

Yoga – Introduction

Session 1

YOGA is:

- The union of Jivatma (individual consciousness) and Parmatma (Ishwar-universal consciousness).
- The way to discover happiness and peace from within.
- A process of gaining control over the mind; to calm down the mind.

Forms of Yoga**1. Gyan Yoga: Listening to the scriptures and gurus.**

Just as food kept in the grocery store is not a nourishment until it is properly consumed, converted and absorbed into the blood stream, likewise information is not knowledge until it is experienced and practiced by the self.

Gyan Yoga is a path for the devotee to experience unity with Ishwar by breaking the layer of ignorance that rests between.

For example; In essence space is the same inside and outside of the room. But in reality we perceive these two spaces to be different due to the layers of walls (ignorance). Once the walls of ignorance are brought down there is only ONE space in existence (Unity-Yoga).

2. Bhakti Yoga: Devotion to Ishwar.

No material item can control the emotions that a person feels or possesses in day to day life. Bhakti yoga is the way to balance these emotions by directing them towards Ishwar. This path appeals mainly to those of an emotional nature.

An ordinary person gets *temporary happiness* by; playing games, watching favorite programs, seeing natural beauty... The happiness is *temporary* because it is produced by a dependency on external objects which are also temporary.

3. Karma Yoga: Righteous action

Karma Yoga is defined as “discipline of action” or “performance of action with un-attachment to the result and the action itself”.

Everybody acts as a part of life. These actions are the results of our past and present samskars (mental impressions) and qualities of nature.

LAW OF KARMA

If actions are continuously performed without divine guidance (yoga) we are likely to accumulate bad samskars. These bad samskars will result in bad karmas in present and future births. On the other hand divine guidance will lead to good samskars which will then result in good karmas in present and future births.

4. Raj Yoga: Asans (postures), Pranayam (breath control), and Dhyan (mediation).

Raj-Yoga is also known as Ashtanga Yoga. Asht is translated to 8 & anga is translated to part/limb. Therefore Raj Yoga is the yoga of 8 limbs. It is a royal (Raj = Royal) path to the happiness and peace.

More than 2500 years ago in Bharat (India) Rishi Patanjali put this practice of YOGA into a system called Ashtanga Yoga. Today it is practiced all over the world for health, peace, and a good state of mind.

The **first part or limb of the Ashtanga** (A-sh-tanga) **Yoga is Yama** (*pronounced YUM*). Closest English translation of Yama is **Restraint or Moral Practices**.

Moral Practice is exercising restraint over **character degradation** instinct to overcome greed, lust, anger, envy and jealousy. Yama is the righteous way we deal with outside world through inner practices. Five essential components of restraint are:

1. Satya (Truth)

Wise people have said, “**Truth is Ishwar (God)**”. It is the highest purpose of life to realize. It is a bridge between thought and word. **Upholding of truth may require many sacrifices in life**. This is one virtue around which all other moral virtues revolve.

2. Ahimsa (non-violence): Pronounced A-Him-Sa

It is a noble, deliberate, cool responsive behavior as opposed to provocation and anger.

Ahimsa is a powerful weapon of peaceful resistance to disarm the most powerful on earth. Non-violence is a fire that burns the hatred and jealousy of the enemy but not the enemy. Great saints, Shri Ram, Buddha, Mahavir, and Mahatma Gandhi preached and practiced non-violence to liberate and make the world a better place to live. Only **through love for every life and humanity** Ahimsa (non-violence) can be cultivated. **Ahimsa is not mean to be a dormant**. It does not teach giving up to the injustice.

3. Asteya (non-stealing): Pronounced A-sTe-ya

To snatch someone else’s property is stealing. Asteya or non-stealing is a virtue of purity and honesty of mind and action that drives away greedy, possessive desires highly detrimental to the spiritual progress.

