



“LOKAH SAMASTA SUKHINO BHAVANTU”
*May all beings everywhere be happy and free
and may the thoughts, words and actions of
my own life contribute in some way to that
happiness and to that freedom for all.*

Namaste





yoga Goes Green

writer danielle rippingale

The practical and ancient practise of yoga has come to resonate with millions of people worldwide and has turned into a multi-billion dollar industry in recent years. However, those who think yoga is solely for the trendy and uber-flexible could well be missing the essence of the ritual. Fundamental to yoga is the understanding that the health of our body depends on clean water, air and food. In fact, yoga was originally a means of experiencing union with nature.

Written 2000 years ago by Indian Sage Patañjali, the *Yoga Sutras* describe the eight limbs of yoga and continue to serve as a philosophical guidebook for those who practise. The first three limbs of yoga described in the Yoga Sutra are the *yamas* (restraints), *niyamas* (observances) and *asana* (postures) and they help us to refine our behaviour in the outer world. The latter limbs of *pranayama* (breathing), *pratyahara* (withdrawal of senses), *dharana* (concentration) and *dhyani* (meditation) allow us to focus inwardly until we reach *samadhi* (enlightenment).

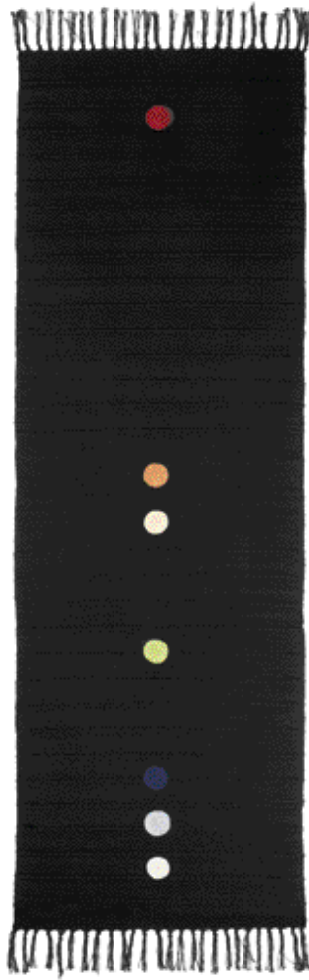
The focus of most modern yoga practitioners is the third limb, *asana* – the physical postures designed to purify the body and build the strength and concentration required for long periods of meditation.

Yoga means “union” and Sage Patañjali profoundly understood how the practise and philosophy of yoga offered a path to connect our body, mind and spirit to all life. Yoga developed in ancient India in the context of an intimate relationship with the earth and cosmos, and a reverence for animals, plants, soil, water and air. You could say that yogi’s were the first environmentalists since practitioners embrace green living as their practise grows.

The following illustrates how through self-inquiry and practise of the ethical principles outlined in the first two aspects of the eight-fold path of yoga (*yamas* and *niyamas*), practitioners can learn to navigate the relationship between self, others and the natural world. We come to live more gently in the world with the understanding that we become what we practise.

AHIMSĀ

The first of the five Yamas (restraints) is *Ahimsā* or *non harm* (Sutra 2.35): *Ahimsā pratisthayam tat samnidhau vaira tyagah* and translates to “in the presence of one firmly established in non-harming, all hostilities cease.” We can practise *Ahimsā* by being sensitive to nature and asking ourselves how we can create less harm to the earth in our daily life. In action, *Ahimsā* may guide us to adopting a vegetarian or vegan diet or using products that are non-toxic and manufactured responsibly like **Manduka’s** certified organic yoga mat cleaners that are phosphate and chemical free and biodegradable. Eco apparel from **be present** include organic french terry and “Renew Tee’s” made from recycled PET and organic cotton that divert three to five plastic bottles from the landfill. Of all the Yamas, *Ahimsā* must be considered first and foremost in guiding one’s action, speech and thought.



TAPAS

Tapas or austerity is observed by training the mind and senses. By making choices to simplify our material needs we not only save valuable earth resources but we enrich our spiritual life. **Movement** espouses the “less is more” philosophy by designing sustainable and Oeko-Tex certified bamboo yoga wear that can be worn in many different ways so you purchase less.

NIYAMAS

There are five *Niyamas* (observances) with the first being *Saucha* or purity, cleanliness. *Saucha* encourages us to observe the purity of body and mind and how it impacts the earth. From the practise of *Saucha* blooms a desire to live a healthy lifestyle and eat organic and wholesome foods in order to cleanse and nourish the body. Organic and fairtrade **Pukka** ayurvedic teas offer balance to the doshas, while cleansing practises like **Intelligent Nutrients** certified organic body care and **Ancient Secrets** neti pot are good for you and the earth.



