtDMalapDb

in large toy stores, where dolls that “do relaxing meditation exercises” are available, and others with full yoga equipment⁷⁵.

Remarks

As we mentioned above in the Introduction, “yoga” is a highly polysemous Sanskrit word. However, in the texts that teach it, its meaning is more limited and can define a practice or a body of practices on the one hand, or the goal and state achieved through these practices on the other⁷⁶. In tantric and non-dualistic (advaita) traditions, yoga can be understood as a state of coupling or union, where “union” can be perceived as a union with Śiva’s power, the union of all dualities, union with a “plane of reality” or finally union of the individual and the supreme self⁷⁷.

However, by carefully observing what has been mentioned above, the concepts of yoga scattered on the internet, which can be found in a good number of articles⁷⁸, have nothing to do with the texts that teach it. It

wd3_xiVM2gqafJx4OQK-nPS2DMwCj-R7gcwv0PAg8TgM. «pilates-yoga, γιὰ νὰ ἔχεις ὁ,τι χρειαστεῖς!», https://www.public.gr/cat/sports-and-fitness/aksesoyar-gymnastikis/akse-soyar-pilates-yoga?gclid=CjwKCAiAkfucBhBBEiwAFjbkr9g3hMuLJNTmBon7aqrtpkSYWVO26-YvzwAxsfj7t5sqZlbdGLZ-RoC4Y4QAvD_BwE. “Yoga-Pilates”, <https://www.kotsovolos.gr/personal-care/organa-gymnastikhs/yoga-pilates> [accessed at 25/3/2023].

75. «Barbie Wellness-Γιόγκα», <https://www.moustakastoys.gr/koukles-playset-loutrina/koukles-modas-barbie/barbie-wellness-giogka-gnk01-399923072446/>. «Our Generation Κούκλα Lucy Grace With Yoga Outfit», <https://www.moustakastoys.gr/koukles-playset-loutrina/koukles-modas-barbie/our-generation-koykla-lucy-grace-with-yoga-outfit-bd31184z-401923031184/>. «BARBIE Wellness ‘Ημέρα Όμορφιάς», https://www.e-jumbo.gr/paichnidia/koukles-kouzinika-set-omorfi-as-iroes-gia-koritsia/barbie-koukles/barbie-epangelmata-ochimata/barbie-wellness/barbie-wellness-imer-a-omorfi-as-mattel_1489581/ [accessed at 25/3/2023].

76. J. Mallinson & M. Singleton, (translation & introduction), *Roots of Yoga*, Penguin Classics, United Kingdom 2017, pp. 29-30, 37-46.

77. J. Mallinson & M. Singleton, *ibid.*, pp. 29-30, 37-46.

78. Regarding the multitude of publications concerning yoga, which we have found in online newspapers and magazines, we can mention the following: In the *Athens Voice* newspaper, a search for the word “yoga” yielded 4,319 articles; a search for the word “yoga” yielded 1,098 results. Similar searches in the *Lifo* newspaper yielded 729 and 557

is about some other ideas, which under the title “yoga” are presented in a popularized way, even dressed up with the garments of scientific knowledge. In these views, we can identify some of the Diffused New Religiosity’s basic patterns, discerned by Ioannis Xidakis⁷⁹.

First: It expresses an expanded concept of man’s potentialities, since through yoga, a self-improvement method, a “pathway”, the practitioner either achieves self-knowledge⁸⁰ or is led “to the direct experience of the inner Self, the realization of the Self or self-realization”. However, these are Vivekananda considerations; the latter emphatically states that the concept of “realization” is eminently personal and experiential⁸¹. Much the same views on self-improvement and the strong experiential and personal connotation of the yogic āsana - used as a means to achieve self-improvement - are later found in B. K. S. Iyengar (1918-2014), creator of the modern yoga system bearing the same name⁸². In addition, human beings’ potential includes the achievement of a “state of expanded awareness” or “awakening of the latent potential” or “development of consciousness”, through alternative healing techniques and “esoteric techniques”, such as the process of yogic meditation; ideas, however,