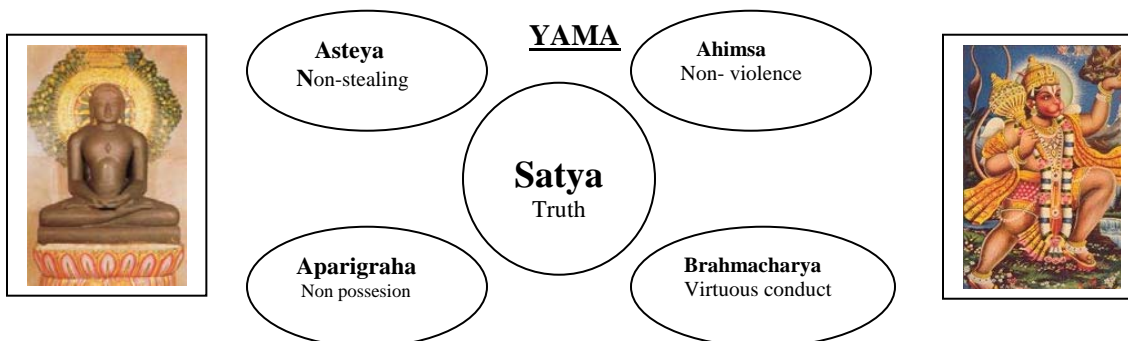
4. Aparigraha (non-possessiveness): Pronounced A-pari-gra-h

It is a Hindu doctrine of renunciation and leading a thrifty life with **bare minimum wants and needs to attain bliss**. It is very common for all of us to get trapped into” **more you have the more you want**”. We all want to do charity and social service (Seva) but many a times it becomes difficult for us to do that due to **our very possessive instinct**. Scriptures say that Aparigraha will help you perform selfless service (Seva) and Seva in turn will help you understand Aparigraha. **Sharing with others is the simplest form of Aparigraha**.

5. Brahmacharya (virtuous conduct) Pronounced brahm-char-ya

It is associated with chastity and celibacy. Brahm means Divine/Pure and Charya means way of life, so in simple terms **Brahmacharya means moral conduct**. Vrata, Upavas and other spiritual practices help in practicing Brahmacharya. When there is a conflict between the good and bad, right and wrong, the one **whose mind and intellect are inspired by Brahmacharya will always decide good and right**.

In a sense all these qualities are interrelated and coexist to help each other in moral practice and restraint.



The second part or limb of the Ashtanga (A-sh-tanga) Yoga is Niyam (*pronounced NEE YUM*). Closest English translation of **NIYAM is Observances or Individual Discipline.**

While YAM directs common man how to live and behave in society, **NIYAMA** guides his/her individual behavior within him/herself. **Thus science of yoga places society before self.**

In the quest for well defined higher spiritual values to be generous, selfless, pious, compassionate, loyal and humble, observance of certain Niyamas or rules are of paramount importance.

According to Rishi Patanjali five essential components of Niyam are:

1. Shoucha (Purity)

A pure mind only can give joy and peace to you as well as others. Cleanliness being next to godliness, a clean body in a pure mind is *essential* for **purity of thought, word and action.** Here purity is referred to as physical, oral and mental. Physical purity can be external and internal. Oral purity means to avoid unnecessary use of tongue and follow YAM steps to purify/modify speech. Mental purity is of course very important to keep one on path of sadhana. Eating fresh and healthy food and treating the body like a temple is shoucha.

2. Santosh (Contentment)

It is a feeling of fulfillment of a mission or goal. Our day-to-day physical needs can be fulfilled with the help of material objects; this fulfillment is sometimes misunderstood as Santosh. Yoga refers santosh to mental contentment which is a **state of mind and is not dependant on outside matters or objects.** Our scriptures state that the root cause of all sufferings is trishna (desires). With Santosh, yoga teaches us to learn to be content and remain happy with what we have and what we are.

3. Tapas or Tap (Austerity)

Tapa means endurance building. **Continue to march forward on the path of Dharma or path of yoga** despite physical or mental limitations is Tap. One should show discipline in thoughts, speech and actions. This helps mind seek higher spiritual aim. Seventeenth chapter of Bhagwad Gita, describes three types of tapas. Satvik (done with faith and not expecting fruits) Rajasik (done to attain status or recognition) and Tamasik (done with meanness to hurt others).

4. Swadhyaya (Study of Self)

Swadhyaya means self study. In simple terms it is learning and then meditate on what is taught. Study of sacred books is Swadhyaya. **Reading and absorbing sacred texts elevates consciousness to a higher level** where we start to realize that all creation is made for bhakti (adoration) rather than bhoga (enjoyment) and that all creation is divine and same divine energy sustains all of us.

