

Beyond Sanskrit Centrism: Classical Tamil Contributions to Cross Cultural Understanding of Ashtanga Yoga

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Abstract: This research presents a systematic cross-cultural analysis of Ashtanga Yoga through the lens of both Sanskrit and Tamil spiritual traditions. By examining Patanjali's Yoga Sutras (c. 400 CE), the Bhagavad Gita (2nd-1st century BCE), and Tamil texts including Thirumandiram (2nd century BCE-4th century CE), Thirukkural (3rd-1st century BCE), Tholkappiyam (2nd-1st century BCE), and Paripadal (300 BCE), this study reveals remarkable convergence in understanding the eight-limbed path. Through comparative textual analysis and synthesis of parallel verses, the research demonstrates that Tamil literature provides not merely derivative interpretations but original contributions to yogic philosophy, particularly in integrating devotional elements with systematic practice. The findings challenge Sanskrit-centric approaches to yoga scholarship and establish Tamil texts as authentic sources for understanding universal spiritual principles.

Keywords: Ashtanga Yoga, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, Bhagavad Gita, Thirumandiram, Thirukkural, Paripadal, Cross-Cultural Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The philosophy and practice of yoga, though most associated with Sanskrit literature, have evolved through a plurality of regional, linguistic, and cultural traditions across the Indian subcontinent. One of the most structured systems of yogic practice is Ashtanga Yoga, the eight-limbed path codified in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. These concise aphorisms outline a systematic spiritual methodology, beginning with ethical and personal disciplines and culminating in meditative absorption and self-realization. Alongside this foundational work, the Bhagavad Gita, a revered portion of the Mahabharata, presents yoga as a spiritual path that integrates action (karma yoga), knowledge (jnana yoga), devotion (bhakti yoga), and meditation (dhyana yoga), reinforcing the ethical and meditative values later formalized by Patanjali.

In South India, a rich body of Tamil spiritual literature offers parallel visions of yogic practice, often interwoven with devotion, ethical living, and metaphysical insight. Among these, Thirumoolar's Thirumandiram is a seminal Shaiva text composed in over 3,000 poetic verses, covering topics ranging from asana and pranayama to higher states of consciousness and surrender to Lord Shiva [2]. Even earlier, the Paripadal, a part of the Sangam canon, presents deeply meditative poetry describing inner stillness, divine union, and sense-withdrawal, suggesting a lived yogic experience long before the formalization of yoga as a system.

Ethical principles that anticipate the classical Yamas and Niyamas are already audible in the Tamil moral imagination of the early Common Era. The Thirukkural (3rd–1st century BCE), a 1,330-couplet masterwork

attributed to Thiruvalluvar, organizes life into the triad of aram (virtue), porul (wealth) inbam (love) and devotes its opening book to forty-five chapters on non-violence, truthfulness, non-possessiveness, sexual restraint, and internal purity—categories that map almost point-for-point onto Patanjali's five Yamas and five Niyamas. Complementing this ethical treatise is the Tholkappiyam (500 BCE–100 CE), the earliest extant Tamil grammar, whose porulatikāram section reads human nature through the lens of akam (interiority) and puram (exteriority) and anticipates yogic psychology in its taxonomy of emotions, vital winds (uyir), and behavioural codes that keep the individual “in resonance” (iyalpu) with society and cosmos. Finally, the Paripadal (300 BCE), fifth in the Sangam anthology Ettutthokai, ostensibly celebrates love in its unique 25-to-400-line paripadal metre; yet its lush nature-meditations, invocations to Viṣṇu-Māyōn and descriptions of breath-control while “seated on flower-strewn banks at dawn” reveal an early yogic technology of sensory withdrawal, concentration and ethical self-fashioning. Together, these three classical Tamil corpora provide a pre-Patanjalian archive in which yogic discipline is articulated through the idioms of virtue grammar, poetic emotion, and meditative ecstasy. Despite their different genres and geographies, these texts express remarkably consonant values, suggesting that yoga was a shared civilizational project articulated through different linguistic and devotional modes. This paper explores these parallels, offering a comparative study of Ashtanga Yoga through Sanskrit and Tamil lenses, with an emphasis on ethical conduct, personal observances, and meditative practice. By aligning verses from Patanjali, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Tamil corpus, this study argues for a more inclusive and intercultural understanding of yoga, one that acknowledges Tamil

literature as a vital and independent contributor to India's spiritual legacy.

Research Objectives

- To establish systematic parallels between Sanskrit and Tamil traditions.
- To analyze the unique contributions of Tamil texts to understanding the eight-limbed path.
- **To contextualize the Bhagavad Gita's contribution** to the eightfold path by highlighting its teachings on *karma*, *jnana*, *bhakti*, and *dhyana yoga* in relation to the Ashtanga framework.
- **To affirm the Tamil yogic tradition** as an authentic and independent stream within the broader Indian yoga heritage, thereby contributing to a pluralistic and inclusive understanding of classical yoga
- To provide new interpretative frameworks for contemporary yoga practice

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a multi-layered comparative approach:

- **Textual Analysis:** Systematic examination of parallel concepts across Sanskrit and Tamil sources
- **Cross-Cultural Synthesis:** Identification of convergent themes and unique contributions
- **Philosophical Integration:** Analysis of how different traditions enhance the understanding of yogic principles
- **Contemporary Relevance:** Assessment of implications for modern yoga practice

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ashtanga Yoga in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras

The dating of the Patanjali's Yoga Sutras text varies among scholars, with Edwin Bryant placing it around the 4th or 5th century CE, Michele Desmarais suggesting a range from 500 BCE to the 3rd century CE, and the most widely accepted date by academic scholars being around 400 CE, as proposed by Woods, which provide the most systematic exposition of yoga philosophy in Sanskrit literature. The text's 196 aphorisms are organized into four chapters (padas), with the second and third chapters detailing the eight-limbed path [1]

- **Yama** (Ethical Restraints) - Five principles of ethical conduct
- **Niyama** (Observances) - Five positive practices
- **Asana** (Posture) - Physical stability for meditation
- **Pranayama** (Breath Control) - Regulation of life force
- **Pratyahara** (Sense Withdrawal) - Turning attention inward
- **Dharana** (Concentration) - Focused attention

- **Dhyana** (Meditation) - Sustained awareness
- **Samadhi** (Absorption) - Unity consciousness

Ashtanga Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita

The Gita consists of 18 chapters with a total of 700 verses in Sanskrit. The Gita is part of the great Hindu epic, The Mahabharata, and appears as Chapters 23 to 40, in the Book of Bheeshma in the Mahabharata. Most of the verses appear in the Anushtubh meter, where each verse has a total of 32 letters with 8 words in each of the four quadrants. Some verses in the 15th chapter appear in the Trishtubh meter with 44 words. The Gita has 18 chapters, and the Mahabharata contains 18 volumes. The Kurukshetra war lasted 18 days with 18 regiments (11 Kauravas + 7 Pandavas). In Chapter 10, Krishna reveals His Vibhuti Roopa in 18 verses (10.21–10.38) [3].

