

Unit 1: Introduction to Yoga

Yoga & Naturopathy - Semester 1

Theoretical Subject : Basics of Yoga

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1.1 Aims and Objectives of Yoga

Aim (Sādhyā):

Yoga aims at the integration of the human personality and the realization of one's essential nature. At its highest, this is expressed as **mokṣa/kaivalya**—freedom from suffering and abiding clarity. At the practical level, the aim is **steadiness of body, regulation of breath, refinement of mind, and ethical harmony** in daily life.

Classical horizon in brief

- **Bhagavad Gītā 6.23:** “दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् ।”
Yoga is that which disengages one from the union with sorrow.
- **Yoga Sūtra 1.2:** “योगश्चत्त्वृत्तिनिरोधः ।”
Yoga is the stilling of the fluctuations of the mind.

Objectives (Sādhana-lakṣya):

1. **Ethical cultivation** – embody *yama-niyama* (non-harm, truthfulness, moderation, contentment, self-study, devotion) as the ground of practice.
2. **Somatic stability** – develop postural ease and functional mobility that reduce strain and enhance vitality.
3. **Respiratory regulation** – refine the breath (*prāṇāyāma*) to influence autonomic balance and attention.
4. **Sensory governance** – learn *pratyāhāra* (wise use of the senses) to lessen reactivity.
5. **Attentional training** – stabilize and clarify the mind through *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*.
6. **Insight and equanimity** – cultivate discernment (*viveka*) and even-mindedness (*samatva*), enabling balanced action.
7. **Social and ecological harmony** – extend inner order to relationships and environment.

Outcome map (objective → lived outcome)

Objective	Everyday outcome
Ethical cultivation	Trustworthiness, reduced inner conflict
Somatic stability	Better posture, fewer aches, improved stamina
Respiratory regulation	Calmer responses under stress
Sensory governance	Less distraction, better study habits
Attentional training	Focus, memory consolidation
Insight & equanimity	Balanced decision-making, resilience
Social harmony	Empathy, collaborative conduct

1.2 Definitions of Yoga in Classical Texts

The meaning of Yoga is articulated across traditions as **union, discipline, sense-mastery, equanimity, and inner quietude**. The following touchstones are central for first-semester study.

Text	Sanskrit (original)	Simple translation	Emphasis
Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.3.11	“तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणाम् ।”	Yoga is firm control of the senses.	Sense-mastery
Bhagavad Gītā 2.48	“योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि... समत्वं योगं उच्यते ।”	Perform action established in Yoga... equanimity is called Yoga.	Equanimity in action
Bhagavad Gītā 2.50	“योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ।”	Yoga is skillfulness in action.	Excellence with balance
Bhagavad Gītā 6.23	“दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् ।”	Yoga is disjunction from sorrow.	Freedom from suffering
Yoga Sūtra 1.2-1.3	“योगश्चत्तद्वृत्तिनिरोधः । तदा द्रष्टुः स्वरूपेऽवस्थानम् ।”	Yoga is the stilling of mind-waves; then the Seer abides in its own nature.	Mental quietude & Self-abidance
Yoga Sūtra 2.29	Aṣṭāṅga list	Eight limbs—from ethics to samādhi—constitute the path.	Graded method

Synthesis for learners:

These sources present Yoga both as a **state** (equanimity, freedom, abiding clarity) and as a **path** (ethical living, posture, breath, sense-regulation, meditation). The two are mutually reinforcing: steady practice cultivates the state; the state refines practice.

1.3 Origin, History, and Development of Yoga

Yoga is best approached as a **historical conversation**—from early images of discipline and breath, to the interiority of the Upaniṣads, the integrative life-path of the Gītā, the psychology of Patañjali, and the physiological emphasis of Haṭha texts. Modern movements organize pedagogy and explore health applications.

Timeline (synoptic)

Period	Features	Lasting contribution
Vedic (c. 1500–500 BCE)	Imagery of yoking, order (<i>rta</i>), vow (<i>vrata</i>), austerity (<i>tapas</i>), breath (<i>prāṇa</i>)	Seeds of discipline, attention, and sacral order
Upaniṣadic (c. 800–300 BCE)	Inward inquiry; sense-restraint; meditation	Contemplative core; early “yoga” as sense mastery
Itihāsa (c. 400 BCE–200 CE)	Bhagavad Gītā integrates action, devotion, knowledge	Spiritual life within worldly duty; <i>samatva</i>
Classical (c. 200 BCE–400 CE)	Yoga Sūtra systematizes mind-science and method	Aṣṭāṅga framework; <i>citta-vṛtti-nirodha</i>
Tantra-Haṭha (c. 700–1700 CE)	Satkarmas, āsana, prāṇāyāma, mudrā, bandha; subtle anatomy	Psycho-physiological tools; preparation for rāja-yoga
Modern-Contemporary (19th c. →)	Global pedagogy; therapeutic and research interfaces	Public health relevance; structured curricula

Scholarly note for balance:

Pre-classical iconography (e.g., meditative figures) is often interpreted as “proto-yogic,” yet interpretations vary; rigorous study values these as **hints** rather than definitive proofs. What remains consistent is Yoga’s **deepening interiorization** and **broadening application**.

1.4 General Introduction to Śad-darśanas (Six Classical Schools)

The **śad-darśanas** are six interrelated systems of Indian philosophy that frame methods of knowing (*pramāṇa*), reality (*tattva/padārtha*), and human goals (*puruṣārtha*). Yoga stands among them, closely allied to Sāṃkhya.