5. Ishwara Pranidhana (Surrender to Ishwara)

The word 'Ishwar' is derived from Sanskrit root 'Ish' to rule. The word Ishwar suggests 'personal God' but also includes the idea of the impersonal Brahman. Ishwara Pranidhana means worship with complete faith. It is to believe in Ishwar's existence, **have faith in His greatness** and to completely devote oneself to Him without expecting anything in return.



DHRUV



MEERA BAI

The fourth part, or limb, of the Ashtanga (A-sh-tanga) Yoga is Pranayam (*pronounced PRAN AAYAAM*). Closest English translation of **PRANAYAM** is **Breath Control**. Prana = Life Energy and Ayam = Manifestation / Control / Regulation.

Prana is not just breathing (oxygen); **it is the life force that keeps the whole body functioning harmoniously**. Pranayama is the technique or practice, which is related to the control or regulation of Prana, the Life Energy. One is said to be alive even if some of the main organs such as Brain, Kidney, or Liver are not functioning, but one is declared dead when the Prana is gone. Sanskrit equivalent of Death is Prana Gati (Prana = Life Energy, Gati = Gone).

We all have the same life energy (Prana) flowing within but only few of us utilize it to the fullest extent. Pranayam is the process of controlling, stimulating, regulating, or channeling that Prana (Energy) in order for us to live healthy and happy. Just as a bath purifies and energizes the body, Pranayama purifies and energizes the mind and, in fact, the entire nervous system. **During pranayam the thoughts in your mind get suspended and the mind is absorbed in stillness leading to infinite joy of Peace (Samadhi) or super consciousness.**

On the physical level Pranayam helps us control our thoughts & actions and on a spiritual level Pranayam helps us realize our true self (Atma Gyan). Progress, through Pranayam, at both physical and spiritual levels, results in a healthy, peaceful, and successful life.

Types of Pranayam

Bhastrika (Bellows Breath)

Kapalbhati (Cleansing Breath)

Bhramari (Bee Breath)

Anulom Vilom (Alternate nostril Breath)

Udgeeth (Chanting Om)

We will practice the pranayams listed above in the next session at Vidya Mandir.

Benefits of Pranayam

- Cleanses and **tones up entire nervous system**.
- Removes mental tensions and worries. **Cools the Mind**.
- **Increases concentration**.
- Strengthens the Heart.
- Strengthens the digestive system.
- **Protection from cough, cold, and common allergies.**

All these benefits can be enjoyed by anyone, provided Pranayam is practiced **REGULARLY**. One can enjoy the taste of the sweet only by eating the sweet itself. Writing the word 'sweet' on paper has nothing to do with actual deliciousness of the sweet. So, **practice Pranayam yourself everyday and enjoy the sweetness of life.**

Yoga – Pratyahar & Dharana

Session 6

The fifth part, or limb, of the Ashtanga (A-sh-tanga) Yoga is **Pratyahar** (*pronounced PRATYAA HAAR*). Closest English translation of **PRATYAHAR** is drawing back from external objects. In Yoga terms it is **withdrawal of dependency of the senses on the external objects**.

In the first four part of Yoga are external preparations for the internal journey which starts from Pratyahar. As the tortoise withdraws its limbs from external world on its will and as the horse rider controls the movement of the horse by controlling its rein, **the Yogi control his/her senses by the practice of Pratyahar**.

Without the mind / awareness behind the sense organs, seeing will be sight but not vision, hearing will be sound but not listening.

Generally **mind dances to the tune of the senses**. In Pratyahar we break link between mind and senses. This de-linking helps us **over come feeling of like & dislike and brings about emotional balance**.

While practicing Pratyahar senses become more acute and try to react negatively. More hunger, more passion, over sensitiveness are some on early consequences of this practice. **The Yama and Niyama practiced earlier will help overcome this state**.

DHARANA

The sixth part, or limb, of the Ashtanga (A-sh-tanga) Yoga is **Dharana** (*pronounced DHAAR NAA*). Closest English translation of **DHARANA** is concentration or uninterrupted attention. The word Dharana has its root in Sanskrit word 'Dhr' means 'to hold'.

Dharana means fixation of the mind on some object. Normally the mind is restless by nature and shifts from object to object. In Dharana, the mind is directed towards a single object and focus is held on that object using determination. When you concentrate and focus attention whole heartedly on an object, you get so absorbed and drowned in it that the **curtain between the subject and object vanishes and they become one with each other**. The differentiation between the SELF and the OBJECT is ultimately removed. **This intense focus ultimately results in the end of separation between "it" and "Me" - there is only one**.

