

RANJANA YOGA CLASS

Vedanta and Yoga

A Beginner's Guide

How two Indian traditions relate: the self, knowledge and practice, in plain words

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General education only. Not medical advice. Speak with your doctor before starting any new practice.

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1. What Vedanta is

Vedanta is a group of philosophical traditions based on the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras. It asks questions such as: what is the self, and what is ultimate reality? Different schools give different answers.

Yoga, in the classical sense, is a set of practices for steadying the mind. Vedanta is more a philosophy of knowledge. In practice the two overlap, and many teachers draw on both.

The short answer

Vedanta is a philosophy about the self and reality, and yoga is a practice for the mind. They share many ideas, such as meditation and ethical living, but they are not the same, and schools within each differ.

2. Before you begin: safety first

General education only. Check with your doctor first if you are pregnant, have high blood pressure, a heart, lung, joint or spine condition, osteoporosis, an eye condition such as glaucoma, or have had recent surgery or injury.

Stop and rest if you feel:

- sharp, pinching or burning pain (a mild stretch is fine, pain is a stop sign);
- dizziness, nausea or breathlessness;
- numbness or tingling, or pressure in the head or neck.

This is a reading and reflection guide, not a medical guide. If you try any practice you read about, do it gently, and talk to your doctor first if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or live with anxiety, depression or trauma.

3. Comparing the two in broad strokes

Question	Vedanta	Classical yoga
Main focus	Understanding the self through knowledge.	Steadying the mind through practice.
Key sources	Upanishads, Gita, Brahma Sutras.	Yoga Sutras and related texts.
Typical methods	Study, reflection, meditation.	Ethics, posture, breath, meditation.
View of the self	Varies by school, such as non-dual or qualified non-dual.	Distinguishes the seer from the mind, in the Sutras.

These are simplifications. Each tradition has several schools, and scholars debate how they relate.

4. Your four-week plan

Week	Focus	Length	What to notice
1	Read a short introduction to the Upanishads	15 min	What is the self, in the text?
2	Read the Gita's ideas on knowledge	15 min	How does this relate to practice?
3	Try a quiet seated reflection	10 min	What did you notice?
4	Write a one-paragraph summary	10 min	Use your own words.

5. Choosing a class or teacher

Vedanta is taught in study circles, lectures and ashrams. Choose teachers who name their school, explain what they believe and why, and welcome questions.

- Ask which translation or commentary the teacher uses.
- Notice whether ideas are presented as tradition or as proven fact.
- If a teacher dismisses your questions or health needs, find another class.

6. Practising at home

At home, read short passages from a good introduction and sit quietly for a few minutes afterwards. Avoid heavy philosophy when tired. Slow reading works best.

7. Honest expectations

Vedanta is a philosophy and a spiritual tradition. It makes claims about the self and reality that are not scientific claims. It is not a medical approach, and it does not replace treatment.

8. Common mistakes and fixes

Mistake	Fix
Treating all Vedanta as one view	There are several schools.
Treating philosophy as practice	Reflection works with practice.
Using big terms without understanding	Define each word simply.
Expecting quick insight	The tradition emphasises long study.
Ignoring daily life	Apply the ideas in ordinary actions.

9. Questions people ask

Is Vedanta a religion?

It is a philosophical tradition connected with Hindu thought. People read it in many ways.

Is yoga part of Vedanta?

They are separate traditions that influence each other.

What does advaita mean?

Non-duality. It is one school of Vedanta that holds the self and ultimate reality are not different.

Where should I start?

A short, clear introduction, then selected Upanishad passages with commentary.

10. A pre-session checklist

- Have I eaten lightly, at least two hours ago, and had some water?
- Is my space clear, warm and free from interruptions?
- Do I know what I will practise, and how long I have?
- Is there anything in my body today (pain, tiredness, illness) that means I should do less?
- Do I know my stop signs: sharp pain, dizziness, breathlessness?

Running through these five questions takes less than a minute and prevents most beginner problems.

11. Your first week, day by day

Day	Suggestion
1	Read this guide. Try just the warm-up and the final rest.
2	Rest, or a five-minute walk.
3	Repeat day 1 and add one new pose or step.
4	Rest.
5	Practise a short version. Notice how you feel afterwards.
6	Write a few lines in the practice log.
7	Rest. Plan next week from what you noticed.

Three short sessions a week are a good start. Regular, gentle practice builds confidence, and rest days let the body adapt.

12. Glossary

Term	Plain meaning
Vedanta	Philosophy based on the Upanishads.
Atman	The self.
Brahman	Ultimate reality, in Vedanta.
Advaita	Non-dual Vedanta.

Reminder

This guide is general education and not medical advice. It does not diagnose, treat or cure any condition. If you have a health concern, speak with your doctor before starting a new practice.

Practice log

Print this page and keep a short record. Notes help you see patterns over time.

Day	Minutes	Reading done	How it felt	Notes
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				