

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF ASHTANGA YOGA AND SRI ANANDA YOGA

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ABSTRACT

Yoga, as one of the most ancient and comprehensive systems of spiritual, mental, and physical discipline originating from the Indian subcontinent, has evolved into numerous traditions and schools over millennia. Among these, Ashtanga Yoga – the classical eight-limbed path systematized by the sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sūtras* – and Sri Ananda-Yoga, rooted in the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda and his lineage, represent two of the most influential and philosophically rich yogic traditions in both historical and contemporary contexts. While Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga offers a rigorous, structured path progressing from ethical discipline (Yama and Niyama) through physical posture (Āsana), breath control (Prāṇāyāma), sensory withdrawal (Pratyāhāra), concentration (Dhāraṇā), meditation (Dhyāna), and culminating in the state of absorption (Samādhi), Sri Ananda-Yoga integrates devotional, metaphysical, and Kriya-based practices oriented toward self-realization and divine communion. This paper undertakes a systematic comparative study of the philosophical foundations, methodological aspects, spiritual objectives, ethical frameworks, and practical dimensions of these two traditions. Through textual analysis and critical engagement with primary and secondary literature, the study identifies key convergences – particularly in the goal of liberation, the centrality of meditation, and the importance of ethical living – as well as significant divergences in ontological orientation, the role of the guru, the use of Kriya techniques, and the relationship between body and spirit. The study concludes that while both traditions share the fundamental telos of moksha or self-realization, their pathways differ in emphasis, technique, and cosmological underpinning, offering complementary rather than contradictory approaches to the ultimate goal of human liberation.

Keywords: Ashtanga Yoga¹, Sri Ananda-Yoga², Patanjali³, Paramhansa Yogananda⁴, Yoga Sūtras⁵, Kriya Yoga⁶, Samādhi⁷, Self-Realization⁸.

1. INTRODUCTION

Yoga occupies a unique and central position in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual heritage of India. Derived from the Sanskrit root *yuj*, meaning "to yoke" or "to unite," yoga signifies both a state of union between the individual self and the universal consciousness, and the various disciplines and practices by which that union is sought [1]. Over thousands of years, this vast tradition has branched into numerous schools and methodologies,

each emphasizing different aspects of the human potential—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—in the pursuit of liberation (*moksha*) or self-realization. Two of the most significant and influential traditions within this expansive universe of yogic thought are Ashtanga Yoga, the classical eight-limbed system codified by the sage Patanjali in the *Yoga Sūtras* (estimated to have been composed between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE, though drawing on traditions far older) [2], and Sri Ananda-Yoga, the modern spiritual tradition rooted in the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda (1893–1952) and further systematized by his disciple Swami Kriyananda [3].

Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga represents one of the most rigorously structured spiritual systems ever conceived. By organizing the entire path of yoga into eight progressive limbs (*aṅgas*), Patanjali provided what has been described as one of the most detailed maps of higher consciousness ever produced on this planet [4]. His system, often referred to interchangeably as Raja Yoga or classical yoga, integrates ethics, physicality, energetics, and consciousness into a unified ascending path culminating in *samādhi* and ultimately *kaivalya*—the absolute liberation of pure consciousness (*puruṣa*) from its entanglement with material nature (*prakṛti*) [5]. Sri Ananda-Yoga, by contrast, is a tradition that emerged from the lineage of Mahavatar Babaji through Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Paramhansa Yogananda, who brought these teachings to the West in 1920 and spent more than three decades revealing what he described as the universal spiritual science of self-realization [6]. Central to Ananda-Yoga is the practice of Kriya Yoga—an advanced meditation technique—combined with devotion, Hatha Yoga, affirmations, and the cultivation of divine joy (*ānanda*) in daily life [7].