The Bhagavad Gita weaves Patanjali's eight-limbed yoga throughout its 18 chapters:

Ethical Foundation (Yama/Niyama):

- **Chapter 13.8:** Dharmic duty and righteous action, humility, nonviolence, tolerance, simplicity
- **Chapter 17.16:** austerity of mind

Physical Practice (Asana/Pranayama):

- **Chapter 6.11-13:** Proper meditation posture
- **Chapter 4.29, 5.27:** the gaze fixed on the space between the eyebrows, equalizing the flow of the incoming and outgoing breath in the nostrils.

Mental Discipline (Pratyahara/Dharana):

- **Chapter 2.58:** Withdrawing senses like a tortoise
- **Chapter 6.15 & 25:** Steady mind like an unflickering lamp

Meditation & Absorption (Dhyana/Samadhi):

- **Chapter 6.18 & 19:** Complete meditation methodology
- **Chapter 6.20 - 28:** Devotional absorption in the Divine

Tamil Yogic Literature: An Underexplored Tradition

Tamil spiritual literature contains sophisticated expositions of yogic philosophy, yet these have received limited scholarly attention in comparative yoga studies. Key texts include:

Thirumandiram by Thirumoolar (2nd century BCE and 4th century CE): A comprehensive work of 3,000 verses covering Shaiva Siddhanta philosophy and practical yoga instruction. The Thirumandiram is also known by other names, such as Tamizh Muvayiram (Tamil Three Thousand) and Mantra Maalai (Root of Mantras). The text comprises 9 tantras (sections), 195 chapters, over 3,000 verses, 128 general sub-sections, 28 special sub-sections, and 7 unique segments. It is considered the

earliest and most comprehensive Tamil yogic scripture. The initial tantras primarily deal with the four purusharthas—Dharma (virtue), Artha (wealth), Kama (pleasure), and Moksha (liberation)—reflecting the Ilamai Vedanta (youthful Vedanta) tradition. From the fifth to the ninth tantra, the focus shifts more toward the core principles of Agama, covering disciplines like yama, niyama, modes of worship, devotional vows, and the philosophy of spiritual living. The Thirumandiram thus stands as a profound treatise on Shaiva worship, ethical living, and yogic wisdom [6].

Paripadal (300 BCE): The Paripadal is a classical Tamil poetic work and is traditionally regarded as the fifth text in the Eight Anthologies (Ettuthokai) of Sangam literature. According to the ancient grammar treatise Tolkappiyam, Paripadal is a unique form of verse that exclusively deals with love themes (akapporul) and does not fall under the standard classification of poetic forms. Each Paripadal poem contains a minimum of 25 lines and can extend up to a maximum of 400 lines. Classical Tamil poetry contains profound spiritual and philosophical insights, including detailed descriptions of meditative practices and ethical principles.

Tholkappiyam: It is the oldest extant work of Tamil grammar and poetics, traditionally dated between the 3rd century BCE and 3rd century CE. It is divided into three sections: 1. Ezhuththathikaram (phonology), 2. Solathikaram (morphology and syntax), 3. Porulathikaram (semantics and literary theory). Within Porulathikaram, the section called Puraththinaiyil deals with Puram (external) themes such as war, heroism, charity, and social conduct. It outlines external poetic

classifications based on life situations, social roles, and ethics. Nachinarkiniyar, a renowned 14th-century commentator, interprets a verse “**Nālu-iru vazhakkin tāpadap pakkamum**” (Porulathikaram – 75) [7] to reveal Ashtanga Yoga (eight-limbed yoga) embedded within Tamil tradition. He identifies: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama (Vazhinalai), Pratyahara (Thogainilai), Dharana (Purainilai), Dhyana (Ninaivu), Samadhi. His commentary shows that ancient Tamil literature not only reflected social and poetic order but also integrated yogic and spiritual disciplines in a culturally grounded way.

Thirukkural by Thiruvalluvar (3rd-1st century BCE): Thirukkural, authored by the revered Tamil poet-saint Thiruvalluvar, is one of the greatest works of Tamil literature and moral philosophy. The text consists of 1330 couplets (kurals), organized into 133 chapters with 10 couplets each. These are divided into three major sections: Aram (virtue), Porul (wealth), and Inbam (love) [8]. Aram focuses on ethical living and personal virtues; Porul deals with statecraft, leadership, and social ethics; and Inbam explores love and family life. While primarily an ethical treatise, it contains a systematic exposition of moral principles that parallel yoga's ethical foundations.

Research Gap

Previous scholarship has largely treated Sanskrit and Tamil spiritual traditions as separate entities. This research addresses the absence of systematic comparative analysis, particularly regarding the practical and philosophical dimensions of the eight-limbed path as understood in Tamil literature.

Comparative Analysis of the Eight-Limbed Path

Yama (Ethical Restraints): Universal Principles Across Traditions

The five ethical restraints form the foundation of yoga practice in both traditions, though with distinct cultural expressions and emphasis.

Patanjali's Approach:

Ahimsa Satya Asteya Brahmacharya Aparigraha Yamah (PYS 2.30)

Translation: The yamas are non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy, and non-possessiveness [1].

Bhagavad Gita's Approach:

Yama	Meaning	Bhagavad Gita Verses	Sanskrit Excerpt	Key Teaching
Ahimsa	Non-violence, non-harming	BG 13.8, BG 16.2	Ahimsā satyam akrodhas tyāgaḥ śāntir apaśunam dayā bhūteṣv aloluptvaṁ mārdaṁ hrīr acāpalam	Divine knowledge and qualities include non-violence
Satya	Truthfulness	BG 16.2, BG 17.15	Anudvega-karaṁ vākyaṁ satyaṁ priya-hitaṁ ca yat svādhyāyābhyasanaṁ caiva vān- mayaṁ tapa ucyaṭe	Truth as divine quality and right speech
Asteya	Non-stealing	BG 3.12	Iṣṭān bhogaṁ hi vo devā dāsyante yajña-bhāvitāḥ tair dattān apradāyaibhyo yo bhuṅkte stena eva saḥ	Taking without giving back is stealing

Brahmacharya	Celibacy/ Energy conservation	BG 6.14, BG 8.11	praśhāntātmā vigata-bhīr brahmachāri-vrate sthitaḥ manaḥ sanyamya mach-chitto yukta āsīta mat-parah	Control of vital energy and senses
Aparigraha	Non- possessiveness, non-greed	BG 6.10, BG 4.21	nirasir yata-cittatma tyakta-sarva-parigrahaḥ sariram kevalam karma kurvan napnoti kilbisam	Freedom from attachment and desires

Tamil Parallel in Thirumandiram: 3rd Thandiram

Kollān poy kūrān kaḷavilān eṇkuṇan

Nallān aḍakka muḍaiyān naṭuccheyyā

Vallān pagunduppān māsīlān kaṭkāmam

Illān iyamattidaiyil ninrānē - 554

Translation: He does not kill, he does not lie, he does not steal; Of marked virtues is he; good, meek, and just; He shares his joys, he knows no blemish; Neither drinks nor lusts-This the man who in Niyama's ways stands [2].

