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COLLECTORS' EDITION headfulless Simply living

A Journey to the Center of Being with DAAJI



THE PROFOUND beauty of YOGA

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Dear readers,

Welcome to our end-of-year Collectors' Edition. What if someone told you there was a simple set of practices that could help you manage every aspect of your daily life, and at the same time take you to a level of human potential beyond your wildest imagination? Would you be interested? Most people would at least be curious.

Well, that is in fact an accurate description of the practices of Yoga. Yoga includes a holistic set of practices for overall self-development and the well-being of the body, mind and soul. A few thousand years back, the great sage Patanjali compiled yogic practices and philosophy into a simple framework consisting of eight parts or limbs, and that framework, known as Ashtanga Yoga, is still used today.

Since Patanjali was alive, the practices of Yoga have evolved in response to the needs of the time, especially during the last 150 years. So in this collectors' edition, Daaji explores each of the eight limbs in the light of the modern day yogic practices of Heartfulness. He shows us how to integrate inner spiritual practices with living in the world and refining our personality, so as to create a state of skill in action, so as to integrate the spiritual and worldly aspects of life. He also explains another ancient classification of Yoga – Karma, Jnana and Bhakti Yoga – in the light of modern times and practices.

We hope this significant compilation will bring to light the possibilities offered by Yoga for everyone. We also wish you and your loved ones a wonderful festive season and look forward to connecting with you again in the New Year.

The editors





The author of all the articles in this issue, Kamlesh Patel is the fourth guide in the Heartfulness tradition of meditation. He is known to many as Daaji. Embracing the many roles of a modern-day teacher, he has that rare capacity to dive deep into the center of his existence in the heart, and simultaneously have a scientific approach to original research in the field of meditation, spirituality and human evolution. He is a prolific speaker and writer, and you can read his latest book, *The Heartfulness Way*. To learn more about Daaji, visit www.daaji.org.

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housands of years ago, the great sage Patanjali summarized the whole philosophy and practice of Yoga into a set of 196 Yoga Sutras. It was an amazing achievement, and he compiled and codified all the knowledge that existed in his day on the art and science of Yoga in order to arrive at this treatise. One of the core aspects of his work is the framework he developed of 8 main attributes or limbs of practice needed to attain the state of Yoga: *Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana* and *Samadhi*. Today we know these 8 as Ashtanga Yoga.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras continue to be a definitive reference today on all aspects of Yoga. They are presented in four chapters: Samadhi Pada – concentration Sadhana Pada – practice Vibhuti Pada – experiences Kaivalya Pada – absolute freedom

Here we will discover a set of modern-day practices that allow us to develop all 8 limbs of Ashtanga Yoga simultaneously, in an effortless way. **Chapter 1** is about the spiritual uses of concentration and focuses on:

- What is Yoga?
- What are the mental deviations and obstacles that take us away from the balanced state?
- The importance of one-pointed practice and renunciation
- Types of concentration and practice, including through OM
- The results of stabilizing the mind

Chapter 2 is about practice and focuses on:

- Removing mental deviations, complexities and impurities, including subtle thoughts, so as to remove the hold of karma
- The first five of the eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga - Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara

Chapter 3 is about experiences and focuses on:

- Samyama the last 3 limbs of Ashtanga Yoga – Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi
- Liberation and higher discrimination

Chapter 4 is about freedom and focuses on:

- Liberation
- Enlightenment
- Illumination
- The three gunas
- Impressions and karma

While the information in all 4 chapters is relevant, chapters 2 and 3 contain Patanjali's presentation of Ashtanga Yoga to the world. By studying these in detail, we learn about the qualities of these 8 limbs needed for a yogi. But while Patanjali tells us to practice, and extols the benefits of practice, there are no specific methods given in his Sutras. Perhaps he did give practices to his followers but they were not written down. For example, he described in detail how impressions complicate our mind, but he fell short of giving the solutions to not forming impressions and removing them once they do form. He also described the 24 mental deviations associated with these impressions, but again there are no methods given. Even the later treatises on Ashtanga Yoga, by yogic scientists such as Swami Vivekananda and Osho, do not give specific methods to follow, and today most people associate it with the Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga of K. Pattabhi Jois, which focuses greatly on the physical body.

This is part of a larger trend: over the centuries, and especially in the 20th and 21st centuries, people have focused more on the body, gravitating towards the external practices of *Asana* and *Pranayama*. Without all eight limbs, however, nothing will work. Also, *Asana* in its true and original form is not actually so much a set of physical exercises as an inward turning of the body in preparation for diving into the inner universe. *Pranayama* is the practice of moderating the energy flows of the *Pranamaya Kosha* in preparation for diving into the inner universe. In fact, the eight limbs are designed to help us turn every aspect of ourselves inwards so that we can journey to the Center of our universe.

In this series of articles, we will explore all eight limbs, how they dovetail together, and why each is important for a yogi. Though Patanjali continues to inspire us, we also need a practical approach to complement this great work, a minimalistic approach that can be followed by people from all backgrounds, cultures and walks of life. So here we will discover a set of modern-day practices that allow us to develop all 8 limbs of Ashtanga Yoga simultaneously, in an effortless way. This may sound unbelievable, given that since ancient times yogis have undergone such strict tapasya and rigorous physical discipline in order to achieve anything. Think of the Buddha and the hardships he endured to reach Nirvana. But this is a new era of Yoga and spirituality – an era in which we have the support of the most refined and subtle form of Prana emanating from the very Source itself in the form of Pranahuti. As is the nature of all life, spiritual practices have also evolved, and what was possible only for the likes of the Buddha in ancient times is now possible for every sincere seeker of Truth. These practices are known as Heartfulness, and here we will link them with the eight limbs of Patanjali, bringing Ashtanga Yoga into the modern era.



YAMA

Refining behavior - removing unwanted habits

Yama is the first of Patanjali's eight limbs of yogic practice. DAAJI expounds on this very first rung of Ashtanga Yoga, and explores its importance in self-development and the path of enlightenment.

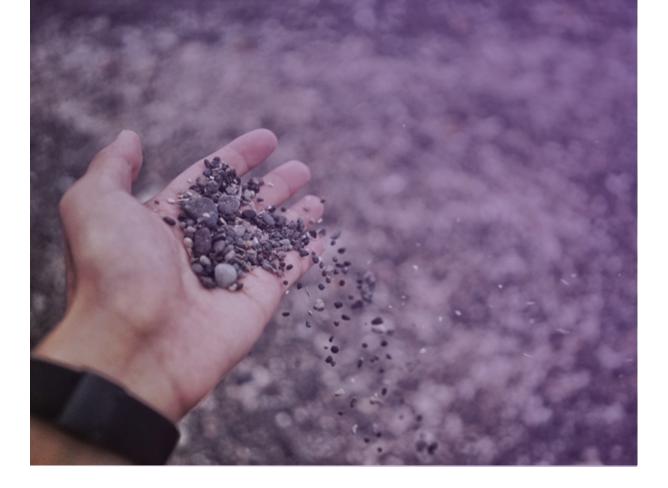
hy does behavior matter so much in the spiritual field? And does it matter only in the spiritual field? Human beings have always valued nobility of character, kindness, generosity and humility. We have also always venerated the people throughout history who embody those values or principles.

When you remember the meaning of the word 'Yoga' it becomes clearer. Yoga means union, integration, oneness, including the integration of our inner and outer states of being. We cannot be saintly on the inside and also greedy, arrogant or angry in behavior – that would be a lack of integrity. That lack of integration is not natural and leads to personality disorders; it is the opposite of holistic. Ultimately, there is no inside and outside but one fluid state of being. So if we are going to embark on a spiritual journey, our character must go with us.

In today's world, this aspect of Yoga is not wellunderstood by Hatha Yoga practitioners and meditators alike, who are often happy just to do their practices. Why? Maybe because it means looking in the psychological mirror in order to change. Spirituality is not a path for the faint hearted. Swami Vivekananda once said, "I need lions not sheep." Have you ever wondered why such a great being said this? It is because every single moment we must work on ourselves to refine our lifestyle if we wish our consciousness to blossom.

While meditation with Yogic Transmission transforms us swiftly from the inside, melting away obstacles to progress, stripping away our limitations at the very root, life demands something more of us. Our inner world may be expanding and evolving, but if our personality and lifestyle lag behind then we will remain spinning, like those little mice in their running wheels. We will not be able to move forward on the journey.

So what sort of a lifestyle is demanded of a seeker of the light? When Patanjali formulated his Ashtanga Yoga



some thousands of years ago, he naturally included the refinement of personality and lifestyle as part of yogic practice, and he did so in the two limbs known as *Yama* and *Niyama*. Here we will explore those fundamental qualities espoused by Patanjali in this first limb, *Yama*. I like to describe them as the five oaths of a seeker.

The word 'Yama' has different meanings. In Sanskrit, it means 'regulation' or 'self-discipline'. Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh wrote, "Giving up untrue feelings and untrue thought is Yama. Yama means to give up. Yama is the giving up of unwanted things from the heart." So Yama is the removal of everything that is unnecessary for our spiritual journey.

In Hindu mythology, the God of Death is also called Yama. How to reconcile this idea of death being intertwined with the refinement of lifestyle? One answer lies in the right understanding of life itself. Physical life begins with conception and ends with the withdrawal of the soul. This does not mean suicide. The real secret is to 'die' while still alive, transcending 'I'-ness to become universal. Meditation is also the process of consciously transcending the individual self, so that we can merge with the universal consciousness. Another way of saying it is: live as if you are going to die the next moment. This constant reminder of *Yama* as death may on the surface sound morbid, but there is tremendous wisdom in this idea, which is to transcend the 'I'-ness of the ego with love. The ego can be a very restrictive force – it doesn't let life blossom – but when this transcendence happens the ego becomes our ally and evolutionary in its purpose. The willpower of the ego moves from being self-centered in individual consciousness.

Where we go wrong is in thinking that this is all about physical death. Here death is not of the physical body, but of our self-created accumulated identity in the subtle body – the layers of our persona. Transcendence means such refinement of the subtle body that it becomes pure and expansive, without individual heaviness. There are basically two aspects to this refinement. The first is the removal of all the heaviness from the subtle body - the impressions we have accumulated from our own past - so that it becomes so light that consciousness can soar higher and higher. These impressions are called samskaras in Yoga. This process leads to the death of our own individual network of complexities - beliefs, emotions, fears, habits and desires. Many people try to let go of the past through psychoanalysis and personal therapy from the mental level, whereas in Heartfulness the practice of Yogic Cleaning removes the very root of the problem, the samskaras, by directly cleaning the subtle bodies. This process is so effective that the impressions from one lifetime can be removed in one meditation session with a trainer.

But if we don't also then work on removing the behaviors that are the outer manifestation of those impressions, we end up re-creating the same heaviness again. Like the mice on the wheel, we go round and round, removing, re-creating, removing, re-creating. It is a never-ending cycle unless we make behavioral and lifestyle changes.

The second aspect is the further refinement of the four main functions of the subtle body – consciousness, the thinking mind, the intellect and the ego:

With meditation on the heart, the mind deepens from thinking to feeling, to simply being, and then finally to unbecoming or unknowing, towards nothingness. It refines towards the subtlest state possible.

The intellect deepens to intelligence to intuition to wisdom and also finally to a higher state beyond wisdom, known as unknowing or higher ignorance – again it zeroes out. Guidance henceforth will descend from beyond.

The ego moves from a selfish focus on 'I', gradually refines to selflessness and generosity of heart, then absolute humility and acceptance, and finally only the finest state of identity remains.

As these three subtle bodies are refined, consciousness is untethered and is able to expand into its infinite state, merging with the universal consciousness.

If this could be achieved only through spiritual practice, everyone would reach the destination in no time at all. But does the ego easily move from selfishness to generosity of heart? Not without a fight! Do we easily trust the wisdom of our hearts, happily residing in a state of unknowing, dependent totally on something higher? That would mean ignoring the pros and cons of the rational mind that are dictated by our own principles and constructs. It takes time to let go of all this and let consciousness soar into universality. It is a process that requires *Yama* and *Niyama* side by side with practice.

Yet with this transcendence we experience real aliveness for the first time. What is aliveness? It means to live life with the heart; a life that is now connected to the eternal and the immortal; a life where there is neither bliss nor sorrow, neither pleasure nor pain. With such

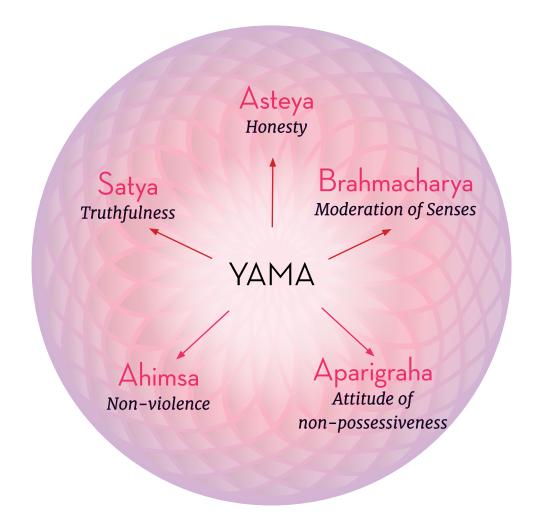
What is aliveness? It means to live life with the heart; a life that is now connected to the eternal and the immortal; a life where there is neither bliss nor sorrow, neither pleasure nor pain. With such a transformation comes the wisdom to conduct life with selfdiscipline or Yama. a transformation comes the wisdom to conduct life with self-discipline or *Yama*.

That is why in Heartfulness we start with the last three limbs of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga – *dharana* and *dhyana*, culminating in *samadhi* – so that we develop the inner capacity and aliveness to then develop self-discipline and nobility. Inner transformation is the catalyst for bringing outer change. The other five limbs are then naturally supported by the newly cultivated balanced tendencies of the mind.

This sequence is more practical than trying to refine character from the outer perspective of changing the persona, because behavioral change is most possible in someone with a well-developed *manomaya kosha* or mind sheath. It is certainly not possible for anyone who still has a heart full of the *samskaras* of desire, worry, anger, fear or guilt. It cannot be imposed artificially from the outside and be real.

This state that *Yama* brings of self-discipline is beautifully described in the yogic literature as being in this world but not of this world, symbolized by the lotus that lives in the mud but is not polluted by it, instead radiating purity and beauty. So these five vows of a seeker are for living life bravely and not straying away from a noble life.

Let's explore them in more detail.



The purpose of embracing truthfulness, nonpossessiveness, moderation, honesty and non-violence is to allow peace to prevail within. Peace is always there. It is our nature. It is only when we embrace lies, dishonesty, cruelty, violence and selfishness to possess things that we lose peace. Moreover, if the peace becomes a means to achieve something else, then that very act will become a hindrance to our evolution.

Non-violence: Ahimsa

The first *Yama* begins with love. The fundamental divine law that governs life is "Love all". If the idea of hurting anyone or anything remains in the heart, we fail at the first step itself. People who intend to hurt others can easily become demons when they develop capacity, so it is important to love selflessly, unconditionally and joyfully. This is the essence of *ahimsa*. But I feel that there is something more to *ahimsa*. Practiced *ahimsa* may not permit you to hurt, which is fine, but there is a greater need to be compassionate, taking action so that the other is not only not hurt, but out of compassion the other is comforted.

It is a simple matter to understand that liking someone ultimately culminates in love. When we love all, where is the question of being violent or hurting others? When we love, we are ready to sacrifice our comforts, our possessions and ultimately ourselves. Is this not compassion? It is sad that under the spell of hatred, people destroy each other. These five qualities form our spiritual foundation. In fact, no spirituality is possible without them. Becoming or imbibing these qualities prepares us for better and nobler experiences.

Be truthful: Satya

The second *Yama* is to be true to yourself. We all know the famous statement by William Shakespeare: "This above all: to thine own self be true."

Be genuine, original and authentic. Say what you mean and mean what you say. No hidden agendas. No masks. No hiding faults and no camouflages. There is childlike innocence, purity and simplicity in truthfulness. Being truthful, while at the same time ensuring that the truth never hurts the heart of another person, is only possible if *ahimsa* becomes a part of us.

When we do not follow the heart, we will sometimes follow wrong guidance. We suffer from an untruthful heart and the coercions that result from it. This leads to a lack of authenticity. Then our inner environment is messed up and wrong habits develop. Hence, always be truthful and nurture the purity within.

When we do hurt others, even unintentionally, guilt often develops, and the removal of guilt is an important aspect of *Yama*. It cannot be done through meditation or cleaning, but can be done through a genuine prayerful state of repentance and letting go at bedtime. This is one important aspect of being truthful – to accept our own failings with humility and genuinely offer them in a prayerful state. It purifies our system of guilty feelings, which are the hardest impressions to remove.

Honesty (not stealing): Asteya

When we have love in the heart and tread the path of truth, honesty then radiates in our existence. Our existence in thought, word and deed will be a manifestation of honesty. Then our very presence will give an impetus to the moral compass of everyone around us. Honesty is the result of a life led with non-violence (ahimsa) and nurtured by truth (satya). In particular, we have no interest in coveting or stealing anything that belongs to anyone else. At least, minimally, we should not take from others or hurt them. If we could be compassionate and do much more than just not taking and hurting, maybe others would feel more at ease and comforted. Is it enough that we do not snatch away food from the hungry? Surely we can be compassionate enough to ensure that the hungry receive what they need.

Moderation of the senses: Brahmacharya

Brahmacharya has been narrowly understood to mean celibacy, whereas it really means a state of moderation across all our faculties. The term is composed of Brahman + *charya*. '*Charya*' means to dwell, so 'one who dwells in Brahman', is aptly called a *brahmacharya*. To pretend to be a *brahmacharya* by imposing rules from outside is like putting the cart before the horse; it is artificial. We achieve moderation as a result of purifying the inner condition through the Heartfulness Way and bringing a state of balance and moderation. When we dwell in that state, all our actions and thoughts naturally have the quality of Brahman.

Such a state of moderation is achieved through the practice of regular meditation on point A and cleaning of point B in Heartfulness practice. For such a person, procreation is a natural and sacred act. Procreation is beautiful, as long as our desires do not become a slave to it.