SATYA

With *satya* or truthfulness we learn to question our values as they relate to the earth. In action, *Satya* may guide us to buy from environmentally responsible companies that give back to the world. **Mission Playground** designs earth-conscious organic apparel and established S.E.E.D. a program that gives one percent of sales proceeds to NPO’s that share their desire to raise awareness for issues that concern the earth.

SANTOSHA

An attitude of contentment or *Santosha* brings happiness, joy, and satisfaction. Contentment comes from within, however nature offers remarkable experiences to be present, guide us inward and contribute to a sense of contentment. **Absolute Essentials** 100 percent natural and organic chakra oils assist practitioners on their journey to self. For example, **Crown Chakra Oil** can be used to work with our highest energy source that allows wisdom, inspiration and blissful meditation to manifest in our life.



SVADHYAYA

Svadhya or self-study leads to a deep acknowledgement of the oneness of Self with all that is. By taking time to commune with nature we experience and learn from the rhythm and flow of the natural world. The endless reflections of nature can be enjoyed through such activities as gardening, walking in a park, and swimming in the ocean.

Ishvara Pranhidhana or devotion sees a letting go so as to allow a natural flow towards the perfected state (*samadhi*). In action, *Ishvara Pranhidhana* can be attained through mantra, meditating in nature and connecting to the creative source of life.

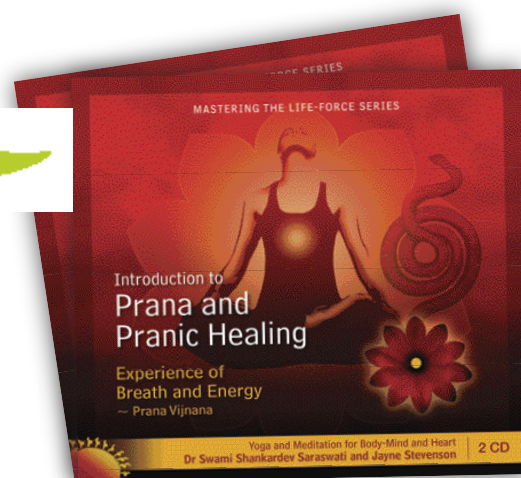
In the third limb of yoga, *Asana*, you may have noticed that nature and animals are reflected in many yoga postures such as *cobra* (*bhujangasana*), *fish* (*matsyasana*) and *tree* (*vrksasana*) pose. Through imitating animals and nature in the postures, our sensitivity to the natural world and the connection with all things emerges. *Hatha* also reflects the masculine and feminine aspects within nature and ourselves, with "ha" meaning sun and "tha" meaning moon. In fact, with this expanded awareness we begin to observe and honour the seasons, moon cycles and rhythms of the day and night.

A beautiful posture that emphasises our connection to the earth is the deeply grounding Mountain Pose or *Tadasana*. To begin, stand with your big toe mounds together, heels slightly apart (outsides of feet parallel) and spread your toes so you feel yourself grounding but lifting from the earth. Shift your weight from your toes to heels and finally settle with your weight directly over your ankles. With your shoulders relaxed and arms hanging at your sides, tuck your tailbone under slightly and lift up through your belly and crown of your head. Like a mountain with your head meeting the sun, close your eyes and feel your heart opening as you tune in to your breath. Inhale and exhale slowly through your nose. As you stand perfectly aligned, invite the mental picture of mountain and sense the feeling of strength and ease.



