

ASHTANG YOGA

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ॐ संस्कृत™

अहिंसा, सत्य, अस्तेय
ahimsā satya asteya
non-violence, truthfulness, nonstealing

ब्रह्मचर्य, अपरिग्रह
brahmacharya aparigraha
continence, non-possessiveness

यम
yama

नियम
niyama

शौच, संतोष, तप
śauca santosa tapa
cleanliness, contentment, austerity

स्वाध्याय, ईश्वर-प्रणिधान
svādhyāya īśvara-praṇidhāna
self-study, surrender to a higher power

समाधि
samādhi
enlightenment

ध्यान
dhyāna
meditative
absorption

धारणा
dhāraṇā
focused
concentration

आसन
āsana
posture

प्राणायाम
prāṇāyāma
control over
life forces

प्रत्याहार
pratyāhāra
withdrawal of
the senses



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8 Limbs of Yoga
अष्टांग योग

Eight Limbs

- Yama (restraint)
- Niyama (observance)
- Asana (physical posture)
- Pranayama (regulation of breath)
- Pratyahara (Sense withdrawal)
- Dharana (focus/concentration)
- Dhyana (meditation)
- Samadhi (total absorption)

-- Sutra 2.29

Ashtanga Yoga

Patanjali was great yoga acharya who took it upon him to do a research on Raj yoga and come with a well codified and documented text on the subject. This text is called the Yog Sutras of Patanjali and they advocate 8 steps to achieve the final goal which according to Patanjali was Samadhi. Because of its eight steps or arms this Yoga is called Ashtanga Yoga.

Stages of Yoga

- Yam : Restraints
- Niyam : Observances
- Asan : Body Postures
- Pranayama : Regulations of Breath
- Pratyahar : Abstractions of Senses
- Dharna : Concentration
- Dhyan : Meditation
- Samadhi : Self Realizations

Yamas - Great Vows

- Must be followed in totality, universally
- With no regard to birth, place, time or circumstance
- Ex: class/birth – fisherman can only kill fish

- Sutra 2.31

1: **YAMA** – Comprises of five virtues :



Ahimsa

- Abstaining from harming others.
- Renunciation of hatred towards all beings.
- Not injure any being, by word, deed or thought.
- Maitri towards happy people.
- Karuna towards unhappy people.
- Delight with virtuous people.
- Indifference towards wicked.
- Ideal of non-violence, even ferocious animals become calm in his presence.



Ahimsa (non-injury)

- Ahimsa toward all living creatures – plants, animals, humans
- Evil tendencies like selfishness, hatred, jealousy, anger etc cause tendency to inflict injury to others
- To nourish one's own body with the flesh of another is 'himsa'
- Inflicting pain for one's own comfort is 'himsa'
- Ahimsa through action, thought and speech; as the thoughts so the actions – so purify thoughts

- Apply ahimsa not only to others but to yourself as well
- Ex: hurting yourself by over-eating, performing asana beyond your capability etc
- Self-destructive behavior caused by fear, guilt
- Food wastage is a form of violence against those who sleep hungry
- Love involving demands and expectations entails violence, both to self and others
- Emotional violence in relationships: harsh, abusive language; angry outbursts, emotional judgments, sarcasm, skillful manipulations
- As the yogi becomes established in ahimsa, all beings coming near him cease to be hostile (sutra 2.35)

Yama - Self-Control

• Ahimsa - Non-Violence

Ahimsa means not to cause pain or harm to any living being by thought, word or deed. Non-violence also means not to kill. Consumption of meat requires the death of an animal. It is due to this principle that Yogis are Vegetarian. Animals have a keen instinct, which heightens their awareness of impending death. They sense when they are to be slaughtered and are in mortal fear. Fear and stress hormones are released throughout their body. These hormones remain in the flesh of the slaughtered animal and are eaten by unsuspecting people. Many apparently groundless fears, neuroses and psychoses have their origin in this food.

Satya

- Speech and mind corresponding to the reality of things.
- The value of truthfulness.
- Satyakama – Chandogya Upanashad.

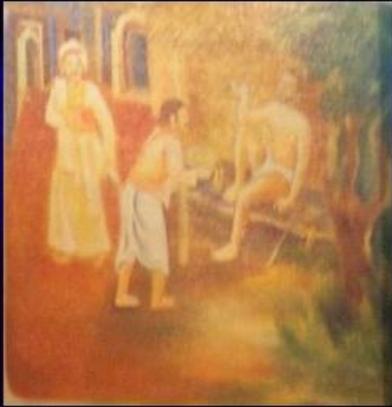


. Satya - Truthfulness

To always speak the truth is good and correct, but more important is how we convey the truth. We have the capacity to hurl truth at someone like a knife, but we are also capable of clothing that same truth in loving words. In order not to violate the principle of Ahimsa as mentioned above, we should heed the advice of Mahaprabhuji, who said: "Each of your words should fall like flowers from your lips".

To be truthful also means not to hide your feelings, not to be evasive or make excuses. Perhaps for some time we can hide our true face from the eyes of others, but there is at least one person knows our inner truth - our own self. Our own consciousness is a witness.

Asteya – Abstaining from appropriating things not sanctioned by sastras.



Asteya - Non-Stealing

- *Asteya means that you should never take anything that rightfully belongs to another. This means not only material objects, but also the stealing of mental property, to rob someone of an opportunity, hope or joy. The exploitation of nature and destruction of the environment also fall into this category.*

Brahmacharya - Pure Way of Life

Brahmacharya – Continenence in though, word and deed.



Aparigraha – Non-acquisition of things or abstention from receiving gifts.



- *Brahmacharya is often translated as sexual abstinence. But it actually consists of much more. Brahmacharya means that our thoughts should always be turned towards God. This doesn't imply that we should neglect our duties in this world. On the contrary, we should fulfil these responsibilities with great care, but always with the awareness: "I am not the doer, God alone is the doer".*

Aparigraha - Non-Accumulation of Possessions

- *We should not accumulate goods, but only acquire and use what we need to live. One who has many possessions, also has many worries. We are born without belongings and when we again depart from this world, we leave all behind. Nonaccumulation also means to grant other people their freedom - not to hold onto others. In letting go, we also free ourselves. Therefore, to give freedom means to also to be free one's self.*

"Shaucha santosha tapah swadhyayeshwara pranidhanani niyamaha!"



