



Studying *Yoga Sūtras* through *Naruto*

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Abstract: Japanese anime in the modern times communicate cross-cultural information exchange of interreligious discourses (Minea 91-103). This propagates mutual appreciation and respect across heterogeneous religious practices emphasizing the need to analyze and rationalize anime content through the prism of our own cultures. According to Feigenblatt and Federico, anime not only reflects Japanese identity and culture, but also incorporates themes of hybridity and globalisation. This broadens anime's horizons from being a simple local entertainment medium to popular culture propagators worldwide, whereby, content analysis of anime becomes an important aspect of cultural studies.

This research paper is tasked to link ancient Indian spiritual philosophy (*Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*) to Japanese animation (Masashi Kishimoto's *Naruto*), thereby, analysing and identifying characters, plot, and motifs in *Naruto* that are relevant throughout the series. The following concepts in Yoga such as “yama, niyama, āsana prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhayaḥ” are used to analyze Kishimoto's Narutoverse. Content as well as context analysis of the series provides the connections to how the Narutoverse incorporates the “Astanga” Yoga approach, enriching its narrative as well as repackaging classical cultural information as part of a new pop culture narrative. This reveals the universality of such Yogic principles as well as portrays the shared ideas of the spiritual wisdom of the Asian countries.

Finally, this paper acknowledges that Indian *Yoga Sūtras* and Japanese anime intersect through universal themes and concepts as portrayed in the Narutoverse transcending aesthetic boundaries of culture and time and enriching pop cultural narratives.

Keywords: *Yoga Sūtras, chakra, pop culture, collective unconscious, Narutoverse*

The phenomenon of pop culture propagated through anime is a multi-billion-dollar industry in the present epoch. Culture and capitalism are interwoven throughout the history and origins of anime (Huang and Archer 471-486). As an artistic form, anime offers a wide demographic, - of colourful pictures and videos that tell super imaginative stories with multiple characters in a wide generic display of romance, fantasy, action, comedy, and sci-fi, among many others (César et al). With a wide variety, exciting plots, and unforgettable characters, anime is a treasure trove to explore ideas, concepts, and perspectives in the contemporary society. This

makes it a channel of expression and gives it value for cultural exchanges. However, this was not how it used to be. Anime started in Japan as a reaction to Western or Hollywood animations (Novielli).

In India, anime begins with *The Jungle Book* and *Doraemon* in the 1990s. At present, OTT services like Netflix, Disney Plus, Hotstar, and Amazon Prime have captured a wide Indian demographic (Sharma). According to Chandi et al., Netflix boasts a viewership of approximately 5 million in India only, with 44% between the ages of fifteen and twenty four. Global web-streaming anime platforms are also catching on. Some names in the industry are Crunchyroll and Animax.

Kishimoto's *Naruto* portrays a twelve-year-old Jinchūriki in the world of Shinobi (Japanese warriors). A Jinchūriki is a person with a Tailed Beast sealed inside him. There is a total of Nine-Tailed Beasts known by the number of tails on them. Naruto has the Nine-Tailed beast (Kyūbi) sealed within him which is named Kurama (Wiki). The setting or the ninja village is referred to as Konoha or the "Hidden Leaf" village. The protagonist, Naruto, aspires to be the leader of the village called Hokage. However, he is unable to control his anger. Kurama takes over his body and in rage, he destroys or hurts people that he loves as well as his villagers. The ninjas in the village are powered by life force (chakra), and they use and manipulate chakra to use Jutsu techniques (ninja techniques). Using chakra is also bound within rules and limitations throughout the series. Naruto joins the Ninjutsu academy, where all ninja techniques of controlling chakra and performing jutsu are taught. He teams up with Sakura and Sasuke and embarks on a journey to battle evil ninjas and supervillains. Kakashi-sensei is in charge of the team, and the team is referred to as 'Team Seven'. Naruto as a character develops throughout the series and learns important lessons on friendship, perseverance, and self-improvement. What makes Naruto unique as a protagonist is, he is a pure soul who always wants to look after his friends and take care of his village. Naruto is a down-to-earth character that portrays dualities in himself which makes him relatable to his fanbase, - light and shadow, good and evil, creative and destructive, happy and sad. The evil chakra within him of Kurama taints him whenever he is angry and he becomes a destructive force to reckon with. Ultimately, he overcomes all evil and befriends Kurama becoming the protector of his village.

Masashi Kishimoto created this series. It first aired on TV Tokyo in Japan from 2002 to 2007, before, being translated and released internationally (Lamarre 123). The series was shown in Indian channels like Cartoon Network and Toonami, and, quickly gained popularity among the Indian population. For this research paper, the initial series of *Naruto* (2002) is taken up for content analysis. *Naruto* has five seasons and two hundred and twenty episodes. All

episodes, wherever referenced are contextualized to comprehend how or why a character performs certain actions.

