



Yoga's Foundational Philosophies: Samkhya, Advaita Vedanta, Tantra

Description

Vocabulary

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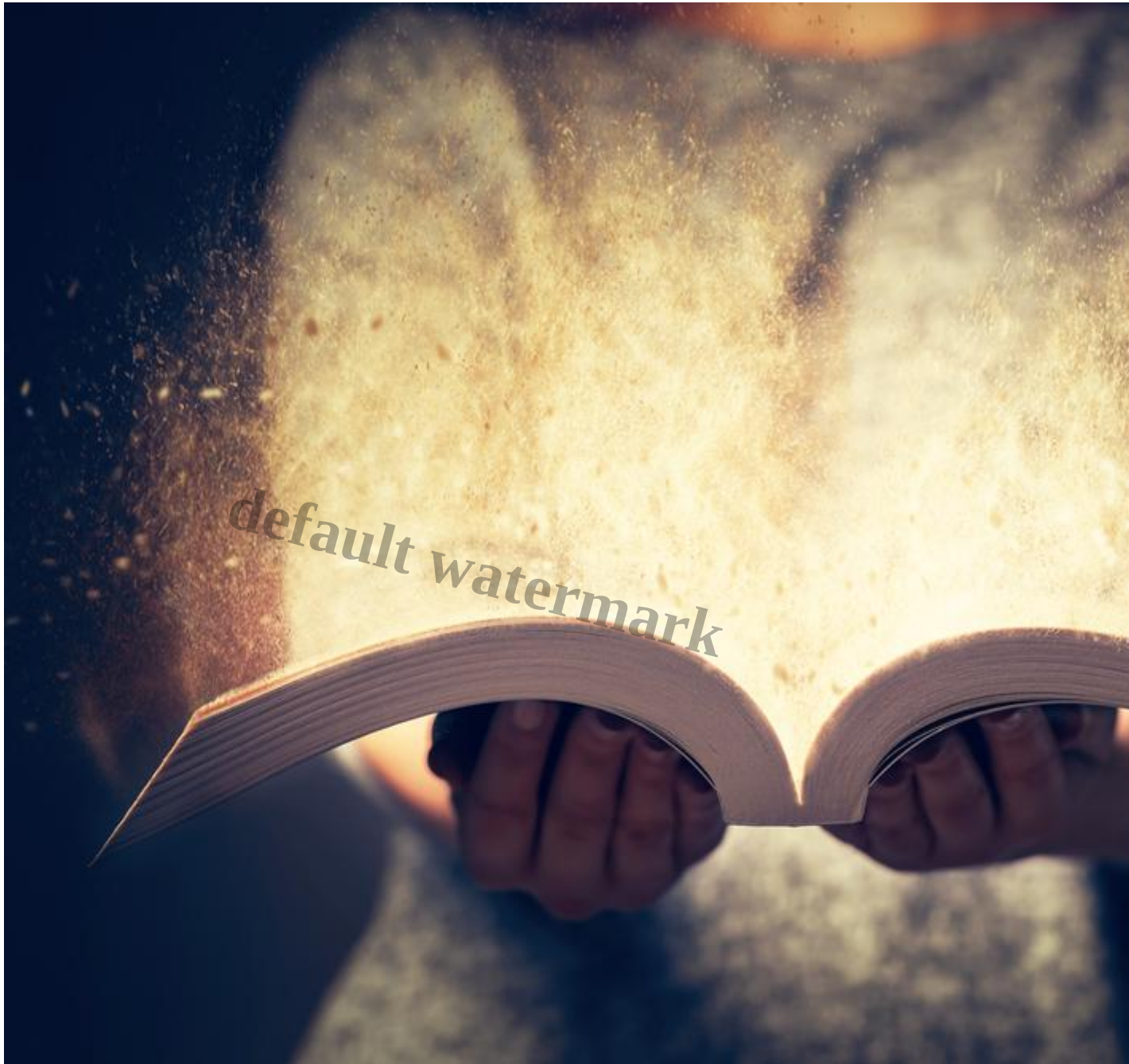


1. ADVAITA VEDANTA - A non-dualistic understanding of Vedanta
2. ATMAN - The Self
3. BRAHMAN - The formless spirit of the Universe
4. GUNAS - Modes of being

