

Importance of Ashtanga Yoga in Yoga Philosophy

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Abstract – In terms of Ashtanga Yoga, it started back in the 20th century, and it was found that there were a few people who influenced it, including Krishnamacharya, Rama Mohan, Pattabhi jobs, and T.K.U Desikachar. It was Pattabhi who developed the main features of Ashtanga, but it was based on Hatha Yoga Ashtanga goal on benefits is to promote harmony within the individuals, to create a greater view of our own reality.

Ashtanga Yoga is a highly structured vinyasa-style class. There are five Ashtanga asana series and each student must master every pose of the first series before moving onto the second series. Ashtanga Yoga came to the west through students of Sri Pattabi Jois, who passed away in 2009 after establishing his yoga center in Mysore, India.

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INTRODUCTION

There are many others benefits of the practice of Ashtanga including increase mind clarity Strength, flexibility, decrease stress and balances body and mind. All these benefit come along with Patanjali's eight limbs of Ashtanga.

These 8 limbs are:

- Yama: how we relate to others and all moral lodes
- Niyama: how we relate to ourselves, and our self-purification
- Asana: how we relate to our body through yoga postures
- Pranayama: how we relate to our breath and control the breath.
- Pratyahara: how we relate to our sense organs, and how we withdraw the mind from the senses
- Dharana : how we relate to our mind through concentration
- Dhyana: how can we move beyond the mind through meditation of deep meditation

- Samadhi: our deep realization via meditation absorption and union with the object of meditation and the essence of god.

Forth more, the 4 first limbs are linked directly with external cleansing practices, whereas the other 4 can be considered internal cleansing practices, control of mind. These limbs ate interconnected, and each limb influence the next, for example, by practicing the physical postures, breath awareness and mindfulness should be carried out. Then the body will become steady and the mind will begin to experience clarity and peace.

The ultimate purpose of the Ashtanga practice is purification of the body and mind. By moving so quickly and powerfully, you will get a lot of tapas and everything extra, physical and mental, will have to get out the way. This practice has a strong sense of purpose and you are forced to focus and grow.

Ashtanga comes with all the benefits of a regular yoga practice--strength, flexibility, stress management, and inner peace. Because the series is so demanding (and in traditional practice you're expected to practice most days) you will get really strong really fast. There is no part of the body that doesn't work hard in this practice.

The practice is identical from day to day, and it takes most people years to move up a level. If you have sensitive muscles or joints, this may not be the

practice for you. There is a strong emphasis on "getting" each pose, even if your body is not necessarily ready to move there in a graceful way.

Ashtanga Yoga is a dynamic style of yoga that quickly builds strength, increases flexibility, and develops cardiovascular fitness with breath-initiated movements between the postures.

PATANJALI'S EIGHT LIMBS OF ASHTANGA

1. Yama (Restraints)

The yamas are five ethical precepts that outline a code of conduct that should be observed when interacting with the world around us. They offer guidance on how to act toward others. They are:

Ahimsa (Non-Violence)

Ahimsa probably had a very straightforward meaning to the original audience of the *Yoga Sutras* and its interdiction against violence is one that is, unfortunately, still very relevant today. In addition, some contemporary yogis interpret ahimsa as a directive toward a vegan diet on the basis that 'all living beings' are entitled to be treated with kindness and non-violence.

Satya (Truthfulness)

Telling the truth is a moral baseline we can probably all get behind and it's certainly one that's not outdated. In fact, in the age of institutionalized lying when 'alternative facts' (aka lies) are condoned in the most public sectors of society, it is more important than ever to speak the truth and support others who do so.

Asteya (Non-Stealing)

In Patanjali's day, this was undoubtedly primarily an injunction against taking someone else's property. While that continues to be good advice (not to mention the law), there are now so many more ways to steal, some of which may not be as obvious. Intellectual property, logos, pictures from the internet: whatever it is that doesn't belong to you, leave it be. Originality is certainly a good choice for the modern yogi wishing to practice asteya.

Brahmacharya (Celibacy)

Brahmacharya is probably the yama that requires the most massaging to fit into a contemporary yogi's lifestyle. Yes, it's highly likely that the original intent was a total prohibition on sexual activity. Yoga certainly wouldn't be the first school of thought to promote celibacy for its practitioners. Does that mean that's how we have to practice it today? Fidelity, constancy, and having honest open relationships with our partners work as alternatives for today's yogi householders.

Aparigraha (Non-Coveting)

Now, here's one that (unfortunately) really stands the test of time, no modern filter necessary. Coveting what other people have, jealousy, envy, and greed are all words for the green-eyed monster that has apparently been with us since the beginning. It's a tough one to get past. One thing that can help is to name the sensation when it arises so that we're aware that it's happening and are then able to realize that we don't have to become attached to it.