शौच-सन्तोष-तपः स्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि
नियमाः ॥ ३२ ॥

NIYAMA

The collective disciplines of Niyama are Physical & mental purity, contentment, austerity, self study of holy books and scriptures and devotion to god. One must dedicate the fruits and one's action to god.

Niyamas

- Saucha (cleanliness)
- Santosha (contentment)
- Tapas (austerity)
- Svadhyaya (self-study)
- Ishvara-pranidhana (surrender to God)

- Sutra 2.32

2: NIYAMA – Disciplines collectively:

Saucha – Physical cleanliness and mental purity.



Santosha – Contentment.



Tapas – Austerity is to gain control over body, mind and the senses.



Svadhyaya – Study of the scriptures.



Ishwarapranidhana – Devotion to God.



Niyama - Discipline

- Shauca - Purity

Not only external purity, but more importantly, inner purity. Our clothing, our body, as well as our thoughts and feelings should be pure. The same holds true for the people we associate with. For our spiritual development it is of great benefit to keep good company of people who impart a good influence upon us, who are spiritual and support us with their wisdom.

- Santosh - Contentment

Contentment is the greatest wealth we are able to possess. The Indian poet Tulsidas, said: "You may possess mines of gold and precious stone, but inner discontent destroys all wealth". We can attain contentment only when we recognise that all worldly goods bring disappointment and that inner wealth provides more happiness than material possessions.

- Tapa - Self-Control, Self-Discipline

In life, when we encounter adversity and obstacles, we should never give up. Rather we should continue on our chosen path with firm determination. To continue to practice, with self-discipline, patience and perseverance - this is the key to success.

Svadhyaaya - Study of the Holy Scriptures

As Yoga aspirants we ought to acquaint ourselves with the traditional scriptures of Yoga philosophy, such as the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, etc. These scriptures impart valuable knowledge and provide great assistance on our Yoga path.



Ishvara Pranidhana - Devotion to God

Hand over all that you do to the Divine Self with pure devotion. God protects all who surrender with trust and faith.

Saucha (cleanliness)

- External cleanliness through soap/water etc and taking pure foods (includes fasting), avoiding alcohol and putrid food
- Hatha yoga has six cleansing techniques – neti, basti, dhauti, kapalabhati, trataka, nauli
- Internal cleanliness through making the mind-field sattvic (pure) by removing anger, pride, arrogance, jealousy, greed, delusion etc. (sutra 1.33 – friendliness etc. to purify the mind)
- Cleanliness of environment (non-pollution)
- From Saucha comes disgust for one's own body and disinclination for contact with others (sutra 2.40)
- From inner purity arise purity of sattva, cheerfulness, one-pointedness, control of senses, and fitness for vision of the Self (sutra 2.41)

Santosha (Contentment)

- Being contented with what we have, not desiring more than what we need
- Being contented in all situations, under all circumstances (not constantly complaining)
- No need to strive to 'be something' or 'achieve something' – we are perfect the way we are
- One established in santosha attains supreme happiness (2.42)

Tapas (Austerity)

- Defined as resisting pairs of experiences like heat/cold, pain/pleasure, hunger/thirst etc
- Not getting upset over small sufferings
- Ability to sit and stand motionless
- Ability to hold silence
- Practice of asana, pranayama help develop tapas
- Tapas is needed to remove impurities caused by karma, afflictions (klesha) and propensities (vasanas)
- When established in tapas, mastery over body and senses is achieved (sutra 2.43)

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Svadhyaaya (self-study)

- Study of scriptures – Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, YSP, Bible, Qurana etc.
- Japa of OM with 'bhava' (awareness of its meaning) leads to understanding of self
- Through Svadhyaaya one can achieve one's 'ishta devata' (chosen deity) (sutra 2.44)

Ishvara Pranidhana (Surrender to Lord)

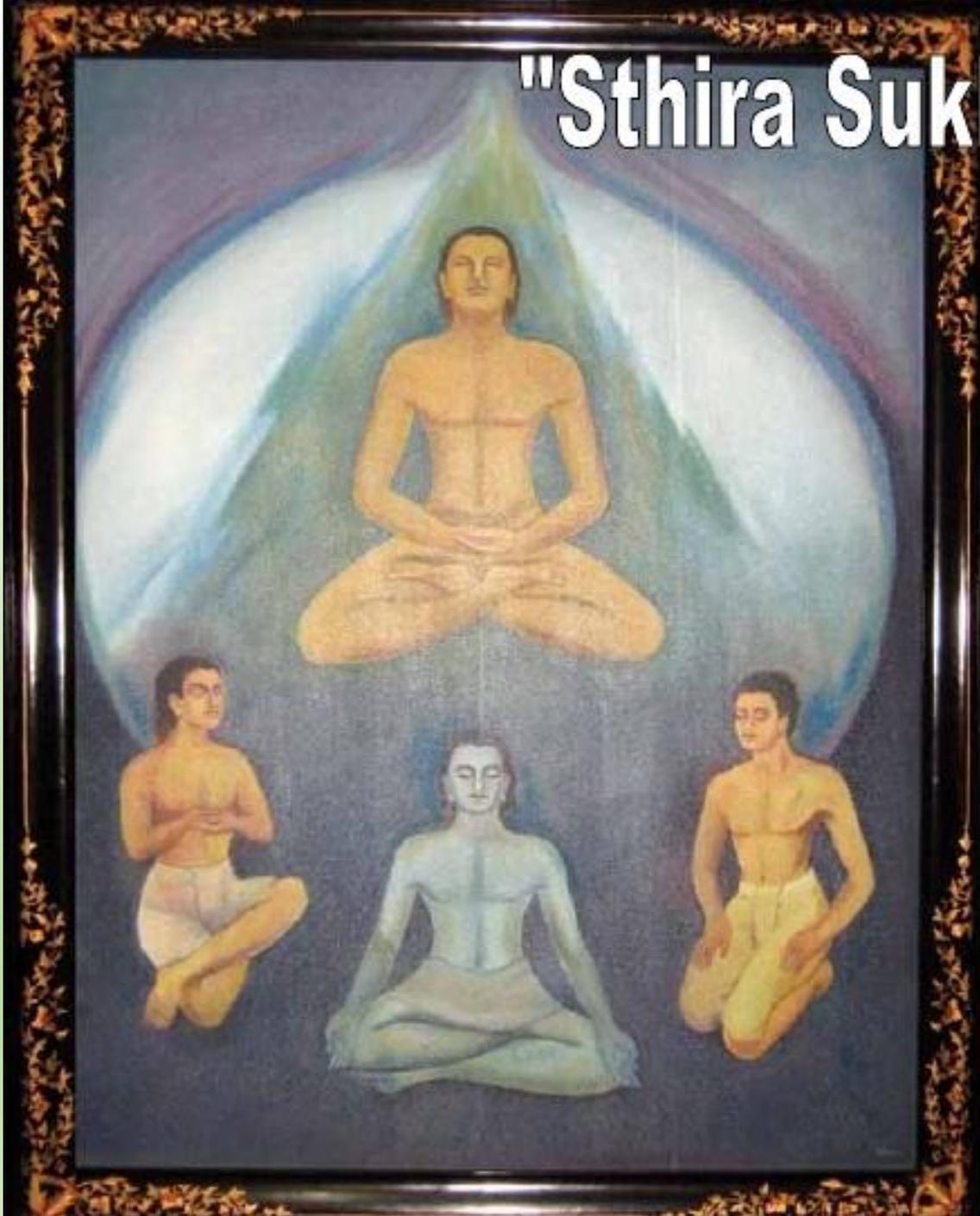
- Ishvara is a special Purusha who is untouched by the afflictions of life, actions and the results and impressions produced by these actions (sutra 1.24)
- Afflictions are ignorance, I-am-ness (egoism), likes, dislikes, and fear of death (sutra 2.3)
- Dedicating all acts to the supreme Lord and renouncing the fruits thereof
- Emphasis on 'bhakti yoga' – yoga of devotion
- Samadhi can be attained quickly through Ishvara Pranidhana (sutra 2.45)