Attitude of non-possessiveness towards worldly things: Aparigraha

The fifth *Yama* is non-possessiveness. It is the culmination of the other four: love, truthfulness, honesty and moderation. We start to exist as if we are in the world but not of the world, like a lotus. It simply means that even if you have something in you, you are not possessed by it or affected by either its presence or its absence. Imagine the arrogance and pride of a *sannyasi* who seems to have renounced all desires and possessions but is proud of his renunciation! He may have renounced, but he possesses a lot of pride and arrogance. He is now possessed! This ego will be fatal. Such an ego will be unproductive and will turn out to be invalid currency in the Higher Dimension.

Imagine the emotional gap created by the two different ideas of belonging versus possessing. When one has the sense of belonging, there is pride. When there is a sense of being possessed, there is a tremendous gap! Let us visit the daily scenario where our mother makes meals for us and serves us with so much love. Now think of the other scenario, where our mother has gone somewhere and we may have to dine out at some friend's place. We become so grateful to our friend's mother. Take another scenario: it is raining and you find shelter under the canopy of someone's roof. You are so grateful to the house owner. Do we express such gratitude towards our mother or our home? Mostly no. Why? It is because we take them for granted, as we have the sense that they are ours. Possessiveness somehow creates a distance. Belongingness brings us closer.

We naturally develop an awareness of our duties, not in an enforced way but because we put others first as the result of an inner generosity of heart. The natural etiquette of caring and putting others first emerges in our behavior, as our thoughts and actions are no longer based on personal desires. We are no longer pulled by likes and dislikes for people, places or things. We simply



A loving, cheerful and contented heart creates the environment for the blossoming of life itself, without any force or pretense.

live our life with devotion, developing an unattached state naturally and spontaneously. It is not that we are detached but that we love everyone and everything without discrimination, universally. In Heartfulness practice, meditation on point A helps develop this virtue.

These five qualities depend on love. A loving, cheerful and contented heart creates the environment for the blossoming of life itself, without any force or pretense. A spiritual seeker who fulfills the five attributes of *Yama* will not be burdened by egoism. Be it exhibiting miracles or showing off possessions, he or she will not be self-centered, covetous or greedy.

And when do we become so interested in these five qualities that it is a joy to pursue them? When we realize their essential role in preparing our heart for one purpose only: the purification of consciousness. These five qualities form our spiritual foundation. In fact, no spirituality is possible without them, and they prepare us for better and nobler experiences. Only when we want nothing from anybody, including God, do the doors open.

It is very much like a bank. When you are in dire need of money, banks generally will not help you, whereas when you have absolutely no need of money the bank will solicit your business. Likewise, when God finds a contented soul He gives more. Heavenly gifts descend on those who renounce power itself. If we ask for it, then it is denied. Nature is similar: powers descend automatically on one who says, "I do not need it."

If you feel daunted by the call of these five vows, I leave you with the lines of the poet H.W. Longfellow, who said,

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow, Is our destined end or way; But to act, that each to-morrow Find us farther than to-day.

NIYAMA

Refining behavior - integrating noble qualities

Niyama is the second of Patanjali's eight limbs of yogic practice. DAAJI shows us how *Yama* is not sufficient for right living – the other side of the coin is the cultivation of nobility of character through the positive duties and inner observances of *Niyama*.

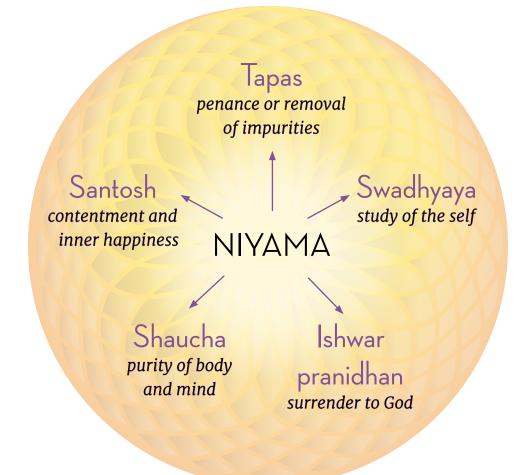
et us say that you are already perfecting the 'five vows of a seeker' of the first limb, *Yama*. In the process you are giving up many negative traits and tendencies, thus clearing so many complexities from your system, the thorns and bushes from the spiritual path. The practice of cleaning removes the load of *samskaras* that accumulate in the heart, and the tendencies and the emotional patterns that accompany them can also be removed with sincere efforts. So *Yama* is effectively the removal of all the 'don'ts', and this is one part of yogic psychology.

But is *Yama* enough? We have to go further in our refinement of character, and for this we take up *Niyama*, which involves cultivating and molding nobility of character. It includes all the 'dos', the virtues, the positive duties and inner observances.

Niyama is about finding some sort of order to establish and intensify life itself. It provides us with the focus to mold our living to such a high level that we are able to radiate the fragrance of the inner state. It is about self-refinement towards subtler and subtler states, both inner and outer. It is about inner gentility, elegance and etiquette. It will eventually result in living a life in such a way that we are in tune with our Divine Nature. In essence, it is about resolving within to follow a regular system of life so that one day the body consciousness resonates well with the mind in an automatic fashion, and where following a certain rhythm brings about automatism. In Nature, as we see, there is tremendous order. The higher the goal, the greater the order required.

To follow *Yama* and *Niyama* is the pious duty of every seeker of spirituality. Just as *Yama* denotes destruction of all that is unwanted, *Niyama* is the embracing of the required qualities in the heart. What are those required qualities? In traditional Yoga, the five *Niyamas* are:





Shaucha

The first *Niyama* is *shaucha* or purity. All great spiritual teachers have extolled the importance of purity, which is a natural result of perfecting the *Yamas*. So in a sense the *Niyamas* continue on from the culmination of *Yama*. To my heart, purity is akin to God. The essence of Reality is purity. Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur gave a very important message towards the end of his life and in it he said that purity weaves our destiny with the Ultimate. That is a very profound thought, and brings a lot of gravitas to the importance of purity.

Swami Vivekananda said, "The sages have said that there are two sorts of purification – external and internal.

¹ Swami Vivekananda, *Raja Yoga*, Chapter 8, 'Raja Yoga in Brief'.

The purification of the body by water, earth or other materials is the external purification, as bathing etc. Purification of the mind by truth, and by all the other virtues, is what is called internal purification. Both are necessary. It is not sufficient that a man should be internally pure and externally dirty. When both are not attainable the internal purity is the better, but no one will be a Yogi until he has both."¹

As we evolve, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, and all the habits with which we are born must slowly be adjusted to our level of evolution. We evolve not just from within but in our manners and in our lifestyle. A complete transformation is necessary. So purity permeates to every level of our being from inside out.

Santosh

The second *Niyama* is *santosh*. What is it that most of us want in life? The commonest answer given by people of all walks of life and cultures is that we want happiness and contentment. Such a state of contentment allows us to accept whatever situation we may be in. We remain grateful to God. And what brings happiness? Perhaps it is a wonderful relationship, a great career, children whose lives are fulfilled, a comfortable lifestyle and some peace and calm. But even if we tick all the other boxes, without inner peace we will not be happy. Why? Because happiness is found within.

Happiness does not actually depend on outside things or people, although external circumstances can fortify the inner states. As long as we have the basics, no amount of money, pleasure, friends, success or possessions will bring happiness. The philosopher Schopenhauer defined true happiness as the complete satisfaction of all desires. You could say that the happiness of a person can be described mathematically as:

Happiness = Total number of desires

When we have zero desires, our happiness will be limitless. By minimizing our desires from more to less and finally to zero, we make peace with ourselves. So if we have ten desires and five are fulfilled, we have fifty percent happiness; if ten are fulfilled, we have one hundred percent happiness. The more desires we have, the harder it will be to fulfill them all, and so the less happy we are. Happiness is inversely related to the number of desires.

What happens when we have no desires at all? The denominator becomes zero. Any number divided by zero is indeterminate. When we have zero desires, our happiness will be limitless. By minimizing our desires from more to less and finally to zero, we make peace with ourselves.

But is it possible to finally arrive at zero desires? Is it practical? Instead, we can try to fulfill our duties in the most appropriate manner, which then do not fall under the category of 'desires' that become a burden.

And how can we remove desires? In Heartfulness this happens as a result of a complementary set of practices:

First, we learn to ignore the pull of thoughts during meditation, so they no longer control us. Instead we develop mastery over the thinking process, and that process deepens to where we also transcend the pull of feelings and emotions in the heart. Transmission provides the necessary support for this to happen.

Second, we remove the underlying impressions or *samskaras* that provide the *hooks* in our subconscious minds for our desires, and this is done through the daily cleaning practice. This is critical, because many of our desires have a subconscious root that we cannot work with in our conscious mind. Cleaning removes the subconscious root.

Third, at bedtime we connect to our own Source through a prayer in which we acknowledge the barrier caused by our wishes. Then we offer our hearts to that Source, our inner Divinity, to help



remove our wishes. Instead of trying to remove desires with our lower ego-consciousness, we take the direct route of engaging our highest consciousness.

Fourth, we have a set of simple guidelines for living, known as the Ten Maxims. They hold those spiritual secrets that have previously been passed down from heart to heart. They have come from direct perception, from the study of Nature, and are revealed by means of vibrations or *shruti*. Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur expressed them in words so that we can learn how to bring them into daily life.²

Fifth, is that we allow the meditative state acquired during meditation to simmer in the background during the day, and this is known as constant remembrance. In this state, part of our attention remains inward and the remainder flows outward in order to complete our daily duties. In such a state, it is impossible to form impressions, and so the state of purity can be maintained.

Tapas

The next *Niyama* is *tapas* – penance, or the inner burning, the inner fire that brings higher and higher purification and refinement. It brings mastery over the senses. It is a manifestation of the fire of Divinity within us, and this we associate with the awakening of chakra 3 in the heart region, the fire point. *Tapasya* brings discipline, love, enthusiasm and a burning desire to reach the spiritual goal. It also burns away any habits and tendencies that may block our progress, and it develops willpower. At the physical level, *tapasya* relates to those practices like fasting, which help us to remove debris from the physical body through autophagy.

It does not mean mortification of the body or running away to the jungle, as has commonly been misunderstood. In fact, it is all about embracing life and facing up to everything in life. It also means sacrificing our available resources for the welfare of the Godly creation.

² Ram Chandra, 2015. Commentary on the Ten Maxims of Sahaj Marg. Shri Ram Chandra Mission, India.

Swadhyaya

Swadhyaya means 'study of the self'; swa means 'self' and adhyaya is 'to study'. The need for self-observation and self-analysis in the journey of Yoga is paramount, otherwise we cannot be conscious of our intentions and actions. As thoughts are the expression of our inner state, observing thoughts helps us to study our inner state. In order to streamline our inner state to resonate with the Higher, we need to work on our character and bring those habits and tendencies to light that limit our personalities, in order for them to go. This can be tricky, because often we become very judgmental with ourselves and develop feelings of guilt and shame. This is not the approach of Yoga, where self-analysis is used for continuous improvement and refinement with self-acceptance.

Without purity, austerity and inner contentment, self-study can take a back seat. Why would an impure mind resort to self-study? A person who has not gone through some level of austerity will not generally be inclined towards self-study. Why would a discontented mind resort to systematic self-study? *Swadhyaya* is completed with meditation on the divine principle. Can an impure mind meditate? Can a discontented heart meditate? Can a person meditate who has not simplified their life through *tapasya*? We need to ask ourselves these fundamental and vital questions.

Heartfulness facilitates self-study in a number of ways, even when we lack those traits of purity, simplicity and contentment. In any case, if we already have all these qualities, why would we need meditation? Why shave eggs?

> First, through meditation we learn to be the observer so as to observe our inner universe keenly. That way, when any inner turbulence arises, we are quickly aware and can do what is necessary to remove it through the process of cleaning. We don't need to be entangled in the emotions of what we see in ourselves.

Second, we are encouraged to write a journal, so as to better sensitize ourselves to the inner condition. We cultivate self-observation, selfacceptance and self-empathy. As a result we are able to change more easily.

Third, through our connection with the Source in prayer, we are better able to listen to our heart and become sensitive to its higher wisdom.

Fourth, through the practice of constant remembrance, we remain constantly connected with the inner wisdom that can help us study and refine our self.

Swadhyaya also includes the reading and study of sacred literature. These texts provide a reference point for our own inner journey, so we know where we are going and how we are progressing. Through reading, we receive the wisdom of those who have already traversed the path and this inspires us to keep moving forward. In these sacred texts there is always layer upon layer of meaning and understanding, and as we progress in our own journey these layers of knowledge unfold.

Ishwar Pranidhan

The final *Niyama* is *Ishwar pranidhan*, meaning surrender to the all-pervading God. This also leads to self-surrender and self-acceptance, and is reflected in our attitudes and behavior by the utmost humility and sense of innocent wonder. This state is the natural outcome and culmination of faith.

Acceptance brings about surrender in the most natural way. Love makes us do things in the most beautiful way for our beloved. In love, where there is total acceptance, the idea of subservience or forced surrender does not even enter the equation. In contrast, a heart imbued with hatred, disgruntlement, confusion, violence, impurities and complexities cannot do anything to promote joy for himself or others. So is an impure mind capable of acceptance or surrender? In surrender, the burden of ego dissipates, leaving us free to soar higher, allowing consciousness to expand limitlessly. The energy that was suppressed now finds immediate expression, so we feel completely at peace with ourselves, and we find bliss within. Accepting everything allows us to surrender to the entire Existence. It is no longer a selective process of acceptance and surrender. Surrender is not an individual or group effort, but the result of our endeavors in the spiritual arena under the guidance of a capable Guide.

We can also learn about *Niyama* from Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. *Niyama* results in surrendering the fruits of all our actions to the Divine with dedication and devotion. It includes selfless action and dissolving any ego-attachment to those things that we think, say or do. Thus it brings skill in action, as Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna.

As a result of these five *Niyamas*, the mind will not wander in any direction, as beautifully explained by Swami Vivekananda.³ There will only be one focus, and that is the inner goal. Concentration will be the natural outcome, so these practices naturally lead to the fifth limb of Ashtanga Yoga, *Pratyahara*.

Cultivating the right attitude toward Niyama

What is the best way to cultivate these *Niyamas*? Often they are done in an enforced or mechanical way, as imposed practices, but discipline cannot be at the cost of love. Love means joy, because love elicits joy. If in discipline there is no joy, it is no less than self-torture.

If something is imposed on a person against their wishes, it is dictatorial or adverse. Enforced discipline, either upon ourselves or upon someone else is like imprisonment. So imposed *Niyama* cannot become the means of liberation. What happens when we enforce *Niyama* on others? There is an enforcer and an enforced being, and they remain opposed to each other. Then there is no joy in being together. Likewise, if my conscience or a brief moment of inspiration temporarily causes me to prescribe myself the discipline of *Niyama*, the fun begins when the initial inspiration dries up. I will be torn between my earlier resolution to be disciplined and my later weakness, unpreparedness, lack of interest, lack of joy or lack of love. A common example of this happens with New Year resolutions. Once the inspiration wanes, the resolution becomes a chore.

I end up giving birth to two of me. One wishes me to do something and one resists, the one that cajoles or taunts. One of me says, "I feel enslaved and need to rest a little more. I can always postpone what I am supposed to do." The other says, "You had better wake up and do what you promised yourself."

When discipline is backed by joy, we look forward to a certain rhythm. For example, when a person who is used to exercising every day cannot go to the gym for some reason, his body feels the difference and he misses it. So when there is joy in doing something, such joy in its trail establishes discipline. And such discipline is enriching, ennobling and showers freedom, as it is done out of joy.

Yoga means union – union of my lower self with the Higher Self. It also brings with it the art of listening to the deeper Self. When the Self imposes rules versus someone else imposing rules, the outcome is

The higher we go, the more discipline we need, and the more joy we need so that it is willing, loving discipline.

³ Swami Vivekananda, Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 6, chapter 'Concentration'.



very different. When we are united with the Higher, integrated with the Higher, life is guided by conscience (con-science) and not by fixed or limited knowledge and dogmas. Then our integrity oozes joy, arising out of following the inner conscience. We can easily then be a disciplined individual, who is now fit to become a disciple.

This gives us some insight into another word, 'confusion' (con-fusion), which arises when too many things are mingled together, but there is no fusion or union with the higher Self.

Think for a moment of walking on a trail versus cycling versus driving on a single-lane road versus driving on a multi-lane freeway versus traveling by plane versus soaring in a rocket. In which of these would we have the greatest freedom to move or travel? You probably think it is a rocket, but is it? While walking we are bound by very few rules. We can stop and start whenever we wish, change direction and go faster and slower at will. On a bicycle we have a few more rules. In a car there are more and more rules in order to keep everyone safe, and the more lanes on the road and the faster the speed, the more careful and disciplined we need to be. A pilot in a plane has even less freedom than the driver of a car, and those in a rocket have their freedom completely curtailed, including what movements they can make, what time they eat, sleep and work.

So the higher we go, the more discipline we need, and the more joy we need so that it is willing, loving discipline.

Let's compare two scenarios. In the first a person wakes up early in the morning to go to the airport at 5 a.m. to fetch his beloved. In the second, that same person is required to wake up to clean the house at 5 a.m., which is something he resents. What will be the difference in his attitude?

Similarly, which attitude will be productive in following the *Niyamas*? They must be followed with tremendous joy and, more importantly, without feeling enslaved. Otherwise they will not serve the purpose of bringing about a higher order, a higher level of osmosis with the Higher Being.

Commonly there are two types of acts: the first arising out of suppression, and the second arising out of excessive indulgence in the name of freedom. Both are against the evolutionary scheme and both violate true freedom. True freedom is to do what is right, and how do we decide what is right? That capacity comes with the first of the four *sadhanas* in Yoga, which is called *viveka*, meaning the ability to discriminate or make wise choices. Unless we have understood that first step in *Sadhana Chatusthaya*, we will not be able to choose what is right.

In *Reality at Dawn*⁴, Ram Chandra describes the qualities of all the four *sadhanas*, starting with the first two, *viveka* (discrimination) and *vairagya* (renunciation). He says, "*Viveka* and *vairagya* are states of mind developed at different stages by constant practice of certain yogic *sadhanas*, for example, remembrance, devotion or love, etc.