Thirukkural Parallel:

Table 2 - Yama in Thirukkural [8]

Yama	Thirukkural Chapter	Tamil Verse	Verse Number	English Meaning
Ahimsa (Non-Violence)	Innā seyyāmai	eṇaittāṇum eññāṇṇum yārkkuṁ maṇattāṇām māṇācey yāmai talai	317	At all times, to all beings, it is good not to do any harmful deed even in thought
Satya (Truthfulness)	vāymai	maṇattoṭu vāymai moḷiyiṇ tavattoṭu tāṇācey vāriṇ talai	295	Those who speak truthfully from their heart are superior to those who perform austerities and give charity
Asteya (Non-Stealing)	Kaḷāmai	uḷlattāl uḷlalum tītē piṇapporuḷaik kaḷlattāl kaḷvēm eṇal	282	Even thinking in the heart about stealing another's property is evil
Brahmacharya (Celibacy/Energy Conservation)	Thuravu	aṭalvēṇṭum aintaṇ pulattai viṭalvēṇṭum vēṇṭiya vellām oruṅku	343	One must control the five senses and abandon all desires simultaneously
Aparigraha (Non-Possessiveness)	Avaa aruththal	avā'eṇpa ellā uyirkkuṁ eññāṇṇum tava'ap piṇappiṇṇum vittu	361	Those without desires have no sorrow; if desires exist, suffering will continuously increase

Tholkappiyam Nachinarkiniyar's interpretation:

Poy kolai kaḷavē kāmam poruṇasai

ivvasai aindu maṭakkiya tiyamam

Translation: Falsehood, killing, theft, lust, and greed for wealth — Controlling all these five is called Yama [7].

Novel Insight: The Tamil tradition presents truthfulness not merely as ethical conduct but as the highest spiritual practice, potentially superior to traditional austerities.

Niyama (Observances): Positive Spiritual Practices

Ishvara Pranidhana (Surrender to the Divine)

Patanjali's Formulation:

Shaucha Santosa Tapas Svadhyaya Ishvara Pranidhana Niyamah (PYS 2.32)

Translation: Cleanliness, contentment, austerity (mental and physical discipline), [svādhyāya](#) (study of scriptures and chanting of [mantras](#)), and devotion to God are the [niyamas](#) (observances) [1].

Bhagavad Gita's Approach:

Niyama	Meaning	Specific Bhagavad Gita Verses	Sanskrit Excerpt	Key Teaching
Saucha	Cleanliness (physical and mental)	BG 17.14, BG 16.3	tejaḥ kṣamā dhṛtiḥ śhaucham adroho nāti-mānitā bhavanti sampadam daivīm abhijāasya bhārata	Bodily austerity includes cleanliness; sacred clean place for meditation
Santosha	Contentment	BG 4.22- BG 3.17	yadṛcchā-lābha-santuṣṭo dvandvātīto vimatsarah samaḥ siddhāv asiddhau ca kṛtvāpi na nibadhyā	Contentment in all circumstances brings peace
Tapas	Disciplined practice/ Austerity	BG 17.16, BG 4.28	manaḥ-prasādaḥ saumyatvam maunam ātma-vinigrahaḥ bhāva-saṁśuddhir ity etat tapo mānasam ucyate	Serenity of thought, gentleness, silence, self-control, and purity of purpose—austerity of the mind
Svadhyaya	Self-study, study of scriptures	BG 4.28, BG 16.1,	dravya-yajñās tapo-yajñā yoga-yajñās tathāpare swādhyāya-jñāna-yajñāśh cha yatayaḥ sanśhita-vratāḥ	Knowledge sacrifice through self-study
Ishvara Pranidhana	Surrender to the Divine	BG 18.66, BG 9.27, BG 12.6-7	sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekam śharaṇam vraja ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣhayiṣhyāmi mā śhuchaḥ	Complete surrender to Krishna brings liberation

Thirumandiram's Elaboration:

- Tūymai arulūṇ surukkam poraisevvai
- Vāymai nilai mai vaḷarththalē marṛivai
- Kāmaṇ kaḷavu kolaiyeṇak kāṇpavai
- Nēmi īraindu niyamatt aṇāmē - 556
- Tavaṇjepaṇ cantoṭam āttikan tāṇaṇ
- Sivanṇaṇ virathamē cittāntak kēḷvi
- Makaṇ siva pūcaiyoṇ matisollīr aintu
- Nivampala seyyin niyamatt aṇāmē - 557

Translation: Purity, compassion, frugal food and patience, Forthrightness, truth, and steadfastness -These he ardently cherishes; Killing, stealing, and lusting, He abhors—Thus stands with virtues ten. The one who follows Niyama's ways [2].

Comparative Analysis: While Patanjali presents surrender as a technique for achieving samadhi, Thirumandiram integrates it with emotional purification (cutting bonds with compassion) and devotional love, suggesting a more holistically transformative approach.

Thirukkural Parallel:

Table 4 - Yama in Thirukkural [8]				
Niyama	Thirukkural Chapter	Tamil Verse	Verse Number	English Meaning

Saucha (Cleanliness)	Thooymai	Puran thooymai neeraan amayum Agan thooymai vaaymaiyaal kaanappadum	298	External cleanliness comes from water; internal purity is achieved through truthfulness
Santosha (Contentment)	Porul / Seyalvagai	Aaraa iyarkai avaa neepin annilaiyē Pēraa iyarkai tharum.	370	By letting go of desires, one stops seeking temporary pleasures and attains lasting happiness and peace
Tapas (Austerity)	Thavam	Sudasudarum ponpōl oli vidum Thunbam sudachchuda nōrkkinarukku	267	Like gold that shines brighter when heated, those who endure suffering through austerity will shine
Svadyaya (Self-Study)	Kalvi	Karka kasadara k karpavai Katrappin nirka atharkku thaga	391	Learn thoroughly without any flaw; after learning, live according to that knowledge
Ishvara Pranidhana (Surrender to God)	Kadavul Vaazhthu	Katraththanaal aaya payan enkol Vaal arivan nattraal thozhaar enin	2	Those with true wisdom worship His good feet; those who do not worship His good feet lack true wisdom

Tholkappiyam Nachinarkiniyar's interpretation:

- Perradharku uvaththal pīlampu nani veruththal
- karpaṇa karṇal kalikaḍum tūymai
- Pūsaṇai perum payam āchār kaliththalotu
- nayaṇḍai marapin iyamam aindē

Translation: The five Niyamas are virtues such as delight in giving (perradharku uvaththal), abhorrence of sin (pīlampu veruththal), control of imagination (karpaṇa karṇal), purity that removes defilement (kalikaḍum tūymai), devotion and worship (pūsaṇai), fear of wrong conduct (perum payam), proper observance of customs (āchāram), together with modest tradition (nayaṇḍai marapu) [7].