"Sthira Sukham Asanam!!"

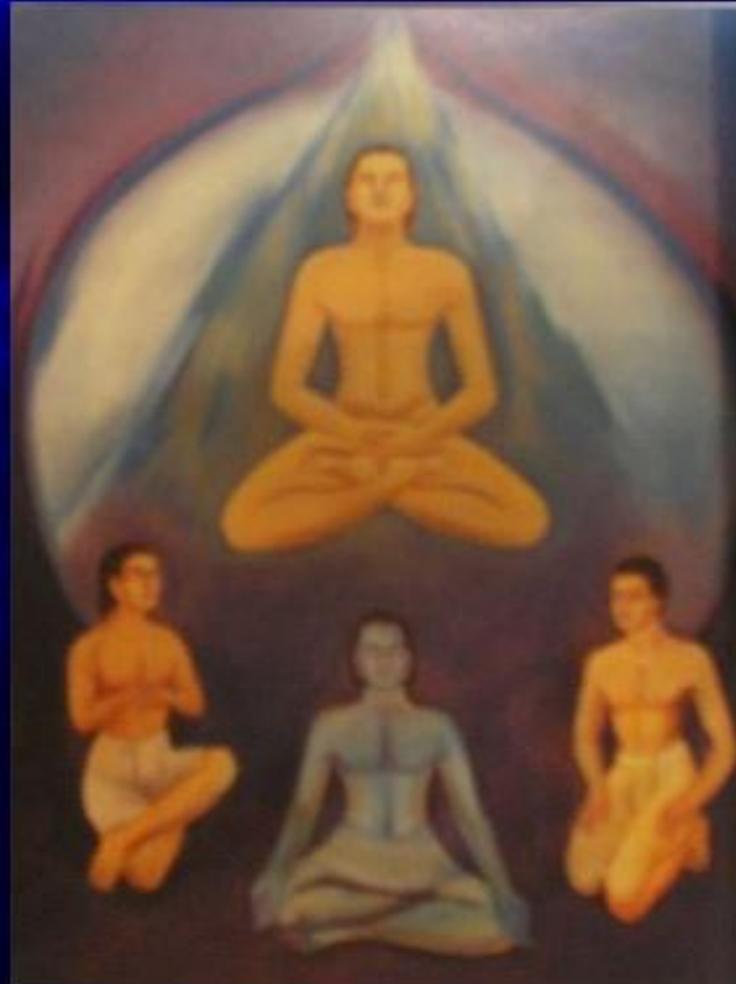
स्थिरसुखमासनम् ॥ ४६ ॥

ASANA

Posture or asana is that which is firm and pleasant . An easy and steady posture enables the sadhaka to practice meditation without feeling strain physical discomfort.



3: Asana – Posture or asana is that which is firm and pleasant. An easy and steady posture will enable the sadhaka to practise meditation.



Asana (Physical Posture)

- Posture must be steady and comfortable (2.46)
- Asana implies a seated posture suitable for meditation, e.g., lotus
- Steady = no shaking or trembling, firm
- Comfortable posture needed for steadiness of breath and stillness of the mind
- In Hatha Yoga, asana practiced to develop a strong and flexible body resulting in comfortable and steady seated posture
- Asanas help remove the nine impediments (1.30)

