

Ashtanga ~ Eight Limbs of Yoga

8 Limbed Path Story:

- Couple: Yogis Prison tower represents conditioned existence silken thread purifying the body through asana
- Strong thread represents Pranayama, breath extension
- Cord: meditation
- Rope: samadhi, pure state of being
- Once the rope is held, freedom from conditioned existence is possible.

Y-S 2.30 Yama Niyama Asana Pranayama Pratyahara Dharana Dhyana Samadhyah Astau Angani

These 7 aspects are self restraint, universal laws, posture, regulation of breath, control and restraint of the senses, concentration and meditation. With these practices comes the 8th aspect of yoga. This is a state of being absolutely absorbed in the source of life.

1. Yama: Self Restraints, Ethics:

- **Ahimsa** - non - violence
 - To avoid all forms of violence or injury to self and others. Be aware and gentle in your actions, speech and thought. Violence comes from fear, anger, ignorance and selfishness.
 - **Practice:** compassion, kindness, consideration, love, understanding, patience, self-love
 - **Fruits:** In the presence of one established in non-violence all hostilities cease
- **Satya** - Truthfulness
 - To refrain from all forms of dishonest and deception. Be truthful in actions, speech and thought.
 - **Practice:** Loving communication, giving constructive feedback, forgiveness, non-judgment, own your own feelings, let go of masks.
 - **Fruits:** When established in truth, things come automatically because all that you say is true.
- **Asteya** - Non – stealing
 - To not take what is not yours. Also included is not taking advantage of those that confide in us.
 - **Practice:** Using objects the right way, cultivate a sense of completeness/contentment, let go of cravings, self sufficiency.

- **Fruits:** When established in non-stealing, all wealth comes.
- **Brahmacharya** - Conservation of energy
 - To be conscious and responsible in the use of energy in all its forms; responsible behavior while moving toward truth.
 - **Practice:** Not repression but management and balance of cravings including sensual cravings. Develop relationships that strengthen our understanding of truth.
 - **Fruits:** When energy is properly managed and directed, vigor, energy and courage come; become free from the fear of death
- **Aparigraha** - Non-Hoarding/Non-possessiveness
 - To not act on the impulse to be greedy
 - **Practice:** Only take what is necessary, non-attachment to objects, possessions, relationships
 - **Fruits:** When acting without possessiveness, you learn the purpose of why you were born.

2. Niyama: Moral observances, attitude toward self, personal integrity: to keep the mind from being stained once purified. This purification is not puritanism. "Stainability" is the propensity of the body / mind to take on conditioning or imprint from the environment.

- **Soucha** - Cleanliness, purification
 - To practice purity in thought and deed
 - **Cultivate:** Even steady action, thought and speech; balanced discernment and discrimination not judgment.
 - **Fruit:** Physical non-attachment to self and others. Mental purity brings cheerfulness and vision of the self.
- **Santosha** – Contentment
 - To be content with yourself, your life as it is.
 - **Cultivate:** Gratitude and joyfulness, remain calm in success and failure. The state of being does not depend on any external status.
 - **Fruit:** Supreme Joy
- **Tapas** - Austerity/Zeal
 - Be willing to do what is necessary to reach a goal with discipline.
 - **Cultivate:** Determination to pursue a daily practice, enthusiasm for the spiritual path. (abhyasa) Joy in your outer practice leads to inner discipline.
 - **Fruit:** Body and organs become healthy and perfect
- **Svadyaya** - Self Study
 - To study your own self and wise teachings
 - **Cultivate:** Reflection, meditation, desire to know the truth, study of yogic texts.
 - **Fruit:** Whatever you focus on you become.

- **Ishvar-Pranidhana** - Surrender / Devotion to the Divine
 - To accept God's will in whatever you experience, to lay all your actions at the feet of God.
 - **Cultivate:** Faith, dedication, sincerity & patience to transcend the ego and letting go.
 - **Fruit:** State of tranquility and union.