The Physical Practices: Asana

Asana in Patanjali's Definition:

- Sthira Sukham Āsanam (YS 2.46)
- Translation: Posture should be steady and comfortable [1].

Bhagavad Gita's Detailed Description:

- śhuchau deśhe pratishṭhāpya sthiram āsanam ātmanah
- nātyuchchhritam nāti-nīcham chailājina-kuśhottaram (BG 6.11)
- tatraikāgraṁ manaḥ kṛtvā yata-chittendriya-kriyah
- upaviśhyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātma-viśhuddhaye (BG 6.12)
- samam kāya-śhiro-grīvaṁ dhārayann achalam sthirah
- samprekṣhya nāsikāgraṁ svaṁ diśhaśh chānavalokayan (BG 6.13)

Translation: Having established a firm seat in a clean place, neither too high nor too low, covered with cloth, deerskin, and kusha grass... Seated firmly on it, the yogi should strive to purify the mind by focusing it in meditation with one-pointed concentration, controlling all thoughts and activities. He must hold the body, neck, and head firmly in a straight line, and gaze at the tip of the nose, without allowing the eyes to wander [3].

Thirumandiram's Approach:

- pattiraṇ kōmukam paṇkayaṇ kēcari,
- cottiram vīraṇf cukāṇam ōrēlu,
- muttama māmutu ācaṇam eṭṭeṭṭup,
- pattoṭu nūru palaā caṇamē - 563

Translation: Bhadra, Gomukha, Padma, and Simha, Svastika, Veera, and Sukha. These seven are asanas eminent and ancient; Numerous as eight, eighty and a hundred, however, are asanas in all reckoned [2].

Novel Contribution: Thirumandiram specifies 7 asanas (compared to Patanjali's general principle) and explicitly connects physical practice with devotional vision and guru relationship, indicating a more integrated pedagogical approach.

Thirukkural Parallel: Chapter: Neeththaar Perumai

seyarkariya seyvār periyar siriyar
seyarkariya seykalā tār - 26

Translation: Renunciants who perform difficult deeds attain both spiritual strength (tava valimai) and soul power (aanma valimai). Those who embrace renunciation but fail to perform these difficult deeds are called "small/inferior people" [8]

Novel Contribution: According to this interpretation, the difficult deeds that renunciants must perform are the eight limbs of yoga.

Tholkappiyam Nachinarkiniyar's interpretation:

- Nīrral irutthal kiḍatthal naṭatthalenru
- ottha nāncin oḷkā nilaimaiyōṭu inbam
- payakkuñ camaya mudhaliyā vandhamil
- sirappin āsanam āgum

Translation: Standing (nīrral), sitting (irutthal), lying down (kiḍatthal), and walking (naṭatthal) are the four balanced postures which, when united with natural comfort and joy (inbam payakkum), constitute the āsanās — yogic postures endless in variety and excellence [7].

Pranayama: Breath as Bridge to the Divine

Patanjali's Framework:

- Tasmin sati shvāsapraśvāsayor gati-vicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ (PYS 2.49)
- Translation: Once this (asana) is mastered, pranayama follows, which is the regulation of incoming and outgoing breath [1].

Bhagavad Gita's Detailed Description:

- Apāne juhvati prāṇam prāṇe'pānam tathāpare
- Prāṇāpāna-gatī ruddhvā prāṇāyāma-parāyaṇāḥ || B.G 4.29||
- Sparśān kṛtvā bahir bāhyān cakṣuś caivāntare bhruvoḥ
- Prāṇāpānau samau kṛtvā nāsābhyantara-chāriṇau ||B.G 5.27||

Translation: Still others offer as sacrifice the outgoing breath in the incoming breath, while some offer the incoming breath into the outgoing breath. Some ardently practice prāṇāyām and restrain the incoming and outgoing breaths, purely absorbed in the regulation of the life-energy [3].

Shutting out all thoughts of external enjoyment, with the gaze fixed on the space between the eyebrows, equalizing the flow of the incoming and outgoing breath in the nostrils, and thus controlling the senses, mind, and intellect, the sage who becomes free from desire, fear, and anger, always lives in freedom.

Thirumandiram's Approach:

- Ēṟuthal pūrakam ireṭṭu vāmatthāl,
- Āṟuthal kumbam aṟupattu nālathil,
- Ūṟuthal muppat tiranda tirēchakam,
- Māṟuthal onṟiṇ kaṇ vañchaka māvē – 568

Translation: Ascending (inhalation/Puraka) for sixteen counts through the left nostril, stopping (retention/Kumbhaka) for sixty-four counts, flowing out (exhalation/Rechaka) for thirty-two counts. when these alternate in one cycle, the illusory (world) becomes (transcended) [2].

Thirukkural Parallel: (Chapter: Ozhukkamdaimai)

- oḷukkam viḷuppan taralāṇ oḷukkam
- uyiriṇṇum ōmpap paṭum - 131

Translation: Discipline is more precious than life itself, for it is discipline that confers eminence [8].

Novel Contribution: This represents perhaps the world's earliest integration of respiratory physiology with moral philosophy. Thiruvalluvar understood that just as breath sustains the body, righteousness sustains civilization. Both are non-negotiable life forces - one biological, one sociological.

Tholkappiyam Nachinarkiniyar's interpretation:

- Untiyōtu puṇarntha iru vagai vaḷiyum
- Tham-tham iyakkam thaduppathu vaḷi nilai

Translation: When inhalation and exhalation (iru vagai vaḷi) join with the navel (unḍi), restraining their movement is called vali nilai [7].

Analysis: The Tamil text provides a more detailed progression of pranayama effects: physical regulation → mental unification → elimination of illusion → clarity of wisdom, offering a comprehensive understanding of breath control's transformative process.

Pratyahara: (Sense Withdrawal) - Turning attention inward

Patanjali's Definition:

Svaviśayāsamprayoge cittasya svarūpānukāra iva indriyāṇāṃ pratyāhārah (PYS 2.54)

Translation: Withdrawal of the senses occurs when the senses withdraw from their objects and imitate the nature of the mind [1].