Asana

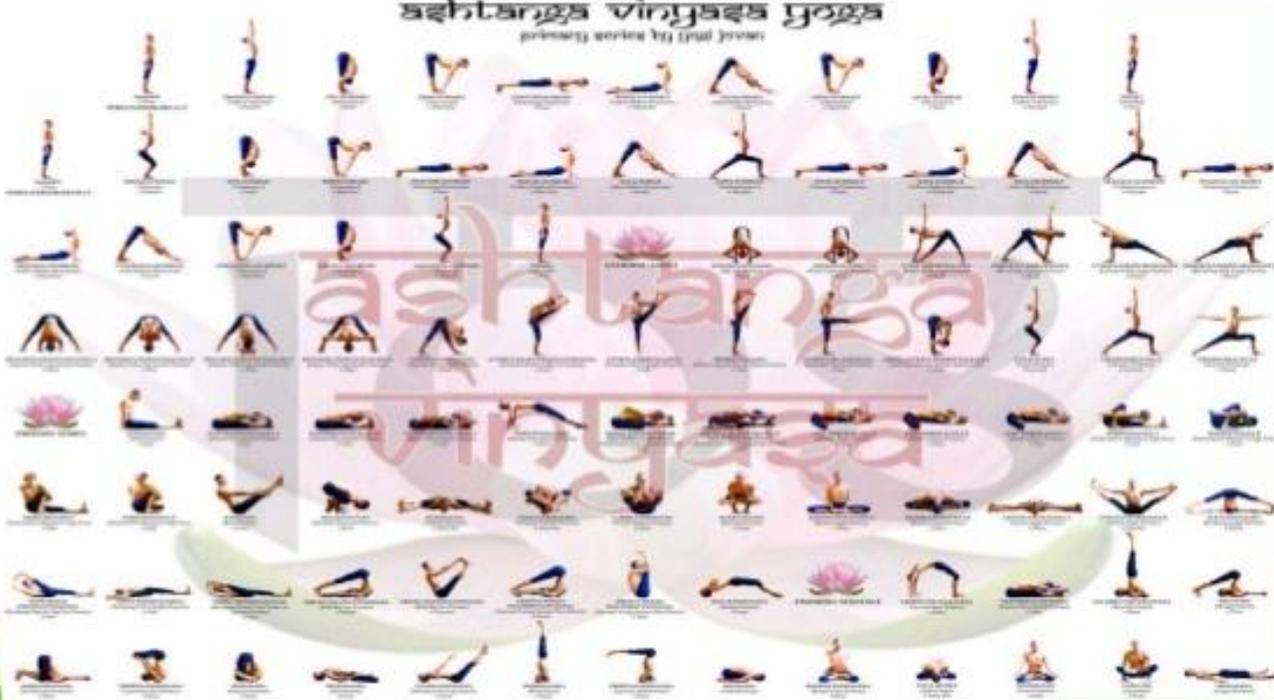
- By relaxation of effort and meditation on the 'Endless' (posture is mastered) (2.47)
- Relaxation – mind free from body awareness
- Meditation of endless – 'ananta' also translated as the snake that upholds the earth –symbolizing strength and steadiness, also the kundalini shakti
- Practice of 'yoga nidra' helps to relax

Asana

- From that no assaults from the pairs of opposites (2.48)
- Opposites – heat/cold, pleasure/pain, good/bad etc., all causing mental conflict
- Necessary for the other limbs like pranayama, and pratyahara (sense withdrawal)
- Develops will-power necessary for undertaking long periods of meditation

**Asana - Physical Exercises and
Pranayama - Breath Exercises**

ashtanga vinyasa yoga
primary series by Sri Sri Jovan

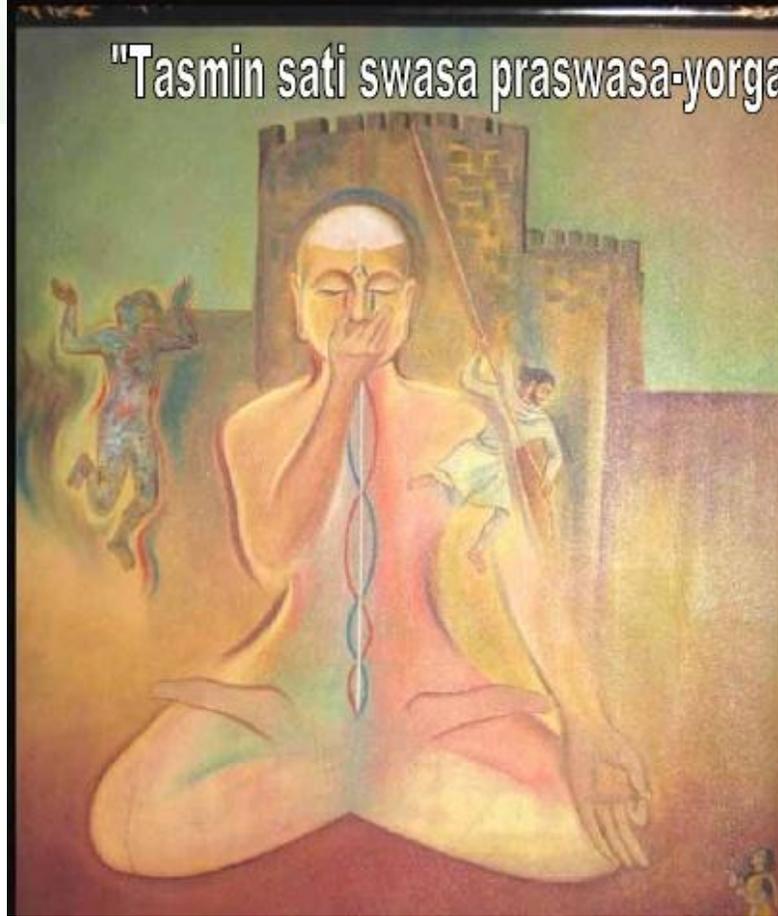


3. Asana (yoga postures)

- The most important effect of asanas is on the endocrine glands which secrete hormones. If the secretion of any gland is too much or too little, then there will be an imbalance in the mind and a malfunctioning in the body. Asanas help to regulate these secretions. Asanas also keep the spinal cord flexible and strong, and they detoxify the organs. The AnnamayaKos'a is perfected through A'sanas.

Pranayama

- Asana having been accomplished, Pranayama is cessation of inspiration and expiration (2.49)
- Breath is the gross manifestation of prana – the cosmic life force
- Link between the body (matter) and the mind (consciousness)
- The vehicle for prana is the pranamaya kosha with all its channels (nadis) of subtle energy



"Tasmin sati swasa praswasa-yorgati vicchedaha Pranayamaha!!"

तस्मिन् सति श्वासप्रश्वासयोर्गतिविच्छेदः

प्राणायामः ॥४६॥

PRANAYAMA

Pranayama helps in retraining and regulating breath. Rhythmic breathing calms down the mind. Swami Vivekananda explained this through a story in which a minister made his escape and descended from the tower by means of a rope and silken thread, tied to a beetle with honey to its feelers

4. Pranayama (breath control)

- Pranayama works on controlling the vital energy. The vital energies are known as Vayus or "winds". There are ten vayus in the human body which are responsible for the moving activities including respiration, circulation of the blood excretion of wastes, movement of limbs; etc. The controlling point of all these vayus is an organ known as Pranendriya. In pranayama there is a special process of breathing in which the pulsation of the Pranendriya becomes still and the mind becomes very calm. This helps meditation greatly. Pra'na'ya'ma perfects the ManomayaKo'sa, (&PranamayaKo'sa).

4: Pranayama – Rhythmic breathing calms down the mind. Prana on the physical plane is connected with the functioning of the mind. By controlling prana, the waves of the mind are controlled.