results respectively. In the Greek edition of the French magazine *Elle*, a search for the word “yoga” yielded 290 articles; a search for the word “yoga” yielded 310. In *Harper’s Bazaar*, similar searches led to 61 and 91 articles respectively. *Holistic Life* is a magazine focused on complementary/alternative therapies; a search for “yoga” has shown 50 Publications, while the same word has 53. In *Marie Claire* magazine, the above searches lead to 5 and 19 articles respectively. In *Natura NRG Green & Healthy Life* magazine, which deals with health-nutrition-wellness issues, we found about 153 article titles in the search for “yoga” and as many in the search for the same word. *Propaganda* is the Greek version of the American magazine bearing the same title of the cultural trend Goth; here we found 179 article titles in the search for “yoga” and 203 in the search for the same word. *Shape Magazine*, with health advice and fitness exercises, shows 429 articles in the search for “yoga” and 757 in the search for the same word. Finally, on *Wefit*, an online health and wellness magazine, the search engine for “yoga” brings up 1. 690 articles

79. Io. Xidakis, «Μετανεωτερικότητα και Διάχυτη Θρησκευτικότητα», *Θεολογία/Theologia* 92, 1 (2021), pp. 166-176.

80. Vivekananda, Swami, *Raja Yoga*, Celephaïs Press, Leeds 2003, pp. 7-8.

81. Vivekananda, Swami, *Raja Yoga*, *ibid.*, pp. 46, 120, 149, 153-154, 188; Eliz. De Michelis, *ibid.*, pp. 123-126, 140-146, 173-177.

82. Eliz. De Michelis, *ibid.*, pp. 211, 219, 221-223, 230-235, 249.

which originated within the New Age movement⁸³, where “personal growth”, as Wouter Jacobus Hanegraaff, argues, can be understood as the form taken by religious salvation⁸⁴.

Second: As soon as man’s “deeper spiritual nature” or the “inner universe” is mentioned and yoga is defined as the “spiritual path leading to the inner Self” or the “center of the Self”, the bi-layer view of the whole reality appears. Thus, Reality is divided into the “inside” and the “outside”, the inner reality, considered superior, and the outer reality. In Vivekananda however, we also find the opposite view, i.e. the “outside”, the “superconscious”, the samādhi, state, existing on a higher plane than the “inside”, the “conscious”⁸⁵.

Third: Diffused New Religiosity is a form of New Religiousness and therefore, as Ioannis Xidakis observes⁸⁶, has the same general properties as those of the New Religious Movements or the “new religious consciousness”, properties which have been pointed out by the religious scholar St. Papalexandropoulos⁸⁷:

a. Objectification of the transcendental and subjectification of human beings. The latter ones are the subject of religiosity and proceed towards the transcendent, towards their object, their goal - the “divine”; they are heading towards the absolute, i.e. their “inner existence” or his “inner silence”.

b. The scientificization of religion, mainly through psychologization, but also yoga’s medicalization, either by using medical terminology or by adopting a medical approach⁸⁸. Indeed, how yoga is presented by

83. St. Papalexandropoulos, «Νέα Έποχή. Ἡ θρησκευολογική ταυτότητα ἑνὸς κινήματος», *Ἐξοδος/Exodos* 6 (1991), pp. 17-29 and 7 (1992), pp. 41-61. P. B. Clarke, “New Age Movement (NAM)”, in: P. B. Clarke (ed.), *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*, Routledge, U.S.A. and Canada 2006, pp. 442-446.

84. W. J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the mirror of secular thought*, E. J. Brill, Netherlands 1996, pp. 44, 46.

85. Vivekananda, Swami, *ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

86. Io. Xidakis, *ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

87. St. Papalexandropoulos, *Δοκίμια Ἱστορίας τῶν Θρησκευτῶν*, *ibid.*, pp. 163, 168-169.

88. Br. S. Turner, “The Body in Western Society: Social Theory and its Perspectives”, in: S. Coakley (ed.), *Religion and the Body*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1997, pp. 29, 38-39; J. S. Alter, *Yoga in Modern India. The Body Between Science and Philosophy*, Princeton University Press, United Kingdom 2004, p. 10; J. Carrette & R. King, *ibid.*, pp.

applications on the Greek internet, either as a health treatment and alternative therapy system or as a method that improves the physical condition and causes a sense of well-being, has resulted in yoga in our country being identified with a holistic system of exercise and therapy.

c. “Cosmotheism”, i.e. the integration of the idea of the absolute on a mundane scale, in one or more aspects of reality, which replace the absolute, although, as St. Papalexandropoulos argues, many times the idea of the absolute is not integrated into the various expressions of reality, but rather into some of the concepts by which we call it⁸⁹. Thus, in the views on yoga circulating on the internet, reference is made to the “One” or the “Whole”, but also to “transcendence”, “liberation”, “awakening” and “transformation”; to “balance”, “harmony” and “awareness”; and especially to the triptych “health-wellness-healing”, as ideas conceptually narrower than the idea of the absolute.