Bhagavad Gita's Detailed Description:

- Yadā saṃharate chāyaṃ kūrmō'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ
- Indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā ||B.G. 2. 58||
- Buddhyā viśuddhayā yukto dhṛtyātmānaṃ niyamya ca
- Śabdādīn viśayāṃs tyaktvā rāga-dveṣau vyudasya ca ||B.G. 18.51||
- Translation: "One who is able to withdraw the senses from their objects, just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs into its shell, is established in divine wisdom" [3].
- One becomes fit to attain Brahman when he or she possesses a purified intellect and firmly restrains the senses, abandoning sound and other objects of the senses, casting aside attraction and aversion.

Thirumandiram's Approach:

- Orukkāl upādhiyaip oṇ-sōdhi thannaip,
- Piriththu uṇar vandha upādhi pirivaik,
- Karaitthu uṇar uṇṇal karaitthal uḷ nōkkal,
- Prathiyā kārap perumaiya thāmē - 585

Translation: describes the complete journey from sense withdrawal to divine union: Mind Control → Discrimination → Transcendence → Divine Experience → Divine Love → Complete Merger [2]

Thirukkural Parallel: (Chapter: Adakkamdaimai)

- Orumaiyul āmaipōl aindadakkal ārin
- Ezhumaiyum ēmaappu uḍaiththu - 126

Translation: like a tortoise keeps in its five senses, the fruit of it will prove a safeguard to him throughout the seven-fold births [8].

Novel Contribution: By aligning Thirukkural with the Yoga Sutras, the comparison affirms that yogic principles like Pratyahara were not confined to Sanskrit texts, but were deeply embedded in Tamil ethical-poetic traditions, pointing to a pluralistic Indian yogic landscape.

Tholkappiyam Nachinarkiniyar's interpretation:

- Poriyuṇarvu ellām pulaththin vaḷāmal
- Oru vazhip paduppathu thogai nilaiyāmē
- Translation: Turning away all sense perceptions (poriyuṇar) from worldly distractions (pulam), and focusing in a single channel, is called thogai nilai (withdrawal of the senses) [7].

Dharana: (Concentration) - Focused attention

Patanjali's Definition:

- Deśa-bandhaś cittasya dhāraṇā (PYS 3.1)

- Translation: Concentration is binding consciousness to a single point. Meditation is sustained concentration [1].

Bhagavad Gita's Detailed Description:

- Tatraikāgrāṇi manah kṛtvā yata-cittendriya-kriyāḥ
- Upaviśyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātma-viśuddhaye||B.G.6.12||
- Yuñjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī niyata-mānasāḥ
- Śāntiṁ nirvāṇa-paramāṁ mat-saṁsthāṁ adhigacchati||B.G.6.15||
- Translation: Seated firmly on it, the yogi should strive to purify the mind by focusing it in meditation with one-pointed concentration, controlling all thoughts and activities. He must hold the body, neck, and head firmly in a straight line, and gaze at the tip of the nose, without allowing the eyes to wander [3].

Thus, constantly keeping the mind absorbed in Me, the yogi of disciplined mind attains nirvāṇ, and abides in Me in supreme peace.

Thirumandiram's Approach:

- Arittha udal-ai aim-bhūthattil vaiththu
- Poruththa aim-bhūtham satthāthiyil pōndhu
- Therittha manāthi satthāthiyil chella
- Thariththathu dhāraṇai tharparath thōḍē – 597

Translation: Placing the purified body in the five elements, the aligned five elements entering into the seven dhatus, the clearly perceived mind and senses flowing into the seven principles, That which sustains this process is Dharana with the Supreme Self [2].

Thirukkural Parallel: (Chapter:Neethaar Perumai)

- Suvai, oḷi, ūru, osai, nārram enRu aindhin
- Vagai therivān kaṭṭē ulagu - 27

Translation: The world honors only the one who understands the nature of the five senses and has the ability to control and master them [8].

Novel Contribution: The control over rasa, rupa, sparsha, shabda, and gandha (taste, form, touch, sound, smell) in Tamil mirrors the withdrawal and redirection of these senses in yogic Dharana. Both traditions affirm that concentration arises only after sensory discipline. While Kural 126 (linked to Pratyahara) advises withdrawal of senses like a tortoise, Kural 27 acts as the next step — preparation for Dharana, where the purified and mastered senses serve as the base for focused cognition. This subtly aligns Tamil ethical development with Ashtanga Yoga's inner progression.

Tholkappiyam Nachinarkiniyar's interpretation:

- Mananththinai oruvazhi niruppathu porai nilai
- Translation: Keeping the mind steady in one direction is called porai nilai. (Concentration) [7].

Dhyana: (Meditation) - Sustained awareness

Patanjali's Definition:

Tatra pratyayaikatānatā dhyānam (PYS 3.2)

Translation: In that (Dharana), the unbroken flow of similar mental modifications is called Dhyana [1].

Bhagavad Gita's Detailed Description:

- Yadā viniyataṁ cittam ātmany evāvatiṣṭhate
- Niḥspṛhaḥ sarva-kāmebhyo yukta ity ucyate tadā || B.G 6.18||
- Yathā dīpo nivāta-stho neṅgate sopamā smṛtā
- Yogino yata-cittasya yuñjato yogam ātmanaḥ || B.G 6.19||

Translation: With thorough discipline, they learn to withdraw the mind from selfish cravings and rivet it on the unsurpassable good of the self. Such persons are said to be in Yog, and are free from all yearning of the senses. Just as a lamp in a windless place does not flicker, so the disciplined mind of a yogi remains steady in meditation on the Supreme [3].

Thirumandiram's Approach:

- Eṇṇāyiraththāṇḍu yōgam irukkinaum
- Kaṇṇār amuthinaik kaṇḍarī vārrillai

- Unṇāḍik kuḷḷē oḷiyuṛa nōkkināl
- Kaṇṇāḍi pōlak kalandhu ninṇāṇē – 603

Translation: Even if one practices yoga for countless thousands of years, they do not perceive the nectar of bliss with their physical eyes. But if one turns the gaze inward, deep into the sacred cranial vault (unnadi), there, like a reflection in a mirror, the Divine Light blends and abides [2].

Thirukkural Parallel: (Chapter: Kadavul Vaazhthu)

- Malarmisai ēkinān mānadi sērndhār
- Nilamisai nīḍu vāzhvār - 3

Translation: Those who have reached the glorious lotus feet of the One who rode upon the flower (Brahma) will live long and prosperously upon this earth [8].

Tholkappiyam Nachinarkiniyar's interpretation:

- Niṛutthiya ammana nilai thiriyāmal
- Kuṛittha poruḷodu koḷutthal ninaivē

Translation: A mind that is stilled (niṛutthiya maṇa nilai), without wandering, fixed firmly with the chosen object, is dhyānam (meditation) [7].

