The Integral Yoga Dharma Sutras: Shared Principles for Spiritual Life



A spiritual tradition lives not only through its teachings and practices, but through the way those teachings are embodied. The Integral Yoga Dharma Sutras gather twelve shared principles for this lived expression of the Path—a common spiritual orientation for how we speak and act, serve and lead, meet disagreement and conflict, and care for one another.

No individual or community will embody these principles perfectly. They describe the direction toward which we seek to return: truthfulness, compassion, respect, responsibility, selfless service, and recognition of the Divine Presence in one another. As Integral Yoga marks sixty years, the Dharma is offered as both a commitment and a practice—a reminder that how we live with one another is itself part of our Yoga.

The Twelve Principles of the Integral Yoga Dharma Sutras

1. Honoring the Divine in All

We recognize that, in our essential nature, we are one. We seek to relate to every person with dignity, kindness, and care, remembering that each of us is more than a role, opinion, wound, mistake, or disagreement. We strive to honor the Divine Light in one another while upholding truthfulness, accountability, and ethical clarity.

2. Honoring Integral Yoga as a Living Tradition

We honor Integral Yoga as a living spiritual tradition with sacred roots, lineage, transmission, teachings, practices, and community. We recognize the spiritual streams that formed Swami Satchidananda and came together in the complete Path he transmitted as Integral Yoga. We commit to preserving and transmitting this Tradition with accuracy, humility, and gratitude.

3. Honoring Integral Yoga as a Complete Path

We affirm that Integral Yoga is a complete and integrated path of spiritual awakening and daily transformation. Its six branches—Jnana Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Japa Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Karma Yoga—are complementary expressions of one unified Path. Its goal is realization of the True Self and the expression of that realization in daily life.

4. Respecting Swami Satchidananda's Foundational Role

We recognize Swami Satchidananda's foundational place as Integral Yoga's founder and Guru, through whom the Tradition and Path were transmitted. Respecting that role does not require denying or minimizing conduct that has caused pain, concern, and difficult questions. We seek to hold the spiritual depth and transformative value of what he transmitted together with honesty about the complexity and limitations of his human life. Each person is free to determine their own inner relationship with him.

5. Practicing Truthful, Compassionate, and Nuanced Communication

We seek truth without losing compassion and practice compassion without abandoning discernment. We speak and listen respectfully, distinguish facts from feelings, interpretations, and assumptions, and make room for sincere questions, complexity, and differing perspectives. We refrain from ridicule, personal attack, motive-attribution, and communication that needlessly inflames or divides.

6. Going Directly to One Another When Concerns Arise

Whenever appropriate and safe, we bring concerns directly and respectfully to the person involved, asking questions and seeking clarification before drawing conclusions or escalating. We avoid gossip, drawing others into conflict, public accusation, and the spread of unverified information. Serious ethical, legal, safety, or organizational concerns belong in appropriate reporting and accountability channels.

7. Working with Conflict as Part of the Path

Conflict is part of life in community and need not be a failure. We seek to use conflict as an opportunity for deeper truth, repair, accountability, and transformation by owning our part, making amends where possible, and seeking repair rather than victory. Compassion does not require avoidance; some situations require boundaries, accountability, or separation to prevent further harm.

8. Confidentiality, Trust, and Responsible Speech

We honor confidentiality, privacy, and responsible speech as spiritual and ethical practices. We treat personal disclosures, meetings, pastoral conversations, personnel matters, legal matters, and other sensitive processes with appropriate care. Confidentiality does not mean secrecy that protects harm; concerns involving safety, abuse, legal obligations, or serious ethical misconduct require appropriate reporting and accountability.

9. Honoring All Paths

Integral Yoga welcomes sincere seekers of all faiths, cultures, and backgrounds. Its teaching that "Truth is One, Paths are Many" calls us to respect the many religious and spiritual paths through which people seek Truth. Practicing Integral Yoga does not require anyone to give up their own religion. Those who practice Integral Yoga remain grounded in the Integral Yoga Path while honoring the freedom of others to follow their own paths.

10. Leadership as Stewardship and Service

Those who serve in visible or formal roles are stewards of the Tradition, not its owners. Leadership calls for service to the whole, honest and responsible communication, appropriate process, accountability, consultation, and ethical clarity. Authority in Integral Yoga is service, not control.

11. Responsibility of Monastics, Ministers, Teachers, and Representatives

Those who minister, teach, train, counsel, or publicly represent Integral Yoga carry a particular responsibility to uphold the integrity of the Tradition and Path. We commit to presenting Integral Yoga in its fullness, continuing our own study and practice, representing it truthfully, maintaining ethical boundaries, acting with humility, and refraining from using our roles to advance personal agendas contrary to the Tradition we are entrusted to serve.