5. KARMA â?? The law of universal causality
6. MAYA â?? The cosmic illusion caused by an error in spiritual perception
7. PRAKRTI â?? Substance
8. PURUSHA â?? Spirit
9. SAMKHYA â?? A dualistic philosophy teaching discrimination between spirit and matter
10. SHAKTI â?? Feminine principle
11. SHIVA â?? Masculine principle
12. TANTRA â?? A non-dualistic philosophy with practices designed to realize through experience that everything is divine and connected
13. VEDANTA â?? A philosophy based The Vedas

Overview

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- Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are rooted in Samkhya philosophy.
- Samkhya is dualistic, teaching discrimination between *purusha* (spirit) and *prakrti* (substance).
- Other Yoga schools of thought are based upon the non-dualistic philosophies of Advaita Vedanta or Tantra, which conclude that the "inherent nature of all things is Consciousness" and that there is only One Consciousness.
- Advaita Vedanta "refers to the non-dualistic school of Hindu philosophy which is derived mostly from the Upanishads." (hinduwebsite.com)
- Tantric practices are designed to realize through experience that everything is divine and connected.

- Some sources consider these different philosophies connected and complementary. For example:
• The aspirant clears the mind through the practice of Yoga meditation as codified in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, does self-enquiry of Vedanta, and then breaks through the final barrier with Tantra, experiencing the heights of *kundalini* awakening. • (Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati)

TANTRA VS. SAMKHYA

Tantra explores the essential unity of reality. Samkhya analyzes the different elements of physical manifestation and explains how they take form from spirit. • Alan Finger

CONNECTING YOGA, VEDANTA AND TANTRA

In the tradition of the Himalayan masters, Yoga, Vedanta, and Tantra complement one another, leading one systematically along the path to Self-realization. The aspirant clears the mind through the practice of Yoga meditation as codified in the Yoga *Sutras* of Patanjali, does self-enquiry of Vedanta, and then breaks through the final barrier with Tantra, experiencing the heights of *kundalini* awakening. • Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati

Samkhya



Introduction

- Indian tradition regards Samkhya as the oldest *darsana* (philosophy).
- â??Samkhyaâ?• means discrimination.

- The philosophy discriminates between *purusha* (spirit) and *prakrti* (substance).
- In *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* published in 1958, renowned scholar Mircea Eliade delineates [Patanjali's Yoga](#) from Samkhya while noting its strong overlap. Much later in the dense, scholarly text, Eliade devotes a long chapter to Yoga and Tantrism in which he explains *mantras*, *mandalas*, *hatha yoga*, *nadis*, *chakras*, and *kundalini* among other topics.

PATANJALI'S YOGA & SAMKHYA

The Yoga and Samkhya systems are so much alike that most of the affirmations made by the one are valid for the other! The essential differences between them are few: 1) whereas Samkhya is atheistic, Yoga is theistic, since it postulates the existence of a supreme God (Isvara); 2) whereas, according to Samkhya, the only path to salvation is that of metaphysical knowledge, Yoga accords marked importance to techniques of meditation. — Mircea Eliade

LIBERATION A PROCESS OF DISCRIMINATION

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are rooted in the Samkhya philosophical system — a system which maintains a strong dualism between *purusha* (the principle of awareness, that which is sentient) and *prakriti* (the insentient manifest/objective world, composed of various combinations of the three *gunas*: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*). The process of liberation, as articulated within this system, is fundamentally one of discrimination between what is real/sentient and what is unreal/insentient and becoming established in one's true identity as the former as opposed to the latter. — Elizabeth Reninger

A Key Aspect of The Philosophy



The following teaching by expert Gary Kraftsow offers a very clear perspective on a vital foundation of yoga philosophy.