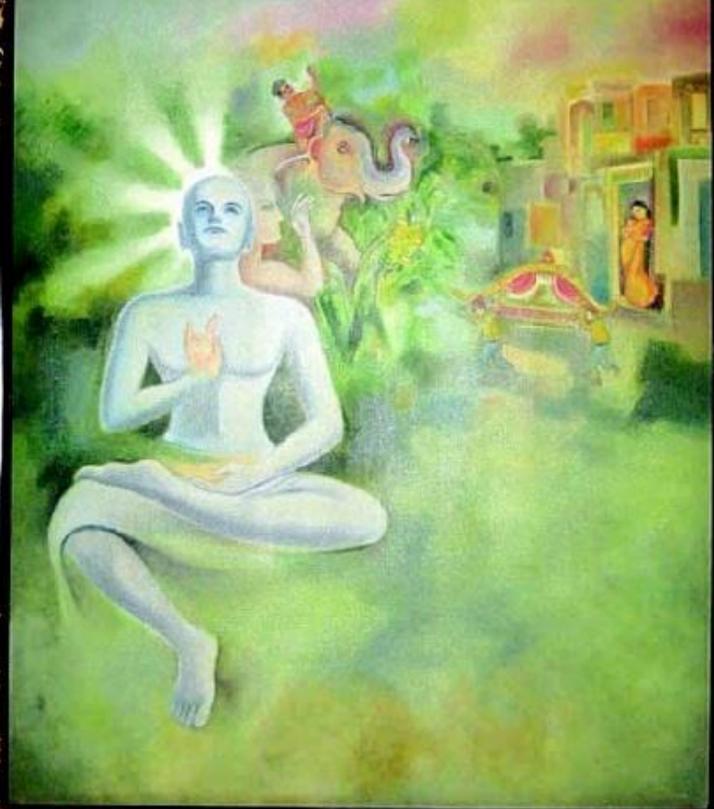
Pranayama

- (Pranayama is) external, internal or suppressed modification; is regulated by place, time and number, (and becomes progressively) prolonged and subtle (2.50)
- Different ratios of inhale, retention and exhale are recommended by various authors, most common being 1,2,2 or 1,4,2
- With practice, over a period of time, one can prolong each breath and make it subtle

Pranayama

- The fourth pranayama is the one that goes beyond the internal and external (2.51)
- From that is dissolved the covering of light (2.52)
- And the fitness of the mind for concentration is established (2.53)
- All the activities of the mind are controlled by prana, and if prana is controlled, we can control the mind.

"Swavishayasamprayoge chittvaswarupanukar eevendriayanang Pratyaharah!!"



स्वविषयासम्प्रयोगे चित्तस्वरूपानुकार

इवेन्द्रियाणां प्रत्याहारः ॥ ५४ ॥

PRATYAHARA

Pratyahara is withdrawing the senses or organs from their contact with the objects in the external world. Sri Ramakrishna has explained it thus : the moment an elephant stretches out its trunk to eat neighbor's garden, it gets a blow from the iron goad of driver

Pratyahara (Sense Withdrawal)

- In Pratyahara, by withdrawing themselves from their objects, the senses seem to imitate the mind (2.54); supreme mastery over the senses then follows (2.55)
- Content of mind at any time determined by:
 - Sensory input
 - Memories from the past
 - Anticipation of the future
- Pratyahara is to eliminate all sensory input

5. Pratyahara (withdrawal of mind)

Pratyahara means to withdraw the mind from its attachment to external objects. In Tantra the repetition of mantra is preceded by a process in which the meditator retracts his or her mind to one point. Pratyahara perfects the Atima'nasaKos'a

6: Dharana – It consists in fixing the mind on an object.

7: Dhyana – Meditation consists of an unbroken flow of thought towards the object of concentration. In meditation, the mind remains fixed for a while on the object of concentration.

8: Samadhi – When meditation becomes continuous and constant, the mind takes the form of the object of meditation itself. It is a state of infinite joy and supreme peace that passeth all understanding.

"Deshbandhashchittvasay Dharana!!

देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा ॥ १ ॥

DHARANA

Fixing the mind on an object is called Dharana. When the chittva or mind-stuff is confined and limited to a certain place its Dharana or concentration

Dharana (Concentration)

- Confining the mind within a limited mental area (object of concentration) (3.1)
- When the mind strays, bringing it back to the object of meditation
- Mental images are sharpened and alertness and power of attention are increased.

6. Dharana (concentration)

Dha'rana' means the concentration of the mind at a specific point. In the basic lesson of Tantric meditation the aspirant brings his or her mind to a specific chakra which is his or her spiritual and psychic nucleus. This point is called the Ista Chakra. Dha'rana' is found in the first lesson of meditation, there is another form of Dharana known as TattvaDharana in which the aspirant concentrates on the chakras and the specific factors controlled by the chakras. This lesson is important because it helps the meditator to gain control over the mental propensities governed by that chakra (vrttis), as well as to increase the concentration powers of the mind which is especially valuable in the other lessons of meditation. The Vijina'nmayakos'a is perfected through Dha'rana'.



तत्र प्रत्ययेकतानता ध्यानम् ॥ २ ॥

DHAYNA

An unbroken flow of knowledge in that object is Dhyanam. The mind tries to think of one object to hold itself to one point and if the mind succeeds in receiving the sensations only through that part or point and if the mind can keep itself in that state for some time, it is called Dhyana

Dhyana (Meditation)

- Uninterrupted flow (of the mind) towards the object (chosen for meditation) is meditation (3.2)
- Narrowing the field of focus compared to dharana
- Holding that focus for longer durations

7. Dhyana (meditation)

Dhyana helps to perfect the most subtle layer of the mind and leads the person to the final step of Ashtanga Yoga which is samadhi. When Tantric teachers from India first brought Dhyana meditation to China it became known as Chan, when brought to Korea it was known as Den, and finally to Japan it became known as Zen. The Hiran'maya Kosha is perfected through Dhyana.

Sri Ramakrishna in Samadhi State

"Tadevartho-matra-nibhasing
swarupashunyamibo Samadhi!!"

तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः ॥ ३ ॥

SAMADHI

When that giving up all forms, reflects only the meaning it is Samadhai. That comes when in meditation the form or the external part is given up.

