

## Yoga - An Overview



Yoga, a Sanskrit word meaning 'to yoke' or 'union', is a 5,000 year-old living oral tradition. It is a science, philosophy and attitude in practice that helps the individual to cultivate health of body and mind, creativity and happiness. In yoga, the union refers to the yoking of the body, mind and spirit.

Yoga has always been an oral tradition, passed along from guru to disciple and teacher to student. This oral tradition and the passing on of direct life and practice experience provide a true living link to yogic knowledge and practice.

The practice of yoga is not based on scriptures, nor does the practitioner of yoga need to believe in specific doctrines or philosophies. Students of yoga are provided specific methods of practice and encouraged to become conscious of the direct experiences of their teacher(s) by developing and nourishing their own yoga practice. Studies in self-discipline and self-awareness are additional parts of a regular yoga practice.

About 2,500 years ago a revered sage named Patanjali codified some of the oral traditions of yoga into four short books of yoga sutras. These **sutras**, or threads, help the teacher and student of yoga understand the basic concepts or branches of yoga. There are eight branches or limbs of yoga known as **Ashtanga** (in Sanskrit, 'ash' = eight, 'anga' = limb). Of these eight limbs, the two most well-known in western culture are the yoga postures, called **asanas**, and **pranayama**, regulation of the life-force observed most commonly in working with the breath and breathing. For the dedicated practitioner of yoga, two additional limbs are equally important. The first are the **yamas**, which help the yogi maintain ethical practices in daily life. The second are the **niyamas**, observances which are important to achieve the outcomes of yoga.

The practice of yoga builds poise and stillness of the body and concentration of the mind, yet yoga is much more than a program of exercise. We welcome your interest and curiosity to learn more about this wonderful system of health, wellness and contentment. Come join us in the yoga experience! Shanti.



May you always remember that the fruit contains the seed,  
and within the seed is all the potential of the tree.  
Goswami Kriyananda