

## INDIAN PHILOSOPHY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO YOGA

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India has a rich and diverse philosophical tradition dating back to the composition of the Upanisads in the later Vedic period. According to Radhakrishnan, the oldest of these constitute "...the earliest philosophical compositions of the world."

Since the late medieval age (ca.1000-1500) various schools (Skt: *Darshanas*) of **Indian philosophy** are identified as orthodox (Skt: *astika*) or non-orthodox (Skt: *nastika*) depending on whether they regard the Veda as an infallible source of knowledge. There are six schools of orthodox Hindu philosophy and three heterodox schools. The orthodox are Nyaya, Vaishesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva mimamsa and Vedanta. The Heterodox are Jain, Buddhist and materialist (Cārvāka). However, Vidyāraṇya classifies Indian philosophy into sixteen schools where he includes schools belonging to Saiva and Raseśvara thought with others.

The main schools of Indian philosophy were formalised chiefly between 1000 BC to the early centuries AD. Subsequent centuries produced commentaries and reformulations continuing up to as late as the 20th century by Aurobindo and Prabhupada among others. Competition and integration between the various schools was intense during their formative years, especially between 800 BC to 200 AD. Some like the Jain, Buddhist, Shaiva and Advaita schools survived, while others like Samkhya and Ajivika did not, either being assimilated or going extinct. The Sanskrit term for "philosopher" is *dārśanika*, one who is familiar with the systems of philosophy, or *darśanas*.

**Common themes:** The Indian thinkers of antiquity (very much like those of the Hellenistic schools) viewed philosophy as a practical necessity that needed to be cultivated in order to understand how life can best be led. It became a custom for Indian writers to explain at the beginning of philosophical works how it serves human ends (*puruṣārtha*).<sup>[6]</sup> Recent scholarship has shown that there was a great deal of intercourse between Greek and Indian philosophy during the era of Hellenistic expansion.

Indian philosophy is distinctive in its application of analytical rigour to metaphysical problems and goes into very precise detail about the nature of reality, the structure and function of the human psyche and how the relationship between the two have important implications for human salvation (*moksha*). Rishis centred philosophy on an assumption that there is a unitary underlying order (*rta*) in the universe which is all pervasive and omniscient. The efforts by various schools were concentrated on explaining this order and the metaphysical entity at its source (Brahman). The concept of natural law (Dharma) provided a basis for understanding questions of how life on earth should be lived. The sages urged humans to discern this order and to live their lives in accordance with it.

Schools

**Hindu philosophy:** Many Hindu intellectual traditions were classified during the medieval period of Brahmanic-Sanskritic scholasticism into a standard list of six orthodox (astika) schools (darshanas), the "Six Philosophies" (*ṣad-darśana*), all of which accept the testimony of the Vedas.

**Samkhya, the enumeration school**

- Yoga, the school of Patanjali (which provisionally asserts the metaphysics of Samkhya)
- Nyaya, the school of logic
- Vaisheshika, the atomist school
- Purva Mimamsa (or simply Mimamsa), the tradition of Vedic exegesis, with emphasis on Vedic ritual, and
- Vedanta (also called Uttara Mimamsa), the Upanishadic tradition, with emphasis on Vedic philosophy.

These are often coupled into three groups for both historical and conceptual reasons: Nyaya-Vaisheshika, Samkhya-Yoga, and Mimamsa-Vedanta. The Vedanta school is further divided into six sub-schools: Advaita (monism/nondualism), also includes the concept of Ajativada, Visishtadvaita (monism of the qualified whole), Dvaita (dualism), Dvaitadvaita (dualism-nondualism), Suddhadvaita, and Achintya Bheda Abheda schools.