Samadhi:(Absorption) - Unity consciousness

Patanjali's definition:

- Tad eva arthamātra-nirbhāsaṁ svarūpa-sūnyam iva samādhiḥ (PYS 3.3)
- Translation: When that, giving up all forms, reflects only the meaning, it is Samadhi [1].

Bhagavad Gita's Detailed Description:

- Yatroparamate cittam niruddham yoga-sevayā
- Yatra chaivātmanātmānaṁ paśyann ātmani tuṣyati || B.G 6.20||
- Yuñjann evaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī vigata-kalmaṣaḥ
- Sukhena brahma-saṁsparśam atyantam sukham āśnute || B.G 6.28||
- Translation: When the mind, restrained from material activities, becomes still by the practice of Yog, then the yogi can behold the soul through the purified mind, and he rejoices in the inner joy [3].

The self-controlled yogi, thus uniting the self with God, becomes free from material contamination, and being in constant touch with the Supreme, achieves the highest state of perfect happiness.

Thirumandiram's Integrated Approach:

- Samādich chey vārkku thagumpala yōgam
- Samādikaḷ vēṇḍām īraiyuḍan ēkir
- Samādhi thāṇ illai tāṇavaṇ ākir
- Samādiyil ettettuch siddhiyum eithumē – 631

Translation: For those who enter Samadhi, many yogic paths are suitable. But if one unites with the Divine, Samadhi is not even needed. When the ego dissolves and he becomes That, then within Samadhi, all the 64siddhis are attained [2].

Thirukkural Parallel: (Chapter: Kadavul Vaazhthu)

- Pīravip perunkaṭal nīndhuvar nīndhār
- Iṛaivan aḍi sēra dhār. – 10
- Yāṇ enadu ennum serukku aṛuppān vāṇōrkku
- Uyarndha ulagham pukum)346)
- Translation: None can swim the great sea of births but those who are united to the feet of God [8].

Novelty approach: This Kural equates reaching the feet of God with attaining Samadhi, where the dissolution of ego into divine consciousness becomes the only true path to cross the vast ocean of birth and rebirth. When 'I' and 'mine' disappear, only pure awareness remains — this is Nirbija Samadhi.

Tholkappiyam Nachinarkiniyar's interpretation:

- Āṅkaṇam kuṛittha vāy-mudhar poruḷodu
- Tān pīraṇāgāth thakaiyathu Samādhi

- Translation: Finally, merging with that chosen object of truth, where the self does not appear separate, is samādhi (absorption) [7].

Paripadal's Ashtanga Yoga: Kadavul Vaazhthu, Kaduvan Ilaveyinar Paattu

- Aindhu iruḷ aṛa nikkī, nāṅkiṇuḷ thuṭaitthuth tham
- Onru āṛruppaduttha nin āṛvalar tozhudh ētti,
- Nin pugazh viriththanaṛ; kiḷakkum kāl, avai ninakku
- Irumpūthu aṇmai naṛku aṛinthēm, āyinuṇ,
- Nakuthalum thaguthi, iṅku uṅku niṛ kiḷappa [4].

Translation: **Aindhu iruḷ aṛa nikkī** symbolizes eliminating the five *kleshas* (ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion, and fear of death). **nāṅkiṇuḷ thuṭaitthuth tham** refers to purifying the four aspects of consciousness: *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *ahamkara* (ego), and *chitta* (memory/self-awareness). These align with the practice of the first five limbs: **yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, and pratyahara**. **Onru āṛruppaduttha nin āṛvalar tozhudh ētti** represents the higher limbs: **dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation), and samadhi (absorption)**—leading to a unified, divine state.

Comparative Analysis of Ashtanga Yoga Across Sanskrit and Tamil Traditions

Limb	Patanjali Yoga Sutras	Bhagavad Gita	Thirumandira m	Thirukkural	Tholkappiya m	Paripadal
Yama (Ethical Restraints)	Divine qualities include Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya Aparigraha अहिंसासत्यास्ते यब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्र हा यमाः (PYS 2.30)	Divine qualities include Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya Aparigraha (BG 13.8, 16.2,3,12,6.14, 6.10) अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्या गः शान्तिरपैशुनम्	"He does not kill, does not lie, does not steal; Of marked virtues is he; good, meek and just; He shares his joys, knows no blemish; Neither drinks nor lusts - This the man who in Niyama's ways stands." (554) கொல்லான் பொய் கூறான் களவிலான் எண்குணன் நல்லான் அடக்க முடையான் நடுச்செய்ய வல்லான் பகுந்துண்பான் மாசிலான் கட்காமம் இல்லான் இயமத்	Non-harming, Truthfulness, Non-stealing, Celibacy, Non-possessiveness "At all times, to all beings, it is good not to do any harmful deed even in thought" (295) "One must control the five senses and abandon all desires simultaneously" (343) இன்னா செய்யாமை, வாய்மை, கள்ளாமை, துறவு, அவா அறுத்தல் மனத்தொடுவாய்மை (295) அடல்வேண்டும்	Positive qualities to cultivate (7): Purity, compassion, brevity, patience, righteousness, truthfulness, steadfastness Negative behaviors to avoid (3): Lust, theft, murder பொய் கொலை களவே காமம் பொருள்நசை இவ்வகை ஐந்தும் அடக்கியது யமம்	Part of removing "five darkness" (ஐந்து இருள்)

Limb	Patanjali Yoga Sutras	Bhagavad Gita	Thirumandiram	Thirukkural	Tholkappiyam	Paripadal
			திடையில் நின் றானே (554)	ஐந்தன் புலத்தை விடல்வே ண்டும்(343)		
Niyama Observances	Cleanliness, contentment, austerity, self- study, surrender to the divine <i>शौचसंतोषतपः स्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणि धानानि नियमाः (PYS 2.32)</i>	Cleanliness, contentment, austerity as divine qualities (BG 17.14,3.17,17.1 6,4.16,4.28,16. 1,18.66)	"Purity, compassion, frugal food and patience, Forthrightness, truth and steadfastness - These he ardently cherishes; Killing, stealing and lusting, He abhors - Thus stands with virtues ten. The one who Niyama's ways observe." (556 & 557) தூய்மை அருளுண் சுருக்கம் பொறை செவ்வை, வாய்மை நிலைமை வளர்த்தலே மற்றிவை, காமங் களவு கொலை யெனக் காண்பவை , நேமியீ ரைந்து நியமத்த னாமே – 556 & 557	Purity, Wealth/Action, Austerity, Learning, Divine Worship "By letting go of desires, one stops seeking temporary pleasures and attains lasting happiness and peace" (370) "Like gold that shines brighter when heated, those who endure suffering through austerity will shine" (267) தூய்மை, பொருள் செயல்வ கை, தவம், கல்வி, கடவுள் வாழ்த்து ஆரா இயற்கை அவாநீப்பி ன் (370) சுடச்சுடரும் பொன்போ ல் ஒளிவிடும் (267)	Contentment, avoiding sins, studying scriptures, maintaining purity, devotional worship, plus surrendering to the guru பெற்றதற் கு உவத்தல் பிழம்புந னி வெறுத்த ல் கற்பன கற்றல் கழிகடும் தூய்மை பூசனைப் பெரும்பய ம் ஆசாற்கு ஆளித்த லொடு நயனுடை மரபின் இயமம் ஐந்தே	Cleansing "within the four" four stages of conscious ness (நா ன்கினு ள் துடைத் து)

