

“Aṣṭāṅgayoga in the Purāṇa Literature”

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The goal of this paper is to address the question of the broader relevance of the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* or “eight limbed” model of yoga found in the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali by examining the representation of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* in the Hindu Purāṇa literature. Though the name Patañjali does not appear to play a predominant role in the Purāṇic representation of yoga, the idea of a yoga “school” (*darśana*, “viewpoint”) and that of a central rubric for yoga (*aṣṭāṅgayoga*, “eight limbed yoga”) both figure prominently in a number of Purāṇic texts. Within the *Yogaśāstra*, the concept of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* is a paradigmatic representation of yoga that is developed in the second *pāda* or chapter of Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra*. The Purāṇa narratives provide insightful perspective on the dynamics of the practice of these limbs and elements of the narrative context of yoga that significantly augments what is found in the commentaries on the *Yogasūtra*. These factors re-affirm the importance of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* as a paradigm in understanding Hindu yoga traditions across literary genres and in different historical periods.