

Yoga Vocabulary

Asana – literally translated as “comfortable seat”, asanas are generally known as yoga poses. Most asanas have English names and Sanskrit names. Example: Tree Pose = Vrksasana, Triangle Pose = Trikonasana

Prana – with a capital P = life force (can be likened to Qi or Chi in other traditions, with a small p = breath. Prana is believed to flow through subtle channels within the body known as the nadis

Pranayama – breath retention and control. In yoga we learn to control our breath during asana practice and meditation so we can use it appropriately during other parts of our lives. There are many types of pranayamas - some are heating and others are cooling

Namaste - a Sanskrit salutation often said as a “hello”, “goodbye” and at the end of most yoga classes. It translates to “the light within me acknowledges the light that is also in you” or “the highest in me honors the highest that is also in you”

Vinyasa - literally linking breath with movement. There are Vinyasa classes that are primarily “flow” type classes, as in flowing from one pose to another. The term “take a vinyasa” primarily refers to moving through a certain sequence of poses (starting with Down Dog - then Plank and lowering (Chataranga Dandasana) - into a backbend (Sphinx, Cobra or Upward Facing Dog) - back to Down Dog)

Hatha Yoga – In ancient yoga there were many types, some of which had nothing to do with the physical yoga poses known as asanas. Hatha is a type of yoga (of which there are many sub-types) that uses the physical body as a vehicle for awareness

Sanskrit – an ancient, Indo-Aryan language and the primary liturgical language of Hinduism. Yoga is rooted historically in Sanskrit

Drishti - gaze or focus. In yoga we use our drishti to turn our senses inward, and to find balance in standing and balancing poses

Mudra – “seal”, “mark” or “gesture” typically of the hands but can be of the whole body. Subtle energy channels run all through our bodies and terminate in our finger tips. In yogic philosophy, it is believed that each fingertip coordinates with one of the five elements. Mudras can be done as part of a yoga practice. We will primarily use

two: Anjali Mudra (gesture that looks like we're praying) and Jnana Mudra (typically seen during meditation with thumbs and fingertips touching)

Dosha – there are three primary doshas: Vata, Pitta and Kapha. In yogic philosophy, it is believed that we each are comprised of certain proportions of each dosha and each dosha is comprised of varying degrees of the 5 Elements: ether (space), air, fire, water, earth

Chakra – subtle energy channels that run through the body and correspond to various experiences/characteristics within us. The seven main chakras run along the central channel of the spine beginning at the perineum and ending at the crown of the head

Yoga Sutras

Approximately 2000 years ago, Patanjali wrote the Yoga Sutras. This text, which contains 196 verses/sutras/threads (sutra means “thread”) represents the most important foundational aspects of yoga up to this time. Ashtanga Yoga, a popular style of yoga today, actually translates to the “8 limbed path” which is defined within the text. The Sutras address all the main questions on the path of yoga and defines yoga as not only a practice but a state of being. It is a guidebook for living. In our normal state of being, we are choosing NOT to see our own wholeness- nor the wholeness of others. Yoga invites us to see, and the Yoga Sutras outline a plan for getting there. The Yoga Sutra is broken into four sections/chapters/padas:

1. Samadhi Pada ... Defines yoga and gives an overview of the path; defines what prevents us from entering the state of yoga, specifically what is going on in our mind that does that
2. Sadhna Pada ... Outlines a method of practice and the obstacles to be overcome; if you haven't reached that level of understanding, this part of the sutra outlines a path for you; the practical part, the practice part
3. Buddhi Pada ... Describes spiritual experiences that may be encountered along the way; also outlines the physical understanding of the truths
4. Kaivayla Pada ... Clarifies that the yoga path is one of de-conditioning; differentiates between Purusha (spirit/consiousness) & Prakriti (matter) - moving away from that that isn't real

How the sutras begin ...

atha yoga anusasana ... now the practice of yoga begins

yoga citta vrtti nirodhah ... yoga is a state in which the mind's agitations are resolved

tada drastuh sva-rupe vasthanam ... and then the seer abides in its own true nature OR this is how you know you are in the state of yoga

Favorite/well known sutras in English translation:

- Yoga is the ending of disturbances of the mind.
- As a result of yoga or sustained, focused attention, the Self or Seer, is firmly established in its own form, and we act from a place of our own true, authentic self.
- There are five functions or activities of the mind, which can either cause us problems or not. They are: perception, misunderstanding, imagination, deep sleep and memory.
- In order to achieve a state of yoga, one must develop both practice and detachment.
- Effort toward steadiness of mind is practice.
- To achieve a strong foundation in our practice we must practice over a long time, without interruption, believing in it and looking forward to it, with an attitude of service.
- In order to reach a state of complete understanding, we must go through a process that progresses from a superficial understanding to increasingly greater refinement and subtlety of comprehension, until our understanding becomes fully integrated and total.
- Through sustained focus and meditation on our patterns, habits and conditioning, we gain knowledge and understanding of our past and how we can change the patterns that aren't serving us to live more freely and fully.

The Eight limbs of Yoga from the Yoga Sutras

- Yama (moral precepts)
 - Ahimsa (non-harming)
 - Satya (truthfulness)
 - Asteya (non-stealing)
 - Brahmacharya (conservation of energy)
 - Aparigraha (greedlessness)
- Niyama (personal disciplines)
 - Saucha (purity)
 - Santosha (contentment)
 - Tapas (self-discipline)
 - Svadhya (self-study)
 - Ishvara Pranidhana (devotion)
- Asana: yoga poses
- Pranayama: breath control
- Pratyahara: focusing the senses inward
- Dharana: concentration
- Dhyana: meditation
- Samadhi: ultimate truth

The first four limbs: Yama, Niyama, Asana and Pranayama are known as External Limbs. The last four limbs: Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are known as Internal Limbs. The Yoga Sutras are a great guide to living and to understanding the meaning of life. The Yamas and Niyamas represent major concepts seen in all of the world's traditions and religions.

5 Kleshas or Afflictions

According to the Yoga Sutras, there are 5 Kleshas/Afflictions that set you off course in life. Here is a description of each, taken from an [article by Bo Forbes](#) in Yoga Journal.

Avidya: *The inability to see things for what they are; this causes you to mistake transient, ego-related matters for permanent, soul-related ones.*

Asmita: *The tendency to over identify with your ego; this keeps you from connecting with your soul.*

Raga: *The flame of desire that causes addiction to pleasure; this discourages you from leaving your comfort zone for more evolved territory.*

Dvesha: *The aversion to pain; this creates a quicksand-like cycle of misery and self-hatred that sucks you under and suffocates your will to evolve.*

Abhinivesha: *The fear of death or a clinging to life; this dilutes your focus and interferes with your ability to experience the spiritual freedom that is the goal of yoga.*