

## **A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF ASHTANGA YOGA IN THE REALIZATION OF VIVEKKHYATI IN PATANJALI YOGA DARSHAN**

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**Abstract:**

*Patanjal yoga sutra is one of the oldest texts in yogic literature, where Ashtanga yoga was discovered for the first time, the aim of yoga is not self-realization. Yoga aims to know the absence of harmony between Ashtanga yoga and Vivekkhyati. The main objective of this research paper is to define relation between Ashtanga yoga and Vivekkhyati. This study is based on qualitative and philosophical research methodology analysis with primary sources of the Patanjali Yoga Sutra and classical commentaries. The study indicates that the preliminary yogic disciplines—namely Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, and Pratyahara—serve to cleanse and discipline the body and sensory organs, whereas the advanced limbs—Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi—are directed towards the refinement and stabilization of the mind. Together, these eightfold practices create a conducive foundation for the emergence of subtle discernment, essential for yogic realization.*

**Keywords:**

*Vivekkhyati, Ashtanga yoga, patanjali yoga, Prakriti, Purusha.*

Reference to this paper  
should be made as follows:

**Received: 30.04.2025**

**Approved: 19.06.2025**

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*RJPSSs 2025, Vol. LI,  
No. 1, pp. 148-152  
Article No. 17*

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**DOI:** *[https://doi.org/10.31995/  
rjpsss.2025v51i01.17](https://doi.org/10.31995/rjpsss.2025v51i01.17)*

## 1. Introduction

In the landscape of Indian philosophy, the attainment of liberation (Moksha) is frequently linked to the realization of the self-distinction from material nature. In the Patanjali yoga sutra, the realization is encapsulated in the term VivekKhyati – knowing prakriti and purusha separately is the glory of wisdom. This knowledge provides new roots to start a yoga journey. A practitioner knows the difference between Prakriti and Purusha with the help of Pragya. In the stage of Sampragyata Samadhi practitioners use sadhana to learn immaculate Vivekkhyati. This sadhana is known ashtanga yoga.

*Yogannghanusthanad ashuddhikshaye jnanadiptira vivekakhyate* (patanjali yoga sutra 2.28)

According to swami Vivekanand the practice of the different parts of yoga the impurities being destroyed knowledge becomes effulgent, up to discrimination. While the use of eight-fold limbs in yoga practice, impurities will destroy and find lightning awareness of Vivekkhyati. Self-knowledge is achieved through Discernment.

### 1. Vivekkhyati in patanjali yoga sutra

In yoga and the distinction of Prakriti-purusha, in yoga philosophy, Vivekkhyati is consider the supreme means of attaining solution. It is realization in which the practitioner clearly understands that the elements of Prakriti such as intellect, ego, senses and body are changeable, inert and temporary, while the Purusha (soul) is completely independent, conscious and unattached. When this discrimination becomes permanent, the practitioner is free from affection and moves towards kaivalya. Patanjali yoga sutra sates,

*Vivekakhyatiraviplavahaanopayah* (patanjali yoga sutra 2.26)

According to swami Vivekanand ji the remedy for all suffering. this unwavering Vivekkhyati is the remedy for all suffering. This unwavering Vivekkhyati is the remedy for all suffering. This knowledge does not come into experience through sadhana, meditation, and introspection. Sankhya philosophy also states that the knowledge of the true nature of Prakriti and Purusha is the key to the path of liberation. Thus, Vivekkhyati is not just a philosophical concept, but is the ultimate point of a seeker's self-realization.

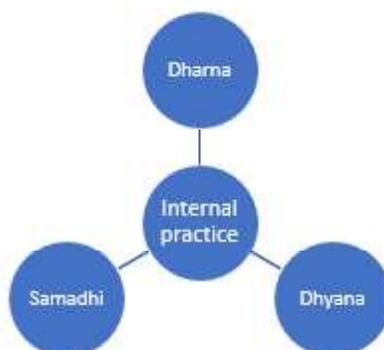
### 2. A Role of Ashtanga Yoga in the Realization of Vivekkhyati

The disciplined observance of Ashtanga Yoga leads to the dissolution of mental impurities, paving the way for inner clarity. It became pure everywhere. The impurities of the mind are destroyed and the knowledge that leads to wisdom is revealed.

Eight limbs are:



The yogic limbs function to harmonize the physical form and refine cognitive capacities. The outer disciplines act as preparatory tools, purging distractions and aligning the mind for deeper internal practices.