Besides these schools Mādhava Vidyāraṇya also includes the following of the aforementioned theistic philosophies based on the Agamas and Tantras:

- Pasupata, school of Shaivism by Nakulisa
- Saiva, the theistic Sankhya school
- Pratyabhijñā, the recognitive school
- Raseśvara, the mercurial school
- Pāṇini Darśana, the grammarian school (which clarifies the theory of Sphoṭa)

The systems mentioned here are not the only orthodox systems, they are the chief ones, and there are other orthodox schools. These systems, accept the authority of Vedas and are regarded as "orthodox" (astika) schools of Hindu philosophy; besides these, schools that do not accept the authority of the Vedas are categorised by Brahmins as unorthodox (nastika) systems. Chief among the latter category are Buddhism, Jainism and Cārvāka. Cārvāka is a materialistic and atheistic school of thought and, is noteworthy as evidence of amaterialistic movement within Hinduism.

**Jain philosophy:**

Jainism came into formal being after Mahavira synthesised philosophies and promulgations of the ancient Sramana philosophy, during the period around 550 BC, in the region that is present day Bihar in northern India. This period marked an ideological renaissance, in which the Vedic dominance was challenged by various groups like Jainism and Buddhism.

**Buddhist philosophy:**

Buddhist philosophy is a system of beliefs based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, a prince later known as the Buddha, or "awakened one". From its inception, Buddhism has had a strong philosophical component. Buddhism is founded on the rejection of certain orthodox

Hindu philosophical concepts. The Buddha criticised all concepts of metaphysical being and non-being as misleading views caused by reification, and this critique is inextricable from the founding of Buddhism.

### **Cārvāka philosophy:**

Cārvāka or Lokāyata was a philosophy of scepticism and materialism, founded in the Mauryan period. They were extremely critical of other schools of philosophy of the time. Cārvāka deemed Vedas to be tainted by the three faults of untruth, self-contradiction, and tautology.<sup>[23]</sup> And in contrast to Buddhists and Jains, they mocked the concept of liberation, reincarnation and accumulation of merit or demerit through the performance of certain actions. They believed that, the viewpoint of relinquishing pleasure to avoid pain was the "reasoning of fools". Cārvāka thought consciousness was an emanation from the body and it ended with the destruction of the body. They used quotes from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad to support this claim. Cārvāka denied inference as a means of knowledge and held sensory indulgence as the final objective of life.

### **Modern philosophy:**

Modern Indian philosophy was developed during British occupation(1750–1947). The philosophers in this era gave contemporary meaning to traditional philosophy. Some of them were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sri Aurobindo, Kireet Joshi, Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan, Debiprasad Chattopadhyay, M. N. Roy, Indra Sen, Haridas Chaudhuri, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Ramana Maharshi, and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Among contemporary Indian philosophers, Osho and J. Krishnamurti developed their own schools of thought. Pandurang Shastri Athavale, U. G. Krishnamurti and Krishnananda are other prominent names in contemporary Indian philosophy.

### **Political philosophy:**

The Arthashastra, attributed to the Mauryan minister Chanakya, is one of the early Indian texts devoted to political philosophy. It is dated to 4th century BCE and discusses ideas of statecraft and economic policy. The political philosophy most closely associated with India is the one of ahimsa (non-violence) and Satyagraha, popularised by Mahatma Gandhi during the Indian struggle for independence. It was influenced by the Indian Dharmic philosophy, particularly the Bhagvata Gita, as well as secular writings of authors such as Leo Tolstoy, Henry David Thoreau and John Ruskin.<sup>[28]</sup> In turn it influenced the later movements for independence and civil rights, especially those led by Martin Luther King, Jr. and to a lesser extent Nelson Mandela.<sup>[29]</sup>

### **YOGA:**

#### ***Rāja yoga:***

("royal yoga", "royal union", also known as **classical yoga** and **aṣṭāṅga yoga**) is one of the six schools of dharmic (*astika*) Hindu philosophy. Its principal text is the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*. *Rāja yoga* is concerned principally with the cultivation of the viewer's (*ṛṣi*) mind using a succession of steps, such as meditation (*dhyāna*, *dhyana*) and contemplation (*samādhi*, *samadhi*). Its object is to further one's acquaintance with reality (*viveka*), achieve awakening (*moksha*) and eventually enlightenment, *kaivalya*.

