

Ashtanga Yoga System of Sage Patanjali

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What is Yoga?
Sage Patanjali and Yoga-sutra
Ashtanga Yoga
Yoga styles
Asana practice
Yoga masters and journals
Conclusion

Outline

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- 2 Sage Patanjali and Yoga-sutra
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What is Yoga?
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What is Yoga?

- One of the six fundamental systems of Indian philosophy:
 - Vaisheshika (Rishi Kanada).
 - Nyaya (Rishi Gotama).
 - Samkhya (Rishi Kapila).
 - **Yoga** (Rishi Patanjali).
 - Mimamsa (Rishi Jaimini).
 - Vedanta (Rishi Vyasa).
- Yoga has origins in **Vedas** — the oldest record of the Indian culture.

Interpretations of Yoga

- To come together, or unite.
- To tie the strands of the mind together.
- To attain what was previously unattainable.
- Single pointed focus.
- A state in which you are **always present** — **really present** — in every action, in every movement.
- To be one with the divine.

Sage Patanjali

- Author of **Yoga-sutra** — written sometime between 200 BC and 300 AD.
- Consists of a total of 195 aphorisms.
- Because of their brevity, require commentary or analysis.
- Important commentaries include:
 - Vyasa's Yoga Bhashya.
 - Vachaspati Mishra's Tattva-Vaisharadi.
 - Vijnana Bhikshu's Yoga-Varttika.

Yoga-sutra

- Book 1: **Samadhi Pada** (On unitive awareness).
- Book 2: **Sadhana Pada** (On Practice — Kriya Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga).
- Book 3: **Vibhuti Pada** (Subtle states of awareness and advanced techniques of Yoga practice).
- Book 4: **Kaivalya Pada** (on Isolation, liberation).

Yoga-sutra aphorisms

- **Ignorance** is seeing the non-eternal as eternal, the impure as pure, dissatisfaction as pleasure, and non-self as Self.
- By cultivating feelings of **friendship** toward the happy, **compassion** toward the unhappy, **joy** toward the virtuous, and **indifference** toward the wicked, the mind becomes purified and calm.

Yoga-sutra aphorisms

- Practical ways to attain Yoga (union of consciousness with the Infinite) are through ascetic disciplines (tapas), study and meditation on Aum (Svadhya), and by devotion to the Lord (Ishvara).

Limbs of Ashtanga Yoga

- Yama — ethical standards.
- Niyama — self-discipline and spiritual observances.
- Asana — postures.
- Pranayama — breath control.
- Pratyahara — sensory transcendence.
- Dharana — understanding mind distractions.
- Dhyana — uninterrupted flow of concentration.
- Samadhi — state of ecstasy.

Yamas: ethical standards

- **Ahimsa** (non-violence).
- **Satya** (truthfulness).
- **Asteya** (non-stealing).
- **Brahmacharya** (continence).
- **Aparigraha** (non-covetousness).

Niyamas: self-discipline and spiritual observances

- **Saucha** (cleanliness) — internal and external.
- **Santosh**a (contentment).
- **Tapas** (spiritual austerities).
- **Svadhya**ya (study of the sacred scriptures and of one's self).
- **Isvara Pranidhana** (surrender to God).

Asanas (postures)

- Unblock energy channels.
- Increase discipline and endurance.
- Bring synergy between body and mind.
- Improve concentration.
- Body is the temple of the Spirit.

Pranayama

- **Prana** (life force) extension.
- **Breath** is the link between the body and mind.
- Meditation on the breath.
- Awareness of the Self.

Pratyahara

- Sensory transcendence — shut off external stimuli.
- Detachment.
- Internal focus.
- Self-introspection — emotions: fears, anger, uncertainty, anxiety.

Dharana

- Understanding mind distractions.
- Cultivation of mind's natural ability for concentration.
- Aim at an object, stay on it, penetrate and *know* it.
- Focus on a single point — chakras, or silent repetition of a mantra.
- Slowing down thought processes.
- Extended periods of concentration.

Dhyana (Meditation)

- Uninterrupted flow of concentration.
- Meditation — doing nothing; freedom from thought.
- Total awareness without focus — dynamic stillness.

Dhyana (Meditation)

I have learnt **silence** from the talkative, **toleration** from the intolerant, and **kindness** from the unkind; yet strange, I am ungrateful to these teachers.

— Kahlil Gibran (1883 – 1931)

Dhyana (Meditation)

In the attitude of **silence** the soul finds the path in an clearer light, and what is elusive and deceptive resolves itself into crystal clearness. Our life is a long and arduous quest after Truth.