YOGA AFFIRMS WHO WE ARE AND WHO WE ARE NOT

The yoga tradition affirms that who we are in essence is an unchanging source of pure awareness that dwells within a changing multidimensional universe. This locus of pure awareness is called atman in Vedic revelation and purusha in both the Sankhya and yoga systems. Purusha, literally â??city dweller,â?• lives within the manifest multidimensional universe, which includes aspects that we normally consider to be part of our self (with a lowercase s), such as our thoughts, feelings, and physical body, as well as those things that we normally consider external to our being, such as our family, social

networks, and the natural world. According to this view, the entirety of this manifest existence â?? beyond our essential Self (with an uppercase S) â?? exists only as ephemeral convergences within a vast field of ongoing change. Fundamentally, yoga affirms that we are not these changing things, and that our suffering comes from our mistaken identification with and attachment to them. â?? Gary Kraftsow

Purusha & Prakrti

In Samkhya philosophy, *purusha* and *prakrti* are the foundational elements.

- *Purusha* refers to consciousness or the experiencer.
- As the experienced, *prakrti* is said to encompass matter, the identity of a self, the forces of movement known as *gunas* (*rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*) and other elements.

Purusha: Spirit

- *Samkyha* philosophy describes *purusha* as free, irreducible, without qualities, without intelligence or desires. (â??Desires are not eternal; hence they do not belong to Spirit.â?• Eliade p 16).
- â??*Purusha* can be neither born nor destroyed, is neither bound nor active, neither thirsts for freedom nor is liberated.â?•
- â??The Self is pure, eternal, free; it cannot be bound because it cannot enter into relationship with anything but itself.â?•
- â??Spirit is free for all eternity.â?•
- â??Spirit is only spectator.â?•
- It is â??impassive, autonomous, and irreducible.â?•

Prakrti: Substance

- â??*Prakrti* is as real and as eternal as *purusha* but unlike Spirit, it is dynamic and creative.â?• (Eliade p 19)
- It possesses three â??modes of being,â?• or *gunas*: *sattva* (luminosity and intelligence), *rajas* (motor energy and mental activity) and *tamas* (static inertia and psychic obscurity)

FROM DUALISM TO A â??NEXT STEPâ?•

The wisdom contained within Yoga Sutras is a powerful tool for facilitating â?? with its neti-neti via-negativa approach â?? the movement from â??mountains are mountains, and rivers are rivers,â?• to â??mountains are not-mountains, and rivers are not-rivers.â?• Because of its commitment to the *purusha/prakriti* dualism, however, it leaves unexplored what for an Advaita Vedanta or Taoist approach would be the next step, namely of seeing the Clear Light nature of all apparent phenomena, i.e. of realizing that manifest phenomena, the ten-thousand-things, are in their essence none other than Tao, the Divineâ?; Mountains are once again mountains, and rivers are once again rivers â?? but are now known/perceived in their True Nature. â?? Elizabeth Reninger

Advaita Vedanta



Introduction

- Advaita Vedanta is a “non-dualistic understanding of Vedanta.” (Vedanta is a philosophy based on [The Vedas](#).)
- “In simple terms, *advaita* means absence of the duality between subject and object.”
- “Advaita school believes that *Brahman* is the one and only reality and everything else is a mere appearance, projection, formation or illusion.” (hinduwebsite.com)

Brahman

- *Brahman* is a Sanskrit word referring to “the formless spirit of the Universe, from which all beings issue and into which they all merge, and as such is not an object of worship, but a subject of meditation.” (hinduwebsite.com)

- Some definitions of *brahman* include eternal Truth, the absolute Universal Principle, the cosmic soul and the spiritual source.
- *Brahman* is the essence of all that can be experienced but not seen, including the soul and the truth. It is also the cosmic soul. Every living being on earth comes from this cosmic soul. [One Sanskrit scholar] describes *brahman* as being the creative principle that is manifested in the whole world. Yoga, as a spiritual discipline, helps the practitioner to understand and experience *brahman*. • Yogapedia

NON-DUALISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF VEDANTA (UPANISHADS, GITA, VEDANTA SUTRAS)

One of the first to comment on the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras is Shankaracharya (c. 700-750 CE). His interpretation of these texts is presented from a non-dualistic point of view, in which the individual self is just seen as a reflection, and therefore non-separate in essence, from the supreme reality. It sees the realization of this oneness of the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness as the ultimate goal of all spiritual endeavor, which is expressed in the Upanishads [as] "You are that." • This non-dualistic understanding of Vedanta, i.e. of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Vedanta Sutras, is known as Advaita Vedanta. • Marco Pino

