









THE 8 LIMBS OF YOGA – ROYAL PATH TO SELF-REALISATION

Raja Yoga as first compiled and described in the Yoga Sutras by Patanjali (ca.500 BC)

(Note: Yoga in the West is commonly practised as physical exercise or alternative medicine, rather than as the spiritual self-mastery and meditation skill associated with in the East.)

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
YAMAS	NIYAMAS	ASANA	PRANAYAMA	PRATYAHARA	DHARANA	DHYANA	SAMADHI
Restraints	Observance	Postures	Breath Balancing	Sense Control	Concentration	Meditation	Ultimate stage of Yoga
<p>1. - 4. serve to prepare the body and mind for 5.- 8.</p>				<p>The last 3 limbs – called <i>Antaranga</i> (internal yoga) – occur solely in the mind of the yogin. They are altered states of consciousness and have no direct counterpart in the normal waking state. Dharana, dhyana and samadhi are collectively called Samyama.</p>			
<p>1. & 2. clear us, bring peace of mind and help us to evolve: "Character development" is absolutely important. If you are not cleared, you cannot take higher consciousness into your cells. A disturbed mind will tend to produce disharmonious actions. Meditation is impossible when the clutter of the lower subconscious mind keeps intervening.</p>							
							
YAMAS:	NIYAMA:	ASANA:	PRANAYAMA:	PRATYAHARA:	DHARANA:	DHYANA:	SAMADHI:
Self-restraints with focus on the harmonisation of one's social interactions.	Disciplines to harmonise one's inner feelings and attitudes.	Performed practices and physical techniques. Even the simplest postures can have a profoundly beneficial effect on all dimensions of a person, helping to release physical and mental tensions.	"Controlled intake and outflow of breath in a firmly established posture." (Patanjali). While Asanas bring the basic physical and mental health, pranayama is for the purification of the nadis and awakening of Kundalini:	Drawing the senses inward. Control of senses which requires mastering the flow of prana as that is what drives the senses.	State of focused attention: mind learns to focus on a single object or thought. Concentration on the space between the eyebrows helps mind control/to keep the body-mind firm.	Over time Dharana transforms into Dhyana, the state of meditation – a gate to Self-realisation.	A transcendental state and the highest level of meditation.
<p>Ahimsa: Non-Violence Non-harmful intent/ non-hostility</p> <p>Satya: Truthfulness True in word/thought/ action with self and others</p> <p>Asteya: Honesty Non-stealing/no-debt/ living simply, sincerely/ also don't steal other people's energy</p> <p>Aparigraha: Non-Possessiveness Non-attachment/ no greed/no cravings</p> <p>Bhramacharya: Divine Conduct Continence in desire states</p>	<p>Shaucha: Cleanliness Purity of all koshas and one's environment/ elimination of samskaras</p> <p>Santosha: Contentment Maintain serenity even when things are difficult/ equanimity</p> <p>Tapas: Endurance Simplicity of life/stamina and willpower/austerity</p> <p>Ishwara Pranidhanini: Cultivation of Faith Surrender of oneself and one's actions to a higher reality</p> <p>Swadhyaya: Self-Study Gain insight/observe own perceptions</p>	<p>Asanas: Body poses and conscious breathing for stretching, vitalising, balancing, relaxing,... <i>combined with</i> Pranayamas Mudras & Bandhas Mantras Meditation techniques Cleansing practices <i>to regulate</i></p> <p>Chakras and Nadis, leading to a balanced energy system on physical and mental level.</p> <p>A group of 84 classic yoga asanas is mentioned in several classic texts on yoga.</p>	<p>Prana: Life force, vital breath or cosmic wind Purak: Inhalation Rechak: Exhalation Kumbhak: Holding</p> <p>Prana pervades the individual body in five forms as Prana Vayu/ The 5 Vital Forces:</p> <p>Prana Vayu (forward/inward moving/takes in food, air, sensory perceptions/energises all vayus/ seat: the heart) Apana Vayu (downward/outward movement/allows to eliminate/seat: abdomen and pelvis) Samana Vayu (unifies prana vayu and apana/digestive fire/seat: solar plexus) Udana Vayu (rules the region of the throat and head/ enabling to speak) Vyana Vayu (pervades the whole body/coordinating, connecting force/strength of action)</p>	<p>As we sense, so we think, and as we think, so we tend to act...</p> <p>Sense control is initiated by conscious breathing and concentrated awareness. And not letting external circumstances distract or annoy us.</p> <p>This practice has an aspect of protection from outer elements and preventing leakage outward.</p>	<p>In Dharana, the yogi learns to prevent other thoughts from intruding on focusing awareness.</p> <p>Conductive: Sattvic (pure) food Seclusion Silence</p> <p>Check also: The 5 Kleshas The 3 Gunas</p>	<p>The purpose of man's life is to realise the Higher Self (or Atman) and merge with Existence/Energy Source/ God/Supreme Consciousness. Enlightened Masters have realised this long ago and have devised techniques for others to realise it as well. What is standing in the way of man are the five body sheaths called Koshas. Man's awareness has to be pulled through these in order to reach the Atman or Self.</p> <p>Meditation allows harmonisation of the Koshas, alignment of all Chakras and connection with the Self, in order to become a complete human being.</p>	<p>States of highest consciousness when mind becomes still and one-pointed while the person remains conscious. Entering and maintaining Samadhi initially takes great training and willpower.</p> <p>Savikalpa: One can experience guessing (vitarka), thought (vicara), bliss (ananda) and self-awareness (asmita). Samskaras are not burned yet, so duality still remains between watching spirit and Higher Self.</p> <p>Nirvikalpa: Highest transcendent state of consciousness (pure awareness, no duality)</p> <p>Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi: Total unity yet staying fully functional in this world – it is a very high stage, and very rare.</p>