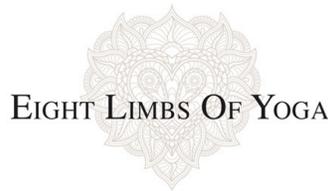


THREE SEASONS AYURVEDA



EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA

The word “yoga” comes from the Sanskrit word "Yuj" meaning to yoke, join or unite. This implies the joining or integrating all aspects of the individual - Body, Mind and Soul - to achieve a happy, balanced and useful life and spiritually uniting the individual with the Supreme.

The basis of yoga philosophy and its methodologies come from many ancient sources including the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana and Mahabharata that have all contributed to the subject of yoga and the path of yogis. This huge subject, in many ways, can be confusing because of the individual perspectives conveyed by each author and a lack of a clear universal overview. Luckily for us the yoga sutras of Patanjali clearly define and direct us on our yogic path.

Patanjali was a sage who lived around 200 BC and is credited with writing the yoga sutras, contributing to Sanskrit grammar and the subject of Ayurveda (Indian holistic medical system).

The yoga sutras are 196 aphorisms (threads, definitions), which define the eight-limb path of yoga, known as Ashtanga yoga. These eight steps define and direct us on how to live a meaningful and purposeful life. They serve as a prescription for moral and ethical conduct and self-discipline while directing our attention toward one's health. They help us to acknowledge the spiritual aspects of our true natures. Here is a brief overview of these eight paths towards Samadhi, Bliss.

I. Yamas – The Five Universal Moralities

Ahimsa – Non-Violence

Ahimsa means to cause no injury, physically or mentally, in one’s deeds, words, and thoughts towards others or to our selves. This is the way that Mahatma Gandhi lived and taught.

Satya- Absolute Truth

Satya universally means purity and absolute truth in our feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds. We must use this concept carefully so not to harms others unnecessarily.

Asteya- Non Stealing

This comes from the belief that we cannot provide what we need and there is not enough for everyone. Here we are content with what comes to us in honest ways and not jealous of others.

Brahmacharya - Sense Control

Brahmacharya relates to how we use our sexual energy, not necessarily celibacy, but rather the forming of meaningful relationships with the highest connection to our spiritual selves.

Aparigraha- Freedom from Greed

This concept stems from a belief of non-possessiveness and directs us not be jealous of others. This differs from Asteya, which is greed springing from a perceived lack of abundance.

II. Niyama – Five Personal Observances

Saucha- Purity and Cleanliness

Meaning physical cleanliness for our bodies and surroundings and mental purity of our minds and by not polluting ourselves with negative emotional or physical obsessions.

Santosa- Contentment

Having a sense of modesty, humility and peace brings a sense of contentment, accepting there is a purpose for everything and cultivating contentment and compassion for all.

Tapas: Burning Desire

This physically refers to the heating and cleansing the body, and enthusiastically engaging our lives with the goal of self-realization and creating union with the Divine.

Svadyaya: Self Study

Svadyaya means self-examination while cultivating self-reflective consciousness. It teaches us to be present, centered and free of dualities and self-destructive tendencies.

Isvara Pranidhana- Surrender to God

This literally means "to lay all your actions at the feet of God." This stage asks us to develop our relationship with the higher force that is guiding our lives and everything around us.

III. Asanas- Body Postures

The practice of mastering the physical body postures increases physical strength, tones the body, and cleans the blood while developing discipline and strengthens the focus of the mind.

IV. Pranayama

This is generally translated as control of the breath. This stage consists of mastering breathing techniques that tone the internal organs while connecting the breath, mind and emotions.

V. Pratyahara- Withdrawl of the Senses

This concept relates to withdrawing the senses from attachments of material possessions directly related to the external world and outside stimuli on our path to self-realization. Here, we step back and take a look at ourselves, our cravings, habits and obstacles standing in our way of inner growth.

VI. Dharana- Concentration

This step teaches us to focus the mind and our attention in one direction by concentrating on a single mental object, a specific energetic center in the body, an image of a deity or the silent repetition of a sound, leading to concentration and the next step, meditation.

VII. Dhyana- Meditation

This relates to concentrating on a single point of focus with the sole purpose of knowing the truth. Concentration (Dharana) and meditation (Dhyana) may appear to be one and the same, but Dharana practices one-pointed attention **while** Dhyana is ultimately a state of being aware without focus.

VIII. Samadhi - Union With The Devine

Patanjali describes this stage as a state of ecstasy. At this point the meditator merges with their point of focus and transcends the self-altogether. The meditator makes the ultimate connection to the **D**ivine, the universe and all living things, peace.