Samadhi (Total Absorption)

- When there is consciousness only of the object of meditation and not of itself (the mind), that is Samadhi (3.3)
- The three (dharana, dhyana, samadhi) taken together constitute Samyama (3.4)
- Extremely narrow focus with no distractions
- Consciousness of the mind too is lost, only the object of meditation shines

8. Samadhi (suspension of mind in the goal)

Samadhi is the absorption of mind in the Supreme Consciousness. There are two main types of samadhi, nirvikalpa and savikalpa. Savikalpa is a trance of absorption with distortion or qualification. In savikalpasamadhi the person has the feeling that "I am the Supreme Consciousness", but in nirvikalpasamadhi there is no longer a feeling of "I". The individual consciousness is totally merged in the Cosmic Consciousness. "when his or her mind merges in universal mind, this state is called savikalpasamadhi". Samadhi can also be attained through intense devotion, sometimes this is called Bhava Samadhi. The Soul is accessed only through Dhyana Samadhi.

Benefits, Utilities and Their Impact Psychological Impact on Body and Mind

(Source :

<https://newworldlibrary.com/ArticleDetails/tabid/230/ArticleID/72/Default.aspx#.XoE9kEAzblU>)

- Ashtanga Yoga is the royal eightfold yoga, standardized by the ancient sage Patanjali.
- It's outset and conclusion is the state of unlimited ecstasy and freedom that forms the core of our being.
- Patanjali calls this state objectless samadhi, the Upanishads refer to it as the heart.
- As human society and it's individuals evolved more and more away from this true and original state, eight sequential steps were presented to get each individual back from wherever their current position is, back into contact with their heart.

- The practice of these eight limbs can take up a copious amount of time of one's daily life.
- Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga is a presentation of Ashtanga Yoga, designed for urban people with time constraints.
- Ashtanga Yoga employs a multitude of techniques, such as postures, breathing, concentration and meditation exercises.
- The benefits may be grouped into four categories: physical, emotional, mental and intellectual benefits.
- The physical benefits consist of making the body free of disease, making it light and strong so that it can be a suitable vehicle on the path to freedom. Through yoga the body is made to absorb and retain prana, which extends the life span.

- The emotional benefits consist briefly in being able to not be a slave to one's emotions but to remain the witness. Most of our suffering is caused by emotions. These emotions may become unbearable by identifying with them and often may cause negative results if we follow their urge. It's important to know the difference between emotions and feelings.
- A feeling is an authentic sensation arising in the present moment such as love.
- An emotion is a reliving of a previously imprinted condition.

- For example because we have been hurt in the past we are acting in the present moment not out of love but out of jealousy or fear. Whenever we are emoting, we are in the past; whenever we are feeling, we are in the present. Yoga makes you feel more intensely because it removes layers of old conditioning.
- The mind is seen in yoga as a computer, which analyses sensory data. It projects all objects cognised in the past onto a present object that needs to be identified. If it achieves what it believes to be sufficient congruency it signals that it has 're-cognized' the object as one of the objects previously cognised.
- This is the whole tragedy of the human being. Mind is an application, which projects past onto the future. As long as one is in the sway of the mind, one is, according to yoga, a living corpse. ... Recognizing oneself as the immortal, infinite consciousness is to be alive for the first time

- Intellect, similar to the egoic body/mind and the world of objects, is something that grows and evolves as opposed to consciousness/awareness/self, which exists in an eternal state of perfection. Everything that grows and evolves however is, according to yoga, made up of the various combinations of the three elementary particles (guna) of nature (prakrti), which we may call mass (tamas), energy (rajas) and information/intelligence (sattva).
- An intellect with a preponderance to tamas is too dull to recognize the truth, whereas the intellect with a preponderance to rajas contains too much frenzy to penetrate to the truth. It is only the intellect, which has been made sattvic through the practice of higher yoga, visualization, meditation and samadhi that is capable of seeing the world as it really is (prajna).

- In practicing yoga, we need to have an undogmatic openness, and a questioning, examining attitude to make progress. Yoga is rather a science (vidya), than a religion. The process of yoga is the pursuit of knowledge and its aim is the attainment thereof. Firstly, we gain knowledge of external objects and our own body, mind, egoity and intellect and only once that is faultless, do we progress to knowledge of the self.
- The wide range of yogic breathing exercises is collectively referred to as pranayama. Pranayama is a compound noun, consisting of prana and ayama. The Sanskrit term prana denotes life force. Since life force is thought to have an air-like quality it is sometimes translated as inner or subtle breath. In some contexts prana simply means breath or even air. The full term pranayama means extension of prana. Extension of prana stands for life extension in a qualitative and quantitative sense. It is thought to not only increase the life span but also increase vitality.

- The reason why breathing exercises are given such importance in yoga is that it is thought that the pulsating or oscillating of prana happens simultaneously with the movements of the mind (chitta vrtti). The practice of pranayama therefore is the study and exercise of one's breath to a point where it is appeased and does not agitate the mind.
- The basic yogic breathing exercise is ujjayi pranayama (victorious extending of the breath). It is practiced by producing a gentle hissing sound through slightly contracting/closing the epiglottis as one breathes. The epiglottis is believed to function as a valve and by half-closing it the body is pumped up with prana (life force).
- The various asanas (postures) are used to become aware of all areas of the body. Where awareness goes-according to the traditional teaching-there goes life force. Chronic diseases are believed to develop where awareness is permanently lacking. The yogi learns to breathe into all parts of the body, an act that is equivalent to evenly spreading the prana throughout the body.

- Yoga uses actively both the abdomen and the thorax to breathe. To describe this method of breathing D. Coulter has suggested the term 'thoraco-diaphragmatic breathing.' The intercostals are here exercised through actively exhaling. The air is literally pumped out of the lungs until all that remains is the respiratory rest volume, the amount of air left after a full exhalation. The aim is to breathe more deeply so as to increase vitality. The way to achieve this is not by inhaling as much as possible but by first exhaling completely in order to create space for the new inhalation.
- Yogic tradition gives two vital reasons for wanting to increase breath volume. Firstly, by increasing our inhalation we increase the amount of oxygen supplied. Secondly, by increasing our exhalation we more efficiently exhale toxins, including mental, emotional, physical toxins, and environmental toxins.

- Yoga sees these toxins to be held and stored in the body in 'stale' areas where there is only a small amount of oxygen, often around the joints or in adipose tissue. The build-up of these toxins-a literal energetic dying of certain body areas long before the death of the entire organism-is thought to eventually lead to chronic disease. By breathing deeply, exhaling accumulated toxins and inhaling oxygen, the yogi attempts to return the body to its original state of health.