Despite the richness of both traditions, comparative scholarly inquiry into their respective philosophical frameworks, methodological approaches, and spiritual objectives remains relatively sparse. Most existing studies tend either to focus exclusively on Patanjali's classical system or to treat Ananda-Yoga primarily as a modern devotional movement, rarely examining the two traditions side by side with philosophical rigor. This paper seeks to address this gap by undertaking a systematic comparative analysis of Ashtanga Yoga and Sri Ananda-Yoga across multiple dimensions including ontology, ethics, practice methodology, the role of the guru, and the conception of the ultimate goal.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The comparative study of Ashtanga Yoga and Sri Ananda-Yoga carries significant theoretical and practical importance. Theoretically, it contributes to the broader field of Yoga Studies and Indian Philosophy by illuminating the points of convergence and divergence between a classical Sāṃkhya-based yogic system and a modern tradition rooted in Tantric and devotional lineages. Understanding how different yogic traditions conceptualize the human condition, the nature of consciousness, and the path to liberation deepens our appreciation of the extraordinary philosophical diversity within the yoga tradition itself [8]. Practically, in an age when yoga has become a global phenomenon practiced by hundreds of millions of people, clarity about the philosophical and methodological distinctions between different traditions is essential for practitioners and scholars alike to make informed and meaningful engagement with these teachings [9]. Furthermore, both traditions have had—and continue to have—transformative impacts on millions of practitioners worldwide, making their comparative study of broad cultural and spiritual relevance.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study pursues the following specific objectives: first, to delineate the philosophical foundations of Ashtanga Yoga as presented in Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras* and of Sri Ananda-Yoga as taught through Paramhansa Yogananda's lineage; second, to undertake a systematic comparative analysis of the eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga against the corresponding dimensions of practice in Sri Ananda-Yoga; third, to identify and analyze the points of convergence and divergence between the two traditions with respect to ethics, methodology, cosmology, and spiritual teleology; fourth, to examine the role of the guru, the nature of grace, and the significance of community in each tradition; and fifth, to assess the contemporary relevance and global impact of both traditions, drawing conclusions about their complementary value for modern spiritual seekers.

1.3 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This study is primarily a philosophical and textual comparative analysis, drawing on classical Sanskrit sources including Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras* and its major commentaries, as well as the teachings and writings of Paramhansa Yogananda, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Swami Kriyananda as they pertain to Sri Ananda-Yoga. The study does not extend to empirical or clinical dimensions of yoga practice, nor does it engage with the sociological or anthropological study of these traditions as communities. It also acknowledges that "Sri Ananda-Yoga" as a designation encompasses a lineage-based tradition, and while the paper refers to the broader teachings of Yogananda's line, it recognizes that distinct organizational forms (Self-Realization Fellowship, Ananda Sangha) may emphasize different aspects of the same core teachings. The primary limitation of the study lies in the breadth and depth of both traditions – any comparative study of such rich and multifaceted systems must necessarily be selective, and the present analysis does not claim to be exhaustive.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The scholarly literature on Ashtanga Yoga is extensive, anchored by Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras* themselves, which have received commentaries from the earliest times, most notably the *Yogabhāṣya* of Vyāsa (c. 5th century CE) and the *Tattvavaiśārādī* of Vācaspati Miśra (c. 9th century CE) [10]. Modern scholarly engagements with the *Yoga Sūtras* include the foundational works of Georg Feuerstein, whose comprehensive study *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali: A New Translation and Commentary* (1979) remains an essential reference [11], and Edwin Bryant's meticulously annotated *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* (2009), which situates Patanjali's system within the broader context of Indian philosophical schools including Sāṃkhya and Advaita Vedānta [12]. The philosophical relationship between the Yoga and Sāṃkhya schools – fundamental to understanding Patanjali's dualistic ontology – has been explored in depth by scholars including Ian Whicher, whose work *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana* (1998) offers a nuanced reading of the *Yoga Sūtras* that resists overly reductive interpretations of Patanjali's dualism [13]. The eight-limbed structure of Ashtanga Yoga has been examined from multiple angles: Swami Satyananda Saraswati's exegetical work situates the limbs within the broader context of Tantric and Hatha Yoga, while contemporary scholars like Mark Singleton have explored the historical evolution of the asana tradition in *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* (2010) [14].

