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## REALITY – REALIZATION THROUGH SELF-DISCIPLINE

Yoga philosophy as systematised by Patanjali is typically Indian in its analysis. It upholds the best Indian values and concepts of life and liberation. Yet it has a definite message for peoples of all cultures, religions and social groups. It speaks to the person as person, not specifically as European or Indian. Though deeply linked to the Indian style of living and Indian ways of thinking, it still can be expressed in different cultural backgrounds and be made relevant to any human situation.

### 1. Goal and Structure

“Yoga has definite regulations for physical and mental balance through which one attains a new awareness of ‘self’ and the great expansion of one’s existence through which a pathway must emerge towards the final end. Yoga helps to unveil the psychic possibilities that are latent in man by methodical process of conscious and disciplined evolution. At its highest culmination Yoga technology ends with the realization of the ‘self’ where reality is seen face to face.”<sup>1</sup>

The Patanjali Yoga is organized into the eight-fold path (*astanga marga*). It begins with bio-physical purification and leads on to the liberation of mind and spirit. At each stage of growth there is an evaluation of limitation and ideal possibilities of human passion. Yoga is harmony, a harmony in eating and resting, in sleeping and keeping awake, a perfection in whatever one does. This is the Yoga that gives peace from all pain. It would be more clear from the words of Gita, “Yoga is not possible for him who eats too much or for him who abstains too much from eating; it is not for him.”<sup>2</sup> When the mind of the Yogi is in harmony,

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1. Pearl Drego, *Pathways to liberation* (New Delhi: Sanjivan Association, 1974), p. 15.

2. Swami Chidbhavananda, *Bhagavatgita* (Tamil Nadu: Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, 1986), p. 376.

all the restless desires disappear and then he can unite himself to God. In fact, Patanjali gives a wide range of techniques which harmonize the mind. They progressively help to prepare body and mind for the last stages. This eightfold path can be summarised as follows:

<i>Yama</i>	- Conditioned Yoga behaviour (social code)
<i>Niyama</i>	- Attitudes sublimated to Yoga norms (personal code)
<i>Asana</i>	- sitting pose
<i>Pranayama</i>	- control of Prana
<i>Pratyahara</i>	- withdrawal of senses
<i>Dharana</i>	- Concentration <sup>2</sup>
<i>Dhyana</i>	- Meditation
<i>Samadhi</i>	- Superconsciousness <sup>3</sup>

Although it may take years to reach the final stage of the eightfold path, one should not be worried or discouraged about the length of time. These steps are to be taken with firm determination. No step can be avoided for each step refers to a special aspect of total journey. Each step gives the aspirant new depths as he goes higher in the eightfold path. However, it is not the sequence of the steps that are to be perfected, but the internal process of the individual who follows the steps. "The person becomes less dispersed and more integrated and is freed from bondage of restlessness, frustration and selfishness, he attains peace and fulness of life. The spring of action moves to real centre of personality, sometimes gradually and sometimes through striking experience of change. The centering of one's personality in the awareness of the 'self' is the goal of Yoga liberation."<sup>4</sup> Yet Yoga cannot be considered as mere human development. The final stage of Yoga-experience is *samadhi*, and the ultimate experience of *samadhi* can be said to be God-experience. Therefore, Yoga goes beyond physical and psychological development. The final goal is liberation. The spiritual quest of the aspirant which runs through all stages integrates the physical and mental disciplines. It means, to follow the line of integration which leads one from the material to the transcendental. We can say that one is advancing in the path of Yoga if he experiences gradual integration of spiritual, mental and physical

3. Satyananda Paramahansa, *Four Chapters on Freedom* (Bhagalpur: Doliya Sharada Press, 1978), p. 8.

4. Pearl Drego *op. cit.*, p. 18.

planes of him. To follow eightfold path is to discover the fine thread of pure consciousness that underlies every stage rather than practising different degrees of Yoga.

