

# Heartfulness Yoga School

Teacher Training Program – 200hrs

EIGHT LIMBS OF YOGA

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Ashtanga Yoga, means “eight limbs of yoga.”

यम नियमासन प्राणायाम प्रत्याहार धारणा ध्यान समाधयोऽष्टावङ्गानि॥2.29॥

yama niyama-āsana prāṇāyāma pratyāhāra dhāraṇā dhyāna samādhayo-  
'ṣṭāvaṅgāni ॥2.29॥

The limbs of the eight-fold path are as follows: respect for others (yama) and yourself (niyama); harmony with your body (asana), your energy (pranayama), your emotions (pratyahara), and your thoughts (dharana); plus contemplation (dhyana) and ecstasy (samadhi).



Ashta = Eight

Anga = Limb

Ashtanga Yoga is a complete package. It is not designed for us to pick and choose one limb or the other. To really benefit from Asana, the soul, heart and mind must be very much involved. You can start anywhere, but if you are serious in your wish to grow, the rest will eventually follow.

## YAMA

अहंसासत्यास्तेय ब्रह्मचर्यापरगिरहाः यमाः ॥3.30॥

ahimsā-satya-asteya brahmacarya-aparigrahāḥ yamāḥ ॥3.30॥

1. Ahimsa (अहंसा): Nonviolence, non-harming other living beings
2. Satya (सत्य): Truthfulness, non-falsehood
3. Asteya (अस्तेय): non-stealing
4. Brahmacharya (ब्रह्मचर्य): Continence, moderation of the senses
5. Aparigraha (अपरगिरहः): Non-possessiveness

- Social discipline
- Moral and ethical prescriptions
- Yama is to give up
- Yama is also the God of Death – death of the self – transcending the ‘I-ness’ with love to become one.

There is an essential condition to practice all the Yamas; a cheerful contented heart. Daaji also calls them: ‘The 5 oaths of the seeker’

## NIYAMA

शौच संतोष तपः स्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणधानानि नियमाः ॥3.32॥

śauca saṁtoṣa tapaḥ svādhyāy-eśvarapraṇidhānāni niyamāḥ ॥3.32॥

1. śauca (शौच) : purity, clearness of mind, speech and body
2. saṁtoṣa (संतोष): contentment, acceptance, inner happiness
3. tapaḥ (तपः): persistence, perseverance, austerity, removal of impurities
4. svādhyāya (स्वाध्याय) : study of Vedas, study of self, self-reflection, introspection
5. Īśvarapraṇidhāna (ईश्वर प्रणधान) : contemplation of the Ishvara (God/Supreme Being, True Self, Unchanging Reality), surrender

- The Niyamas depend on regularity to develop self-discipline, self-refinement.
- Cultivating nobility of character

The yamas and niyamas, as we see, are moral trainings to be followed. Without these as basis, no practice of yoga will succeed. A Yogi must not

think of injuring anyone, by thought, word, or deed. Compassion shall not be for men alone, but shall go beyond and embrace the whole world.

## ASANA

स्थिरसुखमासनम् ॥2.46॥

[sthira-sukham-āsanam](#)

We simply call it 'posture,' but it has a deep meaning and purpose behind it.

Practicing yoga with strength and in a relaxed manner gives rise to harmony with the physical body. Asana is thus a posture that one can hold for a period of time, staying relaxed, steady, comfortable and motionless. Patanjali does not list any specific asana, except the terse suggestion, "posture one can hold with comfort and motionlessness".

"As regards asana, it is a well-known step of yoga. It is treated as a preliminary step and is much emphasised upon by the mahatmas, though the mystery at the bottom has not been revealed yet.

Everything comes to light at the destined time."

Ram Chandra - Commentary on Maxim 1

Prayatna shaithilya ananta samapattibhyam ॥2.47॥

Prayatna means tension or effort;

Shaithilya means relaxing or loosening;

ananta means infinite, endless;

samapattibhyam means bringing the attention to and merging with.

So Asana comes through relaxing efforts and allowing consciousness to merge with the infinite.

The spine: "But the main part of the activity will lie along the spinal column, so that the one thing necessary for the posture is to hold the spinal column free, sitting erect, holding the three parts – the chest, neck and head – in a straight line. Let the whole weight of the body be supported by the ribs, and then you have an easy natural posture with the spine straight."