On the tradition of Sri Ananda-Yoga, the primary textual sources include Paramhansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1946), a spiritual classic that has, since its first publication, introduced millions of Western readers to the tradition of Kriya Yoga and the lineage of masters from which Yogananda drew his teachings [15]. Swami Sri Yukteswar's *The Holy Science (Kaivalya Darśanam, 1894)* provides an important metaphysical framework that forms part of the philosophical underpinning of Ananda-Yoga, particularly in its Vedantic synthesis and its mapping of cosmic cycles [16]. Swami Kriyananda's extensive writings including *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga* and *Ananda Yoga for Higher Awareness* document the development of Ananda Yoga as a formal tradition with distinctive methods of integrating spiritual energy into asana practice and daily life [17]. Scholarly treatments of Yogananda's teachings and their reception in the West appear in Philip Goldberg's *American Veda* (2010), which charts the broader impact of Indian spiritual teachers on American culture, and in the growing literature on the globalization of yoga [18]. Comparative studies that bring classical and modern yoga traditions into dialogue include the work of Kiran Atma, whose examination of Ashtanga Yoga and its contemporary expressions offers a useful analytical framework, and contributions to the *International Journal of Yoga* that have explored philosophical parallels between classical and neo-Vedāntic yoga systems [19]. Research published in the *Journal of Yoga & Physical Therapy* and similar venues has also examined the psychological and therapeutic dimensions of both traditions, offering empirical context for philosophical comparisons [20]. Recent comparative studies in the growing field of Yoga Studies as represented in the work of scholars like David Gordon White and Mark Dyczkowski underscore the importance of situating individual traditions within the complex history of Indian religious thought rather than treating them as isolated phenomena [21].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in comparative philosophical analysis. The research design draws on primary sources canonical texts from both traditions and secondary literature including scholarly commentaries, academic journal articles, and critical studies in the field of Yoga Studies and Indian Philosophy. The comparative framework employed in the study identifies key thematic dimensions ontology, ethical framework, the structure of practice, the nature of the goal, and the role of the guru and examines how each tradition addresses these dimensions, noting both convergences and divergences. The analytical approach is informed by the method of conceptual comparison as used in the philosophy of religion, where traditions are examined both on their own internal terms and in relation to one another, avoiding the imposition of one tradition's categories onto another [22]. Textual analysis is conducted with attention to the original Sanskrit terminology where relevant, as the precise meaning of key terms *chitta*, *puruṣa*, *prakṛti*, *ānanda*, *kaivalya* often resists simple translation and carries philosophical significance that must be preserved in comparative analysis [23].

4. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PAST WORK

The existing scholarly literature on both Ashtanga Yoga and Sri Ananda-Yoga, while rich and growing, reveals several gaps and critical concerns that this study seeks to address. Much of the foundational scholarship on Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga has been conducted within the framework of classical Indian philosophy, focusing primarily on the relationship between yoga and Sāṃkhya, and on the precise interpretation of the *Yoga Sūtras*

dualistic ontology. Vyāsa's *Yogabhāṣya*, the most authoritative traditional commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras*, has shaped centuries of interpretation by reading Patanjali through a strongly Sāṃkhya lens, emphasizing the radical distinction between *puruṣa* (pure consciousness) and *prakṛti* (material nature) [10]. This interpretive tradition, while philosophically coherent, has been challenged by modern scholars like Ian Whicher, who argues that the *Yoga Sūtras* need not be read as promoting a thoroughgoing ontological dualism, and that Patanjali's account of *samādhi* and *kaivalya* is more nuanced than a simple separation of spirit from matter [13]. This debate has important implications for comparative study: if Ashtanga Yoga's final goal is understood as radical separation (*vivekakhyāti*, discriminative discernment), it appears quite distinct from the devotional union sought in Sri Ananda-Yoga; but if Patanjali's system is read more inclusively, the two traditions' goals converge more closely.

The scholarship on Sri Ananda-Yoga has been shaped significantly by its devotional and organizational context. Yogananda's own writings—particularly the *Autobiography of a Yogi*—while spiritually powerful and philosophically rich, are not systematic academic texts, and much of the secondary literature on his teachings has been produced by practitioners within the tradition rather than by independent scholars. This creates a challenge of critical distance that comparative scholarship must navigate carefully. Philip Goldberg's *American Veda* offers a more externally positioned account of Yogananda's impact and legacy, noting that his arrival in America in 1920 and his subsequent decades of teaching fundamentally altered the reception of yoga in the West [18]. However, Goldberg's focus is primarily sociological and cultural rather than philosophical, and does not provide the depth of doctrinal analysis required for a rigorous comparative study.

One of the most significant gaps in past work is the relative absence of systematic philosophical comparison between Patanjali's classical system and the Ananda-Yoga tradition. While several studies have compared Ashtanga Yoga with other traditions—including Hatha Yoga [24], the Yoga of Yogi Vemana [25], and Vasishtha Samhita [30]—the specific comparison with Sri Ananda-Yoga has received limited scholarly attention. Studies that do engage with this comparison often do so from a primarily practical or therapeutic angle, examining the benefits of asana and meditation practices drawn from both traditions without delving into their philosophical underpinnings [26]. Furthermore, studies examining the role of the guru in both traditions—a dimension that is central to Sri Ananda-Yoga but more structurally implicit in Patanjali's text—have tended to treat the guru-disciple relationship as a historical or sociological phenomenon rather than as a philosophically significant category [27].