"Viveka in the true sense never develops unless the senses are thoroughly purified. This happens only when the mind gets properly regulated and disciplined, and egoism (or *ahankara*) assumes a purified state. Thus it is that *viveka* is in fact the result of practices followed in order to bring about the desired results." He then explains how *vairagya* is likewise the result of *viveka*.

> By doing the Heartfulness meditative practices sincerely, the heart is purified and we are able to dive deep within its vastness and tap into the universal wisdom. In this way viveka develops naturally, without undue effort or enforcement.

At this point, Ram Chandra introduces an innovation to the traditional approach that is possible because of Yogic Transmission. He explains that the yogic practices of Heartfulness automatically result in the development of *viveka* and *vairagya*, rather than them having to be done as the first two *sadhanas* or practices. He says that they "are not treated as *sadhanas* but are left aside to be developed automatically by an aspirant during his progress."

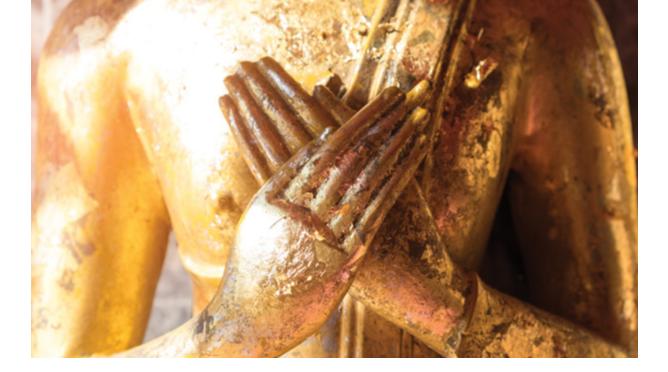
In Heartfulness we start with the third *sadhana*, known as *shat-sampatti*. "The first of these *sampattis* is *sham*, which pertains to the peaceful condition of mind leading to a state of calmness and tranquillity. When we practise it, *viveka* and *vairagya* follow automatically. ... No practice is really of any avail if it does not naturally result in *viveka* and *vairagya*. The real form of *viveka* is when a man begins to realise his own defects and shortcomings and at the bottom of his heart feels repentant for them."

So by doing the Heartfulness meditative practices sincerely, the heart is purified and we are able to dive deep within its vastness and tap into the universal wisdom. In this way *viveka* develops naturally, without undue effort or enforcement.

Let's go back to the two common types of act. Acts of suppression promote inner slavery, and this limits the expansion of consciousness. Acts of uninhibited indulgence sow the seeds for desires to further flourish, and these enslave us in a different way. Both aversion and indulgence are culprits. They are the likes and dislikes that create the impressions that accumulate in our heart, forming heaviness and taking us away from the source of our being.

How to rise above aversion and indulgence? That is why *Niyama* has to be established in our lives. To let the flow of the river of life keep moving towards the infinite ocean, checked by two banks that guide us to our destination. Imagine a river without the banks that define it!

⁴ Ram Chandra, 2015. *Reality at Dawn*, chapter 9, 'Realisation'. Shri Ram Chandra Mission, India.



The Heartfulness practices prepare us to respond to all sorts of situations in life that require discipline and refinement of character, including rising above our weakness, working with our ego, making wise decisions, self-analysis, solving problems and conflicts with others, and our own continuous improvement. No longer do we make rules without understanding the consequences of what we are doing. In everyday life, the rules of discipline can be of various levels. For example, military discipline flourishes with patriotism, courage and obedience; religious discipline flourishes because of the carrot of liberation or heaven, and the stick of fear of death or hell; while true discipline must flourish out of love and joy, otherwise it becomes slavery.

When Yogic Transmission connects the seeker with the Guide, it can magnify the effect of positive suggestion, known as *sankalpa*, and this can bring about miraculous results. For example, when the Guide or a Heartfulness trainer makes a subtlest thought, "May such-and-such a quality develop in the seeker," if the seeker cooperates, then that *Niyama* is established.

But ultimately, "The perfection of human nobility lies in the devotee being always within the sphere of devotion," as Ram Chandra has said in his sixth maxim. Not even a capable spiritual Guide can infuse noble qualities into us if the heart is not prepared and willing to nurture them, and in osmosis with its higher calling. And Ram Chandra gives us yet another hint about how to cultivate *Niyama⁵*:

"This stay on Earth is a determining stage in your evolution; do not let your chances be lost in the turbulence of the days. The vagaries of life must be useful to you; your good or bad experiences must help you progress, be enlightened on the reality concealed behind all these tribulations.

"This succession of moments lived in the spirit, characterising you now and resulting from wisdom acquired over the days, makes your life a permanent enlightenment. Be receptive to all that can occur; do not disregard any detail, everything is important. Signs – which mark your way – are given to you; it is up to you to decode them.

"Let your heart express itself in any event, do not restrain it. It must play its role in your Earthly existence; it embellishes it, it gives it its letters of nobility. The latter will outlast this incarnation. They will remain imprinted on the tables of time."

⁵ Whispers from The Brighter World, Tuesday, May 8, 2001 - 10:00 a.m.



ASANA

Refining the physical body – aligning posture inwards

Asana is the third of Patanjali's eight limbs of yogic practice. DAAJI explains the role of Asana in Yoga, how the physical steadiness of Asana helps us to create inner steadiness, and how the yogic science of Asana is also helping people worldwide to maintain health and well-being.

his third limb of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga is probably the most popular and also the least well understood today. When we think of *Asanas*, many of us will visualize Hatha Yoga exercises at the local gym or yoga studio, but there is much more to understand about *Asanas* than this.

The word *Asana* comes from the Sanskrit root *as*, which means 'to sit': the original *Asana* was the sitting pose for meditation. The purpose of Yoga has always been union or oneness with the infinite, so the main focus in yogic practice is meditation, and through meditation union. It is in this context that Patanjali defined and described *Asana* in the following three Sutras:

2.46: Sthira sukham āsanam.

Sthira means steady, stable; sukham means comfortable, relaxed; asanam means posture or sitting position. So that sitting position which is steady and comfortable is Asana.

2.47: Prayatna shaithilya ananta samapattibhyam.

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.

2.48: Tatah dwandwa anabhighata.

Tatah means thus; *dwandwa* means the dualities or pairs of opposites, such as light and dark, right and wrong; *anabhighata* means without impact or freedom from suffering. So through *Asana* we become free from the impact of the dualities of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc. When we summarize what Patanjali said about *Asana*, it is this: find a steady and comfortable sitting posture, so that you can relax your efforts and allow your consciousness to merge with the infinite, and you will become free from the impact of the dualities of existence. This is the purpose of *Asana*.

Swami Vivekananda explained the role of *Asana* further: in order to meditate every day, find a posture in which you can remain for a long time. It should be an easy posture, and it need not be the same for everyone. What matters is that it should allow the flow of energies through the system.

In his book, *Raja Yoga*, Swamiji described how a good deal of activity goes on in the body when we meditate. "Nerve currents will have to be displaced and given a new channel. New sorts of vibrations will begin, and the whole constitution will be remodeled, as it were. 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."

This may be the first ever description of neuroplasticity arising out of meditation. Swamiji described the process of neuroplasticity not only in the brain, but in the central nervous system, and especially the spinal cord from the chest up to the head and brain, the regions encompassing the chakras of the Heart and Mind.

The best postures for meditation are thought to be the cross-legged postures, such as Siddhasana, with both hands resting on the thighs, and Padmasana, the lotus position.



Siddhasana

Swamiji also guided us on how to maintain this alignment of the spinal column and the brain: "Say to yourself that you are firmly seated, and that nothing can move you. Then mention the perfection of the body, bit by bit, from head to foot. Think of it as being clear as crystal, and as a perfect vessel to sail over the sea of life." The main thing is to leave the body free, holding the chest, shoulders and head straight, so that you do not feel the body at all. When you go beyond the physical, you will lose all sense of the body, pleasure and pain. Afterwards you will feel so rested. It is the most perfect rest you can give the body.

The best postures for meditation are thought to be the cross-legged postures, such as *Siddhasana*, with both hands resting on the thighs, and *Padmasana*, the lotus position. Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur explained the philosophy behind the cross-legged position: if we are to return to our origin through meditation, contracting our existence into nothingness, then it is helpful to adopt a similar physical position of contraction or withdrawal.

He said: "The contraction always starts from below and proceeds gradually upwards because of its upward tendency. Therefore, in order to go upwards he must start contracting from below. The form would only be to bring his legs and the allied parts to one pose and to keep them steady. In whatever way it might be done, the form would finally be that of *Asana*. It is essential because it paves our way to the Ultimate. The posture must always be the same. The reason is that in this way he gets associated with the great Power, the very thing he takes up in the beginning for the attainment of his particular objective. Thus the form which is associated with Reality helps him a good deal in his primary initiation.

"Performing meditation in an upright sitting pose has been thought to be most advantageous from very ancient times, because in that position the flow of divine grace descends straight upon the seeker.

If the seeker sits crookedly or in an unsteady pose, the flow of effulgence will necessarily be impeded or disturbed. The seeker will thus be deprived of the full benefit of the descent. Therefore, in order to get the greatest spiritual benefit, one must sit in a proper steady pose."

But this aligned sitting position is not just so that we receive the flow of divine grace. This steady comfortable pose is also important for physical well-being. Our heads are heavy – even when they are balanced lightly on top of our necks they weigh around 5 kilograms. Now, what happens when we become deeply absorbed in meditation with Transmission and we lose consciousness? Sometimes our head will fall so far forward that it lands on our chest, and in that position it can put up to 27 kilograms of strain on the neck and shoulders. Imagine what that does over time to the back, neck and central nervous system! So it is important to stay upright, steady and balanced in a relaxed way during meditation.

To keep the head balanced lightly on the neck and shoulders during meditation requires a strong consciousness. For that we need to meditate. So everything is interlinked – the physical, mental and spiritual. Even to sit in a comfortable, steady *Asana* during meditation, we have to sharpen our consciousness.

When the ancient Rishis meditated to attain a state of oneness with God, they soon learnt that the body also needed to be cared for and exercised. Sitting in meditation all day would not allow them to stay healthy, so they developed other postures that could be done throughout the day while they remained meditative. That way they could continue to meditate while also improving immunity, respiration, blood circulation, muscle tone and joint flexibility. And so the physical practices of Hatha Yoga evolved.

But are they just physical exercises? The legendary Yogacharya, B.K.S. Iyengar once said, "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

When the ancient Rishis meditated to attain a state of oneness with God, they soon learnt that the body also needed to be cared for and exercised. Sitting in meditation all day would not allow them to stay healthy, so they developed other postures that could be done throughout the day while they remained meditative. Asanas are effective when the heart, mind and body work in unison. Each movement is performed slowly with a heightened consciousness of what is happening. If Asanas are practiced with a meditative mind, there will be many advantages, not just physical ones.

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."

Asanas are effective when the heart, mind and body work in unison. Each movement is performed slowly with a heightened consciousness of what is happening. If *Asanas* are practiced with a meditative mind, there will be many advantages, not just physical ones.

Asanas maintain the flexibility of the spinal vertebrae, and this is important for healthy movement and is the key to the body's overall plasticity. In yogic terminology, this leads to the free flow of energy along the spinal column. And what do we do with that free flowing energy? It is drawn inwards in *Pratyahara*, the fifth limb of Patanjali. *Asanas* also stretch and tone the fasciae, the connective tissue that is found throughout the body. The fasciae hold the muscles together in the correct place, separate them so they work independently of each other and provide a lubricated surface so that the muscles move smoothly.

As the field of Hatha Yoga continues to expand and develop, there are so many *Asanas* being taught today. Here are seven common ones, along with some of the health benefits they offer, just to give you a taste of how the yogic science of *Asanas* has evolved:

Tadasana is for general stretching and for blood circulation in the body. It also helps with knee pain, calcium deposits such as spurs, and cramps. It increases balance, both physical and mental. It is also good for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.



Veerabhadrasana is for the neck, shoulders and backaches. It also helps with chest expansion, asthma, and cancer (as oxygen levels go up). It improves confidence.



Parsva Uthanasana aids digestion and improves the flexibility of the back and of the hamstring muscles. It brings calm and a purpose.

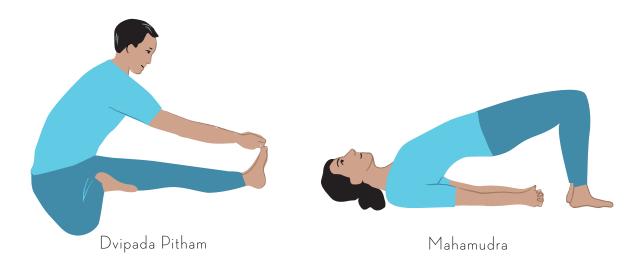
Jataraparivritti works on the digestive system and cleanses the body of impurities.



Parsva Uthanasana

Jataraparivritti

Dvipada Pitham is for blood pressure management, both low BP and high BP (but with some variation). It also helps relieve headache, as well as toning the back, knees, shoulders and calf muscles. It supports balance and confidence. *Mahamudra* opens the pelvic region, and is good for reproductive health. It supports concentration and calms the mind. Is excellent for pregnant women.



Suryanamaskar helps to manage diabetes and thyroid problems. It brings confidence and activates the whole nervous system.



The most important thing to remember is that Ashtanga Yoga is a complete package. It was not designed for us to pick and choose any of the eight limbs at whim. 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.

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PRANAYAMA

Refining the energetic body – aligning energy flow and breath inwards

Pranayama is the fourth of Patanjali's eight limbs of yogic practice. Here DAAJI explains the purpose of the practices of *Pranayama* and some key dos and don'ts. He also introduces *Prana* as the base of all these practices, as well as touching upon *Prana pratishtha* in traditional worship and *Pranahuti* in the Heartfulness way of meditation, describing how the regulation and stabilization of our energy field helps us to dive deep in meditation to the center of our being.

or thousands of years people have worshipped and prayed to idols and statues, including images of gods, saints, and symbols like the cross. Often these images have very profound symbolism, and have also been charged with *Prana* or spiritual essence by great saints or prophets from the past. This process of charging an idol is known as *Prana pratishtha*. Now, here is a question: if a saint or yogi can infuse an inanimate statue, cross or stone with spiritual essence, can that same saint not also infuse the heart of a human being with the same essence? A human being who can feel the divine essence and respond directly rather than having

to go through the medium of an idol? The answer will become clear later in the article.

Swami Vivekananda once said that, "*Prana* stands in metaphysics for the sum total of the energy that is in the universe. This universe, according to the theory of the philosophers, proceeds in the form of waves; it rises, and again it subsides, melts away, as it were; then again it proceeds out in all this variety; then again it slowly returns. So it goes on like a pulsation. The whole of this universe is composed of matter and force; and according to Sanskrit philosophers, everything that we call matter, solid and liquid, is the outcome of one primal matter, which they call *Akasha* or ether; and the primordial force, of which all the forces that we see in nature are manifestations, they call *Prana*. It is this *Prana* acting upon *Akasha* which creates this universe, and after the end of a period, called a cycle, there is a period of rest. One period of activity is followed by a period of rest; this is the nature of everything."This is also the nature of our breath.

What is the first thing we hope for when a baby is born? That the baby is breathing normally. And at the end of life we also check for breathing, because without it we are dead. Breathing is a sign of life, and in that sense *Pranayama* is all about breath. But there is much more to it than that. It is *Prana* by which we breathe, by which our blood circulates, our nerves and muscles work, and by which we think. All forms of energy are manifestations of *Prana*.

Pranayama is a combination of two words, Prana and Ayama. The word Prana is derived from the Sanskrit An, which means 'to move' or 'to breathe' with the prefix Pra which generally is used to intensify the meaning of the root with which it is associated. The word Ayama means 'expanding, extending, stretching,' so Pranayama means to extend or expand the life force or breath. Ayama also sometimes means 'restraint or control', in which case it can also mean controlling or restraining the breath. So both expansion and contraction are there in the process, as in the process of breathing itself.

PATANJALI'S DESCRIPTION

In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali tells us the following about *Pranayama*:

2.49: Tasmin sati shvasa prashvsayoh gati vichchhedah pranayamah.

Once perfection in the meditation posture has been achieved, then we can practice regulation of the incoming and outgoing flow of the breath and expansion of the vital energy or *Prana*. This is known as *Pranayama*.

2.50: Bahya abhyantara stambha vrittih desha kala sankhyabhih paridrishtah dirgha sukshmah.

Pranayama has three aspects: outward flow or exhalation, inward flow or inhalation, and the absence of both during the stationary transition between them, which is known as retention or suspension. These three states are regulated by place, time and number, and the breathing becomes slow and subtle.

2.51: Bahya abhyantara vishaya akshepi chaturthah.

There is a fourth type of *Pranayama*, which transcends the inward and outward *Pranayamas*. It appears effortless and occurs during concentration.

2.52: Tatah kshiyate prakasha avaranam. As a result, the veil covering the inner light diminishes.

2.53: Dharanasu cha yogyata manasah. The mind now becomes fit for concentration or Dharana.

In summary, once you have perfected your meditation posture, you can practice regulating the inflow and outflow of your breath and expansion of your vital energy. There are three aspects to your breathing – exhalation, inhalation, and the stationary transition between them. These three states are regulated by place, time and number, and eventually the breathing will become slow and subtle. As a result of these practices, the veil covering the inner light diminishes, and the mind becomes fit for concentration. The fourth type of *Pranayama* transcends these inward and outward movements, appearing effortlessly and occurring during concentration.

By now we can really start to see the flow that Patanjali envisioned in his Ashtanga Yoga. First came *Yama*



It is Prana by which we breathe, by which our blood circulates, our nerves and muscles work, and by which we think. All forms of energy are manifestations of Prana. The yogic practices of Pranayama work on the energetic field of the body (known as the subtle body) and the associated Pranamaya kosha. When done well they bring mental balance and well-being, resulting in good health, because our energetic system is then resonating in tune and in harmony with the universal energy.

and *Niyama*, because without refinement of character what good is spirituality! There would be no balance between the inner and outer states. Then when starting a spiritual practice, the first step was to establish the right posture to create the field for an inner approach – that is the third limb, *Asana*. Perfection in posture was a prerequisite for the later steps. *Pranayama* then followed directly on from *Asana*, and it also created the right field of energy for both *Pratyahara* and *Dharana*, the fifth and sixth limbs of Ashtanga Yoga.