Swami Vivekananda

"You must do the Asana with your soul. How can you do an Asana with your soul? We can only do it with the organ of the body that is closest to the soul – the heart. So a virtuous Asana is done from the heart and not from the head. Then you are not just doing it, but you are in it. Many people

try to think their way into an Asana, but you must instead feel your way into it through love and devotion.”

B.K.S. Iyengar

## PRANAYAMA

तस्मिन् सति श्वासप्रश्वासयोरगतविच्छेदः प्राणायामः ॥2.49॥

tasmin sati śvāsa-praśvāsyor-gati-vicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ ॥2.49॥

Once harmony with the physical body has been achieved, through interruption of the movement engendered by inhaling and exhaling you attempt to harmonize your energy (pranayama).

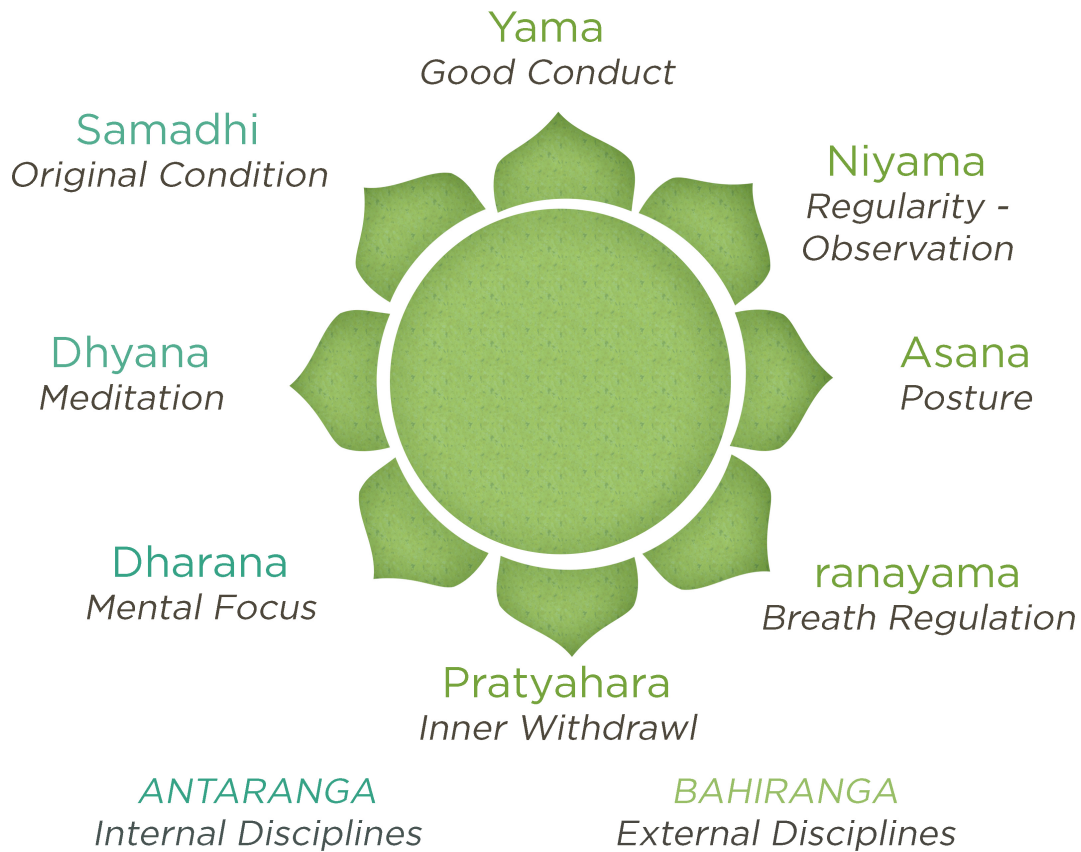
Prāṇāyāma is made out of two Sanskrit words prāṇa (प्राण, breath) and āyāma (आयाम, restraining, extending, stretching). After a desired posture has been achieved, verses 49 through 51 recommend the limb of yoga, prāṇāyāma, which is the practice of consciously regulating breath (inhalation and exhalation). This is done in several ways, inhaling and then suspending exhalation for a period, exhaling and then suspending inhalation for a period, slowing the inhalation and exhalation, consciously changing the time/length of breath (deep, short breathing).<sup>1</sup>

To extend or expand the life force or breath.

1. Inhalation: Puraka
2. Exhalation: Rechaka
3. Retention: Kumbhaka

Pranayama works on the energetic field of the body, creating the right field of energy. You can do breathing exercises with the awareness of expanding into infinity.