The treatment of *prāṇāyāma* and energy-based practices in comparative literature also reveals important lacunae. While both Ashtanga Yoga and Sri Ananda-Yoga assign central importance to the control and refinement of *prāṇa* (life-force energy), they do so through quite different techniques and with different underlying theoretical frameworks. In Patanjali's system, *prāṇāyāma* is the fourth limb, positioned as a bridge between the outer (*bahiraṅga*) and inner (*antaraṅga*) practices, facilitating the withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*) that precedes the concentrative and meditative stages [3]. In Sri Ananda-Yoga, the most advanced *prāṇic* technique is Kriya Yoga, described by Yogananda as an accelerated path that works directly with the life-force in the spine, circumventing the slower progression of conventional practice [22]. Past comparative studies have tended to treat *prāṇāyāma* primarily as a physiological practice, neglecting its deeper metaphysical and spiritual significance within both traditions.

Critical analysis of past work also reveals important disagreements about the relationship between physical posture (*āsana*) and spiritual practice across different traditions. Mark Singleton's influential historical study demonstrates that the emphasis on elaborate physical postures in much contemporary yoga represents a relatively recent development influenced by European gymnastics and physical culture, and does not reflect the primarily meditative function of *āsana* in classical texts like the *Yoga Sūtras*, where Patanjali describes *āsana* simply as a posture that must be "steady and comfortable" (*sthira sukham āsanam*) for the purpose of facilitating meditation [28]. Sri Ananda-Yoga, as formulated by Swami Kriyananda drawing on Yogananda's teachings, develops a distinctive approach to *āsana* in which physical postures are practiced with the specific intention of raising spiritual energy and attuning the practitioner's consciousness to higher states – an approach that uses *āsana* as an instrument of energetic and devotional practice rather than primarily as physical exercise [17]. This difference in the understanding and use of *āsana* between classical Ashtanga Yoga and Sri Ananda-Yoga represents an important area where past comparative literature has not adequately engaged.

5. DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of Ashtanga Yoga and Sri Ananda-Yoga across the dimensions of philosophy, ethics, practice, and teleology reveals a complex landscape of both profound convergence and instructive divergence. Understanding these relationships requires moving beyond superficial comparison and engaging with the internal logic of each tradition. At the most fundamental ontological level, the two traditions part ways significantly. Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga is grounded in the Sāṃkhya philosophical framework, which posits a radical ontological dualism between *puruṣa* (pure, witness-consciousness) and *prakṛti* (the material cause of all phenomenal existence including the mind) [5]. The goal of Ashtanga Yoga – *kaivalya* – is therefore conceived as the utter disentanglement of *puruṣa* from its confused identification with *prakṛti*, a liberation that is essentially a recognition of the absolute aloneness and purity of consciousness [4]. Sri Ananda-Yoga, by contrast, draws on a more explicitly non-dualistic or qualified non-dualistic metaphysics influenced by Vedānta and Tantric thought, in which the ultimate reality is conceived as a divine consciousness (*Brahman* or God) that is both transcendent and immanent, and with which the individual soul (*ātman* or *jīva*) seeks union (*yoga*) rather than mere separation from matter [29]. Yogananda consistently emphasized that the goal of self-realization is the recognition of one's oneness with God – a knowing not merely in the intellect but in all parts of body, mind, and soul [7]. This distinction between *kaivalya* (liberation as aloneness/purity) and *self-realization* (liberation as conscious divine union) represents one of the most fundamental philosophical differences between the two traditions and has cascading implications for their respective understandings of ethics, practice, and ultimate purpose.

At the ethical level, however, the two traditions show remarkable convergence. Patanjali's first two limbs Yama (restraints) and Niyama (observances) – establish a comprehensive ethical framework encompassing non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), celibacy/moderation (*brahmacarya*), and non-possessiveness (*aparigraha*), complemented by cleanliness (*śauca*), contentment (*santoṣa*), austerity (*tapas*), self-study (*svādhyāya*), and surrender to God (*Īśvara-praṇidhāna*) [1]. Sri Ananda-Yoga likewise emphasizes ethical living as the foundation of spiritual life, with Yogananda consistently teaching that self-discipline, non-attachment, truthfulness, and devotion to God form the indispensable basis for deeper spiritual practice [15].