THE INFLOW AND OUTFLOW OF ENERGY

So the original purpose of *Pranayama* was to regulate the breath to become slow and subtle, in order to allow the attention to turn inwards, calming the mind and dissolving scattered thinking patterns. After all, what are thoughts but energy? This inward turning of the energetic field would then strengthen the link of the *Pranamaya kosha*, the energy sheath of the human being, with the more subtle planes of existence – the mind and soul – rather than always directing energy outwards into the physical plane.

The yogic practices of *Pranayama* work on the energetic field of the human being (known as the subtle body) and the associated *Pranamaya kosha*. When done well they bring mental balance and well-being, resulting in good health, because our energetic system is then resonating in tune and in harmony with the universal energy.

We can think of *Pranayama* as the expansion of vitality; breathing with the inflow and outflow of the whole. We expand into the infinite breath of the Eternal.

When we do breathing exercises with this in mind, then we will see their effect. If the goal is just to breathe in and out in a particular rhythm then we won't enjoy it, but once we do it with the awareness that it is meant for this higher purpose, then it is different.

We can easily observe what happens when we change the way we breathe; our whole energetic field changes. For example, try to observe how your breathing differs when you are angry versus calm, when you are asleep versus awake, and when you are loving versus selfish. And different patterns of breathing are also an indication of a deeper energy pattern - that of inflow and outflow. We can compare it to Newton's second law of thermodynamics about entropy: he says that in unregulated systems entropy or disorder increases. When we get angry with another person, for example, our energetic field is destabilized because our attention is drawn outwards to the periphery of our being. Our system remains unstable. In contrast, when energy flows inwards towards the center of our being, we feel refreshed and rejuvenated, and our breathing becomes rhythmic, subtler and more relaxed. At the center of our being we are one with everything - in fact there

is only oneness – so when our energy moves inwards we are moving towards harmony.

CARE IS NEEDED

So the practices of *Pranayama* are very useful in regulating our energy system, as they provide the inputs to bring stability and reverse the increase in entropy or disorder in our system. But they can be misused, so that instead of refining our energy field they create disturbance. This happens when there is not proper guidance, so it is always better to learn the practices of *Pranayama* from an expert.

There are also many nuances to the science of *Pranayama*, and here are some that Ram Chandra of Fatehgarh advised to his followers:

- While engaging in *Pranayama*, avoid cold and sour foods. Also avoid very hot foods, as they may cause some harm.
- In the beginning there may be bleeding through the nose, the ears or in the stool, which will disappear with time.
- It is not a good idea to immediately start devoting a lot of time to *Pranayama*. Instead go on gradually increasing the number of breaths.
- Exhale slowly and through the nostrils rather than through the mouth, as exhaling through the mouth may harm the teeth.
- *Pranayama* should not be done on an empty stomach or immediately after food. The stomach should neither be totally empty nor totally full but in between.

These restrictions are for beginners. Adepts can do *Pranayama* as they like, but it is always better to avoid excessive practice, as it creates too much disturbance. Over the years I have seen that whenever there is a

lot of physical disturbance during meditation, like unconscious shaking or oscillations, it is because the person has been doing too much *Pranayama*.

THE PRANAMAYA KOSHA

The *Pranamaya kosha* is the sheath in which we experience the flow of energy, which is described according to five energetic processes (*karmendriyas*) and five energy flows (*pranas*). The five energetic processes are elimination, reproduction, movement, grasping with our hands, and speaking. The five flows of energy within the human body are known as the *vayus* or winds. They are:

- The inward flow that governs respiration and the receiving of everything, from air, food and energy to ideas and impressions.
- The downward and outward flow of elimination - excretion, urination and menstruation on the physical level, and anything that needs to be removed mentally.
- The balancing and integrating flow at the meeting point between the inward and outward flows, associated with assimilation and digestion.
- The ascending flow that directs energy towards higher levels of consciousness and governs self-expression through communication.
- The flow through the *nadis*, the circulatory system, the nervous system, the lymphatic system, the movement of muscles and joints, and thoughts and emotions.

Even though the *Pranamaya kosha* can be regulated by breathing exercises, it is subtle and not glued to the physical system. It permeates all throughout and envelops us like an energy bubble, creating the field of the aura. The chakras of the subtle body are also associated with this *kosha*, so meditation and cleaning of



the subtle body are also needed to refine the *Pranamaya kosha*.

Whenever an imbalance or illness happens, the first *kosha* to be compromised is usually the *Pranamaya kosha*. That is why acupuncture and acupressure treatments work on our energy meridians. In fact, our energy field is disturbed before any physical ailment appears. Sometimes we can predict the health of a person just by looking at the aura around their face. We feel the difference if someone is angry, in love, or it is a gentle mother with her baby, for example. This is because our attitude affects our *Pranamaya kosha* to a large extent. When this *kosha* is shining, our overall health is benefited. We radiate the state we have in our energy sheath, including joy and love; love is very palpable.

As I mentioned earlier, when we are stressed, angry or reactive, we need more energy, and it is generally directed in an outward flow. So we activate the *Pranamaya kosha* by activating the sympathetic nervous system. Our heart rate goes up, our breathing becomes more variable, and our body goes into its stress response. This is actually one of the reasons why *Pranayama* came into being – to balance the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems. When our sympathetic nervous system is activated by stress, we can calm ourselves by activating the parasympathetic system, for example through the *Chandra nadi.* And when we need to be more active and engaged, we can activate the sympathetic system in a similar way through the *Surya nadi*. We are able to bring about balance.

This energy *kosha* is quite forbidding to refine, because here consciousness mixes with ego, and that can be like sodium metal exposed to moisture in the air – explosive. All our energetic processes and cognitive senses derive their energy from this sheath, our waking consciousness is regulated by this sheath, and the natural emotions of passion and anger are nourished by this sheath. Fights and conflicts at work and at home with dear ones are due to imbalances here; when it is spoiled we can be terribly egotistical, whereas when it is rightly used it supports Self-Realization.

Always running after pleasure and an excess of materialism can also distort the finer balance of this energy sheath. In contrast, moderation in emotions and other faculties harmonizes the *Pranamaya kosha*, and this in turn helps to harmonize the physical body also. The Heartfulness practices of meditation on point A and cleaning of point B are very helpful in refining this sheath.

The play of opposites is very strong here. Attitudes of likes and dislikes, attraction and repulsion, make this

When our sympathetic nervous system is activated by stress, we can calm ourselves by activating the parasympathetic system, for example through the Chandra nadi. And when we need to be more active and engaged, we can activate the sympathetic system in a similar way through the Surya nadi. We are able to bring about balance.

sheath even more formidable. Moderation is not so easy when these things are at play. It is important to remain vigilant in the way we speak, our body language and our inner attitude. It means being humble and respectful towards everyone, including young ones and elders. Constantly nurturing a state of insignificance and curbing the ego are the surest ways to refine this sheath. It finds its true natural luster only when the ego is totally refined to its original purity.

PRANAHUTI

Reaching that state of insignificance is already a high achievement, however, as the true refinement of the ego comes only with the journey of the higher regions of the mind and beyond. Until that work has been done, *Pranayama* can always potentially inflame the ego. So in Heartfulness, we instead use something so superfine to direct the energetic flow inwards in a highly potentized way, and that is *Pranahuti* or Transmission.

Transmission is an offering of Prana directly from the Source, which is directed by a Guide of calibre into the heart of a seeker - ahuti means offering. While Prana is all around us everywhere, just like air, the Guide acts like a fan, directing the essence of Prana into the heart of the seeker. When we meditate with Transmission, our attention naturally flows inwards and so does our breath, so our system becomes highly stable, leading to lower and lower entropy. Our breathing is regulated naturally as a result of the inward flow of Pranahuti. This also leads naturally to Pratyahara and Dharana, and in fact helps us dive deeper into Dhyana so that we often attain the state of Samadhi during the first meditation sessions. The practices of Yoga have evolved considerably during the last century, thanks to the subtlest flow of Pranahuti that is the specialty of Heartfulness.

PRACTICES OF PRANAYAMA

As with *Asana*, the science of *Pranayama* has evolved a lot since the time of Patanjali, when the purpose was simply to gather the life force inwards and expand it to merge with the infinite whole. Nowadays there are practices of *Pranayama* for many purposes, to balance the energetic systems. Simple breathing practices are very beneficial for overall health and well-being, and some of these exercises are available. For more information, please contact us at wellness@heartfulness.org.

I find this advice given by Swami Vivekananda to be very beneficial: first hold yourself straight; then think of your body as sound and perfect, and healthy and strong; then throw a current of love all around, thinking that the whole universe is happy; then pray, if you believe in God; and then breathe.

Also, it helps to include the idea of *Yama* and *Niyama* when you are breathing. With every breath you take in, think that you are drawing goodness and nobility from the existence all around you (*Niyama*), and with every breath you breathe out, think that you are expelling unnecessary complexities from your system (*Yama*).



PRATYAHARA

Refining the attention – aligning the senses inwards

Pratyahara is the fifth of Patanjali's eight limbs of yogic practice. While it is one of the most important concepts in Yoga, it is not well understood. The lack of Pratyahara is the reason why many of us struggle with a meditation practice, and also why we don't benefit as much as we could from the practices of Asana and Pranayama. Here DAAJI helps us to understand the significance and purpose of Pratyahara and how to bring it into our Yoga practice.

hat is the most common problem we face as new meditators? "How can I get rid of all the thoughts and emotions that bubble up when I sit still with my eyes closed and try to meditate?" Whether it's trying to meditate, read a book or solve a problem, so often our thoughts are pulled in all directions so that we just cannot focus. Do you ever find that even when you close your eyes, the sounds, smells and activity all around distract you from going within? Focusing on external things is easy, for example on a movie or a football game, because our senses are drawn outwards, and are engaged and stimulated. But trying

to stay focused inwardly on the object of meditation is often difficult.

Welcome to the fifth limb of Ashtanga Yoga! This quality or ability to turn the attention inwards is known as *Pratyahara*, or 'gathering towards'. Most people who practice Hatha Yoga or who meditate don't think too much about *Pratyahara*, yet it is vital to any yogic practice.

The first four limbs - Yama, Niyama, Asana and Pranayama - refine thoughts, actions, posture and

energy, including the breath. When we reach the fifth limb we are at a turning point, because the focus moves to the mind, the subtle bodies.

PATANJALI'S DESCRIPTION

In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali tells us the following about *Pratyahara*:

2.54: Sva vishaya asamprayoge chittasya svarupe anukarah iva indriyanam pratyaharah

When the *indriyas*, the mental organs of the senses and actions, cease to be engaged with their corresponding external manifestations, and turn inwards to the field of consciousness from which they arose, this is the fifth step called *Pratyahara*.

2.55: Tatah parama vashyata indriyanam

Through that turning inward of the organs of the senses and actions also comes a supreme ability, controllability, and mastery over those senses that otherwise go outward towards their objects.

THE SUBTLE BODIES AND PERCEPTION

To really understand this concept of *Pratyahara*, we need to explore the science of human perception, and how we use the sense organs that function as part of the subtle body. We have 19 main subtle bodies, and they are:

- The 4 subtle bodies (*ant*): consciousness (*chit*), mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*) and ego (*ahankar*);
- The 5 energy flows (*pranas*): the inward flow that governs respiration and reception; the downward and outward flow of elimination physically and mental removal; the balancing and integrating flow associated with assimilation and digestion; the ascending flow towards higher levels of consciousness, governs self-expression; and the

It is not so difficult to withdraw attention from the senses, but it must happen naturally through a practice that expands consciousness and opens the heart.

flow through the nadis, the circulatory system, the nervous system, the lymphatic system, muscles and joints, and thoughts and emotions.

- The 5 inflowing senses, the *jnanendriyas*: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.
- The 5 outflowing senses or energetic processes, the *karmendriyas*: elimination, reproduction, movement, grasping with our hands, and speaking.

Pratyahara is the ability to divert the flow of attention of the 5 sense organs inwards. It is the conscious withdrawal of energy from the senses. We know how perception happens:

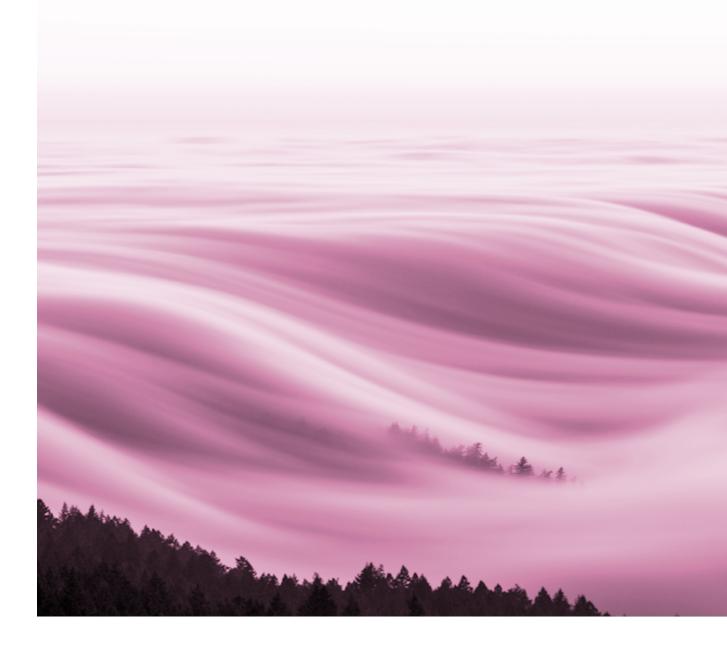
First we take in impressions from the outside world through our 5 senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.

Then the internal organs of perception act through the brain centers and relay these impressions to the mind, and

The mind relays the same through its layers to the soul.

When these all work together we perceive an external object.

When we allow our senses to look outwards to the periphery, we are constantly pulled to the external world.



We are no longer dependent on our inner resources, looking outwards for everything. Entropy sets in. *Pratyahara* is the opposite of entropy. Approached wisely, it is not so difficult to withdraw attention from the senses, but it must happen naturally through a practice that expands consciousness and opens the heart. Later in the article we will explore how Heartfulness practices bring about *Pratyahara* in a very satisfying way.

There are systems that try to force inner withdrawal, by hypnosis, chanting, drugs or suppressive meditative practices, but it is always better to choose a natural path. This gives us a vital clue to how to evaluate and choose a personal practice: "Is it natural? Does it allow me to open my mind, witness its activities, and gently direct the attention of the senses inward?"

Anyone who is able to check the outward flow of the mind, and free it from the bondage of the senses, has succeeded in *Pratyahara*. The mind will anyway bubble up in meditation, as it is its nature to think. Initially, many uncomfortable thoughts and images may come, but each day these fluctuations become less and less, and gradually it becomes calmer. In the first few months of a meditation practice there may be many thoughts, later they will subside, and at some point the mind will be without ripples. And that is the easy part – it is the rest of the day when we are not meditating that requires mastery!

In Yoga, we need to pay attention to *Pratyahara*. Even if we are mastering *Yama* and *Niyama*, *Asana* and *Pranayama*, these four limbs of Ashtanga Yoga need to join with this fifth limb to bring about real purity and simplicity of character, through mastery of the sensory functions of the mind. And the functions of the mind, the subtle bodies, are the trickiest of all! You could say that this is the beginning of the march to freedom, because before this we are just puppets at the beck and call of our senses and desires.

You may have read the ancient Indian wisdom from the Upanishads, which says,

Mana eva manushyanam karanam bandha-mokshayoh bandhaya visayasango muktyai nirvisayam manah

For man, mind is the cause of bondage and mind is the cause of liberation. Mind absorbed in the sense objects is the cause of bondage, and mind detached from the sense objects is the cause of liberation.

MINDFULNESS IS ONLY THE FIRST STEP

Swami Vivekananda once said, "*Pratyahara* is a gathering toward, an attempt to get hold of the mind and focus it on the desired object. The first step is to let the mind drift; watch it; see what it thinks; be only the witness. Mind is not soul or spirit. It is only matter in a finer form, and we own it and can learn to manipulate it through the nerve energies."

Here in Yoga we find the original roots of Mindfulness, which has traveled and morphed through cultures over

thousands of years, and which Vivekananda defines as the first step in *Pratyahara* – to be a witness to our minds. Most of the scientific research on meditation in the western world has focused on this practice of witnessing the mind and the subsequent ability to "learn to manipulate it [the mind] through the nerve energies" – the basis of a lot of modern research in neuroscience.



But *Pratyahara* goes beyond this first step. Vivekananda goes on to say, "The body is the objective view of what we call mind (subjective). We, the Self, are beyond both body and mind; beyond being subjective or objective; we are *Atman*, the eternal, unchangeable witness. The body is crystallized thought."

He gives us methods to develop *Pratyahara*: "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.'Then see it think as if it were a thing entirely apart from yourself. Identify yourself with God, never with matter or with the mind.

"Picture the mind as a calm lake stretched before you and the thoughts that come and go as bubbles rising and breaking on its surface. Make no effort to control the thoughts, but watch them and follow them in imagination as they float away. This will gradually lessen the circles. For the mind ranges over wide circles of thought and those circles widen out into everincreasing circles, as in a pond when we throw a stone into it. We want to reverse the process and starting with a huge circle make it narrower until at last we can fix the mind on one point and make it stay there. Hold to the idea, 'I am not the mind, I see that I am thinking, I am watching my mind act,' and each day the identification of yourself with thought and feeling will grow less, until at last you can entirely separate yourself from the mind and actually know it to be apart from yourself. When this is done, the mind is your servant to control as you will. The first stage of being a yogi is to go beyond the senses."

Does this mean that we do not use the senses at all? Of course not - they allow us to navigate in the world and live successfully. Without them we suffer, as people who are blind, deaf or mute know all too well. So it is not a case of suppressing the senses but of refining them and using them wisely. When I was a young practitioner of Heartfulness, I would observe Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, my first Guide. One of his eyes always gazed towards his heart, focused inward, while the other looked at the world and at all of us, allowing him to guide us and do his work. He utilized the sense of vision in tune with Pratyahara. Similarly, he used his sense of smell to perceive the world for a different purpose. In his autobiography he describes how, as a teenager, he developed an instinct to recognize people's clothes by smell: "This developed to the extent that at the age of fourteen I could know the character of a man by the smell of his perspiration." The senses are vital to life and can be very useful, as long as we master them so that they are not at the mercy of external desires.