VEDANTA DEFINED

Vedanta is one of the world's most ancient spiritual philosophies and one of its broadest, based on the Vedas, the sacred scriptures of India. It is the philosophical foundation of Hinduism; but while Hinduism includes aspects of Indian culture, Vedanta is universal in its application and is equally relevant to all countries, all cultures, and all religious backgrounds. Vedanta affirms: the oneness of existence, the divinity of the soul, and the harmony of all religions. • Vedanta Society

DEFINING BRAHMAN

The *Upanishads* define brahman as *satyam jnanam anantam brahma*. Satyam means "that which never changes," • *jnanam* means "knowledge," • and *anantam* means "infinity." • Brahman is the essence of all that can be experienced but not seen, including the soul and the truth. It is also the cosmic soul. Every living being on earth comes from this cosmic soul and, as such, there is no spiritual distinction between people around the world. Brahman is the source of all reality and the grounding sustenance of all reality. Paul Jakob Deussen, a Sanskrit scholar from Germany describes brahman as being the creative principle that is manifested in the whole world. Yoga, as a spiritual discipline, helps the practitioner to understand and experience brahman. Yoga helps one master the senses and ultimately the mind, thereby bringing the Self closer to brahman, the spiritual source. Brahman does not refer to the Hindu god Brahma, the Hindu god of creation. Nor does it refer to *Brahmin*, a class that is a part of the caste system as described in the Upanishads. • Yogapedia

ADVAITA VEDANTA RECOGNIZES SELF IS THE SAME AS THE HIGHEST REALITY, BRAHMAN

Advaita Vedanta gives a unifying interpretation of the whole body of Upanishads, providing scriptural authority for the postulation of the nonduality of Atman and Brahman. Advaita (not-two in Sanskrit) refers to the recognition that the true Self, Atman, which is pure consciousness, is the same as the highest Reality, Brahman, which is also pure consciousness. Followers seek liberation/release by acquiring vidyā (knowledge) of the identity of Atman and Brahman. Advaita thought can also be

found in non-orthodox Indian religious traditions, such as the tantric Nath tradition! The key source texts for all schools of Vedānta are the Prasthanatrayi, the canonical texts consisting of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras, of which they give a philosophical interpretation and elucidation. ?? wikipedia

DIFFERENTIATING PHILOSOPHIES

The Eastern myths tell us that we are divine, we are God, and God is everywhere. We walk through the world and miss its divinity. Our task of tasks is to realize our identity with God. This is not the task we have set out for ourselves in the West. In the West we are told, through our stories, that we are not divine and God is not a part of us, so our task of tasks in the West is to come into a relationship with the divine. These are two very different imperatives that differentiate Eastern and Western spirituality and philosophy: are you seeking a relationship with God (Western); or are you trying to identify with God (Eastern)? This basic philosophical understanding of the nature of the universe underlies much of the differences between the stories we will hear, East and West. ?? Bernie Clark

Tantra

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Introduction

- *Tan* means *to extend*, *expansive*, or *whole*.
- *Tantrikas* seek liberation in the world. Tantric practices are designed to realize through experience that everything is divine and connected.
- Tantra arose in reaction to patriarchy, dualism, and atheism.
- A key philosophy of *Tantra* is nondualism, or the idea that *one's* true essence exists in every particle of the universe.
- Practices include *pranayama*, *mantra*, *mudra*, and *yantra*.

- According to *Tantra*, the masculine principle referred to as *Shiva* and the feminine principle called *Shakti* are unified on a plane of infinite consciousness, beyond our earthly concepts of time and space.
- To create our universe, they were separated.
- Illusion causes a continued separation between *Shiva* & *Shakti* and a perceived world of duality.
- See more: [About the Polarities of Yin and Yang](#) and [Branches of Yoga](#).