Rāja yoga was first described as an eightfold or eight-limbed (*aṣṭāṅga*, *ashtanga*) path in the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, and is part of the Samkhya tradition. As a result, it has also been known as *śeṣvara samkhya*, and *Patanjali samkhya*.

In the context of Hindu philosophy, *rāja yoga* is known simply as *yoga*. The term *rāja yoga* is a retronym, introduced in the 19th-century by Swami Vivekananda. The prior use of the term *rāja yoga* in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* refers to the highest form of yoga, *laya yoga*, described in this text. The HYP is a text of the Nātha sampradaya and is not concerned with the yoga taught in the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*.

### **Concept:**

Rāja yoga is concerned with the mind (*citta*) and its fluctuations (*vṛttis*, vortexes, variations) and how to quiet or master the mind's fluctuations. Humans have all sorts of addictions and obsessions and these preclude the attainment of tranquil abiding (meditation). Through restraint (*yama*) such as celibacy, abstaining from intoxicants, and careful attention to one's actions (*niyama*) of body, speech and mind, the human being becomes fit to practice meditation. This yoke that one puts upon oneself (discipline) is another meaning of the word *yoga*.

Every thought, feeling, perception, or memory you may have causes a modification, or ripple, in the mind. It distorts and colors the mental mirror. If you can restrain the mind from forming into modifications, there will be no distortion, and you will experience your true Self.

—Swami Satchidananda

Rāja yoga is traditionally referred to as *aṣṭāṅga* (eight-limbed) yoga because there are eight aspects to the path to which one must attend.

Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* begin with the statement *yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ* (1.2), "Yoga limits the oscillations of the mind". They go on to detail the ways in which mind can create false ideations, and advocate arduous, dedicated meditation on real objects or subjects. This process, it is said, leads to a state of quiet detachment, *vairāgya*, in which there is mastery over the thirst (*trṣṇā*, *taṇhā*) of the senses.

Practices that serve to maintain for the individual the ability to access this state may be considered *rāja yoga* practices. Thus *rāja yoga* encompasses and differentiates itself from other forms of yoga by encouraging the mind to avoid the sort of absorption in obsessional practice (including some traditional practices) that can create false mental objects.

In this sense *rāja yoga* is called the "king among yogas": all honest yogic practices are seen as tools in the quest to cleanse karma and obtain mokṣa, nirvāṇa or kaivalya. Historically, schools of yoga that label themselves "*rāja*" offer students a structure of yogic practices and a solid viewpoint on dharma.

Kṛṣṇa describes the yogi as follows: "A yogi is greater than the ascetic, greater than the empiricist, and greater than the fruitive worker. Therefore, O Arjuna, in all circumstances be a yogi".

### **Practice:**

Rāja yoga aims at controlling all thought-waves or mental modifications. A *rāja yogi* starts his *sādhana* with the mind as well as a certain minimum of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* usually included as a preparation for the meditation and concentration. In *Samādhi Pada* I,27 it is stated that the word

of Īśvara is Om, the praṇava. Through the sounding of the word and through reflection upon its meaning, the way is found.

In the *jāngama dhyana* technique of rāja yoga, the yogi concentrates the mind and sight between the eyebrows. According to Patanjali, this is one method of achieving the initial concentration (*dharana*: Yoga Sūtras, III: 1) necessary for the mind to go introverted in meditation (*dhyana*: Yoga Sūtras, III: 2). In deeper practice of the Jāngama dhyana technique, the mind concentrated between the eyebrows begins to automatically lose all location and focus on the watching itself. Eventually, the meditator experiences only the consciousness of existence and achieves Self-realization. In his classic *Rāja Yoga*, Swami Vivekananda describes the process in the following way:

When the mind has been trained to remain fixed on a certain internal or external location, there comes to it the power of flowing in an unbroken current, as it were, towards that point. This state is called *dhyana*. When one has so intensified the power of *dhyana* as to be able to reject the external part of perception and remain meditating only on the internal part, the meaning, that state is called *Samādhi*.