2. Niyama (Observances)

If the yamas are outward looking toward society, then the niyamas are inward practices to improve the self. They are:

Saucha (Purification)

Purification of the body and mind are specified in the *Yoga Sutras* as a necessary step in detaching from the physical world in preparation for meditation. For us, this might mean identifying and releasing thought patterns that have the ability to distract us from our purposes. If we can clear away thoughts that dwell on negativity or meanness toward ourselves or others then there's less clutter up there when it comes time for inner focus.

Santosa (Contentment)

Contentment is a real challenge for many people so it's well worth examining why it's so damn hard to feel happy with ourselves. The culture of always wanting more, of status, of constant striving to out-do is so pervasive that it actually takes a bit of effort to realize that it's not compulsory. Existing in a state of constant dissatisfaction and comparison isn't the only way. A practice of expressing gratitude can help us feel better about the good things we do (already) have in our lives.

Tapas (Asceticism)

One of the translations of tapas is heat, so it is often interpreted as encouraging practices that stoke our inner fire. Miller explains that asceticism was thought to produce the heat of tapas. Purification through self-discipline is described in Patanjali's work. In contemporary yoga, tapas might be observed through the daily practice of postures or meditation which require self-control to maintain.

Svadhyaya (Study)

Svadhyaya is sometimes translated as self-study, which implies that it means introspection, however, that doesn't seem to be the original intent. Rather, it meant the study, memorization, and repetition of sacred prayers and mantras, which was and continues to be a common practice in Hinduism. In

modern times, we may choose to interpret this as an exhortation to be diligent students of the world, whether through formal or personal education.

Ishvara Pranidhana (Dedication to God/Master)

This can be a tricky one since many modern practitioners bridle at the suggestion that God is a prescribed part of our practice. It's interesting to note that the meaning of Ishvara in the original text is also open to interpretation. It could have meant a master, a teacher, or an unspecified god. Submission to a teacher is in line with the guru-student relationship that was an established tradition within yoga in India. However, surrender to a guru doesn't sit that well with many Western students. For our purposes, we can perhaps think of it as a necessity to acknowledge that yoga is a spiritual practice. It affects the whole person, whose constituent parts are mind, body, and spirit.

3. Asana (Posture)

While it might seem like we're getting onto more familiar ground here, asana also had a very different meaning in its original context. While we now use this term to refer to any part of a postural practice (all yoga poses), its original meaning was simply a comfortable seat.

Patanjali's work has no other asana instruction other than the necessity of finding a posture in which to engage in the practices of pranayama and meditation. In terms of the eight-limbed path, it seems that once we have established that we are right with the world and with ourselves, we can turn our attention to the business of calming and focusing the mind. Of course, asana is now quite often the point of entry for people into yoga.

4. Pranayama (Breath Control)

On the subject of breath control, Patanjali instructs that the practitioner should regulate the inhalations, exhalations, and retentions of the breath in a cyclical manner. All other breathing exercises we now practice came from sources outside of the Yoga Sutras. Since the eight limbs are concerned with preparing for meditation, any breath that is centering and brings us in contact with the present moment helps ready the body and mind to turn the focus inward.

5. Pratyahara (Withdrawal of the Senses)

Isolating consciousness from the distractions offered by engagement with the senses is the final physical preparation for the meditation practices outlined in the final three limbs. This can be in itself a form of what we would call mindfulness in which sensory input such as sounds, sights, or smells are noticed as external and then allowed to pass without capturing our attention.

6. Dharana (Concentration)

Dharana is the first stage in the inner journey toward freedom from suffering. During this type of meditation, practitioners concentrate all of their attention on a single point of focus such as the navel or on an image in their mind.

7. Dhyana (Meditation)

In this stage, the practitioner meditates on a single object of their attention to the exclusion of all others. While we are accustomed to a type of meditation that attempts to clear the mind of all thoughts and images, this doesn't seem to have been a requisite part of the method described by Patanjali. As long as the attention is focused, the object is not specified.

8. Samadhi (Pure Contemplation)

When dhyana is achieved, the practitioner enters a state of samadhi in which they merge with the object of their meditation. Although this has been interpreted to mean union with the divine or with the entire universe, Patanjali's explanation does not go this far.

DISCUSSION

Ashtanga Yoga teaches patience and persistence, as it may take several years to learn the postures of the Primary Series. Once the Primary Series is mastered, the Intermediate Series is taught one posture at a time.

Ashtanga Yoga is practiced six days a week, excluding Saturday. Practice is also suspended on the New Moon and Full Moon and the first three days of a woman's menstruation.

Ashtanga Yoga is a gateway into the practice of hundreds of yoga postures. Everyone can practice Ashtanga and with a regular practice, the benefits are abundant. This potent form of yoga is a transformational experience physically and mentally.

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.

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.



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.

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.

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.

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.

CONCLUSION

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.

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.

Ashtanga yoga comes with plenty of other benefits, helping you to lead a healthy, happy and fruitful life. If you want to practice this yoga style and you live in San Diego, reach out to Fit Athletic. We are a unique health club and fitness center, a place where you can unwind, work out, rejuvenate and take a break from your busy life.

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