The Narutoverse can be considered as an example or a culmination of the old as well as new cultural practices since it conflates both the systems creating a new environment where both exist simultaneously creating a symbiosis of systems. *This paper is a revelation of the motifs and concepts presented throughout the series that connect to the Yoga Sūtras, to suggest that the spiritual wisdom (of any culture) can be used in a plethora of ways to attract global viewership.* Their relevance today in creating a fanbase and emanating pop culture affecting millions of lives is a phenomenon to be studied. In a networked society (Castells), where people drift apart from each other through their daily life engagements, pop culture can be seen as a uniting force in society. Therefore, this paper fulfils the role of studying such universal forces to reveal what the content is, - is it a new representation of old cultural themes? Is it borrowed material? Or is it just plain simple action series for kids?

Part 1: Verses and Translation, Verse 29 of the *Yoga Sūtras* by Yogi Madhvācārya (27) refers to the “Astanga” Yoga approach. For this research, they are linked to Naruto's ninja training and psychological growth throughout the series. Naruto's devotion to justice and non-violence exemplifies the “Yamas”. His self-discipline and commitment to training embody the spirit of the “Niyama”. “Āsana” is linked to Naruto's physical strength and flexibility in performing jutsu. His ability to regulate his chakra and hand-weaving signs combined with breathing methods illustrate “prāṇāyāma”. “Pratyāhāra” is proven by Naruto's ability to zero in and focus on his life objectives without getting distracted. “Dhāraṇā” is related to Naruto's mental strength and resolve. “Dhyāna” is mirrored in Naruto's introspection and self-reflection. Finally, “samādhi” is revealed in Naruto's connection to the cosmos, his meditative practices, and self-realization.

According to Wall, Kishimoto had stated his interest in Hinduism and Buddhism and revealed that he had infused parts of these ideologies into the *Naruto franchise* in an interview with the Japanese magazine “Shonen Jump” (2007). He was attracted to the notion of “chakra” in Hinduism and Buddhism (Hal Jordan). It is noted that Kishimoto's *Naruto* was influenced by Indian philosophy, among other sources, to construct the Narutoverse (Nasir). However, it is not a straight adaptation or portrayal of Indian philosophical principles. Hence, this research essay, investigates four main research questions:

- How do the *Yoga Sūtras* manifest in the Narutoverse?

- Can Indian concepts and ideas be used to enhance pop cultural narrative aesthetically?
- Can Indian yogic principles be repackaged to fit modern narratives?
- Can messages of ancient spiritual wisdom be marketed as cultural commodities?

Before relating the cross-cultural information exchange between Indian spiritual wisdom and *Naruto*, it is important to consider the components in the Narutoverse that are borrowed directly from Japanese culture. The Narutoverse is mainly set in an era of Feudal Japanese ninja customs (Shinobi culture) as seen by the architecture and environment portrayal in the anime. Weaponry, hand seals, and nature-based tactics are relevant to Japan's traditional warrior culture (Budiarto 225-236). The confluence of real practices in an imaginary set world of Konoha creates nostalgia as well as reintroduces the old culture to the modern times. To further understand mutual philosophical ideas connecting Japan and the Indian subcontinent, we must go deeper into anime's cultural roots, particularly its Eastern roots and its spiritual inspirations.

Beyond amusement, *Naruto* provides a unique perspective on human experiences, emotions, and relationships. According to Jadhav, anime affects young people's perspectives and actions by providing comparable examples for handling life's obstacles. Furthermore, anime stories are applied in therapies like Logic-Based Therapy (LBT), which encourages positive thinking patterns and lifestyle choices (25–42). *Naruto's* use of Hindu myths and philosophies provides a unique viewpoint on human experiences, affecting viewers' thoughts and behaviours as well as providing a shared framework for understanding certain norms and values.

According to Carl Jung's "collective unconscious", some common symbols and themes exist throughout cultures, allowing access to a shared reservoir of experiences and knowledge systems. (123). This notion may be used in the context of *Naruto*, which integrates Hindu, Buddhist, and Japanese concepts into the "chakra system". In the Narutoverse, the chakra system is the manipulation of the life force existing within one's own body to induce physical manifestations via Ninjutsu (ninja fighting techniques). The chakra system is relatable to other Eastern cultures due to the spread of Buddhism and Indian cultures. Therefore, this system allows the Narutoverse to transcend physical boundaries and connect with their viewers through common concepts and theories prevalent in most of the Asian cultures. As Jung explains, "The collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution born anew in every individual" (152). By establishing commonality or universality

in the themes from *Naruto*, the goal of this paper is not to reflect on separate audience categories for viewership but to solidify viewership as a unanimous phenomenon creating one audience, - an international audience. This creates a strong fanbase and a global, unified, mass audience.