Dharna is the first critical step in entering the higher states of meditation to unite with Ishwar (God). Persistent focus can further reduce negative thoughts and influences, purifying the mind and bringing it closer to Ishwar. **This practice is very helpful in all walks of life; Puja, Studies, Sports, Job etc.**

There is some flexibility in the objects of meditation. Commonly used objects are pictures of Bhagwan or one's guru, candles, flowers, religious symbols or any sacred object. Some of the techniques rely on mantras or the sound of OM. In this technique, **one tunes one's mind to the repetitive sound of the mantra or OM**. Often a Japa-Maala, or a string of holy beads (typically 108), is used as an effective tool to focus the mind.

A continuous flow of Dharana is called Dhyana (meditation). If Dharana is the drop, then Dhyana is the river.

The seventh part, or limb, of the Ashtanga Yoga is **Dhyān** (*pronounced DhYAAAn*). Closest English translation of **DHYAAN** is Meditation - continued thought. In Yoga terms, it is a **Controlled channelization of Mind (Chitta) towards the Object of Focus (for example Bhagwan)**. The word **Dhyān** has its root in Sanskrit word '*dhyaa-e*' means '*to think*'.

As we learned in the earlier session, a **continuous flow of Dharana (concentration) is called Dhyān (meditation)**. **If Dharana is the drop, then Dhyān is the river**. It is a process of unlearning what has been learned so far. '**Meditation**' is the ultimate remedy for '**Agitation**'. **Meditation is the most precious treasure chest of wisdom handed down by our rishis, saints and ancestors to the world for the benefit of entire humanity**.

The eighth and final part, or limb, of the Ashtanga Yoga is **Samādhi** (*pronounced SaMAA-Dhi*). Closest English translation of *Samādhi* is deep contemplation, a state of Super consciousness. The word **Samādhi** has its root in Sanskrit words '*sam*' (together or integrated), and "*dha*" (to hold). Thus, the literal meaning of Samādhi can be Wholeness.

At an elevated spiritual level Dhyān and Samādhi are inseparable as described by rishi Patanjali. A logical distinction can be made between the two in the sense that *Dhyāna* or meditation has three components i.e. Subject (doer), Process and Object (Ishwar – God), whereas in Samādhi the first two get united with the Object. This can be simply compared with the entry of a flowing river into the ocean, in which condition the **river losses its identity and becomes the ocean itself**.

Samādhi is a state of complete peace, complete bliss (happiness) and being in Divinity.

Steps/Components of Dharana - Concentration

1. Exclusion of unrelated thoughts
2. Subject (the doer)
3. Process of Concentration (sitting in posture – aasan)
4. Object (Sacred word, Mantra, Bhagwan - God...)

Steps/Components of Dhyān – Meditation

~~Exclusion of unrelated thoughts~~

1. Subject (the doer)
2. Process of Concentration (sitting in posture – aasan)
3. Object (Sacred word, Mantra, Bhagwan - God...)

Steps/Components of Samādhi - Super-conscious state / Nirvana

~~Exclusion of unrelated thoughts~~

~~Subject (doer)~~

~~Process of Concentration~~

1. **ONLY Object** (Sacred word, Mantra, Bhagwan - God...) – **Subject (doer) merges in the Object**.

How to meditate

1. Sit on a soft, flat yoga mat in Padmasan (Lotus Pose) or Sukhasan (Easy Pose). Relax the body.
2. Close your eyes. Start chanting OM – Let the sound of chanting rise like a water fountain. Continue chanting, vibrations of OM will grow and expand around you. You can feel these divine vibrations.
3. After some time chant OM in mind only. Chanting will still be louder in the mind. Now slowly and steadily reduce the tone to mental whisper. Allow to dissolve OM chanting into silence within you (in the same way as water fountain comes to a steady close).
4. When you stop mental chanting, there will be a split moment of thoughtless state, hold on to that state as long as you can. As soon as thoughtless state breaks and new thought comes in mind, start chanting 'Chidananda Roopa, Shivoham, Shivoham - I am eternal blissful Shiva - love and happiness' – that will enable you to come back to thoughtless state.
5. Do this for at least 5 to 10 minutes everyday and **enjoy the divinity (purity) within** as you **practice and progress**.