12. Renewal, Accountability, and Recommitment

We recognize that individuals and communities may fall short of these commitments. When we do, we seek to pause, reflect, acknowledge what happened, make amends where possible, seek guidance where needed, and recommit to the teachings and to one another. Renewal comes through the way we live the teachings together—with honesty about the past, compassion in the present, and ethical clarity for the future.

An Interpretation of the Twelve Principles

The brief statements above express the shared principles of the Integral Yoga Dharma Sutras. The following commentary explores their meaning more fully and offers guidance for how they may be lived and applied within the Integral Yoga community.

Context for the Principles

The Integral Yoga Tradition is rooted in the ancient wisdom of Yoga, Advaita Vedanta, Sanatana Dharma, and the living current of Guru-tattva, the principle of spiritual wisdom and grace transmitted through the Guru. These spiritual currents came together in Swami Satchidananda and found contemporary expression in the complete Path he transmitted as Integral Yoga.

Spiritual community is both a blessing and a responsibility. We gather not only to practice, study, teach, serve, and worship, but also to learn how to live the teachings in relationship with one another. Our conduct, speech, decisions, service, and ways of addressing conflict are themselves part of our Yoga.

The Integral Yoga Dharma Sutras are offered as a shared foundation for how we seek to live, serve, communicate, and work together.

1. Honoring the Divine in All

The recognition of our essential unity is not only a spiritual teaching; it is meant to shape the way we relate to one another. Honoring the Divine in all does not mean overlooking harmful behavior or setting aside discernment. It calls us to meet one another with dignity and care while remaining truthful, responsible, and ethically clear.

Therefore, we commit to:

- Relate to one another with dignity, respect, and care.
- Practice kindness in thought, word, deed, gesture, and tone.
- Remember that the way we relate to one another is itself part of our sadhana.
- Refrain from demeaning, ridiculing, shaming, or dismissing others.
- Allow room for human limitation while continuing to uphold truthfulness, accountability, and ethical clarity.

2. Honoring Integral Yoga as a Living Tradition

A living spiritual tradition is more than a body of teachings or practices. It carries a spiritual inheritance, a lineage of transmission, forms of practice and worship, a community that embodies them, and a responsibility to transmit them faithfully to future generations.

Integral Yoga is nourished by both a formal Sannyas lineage and a broader constellation of formative spiritual streams. The formal Sannyas lineage comes through Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh. Swami Satchidananda received Sannyas initiation from Swami Sivananda in the Dashanami/Saraswati lineage, which Integral Yoga sannyasis carry forward as a sacred stream within Integral Yoga.

Swami Satchidananda's spiritual formation was also shaped by a wider inheritance: the Tamil Shaiva-Shakta, Siddhar, and Bhakti traditions; the nondual wisdom of Advaita Vedanta; classical Yoga; and the comprehensive synthesis of Yoga and Vedanta he received through Swami Sivananda. These currents came together in him and found integrated expression in the Path he transmitted as Integral Yoga.

The Integral Yoga Tradition includes the Guru through whom the teachings were transmitted; the spiritual roots and lineages from which they flow; the teachings themselves; the Path through which they are practiced and lived; the Sangha that carries them; and the Ashram, centers, teachers, ministers, monastics, and organizations entrusted with their stewardship.

In Integral Yoga, Sangha is not merely a social community. It is the fellowship of those drawn together by the Tradition and Path who support one another in living them with sincerity, humility, practice, and service. We therefore seek to understand the spiritual inheritance of Integral Yoga, transmit it accurately, preserve what is essential, and carry it forward with gratitude, humility, and discernment.

3. Honoring Integral Yoga as a Complete Path

Integral Yoga can easily be encountered through one aspect of its teachings—a Hatha Yoga class, meditation, Raja Yoga, selfless service, interfaith work, or another doorway. No single doorway, however, represents the whole.

The six branches—Jnana Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Japa Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Karma Yoga—are complementary dimensions of one integrated spiritual Path. Together with its teachings, practices, ceremonies, community life, and service, they address the whole person and orient spiritual life toward realization of the True Self.

We therefore seek to:

- Present Integral Yoga as a complete spiritual Path rather than primarily as a system of techniques or wellness practices.
- Preserve the relationship among its six branches rather than treating them as unrelated approaches.
- Help those who teach and practice Integral Yoga understand the spiritual purpose underlying its practices.
- Avoid reducing the Tradition to whichever aspects are most familiar, popular, or personally preferred.
- Keep realization of the True Self at the heart of the Path.

4. Honoring Swami Satchidananda's Foundational Role

Swami Satchidananda's place within Integral Yoga is foundational: the contemporary Tradition and Path came through his realization, teaching, and transmission. At the same time, honoring that role does not require denying or minimizing aspects of his human life that have caused pain, concern, and difficult questions.