It is observed that previous research lacks a clear assessment of the relationship between *Patañjali's* Eightfold Path and the *Narutoverse*. To explore this research gap, an analysis of *Naruto's* narrative and philosophical themes is conducted, with a focus on the concepts in the *Yoga Sūtras*. This study reveals how *Naruto's* character development and relationships resemble the *Sūtras* and portrays how it uses Hindu mythology and philosophy to display a pantheistic system of spirituality. The use of Indian techniques of *Sūtras* and seven chakras creates a panoramic view of cultural notions, combining Japanese and Indian elements to produce a unique story that appeals to a wide range of consumers making it a fascinating cultural commodity for the masses.

The research paper adopts a mixed-methods technique, including a quantitative strategy (content analysis), to determine the motifs in *Naruto* that present their relation to the *Sūtras*. The global streaming website “h!anime” as accessed up to 8 September 2024, is utilized to obtain a list of episodes and screenshots for references in this paper. A qualitative approach (context analysis) is then used to better understand these allusions.

Since the episode list contains two hundred and twenty episodes, they have been divided into “arcs” or sagas to condense the information. It should be emphasized that the discussion does not include “filler episodes” from the TV series. Filler episodes are anime or manga episodes that do not constitute a section of the primary storyline and are made to give manga creators time to create fresh content or extend the series. In *Naruto*, filler episodes (about ninety episodes) are used as “metaphors” to highlight character qualities, feelings, and relationships without directly affecting the main narrative (Nakamura). Symbolic settings, figurative language, and abstract representations of concepts or emotions enrich characters, making filler episodes interesting and enlightening.

The following summary is created using “Crunchyroll” as a reference to categorize the *Narutoverse* and project familiarity with its timeline: -

Introduction Arc (Ep. 1–19): It features *Naruto Uzumaki*, a ninja from *Konoha* who aspires to be the *Hokage*. He meets his comrades, *Sasuke* and *Sakura*, and they go on a series of ninja missions. He has a Nine-tailed beast (*Kyūbi*), *Kurama*, sealed inside him since birth.

Land of Waves Arc (Ep. 20–43): Naruto and his crew are assigned to watch Tazuna, a bridge constructor. They confront several problems and foes, including a face-off with the Akatsuki group, a rogue ninja organisation.

Chunin Exams Arc (Ep. 44–77): Naruto and his squad take part in the Chunin Exams, a competition meant to test the abilities of young ninjas. They face their classmates as opponents and grow through the challenges that they face.

Sasuke Retrieval Arc (Ep. 78–135): Sasuke leaves the community to join Orochimaru, a renegade ninja. Naruto and his companions embark on a journey to rescue Sasuke, encountering the “Sound Four” (Orochimaru’s underlings) and other foes.

Kazekage Rescue Arc (Ep. 136–141): Naruto and his squad rescue Gaara, a Shinobi from another community (Village of the Sand) from the Akatsuki.

Reunion Arc (Ep. 142–165): Following two years of intense Ninjutsu training with Jiraiya-sensei, Naruto returns to Konoha and reunites with his companions. They face new challenges against the Akatsuki.

Ninja Guardian Arc (Ep. 166–171): Naruto and his teammates defend the community from the twelve Guardian Ninjas (warriors from other communities).

Hidan and Kakuzu Arc (Ep. 172–204): Naruto and his allies confront Hidan and Kakuzu (Akatsuki members), resulting in character growth and story development.

Itachi Pursuit Arc (Ep. 205–220): Naruto and his companions discover more about Sasuke's history and his relationship with Itachi Uchiha, leading up to the series finale.

Naruto's journey as categorized above now serves as a foundation for the linkages to the Yoga Sūtras.

Yama (Universal ethics)

Sri Madhvācārya (27) in a brief explanation in his book *Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras*, talks about Yama (Verse 30) as the first branch of the eight-stepped Yoga journey. It consists of five principles to pursue harmonious living: Ahimsā (nonviolence), Satya (truth), Asteya (integrity), Brahmacharya (celibacy), and Aparigrahāḥ (non-possessiveness). They guide the yogi's interactions with others.



Fig. 1. Still from *Naruto, The Demon in the Snow* (18:22).