## 2. The Eight stages of Yoga

Patanjali in his dealings with supra-mental existence and its achievements begins with *Yama* and *Niyama*. "So many as sixteen *sutras* are devoted to the exposition of these two, against thirteen *sutras* for a general delineation of the other six."<sup>5</sup> No one can forget the importance of these two stages who desires to enter the spiritual path, because mastery of the worldly life and a harmonious living with the neighbourhood are preliminary requisites to the spiritual life. "By practising *Yama* and *Niyama* the aspirant develops dispassion and worldly pleasures cease to attract him."<sup>6</sup> *Yama* and *Niyama* are meant to purify the mind and to prepare it to face the more arduous tasks that lie ahead.

### i) *Yama*

*Yama* may be interpreted as "abstinence." It represents the conscious endeavour of the Yogi to abstain from doing things that distract his mind. Although the stress seems to be on abstaining, which is a negative concept, the contents of the abstinences are positive. They are five in number namely *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *brahmacharya* (Continence), *asteya* (non-stealing) and *aparigraha* (non-greed).

According to Patanjali, *Yamas* are universal, not restricted to any particular conditions of living, space and circumstances. They are supposed to be practiced always, irrespective of creed, religion, country, season and time . . . and so on. "The truth is the same in all places at all times. What is right is right everywhere. For the Yogi therefore, these virtues are to be meticulously and strictly cultivated. There can be no compromise."<sup>7</sup> To try to achieve mental control or mystical height without this sound moral code will be like trying to climb the tower with no foundation. "Purity of action is the basis of purity of mind."<sup>8</sup> One may be able to sit for hours in silent concentration but he is

5. Swami Atmananda, *The Four Yogas* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1966), p. 130.

6. K.P. Bahadur, *The Wisdom of Yoga* (Delhi; Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1977), p. 44.

7. K.P. Bahadur *op. cit.*, p. 42.

8. Pearl Drego *op. cit.*, p. 24.

not even considered as a student of yoga if he is not making effort to be non-violent, truthful and pure. Today's world in which we live provides many means of liberation and development. But often the benefits of these are cancelled as the people fall back into the existing structures and motives of action. The new corn that is planted is so quickly crushed by the weeds that still lie hidden in the soil. If principles of *yama* are applied seriously to all aspects of life, they could demand quite a critical life or even create an earth-quake in our immediate social environment.

"The Yamas are called *mahavratas* (big vows). When applied with certain modifications to a particular social context or to a personal situation they are called *anuvratas* (little vows). When dealing with the primary and serious issues of life, a student of Yoga is expected to treat the yama norms as *Mahavratas*"<sup>9</sup> "When practiced without any exception due to place, birth, time and circumstances *Yamas* become great disciplines."<sup>10</sup>

#### *Explanation of five Yamas*

Patanjali defines Yoga as, "Non-injury, truth, non-stealing, continence and non-receiving constitute *yama*."<sup>11</sup>

##### a) *Ahimsa* (Non-injury)

*Ahimsa* is the fountain head of all *yamas*. Injury to any-one either by deed, word or by thought is to be avoided. It consists of positive side of genuine love for all and absence of jealousy. When non-violence get established in anyone no feeling of enmity arise. Patanjali defines killing as acting for the purpose of removing life, which is the source of great evil. *Ahimsa* therefore, implies not killing at all times. Not only does it condemns physical violence like armed conflict, bombing and all ways of destroying life, but it also condemns the desire to do any kind of violence. In the world of today, besides war, a huge number of people are being killed by poverty, exploitation and disease. *Ahimsa* requires us to develop a real sense of morality and to become aware of the causes of violence and uproot them.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

10. Satyananda Paramananda, *Four chapters on Freedom* Commentary on Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (Bhagalpur: Drolia Sharada Press. 1978), p. 129, Sutra 31.

11. Satyananda Paramahansa *op. cit.*, p. 132, Yoga Sutra, II. 30.

Since the source of violence is in the desire to be aggressive and destructive the student of Yoga must cultivate a desire to heal and conserve life. The truly non-violent person gives up the desire for revenge and does nothing that could irritate others or stir them to anger. The Sutra II.34, defines anger as an inflamed condition of the mind, which uproots all discrimination between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done.

Since there is so much hidden and subtle violence present in the social and economic structures today, we need to ask ourselves whether Yogic *ahimsa* has anything to do with these problems. Can we be contented and peaceful in the extreme situations of poverty, persecutions? We cannot expect the world to be peaceful if three-fourth of population are hungry, exploited and unfree and uncertain about their future. In the name of non-violence people who are oppressed are often persuaded to be inactive. This is where *ahimsa* needs to be connected to other Yamas of truthfulness, non-stealing and non-greed.