The first 4 limbs are called *Bahiranga*, external discipline. The first 4 limbs refine our actions, thoughts, posture and energy. Pratyahara is the pivot between the 2 sorts of practices. They are a preparation for the next 3 limbs of Ashtanga Yoga called *Antaranga*.



## PRATYAHARA

स्ववशियासंप्रयोगे चित्तस्य स्वरूपानुकारैवेन्द्रियाणां प्रत्याहारः ॥2.54॥

svaviśaya-asamprayoge cittasya svarūpānukāra-iv-endriyāṇāṃ pratyāhārah  
॥2.54॥

Harmony with the emotions (pratyahara) is achieved when the senses cease to be engaged with external objects and thus that which is mutable in human beings (chitta) becomes similar to true nature.

Pratyāhāra is a combination of two Sanskrit words prati- (the prefix प्रति, "against" or "contra") and āhāra (आहार, "bring near, fetch").<sup>1</sup>

Pratyahara is drawing within one's awareness. It is a process of retracting the sensory experience from external objects. It is a step of self extraction and abstraction. Pratyahara is not consciously closing one's eyes to the sensory world, it is consciously closing one's mind processes to the sensory world. Pratyahara empowers one to stop being controlled by the external world, fetch one's attention to seek self-knowledge and experience the freedom innate in one's inner world.

Pratyahara marks the transition of yoga experience from the first four limbs that perfect external forms to the last three limbs that perfect the inner state, from outside to inside, from the outer sphere of body to the inner sphere of spirit.

The 5<sup>th</sup> limb is the turning point – turn to the mind – the subtle bodies. The next limbs are called 'antaranga', internal practices.

Pratyahara should be done in a natural and gentle way and with love. It is the beginning of the March to Freedom, the spiritual Yatra. It is the original roots for Mindfulness – learn to manipulate the Mind, to watch the Mind.

"The easiest way to get hold of the mind is to sit quietly and let it drift where it will for a while. Hold fast to the idea, 'I am the witness watching my mind drifting. The mind is not I.'

Swami Vivekananda

Pratyahara and Breathing:

Pratyahara is easier when both the nostrils are in balance, or when Chandra Nadi is predominant as the Natural flow inward. In Heartfulness, transmission calibrates us and helps us to bring the mind towards a central point.

SAMYAMA – antara practices: Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi

Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi focus on the real purpose of Yoga and they are the practices of the inner journey known as the spiritual yatra. Through Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi, we open up the potential of the subtle bodies and finally go beyond these, eventually to the Absolute state. This is where Heartfulness starts. By the effect of cleaning and transmission, the mind is regulated.

3.1: Deshah bandhah chittasya dharana

Dharana is the process whereby the mind holds on to some object, either in the body, or outside the body, and keeps itself in that state.

### 3.2: Tatra pratyaya ekatanata dhyanam

When there is an unbroken flow or uninterrupted stream of knowledge in that object or part of the body, it is called Dhyana.

### 3.3: Tad eva artha matra nirbhasam svarupa shunyam iva samadhih

When only the essence of that object, place, or point shines forth in the mind, without any form, that state of deep absorption is called Samadhi.

### 3.35: Hridaye chitta samvit

By practicing Samyama on the heart, knowledge of the mind is attained.

## DHARANA

देशबन्धः चित्तस्य धारणा ॥3.1॥

deśa-bandhaḥ cittasya dhāraṇā ॥3.1॥

Harmony with your thoughts and the ability to concentrate are attained by aligning the mutable aspects of humankind with a specific subject.

Dharana (Sanskrit: धारणा) means concentration, introspective focus and one-pointedness of mind. The root of the word is dhṛ (धृ), which has a meaning of "to hold, maintain, keep".

Dharana, the sixth limb of yoga, is holding one's mind onto a particular inner state, subject or topic of one's mind. The mind is fixed on one thought, or an object one wants to observe, or a concept/idea in one's mind. Fixing the mind means one-pointed focus, without drifting of mind, and without jumping from one topic to another.

## DHYANA

तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम् ॥3.2॥

tatra pratyaya-ikatānatā dhyānam ॥3.2॥

Allowing your thoughts to flow in an uninterrupted stream results in contemplation (dhyana).

Dhyana (Sanskrit: ध्यान) literally means "contemplation, reflection" and "profound, meditation".