Naruto remarks - “I’m going to pursue my way of Ninja. I’m gonna sprint straight ahead and pursue a way that I absolutely won’t regret.” This is probably one of the more well-known sayings from the protagonist himself. He says this whenever he feels the need to convince others about his “Ninja way” which is extremely different from the mainstream world of death and revenge. Naruto’s commitment to certain universal principles and his way of adopting certain principles are common throughout the series. This has been referred to as Naruto’s commitment to the five principles of Yama. He is devoted to as much nonviolence as he is practically able as is seen from the following episodes. Where a conversation with the villains fails, then Naruto is forced to use his powers. Otherwise, he sticks to the path of nonviolence as much as possible. His true devotion to friends and his village indicates honesty (*Satya*). Demonstration of non-stealing is given by choosing to defend and give instead of taking (*Asteya*). His self-control and dedication to his ninja path, rather than personal cravings, demonstrate celibacy (*Brahmacharya*). Furthermore, Naruto’s willingness to give up personal attachments for the larger good displays non-possession (*Aparigrahāḥ*). The newest series of *Naruto*: “*Boruto: Naruto Next Generations*” (2017 - 2023) tell us how Naruto used to train, eat, and sleep in only one of his training jackets while mastering and practising a certain kind of Jutsu (Ninja technique). Naruto’s son, Boruto, is inspired by seeing the old, tattered jacket of his father in Ep. 61 (*Boruto Series*). Some examples of Naruto’s actions are given as instances to support the narrative that Naruto exhibits the principles of “Yama” from the *Yoga Sūtras*.

Ahimsā (Non-violence): Naruto’s refusal to kill during the Chunin Exams (Ep. 20-24).

Although the *Narutoverse* deals with extreme fighting skills and techniques, the most impressive character trait of Naruto is perhaps that of nonviolence. He is a very passive character who always wants to change people through his dialogue. His unwillingness to murder the supervillains and instead seek alternate solutions illustrates his devotion to non-violence. His compassion and love for his teammate Sasuke, as well as his friends Gaara, Shikamaru, and others, demonstrate his capacity to empathize with and comprehend others'

points of view. It is observed that although he holds immense powers from Kurama's chakra he refuses to use them for destructive purposes. He is motivated by a desire to defend and provide peace to his village rather than use his powers for domination and control.

Satya (Truthfulness): Naruto's honesty with Sakura and Sasuke about his feelings.

Naruto has an unyielding spirit filled with truth and sincerity that is reflected in his actions and decisions. In the face of adversity, he is loyal to his friends. He is a down-to-earth soul and is satisfied with life's little pleasures. He hopes to become the Hokage, but in no way does he want to take a shortcut to realize it. He is true to the goal and the purpose. Throughout the finale of the series, he stays devoted to Sasuke, his friend and teammate, who falls in bad company. He is projected as a character who is true to himself as well as others. By remaining loyal to himself and others, Naruto gains the respect and confidence of everyone around him including the supervillains that bear hatred towards him and his village. When Naruto forms the three-men team for his ninja missions, he is protective of his teammates Sasuke and Sakura, also, harbouring an infatuation for Sakura. Naruto is always honest about his feelings which makes him command the respect of others.

Asteya (Non-stealing): Naruto's return of the stolen Scroll of Seals (Ep. 1).

The exposition of *Naruto* portrays Naruto as an adventurer and a trickster who enjoys playing practical jokes on others. However, he looks up to one of his teachers, Iruka-sensei since they both grew up without parents. He thinks that stealing a scroll and learning a secret technique will enable him to pass his tests at the Ninja Academy. This is the very first act of stealing that Naruto performs and he is immediately reprimanded as well as protected by Iruka-sensei. His teacher influences him enough to make him return the seal and never commit such actions again.

In Naruto's unwillingness to take Kurama's power for personal gain, he exhibits his non-stealing attitude. Naruto respects the skills and abilities of his friends as well as his enemies. He is eager to learn from others, like Jiraiya and Kakashi, without attempting to copy their expertise or experience for personal gains.

Brahmacharya (Celibacy): Naruto's training with Jiraiya, and an impervious focus on his goals (Ep. 53, 86, 220 onwards).

Naruto has to use his chakra to perform Jutsu, which is a difficult task in itself. Controlling chakra is something that Naruto is not habituated to. However, his immense mental focus on

mastering the “Rasengan” technique taught to him by Jiraiya-sensei showcases the celibate aspect that Naruto portrays. He avoids all distractions with the sole purpose of training and sleeping till he perfects this Jutsu.

His fondness for “Ichiraku’s Ramen” (Japanese noodle soup) is also associated with this discussion. Although Naruto loves eating the ramen, it is seen that he only does so when he is feeling elated, or sad or at the end of an episode where he is seen relishing his ramen after accomplishing a mission. There are very few things he loves in the Shinobi world, his village and his friends being the dearest to him. However, he is willing to leave his village to train and get stronger with Jiraiya-sensei and others. This shows how Naruto is a complete Brahmacharya when it comes to pursuing his dream of becoming the Hokage.