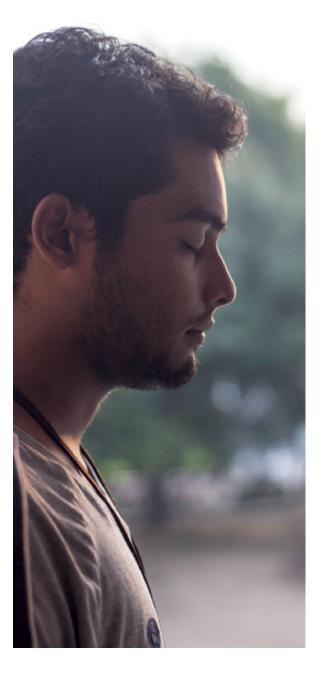
NATURAL CYCLES

There is another practical tip that helps with *Pratyahara*, involving the *nadis* and breathing. Generally, those times of day when we are breathing equally through both nostrils tend to be the times of *sandhya*, that is, the stationary or turning points in the solar and lunar cycles – sunrise, noon, sunset and midnight. When we meditate at these times, it is easier to turn inwards and be still. Also, when our energies are moving inwards, when the breath is flowing through the left nostril, associated with the *Chandra nadi* and the parasympathetic nervous system, our senses will easily focus inward and our thought energy will flow inward. We can make use of such periods for *Pratyahara*.

HEARTFULNESS PRACTICES

Modern-day Heartfulness takes us further, as it simplifies and expedites the old path of Yoga. There is no longer any need to take up the different steps of Ashtanga

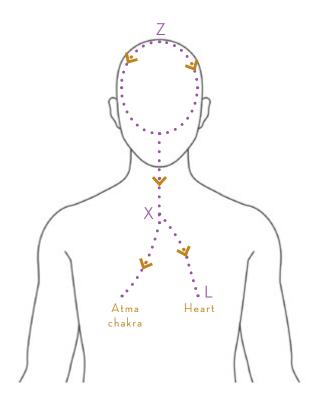
Hold to the idea, 'I am not the mind, I see that I am thinking, I am watching my mind act,' and each day the identification of yourself with thought and feeling will grow less, until at last you can entirely separate yourself from the mind and actually know it to be apart from yourself.



When we emerge from meditation, we allow a few minutes for the condition we have acquired to be enlivened and imbibed, so that we are one with it, in complete union (A E I O U). When we are able to hold this state of Samadhi after we open our eyes, Pratyahara happens naturally.

Yoga separately, one at a time. Instead, Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are all taken up simultaneously. How does this work with respect to Pratyahara?

First, Heartfulness Meditation is aided by Transmission, which facilitates effortless inward focus. How? Transmission is from the Source, from the Center, so it calibrates us from the inside out to be in osmosis with the most sublime Samadhi from the very beginning. During Heartfulness Meditation with Transmission, transformation happens from the inside out, from Samadhi to Yama, from limb number eight to one. At the same time, we mold our lifestyle from the outside in, going from limb number one to eight. This twoway approach is revolutionary, because it allows us to experience the eight yogic attributes simultaneously, without such a severe struggle. We are given a cane with which to walk, and sometimes we are also carried like a joey in the mother kangaroo's pouch, so that the journey is one of effortless effort.



Second, Heartfulness Cleaning removes those impressions from our subtle bodies that fuel our desires and activate the senses. In previous articles, we have spoken about all the emotional pulls that we feel due to the impressions we accumulate from our past. Until they are removed, how can inward focus be natural? That is why Cleaning is so important.

Through these two Heartfulness practices, *Pratyahara* is facilitated, as both the deepening inward focus and the removal of obstacles are speeded up. While we still witness the vagaries of the mind during meditation, we simply ignore the thoughts that surface as they are being removed.

Third, the Heartfulness Prayer is a direct practice of *Pratyahara*. It contains an acknowledgment, "We are yet but slaves of wishes putting bar to our advancement", and then gives us the solution to take us beyond that limitation, by focusing on a stage of existence beyond the senses. Prayer naturally takes us to the center

of ourselves where the senses are not needed in our witnessing. Instead we are in osmosis with a higher dimension of existence through the heart.

There are also other Heartfulness practices that support *Pratyahara*, including a scientific technique that was developed by Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur. While observing the flow of thought energy, he discovered how it descends from the 'lake of consciousness' – known in Yoga as the *chit* lake – which is associated with the prefrontal cortex of the brain and the *Brahmanda Mandal* or the Cosmic Region in spiritual anatomy. Thought energy descends from the *chit* lake towards the chest area and in most people it diverts to the left side, to the first chakra of the heart. From there it flows outwards into worldly thoughts and activities.

Then he observed that if the *chit* lake is first cleaned and a portion of the flow of thought energy is gently diverted towards the right side of the chest, to point 2, the point of the soul, then the seeker will be relieved of disturbing thoughts. By bringing the attention to the soul rather than to desires, the senses are naturally drawn inward. *Pratyahara* and *vairagya* go hand in hand, and a great hurdle is overcome in such a simple way.

Then there are the Heartfulness practices to maintain the purity of points A, B, C and D around the first point of the heart, where most of the sensory impressions initially lodge in our system. These practices are a daily maintenance regime so that the senses are no longer always searching outwards for stimulation. They can instead rest calm and unaffected.

And finally there is the coup de grâce, the technique of all Heartfulness techniques for keeping the senses relaxed and free from excitement. It is meditation with open eyes, or constant remembrance, in which the meditative state continues throughout the day. It is the classic example of how Heartfulness works from the inside out. When we meditate first thing in the morning, before the dawn, we are able to imbibe Transmission very easily, because we are cooperating with Nature – we are swimming with the current. The And finally there is the coup de grâce, the technique of all Heartfulness techniques for keeping the senses relaxed and free from excitement. It is meditation with open eyes, or constant remembrance, in which the meditative state continues throughout the day.

Transmission takes us to deep levels of meditation, where we experience *Samadhi*, that condition of perfect balance that was there before creation. We are at one with the soul. When we emerge from meditation, we allow a few minutes for the condition we have **a**cquired to be **e**nlivened and **i**mbibed, so that we are **o**ne with it, in complete **u**nion (A E I O U). When we are able to hold this state of *Samadhi* after we open our eyes, *Pratyabara* happens naturally.

We carry on with the day, and that underlying condition stays with us so that we remain connected with it while we do other things. We are in the world, but our senses are not pulled by the world. We retain our equilibrium and imbibe things consciously. We remain alert and aware with a mindful focus, while also being absorbed in *Samadhi*.

There is an Indian fable that explains this beautifully: When the star Svâti is on the ascending horizon, if it rains and a drop of rain falls into an oyster, that drop will become a pearl. The oysters know this, so they come to the surface when Svâti is shining bright in the sky and wait to catch a raindrop. When the drops are caught, the oysters close their shells and dive to the bottom of the sea to patiently grow the pearl. How can we be like these little oysters? How can we live in the world, while leaving aside outside influences so as to patiently grow the truth (an exquisite pearl) within us? That is where Heartfulness plays its part. When the heart is our focus, everything is anyway connected and integrated. The heart does not distinguish the physical, subtle and causal levels of existence, because the heart encompasses all of them.

By diving into the heart each morning in meditation, we will become like those little oysters. Then we will arrive at the yogic state of *uparati*, where we are no longer controlled by our desires and senses, as our minds are all the time centered in Reality.







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SAMYAMA

PART 1

Dharana: Refining the thought process – aligning the flow of intention inwards towards the Center

Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are the final three limbs of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga. There is no clear separation or definition among them, as they weave together to define the inner spiritual practices of meditation, known as Raja Yoga. These three limbs focus on the real purpose of Yoga and they are the practices of the inner journey known as the spiritual *yatra*. In the remaining articles of the series on Ashtanga Yoga, DAAJI helps us to understand the role of *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*, and how they take us to the culmination of Yoga – union or osmosis with the Ultimate Existence.

e have so far explored the first five limbs of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga – Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara. Each has its purpose, and together they help us refine our thoughts, actions, posture and energy, including the breath, and direct our senses inwards to the field of consciousness. All this prepares us to go deeper into the heart and mind. Through Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi, we open up the potential of the subtle bodies and finally go beyond these, eventually to the Absolute state. If you can visualize a human being as made up of matter, energy and the absolute state of nothingness – body, mind and soul – then we are now moving away from the world of matter into the realm of subtler and subtler forms of energy until eventually we reach the Center of our being, which is the Absolute nothingness at the base of everything.

PATANJALI'S SUTRAS

There are many Sutras about *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* in Patanjali's seminal research. Here are a few that are relevant to this article:

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*. It comes in meditation when the form or the external part drops off on its own.

3.4: Trayam ekatra samyama

When the three processes of *Dharana*, *Dhyana*, and *Samadhi* are taken together as one, on the same object, place or point, it is called *Samyama*. The form has vanished, and only the meaning remains.

3.5: Tad jayat prajna lokah

Through the mastery of the three-fold process of *Samyama*, the light of knowledge, transcendental insight and higher consciousness come.

3.6: Tasya bhumisu viniyogah

Samyama is gradually applied to the finer planes, states or stages of practice.

3.7: Trayam antar angam purvebhyah

These three practices [of *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*] are more internal than the previous five practices.

3.8: Tad api bahir angam nirbijasya

They are, however, still more external than the real *Samadhi*, which does not have an object or even a seed object on which to concentrate.

3.9: Vyutthana nirodhah samskara abhibhava pradurbhavau nirodhah ksana chitta anvayah nirodhah-parinamah

That high level of mastery called *nirodhah-parinamah* occurs in the transition stage where the rising tendency of deep impressions converges with the subsiding tendency, and the attention of the mind field itself.

3.10: Tasya prashanta vahita samskarat

The steady flow of this state of *nirodhah-parinamah* continues by creating the habit of doing the practice day after day.

3.11: Sarvarathata ekagrata ksaya udaya chittasya samadhi-parinamah

The mastery called *samadhi-parinamah* is the transition stage in which the tendency to multi-pointedness subsides while the tendency to one-pointedness arises.

3.12: Tatah punah shanta-uditau tulyapratyayau chittasya ekagrata-parinimah

The mastery called *ekagrata-parinamah* is the transition stage in which one-pointedness of consciousness arises and subsides sequentially. The idea of time vanishes, the past and present are as one, and the mind is said to be concentrated.

3.13: Hirdaye chitta samvit

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

Patanjali describes *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* together, because he considers them progressive and interrelated aspects of concentration or inward settledness. Meditation generally starts with *Dharana*, a supposition. This supposition or *sankalpa* initiates the flow of intention with thought energy and direction.



If you can visualize a human being as made up of matter, energy and the absolute state of nothingness – body, mind and soul – then we are now moving away from the world of matter into the realm of subtler and subtler forms of energy until eventually we reach the Center of our being. As that intention moves deeper, diving into the field of experience of the heart, we move into *Dhyana* or meditation. The outcome is *Samadhi*, or absorbency in the object of meditation. And the quality of the *Samadhi* we experience depends on the field we create through this process of meditation.

DHARANA

Dharana is often translated as 'concentration', and certainly that is one part of it. But its meaning is broader and far more interesting than simply the ability to concentrate with one-pointed attention. *Dharana* also covers the ability to contain, to hold, and, like a womb, to nurture in the same way that Mother Earth gives birth to trees from seeds that are planted in her soil. As our consciousness expands, that ability to contain eventually becomes so vast that we are able to contain God within us.

At the beginning of the Heartfulness Meditation, we make the supposition that "the Source of Divine Light within my heart is drawing me inwards", and we then gestate, envelop, hold and nurture that supposition. *Dharana* results in concentration because there is an unbroken flow towards one thing that is contained and nurtured in the heart. There is some effort involved, through the process of *sankalpa* directing the flow of thought, but the ideal is to cultivate a capacity for effortless effort. This supposition guides our consciousness into the current that is flowing inwards to the Source, so we are moving towards the goal of complete oneness with the Divine Principle. Holding and affirming that spiritual goal in Yoga is *Dharana*.

Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur has explained it as follows¹:

"It is very essential for everyone to fix their thought, at the very outset, upon the goal that they have to attain so that their thought and will may pave the way up to it. It has been observed that those on the path of spirituality who did not fix that final state for their goal have definitely remained short of the mark because, before arriving at the final point, they mistook one or the other of the intermediate states to be the final point or Reality, and stopped there. Thus they suffered merely for not having fixed their goal. Even in worldly matters, so long as a person does not keep their object in view, their efforts are never so intensified as to ensure success."

How does this practice of Dharana resonate in the field of universal consciousness? When we sincerely take up the goal of becoming one with the Ultimate state, the centripetal flow creates a stir in the Infinite. Divinity itself becomes convinced of our one-pointedness of purpose, of our earnest intent. Then it is no longer simply 'me' moving towards the goal; the dynamic changes to that of a lover and the Beloved, where attraction is from both sides and the distance between lover and Beloved becomes less and less. Closeness goes on increasing and this eventually leads to mergence in the Ultimate, assuming the form of the latent motion that existed at the time of creation. Our intention, our ideal, results in intense longing, craving and impatience, and this is much more than mere concentration. Dharana keeps our meditation fixed upon the final goal, and this is vital to bringing about the final state.

This same aspect of *Dharana* also allows us to hold and enliven the inner states we receive during every meditation, so that they become part of us. This way, the gifts we receive in each meditation can be absorbed and their qualities become second nature.

¹Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur, 2016. *Commentary on the Ten Maxims of Sahaj Marg*, Shri Ram Chandra Mission, India

SANKALPA

In fact, *Dharana* is integral to every aspect of Heartfulness practice, because it is the fuel underlying *sankalpa* or subtle suggestion. As Swami Vivekananda simply puts it, "What is thought? Thought is a force, as is gravitation or repulsion. From the infinite storehouse of force in nature, the instrument called *Chit* takes hold of some, absorbs it and sends it out as thought."

With *sankalpa* we can utilize the power of thought in a very effective way. When we master this art of *Dharana, sankalpa* becomes so potent because it is the subtlest suggestion resonating in a pure, open, loving heart connected to the Divine and thus supported by the Divine Will. This is also the secret behind the potency of prayer. When *Dharana* is prayerful, offered in a vacuumized pure heart, then the Divine flows in and automatically draw the attention towards the Ultimate. Any thought or intention offered in this state is bound to reach its target.

TRANSMISSION

Heartfulness Meditation is aided by Transmission, which facilitates effortless inward focus, because it has come from the Source itself. It naturally turns our attention deep within to be in osmosis with the most sublime *Samadhi* from the very beginning. As mentioned in the last article on *Pratyahara*, personal transformation is from the inside out, from the state of *Samadhi* outwards. We are given such support so that the journey is one of effortless effort.

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RESEARCH

The yogic science of inner revelation depends on *Dharana*. From an initial supposition, we meditate, diving deeper into the universal consciousness of *Samadhi* and then resurface at the end of the meditation to observe, record and infer what we experienced and what changed in our inner state. Without *Dharana* nurturing the initial

idea, and allowing it to deepen and unfold during the process of meditation, such revelation would not be possible. In fact, the reason why many people cannot 'read' their inner states is because they do not cultivate *Dharana* during meditation.

To do so requires exercising the cognitive functions of the *manomaya kosha* and *vignanamaya kosha*, observing In fact, expanded consciousness generally leads to inspiration, which is also how most great discoveries have occurred in the realm of science, and how most artistic masterpieces have been created. For example, Kekulé's dream led him to the discovery of the benzene ring, the Archimedes Principle was discovered while Archimedes was relaxing in a bathtub.

with full consciousness, and integrating the knowledge received by the mind in new and creative ways. One way to develop this capacity is to write a journal after each meditation, noting down what happened. Another way is to actively use meditation as a tool for research, by offering a question or a supposition to be explored through expanded consciousness during meditation. The mind in a meditative state is able to gestate an idea or problem with a much higher and broader perspective than rational logic can achieve.

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Swami Vivekananda explains clearly in the introduction to his book, *Raja Yoga*, that Yoga is the science whereby we gain direct experience and perception of the inner states of a human being.

He says, "The science of Raja Yoga, in the first place, proposes to give us such a means of observing the internal states. The instrument is the mind itself. The power of attention, when properly guided, and directed towards the internal world, will analyze the mind and illumine facts for us. The powers of the mind are like rays of light dissipated; when they are concentrated they illumine. This is our only means of knowledge."

This is the potential and beauty of Dharana.



It is the Divine Presence that gives value to life. This Presence is the source of all peace, all joy, all security. Find this Presence in yourself and all your difficulties will disappear.

MIRRA ALFASSA (THE MOTHER)



SAMYAMA

PART 2

Dhyana: Refining the subtle bodies – expanding the spectrum of consciousness to reach the Center

Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are the final three limbs of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga. Together they comprise the practices of meditation known as Raja Yoga, and are associated with the inner journey known as the spiritual yatra. In this article, DAAJI focuses on consciousness, the causes of disturbance in consciousness, and how to bring consciousness to a peaceful, calm state through Dhyana, meditation, in order to realize our true nature.

o far we have been exploring Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi as different limbs or aspects of Yoga, but this is only for the purpose of understanding; in reality they are not separate. In fact all the techniques and methods of Yoga have been designed for one purpose alone, and that is how to use the mind. The mind can be used for freedom or for bondage: when the mind is used with right purpose it is clear and wise,

with an expansive consciousness leading to liberation and beyond; when it is not used with right purpose it is confused, chaotic, emotionally turbulent and selfdestructive, and consciousness contracts in on itself like a black hole, leading to misery. So by integrating all the limbs of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga, the mind can realize its rightful purpose; they create the foundation for the mind to come to its original state of infinite potential. "The proper method to control the activities of the mind is to fix it on one sacred thought, just as we do in meditation, and dispel from it everything unwanted or superfluous. Over the course of time, after constant practice, the mind becomes disciplined and regulated, and much of the inner disturbance is eliminated."

Babuji

The first six limbs contribute to that journey in the following way:

Yama is the process of removing all the unwanted tendencies, behaviors and thought patterns that limit consciousness and therefore destiny;

Niyama is the process of infusing noble inner qualities and the appropriate attitude and inner focus for the inner journey;

Asana is the focusing of the physical body inwards, so that it participates in this evolution, facilitating the inward flow to the Center in meditation;

Pranayama is the regulation and stabilization of the energy field, bringing it into alignment and purifying it, so that it also participates in this evolution;

Pratyahara is the turning of our attention away from the external pull of the senses, inwards to the field of consciousness; and

Dharana directs the flow of thought towards the goal, and then continues to hold and nurture that intention while we meditate.