Another aspect of *ahimsa* is the cultivation of a fine sense of unity with the whole nature. There are many stories about Yogis which tell us that they could live safely among the wild beasts and snakes. It shows that they had close comradeship with nature. In fact the postures and practices of Yoga were said to have been inspired by the natural habits and movements of living creatures. "The balance of the peacock, the gliding of snake, the folded wings of a bird at rest, the water spurt of an elephant, the brooding stillness of a cow, the flexibility of a fish, the stability of a mountain, the blossoming of a lotus flower, the angle of a plough, the circular movement of a wheel, the polarised tension of a strange bow, the spreading height of a palm tree, and the rising majesty of the sun, all had infinite lessons and meanings for our ancient Indian Yogis."<sup>12</sup>

The Yogi should have a sense of compassion for what is weak and defenceless in nature and a challenge for what is strong. Yogi should have the feeling of harmony with nature rather than getting ecstatic. "Yoga philosophy holds that the material world mirrors pure consciousness and evolution has taken place under the guiding principle."<sup>13</sup>

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12. Pearl Drego *op. cit.*, p. 32.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

b) *Satya* (Truthfulness)

"It implies abstaining from telling lies and from falseness of any kind." A Yogi must strictly avoid any kind of hypocrisy and double dealing. The Gospel says: "Whatever is covered up will be uncovered and every secret will be made known." (Lk. 12:2) It means that no form of deception can last long. Yet, duplicity and untruth are common in all categories of professional and personal work. Even the religious and spiritual groups build false facade of peace, unity and high principles in order to get prestige and attention. Those who hold authority of any kind are specially prone to hypocrisy and falsehood. They take false role of perfection in order to be convincing and powerful. *Satya* demands that public and private action should be honest and sincere. "Absolute truth and honesty in thoughts, words and deeds should shine forth in a Yogi."<sup>14</sup> *Satya* helps to bring into light of consciousness the real inner self. The mental disturbances can be cured if hidden conflicts and roles are brought into the surface. Truth and honesty are the basis of the full interpretation of a personality. Patanjali speaks of the interrelation between the veracity of the mind and the fruit of the action: "Veracity being confirmed, action and fruition become dependent."<sup>15</sup> Swami Atmananda interprets the *satya* as follows: "When one is established in truth, he gets the power to attain the fruits of work without actually doing them."<sup>16</sup>

c) *Brahmacharya* (Continence)

Sutra II: 38 of the Patanjali says that continence being confirmed, great vigour of body and mind can be attained. It does not mean that *brahmacharya* is just abstaining from sexual relationship for the sake of getting power and vigour. In a Yogic sense, it is the way of renunciation and single minded search for truth. Yet every student of Yoga is not bound to make such radical choice just as every christian is not called to enter into a life of celibacy. When disciples asked Jesus about marriage, Jesus answered "The teaching does not apply to everyone but to those whom God has given it." (Mt. 19:11).

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14. B.C.M. Mascarenhas *op. cit.*, p. 50.

15. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* 11:36.

16. Swami Atmananda *op. cit.*, p. 133.

Celibacy is not just a restraint, but it is a way of giving, loving and being available. A choice to celibate life witnesses to the faith that everyday life in society is a shadow. It expresses that final goal which is the fulfillment in the spirit lies beyond the 'everyday life.' Celibacy proclaims that the total giving, which the ultimate goal demands can be lived here and now.

"Celibacy is one dimension of faith that the ultimate goal and the deepest reality of the present are the same. We think they are different, we experience tensions between "now" and 'then' because of our earthly bondage to time and disintegration."<sup>17</sup> Yoga philosophy also affirms that the self which is attained in the final liberation is the ground of our present existence even though we are not aware of it.