Within the long history of the spiritual lineages from which Integral Yoga emerged, Guru-tattva—the Guru principle—has been foundational. Guru-tattva is the universal principle of spiritual wisdom and grace transmitted through the Guru, guiding us toward awakening to our true nature. The human instrument may have limitations and complexities, yet these do not diminish the spiritual wisdom and transmission itself. Recognizing this distinction calls for both honoring the spiritual transmission and clear ethical discernment regarding the human teacher

We affirm that:

- Swami Satchidananda is Integral Yoga's founder and Guru, through whom the Tradition and Path were transmitted.
- His human life may be approached with truthfulness, discernment, and an openness to complexity.
- Each person is free to determine the nature of their own inner relationship with him.
- Differences in personal relationship do not alter his foundational place within the Integral Yoga Tradition.
- Those who teach, lead, serve, or represent Integral Yoga should speak about him with both truthfulness and respect for that foundational role.

5. Practicing Truthful, Compassionate, and Nuanced Communication

Spiritual community inevitably brings differences of perception, experience, interpretation, and conviction. Communication rooted in Yoga asks us neither to avoid difficult truths nor to abandon compassion when speaking about them.

Complex situations may require us to hold more than one reality at the same time: grief and gratitude, accountability and forgiveness, devotion and discernment, personal pain and shared responsibility. Nuance does not mean avoiding clarity. It means resisting the impulse to reduce people or situations to a single interpretation when greater complexity is present.

We therefore seek to:

- Speak truthfully and respectfully.
- Listen carefully before responding.
- Seek to understand before seeking to be understood.
- Avoid interrupting, attacking, mocking, or attributing motives.
- Distinguish among facts, feelings, interpretations, and assumptions.
- Examine our own reactions before speaking from hurt, anger, or fear.
- Welcome sincere questions and differing perspectives without turning difference into hostility.
- Resist either/or thinking when a situation calls for deeper reflection.
- Make room for quieter voices and those who may need more time or safety to speak.
- Practice restraint when speaking would only inflame, injure, or divide.

6. Going Directly to One Another When Concerns Arise

Trust is difficult to sustain when concerns about one another travel through a community without direct conversation. Gossip, partial information, assumptions, and drawing others into a conflict can magnify misunderstandings and turn a resolvable concern into a wider rupture.

Direct communication is not always possible or appropriate. Concerns involving safety, abuse, serious ethical misconduct, legal responsibilities, or significant power differences may require confidential assistance or formal reporting rather than approaching someone alone.

Whenever circumstances permit, we therefore seek to:

- Bring concerns directly and respectfully to the person involved.
- Ask questions before drawing conclusions.
- Seek clarification before escalating a concern.
- Avoid drawing others into a disagreement in order to pressure, shame, or isolate someone.
- Refrain from spreading unverified information.
- Use appropriate channels for serious ethical, legal, safety, or organizational concerns.
- Seek help from a trusted facilitator, elder, minister, supervisor, or appropriate process when direct conversation is not possible or has not been fruitful.

7. Working with Conflict as Part of the Path

Conflict does not necessarily mean that spiritual community has failed. Differences and tensions are inevitable wherever people live, work, practice, and serve together. How we respond to conflict can itself become part of spiritual practice.

Approached with humility and courage, conflict can reveal misunderstandings, unmet needs, unexamined assumptions, injuries requiring repair, and areas where individuals or communities need to change.

When conflict arises, we seek to:

- Stay connected where possible.
- Own our part.
- Ask questions from curiosity rather than judgment.
- Seek repair rather than victory.
- Make amends when we have caused harm.
- Receive correction without defensiveness when we are able.
- Offer forgiveness as we are able, without forcing premature reconciliation.
- Ask for help when tension continues.
- Recognize that some situations require boundaries, accountability, or separation in order to prevent further harm.

Compassion does not mean avoidance, and accountability does not mean punishment. We seek responses grounded in truth, non-harming, responsibility, and love.

8. Confidentiality, Trust, and Responsible Speech

People must be able to speak honestly about personal, pastoral, organizational, and community concerns without assuming that what they share will circulate beyond the setting in which it was entrusted. Protecting appropriate confidentiality helps make trust possible.

At the same time, confidentiality must never become a means of concealing or protecting harm. Ethical and legal obligations may sometimes require information to be shared with those responsible for addressing a concern.

We therefore commit to:

- Respect the privacy of individuals and groups.
- Not share personal disclosures without permission except where ethical, safety, or legal responsibilities require it.