SHIVA & SHAKTI

Femininity and masculinity exist wherever there is creation. The scriptural texts call the male the Deva and the female the Devi, in accordance with the male and female principle in all fathers and mothers in the world. Energy per se is symbolized in the male aspect. Energy manifest is symbolized in the female aspect. Swami Sivananda Radha

SHIVA

The yoga we know today was developed as part of the tantric civilization which existed in India and all parts of the world more than ten thousand years ago. According to mythical tradition, Shiva is said to be the founder of yoga, and Parvati, his first disciple. Lord Shiva is considered to be the symbol or embodiment of supreme consciousness. Swami Satyananda Saraswati

KUNDALINI SHAKTI: THE COSMIC FORCE WHICH LIES DORMANT IN ALL BEINGS

Parvati represents supreme knowledge, will and action, and is responsible for all creation. This force or energy is also known as kundalini shakti, the cosmic force which lies dormant in all beings. Parvati is regarded as the mother of the whole universe. The techniques of yoga have their source in tantra and the two cannot be separated, just as consciousness, Shiva, cannot be separated from energy, Shakti. Swami Satyananda Saraswati

SHAKTI: THE GREAT MOTHER

Shakti is the Great Mother. In glory, She surpasses a father at all times. Mother Shakti holds the child, the seeker, the aspirant in Her womb, which is the world. She nourishes the child with Divine nectar, which brings the child back to Mother, after the enjoyment of the play of Maya. Swami Sivananda Radha

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NON-DUAL PHILOSOPHIES

In the schools of Yogic Non-Dualism, we primarily have Advaita Vedanta and Tantra. They both arrive at a non-dual conclusion through their practice, and thus believe that the inherent nature of all things is Consciousness, or the True Self, and that there is only One Consciousness or Self. They each apply what appears to be a radically different method and attitude towards their practice, however. Advaita Vedanta declares emphatically that all phenomenal experience such as body, earth, thoughts, etc. in short, anything that can be observed or experienced, is an Illusion without any basis in Reality. The only thing that is Real, it declares, is the Self as Pure Consciousness. From this perspective, Advaita

Vedanta would say that the body is worthless and that by falsely believing your own individual self to be the body, you prevent yourself from experiencing your larger True Self. Tantra, on the other hand declares that all of life that can be observed and experienced is the Divine Consciousness Itself, and should be honored as God, and is inherently as Real as the Consciousness itself. Tantra says that the body is Sacred, and through the body one can experience the Divine. — Atlanta School of Tantra Yoga

HOW CHAKRAS MAY CONNECT THE PHILOSOPHIES

- Although the chakra system, in its final form, post-dates the Sutras, the five elements which are at the heart of the chakras are a foundation of Samkhya philosophy which is also a foundation of the Yoga Sutras.
- Most of the chakras are described or alluded to in chapter three of the Sutras pointing to Patanjali as a bridge between Yoga and Tantra, of which the chakras are a part.
- The cosmology of Tantra is an extension and natural progression of the 24 Tattvas of Samkhya, showing the common roots of both the Sutras and the chakras.
- This is not to say that Patanjali had the seven chakras in mind when he wrote this sutra [2.27 Seven Levels of Clear Seeing], but that there is a deeper archetypal system of seven levels of wisdom that both Patanjali and Tantra were accessing. — Joseph LePage

More Fundamental Concepts

Mircea Eliade begins the scholarly work, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, with the premise that these four concepts are fundamental principles upon which yoga philosophy is based.

Karma

- *Karma* is first referenced in the *Upanishads*.
- *Karma* is a Sanskrit word which means “action” or “work” and can refer to “all the actions a person makes, both with their body and in their mind.”

A popular way of explaining *karma* is the idea that every action has a reaction. The idea here, of course, is that positive actions create good *karma*, leading to future happiness, while negative ones create bad *karma*, which leads to suffering. Although all actions create *karma*, it is believed that the intention behind the action affects the *karma*. Thus, actions which are unintentional, or without bad intent, do not have the same *karmic* influence and may be considered *karmically neutral*. *Karma* is closely linked in many schools of religion and philosophy to the concept of rebirth or reincarnation. It is believed that *karma* can be carried over from one life into the next. Yoga is seen as one way to free oneself from the cycle of *karma*, and to find freedom and liberation. The branch of yoga which uses work and action to do this is called Karma Yoga. — Yogapedia

Maya

- The cosmic illusion caused by *avidya* (an error in spiritual perception).

Nirvana

- Absolute reality, pure Being, the Absolute, *atman* (the Self), *brahman*, the unconditioned, the transcendent, the immortal, the indestructible.

Yoga

- The means for gaining liberation, of attaining Being.

See also [What is Yoga?](#)

Category

1. Uncategorized

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