— Mahatma Gandhi, Indian ascetic & national leader (1869 – 1948)

Samadhi

- State of ecstasy
- Transcending the Self — Self-realization (Swami Sachidananda).
 - You are not your: body, breath, and mind.
 - You are just an observer.
- Interconnectedness with the Divine and all living things.
- Enlightenment.
- No description — only experiential.

Enlightenment

Before **enlightenment** I chopped wood and carried water; after enlightenment I chopped wood and carried water.

– Zen saying

Yoga styles

- **Ananda Yoga**: emphasis is on meditation.
- **Anusara Yoga**: heart-oriented.
- **Ashtanga Yoga**: fast-paced series of poses.
- **Bikram Yoga**: practiced in a steamy environment.
- **Integral Yoga**: equal emphasis on pranayama and meditation as well.

Yoga styles

- **Kripalu Yoga**: emphasizes alignment, breath and movement synchronization.
- **Iyengar Yoga**: use of props, pose perfection, and holding the pose.
- **Kundalini Yoga**: focus is on awakening the Kundalini.
- **Sivananda Yoga**: emphasizes a healthy life style, meditation, and deep relaxation.

Yoga styles

- **Tantra Yoga**: visualization, chanting, asana, and strong breathing practices.
- **Viniyoga Yoga**: gentle form; breath and movement coordination. Used for beginners and in therapeutic environments.

Asana practice

- Wait 3 hours after a regular meal; an hour after a snack or drink.
- Wear loose and comfortable clothing.
- Practice in a clean, dry, warm, airy, ventilated room.
- Twenty minutes of daily practice is better than a two-hour weekly session.
- Group practice is beneficial — **law of resonance**.

Asana practice

- Practice in the same place and at the same time.
- **Ujjayi breath.**
- **Bandhas** (locks): mula (root), uddiyana (navel), jalandhara (chin).
- **Vinyasa** — synchronization of breath and movement.
- **Dhristi** (gaze).
- Consult your physician before practicing Yoga.

Vinyasa

Oh, Yogi, do not practice asana without **vinyasa**.

– Vamana Rishi

Never a mechanical process

We shall never cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

— T.S. Eliot (1888 – 1965)

Two important qualities of asana

- **Sthira** — steadiness and alertness.
- **Sukha** — ability to remain comfortable in an asana.
- Progress from simple ones to more advanced and challenging ones.
- If you cannot breathe in a pose, it is an indication that you shouldn't be in that pose.

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Yoga master – Sri T. Krishnamacharya

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- Family origin traces to Nathamuni of 7th century.
- Studied under Rama Mohana Brahmachari of western Tibet.
- Focused on therapeutic use of asanas and pranayama.
- Established school of Yoga in the palace of the Maharajah of Mysore.
- Served as a professor at the University of Mysore.
- Passed away in 1989 at the age of 101.

Students of Sri T. Krishnamacharya

- T.K.V. Desikachar (Yoga Mandiram, Chennai, India).
- B.K.S. Iyengar (Pune, India).
- A.G. Mohan (Chennai, India).
- Pattabhi Jois (Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute, Mysore, India).
Passed away on 18 May 2009.

B.K.S. Iyengar

When I practice, I am a philosopher.
When I teach, I am a scientist.
When I demonstrate, I am an artist.

— B.K.S. Iyengar

Journals

- Yoga International (<http://www.yimag.org/>)
- Yoga Journal (<http://www.yogajournal.com/>)

Outcomes

- Increases poise, balance, and flexibility.
- Reduces physical and emotional stress.
- Reduces thought clutter and enhances clarity of mind.
- A strong and healthy endocrine and immune systems.

Outcomes

- Excellent physical health, strength and endurance.
- Increases and channels your vital life-force energy (prana).
- Stimulates and balances chakras.

Inspiration

When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bonds; your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world.

Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.

– Sage Patanjali

Closing

- May I open my eyes in the morning with the Holy Name on my lips.
- May I see Divinity everywhere and in everyone.
- May I never hurt anyone and may I never be afraid of anyone.
- May I be inspired to choose persuasive words, loving language, creative and positive thoughts to bring peace and good will throughout the world.

Closing

- May my meditation deepen so I can draw upon the Source of all life for healing myself and the world.
- May I fall asleep at night with the Holy Name on my lips, healing my wounds and preparing me for another day of service.

— From the Invocations to the Upanishads (translation by Eaknath Easwaran)