(Based on the book [Ashtanga Yoga: Practice & Philosophy](http://www.newworldlibrary.com) © 2007 Gregor Maehle. Printed with permission of New World Library, <http://www.newworldlibrary.com>)

(Link : <https://healthy.net/2007/12/08/the-benefits-of-ashtanga-yoga/>)

Benefits of Ashtanga Yoga

(**Source:** <https://fitathletic.com/benefits-ashtanga-yoga/>)

- Many people do yoga for physical benefits. However, yoga is a way of life. It is about the union of body, soul, spirit, and mind. If you want to reap all the benefits and achieve that balance, consider practicing one of the oldest forms of yoga, Ashtanga yoga in Poway or neighboring areas.
- In Sanskrit, ashtanga means “having eight limbs or branches (components)”. According to the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, there is a practice called the Eightfold Path that leads to self-awakening and liberation. Ashtanga yoga, as the name says, outlines all eight limbs of yoga and develops both psychological and spiritual health. It focuses on a predefined sequence of poses that are connected through breath and movement. Take a look at a few amazing benefits this yoga style can bring.

Physical strength

- Ashtanga yoga focuses on muscle training and develops physical strength. Practicing Ashtanga rejuvenates your body, making it stronger, toned, more flexible and controlled.
- The opening series includes lots of contortion-esque poses and many of them require core and arm strength. Your stamina and endurance will gradually improve and you'll have stronger core muscles. Another advantage of Ashtanga is that you can move through the practice at your own pace and level.

Effective Cardio Workout

- Ashtanga is great if you need a cardio workout. It will help you to get in shape, manage your weight and stay fit, all that, while doing long slow deep breathing! When done swiftly, these movements can effectively raise your heart rate.
- Sequences of Ashtanga postures are done in a continuous, fast-paced way and the dynamic flow of the asanas (postures) may give you the sense of intensity. If you prefer more vigorous styles of yogic practice, Ashtanga is just the right style for you.

Good Coordination

- Ashtanga yoga is a powerful tool to tune the body. It improves focus, balance and coordination. A swift and intense set of asanas instills a better sense of rhythm and increases your awareness of the movement and flow of your body.

Emotional Benefits

- This style of yoga also emphasizes emotional and mental flexibility and strength. Asanas can affect not only your muscles and joints but also your emotions and enable purification.
- By practicing Ashtanga, you will find a balance between feelings and emotions. It will help you deal with emotionally difficult situations, work through the pain and suppressed emotions, and overcome them. The equilibrium in your emotions will cause your organs and your whole body to work more efficiently and you will realize how strongly connected your body and mind are.

Mental Healing

- Ashtanga yoga will keep your body moving in coordination with the breath. Breath awareness is particularly important in this practice. This sort of moving meditation and constant focus on the breath will purify and still your mind, relieve you of stress and allow you to alter patterns of unwanted behavior.
- Ashtanga will bring you back to yourself and keep you centered on a daily basis. This practice teaches us to move beyond our mind, attain inner union and deep realization. Start practicing Ashtanga yoga in Poway and get in a state of being calm, energized, relaxed, and liberated.

Spiritual Well-being

- As we already mentioned, there is a set of specific sequences based on the practitioner's skill and experience that every Ashtangi has to follow. Repeating the same poses in the exact order has its purpose and the benefits are not only physical. It awakens your spiritual self.
- The first four limbs cleanse your external and teach you how to interact with the world around you. The next four limbs focus on withdrawal, cleansing the internal and how you relate to your mind.
- You will face your sore spots and work through your challenges until you reach mental clarity and gain a better understanding of the self. Through the practice of postures, focus points and breathing, you will be able to explore the limitless nature of your inner self.

Benefits

(Source : <https://www.rishikulyogshala.org/the-top-10-benefits-of-ashtanga-yoga/>)

- The [Ashtanga Yoga](#) is a systematized practice of prescribed yoga postures to channel the energy through the body locks (bandhas) and focusing at a particular point (drishti) in asanas. It is the practice of six series, Primary Ashtanga Yoga Series, being the basis of all other series. The three elements of Ashtanga Yoga (Ujjayi breath, bandhas, and drishti) make this yoga form a cleansing and moving meditation practice.
- Practiced in two ways, Ashtanga Yoga is a sacred science that is extremely beneficial for the body, mind, and soul of the practitioners. Learn the health benefits of Ashtanga yoga that transform a yogi's life for the better.

Benefits

- 1. Improvement in Core Endurance:** The core endurance is likely associated with lower back pain, especially in athletes. The practice of Ashtanga Yoga poses week after week can significantly improve core endurance and resulting problems. It improves muscular strength and muscle tone.
- 2. Enhanced Flexibility:** As with most yoga forms, Ashtanga Yoga gradually enhances flexibility when practiced on a daily basis. The Ashtanga Yoga postures work efficiently in building hamstring flexibility that influences trunk movements. A reduced hamstring elasticity limits the pelvic movements and increases trunk angles which affect the health of the spine. The Ashtanga Yoga also promotes shoulders and calf flexibility.
- 3. Reduced Stubborn Body Fat:** Savor a lean body and natural fat loss benefits of Ashtanga Yoga. As most of the Ashtanga Yoga poses use body weight, the practitioners get a lean and toned body. Also, the performance of vigorous Ashtanga Yoga poses detoxifies the body that assists in getting rid of fat from the stomach and arms. This yoga style promotes greater body-awareness making you a conscious eater.
- 4. Improves Cardio-vascular Fitness:** The constant vinyasas between each pose keep your heart rate up throughout the practice. Not only are you building strength and flexibility but you're also working your cardiovascular system

- 5. Builds Inner Strength:** The use of Bandhas (locks) during the practice of Ashtanga Yoga Series teaches the Ashtangis the method to harness and direct the prana flow. The focus on the pelvis, throat, belly Bandhas in the Ashtanga Yoga practices provide strength and stability to the body helping it to work with its inherent energies.
- 6. Relieve from Stress:** Ashtanga Yoga focuses on the practice of the same sequence of postures. As you dedicatedly take up the practice, you naturally begin to focus on the physical movements coordinating it with the breath. This makes Ashtanga Yoga a moving meditation leaving you relaxed, refreshed, and rejuvenated.
- 7. Learn to Breathe:** In the times where most of us exist in the spectrum of stress and depression, we need to learn the art of yogic breathing. Ashtanga Yoga employs the practice of Ujjayi Breathing or the victorious breath– the art of taking purified air through the nostrils. The Ujjayi breathing fuels the metabolic fires, increases the prana, vitalizes the system, and more. Reap the health benefits of Ashtanga yoga and Ujjayi breathing with the practice.
- 8. Treats Hypertension:** Synchronizing the Ashtanga Yoga poses with the Ujjayi Pranayama is beneficial for the health. The long-term benefits of Ujjayi breathing are lowering of the high blood pressure in the people suffering from hypertension.