### **Eight limbs of ashtanga yoga:**

The eight limbs of ashtanga yoga are:

- Yama – code of conduct, self-restraint
- Niyama – religious observances, commitments to practice, such as study and devotion
- Āsana – integration of mind and body through physical activity
- Prāṇāyāma – regulation of breath leading to integration of mind and body
- Pratyāhāra – abstraction of the senses, withdrawal of the senses of perception from their objects
- Dhāraṇā – concentration, one-pointedness of mind
- Dhyāna – meditation (quiet activity that leads to samadhi)
- Samādhi – the quiet state of blissful awareness, superconscious(?) state. Attained when yogi constantly sees Paramatma in his (jivaatma) heart.

They are sometimes divided into the lower and the upper four limbs, the lower ones—from yama to pranayama—being parallel to the lower limbs of hatha yoga, while the upper ones—from pratyahara to samadhi—being specific for the *rāja yoga*. The upper three limbs practiced simultaneously constitute the samyama.

### **Yama:**

Yama (restraints) consists of five parts: *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (sexual abstinence), and *aparigraha* (non-covetousness). *Ahimsa* is perfect harmlessness, as well as positive love. The five directives of *yama* lay down behavioral norms as prerequisites for elimination of fear, and contribute to a tranquil mind.<sup>[7]</sup>

### **Niyama:**

Niyama is observance of five canons: *shaucha* (internal and external purity), *santosha* (contentment), *tapas* (austerity), *svadhyaya* (study of religious books and repetitions of mantras), and *ishvarapranidhana* (self-surrender to God and his worship). *Niyama*, unlike *yama*, prescribes mental exercises to train the mind to control emotions.

**Asana:**

Asana in the sense of a posture that one can hold for a period of time, staying relaxed and with normal (calm) breathing (or, as some sources say, "without effort").

In English, the Sanskrit word asana means "seat", the place where one sits; or posture, position of the body (any position). Asanas (in the sense of Yoga "posture") are said to derive from the various positions of animals' bodies (whence are derived most of the names of the positions). 84 asanas are considered to be the main postures, of which the highest are Shirshasan (headstand) and Padmasan (lotus).

The practice of asanas affects the following aspects or planes of the human being:

- Physical (blood circulation, inner organs, glands, muscles, joints and nerve system)
- Psychological (developing emotional balance and stability, harmony)
- Mental (improved ability to concentrate, memory)
- Consciousness (purifying and clarifying consciousness/awareness)

From the *rāja yoga* perspective, it is considered that the physical postures and pranayama serve to prepare the body and mind for the following steps: *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samādhi* (withdrawal of the senses, contemplation, meditation, and state of expanded or transcendental consciousness, where the activity of the mind ceases and "The Knower and The Object of Knowledge Become One").

**Prāṇāyāma:**

Prāṇāyāma is made out of two Sanskrit words (prāṇa = life energy; ayāma = control or modification). Breathing is the medium used to achieve this goal. The mind and life force are correlated to the breath. Through regulating the breathing and practicing awareness on it, one learns to control prana.

According to Rāja yoga, there are three main types (phases, units, stadia) of pranayama:

- Purak (inhalation)
- Rechak (exhalation)
- Kumbhak (holding the breath); which appears as:
  - Antara kumbhak (withholding the breath after inhalation)
  - Bahar kumbhak (withholding the breath after exhalation)
  - Keval kumbhak (spontaneous withholding of the breath)

There are numerous techniques of pranayama, each with their specific goals. The main techniques are:

- Surya bhedan
- Candra bhedan
- Nadi shodhan (anuloma viloma)
- Bhastrika
- Kapalabhati
- Ujjaji
- Plavini (bhujangini)
- Bhramari
- Sheetkari

- Sheetalī
- Combination of sheetkari and sheetalī
- Murccha

All pranayama practice ultimately works toward purification of the nadis (energy channels) and the awakening of kundalini shakti at the muladhara chakra. The awakening of kundalini energy (also described as the awakening of divine consciousness or wisdom), and its ascent to the crown chakra is the final goal of rāja yoga.