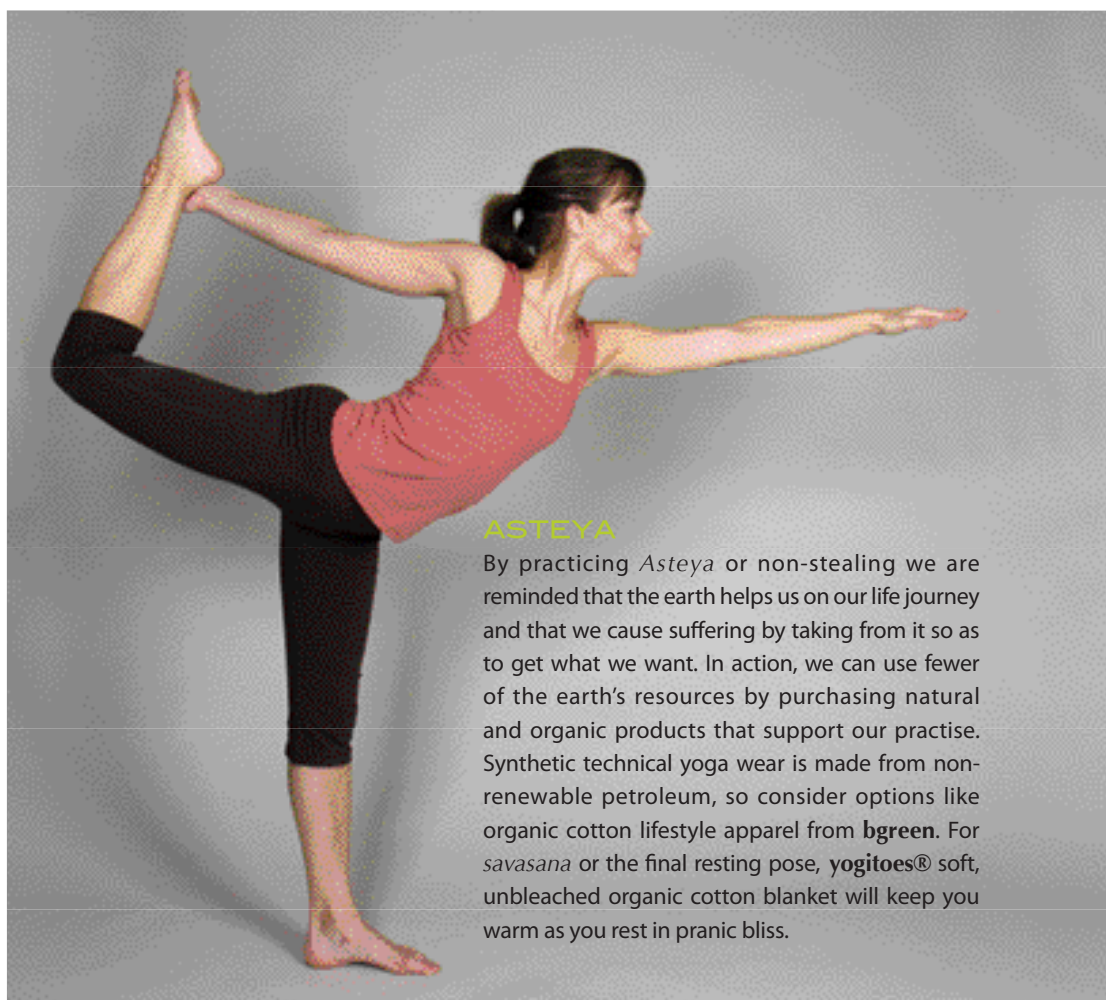
APARIGRAHA

Aparigraha or greedlessness encourages us to ask if we are sharing what we have for the good of the earth and others. In action, *aparigraha* may encourage us to contribute to the world in a meaningful way through volunteerism. Volunteer with a local environmental project or participate in charity events like **Yoga Aid** and **Global Mala Project**.



BRAHMACHARYA

Brahmacharya or mindfulness of the higher truth reminds us to practise moderation in our quest for worldly desires. In action, meditation, wellness and self-inquiry can be supported with audio teachings like "Core Strength Calm Mind" and "Pranic Healing" from **Big Shakti** that bridge eastern healing and knowledge (available in CD and eco-friendly-downloadable MP3).



ASTEYA

By practicing *Asteya* or non-stealing we are reminded that the earth helps us on our life journey and that we cause suffering by taking from it so as to get what we want. In action, we can use fewer of the earth's resources by purchasing natural and organic products that support our practise. Synthetic technical yoga wear is made from non-renewable petroleum, so consider options like organic cotton lifestyle apparel from **bgreen**. For *savasana* or the final resting pose, **yogitoes®** soft, unbleached organic cotton blanket will keep you warm as you rest in pranic bliss.