1.4.1 Overview at a glance

Darśana	Traditional seer	Core concern	Typical pramāṇas (means of knowledge)
Nyāya	Gotama (Akṣapāda)	Logic, inference, valid knowledge	4: perception, inference, comparison, testimony
Vaiśeṣika	Kaṇāda	Ontology of categories (<i>padārtha</i>)	2 (classical): perception, inference
Sāṃkhya	Kapila	25 tattvas; puruṣa-prakṛti dualism	3: perception, inference, testimony
Yoga	Patañjali	Practical method to still mind; kaivalya	3: perception, inference, testimony
Pūrva Mīmāṃsā	Jaimini	Dharma and Vedic injunctions (ritual hermeneutics)	5–6 (school-dependent), testimony central
Uttara Mīmāṃsā (Vedānta)	Bādarāyaṇa (Vyāsa)	Brahman-Ātman; liberation	Often 6; testimony (śruti) central

Pramāṇa counts vary by sub-school; the table presents commonly taught baselines for foundation study.

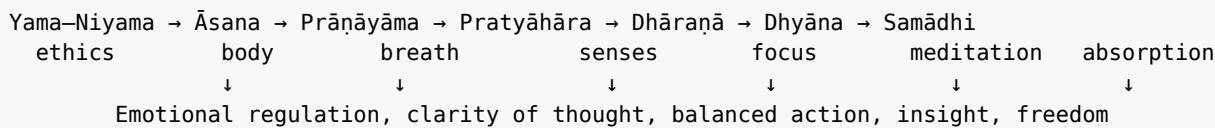
1.4.2 Distinctive contributions

- **Nyāya** supplies the tools of **critical reasoning** and debate, clarifying errors in perception and inference—skills that sharpen a yogin’s discernment (*viveka*).
- **Vaiśeṣika** analyzes reality into **categories** (substance, quality, motion, universals, particularity, inherence; later, absence), training attention to **particulars** and causal clarity.
- **Sāṃkhya** maps experience into **25 tattvas**, distinguishing the witnessing consciousness (*puruṣa*) from nature (*prakṛti*) and its evolutes. This map undergirds Yoga’s method.
- **Yoga** operationalizes Sāṃkhya’s insight: by **ethical, somatic, respiratory, sensory, and meditative** disciplines, awareness is disentangled from mental flux. It uniquely includes **Īśvara** (a special *puruṣa*) as an optional aid to concentration.
 - **Yoga Sūtra 1.24:** “...पुरुषविशेष ईश्वरः ।” — *Īśvara* is a special *puruṣa*, untouched by afflictions and karma.
- **Pūrva Mīmāṃsā** emphasizes **dharma** as revealed in Vedic injunctions and develops rigorous **hermeneutics**; its discipline of attention to text and duty informs Yoga’s steadiness in action.
- **Vedānta** consummates the inquiry in **Brahman/Ātman** realization; sub-schools (Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita) differ in ontology but converge on **liberation** as the human end. Yoga practices are frequently adopted as **means to mental purity** for Vedāntic contemplation.

1.4.3 Sāṃkhya-Yoga relation in a sentence

Sāṃkhya gives the map; Yoga gives the road. The map distinguishes the Seer from the seen; the road trains body-breath-mind so that the Seer stands clear.

1.5 Concept Chart: From Ethics to Liberation



Unit Summary

This unit introduces Yoga as a **state of equanimity and freedom** and a **path of disciplined practice**. Classical texts define Yoga through **sense-mastery (Upaniṣads)**, **equanimity and skilled action (Gītā)**, and **stilling of mind (Yoga**

Sūtra). Historically, Yoga develops from early Vedic seeds to Upaniṣadic interiority, the Gītā's integration of life and duty, Patañjali's psychology, and Haṭha's physiological toolkit, culminating in contemporary pedagogies and health applications. The **śad-darśanas** provide India's philosophical backdrop; among them, **Sāṃkhya and Yoga** form a pair—**theoretical map and practical method**—while Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika sharpen analysis, and Mīmāṃsā/Vedānta clarify duty and liberation.

Key Terms

- **Samatva** (समत्व) – equanimity
- **Citta-vṛtti** – mental modifications
- **Pratyāhāra** – regulation/withdrawal of senses
- **Viveka** – discriminative insight
- **Puruṣa/Prakṛti** – witness consciousness / primordial nature
- **Pramāṇa** – means of valid knowledge
- **Kaivalya/Mokṣa** – liberation, independence of awareness
- **Īśvara** – special puruṣa (Yoga Darśana)

Self-Assessment

MCQs

1. According to **Yoga Sūtra 1.2**, Yoga is primarily:
a) mastery of ritual b) stilling of mind-fluctuations c) breath retention alone d) physical prowess
2. **Bhagavad Gītā 2.48** emphasizes Yoga as:
a) renunciation of all action b) equanimity in action c) fasting d) pilgrimage
3. The pair that best captures the Sāṃkhya-Yoga relationship is:
a) myth-ritual b) logic-grammar c) map-method d) art-aesthetics
4. In the śad-darśanas, **Nyāya** is primarily associated with:
a) devotion b) logic and inference c) ritual hermeneutics d) non-dualism
5. The eight limbs of Yoga begin with:
a) prāṇāyāma b) āsana c) yama and niyama d) dhyāna

Answer key: 1-b, 2-b, 3-c, 4-b, 5-c

Short Answer

1. State two practical objectives of Yoga and relate each to a likely change in daily student life.
2. Summarize, in 6-8 sentences, the development of Yoga from the Upaniṣads to the Yoga Sūtra and Haṭha compendia.
3. List the six darśanas and write one distinctive contribution of any two of them.

Reflective Prompts

1. Identify a recurring stressful situation and describe how equanimity (*samatva*) and breath-regulation could alter your response over one week.
2. In your own words, articulate the “map-method” insight of Sāṃkhya-Yoga and how that shapes your study plan for this semester.

End of Unit 1: Introduction to Yoga