



TriYoga® Center of Philadelphia at Mind-Body Services

301 West Chester Pike, Suite 102
Havertown, PA 19083
www.mindbodyservices.com
610-664-6446 x3

A COMPLETE YOGA SYSTEM: THE BRANCHES OF YOGA AND THE EIGHT LIMBS BY CHRISTINE (CITRINĪ) WARE, Ph.D., E-RYT

*Experience the kundalinī-inspired sequenced flow
of yogāsana (postures) synchronized with prānāyāma (rhythmic breath) and mudra (focus).
The result is increased energy ... physically, mentally, and spiritually.
This gives the mental clarity to manifest one's life with greater awareness.*

- Kaliji

TriYoga is a complete yoga system. To what does this refer, and how might this distinguish our classes or practices from other yoga classes? There are various ways that I understand and experience TriYoga as a complete yoga system.

Yoga refers to "union" and comes from yuj, to unite or connect; the act of yoking, joining, attaching, and harnessing. It encompasses the union of body, mind, and spirit. It also refers to the system or path by which we may attain complete union with the Supreme Spirit: the union of the individual with the Universal.

There are many "branches" of yoga, such as jñāna yoga (the path of wisdom or knowledge), nāda yoga (the path of sacred sound vibration), karma yoga (the path of selfless service/action), bhakti yoga (the devotional path), and haṭha yoga (the path that balances prāna; the path that balances sun-moon; the path that unites āsana, prānāyāma, and mantra - or posture, breath, and focus). Many yoga classes today focus only on haṭha yoga, or on one aspect of haṭha yoga. TriYoga not only incorporates and expresses all aspects of haṭha yoga, but all "branches" of yoga. In our haṭha yoga classes, we may focus on sustained and flowing postures, breath, and concentration/focus, yet the incorporation of music that calms and elevates the spirit is an expression of nāda yoga. There is also an expression of both nāda yoga and bhakti yoga in our kīrtan sessions (such as Chant Club). In our pursuit of yogic

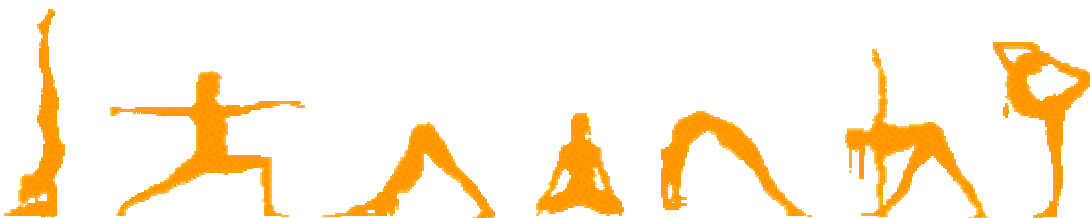
knowledge, whether expressed in learning about postures/Flows or whether expressed in other ways of seeking wisdom, jñāna yoga is expressed.

TriYoga also incorporates all of the "Eight Limbs" of Classical or Raja Yoga (the royal path). The Yoga Sūtras are attributed to Patanjali, a sage from a couple of thousand years ago. He detailed these eight limbs as

- (1) Yama (moral principles or "restraints," such as ahimsā, non-harming)
- (2) Niyama (disciplines, such as svādhyāya, self-study)
- (3) Āsana (posture)
- (4) Prānāyāma (breathing practices)
- (5) Pratyāhāra (sense withdrawal)
- (6) Dhāranā (concentration)
- (7) Dhyāna (meditation)
- (8) Samadhi (expanded awareness)

Some forms of yoga focus on certain limbs more than on others. For example, some yoga classes exclusively teach āsana; some focus on breathing practices; some focus on meditation. There are also some yoga schools and teachers who believe that one must master each of the eight limbs in succession prior to pursuing a practice in the next limb. TriYoga integrates practices involving all eight limbs, for they all point us toward and move us into integration and, ultimately, union. Of course, if a TriYoga student or practitioner has a particular propensity or need to focus on one limb more than on another, this is also supported by the method and teaching.

Finally, TriYoga is systematized. This systematization is expressed in the way that the postures and Flows are systematically taught from Basics to Level 7, as well as the systematized levels of Prāna Vidyā practices (incorporating Prānāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāranā, and Dhyāna practices), and in the ways that practices from each of the eight limbs intertwine and integrate as one progresses in the practice. There is recognition in this systematization that it is helpful to have a foundation of an ethical, moral, and disciplined lifestyle to help one consistently pursue a haṭha yoga practice. Furthermore, meditation and expanded consciousness naturally arise from freeing the body of tension (through āsana and Flows), calming the mind (through breathing practices, sense withdrawal, and concentration), and developing the body-mind capacity to remain focused and still. We have all experienced how difficult, if not impossible, it is to meditate when the body is full of tension/pain or when the mind is active and thoughts are racing (the "monkey mind"). As complete yoga practices are pursued systematically and regularly, yoga, as in "union," is experienced and embodied.



Visit our facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Havertown-PA/TriYoga-Center-of-Philadelphia/101063532486>