

Forty Types of Yoga

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The Sanskrit word *yoga* stems from the verbal root *yuj* meaning "to yoke" or "to unite." Thus, in a spiritual context, *yoga* stands for "training" or "unitive discipline." The Sanskrit literature contains numerous compound terms ending in *-yoga*. These stand for various yogic approaches or features of the path. The following is a descriptive list of forty such terms. Not all of these form full-fledged branches or types of Yoga, but they represent at least emphases in diverse contexts. All of them are instructive insofar as they demonstrate the vast scope of Hindu Yoga.

1. **Abhâva-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of nonbeing, meaning the higher yogic practice of immersion into the Self without objective support such as *mantras*; a concept found in the *Purânas*; cf. Bhâva-Yoga
2. **Adhyâtma-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the inner self; sometimes said to be the Yoga characteristic of the *Upanishads*
3. **Agni-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of fire, causing the awakening of the serpent power (*kundalinî-shakti*) through the joint action of mind (*manas*) and life force (*prâna*)
4. **Ashtânga-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the eight limbs, i.e., Râja-Yoga or Pâtanjala-Yoga
5. **Asparsha-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of "noncontact," which is the nondualist Yoga propounded by Gaudapâda in his *Mândûkya-Kârikâ*; cf. Sparsha-Yoga
6. **Bhakti-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of love/devotion, as expounded, for instance, in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, the *Bhâgavata-Purâna*, and numerous other scriptures of Shaivism and Vaishnavism
7. **Buddhi-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the higher mind, first mentioned in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*
8. **Dhyâna-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of meditation
9. **Ghatastha-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the "pot" (*ghata*), meaning the body; a synonym for Hatha-Yoga mentioned in the *Gheranda-Samhitâ*
10. **Guru-Yoga:** The unitive discipline relative to one's teacher
11. **Hatha-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the force (meaning the serpent power or *kundalinî-shakti*); or forceful unitive discipline
12. **Hiranyagarbha-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of Hiranyagarbha ("Golden Germ"), who is considered the original founder of the Yoga tradition
13. **Japa-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of *mantra* recitation
14. **Jnâna-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of discriminating wisdom, which is the approach of the *Upanishads*
15. **Karma-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of self-transcending action, as first explicitly taught in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*
16. **Kaula-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the Kaula school, a Tantric Yoga
17. **Kriyâ-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of ritual; also the combined practice of asceticism (*tapas*), study (*svâdhyâya*), and worship of the Lord (*îshvara-pranidhâna*) mentioned in the *Yoga-Sûtra* of Patanjali
18. **Kundalinî-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the serpent power (*kundalinî-shakti*), which is fundamental to the Tantric tradition, including Hatha-Yoga

19. **Lambikâ-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the "hanger," meaning the uvula, which is deliberately stimulated in this yogic approach to increase the flow of "nectar" (*amrita*) whose external aspect is saliva
20. **Laya-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of absorption or dissolution of the elements prior to their natural dissolution at death
21. **Mahâ-Yoga:** The great unitive discipline, a concept found in the *Yoga-Shikhâ-Upanishad* where it refers to the combined practice of Mantra-Yoga, Laya-Yoga, Hatha-Yoga, and Râja-Yoga
22. **Mantra-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of numinous sounds that help protect the mind, which has been a part of the Yoga tradition ever since Vedic times
23. **Nâda-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the inner sound, a practice closely associated with original Hatha-Yoga
24. **Pancadashânga-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the fifteen limbs (*pancadasha-anga*): (1) moral discipline (*yama*), (2) restraint (*niyama*), (3) renunciation (*tyâga*), (4) silence (*mauna*), (5) right place (*desha*), (6) right time (*kâla*), (7) posture (*âsana*), (8) root lock (*mûla-bandha*), (9) bodily equilibrium (*deha-samyâ*), (10) stability of vision (*dhrik-sthiti*), (11) control of the life force (*prâna-samrodha*), (12) sensory inhibition (*pratyâhâra*), (13) concentration (*dhâranâ*), (14) meditation upon the Self (*âtma-dhyâna*), and (15) ecstasy (*samâdhi*)
25. **Pâshupata-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the Pâshupata sect, as expounded in some of the *Purânas*
26. **Pâtanjala-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of Patanjali, better known as Râja-Yoga or Yoga-Darshana
27. **Pûrna-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of wholeness or integration, which is the name of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga
28. **Râja-Yoga:** The royal unitive discipline, also called Pâtanjala-Yoga, Ashtânga-Yoga, or Râja-Yoga
29. **Samâdhi-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of ecstasy
30. **Sâmkhya-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of insight, which is the name of certain liberation teachings and schools referred to in the *Mahâbhârata*
31. **Samnyâsa-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of renunciation, which is contrasted against Karma-Yoga in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*
32. **Samputa-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of sexual congress (*maithunâ*) in Tantra-Yoga
33. **Samrambha-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of hatred, as mentioned in the *Vishnu-Purâna*, which illustrates the profound yogic principle that one becomes what one constantly contemplates (even if charged with negative emotions)
34. **Saptânga-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the seven limbs (*sapta-anga*), also known as Sapta-Sâdhana in the *Gheranda-Samhitâ*: (1) six purificatory practices (*shat-karma*), (2) posture (*âsana*), (3) seal (*mudrâ*), (4) sensory inhibition (*pratyâhâra*), (5) breath control (*prânâyâma*), (6) meditation (*dhyâna*), and (7) ecstasy (*samâdhi*)
35. **Shadanga-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the six limbs (*shad-anga*), as expounded in the *Maitrâyanîya-Upanishad*: (1) breath control (*prânâyâma*), (2) sensory inhibition (*pratyâhâra*), (3) meditation (*dhyâna*), (4) concentration (*dhâranâ*), (5) examination (*tarka*), and (6) ecstasy (*samâdhi*)
36. **Siddha-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the adepts, a concept found in some of the *Tantras*
37. **Sparsha-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of contact; a Vedantic Yoga mentioned in the *Shiva-Purâna*, which combines *mantra* recitation with breath control; cf. Asparsha-Yoga

38. **Tantra-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the *Tantras*, a *kundalinî*-based Yoga
39. **Târaka-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of the "deliverer" (*târaka*); a medieval Yoga based on light phenomena
40. **Yantra-Yoga:** The unitive discipline of focusing the mind upon geometric representations (*yantra*) of the cosmos.

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