- 9. Healthy Back:** The Ashtanga Yoga tones the lower abdominal muscles, realigns the musculoskeletal system, and effectively diminishes a backache. Ashtanga yoga is one natural way to embrace a strong and healthy back.
- 10. Prevents Injury:** Ashtanga Yoga, when performed in a safe, comprehensive, mindful manner and in the guidance of experienced yoga teachers grants you with strong, flexible, and internally balanced body that is less prone to injuries and health problems.
- 11. A Plan for Wellness:** The Ashtangis can feel the difference in their body, mind, and attitude when they practice Ashtanga Yoga and when they do not. Ashtanga yoga is a system that connects us to our center and helps us act from our authentic self.
- 12. Reduce Stress and Anxiety**
- 13. Increase Focus and Creativity**
- 14. Lower Blood Pressure**

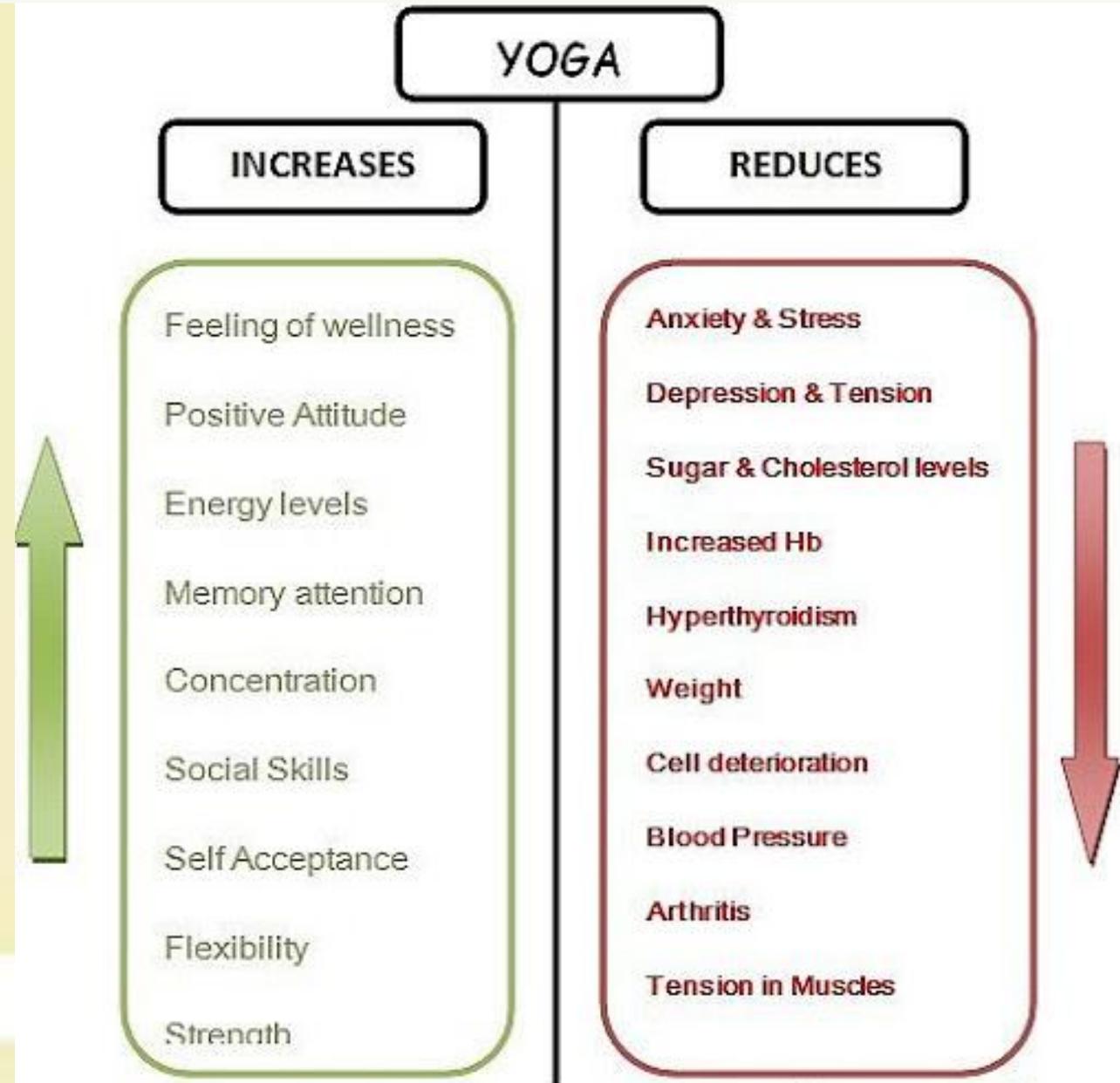
BENEFITS OF ASHTANGA YOGA

- **yama (moral restraints)** – Experience your relation with fellow beings
- **niyama (observances)** – Experience the relation with the self
- **āsana (posture)** – Observe reaction of body and mind, its synchronization
- **prānāyāma (breath extension)** – Breathing techniques to activate body and brain cells
- **pratyāhāra (sensory withdrawal)** – Control the sense organs
- **dhāraṇā (concentration)** – Control the faculty of sense organs
- **dhyāna (meditation)** – Experiencing the consciousness beyond the mind
- **samādhi (meditative absorption)** – Realizing and the union with the Self



The benefits of Ashtanga yoga include:

1. Makes body more flexible
2. Cleanses and detoxifies the body
3. Improves health of the lungs
4. Improves blood circulation
5. Improves power of concentration
6. Builds patience
7. Helps gain confidence
8. Gives strength to fight stress and tensions





mind

spirit

body

Wellness

Thank You !