Dhyana is contemplating, reflecting on whatever Dharana has focused on. If in the sixth limb of yoga one focused on a personal deity, Dhyana is its contemplation. If the concentration was on one object, Dhyana is non-judgmental, non-presumptuous observation of that object. If the focus was on a concept/idea, Dhyana is contemplating that concept/idea in all its aspects, forms and consequences. Dhyana is uninterrupted train of thought, current of cognition, flow of awareness

Dhyana is integrally related to Dharana, one leads to the other. Dharana is a state of mind, Dhyana the process of mind. Dhyana is distinct from Dharana in that the meditator becomes actively engaged with its focus. Patanjali defines contemplation (Dhyana) as the mind process, where the mind is fixed on something, and then there is "a course of uniform modification of knowledge". Adi Shankara, in his commentary on the Yoga Sutras, distinguishes Dhyana from Dharana, by defining Dhyana as the yoga state when there is only the "stream of continuous thought about the object, uninterrupted by other thoughts of different kind for the same object;" Dharana, states Shankara, is focussed on one object, but aware of many aspects and ideas about that object.

Meditation generally starts with Dharana, a supposition. The Sankalpa initiates the flow of intention with thought energy and direction. It is more than concentration. Dharana also means to hold or nurture, like in a womb, in our consciousness. We plant that seed of the presence of divine light in the heart deep in our core.

Fix your Goal – thoughts and will may pave the way towards that goal

Dharana is also the power behind prayer – for your own evolution, for change

Dhyana is expanded consciousness. We explore a thought, an idea through meditation with higher and broader perspectives. Meditation leads to inspiration. Dhyana is our means of approach to the center and transmission makes it dynamic.

#### Preparation for Meditation

1. The day before by cleaning – removing the impressions of the day, reducing the fluctuations of the mind - Yama
2. Removing the tendencies – Reflection at the end of the day, prayerful intention to change - Swadhyaya
3. Connect with all our brothers and sisters – Point A meditation
4. Connect with our Inner Self – Ishwar Pranidhan

## Morning meditation

1. At dawn – stillness of the surroundings - Pratyahara
2. Comfortable steady posture – Asana
3. 5 min cleaning on Point B- Saucha
4. Relaxation, breathing exercises – supports Pratyahara
5. Start with a thought that there is light in the heart, hold and witness – Dharana

## SAMADHI

तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपभूत्यमविसमाधिः ॥3.3॥

tadeva-artha-mātra-nirbhāsaṁ svarūpa-śūnyam-iva-samādhiḥ ॥3.3॥

Insight (samadhi) occurs when only the subject matter of the orientation shines forth without any being affected by the person in question.

Samadhi (Sanskrit: समाधि) literally means "putting together, joining, combining with, union, harmonious whole, trance".

Adhi - something that prevailed before, 'the original', before the creation came into existence

Sam - means 'balance' or 'similar to'

Samadhi is oneness with the subject of meditation. There is no distinction, during the eighth limb of yoga, between the actor of meditation, the act of meditation and the subject of meditation. Samadhi is that spiritual state when one's mind is so absorbed in whatever it is contemplating, that the mind loses the sense of its own identity. The thinker, the thought process and the thought fuse with the subject of thought. There is only oneness, samadhi.

Lets look at the way transformation happens in Heartfulness. Personal transformation in Heartfulness is from inside towards the outside - from Samadhi to Yama.

Samadhi  
Dhyana  
Dharana  
Pratyahara  
Pranayama  
Asana  
Niyama  
Yama



#### States of Samadhi

- Sahaj Samadhi - You are aware of everything around as well as being in the state of absorbency.
- Known as the fourth state, also called the Turiya condition
- When we keep this condition even during our wakeful hours, then it becomes Turiyatit. The way you conduct yourselves with others reflects that state that you have in the heart.

#### Patanjali's ashtanga yoga in the light of Heartfulness:

1. YAMA - removing unwanted tendencies
2. NIYAMA - infusing noble inner qualities
3. ASANA - Steady body, ready to turn inwards
4. PRANAYAMA - regulation of energy
5. PRATYAHARA - pulling the senses inwards to the field of consciousness
6. DHARANA - flow of thoughts directed towards the Goal - nurture
7. DHYANA - Meditate on the divine light in the heart
8. SAMADHI - Absorbed in the condition, during meditation and after

Eventually the mind becomes so refined that it is a useful instrument for the heart, guided by the soul, and everything settles into its rightful role.