- Honor the confidentiality of meetings, pastoral conversations, personnel matters, legal matters, and sensitive community processes.
- Speak responsibly in public, online, and in private communications.
- Remember that electronic communication can easily magnify misunderstanding and harm.
- Use appropriate reporting and accountability channels when concerns involve safety, abuse, legal obligations, or serious ethical misconduct.

9. Honoring All Paths

Integral Yoga's teaching that "Truth is One, Paths are Many" expresses respect for the different religious and spiritual paths through which people seek Truth. This respect does not require people entering Integral Yoga to leave behind their own religious tradition.

Integral Yoga has historically welcomed people of many religions as well as those who do not identify with a particular religion. A person may practice Integral Yoga while remaining deeply rooted in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or another faith tradition.

At the same time, honoring many paths does not mean treating spiritual traditions as interchangeable. Integral Yoga itself is a particular Tradition and Path, with its own teachings, practices, spiritual inheritance, and forms of transmission.

We therefore seek to:

- Welcome sincere seekers of all faiths, cultures, and backgrounds.
- Respect the religious and spiritual paths through which others seek Truth.
- Never require someone to give up their religion in order to practice Integral Yoga.
- Allow room for differing devotional expressions within the Integral Yoga community.
- Remain grounded in the Integral Yoga Path while honoring the freedom of others to follow theirs.
- Avoid disparaging, appropriating, or casually blending traditions in ways that obscure their integrity.

10. Leadership as Stewardship and Service

Leadership within a spiritual tradition carries a particular responsibility because decisions made by those in authority affect not only programs and organizations, but also relationships, trust, spiritual community, and the transmission of the Tradition itself.

Those who serve in leadership are therefore not owners of Integral Yoga. They are temporary stewards of something entrusted to their care. Leadership is an opportunity for service rather than personal control, status, or protection of factional interests.

Those serving in leadership seek to:

- Serve the good of the whole rather than personal preference or factional interest.
- Communicate clearly, honestly, and responsibly.
- Respect confidentiality and appropriate group process.
- Address disagreement through truthful and responsible processes rather than gossip, misrepresentation, or back-channel conflict.
- Provide appropriate pathways for concerns to be raised and addressed.
- Be transparent where transparency is needed and discreet where confidentiality is required.
- Welcome accountability.
- Make room for consultation, discernment, and wise counsel.
- Exercise authority as service rather than control.
- Model the respect, humility, steadiness, and ethical clarity expected of the wider community.

11. Responsibility of Monastics, Ministers, Teachers, and Representatives

Those who minister, teach, train, counsel, or publicly represent Integral Yoga do more than speak for themselves. Their words, conduct, and choices inevitably shape how others understand the Tradition and Path.

This responsibility asks for more than familiarity with a particular subject or practice. It requires continuing study, personal practice, ethical conduct, humility about the limits of one's knowledge, and care in distinguishing personal views from the teachings one has been entrusted to represent.

We therefore commit to:

- Present Integral Yoga in its fullness rather than reducing it to particular practices or preferred teachings.
- Represent the Tradition, its lineage and spiritual roots accurately and respectfully.
- Continue to study, practice, and deepen our understanding.
- Respect Swami Satchidananda's foundational role as Integral Yoga's founder and Guru, and accurately reflect that role when teaching or representing the Tradition
- Distinguish personal perspectives from the teachings of the Tradition when necessary.
- Refrain from using positions of trust or authority to advance personal agendas contrary to the Tradition we are entrusted to serve.
- Refer difficult questions to appropriate resources when we do not know how to respond.
- Maintain ethical boundaries with students, clients, seekers, and community members.
- Approach teaching and transmission with humility.

12. Renewal, Accountability, and Recommitment

The Integral Yoga Dharma Sutras are not a declaration that individuals or communities will embody these principles perfectly. Spiritual practice includes recognizing when we have fallen short and returning again to what we know to be true.

Accountability, in this sense, is not merely a response to wrongdoing. It is part of spiritual renewal: the willingness to look honestly at our actions, acknowledge their effects, make changes where needed, and begin again.

When we fall short, we seek to:

- Pause.
- Reflect.
- Acknowledge what happened.
- Take responsibility for our part.
- Make amends where possible.
- Seek guidance where needed.
- Learn from what occurred.
- Recommit to the teachings and to one another.

The renewal of Integral Yoga will not come only through policies, programs, or statements. It will come through the way we live the teachings together—with honesty about the past, compassion in the present, and ethical clarity for the future.

Closing Affirmation

We affirm these shared principles in the spirit of Yoga: union, harmony, self-discipline, compassion, and realization of the one Self in all.

May our thoughts, words, and actions reflect the peace we seek.
May our service preserve the integrity of the Integral Yoga Tradition.
May our community become a field of healing, wisdom, courage, and love.
May we honor the Divine Light in all beings.
Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

(Prepared by the Community Renewal Group Coordinating Team)