3. Asana: Yoga postures to balance the energy in your body

- Steady and comfortable (with ease) should be the posture (YS 1:46)
- By loosening effort and meditation on steadiness/infinite, the asana is mastered (YS 1:47)
- Result of mastering asana: the pairs of opposites cease to exist (YS 1:48)
- Obstacles to knowing oneself is manifested in the body: disease, sluggishness and dullness. Our body is the crystallized history of our past thoughts. To practice forcefully will only superimpose a new layer of subconscious imprints based on suffering and pain. It will also increase identification with the body. Identifying with anything impermanent is called ignorance - avidya.
- Asana: some students experience a lot of anger in forward bending due to past being stored in our hamstrings. If we consciously let go of the anger, the emotion will disappear. Some students feel like crying after intense backbending. emotional pain is stored in the chest, where it functions like armor hardening around the heart. this armor may be dissolved during backbending. if we let go of this armor, a feeling of tremendous relief will result, sometimes accompanied by crying. Extreme stiffness: mental rigidity; extreme flexibility: inability to take a position in life and set boundaries.

4. Pranayama: Exercises to control or enhance Prana for increased vitality

- Breath control and breathing exercises
- **Ashtanga yoga practice: Ujjayi breath.** Practice and we become able to breathe in all parts of the body, which is equivalent to spreading prana throughout.

5. Pratyahara: Managing control over senses, sense withdrawal,

- Exercises to cultivate introspection. if one becomes preoccupied with with sense objects, the mind is fueled, which will lead to delusion and suffering .
- If the fuel of the senses is withheld, then the mind becomes re-absorbed into its source, the heart- hryd.
- **Ashtanga yoga practice: DRISTI** sense withdrawal during ashtanga practice. Sense of hearing is withdrawn by listening to ujjayi

6. Dharana: Exercises that focus and still the mind in one direction, concentration.

- Mental sharpness, control and focus
- One pointedness
- **Ashtanga Yoga Practice Bandhas:** externally it's the practice of mula, uddiyana & jalandhara (pelvic, lower abdomen, chin locks), internally it's practicing and bonding together of movement, breath and awareness. To do this, we have to let go of the beta brain wave pattern and instead shift to alpha pattern, which enables multiple focus and

leads to simultaneous awareness of everything, or being in this moment, which is meditation.

- BETA WAVES - 14Hz to 20Hz. Beta waves are associated with normal waking consciousness. They are present when you are focused on activities in the outside world.
- ALPHA WAVES - 8Hz to 13Hz. Alpha waves are likened to a light meditation. They are prevalent when you daydream. They will become stronger when your eyes are closed
- THETA WAVES - 4Hz to 7Hz. Theta waves occur during heightened states of creativity and are found with a deep meditative state.
- DELTA WAVES - .5Hz to 3Hz. Delta waves are found in a deep sleep state or unconsciousness. Also, Delta waves are common in very deep meditation.

7. Dhyana: Exercises that give the experience of absorption or dissolution, meditation.

- Meditation, awareness, heightened consciousness
- Mind becomes one with and connected to its focus
- In **vinyasa** it starts when, rather than doing the practice, **we are being done or moved**. At this point we realize that, since we can watch the body, we are not the body but a deeper - lying witnessing entity. Vinyasa is a constant coming into and out of postures, the constant change of form, which we never hold on to. It is itself a meditation on impermanence.

8. Samadhi: objective and objectless. Objective: when the mind is clear enough that it doesn't modify sensory input at all. To experience this, we have to de-condition ourselves to the extent that we let go of all limiting and negative programs of the past. Then, all that can be known about an object is known. Objectless Samadhi: highest form of yoga. When thought waves are suspended, which leads to knowing of that which was always there: consciousness and divine self.

- **Samadhi:** To merge with the infinite through deep meditation
- “Sama” same “dhi” vision
- Neutral, unclouded vision
- No separation
- Spiritual Awakening