Internal means focusing the mind on discrimination. When Samadhi is permanent, Vivekkhyati is awakened.

### **3. Significance of Ashtanga yoga in Vivekkhyati**

Ashtanga Yoga plays a vital role in the realization of Vivekkhyati by providing a disciplined and gradual framework through which the mind is purified and directed inward. The eight limbs are not isolated techniques but interconnected stages that cultivate moral integrity, physical stability, breath regulation, and mental concentration. These practices collectively diminish distractions (*kleshas*) and enhance the practitioner's capacity for *Viveka*—discrimination between the real (*Purusha*) and the unreal (*Prakriti*). Without such preparatory and transformative practices, the subtle perception required for Vivekkhyati remains obscured. Hence,

Ashtanga Yoga is not merely supportive but essential for attaining the highest state of discernment and spiritual liberation described in Patanjali's Yoga Darshan.

#### 4. Results

The study reveals that the external disciplines purify the body and senses, while the internal limbs refine the mind. Both collectively facilitate the rise of subtle cognition necessary for Vivekkhyati. The research establishes that the Ashtanga Yoga forms a systematic and progressive framework that leads the practitioner from ethical grounding to meditative absorption, ultimately culminating in Vivekkhyati the discriminative knowledge between *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. Each limb plays a functional role in removing Avidya and fostering *Viveka* (discrimination).

The stage of Vivekkhyati, the uninterrupted awareness of Purusha, is made possible only through consistent practice of Ashtanga Yoga, making it necessary sadhana in the Ashtanga yoga metaphysical framework. Despite its ancient origins, the Ashtanga system remains relevant in modern spiritual psychology, emphasizing ethical living, mental discipline, and meditative clarity for higher awareness.

#### 5. Discussion

In Patanjali's Yoga philosophy, Vivekkhyati the continuous and refined discernment serves as a cornerstone, enabling the practitioner to distinguish clearly between the seer (*Purusha*) and the seen (*Prakriti*). This level of realization cannot arise abruptly; it requires a progressive purification and refinement of the body, mind, and intellect. This is precisely the function of Ashtanga Yoga. Each limb of the eightfold path plays a unique role in dismantling the layers of ignorance (*Avidya*) and emotional afflictions (*Kleshas*) that cloud true perception. The initial five limbs prepare the practitioner through ethical conduct, physical discipline, and sensory withdrawal, setting the foundation for inner practices. The remaining three focus the mind and lead it into deep meditative absorption, ultimately opening the gateway to *Vivekkhyati*. Philosophically, the process of *Vivekkhyati* is not simply an intellectual realization but an existential shift—a transformation in awareness that allows the seer (*Drashta*) to remain established in their true nature. This transformation, as outlined in the Yoga Sutras (e.g., Sutra 2.26: *vivekakhyâtir-aviplavâ hânopâya%*), is only possible through sustained effort (*abhyâsa*) and detachment (*vairâgya*)—both of which are embedded within the structure of Ashtanga Yoga.

Therefore, the significance of Ashtanga Yoga in the attainment of *Vivekkhyati* lies in its function as a methodological path: it is both preparatory and transformative, guiding the aspirant step-by-step toward the removal of ignorance and the realization of pure awareness. Without the integrative discipline of the eight limbs, the subtle and sustained awareness required for *Vivekkhyati* remains inaccessible.

## **6. Conclusions**

The present study highlights that Patanjali's concept of Ashtanga Yoga is a well-structured philosophical and practical system aimed at guiding the aspirant toward the realization of *Vivekkhyati*, or discriminative knowledge. Each limb of Ashtanga Yoga from ethical observances to meditative absorption—serves as a progressive tool for refining the body, mind, and intellect.

Through disciplined practice, the aspirant gradually overcomes mental impurities and ignorance (*Avidya*), allowing clear perception between the eternal *Purusha* and the transient *Prakriti*. This discernment, known as *Vivekkhyati*, is not achieved through intellectual understanding alone but through sustained practice of the eightfold path. The research concludes that Ashtanga Yoga is central to the realization of the ultimate goal of Patanjali's Yoga philosophy—*Kaivalya* (liberation or isolation of pure consciousness). As a timeless spiritual discipline, it continues to offer a comprehensive path for self-transformation, inner clarity, and liberation from the cycles of suffering.

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