

YOGA

The word yoga is often misunderstood to mean only one aspect of it, the physical part - which has become immensely popular. The etymology of the word yoga is from its root word YUJ, which, in Sanskrit means to tie together firmly or bind. Yuj means yoke in English as in tying bullocks to a plough and horses to a carriage. In its true spiritual sense, it is used to mean the individualized divine core (ĀTMAN) in Man getting united with the all-pervading SUPREME DIVINE SPIRIT (BRAHMAN). This is called SELF REALIZATION, or 'yoked to the GOAL OF LIFE,' Man, having completely shed his DELUSION (MOHA, AVIDYA, MĀYĀ, FALSE PERCEPTION) that he is the PSYCHO_PHYSICAL (BODY-MIND) COVER, finds that "HE" is in essence truly THAT SUPREME CHANGELESS IMPERISHABLE DIVINE – TAT TVAM ASI (THAT THOU ART), the basic theme of the CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD, and AHAM BRAHMASMI, (I am veritably that Brahman)....., two of the GREAT STATEMENTS (MAHĀ VĀKYĀS) of the ancient VEDĀS.

Yoga as a SCIENCE was established and well explained and by SAGE PATANJALI who is universally acknowledged as the authority on this subject. It commences from simple basic principles and ends in final goal of SELF REALIZATION. PATANJALI says that the natural state of human mind is to be dispersed or scattered and that our effort must be to gather all of our thoughts together - CHITTA VRITTI NIRODHAH (CHITTA, the MIND, VRITTI, the outward going tendency, NIRODHAH, full control). He has rendered it into practice by EIGHT GRADED STEPS, the ASHTANGA YOGA (ASHTA, the EIGHT; ANGA, limbs).

They are as follows:-

1) YAMA - refraining from evil actions such as cruelty and dishonesty which can be achieved by stressing negation of such actions and emphasizing the following:

ahimsa – non injury, no killing

astaya – no stealing

aparigraha – non covetousness for wealth and possession of others

akāma – no intense desire which includes lust for sex

brahmacharya – celibacy absence of sex impulse in thought, word and deed

- 2) NIYAMA - performing good actions and emphasizing positive qualities such as:
- saucha – cleanliness
 - santosha – contentment
 - svadhyayah – study of the scriptures
 - tapas – austerity
 - iswara pranipradhana – dedicating all actions to God.
- 3) ĀSANA- various physical postures to maintain a healthy and flexible body and to keep it in good condition.
- 4) PRĀNAYĀMA - a scientific technique of breathing exercises involving voluntary control of the diaphragm (the muscular partition between the chest and the abdomen). This indirectly brings about changes in the lungs, the heart, the abdominal organs, circulation, and body metabolism.
- 5) PRATYĀHĀRA- a deliberate and willful withdrawal of the SENSES (the Indriyās) from the SENSE OBJECTS (the Indriyaarthas).
- 6) DHARANA- focusing on the INNER SELF and rejecting the false, fleeting, and impermanent world of sense pleasures.
- 7) DHYĀNA- arousing the dormant KUNDALINI SAKTI, the sleeping coiled SERPENT POWER, from its position at the bottom of the spine to upwards along the spine to various seats or centers designated as CHAKRĀS at different levels where LOTUSES with different number of petals are visualized ending at the crown of the head when you get Liberation or Mukti.
- 8) SAMĀDHI - a transcendental state of SUPER CONSCIOUSNESS where all physical activity and sense perception is reduced to the barest minimum.