The inclusion of *Īśvara-praṇidhāna* (surrender to the Lord) as one of Patanjali's *niyamas* is particularly notable in the context of comparative study, as it introduces a theistic and devotional dimension into the otherwise apparently non-theistic framework of the *Yoga Sūtras* – a dimension that is central and primary in Sri Ananda-Yoga [13]. This shared emphasis on ethical purification as a prerequisite for higher practice reflects a deep structural convergence in the two traditions' understanding of the human condition and the requirements for spiritual growth.

The approach to *āsana* in the two traditions illustrates both convergence and divergence in the domain of physical practice. Patanjali devotes only three *sūtras* to *āsana*, defining it functionally as a posture that is steady and comfortable, adequate to sustain the deeper practices of *prāṇāyāma* and meditation [12]. This minimalist treatment of physical posture reflects the *Yoga Sūtras*' primary orientation toward mental and spiritual discipline rather than physical training. Sri Ananda-Yoga develops a more elaborate approach to *āsana*, drawing on Yogananda's insight into the deep connection between body positions and states of mind, and using physical postures as vehicles for spiritual energy and devotional attunement [14]. Swami Kriyananda developed a systematic approach in which each *āsana* is accompanied by an affirmation intended to direct the practitioner's consciousness toward the spiritual quality expressed by that posture, explicitly linking the physical and spiritual dimensions of practice in a manner not found in Patanjali's text [17]. Both traditions, however, share the understanding that physical practice is ultimately in service of the deeper goals of concentration and meditation, and both resist the reduction of yoga to mere physical exercise.

The domain of *prāṇāyāma* and energy work reveals one of the most illuminating comparisons between the two traditions. In Ashtanga Yoga, *prāṇāyāma* – the fourth limb – functions as a bridge between the outer practices of Yama, Niyama, and *Āsana*, and the inner practices (*antaraṅga*) of *Pratyāhāra*, *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna*, and *Samādhi* [3]. By regulating and ultimately suspending the breath, the practitioner facilitates the withdrawal of the senses from their external objects, enabling the concentration of awareness on internal objects of meditation. The progression from *Pratyāhāra* (sensory withdrawal) through *Dhāraṇā* (concentration) to *Dhyāna* (meditation) represents a systematic inward movement of consciousness, culminating in the dissolving of the distinction between meditator, act of meditation, and object of meditation in *Samādhi* [6]. In Sri Ananda-Yoga, the central energy practice is Kriya Yoga – an advanced technique involving the conscious circulation of life-force (*prāṇa*) through the spine and its energy centers (*chakras*) – which Yogananda described as working directly with the life current to accelerate spiritual evolution [22]. The lineage traces this technique to Mahavatar Babaji through Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar, and understands it as an ancient science that was largely hidden for centuries before being revived for modern practitioners [15]. The understanding of Kriya as an accelerated, energy-based path that works directly with the spine and consciousness distinguishes it significantly from the more gradual, stage-by-stage progression of Patanjali's eightfold path, though both ultimately aim at the same inner silence and expanded consciousness.

The conception of meditation (*dhyāna*) and its ultimate fruit (*samādhi*) reveals both the deepest convergence and the most subtle divergence between the two traditions. Both Ashtanga Yoga and Sri Ananda-Yoga regard meditation as the supreme practice and *Samādhi* as the highest human attainment accessible in embodied life. Patanjali describes *Samādhi* as the state in which the mind becomes so absorbed in its object of contemplation

that it loses its sense of its own identity the thinker, the process of thinking, and the object of thought fuse into a single luminous awareness [6]. He further distinguishes between levels of *Samādhi* from *samprajñāta* (supported by an object) to *asamprajñāta* (objectless) with the final stage of *nirbīja Samādhi* (seedless absorption) representing the threshold of *kaivalya* [35]. Sri Ananda-Yoga's understanding of the deepest meditative states is structurally similar: Yogananda described the experience of true meditation as a condition in which individual consciousness merges into the divine consciousness, transcending the rational mind and entering a superconscious state that reveals the soul's inherent divine nature [18]. The difference lies, again, in metaphysical framing: where Patanjali's *Samādhi* ultimately points toward the absolute autonomy and purity of *puruṣa*, Sri Ananda-Yoga's deepest states are characterized by the language of union with God, of love and bliss (*ānanda*) as the nature of ultimate reality [20].