But it is *Dhyana* or meditation that provides the real opportunity to dive inwards into the field of consciousness; to go deeper into the heart and master the mind. This is the realm of Heartfulness, of Raja

Yoga. In fact, in the Heartfulness system, Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi are all taken up simultaneously during the course of meditation. Meditation in due course leads to the concentrated state of Samadhi.

Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur describes it as follows: "We have spoiled the mind ourselves by allowing it to wander about aimlessly during leisure hours. The practice has continued for years and it has now become almost its second nature. If we now try to control the mind by putting it under restraint, we meet with little success. The more we try to suppress it by force, the more it rebounds and counteracts, causing greater disturbance. The proper method to control the activities of the mind is to fix it on one sacred thought, just as we do in meditation, and dispel from it everything unwanted or superfluous. Over the course of time, after constant practice, the mind becomes disciplined and regulated, and much of the inner disturbance is eliminated."

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.

PATANJALI'S SUTRAS

This approach of Heartfulness is completely in tune with Patanjali's worldview, as he describes the purpose of Yoga in the first Sutras:

1.1: Atha yoga anushasanam

Now, after prior preparation through the course of life and other practices, the training and practice of Yoga begins.

1.2: Yogash chitta vritti nirodhah

Yoga is the restraining of the field of consciousness from fluctuating and taking various forms.

1.3: Tada drashtuh svarupe avasthanam

At the time [of meditation], the Seer rests in its own original essence, its own true nature.

1.4: Vritti sarupyam itaratra

At other times, the Seer appears to take on the characteristics of the fluctuating forms associated with thought patterns.

1.5: Vrittayah pancatayah klishta aklishta

Those thought patterns (*vrittis*) are of five different types, of which some are painful and impure and some are agreeable and pure

1.6: Pramana viparyaya vikalpa nidra smritayah

The five types are: right knowledge and cognition, misconception and not seeing clearly, verbal delusion and imagination, sleep, and memory.

1.7: Pratyaksha anumana agamah pramanani

There are three ways to develop right knowledge: direct perception, inference and competent evidence from others.

1.8: Viparyayah mithya jnanam atad rupa pratistham

Misconception or illusion is false knowledge that results from perceiving a thing as other than what it is.

1.9: Shabda jnana anupati vastu shunyah vikalpah

Verbal delusion and imagination result from words having no grounding in reality.

1.10: Abhava pratyaya alambana vritti nidra

Sleep is the *vritti* that embraces the feeling of nothingness, the absence of other thought patterns.

1.11: Anubhuta vishaya asampramoshah smritih

Memory is when the thought patterns of previous impressions have not been removed, and they then return to consciousness.

1.12: Abhyasa vairagyabhyam tat nirodhah

All these *vrittis* are mastered by practice and by the letting go of attachment.

In this sequence of sutras, Yoga is described as the refinement and purification of consciousness to its original balanced state, known as *Samadhi*, and Patanjali explains that this happens through meditation, so as to master the fluctuations that disturb consciousness from its original state.

CONSCIOUSNESS

It is useful here to understand what *chit* or consciousness is, and how the *vrittis* or fluctuations in the *chit* lake disturb the mind and create imbalance. Imagine the field of consciousness as a canvas or a lake. In its original natural state, consciousness is still and pure, like a completely blank canvas or a still crystal clear lake. *Vrittis* are the fluctuations caused by thinking and feeling. They cause turbulence, disturbing that stillness and purity. They are the play of energy, as *chit* absorbs some of the universal energy of *Prana* and sends it out as thought. These vrittis are the waves or ripples of energy that form upon the lake of consciousness when external things affect it, and this happens because we take in so many impressions through our senses.

Swami Vivekananda explains it very simply: "Why should we practice? Because each action is like the pulsations quivering over the surface of the lake. The vibration dies out, and what is left? The *samskaras*, the impressions. When a large number of these impressions



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.

are left on the mind, they coalesce and become a habit. It is said, 'Habit is second nature,' but it is first nature also, and the whole nature of man; everything that we are is the result of habit. That gives us consolation, because, if it is only habit, we can make and unmake it at any time.

The *samskaras* are left by these vibrations passing out of our mind, each one of them leaving its result. Our character is the sum total of these marks, and according as some particular wave prevails one takes that tone. If good prevails, one becomes good; if wickedness, one becomes wicked; if joyfulness, one becomes happy. When meditation is seen as a separate event or activity of the day, it is rarely effective. In contrast, when we prepare for meditation the night before, and then afterwards try to carry the condition received in meditation into the rest of the day, then its effectiveness is dynamic and life-changing.

... Never say any man is hopeless, because he only represents a character, a bundle of habits, which can be checked by new and better ones. Character is repeated habits, and repeated habits alone can reform character."

The *chit* is also always trying to re-establish its original stillness, purity and simplicity, and that is why the mind is constantly throwing off thoughts. It is removing the heaviness and turbulence created by the accumulation of *vrittis* both in the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. It is attempting to calm the waves and ripples so that the *chit* lake becomes like a still clear pond where we can see to the bottom, to the soul.

That is also why we dream – in that relaxed sleepy state the mind is trying to purify the canvas of consciousness by throwing off impressions from the subconscious so that it can dive into the deep sleep state to touch the soul. Dreaming is an obvious prelude to deep sleep. But dreaming is generally not enough to purify the *chit*, as most of us accumulate more impressions than we can remove. We create an imbalance because our sensory organs draw us outwards into mental and emotional stimulation. The more hectic our lives, the less stillness in our lives, the more stimulation we crave, the more desires we want fulfilled, the greater the load of impressions we will accumulate, so the more muddy and turbulent the water is in the lake.

THE FIRST STEP IN YOGA

Because of this, the first step in Yoga is to restrain that outward pull of the senses and start the return journey inwards through meditation towards a purified consciousness. We start with meditation, and the other steps of *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara* and *Dharana* naturally come into play along with *Dhyana*.

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PREPARATION FOR MEDITATION

It makes a very vital difference to the quality of meditation the next morning if we prepare the evening before. The first thing is to remove the impressions at the end of the workday, through the practice of Heartfulness Cleaning. In this practice, the *chit* is cleaned of the fluctuating *vrittis*, in the same way that taking a bath cleans the body. The fluctuations reduce, so that the canvas of consciousness moves towards a state of stillness, lightness and purity. This removal of these unwanted impressions is active *Yama*.

We continue with *Yama* by also removing the behavioral tendencies and habits that have developed as a result of these impressions. The heart and mind are often preoccupied because of the various emotions, interactions with others, habits and behavioral patterns that occur during any day. Someone may have hurt us, we may be



jealous of someone else's success, worried about money or children, or feeling resentful or fearful. We may even feel guilty about something we did or did not do. So the reflective, quieter time during the evening, before going to bed, is a wonderful time to scan the day's activities, and decide not to repeat anything that we may have done wrong, even unintentionally.

This is also the time to connect with our fellow beings, acknowledging them all as brothers and sisters on this journey of life, no matter what they have done, in order to release all complexities in relationships. How can any resentment, jealousy or fear of others remain in our hearts when we accept everyone as one family?

Finally, the time just before sleep is perfect for connecting deep within the heart to the Self through the Heartfulness Prayer. As a result of this connection, sleep is also rejuvenative – physically, mentally and spiritually – and peaceful instead of mentally turbulent. It is like the difference between sailing on a smooth still lake and on a stormy sea.

Such rejuvenative sleep allows us to wake early and meditate in the stillness of Nature at dawn. That is one of the most profound and beautiful experiences any human being can have. The Center within us resonates with Nature's still pure Center at that stationary cusp between night and day. We are able to dive deep.

Before starting the Heartfulness Meditation, we are conscious of first purifying mind and body. Then we sit in a comfortable inward-facing posture (*Asana*) and relax so that our breathing and all our energies are able to focus inwards (*Pranayama* and *Pratyahara*). Then we make the supposition (*Dharana*) that "the We make the suggestion in our heart, and it resonates with the surroundings of the Heart Region. This vibrationless vibration then expands further, extending to all the chakras of the human system and they all begin to glow. It goes on expanding, passing through region after region until they are all absorbed in the innermost circle.

Source of Divine Light within my heart is drawing me inwards," and through *Dharana* we hold and nurture that supposition in the heart as naturally and effortlessly as possible so that we slip into *Dhyana*. *Pranahuti* or Yogic Transmission facilitates this process of effortless inward focus towards *Samadhi*.

We make the suggestion in our heart, and it resonates with the surroundings of the Heart Region. This vibrationless vibration then expands further, extending to all the chakras of the human system and they all begin to glow. It goes on expanding, passing through region after region until they are all absorbed in the innermost circle. Sometimes we feel dazzling light at the region we have reached, and the dazzling light then fades as we journey forward. And eventually we cross the different stages of maya and find ourselves in a totally calm atmosphere. There are stages and stages after that as we journey to the Center.

Meditation is our means of approaching the Center. When we meditate, the central power we have remains in force, and it disperses the clouds and obstacles on the way. This can only be experienced practically. Eventually we find ourselves swimming in everlasting peace and happiness. At this stage the mind has automatically become disciplined and regulated, our senses naturally come under control, and we gain mastery over them. All this is the result of meditation on the heart with the aid of Yogic Transmission, *pranabuti* or *pranasya pranaba*.



SAMYAMA

Dhyana and Samadhi: The process of revelation and transcendence

Dhyana, often translated as meditation, is the centerpiece of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga, and through the inner spiritual journey it leads us to Samadhi, the original state. In this article, DAAJI focuses on the practice of meditation and how it leads us into Samadhi.

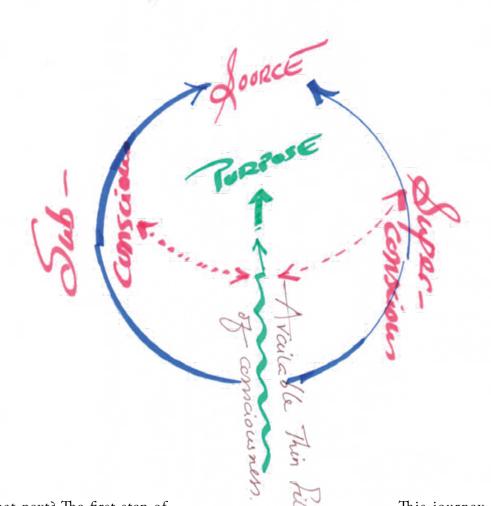
Meditation is a state of intense inner wakefulness. —The Upanishads

There are two very common images we see of people meditating. The first is that of a practitioner sitting completely erect in one of the traditional cross-legged sitting *Asanas*, mindful, witnessing thoughts, and very alert.

The second is of a practitioner in an absorbed state of *Samadhi*, unconscious of everything around, sometimes in a stone-like state. Again, he or she usually sits in one of the traditional cross-legged *Asanas* but often the head has fallen forward, sometimes even to the ground.

These seem like totally different approaches to meditation – one fully conscious and aware, and the other fully unconscious and absorbed in something that resembles deep sleep. In fact, these are different stages of the meditative process that need to be understood within the overall context of consciousness. What actually happens to our consciousness in meditation? That depends on many factors, some of which we will explore here.

One of those factors is preparation. How do you prepare for meditation? In the last article of this series, we discussed the importance of preparing the night before for morning meditation. Now let's look at the morning meditation process in more detail. First it is important to get settled physically, going to your chosen place of meditation, finding a comfortable posture, relaxing the body, and becoming quiet. Patanjali recommended relaxation as a prerequisite to meditation or Dhyana, because unless your body is relaxed your attention will move from one part of your body to another, as you try to get comfortable. To meditate well, you need to be able to gently close your eyes and passively let things unfold. Arriving at effortlessness combined with a steady and comfortable posture prepares you to plunge into meditation, because you have created the field. If you don't first prepare in this way, if you are rushing or disturbed, how effective will your meditation be? So the first thing is to settle.



What next? The first step of meditation is often defined as thinking about one thing continuously, so usually you would start by gently focusing on the object of your meditation. This is actually the aspect of Ashtanga Yoga we know as *Dharana* – focusing attention, holding and nurturing an idea. Whatever suggestion you make in meditation becomes your goal, your purpose for meditating, and it defines what you will become.

But we often get stuck with this definition of meditation and lose sight of the real purpose of *Dhyana*. In Yoga, meditation is the process of revelation, where the true nature of the object upon which we are meditating is gradually uncovered. Such revelation comes not as thought but as feeling. In meditation we shift from thinking to feeling; from thinking about the Divine to feeling the Divine Presence and then eventually to becoming one with that Presence. It is a journey from the complexity of the mind to the simplicity of the heart and through the heart to the very Center of our being.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS SPECTRUM

This journey takes us from the surface level of limited consciousness to deeper levels where we awaken and experience more and more of the full spectrum of superconsciousness-consciousnesssubconsciousness. And so we have different experiences along the way. There are times when we are very alert and aware during meditation, either in stillness or when the mind is turbulent with thoughts, emotions, expectations, desires and concerns. There are other times when we go beyond consciousness into deep sleep-like sushupti states, when we appear to be totally unconscious of what is going, because we have been taken to dimensions that are not in our conscious awareness. There are also dream-like semi-conscious states,

where our subconscious is very active. Then there is the ultimate expanded state where consciousness spans the full spectrum from total absorption to total alertness.

And the journey is not linear – it is not that early on we are restless and then we become absorbed or still. In fact, at each stage or point along the way, we will feel some disturbance with the change as we enter a new realm, and then gradually we may become unconsciously absorbed until our consciousness settles in the new place and becomes familiar enough to feel comfortable there. Eventually we will 'own' that place, and we no longer notice anything about it – our consciousness has somehow expanded into that realm. Then it is time to move on to the next point or chakra. So the interplay of settledness and restlessness, of unconscious and conscious *Samadhi*, will be cyclical as we journey onwards and inwards.

Why are some of us able to dive deep into various dimensions of human experience, while others seem to float on the surface, stuck with thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations, and distracted by what is happening around? We can consider the former to be vertical expansion of consciousness into different dimensions of existence, while the latter is horizontal expansion within the same dimension of existence. Both have their place in our evolution, but it is important to know the difference because without vertical growth we do not evolve. If we only stay on the surface, we may become very adept at witnessing our thoughts and emotions, but we will be stuck in a small band of consciousness that is a minute part of our being.

THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION

Here the object of our meditation becomes very important: What do we want to become? With what do we identify? We have discussed at length in past articles about the various bodies we possess – the physical body or *sthool sharir*, the subtle body or *sookshma sharir*, also known as the mind, and the causal body or *karan sharir*, also known as the soul. Our bodies and minds are both vehicles for the soul, the cause of our existence, the master of our existence. The mind is the interface between the body and the soul. During meditation, or at any other time for that matter, we can direct our attention towards worldly physical life or to the soul's existence, or we can acknowledge and integrate both, which is the path of Yoga.

Most importantly, through meditation we experience the master behind the vehicles. We discover firsthand that we are not just the vehicles of body and mind, but also the one using the vehicles. *Pranahuti* or Yogic Transmission facilitates this experience and when that happens our meditation soars. The master within witnesses. The body and mind take their rightful natural place, so that we can identify with the master within, with Reality, with the cause of our existence.

It is just like a pianist using the piano keys, strings and pedals to play music, but it is obvious that she is none of these things – they are vehicles for her to make music. Regular practice of meditation allows us to understand this difference, as our consciousness observes the mind during meditation.

THE THREE BODIES

The repercussions of this are astounding. For example, once we identify with consciousness and the soul, our perception of death changes. Does the soul die? Does consciousness die? Only the body dies, and those aspects of the mind connected directly with the body, like the senses and energy channels. When we leave the physical body it is like removing a set of clothes that no longer fit. Most aspects of the subtle body continue onwards with the soul, and these are the functions that we know as *manas* (contemplative mind), *buddhi* (intelligence) and *ahankar* (ego) along with *chit* (consciousness); in fact the subtle body departs along with our soul at the moment of death. And once we are pure consciousness,

SUBTLE BODY

Sookshma Sharir

Consciousness (Chit) Mind (Manas): Intellect (Buddhi): Ego (Ahankar)

CAUSAL BODY

Karana Sharir Atman

PHYSICAL BODY

Sthoola Sharir

ahankar becomes pure identity. When we witness life, the ego dissolves, whereas when we are busy 'doing' in the world, the ego generally strengthens. The trick is to learn to 'do' without doing, and that is where meditation also comes into play. When we meditate, we are gifted a meditative state. If we are able to carry the consciousness of that state with us throughout the day into worldly activities, if we let that state ooze from the Center of our being into everything we do, then we learn to 'do' without being the doer.

PATANJALI'S SUTRAS

Patanjali describes this concept in his Sutras:

4.18: Sada jnatah chitta vrittayah tat prabhu purusasya aparinamitvat

The activities of the mind are always known by pure consciousness, because that pure consciousness is superior to, supports and is the master over the mind. Rather consciousness operates through the mind. The Lord of the mind is unchangeable.

4.19: Na tat svabhasam drishyatvat

Mind is not self-illuminating, as it is the object of knowledge and perception by pure consciousness.

The mind is like the moon that needs the sun to illuminate it. In meditation, when we connect with the Source, pure universal consciousness illuminates the mind, and with Yogic Transmission the mind is very quickly illuminated. As a result, we also become aware when we are not centered, and so we can adjust and recalibrate ourselves. Once we are centered, the master within disciplines and guides our lives.

In the Heartfulness practice, from the beginning we establish a connection with this inner master so that our focus goes directly to the Center of our being, to the Source. It is the same Source as the Source of all things, which is also called the Ultimate, Infinite, Absolute and God. This is the way we bring about vertical expansion in our consciousness during meditation – our focus is on the Center not on the periphery. While we are meditating we are not interested in analyzing our thoughts and how we can do better during the day-today happenings of life; we keep that for another time and practice. No, meditation is for diving deeper, as at that time we are interested in expanded consciousness, pure consciousness, dynamic consciousness. For this reason it is also hard to write about the states of meditation, because the language of describing things is of duality and we are going beyond the duality of the mind, beyond mind, beyond even consciousness, to what is behind all of those things – that which transcends duality.

