

Philosophy

Yoga Sutras

The Eight Limbs of Yoga Sutras

Over 2000 years ago, Patanjali, the main teacher who wrote down the Yoga Tradition for the first time, compiled the knowledge of yoga into the Yoga Sutras. Before this, yoga teachings were passed orally from master to disciple. The Yoga Sutras, consisting of 195 short aphorisms, encapsulate the essence of yoga philosophy and practice. Even today, these ancient teachings hold profound significance, guiding practitioners in modern life.

The Yoga Sutras outline eight "limbs," each representing a different aspect.

1. **Yama** = external discipline
2. **Niyama** = internal discipline
3. **Asana** = physical postures
4. **Pranayama** = breathing techniques
5. **Pratyahara** = sense withdrawal
6. **Dharana** = concentration
7. **Dhyana** = meditation
8. **Samadhi** = enlightenment or bliss



The cosmic dance of **Lord Shiva** symbolizes five aspects of divine control: creation, preservation, destruction, illusion, and grace.

Let's dive a little deeper into those 8 Limbs.

1. YAMAS = External Behavior

Yama, the first limb of yoga, embodies principles of external discipline and ethical behavior. It is comprised of five categories grouped for orientation.

- Ahimsa, or non-harming, promotes kindness and compassion towards all beings.
- Satya, truthfulness, encourages honesty and integrity in thought, speech, and action.
- Asteya, or non-stealing, emphasizes respect for others' belongings and integrity in one's dealings.
- Brahmacharya, often interpreted as celibacy, advocates for the right use of energy and moderation in all aspects of life.
- Aparigraha, or non-greed, teaches detachment from material possessions and the practice of contentment with what you have.

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2.Niyama: Internal Discipline

Niyama, the second limb of yoga, focuses on internal discipline and personal observing. Embracing Niyama cultivates self-awareness, contentment, and spiritual development.

It is comprised of five categories grouped for orientation.

- Saucha, emphasizing cleanliness, fosters purification of body and mind.
- Santosha, advocating contentment, encourages finding joy in the present moment.
- Tapas, promoting discipline, fuels inner strength and determination.
- Svadyaya, the practice of self-study, deepens self-awareness and understanding.
- Ishvara Pranidhana, surrendering to a higher power, cultivates humility and spiritual connection.

3.Asana = Physical Postures

Asana, the third limb of yoga, refers to physical postures practiced to promote health, flexibility, and stability in the body. Through mindful movement coordinated with breath awareness, Asana enhances physical well-being, reduces stress, and prepares the body for meditation and spiritual practices.

4.Pranayama = Breathing Techniques

Pranayama, the fourth limb of yoga, includes various breathing techniques designed to regulate and control the breath. Practices such as Ujjayi Pranayama, and Nadi Shodhana promote relaxation, mental clarity, and emotional balance.



5.Pratyahara = Sense Withdrawal

Pratyahara, the fifth limb of yoga, involves withdrawing the senses from external stimuli to cultivate inner awareness and reduce sensory overload, paving the way for deeper states of consciousness.

Lord Ganesha removes obstacles and helps us progress in life. His large elephant head symbolizes wisdom, understanding, and good judgment. The wide mouth represents our natural desire to enjoy life.

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6.Dharana = Concentration

Dharana, the sixth limb of yoga, is focused concentration on a single point or object to enhance mental clarity and sustain attention, laying the foundation for deeper meditation and spiritual insight.

7.Dhyana = Meditation

Dhyana, the seventh limb of yoga, signifies meditation or sustained contemplation, leading to inner absorption, tranquility, and spiritual awakening.

8.Samadhi = Enlightenment or Bliss

Samadhi, the eighth and final limb of yoga, represents the highest state of consciousness, characterized by profound absorption, unity, and spiritual fulfillment. Attaining Samadhi is the ultimate goal of yoga, symbolizing liberation from suffering and realization of one's true nature.



*“Guard your thoughts,
for they become words.
Guard your words,
for they become actions.
Guard your actions,
for they become your character.
Guard your character,
for it becomes your destiny.”*

Charles Reade
(1814 - 1884),
English writer,