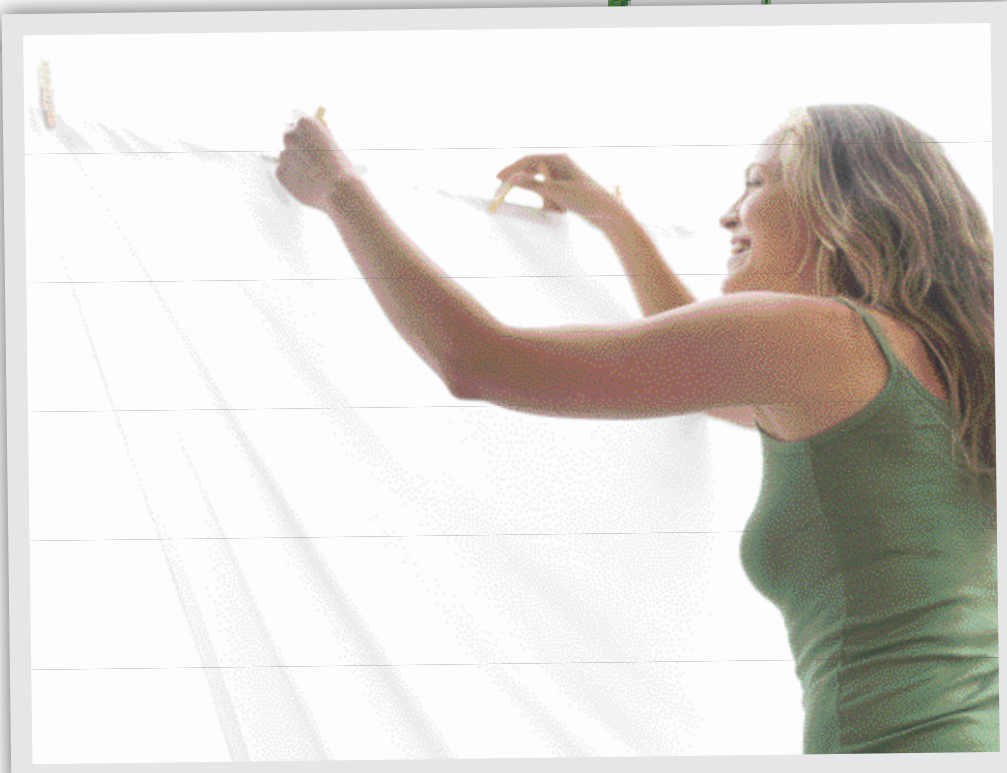
eco-friendly yoga mats

Your yoga mat is an essential prop that offers support as you lengthen and breathe your way to enlightenment. In contrast to the health benefits of yoga, many of the cheap mats on the market are made of PVC (polyvinyl chloride) – the most toxic of plastics. PVC is a carcinogenic petroleum by-product that off-gasses, contains hormone-altering phthalates and doesn't biodegrade. Your vehicle to enlightenment just hit a speed bump. Thankfully, mats with a conscience are available from several companies that are PVC and heavy metal free, and decompose completely and safely at the end of their useful life.



Natural rubber mats from sustainable and renewable non-Amazon harvested rubber trees are available from **Manduka** (eKO™ series) and are closed-cell for easy cleaning and designed for durability and comfort. **Jade's** natural rubber mats include travel and kids mats and their "buy a mat, we plant a tree" program gives back to the earth with every purchase. Jade will soon release eco-props that include yoga essentials of organic cotton strap and recycled wine cork yoga blocks. Realign your chakras with **The Bolder Mat Company's** boldly patterned phthalate free mats or **Agoy's** beautiful organic cotton chakra mat. To transport your eco-mat look no further than **Yogoco's** durable, stylish and functional yoga mat bags. Made from recycled cotton scraps from the t-shirt industry, you can comfortably store your mat in one vented compartment and water bottle, wallet, keys in another.

Countless yoga mats meet a landfill fate at the end of their life so it is worth checking to see if your area has a Recycle Your Mat programme where used mats are given to charities or upcycled to make other products.



useful websites

- www.swamivenkatesananda.org
- www.manduka.com
- www.bepresent.com
- www.missionplayground.com
- www.bgreenapparel.com
- www.yogitoes.com
- www.bigshakti.com
- www.yogaaid.com
- www.globalmala.org
- www.pukkaherbs.com
- www.intelligentnutrients.com
- www.ancient-secrets.com
- www.absoluteessential.com
- www.movementglobal.com
- www.jadeyoga.com
- www.theboldermatcompany.com
- www.agoy.com
- www.recycleyourmat.com
- www.mulberryskys.com

With increased awareness and a growing desire to be more environmentally friendly, practitioners can learn to minimise their impact on the earth both on and off the mat. Embrace your green inner yogi by leaving the car at home and opting to walk, bike or bus to your class or sleep with a clear conscience for your final resting pose of the day between your eco-conscious bamboo linens by **Mulberry Sky's**. When practicing asana try to connect with the essence of their form – be the tree, the cobra, the mountain. Watch your empathy and sensitivity to nature and all beings grow inviting changes in your daily life to tread more gently in the world. 🌱