Limb	Patanjali Yoga Sutras	Bhagavad Gita	Thirumandiram	Thirukkural	Tholkappiyam	Paripadal
Asana (Posture)	<i>स्थिरसुखमासनम्</i> (YS 2.46) "Posture should be steady and comfortable"	Detailed posture instructions (BG 6.11-13) <i>शुचौ देशे प्रतिष्ठाप्य स्थिरमासनमात्मनः</i> "Having established a firm seat in a clean place"	"Bhadra, Gomukha, Padma and Simha, Svastika, Veera, and Sukha. These seven are asanas eminent and ancient; Numerous as, eight, eighty and hundred, however, are asanas in all reckoned." (563) பத்திரங் கோமுகம் பங்கயங் கேசரி சொத்திரம் வீரஞ் சுகாதனம் ஓரேழு முத்தம் மாமுது ஆசனம் எட்டெட்டுப் பத்தொடு நூறு பல ஆசனமே - 563	Performing difficult deeds as spiritual practice. "Renunciants who perform difficult deeds are great; those who cannot perform difficult deeds are small" (26) செயற்கரிய செய்வார் பெரியர் சிறியர் செயற்கரிய செய்கலாதார் - 26	Four postures: standing, sitting, lying, walking நிற்றல் இருத்தல் கிடத்தல் நடத்தல் என்று நான்கின் ஒல்கா நிலையை யோடு இன்பம் பயக்கும் சமயம் முதலிய அந்தமில் சிறப்பின் ஆசனமாகும்	Physical preparation for divine union
Pranayama (Breath Control)	<i>तस्मिन्सतिश्वासप्रश्वासयोगीति विच्छेदः प्राणायामः</i> (YS 2.49) "Once posture is mastered, pranayama follows - regulation of incoming and outgoing breath"	Detailed breath control techniques (BG 4.29, 5.27) <i>अपाने जुहति प्राणं प्राणोऽपानं तथापरे प्राणापानगती रुद्ध्वा प्राणायामपरायणः</i> B.G 4.29	"Ascending (inhalation/Puraka) for sixteen counts through the left nostril, stopping (retention/Kumbhaka) for sixty-four counts, flowing out (exhalation/Rechaka) for thirty-two counts, when these alternate in one cycle, the illusory (world) becomes	"Discipline is more precious than life itself" ஒழுக்கம் விழுப்பம் தரலான் ஒழுக்கம் உயிரினும் ஒம்பப்படும் (131)	Control of two winds united with navel. உந்தியொடு புணர்ந்த இருவகை வளியும் தம் தம் இயக்கம் தடுப்பது வளிநிலை	Breath as life force regulation தம் ஒன்று ஆற்றுப்படுத்த

Limb	Patanjali Yoga Sutras	Bhagavad Gita	Thirumandiram	Thirukkural	Tholkappiyam	Paripadal
			(transcended)." (568) ஏறுதல் பூரகம் ஈரெட்டு வாமத்தால், ஆறுதல் கும்பம் அறுபத்து நாலதில், ஊறுதல் முப்பத் திரண்டதி ரேசகம், மாறுதல் ஒன்றின்க ண் வஞ்சக மாமே – 568			
Pratyahara (Sense Withdrawal)	स्वविषयासम्प्रयो गे चित्तस्य स्वरूपानुकार इवेन्द्रियाणां प्रत्याहारः (YS 2.54) "Withdrawal of senses occurs when senses withdraw from their objects"	Tortoise withdrawing limbs analogy (BG 2.58) यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थं भ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता (BG 2.58)	"Once distinguishing the conditioned self from the pure light of consciousness, separating and recognizing the conditioned divisions, dissolving and recognizing through inner vision, Pratyahara's greatness stands." (585) ஒருக்கால் உபாதியை ஒன்சோதி தன்னைப், பிரித்துணர் வந்த உபாதிப் பிரிவைக், கரைத்து ணர் வுன்னல்	"Tortoise-like control of five senses" (126) "Like a tortoise controlling five senses brings protection through seven births" ஒருமையுள் ஆமைபோ ல் ஐந்தடக்கல் ஆற்றின் எழுமையும் ஏமாப்பு உடைத்து	Directing all sense perceptions in one direction. பொறியு ணர்வு எல்லாம் புலத்தின் வழாமல் ஒருவழிப் படுப்பது தொகைநி லையாமே	Sensory purification, concentration → meditation தம் ஒன்று ஆற்றுப் படுத்த

Limb	Patanjali Yoga Sutras	Bhagavad Gita	Thirumandiram	Thirukkural	Tholkappiyam	Paripadal
			கரைதல்உ ள் நோக்கல், பிரத்தியா காரப் பெருமைய தாமே – 585			
Dharana (Concentration)	देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा (YS 3.1) "Concentration is binding consciousness to a single point"	One-pointed concentration (BG 6.12, 6.15) तत्रैकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रि यः उपविश्यासने युज्याद्योगमात्म विशुद्ध्यते B.G.6.12	"Placing the purified body in the five elements, the aligned five elements entering into the seven dhatus, the clearly perceived mind and senses flowing into the seven principles, That which sustains this process is Dharana with the Supreme Self." (597) அரித்த வுடலைஐம் பூதத்தில் வைத்துப் பொருத்தஐ ம் பூதஞ்சத் தாதியிற் போந்து தெரித்த மனாதிசத் தாதியிற் செல்லத் தரித்தது தாரணை தற்பரத் தோடே – 597	"Mastery over five senses" (27) The world honors only the one who understands the nature of the five senses - 27 சுவைஒளி ஊறுஒசை நாற்றமெ ன்று ஐந்தின் வகைதெரி வான் கட்டே உலகு - 27	Fixing mind in one direction மனத்தி னை ஒருவழி நிறுப்பது பொறை நிலை	Focused divine attention தம் ஒன்று ஆற்றுப் படுத்த
Dhyana (Meditation)	तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम् (YS 3.2) "In that (concentration)	Steady mind like lamp in windless place (BG 6.18-19)	"Even if one practices yoga for countless thousands of years, They do	"Reaching lotus feet of Divine" (3) Those who have reached	Sustained attention on chosen object நிறுத்திய	Continuou s divine awareness