SAMADHI

It is through this inner connection that we are able to dive deep in meditation and journey a little further each time, becoming absorbed in various levels of *Samadhi. Samadhi* is highly sought after in Yoga. It is the eighth and culminating stage in Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga. In the Sutras, Patanjali describes the first level of *Samadhi* as a stone-like consciousness where we are oblivious to what is happening. This is because we have journeyed into those parts of our mind beyond awareness. In the second state we are in a dreamlike subconscious *Samadhi*, and in the third we are fully aware and absorbed simultaneously, which is known as *Sahaj Samadhi*. In Heartfulness, quite quickly we are able to experience the lighter, more evolved states of *Samadhi*.

Sahaj Samadhi is a condition where we are deeply absorbed in meditation, and at the same time fully conscious of everything else that is going on. In the Yoga Shastras, this is known as the *Turiya* condition or the fourth state. Everything is in our view – we are aware of outside noises, the thoughts in our head, and the deepest inner connection with the Source. It is all integrated within us, so that everything becomes an expression of the deepest part of our being. Our consciousness is whole and complete.

We can also take this state out into our day, while we are busy doing other things. We are simultaneously able to focus on work, on the surroundings, on the TV, on something happening outside, and still remain in communion with our inner being. We can also simultaneously witness the Transmission flowing, and any thoughts that arise, and we are able to decide the next step we should be taking. We remain peaceful with all these things happening at the same time. This is known as the *Turiyatit* state in Yoga. It is a state where we have full spectrum consciousness with eyes open. There is no need to focus on any particular thing. The moment we focus on any particular thing, it is no longer meditative but concentration.

THE SCIENCE OF MEDITATION

This is not all there is to meditation, as there is a vast science and underlying philosophy behind it, which can best be studied practically. Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur has written:

"People may ask why it is necessary to proceed with meditation at the first stage of Raja Yoga. The answer is quite plain and simple. We are now gathering ourselves at one point so that our individual mind may leave its habit of wandering about. By this practice we set our individual mind on the right path because it is now metamorphosing its habit. When this is done, our thoughts naturally do not go astray."

"Meditation is the only thing that can lead you to the end. There is no other means of approaching the Center. We have seen that the one thought arising out of the Center created so big a universe. We have got within us the same central force, though marred by our wrong doings. We utilize the same power, which is automatic in us. We take work from the same force through meditation. This is how we proceed naturally and with Nature's force."



SAMYAMA

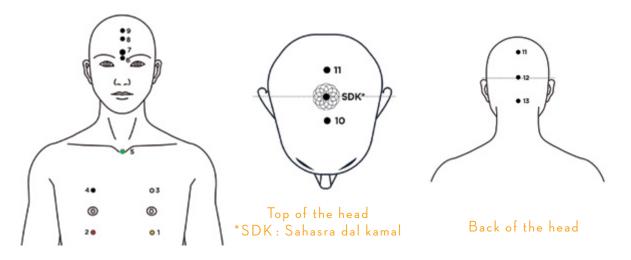
PART 4

Samadhi: Realizing non-being – the absolute state of balance at the Center

Samadhi is the eighth limb of Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga. It is considered to be the goal of Yoga, an inner experience of purity and balance that is one with the original state that existed before creation. During our yogic practice, we also encounter various stages or glimpses of *Samadhi* as we progress on the journey towards this original state. In the final article of this series, DAAJI explains this unfolding experience of *Samadhi* and how we eventually come to the ultimate goal of Yoga through our practice.

e have now reached the real purpose of Yoga, the zenith of yogic practice, the much sought-after state of *Samadhi*. The word '*Samadhi*' simply means 'that which prevailed before creation came into existence', the absolute balanced state of oneness or nothingness or total emptiness. Our soul has always been craving for that ultimate state of balance, and, unless and until we attain it within, the soul will always find some sort of shortcoming in whatever we do in life. Once we achieve that *Samadhi* state in all our activities, both worldly and spiritual, then true happiness comes on its own, even when we fail in our actions. We remain unshaken.

Samadhi is the ultimate spiritual relaxation and the ultimate effortless concentration, and it is considered to be the goal of human existence in Yoga. You might even say that it is the reason for our existence as a species. Every species has a purpose on this Earth, and ours is to go back to the original state. Hence we have a spectrum of consciousness of a high enough order so that we can realize this purpose. Every other limb of Ashtanga Yoga is only a training and a preparation to help us arrive at that goal. It is the reason we refine our posture, our breath, or thoughts, our sensory inputs and our behavioral reactions to the outside world. It is the reason we turn all our faculties inwards and meditate. We are going home.



Chakras 1 to 13, from the heart to the occipital prominence at the back of the head.

STAGES OF SAMADHI

In its pure form *Samadhi* is that ultimate state, but we also experience various glimpses or stages of Samadhi along the way, throughout our journey. Those experiences vary according to the view from the vantage point we have reached at any given stage. We view the ultimate state from the position we are at in the present moment, and that becomes our current experience of Samadhi. In the Heartfulness Way, we invite such states of Samadhi day after day and make them permanent. So when practitioners speak of experiencing Samadhi during meditation, they are speaking about these experiences that vary from person to person, and for the same person at difference stages in the journey. There is a different flavor of Samadhi at each point or chakra, and also within each chakra, as we enter new levels. It goes on changing until eventually we can experience all of these states in one go. By the time we are at chakra 12, for example, we have already experienced infinite variations of Samadhi.

These stages of *Samadhi* have been described in a number of ways in classical yogic texts. In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali describes the various levels, as mentioned in the previous article, all the way up to *Sahaj Samadhi* or natural absorption.

As mentioned previously, Sahaj Samadhi is a condition where we are deeply absorbed in meditation, and at the same time fully conscious of everything else that is going on. In the Yoga Shastras this is known as the Turiya condition, or the fourth state. Everything is in view. When we learn how to take this state into our day, we are then simultaneously able to focus on work, on the surroundings, on the TV, on something happening outside, and still remain in communion with our inner spiritual state, the condition that is prevailing within, something that is about to come into our system, thoughts that arise, and the next step we should be taking. We are peaceful witnessing all these things simultaneously. This is known as the Turiyatit state in Yoga, where we have three-hundred-and-sixtydegree consciousness with eyes open. There is no need to focus on any particular thing. The moment we focus on a particular thing, it is no longer meditation, but concentration.

In its pure form Samadhi is that ultimate state, but we also experience various glimpses or stages of Samadhi along the way, throughout our journey. Those experiences vary according to the view from the vantage point we have reached at any given stage.

REFINING THE SUBTLE BODIES TO EXPERIENCE SAMADHI

Trying to experience *Samadhi* at a physical level is only a reflection of Reality. When the heaviest layers of our system are removed, and we transcend the various sheaths of the human system, known as the *koshas*, *Samadhi* has a different flavor. It is like the difference between seeing the bottom of a pond through still crystal clear water versus through dirty turbulent water. The more sediment in the water, the more turbulence, the more obscured the view and the less we are aware of what is happening.

We have entrapped the soul in heaviness, turbulence and complexity as a result of our *samskaras* – the impressions we have accumulated from the past, and the layers formed due to the seeds of future *samskaras* – as well as our ego. Until our inner journey crosses the 5 points in the region of the heart known as the *Pind Pradesh*, we are still very much entrapped in duality, in opposites or *dwandwas*, in likes versus dislikes, in likes versus indifference, in satisfaction versus dissatisfaction, in clarity versus confusion, and in all of the emotional spectra that characterize human life. These emotions include: greed, jealousy, lust, guilt, resentment, self-pity and prejudice versus contentment; anxiety and worry versus peace; hate and anger versus love and compassion; and fear versus courage. While our minds are prey to



It is perhaps the greatest tragedy of humanity that most of us have lost control of these subtle bodies. Instead we let desires, ego, worldly worries, passion, guilt and prejudice pull us in all directions. This is the reason for the problems humanity faces today: human conflict and abuse, environmental issues, emotional problems, mental illness and stress-related diseases. The whole purpose of Yoga is to lighten this burden constantly created by the subtle bodies.

these opposite polarities, they become the seeds for the transmigration of the soul from life to life, recycling from one body to another in the process we know as reincarnation or rebirth.

When we remain away from the Source, from the cause of our existence, these opposites continue to prevail, because our senses continue to be drawn outwards. The functions of the mind known as the subtle bodies – *chit* (consciousness), *manas* (contemplation), *buddhi* (intellect) and *ahankar* (ego) – are also directed mostly towards worldly matters. In the process, the soul is buried within layers of complexity and we cannot connect with the center of our being. Because it is buried, it is impossible to lead a balanced joyful life because joy emanates from the soul. In fact it is the quality of the soul, so what do you think happens when we bury it and cannot connect within?

Once our attention is directed towards the Source of our being, then our inner world begins to open up. The three mental functions of contemplation, intellect and ego begin to fulfil a higher purpose. They become refined and attuned to assisting consciousness to evolve to a higher plane of existence. Then the soul receives its due attention and nourishment, and we are able to function holistically, with body, mind and soul in harmony. Though our consciousness transcends from one level to another, yet during deep sleep none of us are aware of it. The intellect and ego have no recourse during sleep; during sleep we are nobody. In contrast, in true *Samadhi*, unlike sleep, there is a natural recourse to the Source.

It is perhaps the greatest tragedy of humanity that most of us have lost control of these subtle bodies. Instead we let desires, ego, worldly worries, passion, guilt and prejudice pull us in all directions. This is the reason for the problems humanity faces today: human conflict and abuse, environmental issues, emotional problems, mental illness and stress-related diseases. The whole purpose of Yoga is to lighten this burden constantly created by the subtle bodies. But it is not that we are external and passive victims of our own destiny. God has bestowed us with the wisdom to use the same instruments, these subtle bodies, to trace our way back to the Source.Swami Vivekananda explains it so clearly in his commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras when he says, "Chit manifests itself in all these different forms scattering, darkening, weakening and concentrating. These are the four states in which the mind-stuff manifests itself. First, a scattered form is activity. Its tendency is to manifest in the form of pleasure or of pain. Then the dull form is darkness, the only tendency of which is to injure others. The *Ekagra*, the concentrated form of chit, is what brings us to Samadhi."



Ekagrata is the centripetal tendency of consciousness, which we can bring about in meditation supported by all the other practices of Ashtanga Yoga. Patanjali summarizes it in one of the most important and profound of his Yoga Sutras, when he says:

4.6: Tatra dhyana jam anasayam

Only the original mind, which is uncovered as a result of meditation, is desireless and free from impressions. The original mind exists in itself, without the need for support, cause or motivation.

PRACTICAL TOOLS

In Heartfulness, it is *Pranahuti* that makes meditation so effective, as it gives us glimpses of our original mind from the very first meditation. Just as fish experience different depths in a pond of water, by swimming up and down, *Pranahuti* carries us effortlessly to depths of *Samadhi* consciousness we would not otherwise experience so easily and quickly. It can also be likened to a lift in a high-rise building – a one-way lift upwards to the purpose of our existence.

The Heartfulness Prayer also has a very profound impact on our deepening experience of *Samadhi*, when it is practiced before sleeping at night and on waking in the morning. Done properly, it connects us prayerfully to our deepest *sushupti* consciousness, and this brings about

Each morning in Meditation, we create a meditative state to carry out into the day. Each evening during Cleaning we create a state of purity to carry with us, and each time we pray we create a prayerful state in the heart so that we stay connected to the Source, vacuumized and receptive. When we retain and nurture these three states throughout the day, it keeps the top spinning of our inner condition – creating a beautiful balanced state.

awareness in the deep-sleep state. We experience the entry and exit to and from various levels of consciousness – known in neuroscience as the spectrum of brainwave frequencies from Delta waves in deep sleep to Gamma waves in highly alert learning states. Our consciousness becomes elastic, expanded and more easily able to move between surface and depth. Gradually, over time, all these states are able to coexist simultaneously in the 360-degree consciousness of *Sahaj Samadhi*. This has to be experienced to be understood – it is such a dynamic, fluid and responsive state of mind.

The daily practice of Heartfulness Cleaning supports the goal of Yoga by purifying the subtle bodies, the field of consciousness. As layer upon layer of *samskaras* are removed, as the purified *koshas* are transcended, as thinking, intellect and ego are refined, and as stillness results, *Samadhi* becomes effortless.

Each morning in Meditation, we create a meditative state to carry out into the day. Each evening during Cleaning we create a state of purity to carry with us, and each time we pray we create a prayerful state in the heart so that we stay connected to the Source, vacuumized and receptive. When we retain and nurture these three states throughout the day, it keeps the top spinning of our inner condition – creating a beautiful balanced state. This practice is known as Constant Remembrance, and when we are able to hold it throughout the day, we not only stop the formation of *samskaras*, but naturally develop the capacity for *Sahaj Samadhi*.

How to do this? First, meditate well. Second, surrender to the soul's existence, to the Source, to the Master within. Surrender is the key, because then there is no force in our efforts, and effortlessness is needed to experience *Samadhi*. After all, how can there be force in the original state of nothingness before creation?

This quality of surrender in a spiritual practitioner is generally not well understood. The ego rebels against surrender, so often there is resistance to the idea. But without this vital quality, *Samadhi* is not possible. It is one reason why having a Guide of caliber is so important, even for those at the highest pinnacle of spiritual evolution. The greatest saints have always had Guides, just like the greatest tennis players have coaches, because without that feeling of receptivity, humility, willingness to accept, and becoming nothing at the feet of Divinity, how will the current of Grace flow? How will dynamic evolution continue? As soon as we say, "I am there," we are done for! So the third thing is to create dependency on a Guide of caliber and see where that takes you. In true Samadhi we go beyond the beginning of creation, beyond the first mind of God, to the state of Tam or Prakriti that rests at the base. We come to the realm of the Absolute, of formlessness, of Akasha. It is the nothingness out of which everything arose and will return, like the nothingness at the center of the seed from which a giant sequoia tree grows.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ULTIMATE STATE

Many people think that *Samadhi* is associated with Divine Light, with *Sat*, with *Purusha* or God, but *Samadhi* is beyond all these things, way beyond *Satchidananda*, even beyond the potentiality at the base of consciousness. In true *Samadhi* we go beyond the beginning of creation, beyond the first mind of God, to the state of *Tam* or *Prakriti* that rests at the base. We come to the realm of the Absolute, of formlessness, of *Akasha*. It is the nothingness out of which everything arose and will return, like the nothingness at the center of the seed from which a giant sequoia tree grows.

But let me end with something for you to ponder. Is this life simply for the soul to return to the Source with the same nothingness with which we came into this world? If that were the case, what would be the point? In each life, each existence, we come with a certain potency or potential. Do we go back with a higher potential, enriched spiritually? If we come with 15X potency, do we return with 100X or 1000X potency? Certainly we would want this life to contribute something to our collective existence. Maybe even after the end of this universe we can also carry forward a greater potential of possibility to contribute to whatever comes next. It is worth considering.

I wish you all the experience of subtler and subtler states of *Samadhi* through the practices of Yoga, until one day you are able to swim in the infinite ocean while also living a joyful human existence. And that swimming is also endless in nature, so actually there is no endpoint to this journey of Yoga.





Karma, Jnana & BHAKTI YOGA

We usually associate Karma, Jnana and Bhakti Yoga with Lord Krishna's teachings to Arjuna on the battlefield in the Bhagavad Gita. These three yogas of action, knowledge and devotion are not seen as separate paths, but as different facets of the journey.

Why is it useful to understand Yoga according to these three aspects? For a start, action is associated with the physical body, knowledge with the mind or subtle body, and devotion with the soul or causal body. Just as the body, mind and soul all function together in a human being, karma, jnana and bhakti are also interwoven. In fact it is in the integration of the three that we integrate our being. Inner Realization is only valid if it is expressed outwardly in action – what Lord Krishna calls skill in action. And how we navigate life is all about the mind and the wisdom we develop. Lord Krishna says, "People are made by belief. As they believe, so they are." Jnana is our rudder in life, the essential aspect of existence, hence the importance of meditation to keep it in the best condition possible to guide us well. And without love and interest, no thought or action has any purpose behind it.

So in these two articles we explore Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga, and the interrelationship among all three. We also explore the origin of our threefold existence at the time of creation, and how movement, thinking and oneness are all inherent in our soul, which has a compound existence. All three join at the midpoint of our being, the human heart, so it is here that we embark on our journey of integration through the practices of Heartfulness.

KARMA, JNANA & BHAKTI YOGA

PART 1

The triad of action, knowledge and connection with the Center

Even before the texts of the Vedas were written down, the three fundamental elements of yogic practice were known as Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. Here DAAJI enlightens us on how these three elements arose, and how mastering karma, jnana and bhakti can help us to reach the stage of oneness known as Yoga.

t is fascinating to me that the most unified concept in the world, Yoga, has been subdivided into so many branches. Just as medical doctors specialize in certain organs of the body and certain illnesses, Yoga practitioners often specialize in just one or two aspects of Yoga. And like medicine, these yogic specializations may take us deeper into each area of speciality and provide very useful and important understanding, but the underlying purpose of Yoga has been lost in the process.

The word 'Yoga' itself means 'union' or 'to bind', and the practices of Yoga are all about unification of the lower self with the higher Self; union of individual consciousness with universal consciousness; and the integration of body, mind and soul into a purified whole. Despite this focus on union, Yoga has also traditionally been classified into three major disciplines – Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. What are these three disciplines and how do they fit together? Is there some purpose to this triadic classification? To understand this, we really need to go back to the time of creation.

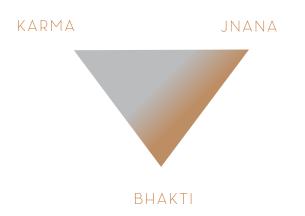
CREATION

What was there before the creation of the universe? There was indescribable and infinite darkness. Then, into this absolute state of nothingness came a stir, and that very first vibration caused the big bang. It was also the first manifestation of consciousness, described in Yoga as AUM. The whole world rests upon it. It is the Absolute Base and foundation of all creation.