Aparigrahāḥ (Non-Possessiveness): The Sasuke Retrieval Arc, where Naruto learns to allow himself to be rid of all attachments (Ep. 107-110).

Aparigrahāḥ, or non-possessiveness, is obtained by Naruto. His readiness to give up his craving for attention and acknowledgement, and to establish self-worth outside of external validation is worth mentioning. Naruto accepts his parents' sacrifice, letting go of an unchangeable past. He has a unique ability to delegate authority and responsibility to others, like Sakura and Kakashi, rather than clinging to control like Shikamaru (the strategist), one of his ninja friends.

Niyama (Appropriate habits)

Sri Madhvācārya’s (27) Niyama (Verse 32), consists of five observances that promote personal growth and self-control. “Śauca” cultivates body and mental purity, “Santoṣa” embraces contentment and acceptance, “Tapah” practices discipline and self-control, “Svādhyāya” engages in self-reflection, and “Īśvarapraṇidhānāni” refers to surrendering to a greater authority.



Fig. 2. Still from Naruto, You Failed! Kakashi's Final Decision (11:33).

Kakashi-sensei (Naruto's teacher) tries to teach the newly formed 'Team 7' of habits and attitudes that embody Niyama. He urges the team to push themselves and concentrate on the present moment as well as provides them with a Bell test through episodes 4 and 5 to train them in real-time.

Śauca (Cleanliness): Naruto's purification ritual after being contaminated by Kurama's chakra (Ep. 16).

Śauca is a prominent concept propagated through Naruto's expeditions, observing physical, mental, and emotional purity. The missions he is given emphasize the significance of maintaining both inner and exterior cleanliness. To channel chakra throughout one's body, one has to have the ability to clear one's thoughts and concentrate on the moment which leads to boosting personal development and self-awareness. Naruto's tough training and exercises purify his body and mind ushering in the stability to perform his jutsu. Naruto's desire to face and purge the evil inside himself and others, such as Sasuke and Gaara (Ep. 12-16, 44) allows him to stay truthful to his methods.

Santoṣa (Contentment): Naruto's acceptance of his teammates' strengths and weaknesses (Ep. 24).

Naruto is a character that constantly endeavours to perform his best. He becomes mentally perturbed when his friends or the people in his village try to hurt him. Some of them cannot stand him since he was solely responsible for the attack on the village years ago. The villagers blame him for the attack since he has Kurama sealed within him. However, Naruto throughout the series constantly endeavours to prove them wrong and through his actions proves that he is worthy to become the Hokage. In Ep. 1-20, Naruto accepts his terrible history and works to create an understanding with the villagers. His appreciation for the individuals in his life, such as Iruka, Kakashi, and Jiraiya, and the teachings they teach him (Eps. 43-135) contribute towards his character development. In other words, it can be said that Naruto reverses all the negativity projected towards him. He finds serenity in situations of conflict and is ready to sacrifice himself for the village whenever it is under attack. He demonstrates his contentment in achieving emotional balance, resilience, and compassion throughout the Narutoverse.

Tapah (Self-discipline):



Fig. 3. Still from *Naruto*, Enter: Naruto Uzumaki! (5:12).

Naruto says, “And I’ll be the greatest Hokage of all time,” while eating at Ichiraku’s ramen, a shop that sells his favourite noodles. He claims to be gunning for the Hokage while talking to Iruka-sensei (his class teacher, is a father-like figure to him). Naruto had been foiled in his mischievous act of drawing funny artwork on stone statues of the previous Hokages. Although this context is an evidence of Naruto’s mischievousness, it highlights the dedication that Naruto has towards being the leader of this Village. Naruto has to adhere to immense self-discipline through his training which shapes his strong mentality. This enables him to cultivate the ability to transform and overcome barriers to accomplish his goals. Other examples from the *Narutoverse* that maintain his character trait of self-discipline include his mastery of the Rasengan technique (Ep. 86-88), his commitment to returning his teammate and friend Sasuke to the village, and his ability to remain untainted from the chakra of Kurama. Enduring such difficulties, he overcomes limitations, builds his abilities, and eventually becomes a powerful and caring leader

Svādhyāya (Self-reflection): *Naruto's introspection about his desire for recognition (Ep. 60-65).*

Throughout the *Narutoverse*, Naruto engages in self-reflection allowing himself to become a better version of himself and evolve mentally. He learns from his mistakes during the Chūnin

Exams (Ep. 24) and improves his chances for growth and self-development. His love for his friends, especially teammates Sakura and Sasuke requires great introspection on his part. Naruto as a protagonist not only possesses a high emotional quotient but also can change a person (mainly villains in the series) through just dialogue. This is a quality that requires intense self-reflection, and it is noticed that he sometimes compares the lives of the villains such as Gaara, Obito, and Nagato to his own life to comparatively analyse and transform or at least change the mindset of such individuals. His dedication to Svādhyāya allows him to gain a stronger sense of self, form deeper bonds, and eventually become a wise and compassionate leader.