Fourth: Although Ioannis Xidakis does not mention capitalism as one of the Diffused New Religiosity’s motifs it is one of Postmodernity’s characteristics, which, as the researcher observes, “shapes buyer-seller relations” and “is inextricably linked to the existence and spread of contemporary diffuse religiosity”⁹⁰. However, as many scholars agree, capitalism has been a key factor in the rapid spread of modern yoga systems⁹¹. During the 1970s, as there was an explosion of interest in physical exercise, yoga was perceived as a safe and balanced way of maintaining fitness. This resulted in the establishment of a significant

116-127; Eliz. De Michelis, “Modern Yoga History and Forms”, in M. Singleton & J. Byrne (eds.), *Yoga in the Modern World. Contemporary Perspectives*, Routledge, U.S.A. and Canada 2008, pp. 25-26; M. Singleton, *Yoga Body. The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*, Oxford University Press, New York 2010, pp. 81, 104.

89. St. Papalexandropoulos, *ibid.*, pp. 171 and 175, 176.

90. Io. Xidakis, *ibid.*, p. 162.

91. El. De Michelis, “Yoga, Modern”, in: P. B. Clarke (ed.), *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*, Routledge, U.S.A. and Canada 2006, pp. 700-702; “Modern Yoga History and Forms”, in: M. Singleton & J. Byrne (ed.), *Yoga in the Modern World. Contemporary Perspectives*, Routledge, U.S.A. and Canada 2008, pp. 17-20; M. Singleton, “Suggestive Therapeutics: New Thought’s Relationship to Modern Yoga”, *Asian Medicine. Tradition and Modernity*, Vol. 3 (2007), p. 72; J. Carrette & R. King, *ibid.*, pp. 114-120; A. R. Jain, *Selling Yoga. From Counterculture to Pop Culture*, Oxford University Press, New York 2015, pp. 46-47, 115.

number of Yoga Schools, which even began to standardize its various possible practical applications – for example in sports, medical treatment and prevention, perinatal yoga, yoga for children, yoga for the elderly, and people with special needs, etc.⁹². Then, from the 1990s onwards, yoga has evolved into a commercial enterprise, which includes courses, certification of instructors, clothing, books, videos, equipment, and holidays for sale to the “spiritual consumer”, phenomena which, as we have seen above, are also very common in our country.

Conclusion

To conclude this debate, we would like to point out the following:

The modern, popular yoga systems that emphasize postures -mostly practiced in our country and are identified with holistic fitness regimes-were created during the first half of the 20th century; yet, they are also a hybrid product of the interactive encounter between colonial India and the global physical culture movement⁹³. Moreover, as Modern Yoga and the New Age movement developed in parallel and often interrelated from the 1970s onwards, the religious-philosophical beliefs expressed in yogic environments tended to align increasingly with New Age forms of religiosity⁹⁴.

However, although Modern Yoga has also been influenced by movements other than the New Age⁹⁵, it cannot be included in the New Religious Movements phenomenon⁹⁶. However, it could be included in its particular subset, that of the Diffused New Religiosity, as we can

92. El. De Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga*, *op.cit.*, pp. 192-193; M. Singleton, “Yoga, Modern”, in: D. Cush, & Cath. Robinson & M. York (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Routledge, U.S.A. and Canada 2008, pp. 1033-1038.

93. M. Singleton, “Suggestive Therapeutics: New Thought’s Relationship to Modern Yoga”, *op.cit.*, p. 82; *idem*, “Yoga, Modern”, *op.cit.*, pp. 1033-1038; *idem*, *Yoga Body. The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*, *ibid.*, p. 81.

94. El. De Michelis, “Yoga, Modern”, *ibid.*, pp. 700-702.

95. Regarding yoga’s relation with the New Religious Movements, see Loukia Roditou, *ibid.*

96. Eliz. Puttick, “YOGA”, P. B. Clarke (ed.), *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements*, Routledge, U.S.A. & Canada 2006, pp. 702-704.

discern some of the latter's basic patterns in how yoga is presented on the Greek internet, which is undoubtedly a Diffused New Religiosity's means of expression.