



Yoga and the Eightfold Path of Patanjali

What is Yoga?

Yoga is an ancient system from India that combines physical exercises, breathing techniques, meditation, and ethical principles. The word "yoga" comes from Sanskrit and means "union" or "connection" – referring to the harmonization of body, mind, and soul. While many people in the West primarily know yoga as a physical practice, traditional yoga encompasses a holistic life path for spiritual development and self-realization.

The philosophical foundations of yoga were significantly shaped by the scholar Patanjali, who probably lived between the 2nd century BCE and the 2nd century CE. He composed the "Yoga Sutras," one of the most important texts of yoga, in which he systematically describes the path to liberation from mental suffering. Patanjali's greatest contribution to yoga philosophy is the Eightfold Path (Ashtanga), which shows a structured way to self-realization.

The Eightfold Path of Patanjali

1. Yamas (Ethical Guidelines in Dealing with Others)

The Yamas form the ethical foundation of yoga practice and govern our behavior toward other people and the world. They are not to be understood as strict rules, but as guiding principles for harmonious coexistence. The Yamas help to recognize and overcome negative behavioral patterns, whereby inner peace and outer harmony can arise.

The five Yamas:

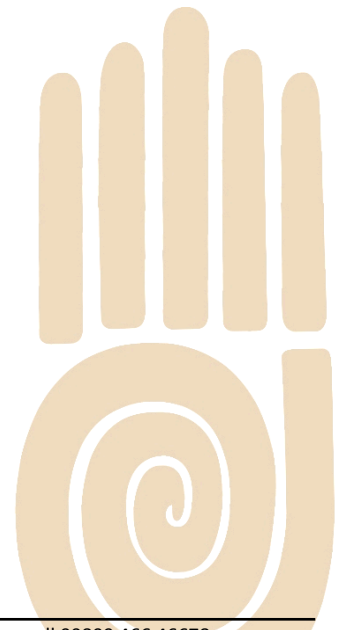
Ahimsa (Non-violence): The principle of non-harm in thoughts, words, and actions toward all living beings. This includes both physical violence as well as emotional injuries and self-harm.

Satya (Truthfulness): The commitment to truth in all areas of life. This involves not only honest communication, but also authenticity and living in accordance with one's own values.

Asteya (Non-stealing): Refraining from taking what does not belong to one, both materially and immaterially. This also includes theft of time, claiming recognition for others' achievements, and wasting resources.

Brahmacharya (Contenance/conscious use of energy): Originally understood as sexual abstinence, it is today often interpreted as conscious and moderate use of one's life energy. It is about channeling energy for spiritual growth.

Aparigraha (Non-possessiveness): Letting go of greed and excessive desire for material goods. It means being content with what one has and not defining oneself through possessions.



2. Niyamas (Ethical Guidelines in Dealing with Oneself)

The Niyamas complement the Yamas and focus on personal discipline and self-care. They form the foundation for a healthy relationship with oneself and create the inner prerequisites for spiritual growth. Through the practice of the Niyamas, we develop positive habits and a clear mental orientation.

The five Niyamas:

Saucha (Purity): Physical and mental purity through healthy nutrition, hygiene, and pure thoughts. This encompasses both external cleanliness as well as the purification of negative thought patterns and emotions.

Santosha (Contentment): The cultivation of inner contentment independent of external circumstances. It means practicing gratitude and not making happiness dependent on external factors.

Tapas (Discipline/spiritual practice): It requires the willingness to practise consistently and to overcome laziness and complacency. Tapas involves consciously accepting challenges for spiritual growth.

Svadhyaya (Self-study): The study of sacred scriptures and continuous self-reflection. It encompasses both reading spiritual texts as well as honest contemplation of one's own thoughts and actions.

Ishvara Pranidhana (Surrender to the Divine): The dedication of all actions to a higher power or universal consciousness. This means putting the ego aside and surrendering to the greater whole.

3. Asanas (Physical Postures)

Asanas are the physical yoga exercises that strengthen the body, make it flexible, and prepare it for meditation. Through regular asana practice, we develop physical stability and comfort, which is essential for longer meditation. The physical postures also help to release blockages and allow life energy (Prana) to flow freely.

4. Pranayama (Breath Control)

Pranayama means the conscious guidance and control of breath to regulate life energy. Through various breathing techniques, we can calm the nervous system, focus the mind, and reach deeper states of consciousness. The breath practice forms a bridge between the physical exercises and the meditative practices of yoga.

5. Pratyahara (Withdrawal of the Senses)

Pratyahara describes the conscious withdrawal of attention from external sensory impressions inward. This practice helps to react less to external distractions and develop control over one's own senses. Pratyahara is an important step in preparation for concentration and meditation.

6. Dharana (Concentration)

Dharana is the ability to direct attention to a single point or object for extended periods. This can be a mantra, an image, the breath, or another object of concentration. Through regular concentration exercises, the mind is trained to wander less and become more stable.

7. Dhyana (Meditation)

Dhyana arises naturally from deep concentration and describes a state of effortless, continuous awareness. In meditation, the boundaries between the observer, the observation process, and the observed object dissolve. This state is characterized by inner peace, clarity, and a feeling of unity.

8. Samadhi (Superconsciousness/Unity Experience)

Samadhi is the highest goal of the yoga path and describes a state of perfect unity and awareness. In this state, individual consciousness merges with universal consciousness. Samadhi can be understood as an experience of ultimate truth and liberation from all suffering.

Yoga at the Ayurveda Paragon Hotel

Here, we combine the health-promoting principles of Ayurveda with mindful yoga practice. These two sister sciences are highly effective in supporting the process of becoming and staying healthy. Whether you are new to yoga or an experienced practitioner, our yoga teachers will design a programme to suit your needs. Participation is free of charge.

If you have any questions, please get in touch — we look forward to seeing you!

Your yoga teacher

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