Īśvarapraṇidhānāni (devotion): Naruto's devotion to his friends and village, is demonstrated throughout his selfless acts and sacrifices (Ep. 135).

Devotion in the Narutoverse is a major element and highlights the value of friends, surrender, faith, and dedication. Naruto himself displays two types of devotion. His devotion to becoming the Hokage can be labelled as a devotion to a higher purpose. And another devotion to his friends. Since Naruto grew up without parents and friends, he values friendship above all. It becomes pathetic to find instances throughout the series where Naruto is ostracized by his villagers as a monster because he harbours Kurama. However, Naruto does not bear any ill will towards the Kyūbi or the villagers who harass him. He aims at winning the hearts of the people through his actions of protecting his village. His journey proves that the transforming potential of Īśvarapraṇidhānāni in overcoming obstacles contributes towards Naruto's everlasting loyalty to his friends and town, even risking his life for them (Ep. 128-135). His loyalty to his guru, Jiraiya-sensei guides his actions and judgments (Ep. 43-44, 91-112). Despite scepticism and suffering, Naruto maintains trust in himself and his talents (Ep. 169-171). His commitment to the greater good prioritizes the interests of others over his own (Ep. 163-171).

Āsana (posture of body)

Sri Madhvācārya (30) in Verse 46 states “sthira sukham āsanam” or a stable, comfortable position that balances stability and relaxation, letting the body rest while the mind focuses. He defines āsana as a position of the body that balances exertion and relaxation, reduces tension, promotes inner calm, and prepares the body for meditative and spiritual growth.



Fig. 4. Still from Naruto, The Battle Begins: Naruto vs. Sasuke (19:10).

The Narutoverse explicitly uses certain Jutsu styles that are performed using chakra and these can be labelled as *Āsanas* since they demonstrate focus, balance, inner strength, and control. Without proper posture of the body, channelling chakra to use for combat is impossible. Naruto portrays certain postures used during the Tree-climbing exercise (Ep. 10-11), his Shadow-Clone Jutsu, and his Kyūbi transformations (Ep. 163-171). All Ninjutsu users have to adapt to certain body postures to successfully use a certain type of Jutsu. It is noted that the hand-weaving signs or *mudrās* as well as meditative postures that Ninjutsu users perform while projecting a certain type of Jutsu also fall under this category of body postures. Screenshots in Fig.5 are used as reference: -



Fig. 5. Stills from Naruto, The Broken Seal (1:30).

Prāṇāyāmaḥ (Breath control)

In *Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras* by Sri Madhvācārya (31), Verse 49 discusses “prāṇāyāmaḥ”, as the regulation of life force via breathing methods. It is described as the manipulation of inhalation and exhalation to soothe the mind, focusing on the moment, and merging individual awareness with universal awareness.

The Narutoverse features āsana and prāṇāyāmaḥ as a part and parcel of manipulating chakra. Hence, one cannot go without the other. Breath control is essential for maintaining the Jutsu techniques that the Ninjas use in Naruto. The best example that can be cited is Naruto’s “Sage Mode” transformation. He has to practise constant meditation without disturbance to gather the cosmic energy around him to use it to transform into a being with immense power. His training with Fukasaku (toad sage) and mastering this "Sage Mode," entails managing breath to connect with cosmic energy (Ep. 154 of Naruto: Shippuden). This enables Naruto to access higher levels of awareness and portray significant power over the villains in the series.

Pratyāhāra (Sense Withdrawal)

Sri Madhvācārya (32) in Verse 54 explains *Pratyāhāra* as detaching one's senses from external things and wants. *Patañjali* describes *Pratyāhāra* as the channelling of senses from the outside to the inside, “a complete mastery of the senses”. Such a practice allows the mind to quiet down from environmental noises and concentrate, thus, preparing it for mediation.



Fig. 6. Still from Naruto, A New Training Begins: I Will Be Strong (20:35).

Jiraiya-sensei says, “First, you must gather and maintain chakra in your hand using the tree climbing exercise, then you must continuously release chakra using the walk on water technique. Then push and churn the water in the balloon with the Chakra!” Pratyāhāra or the mastery of senses is the key to using chakra along with āsana and prāṇāyāma. In the above

episode, Jiraiya-sensei, one of Naruto's teachers, teaches him the Ninjutsu technique of "Rasengan". It is noticed that this is quite a difficult jutsu even for Naruto to master since it requires immense control over one's chakra.