The role of the guru represents another dimension of significant divergence between the two traditions. While Patanjali acknowledges *Īśvara* (the Lord) as a special *puruṣa* untouched by afflictions and as a legitimate object of meditative focus (*praṇava* meditation), the *Yoga Sūtras* do not assign a structurally central role to a personal human teacher as a mediator of grace and spiritual transmission [4]. The path of Ashtanga Yoga, as presented in the text, is fundamentally a path of self-effort and self-discipline, in which the practitioner's own dedicated practice (*abhyāsa*) and non-attachment (*vairāgya*) are the principal means of spiritual progress [2]. Sri Ananda-Yoga, by contrast, assigns a central and indispensable role to the guru as a transmitter of consciousness and a living link in a lineage of realized masters stretching back to divine sources [15]. Yogananda consistently emphasized that the relationship between guru and disciple understood not merely as teacher and student but as a profound spiritual bond spanning lifetimes is the most essential factor in spiritual awakening. The guru's grace (*guru-kṛpā*) is understood as a genuine causal factor in the disciple's liberation, not merely an aid to self-effort [25]. This difference reflects the broader distinction between a system that emphasizes personal discipline and discriminative wisdom (Ashtanga Yoga) and one that incorporates devotion, grace, and lineage transmission as constitutive elements of the spiritual path (Sri Ananda-Yoga).

The concept of *ānanda* (divine bliss or joy) occupies a distinctive place in Sri Ananda-Yoga that has no precise structural equivalent in Patanjali's system. The very name "Ananda-Yoga" points to the centrality of joy as both the medium and the goal of spiritual practice. Yogananda taught that the nature of the soul and of ultimate reality is *sat-chit-ānanda* (existence, consciousness, bliss), and that the cultivation of inner joy through meditation, devotion, and right living is not merely a byproduct of practice but a direct expression of divine nature [19]. This emphasis on joy as intrinsic to the spiritual path contrasts with the more austere and disciplinary tone of Patanjali's system, which emphasizes *tapas* (austerity) and *vairāgya* (non-attachment) as key attitudes, and which frames the ultimate state of *kaivalya* in terms of freedom from suffering and the cessation of *kleśas* (afflictions) rather than in terms of positive bliss [28].

Both traditions, however, share a profound agreement on the universality and accessibility of the path. Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras* were groundbreaking in their systematization of yoga as a practical, accessible science rather than a mystery available only to initiated elites [1]. Similarly, Yogananda's mission in the West was explicitly oriented toward making the ancient science of Kriya Yoga available to all sincere seekers regardless of religious background, and his teachings consistently emphasized the non-sectarian, universal nature of the

path to self-realization [26]. Both traditions are therefore democratic in their spiritual vision affirming that the highest human attainment is available to any being who undertakes the necessary discipline and practice with sincerity and dedication.

6. CONCLUSION

The comparative study of Ashtanga Yoga and Sri Ananda-Yoga reveals two magnificent and internally coherent paths that share a common vision of human possibility while diverging significantly in their philosophical frameworks, methodological approaches, and experiential emphases. Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga stands as a monument of systematic philosophical and psychological rigor a precisely articulated eightfold path that progresses from ethical refinement through physical discipline, energetic purification, sensory withdrawal, and increasingly subtle states of mental absorption, culminating in the absolute liberation of pure consciousness from its entanglement with the phenomenal world. Its strength lies in its comprehensiveness, its psychological precision, and its insistence on the primacy of direct experience over dogma. Sri Ananda-Yoga, rooted in the lineage of realized masters and transmitted through the inspired teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda, represents a path that integrates ethical living, physical practice, advanced energy techniques (particularly Kriya Yoga), devotion, and community in service of the goal of self-realization understood as conscious, loving union with the divine. Its particular strengths lie in its warmth, its integration of the devotional and the technical, its emphasis on divine joy as both means and end, and its vision of a spiritually conscious life lived in the world rather than withdrawn from it.

In their convergences the centrality of meditation, the emphasis on ethical purification, the understanding of the human being as a layered being of body, life-force, mind, and consciousness, and the unshakeable conviction that liberation is the highest human possibility both traditions affirm the deepest truths of the Indian spiritual tradition and speak with enduring authority to seekers in every age and culture. In their divergences ontological, methodological, and experiential they offer different emphases that may speak more powerfully to different types of seekers, and that enrich the overall tradition of yoga by demonstrating the extraordinary range of pathways available to the sincere human being in pursuit of the ultimate. Future research might profitably explore these traditions' respective impacts on contemporary wellbeing, their relevance to interfaith dialogue, and the ways in which their insights might be brought into productive conversation with contemporary psychology and neuroscience. What this study ultimately affirms is that Ashtanga Yoga and Sri Ananda-Yoga are not rivals but complementary expressions of humanity's deepest and most enduring aspiration the aspiration to know, in the fullest possible sense, what we truly are.

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