### **Pratyahara:**

Pratyahara is bringing the awareness to reside deep within oneself, free from the senses and external world. The Goal of Pratyahara is not to disrupt the communication from the sense organ to the brain. The awareness is far removed from the five senses. Pratyahara cannot be achieved without achievement of the preceding limbs (pranayama, niyama, etc.). The awareness comes to rest deep in the inner space, and during this time the yogi's breath will be temporarily suspended. Pratyahara should not just be likened to concentration or meditation, etc. It is a yogic practice that takes on adequacy with the prior 4 limbs as prerequisites.

### **Dharana:**

Yoga starts from concentration. Concentration merges into meditation. Meditation ends in samadhi. Retention of breath, brahmacharya, satvic (pure) food, seclusion, silence, satsanga (being in the company of a guru), and not mixing much with people are all aids to concentration. Concentration on bhrakuti (the space between the two eyebrows) with closed eyes is preferred. The mind can thus be easily controlled, as this is the seat for the mind.

### **Dhyana:**

Sleep, tossing of mind, attachment to objects, subtle desires and cravings, laziness, lack of Brahmacharya, gluttony are all obstacles in meditation. Reduce your wants. Cultivate dispassion. You will have progress in Yoga. Vairagya thins out the mind. Do not mix much. Do not talk much. Do not eat much. Do not sleep much. Do not exert much. Never wrestle with the mind during meditation. Do not use any violent efforts at concentration. If evil thoughts enter your mind, do not use your will force in driving them. You will tax your will. You will lose your energy. You will fatigue yourself. The greater the efforts you make, the more the evil thoughts will return with redoubled force. Be indifferent. Become a witness of those thoughts. They will pass away. Never miss a day in meditation. Regularity is of paramount importance. When the mind is tired, do not concentrate. Do not take heavy food at night.

The mind passes into many conditions or states as it is made up of three qualities: Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Kshipta (wandering), Vikshipta (gathering), Mudha (ignorant), Ekagra (one-pointed), and Nirodha (contrary) are the five states of the mind.

By controlling the thoughts the Sadhaka attains great Siddhis. He becomes adept. He attains Asamprajnata Samadhi or Kaivalya. Do not run after Siddhis. Siddhis are great temptations. They will bring about your downfall. A Raja Yogi practices Samyama or the combined practice of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi at one and the same time.

Control the mind by Abhyasa (practice) and Vairagya (dispassion). Any practice that steadies the mind and makes it one-pointed is Abhyasa. Dull Vairagya will not help you in attaining perfection in Yoga. You must have Para Vairagya or Theevra Vairagya, intense dispassion.

—Swami Sivananda from *Amrita Gita*

## **Samadhi:**

Meditation on Om with *bhava* removes obstacles in *sadhana* and helps to attain *samadhi*. Avidya (ignorance), asmita (egoism), raga-dvesha (likes and dislikes), abhinivesha (clinging to mundane life) are the five kleshas or afflictions.

Samadhi is of two kinds:

- Savikalpa, samprajnata or sabija; and
- Nirvikalpa, asamprajnata or nirbija.

In savikalpa or sabija, there is tripiti or the triad (knower, known and knowledge). Savitarka, nirvitarka, savichara, nirvichara, sasmita and saananda are the different forms of savikalpa samadhi. In nirvikalpa samadhi, nirbija samadhi or asamprajnata samadhi there is no triad.

In the last sutra (4,34), Patañjali says the soul reaches its end in liberation, enlightenment, kaivalya.

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