As a result, the veil of darkness collapsed and time was born. Individual identity arose, the 'I', and consciousness experienced fear because it was now separated from the Source. Fear arose because of the feeling of separateness or individuality. But as a result of thinking and understanding, fear disappeared, as it still does today whenever we face fear. The Being that existed at the dawn of time wished to expand, and that wish was the beginning of desire, and it began to grow. From then on it was called Brahman.

That first stir faced no friction; nothing prevented it or slowed it down in any way, and so it found an opportunity for infinite expansion. Thus there was movement or expansion (karma) and thinking (jnana), and before these two existed there was the original connection with the Source (bhakti). These three – karma, jnana and bhakti – have been there since the very beginning of the universe, as fundamental elements of life, and together they dance and weave our existence through the fabric of time. They are inseparable, and dependent on each other.



The first and fundamental element is bhakti. We usually translate bhakti into English as 'love and devotion', but it is more fundamental than that. It is the feeling of connectedness with everything through the heart; the link of our individual consciousness with the universal divine consciousness. Without bhakti, karma and jnana are missing that vital element of enthusiasm and spark; so they become purposeless and futile. In these two articles we will explore all three of these elements, their interplay, and the role of spiritual practice and *Pranabuti* in refining them towards our purpose.

KARMA

Karma is action. Why is action necessary? It is the practical manifestation of existence. Without action we cannot infer life, as action expresses life. Karma is the 'movement' part or the *ath* of the *atman* or soul. Karma was also the movement of that stir at the time of creation that became the ongoing 'expansion' part, the *bruha*, of Brahman or God. This aspect of movement and expansion that is critical to all life is what we call karma.

So in Karma Yoga we learn to express life through action according to the natural law. If life is expressed in this natural way, without harming anyone or anything, there is neither merit nor wrongdoing in it. When we spend time observing newborn babies, we soon see that there is no consciousness of right or wrong in their actions, or any thought of legitimate or illegitimate. Every action is so natural, in response to the most basic needs and stimuli. The ideal Karma Yogi is like a newborn – so pure that there is no need for 'right or wrong' consciousness.

But are we there yet? Instead we are entangled in thoughts of right and wrong, creating bondage and the need for ethics and values. When we act in accordance with mundane desires, we develop a chain of karma after karma, of desire after desire, and we become trapped in that net. Then the need to free ourselves arises, otherwise it would not even enter our thought.

To free ourselves from bondage, we have a number of Heartfulness practices:

- The first is a process of Cleaning a super effective method for removing the past impressions that created the bondage and limit or distort our consciousness.
- The second is a practice of Constant Remembrance, in which we maintain a base of resonating with the universal consciousness,

of being united with the rest of Existence throughout the most part of the day. This way we are not laying down new impressions. That state is possible when our consciousness is purified, and we are able to connect with our Center in Meditation in the morning and then carry that state with us throughout the day.

• The third is a practice of prayerful Continuous Improvement at bedtime, in which we let go of any feelings and emotions we hold about wrongdoings, in a guilt-free way, focusing on positive behavioural change and growth. This brings us restful and carefree sleep.

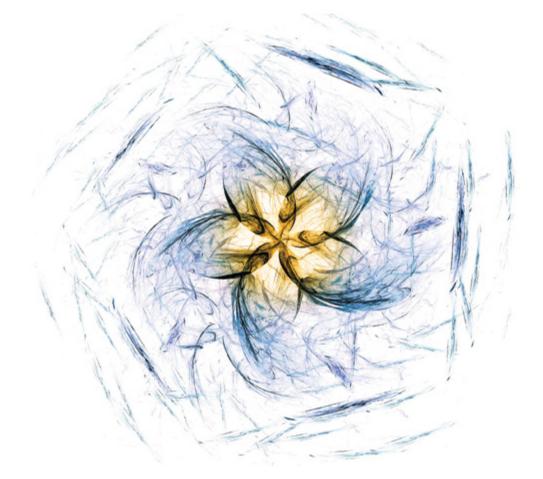
Another remedy that helps to remove this bondage is to convert any intention into a good intention before acting. The best kind of action is to serve our fellow beings in the world without any selfish motive, personal desire or self-importance. When we do this, we are free from any bondage imposed by karma, and we refine ourselves through Karma Yoga.

Simplistically, we can say that there are two types of action, legitimate action and illegitimate action. Legitimate action brings happiness, and illegitimate action does not. An action is illegitimate if there is fear, hesitation and shame, and an action is legitimate if there is fearlessness, courage and valor. But there are also other influences: education, personal and cultural values, collective consciousness and experience. So to know if an action is legitimate, make sure that the following things are all in sync:

> Your religious or ethical principles, The sacred and philosophical texts you follow, Your Guide's teachings, and Your own conscience.

When these are in agreement, an action is legitimate; if they differ, it is illegitimate.

In religious and spiritual texts, and the philosophy of ethics, a lot is made of the principles of right



action. In fact, right character is considered to be the cornerstone of most value systems, such as the Buddha's eightfold path, Confucius' aphorisms, Plato's *Republic* and Ralph Waldo Emerson's *The Sovereignty* of *Ethics*. Probably the most famous *slokas* from the Bhagavad Gita, which can be recited by most school children in India, are *slokas* 47 and 48 from chapter 2, in which Lord Krishna tells Arjuna:

Your authority is in action alone, not in its fruits. The motive for any action should not be in its fruits, nor should you cling to inaction.

While abiding in Yoga, engage in action! Let go of clinging, and let satisfaction and frustration be the same; for it is said that Yoga is poise.

But with this ethical guidance comes an apparent paradox of karma to be resolved in our hearts: on one hand we have the above statements by Lord Krishna, and also his instruction to live life like a lotus in a muddy pond – unaffected by the dirt and sludge The real enlightenment comes when we have full consciousness of the condition that has been enlivened in us at each chakra, and we become one with it.

around. The great sage Ashtavakra also speaks about the importance of contentment as one of the five great qualities to be imbibed.

On the other hand, Patanjali advocates intensity and sincerity in our approach to Yoga. He says that if this intensity in practice, intensity of love, is not there,



then we will not achieve the spiritual goal. We cannot have a lukewarm relationship with anyone let alone God. Ram Chandra of Shahjahanpur also advises us to have restlessness and intense craving for God; he invites us to say goodbye to peace. We will come back to this in part 2, when we explore the interplay between karma, jnana and bhakti.

JNANA

Jnana is knowledge. Just as karma is the practical expression of life, knowledge is its essential aspect. Knowledge is the way we perceive and understand the reality of our life, and this is the distinguishing quality of human beings. Even the word 'man' comes from the Sanskrit word *manas*, meaning mind. Understandably, we place a lot of importance on the mind and knowledge.

The real knowledge of existence is not learnt through books and lectures, however, but through observation and direct experience. We also see this in newborn babies: even from the beginning, knowledge is constantly being absorbed, and they develop a set of cognates that help them survive in this world of experiences.

Knowledge is no doubt enlightening, but it is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end; it always has some purpose. This is so evident in worldly life, for example, reciting C₆H₁₂O₆, the molecular formula for glucose, is not going to elevate my blood glucose level when I am hypoglycaemic, although repeating the formula shows that I have the knowledge of the formula for glucose. And reciting the formula for water – two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom, H_2O – is not going to quench my thirst! Similarly, to make a wooden chair I will have to practice carpentry and wood turning; and to learn swimming I will have to get into the water.

But what is it that human beings are supposed to achieve apart from the smaller mundane goals of life? What is our ultimate purpose, for which we need knowledge? In Yoga it is to become one with the higher Self, the absolute Reality, which is also that same state that was there before creation. So Jnana Yoga is the process of enlightening the way on that journey back to our Source. Our awareness of When the heart's attention also goes to the third stream, where it settles on the subtlest region, then our higher purpose comes into focus, and the teaching is known as upasana. For this we need bhakti, which is our lifeline for the upward journey.

the destination is Jnana Yoga, and that is purposeful knowledge.

The word Jnana is usually applied so vaguely in the spiritual field that it is used to describe the range from bookish knowledge to the highest level of inner enlightenment. So a person who has learnt a few scriptures, another who has read many books, and yet another who recites philosophy or the scriptures in a very erudite way, may claim to be enlightened, irrespective of their inner state.

In fact, true Jnana is an ever-changing state, because the spiritual journey is an ever-expanding journey. We become enlightened up to a certain stage. In the real sense Jnana refers to the inner condition of the mind that develops as we pass through the different states at different points or chakras on the spiritual journey. Jnana is the practical realization of the condition prevailing at each chakra, and so our knowledge will vary according to the level we have reached on the journey.

The real enlightenment comes when we have full consciousness of the condition that has been enlivened in us at each chakra, and we become one with it. We merge into its consciousness, and so we become enlightened up to that particular stage. This mergence carries with it a blissful state that encourages our heart to keep going ahead on the journey. Jnana allows us to think, reflect, make wise choices and exhibit right behavior; it allows us to differentiate and draw a line between good and bad; it is the exclusive quality of the heart. As we progress on our journey, those abilities continue to become more and more refined until we reach a stage characterized by purity, discernment and wisdom. Eventually we transcend the need for knowledge to reach a higher state, which is at one with the condition before creation.

Karma and Jnana are joined by the middle link, which is the human heart. The heart sends its currents into our material existence, on one side, leading to action. The same heart sends its currents into the subtler regions of the mind for knowledge. While it lies in both knowledge and action, it enjoys the bliss of both, but if it leans completely towards one or the other, it is no longer balanced.

Now, when the heart's attention also goes to the third stream, where it settles on the subtlest region, then our higher purpose comes into focus, and the teaching is known as *upasana*. For this we need bhakti, which is our lifeline for the upward journey. In part 2, we will explore bhakti, as well as the interplay of all three elements, along with the practices that support them.



KARMA, JNANA & BHAKTI YOGA

PART 2

Yoga - integration and the oneness of existence

From before the written Vedas, the three fundamental elements of yogic practice have been described as Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. In part 1, DAAJI enlightened us on how these three elements arose, and went into detail on karma and jnana. Here he focuses on bhakti and the interplay of all three in our path of Yoga.

he heart is the midpoint of our whole system, and its attention can be diverted towards any aspect of worldly life and also towards spiritual life. So the heart's energy can be expressed in action, in knowledge, and also in the subtlest aspects of existence. In a balanced person, the heart gives importance to all three elements, and our higher purpose is very much in focus. For this higher purpose, and even to bring love and enthusiasm into daily life we need bhakti, which is our lifeline for the upward journey.

BHAKTI

What is bhakti? If we could ask Mirabai, she would probably say, "I don't know anything about bhakti." If we could ask Kabir Saheb, or Teresa d'Avila or Rabi'a, I don't think their answers would impress us either. Yet all these saintly people are the personification of bhakti for us.

Most people understand bhakti as devotion. But actually it is much more. Remember the state before creation, when everything was resting in a state of absolute oneness? What qualities lead us towards that state? It is a combination of so many things: enthusiasm, will, interest, faith, courage, devotion, attachment, respect, and most of all love. Especially love for the universal principle we call God. Bhakti is something we cherish so deeply inside our heart that the Ultimate becomes everything for us. The result of adding bhakti to any action or thought is that it is enlivened. Bhakti is the spark in action and the spark in thinking. The word 'enthusiasm' comes from the Greek theos, and literally means 'to put God into'; that is bhakti.

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More than understanding bhakti, we need to experience it. If meditating, praying, going to church, the temple or the mosque resulted in bhakti, then so many of us would develop it, but that is not the case. Why? Because with every ritual or prayer, we have a hidden agenda: I want peace of mind; I want to be successful; I want life's miseries to go away; I crave a better life after death, to spend in a magnificent paradise. Bhakti is that state where we love for the sake of love. The moment we put a temporary worldly or other-worldly goal in front of us it fails.

When we meditate, we gradually develop various stages of bhakti as we progress. Just as enlightenment is an unfolding work in progress, so is bhakti. We develop states of spiritual consciousness, and over time the inner sky of our consciousness changes and becomes more and more beautiful as we rise higher and higher. When we are on top of a hill, we are able to view the entire surroundings for 360 degrees, whereas when we are in the valley we have a limited view of things. Even on top of the mountain, if four of us are there we may not all be looking in the same direction. One person stands facing the East, another facing the West etc. All of us will have a different vision by which we have reached the top. So realized souls, though they have reached the top, see different things because the vision is infinite. A highly-evolved consciousness is able to see things based on the direction faced from the top. What one person says is correct because that is what they see from the top; what I say is also correct based on what I am seeing from the top. Nobody is wrong. Mirabai would laugh and say, "I don't know anything about bhakti," but her life is bhakti personified, love personified, because she is absolutely ignorant about the whole thing. The moment we are aware of our love for the beloved, the moment we become conscious of it, it loses its charm.

When we meditate and arrive at a particular spiritual state and it becomes more and more beautiful, what happens? A time comes when we start appreciating this ever-changing canvas, the horizon, the sky of consciousness that goes on changing. First, we appreciate the practice that has brought this experience forward into our lives – something that otherwise would have come many years later. We have accelerated the pace of our evolution of consciousness thanks to meditation.

A time comes when we don't feel like missing it at any cost. Then we start wondering, "Who is it behind the practice? Who is helping me arrive at such beautiful experiences?" Then we realize that the practice has other elements to it: there is Transmission; there is the Guide; and we slowly fall in love with the giver, with the Source, with the Lord.

So this attachment or affiliation develops naturally, out of personal experience, and is translated slowly into a state of bhakti. And just as we have a spectrum of light, a spectrum of consciousness, so also there is a spectrum of bhakti. In the beginning we may like to dance, perhaps like Mira. She was always ecstatic, singing the praises of the Lord with an instrument in her hand. But then a day also comes when this music



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becomes internalized. The Lord is no longer spoken about, is no longer praised but entertained in the heart so much that He engulfs us in some way. There is a kind of osmosis established between our little self and His great Self and we become one. That is the state of bhakti. But do we need to go mad in love? How many Miras have there been in this world? What price did she pay? She chose to leave her family and her friends. We have a beautiful path where a similar state develops without the need for that; but only if we become such a vessel who is willing to experiment. Experimentation will lead us to the right result. We need to experiment in order to see if we develop bhakti while leading a normal family life. That means practicing meditation and the other methods that are given. That is the karma part of it.

In the beginning the practice is also a burden. But it becomes easier once we meditate for a few days and have various experiences. Then we feel that it is worth making it a part of our life. We arrive at some sort of knowledge. But karma alone is not enough, and knowledge alone is not enough, because karma without bhakti and jnana without bhakti are impotent. It is like serving your husband all your life but without love. What becomes of your actions, your service? Service without love is of no use; karma without love is of no use.

And knowledge? You may know so much. Let us say that you can recite the entire Gita. That is wonderful and a sacred beginning; but should you end there? Should you become complacent: "Oh, I know the whole Gita." That is the danger of knowledge.

Knowledge can be dangerous if there is no action. Action without love is also not productive. Lord Krishna emphasizes this in the Gita. He classifies actions into three categories: karma, vikarma and akarma. When you add the first two, karma and vikarma, they become akarma. Here is a mundane example: a mother wakes in the middle of night because her baby is crying. She feeds the baby and goes back to bed. Suppose a few days later she is not well, the baby cries, and she wakes her husband: "Honey, please, the baby is crying, warm up the milk and feed the baby." He will get up, he will do it, but he will keep it in his memory, "I did this for you when you were not well." He will remind everyone else also.

So what happens to such actions? A mother acts for the sake of the baby, out of love, to the extent that she is not even aware of what she has done, but the great husband remembers it all his life (I am not attacking anyone!). His action is done without the kind of love the mother has, so it will not become vikarma. When karma is performed with love, it becomes vikarma. But a person who keeps on saying, "I did this, I did this out of love," is not acting from love – people with love will never do this. But a time comes when the idea of love disappears from the equation altogether, although it is very much present behind the scenes. Then it becomes akarma, when you neither remember the action nor the love behind it.

When you start driving for the first time in life, you struggle with where to put the key, how to open the door, how to move the gears, where the light is, where the wiper is, and which side to turn. You are very careful, with heightened awareness and anxiety about driving the car. Then a time comes when you know how to drive properly and you start enjoying it, like a child who rides his cycle with his friends, singing songs. He is not even aware of riding the bicycle, and he loves it. Love makes us forget action. A stage comes where it becomes absolutely automatic. That is akarma – where you have no idea and there are no impressions of either karma or love.

So this state of akarma can be a bhakti state, where we love God but don't know that we love Him. The idea of love disappears. Our approach to God needs to become like that, where the heart is burning with restlessness waiting for the beloved. Either we burn like wet wood, giving out a lot of smoke, or we burn like dry wood, which burns easily with very little smoke and sparks, because it does not have the water element in it, or we burn like electricity without any smoke, emotions and the need for display. It is our choice whether we approach the Lord with a lot of smoke, flourish and bravado, or we want to be anonymous, quiet, insignificant, and humble, quietly loving His creation. For loving the Lord is not enough if we forget His creation.

INTEGRATING KARMA, JNANA AND BHAKTI

Let's go back to the beginning of the universe when that first stir found an opportunity for infinite expansion. There was movement (karma) and thinking (jnana), and before either of these there was the original connection of everything with the Source (bhakti). Karma, jnana and bhakti have been there since the very beginning of the universe, as fundamental elements of life, and together they dance and weave our existence through the fabric of time.

How to be wise and selective in what actions, knowledge and devotional practices you choose? Ask yourself:

Karma Yoga: what actions and services will refine me? What karmas connect me to the Source?

Jnana Yoga: what sort of knowledge elevates my consciousness? Which jnana connects me to the Source?

Bhakti Yoga: to whom or what am I devoted? What form of bhakti connects me to the Source?

In fact, these three are inseparable, and dependent on each other, and they continue to represent the body, mind and soul of all existence. When they are integrated into oneness within us, then we are able to reach that state of union we know as Yoga.



Following a spiritual way with conviction and ardour places you in a vibratory spiral, the effects of which are reflected ad infinitum. You act for your own good and beyond, by amplifying the movement which is the prelude to final regeneration.

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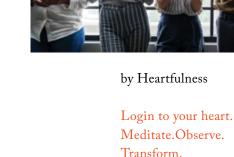
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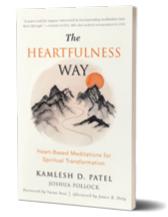
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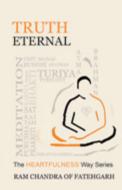
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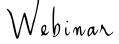


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