Another example can be cited of the relationship between Naruto and Kurama. Naruto (Yin akin to femininity and passive power) and the Nine-Tails (Yang akin to masculinity and aggressiveness) find equilibrium in their linked life. Naruto's compassion and empathy balance the Nine-Tails' destructive force, while the Nine-Tails' strength and knowledge strengthen Naruto's will and courage. This reflects the *Yoga Sūtras'* goal of developing inner calm and self-awareness via Pratyāhāra.

Dhāraṇā (Single point focus)

Sri Madhvācārya (31) in Verse 53 explains "dhāraṇāsu" as the meditative practice of concentrating on a single point, spot, or idea. It requires binding the mind to the oneness of thought, actions, and feelings which leads to enhanced concentration and clarity.

Naruto has five fundamental elements: earth, water, fire, wind, and lightning, which are managed via Dhāraṇā (sitting in a meditative posture) and the convergence of chakra. The relationship between Naruto and Kurama is also a dynamic interplay of opposing forces. However, Naruto's ability to access Kurama's chakra is not accompanied by wrath, self-hatred, or other negative feelings. Instead, it is the meditative power of oneness in which Naruto becomes Kurama and vice versa that Naruto can obtain immense power. Their symbiosis in the plot is achieved from Dhāraṇā or a single pointed focus of their thoughts and actions.

Dhyāna (meditation)

Sri Madhvācārya (31) in Verse 53 states that "dhyānāt", is meditation in which the mind maintains a constant flow of attention on a single point, object, or concept. A "steady and uninterrupted flow of thought" leads to self-understanding and progress in one's meditative practices.

In Naruto, mindfulness and awareness are seen throughout the connection between Naruto and Kurama's struggle for power (Ep. 120-125). It is not without dhyāna that the processes of Ninjutsu are controlled by users. The Narutoverse features meditation as the primary source of power to control the chakra. It is shown in successive episodes how the evolution of using higher forms of Ninjutsu comes through the stability of mind and focussing of the mind. Naruto can gain better self-awareness through his Justsu techniques. Dhyāna and

Dhāraṇā are both in a causal relationship in *Naruto*. *Naruto*'s dhyāna is the cause which produces the effect of Dhāraṇā that amplifies his chakra and powers.

Samādhi (Absolute stillness)

Sri Madhvācārya's (30) Verse 45 explains samādhi, as a condition of total stillness of the mind. The mind is entirely immersed in meditation and transcends individual awareness for a certain period of time. In some cases, samādhi is used by sages or yogis to leave their human bodies and combine with the Divine Consciousness. There are different types of samādhi including Savikalpa samādhi, Nirvikalpa samādhi, and Dharmamegha samādhi (*Patañjali*). Maintaining normal daily activities combined with the inner silence achieved during samādhi can also be termed as Sahaja samādhi or divine illumination.

Examples of other types of samādhi are not prevalent in *Naruto*. However, a temporary connection with the cosmos is achieved by *Naruto*, multiple times throughout the anime. This is termed as Savikalpa samādhi. *Naruto* connects with Kurama's chakra, gaining oneness and harnessing its strength (Ep. 247/ Shippuden series). His mind is engrossed in meditation in this state. Earlier he would go on a rampage but slowly he gains control over Kurama's chakra. Through training and meditative practices, he reaches a strength that others fear and respect throughout the series.

The subtle integration of the *Yoga Sūtras* in the *Naruto*verse showcases the cross-cultural borrowings of Hindu concepts in Japanese anime and this is not just limited to one particular anime. Adaptations of Hindu mythological references are common as in *Earth Maiden Arjuna*, *Yu Yu Hakusho* and *Dragon Ball-Z*'s depiction of Yamaraj, *Berserk*'s Garuda, as well as Buddhist allusions to the "Six Paths to Reincarnation and Enlightenment" in *Naruto* (Stavridi). The incorporation of characters and plots from Indian cultures reflects the timeless relevance of the folk tales present in Indian culture.

Finally, the discussion ends with summarized observations on the earlier posed research questions: - ***How do the Yoga Sūtras manifest in the Narutoverse?*** The *Naruto*verse combines Indian meditative practices that are adapted well to the cultural background of Konoha, an imaginary village in Japan. Kishimoto has successfully combined universal elements throughout *Naruto*'s inner journey, and these motifs converge with the *Yoga Sūtras* in some cases as explained in this essay. This demonstrates that Indian philosophy or spiritual practices can successfully be integrated into modern Japanese storytelling which transcends the boundaries of physical space and time.