Limb	Patanjali Yoga Sutras	Bhagavad Gita	Thirumandiram	Thirukkural	Tholkappiyam	Paripadal
	the unbroken flow of similar mental modifications is meditation"	यदा विनियतं चित्तमात्मन्येवाव तिष्ठते निःस्पृहः सर्वकामेभ्यो युक्त इत्युच्यते तदा B.G 6.18	not perceive the nectar of bliss with their physical eyes. But if one turns the gaze inward, deep into the sacred cranial vault, There, like a reflection in a mirror, the Divine Light blends and abides." (603) எண்ணா யிரத்தாண் டு யோகம் இருக்கினு ம் கண்ணார் அமுதினை க் கண்டறி வாரில்லை உண்ணாடி க் குள்ளே ஒளியுற நோக்கினா ல் கண்ணாடி போலக் கலந்துநின் றானே – 603	the glorious lotus feet will live long and prosperously - 3 மலர்மிசை ஏகினான் மாணடி சேர்ந்தார் நிலமிசை நீடுவாழ் வார் -3	அம்மன நிலை திரியாம ல் குறித்த பொரு ளொடு கொளுத்த ல் நினைவே	தம் ஒன்று ஆற்றுப் படுத்த
Samadhi (Absorption)	तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भा सं स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः (PYS 3.3) "When that, giving up all forms, reflects only the meaning, it is Samadhi"	Perfect happiness in Brahman contact (BG 6.20, 6.28) यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योगसेवया यत्र चैवात्मनात्मानं पश्यन्नात्मनि तुष्यति B.G 6.20	"Crossing ocean of births, ego dissolution" (10, 346) None can swim the great sea of births but those who are united to the feet of God பிறவிப் பெருங்கட ல் நீந்துவர் நீந்தார்	Unity without separation of self and object ஆங்கனம் குறித்த வாய்முத ற் பொரு ளொடு தான் பிறனாகா த்	Establishing "their one" - Devotees worshipping with devotion நின் ஆர்வல ர் தொழு து ஏத்தி	

Limb	Patanjali Yoga Sutras	Bhagavad Gita	Thirumandiram	Thirukkural	Tholkappiyam	Paripadal
			இறைவன் அடிசேரா தார்	தகையது சமாதி		

Novel Insights from Tamil Yogic Literature

The Integration of Devotion and Systematic Practice

Tamil yogic literature demonstrates a unique synthesis of bhakti (devotion) and systematic yoga practice. Unlike the predominantly technical approach of Patanjali, Tamil texts integrate emotional purification and devotional surrender throughout all eight limbs.

Practical Specificity

Tamil texts often provide more specific practical instructions. For example, Thirumandiram's mention of eight "asanas" and Paripadal's detailed sense-by-sense pratyahara instructions offer concrete guidance that complements Patanjali's general principles.

Cultural Integration

Tamil yoga texts demonstrate how universal spiritual principles can be culturally integrated without losing their essential meaning. The frequent references to Tamil geography, customs, and social contexts show how yoga adapts to different cultural settings while maintaining its core transformative purpose.

Guru-Disciple Relationship

Tamil texts place greater emphasis on the guru-disciple relationship as integral to the eight-limbed path, suggesting a more relational approach to spiritual development compared to Patanjali's more individualistic systematic methodology.

Synthesis: Toward a Comprehensive Understanding Complementary Strengths

The Sanskrit and Tamil traditions offer complementary strengths:

Sanskrit Strengths:

- Systematic categorization
- Philosophical precision
- Universal applicability
- Psychological insight

Tamil Literature Strengths:

- Practical specificity
- Devotional integration
- Cultural adaptability
- Experiential richness

Implications for Contemporary Practice

This comparative analysis suggests that contemporary yoga practitioners could benefit from integrating insights from both traditions:

- **Enhanced Ethical Foundation:** Combining Patanjali's systematic yamas/niyamas with Tamil literature's devotionally integrated approach
- **More Comprehensive Physical Practice:** Utilizing specific Tamil instructions alongside Patanjali's general principles
- **Integrated Mental Training:** Combining systematic concentration practices with devotional meditation
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Understanding how universal principles can be culturally adapted

Methodological Contributions

Comparative Textual Analysis Framework

This research establishes a framework for comparing yogic texts across linguistic and cultural boundaries:

- **Verse-by-verse comparison** of parallel concepts
- **Philosophical analysis** of underlying principles
- **Cultural contextualization** of specific expressions
- **Practical synthesis** for contemporary application

Linguistic Bridge-Building

By presenting Sanskrit and Tamil verses with detailed translations and analysis, this research creates linguistic bridges that make Tamil yogic wisdom accessible to Sanskrit-trained practitioners and scholars.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations

- **Textual Selection:** This study focuses on specific texts; broader Tamil literature may contain additional insights
- **Translation Challenges:** Some subtle meanings may be lost in translation
- **Historical Context:** Limited exploration of historical developmental relationships between traditions

Future Research Directions

- **Extended Textual Analysis:** Including other Tamil works like Sivavakkiyar, Pattinathar
- **Historical Developmental Studies:** Tracing influences between Sanskrit and Tamil traditions

- **Practical Application Studies:** Testing integrated approaches in contemporary settings
- **Regional Variations:** Exploring how other regional Indian traditions interpret the eight-limbed path

CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis reveals that Tamil yogic literature offers not merely parallel teachings to Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, but complementary insights that enrich our understanding of the eight-limbed path. The Tamil tradition's integration of devotional elements, practical specificity, and cultural adaptability provides valuable contributions to yoga scholarship and practice.

The research establishes three key conclusions:

1. **Universal Principles, Cultural Expressions:** The eight-limbed path represents universal spiritual principles that find authentic expression across different cultural and linguistic contexts.
2. **Complementary Wisdom Traditions:** Sanskrit and Tamil yogic literatures offer complementary rather than competing approaches, each contributing unique strengths to comprehensive spiritual development.
3. **Integrated Practice Possibilities:** Contemporary practitioners can benefit from integrating insights from both traditions, creating more culturally sensitive and practically effective approaches to yoga.

This study contributes to yoga scholarship by:

- Establishing systematic parallels between major Sanskrit and Tamil yogic texts
- Providing new interpretative frameworks for understanding classical yoga
- Demonstrating the syncretic nature of Indian spiritual traditions
- Offering enhanced practical guidance for contemporary practitioners

The research confirms that yoga, as a philosophy and a practice, transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries while maintaining its essential transformative purpose. The Tamil tradition's contribution to understanding the eight-limbed path deserves recognition alongside Sanskrit sources, not as a derivative tradition but as an authentic and valuable expression of universal spiritual wisdom.

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