Can Indian concepts and ideas be used to enhance pop cultural narrative aesthetically? Be it for aesthetic or other purposes, anime concepts and ideas will always be enriched by the incorporation of elements from other cultures. Not only does it interest the global audience, but it also attracts the population of the local indigenous cultures. The notion of chakra used in *Naruto* can be seen as a concept uniting East Asian mythology. The seven chakras are evident throughout *Naruto*'s experiences and instances can be provided of the Root Chakra (stability), Sacral Chakra (emotions), Solar Plexus Chakra (personal power), Heart Chakra (compassion), Throat Chakra (communication), Third Eye Chakra (intuition), and Crown Chakra (spiritual connection). The journey of *Naruto* from a toddler to a man is a journey towards maturity with the strengthening of his mental, spiritual, and physical fortitude, and this can be recounted through these chakra associations of the body. The *Naruto* Series foregrounds the enduring nature of Indian spiritual wisdom and reveals how yogic ideas can enhance and delimit anime.

Can Indian yogic principles be repackaged to fit modern narratives? A special reference to "Infinite Tsukuyomi" from *Naruto* is made to prove the reliability of yogic ideas. It is a *Naruto* genjutsu (eye technique), very similar to the Indian idea of illusion (Maya), as described by Adi Shankara (Menon). As Menon describes Maya, it is the knowing of the truth that this world is an illusion and the activities that we perform in this world are of no concern once we depart from our corporeal bodies. Similarly, the jutsu technique of infinite Tsukuyomi which can be performed by only a handful of characters in the *Naruto*verse, plunges the whole world into a dreamlike state. This blurs the distinction between reality and illusion. People trapped in this genjutsu are eternally trapped in a web of contentment. This method, wielded by the "Sage of the Six Paths" (ancient wise being in the *Naruto*verse), produces a realm in which time and space are subverted. The universe becomes an appearance or illusion that conceals the actual nature of existence, or the Brahman.

It is noticed that modern narratives are not only enriched by the incorporation of yogic elements but these also improve the quality of narration. Ancient knowledge is easily repackaged to a mass audience with ease which enriches its reach and impact.

Can messages of ancient spiritual wisdom be marketed as cultural commodities? Ancient traditions and modern pop culture are amalgamated through the *Naruto*verse. The plot structure and plethora of characters in this series resonate with worldwide audiences belonging to different cultural traditions. The repackaging of cultural heritage be it local, national or global continues the preservation of ancient practices in modern times through electronic mass

media channels (Onemu). To summarize, this case study proves that Indian spiritual wisdom can be marketed as a cultural commodity due to the success that the Narutoverse has established globally.

According to Norris, cultural appropriation becomes a case of major concern when it comes to adaptations and re-interpretations in visual culture. Since the Narutoverse homogenizes and produces one dominant pop culture narrative it can be seen as a subversion of the other cultures being represented by the anime. In the case of *Naruto*, however, such claims become invalid when it is observed that Eastern cultures have deep-rooted chakra practices in their traditions as well as meditation, breath-control, yoga, and Reiki (Barratt 103-112). In other cases, when certain elements are being incorporated from a certain culture without explicit reference to it, the anime becomes a breeding ground for misrepresentation and distortion of the original concepts and ideas (Young 135-146). Iwabuchi terms this "cultural centralization". Here, the dominant pop culture narrative chooses to integrate aspects of other cultures homogenizing and recontextualizing the grand narrative.

The intention of this research has been to explore *Naruto*'s expeditions through an Indian cultural context which ultimately concludes that character behaviour in anime is as much universal (global) as it is particular (local). The universality of motifs creates narrative homogeneity and that makes it easier for viewers to easily connect with the anime series. The anime has been analyzed through Ashram practices that pave the way to a cross-cultural dialogue promoting religious solidarity and harmony. In no way does this research essay aim to promote a specific culture over another. However, it is established through the Narutoverse analysis that anime plots can incorporate narratives from other cultures to enrich their storylines and attract viewers locally and globally.

Although the content analysed and studied may seem vast, at first, this study is limited to its reliance on a single anime series, *Naruto*, which may not be indicative of other Japanese anime or Japanese culture in general. Furthermore, the coding methodology and interpretations of yogic principles in this paper are entirely subjective, which may lead to differing opinions and restrict the generalizability of the findings. Nonetheless, the study paves the way for future research on the comparative analysis of anime series with Hindu texts, exploring commonality, linking, and associating Eastern spiritual traditions to identify patterns and investigate how cultural borrowings can influence plot narrative and themes, providing a deep understanding of cultural exchanges.

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