*Brahmacharya* has been greatly respected by Hindu sages. Even though it was only one of the *Ashramas*, a Yogi who aimed at attaining the final goal remained as an absolute celibate throughout his life. The main reason is that sex was considered as a great hindrance that would distract the attention of the aspirant from the goal he has set before him. Sankara, the great exponent of *Jnana Yoga* remained as an absolute celibate through out his life for the same reason.

d) *Asteya* (non-stealing)

It means abstaining from stealing. Definitely, all of us know that robbery is wrong. But we often steal others property, freedom and dignity in very subtle forms. Millions of people all over the world are being cheated of their basic necessities of life due to the huge concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and the seeking of the promotion of the individuals interest rather than common good. The present educational system in India itself steals away the human dignity and occupational opportunities of the uneducated. All forms of bureaucratic organizations rob the people from being able to maintain their own groupings. In short, so many aspects of capitalist and socialist structures that exist today are the organised forms of public stealing.

*Asteya* implies not only abstinence from actual theft but it demands that even a covetous thought is to be eliminated from the mind of a Yogi.<sup>18</sup>

17. Pearl Drego *op. cit.*, p. 39.

18. B.C.M. Mascarenhas *op. cit.*, p. 57.

According to the *Sutra* II. 37 when there is covetousness for property, it leads to the possession of all goods. Thus, it is said, M. Gandhi, Swami Sivananda, Swami Ramadas, Ramana Maharshi, St. Francis of Assisi and others who renounced all, had all they wanted.

e) *Aparigraha* (non-possessiveness)

As the receiving of gifts is likely to create an attachment to them and even craving for more the Yogi is supposed to decline all gifts.<sup>19</sup> If a Yogi keeps on receiving gifts, he may be gradually led to greediness to have things better than what others have and thus the luxuries of today becomes necessities of tomorrow for him.

Karel Wearnar interprets *aparigraha* as "an attitude of mind that does not consider anything to be one's own, even if one is using it and even if it seems to be essential for life."<sup>20</sup>

*Aparigraha* is a temporary course of *sadhana* in aspirants life. But it is necessary to practice in the beginning in order to break the old habits. When they are broken one can have different things which are needed for social work and service to humanity. When this *sadhana* is firmly established aspirant comes to know about his previous births: "On becoming steady in non-possessiveness, there arises the knowledge of how and from where the birth comes."<sup>21</sup>

ii) **Niyama**

Passing on to *Niyama*, which means observances, Patanjali warns that in practising them the aspirant is liable to meet with troubles and hindrances. These are cravings, anger and ignorance of varying intensities resulting in pain and destruction of wisdom and thereby leading to a desire to harm others.<sup>22</sup> The Gita also says, "when one craves for sense objects he gets attached to them. From attachment is born desire; from desire anger sprouts forth. From anger proceeds delusion; from delusion confused memory; from confused memory the ruin of reason; due to the ruin of reason he perishes."<sup>23</sup> Having indicated these impediments Patanjali

19. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

20. Karel Wearnar, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

21. *Yoga Sutra*, 11:39.

22. *Yoga Sutra*, 11:34.

23. *The Gita*, 11:62-63.



tells the aspirant how to overcome them. This is to be achieved through the habit of thinking to the contrary. "When the mind get disturbed by the passions one should practise pondering over their opposites."<sup>24</sup>

This method of Patanjali aptly suits human nature and is strikingly practical. Christians believe in the temptation of devil, which even Christ had to combat and the Buddhists in *mārā* whose influence even the great Buddha had to combat. The lives of Christ and Buddha teach us that fighting against evil thoughts is a grim battle and the chances of being vanquished are great.

By replacing evil thoughts with noble ones, their very roots are destroyed and the aspirant can move on to the goal of Yoga. By practising *Yama* and *Niyama* the aspirant develops dispassion and worldly pleasures cease to attract him. These are the purificatory steps of *astanga marga*. Patanjali says that purification leads one to the quality of goodness from which comes complacency, from which in turn comes intentness. Intentness brings subjugation of the senses and a fitness for beholding 'self'.<sup>25</sup> Like *Yamas*, *Niyamas* also refer to individuals life in society, but they touch more intensely on inner state of mind. *Niyamas* are disciplines for acquiring the qualities of a contemplative spirit. The five important *Niyamas* are the follows:

a) *Saucha*

*Saucha* means cleanliness or purity. A Yogi has to strive for pure thinking, speaking and acting to keep his body clean. It is said that by practising physical cleanliness one develops in the course of time a kind of indifference towards his body and at the same time, a kind of non-attachment to others is also developed.<sup>26</sup> There is no element of ritualism and occultism in the Yoga-practice of cleanliness. It cultivates sensitivity for what is pure and wholesome. It is an initial training for the more difficult inner purification. Christ warns us against the superficial practices of cleanliness which do not purify the interior of man. "You clean the outside of your cup and plate, while the inside is full of things you have got by violence and selfishness. Clean what is inside the cup first and then the outside will be clean too." (Mt. 23:25 - 26).

24. *Yoga Sutra*, 11:33.

25. *Yoga Sutra*, 11:41.

26. Satyananda Paramahansa, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

b) *Santosha*

Unexpelled happiness comes from the practice of contentment.<sup>27</sup> Contentment is one of the fixed rules for an aspirant who is serious about higher aspect of Yoga and realization, because it is impossible for one who is dissatisfied with himself or with anything else to realize the higher consciousness. The absence of contentment brings about a number of mental illnesses. If the mind is ill, no discipline is possible. "The Yogic sense of contentment is not that of excitement; exhilaration or pleasurable feelings. These would involve too much high-strung of emotion and disturb inner peace. The Yogic idea of happiness is that of equanimity, fine experience of calm and contentment. To be content means to be peaceful with oneself, patient even in the midst of deprivation."<sup>28</sup>

Bhartrhari, in his *Vairagya Satakam* (no. 35) says that life is as insecure as a drop of water, attached to the edge of a lotus flower leaf. The desires of the youth are unsteady, they are charged with heavy emotions and impulsiveness. Realizing these, wise men fix their minds in Yoga in order to attain peace and equanimity. The man who is wise put on leather sandals while walking along a thorny road instead of trying to cover the road itself with leather. Life is indeed, so full of troubles that it is obviously more rational to accept them with equanimity than to attempt to overcome each and all of them. "Contentment is not a fatalistic acceptance of suffering but a balanced and controlled frame of mind from which all kinds of initiative may arise, even the restlessness that makes one to begin a spiritual search." A Yoga aspirant must cultivate an attitude of joy, peace and contentment even in time of strain and anxiety, so that he may be able to remain in equanimity when faced with the tempest of life just as the bottom of the ocean is still and undisturbed even though squalls may rage on the surface.

A person who does not practise *Yamas* cannot know contentment for violence and greed easily destroy contentment and calmness. Contentment also springs from deep optimism. The Yogi glimpses and tastes the bliss of final liberation at every step of eight-fold path as each step

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27. *Yoga Sutra*, II, 42.

28. Pearl Drego, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

is the incarnation of *samadhi*. So, there is a hope to look forward too. *Santosh* prepares a Yogi for the final peace and bliss of *samadhi*. By practising it one also can get the christian vision of the final Kingdom, "where never again will they hunger or thirst, neither the Sun nor the scorching heat will burn them." (Apoc. 7:15-17).

c) *Tapas*

*Tapas* traditionally means 'austerity.' *Tapas* of the body is called *Kayika*, of speech is *Vachika* and of the mind is *Manasika*. They are meant to help the Yogi to free himself from all impediments that stand in his way of spiritual advancement.<sup>29</sup> To meditate, one requires a healthy body. Patanjali in his Yoga Sutra (43) recommends that the body and the sense organs must be perfected for meditations, so that there would be no uneasiness in meditation due to weakness of the body. *Tapas* involves subjecting the body to hardships so that the aspirant may learn to bear hunger or thirst, heat and cold, fasts and penances without losing his composure. There are five types of austerities; Firstly, exposing the body to the Sun to make the skin hard. Secondly, subjecting the body to the heat of fire to make it slim and brown. Thirdly, practising the *Pranayama* to create heat in the body and the fourth one is the developing of concentration on one point and finally, practising the fire of fasting. These five fires remove the toxins and harden the body to make it fit for meditation.<sup>30</sup>

The practice of *tapas* makes us aware of the ways in which the unreasonable needs are getting multiplied, and the amount of energy we waste for attending to those needs. Human wants and desires are numberless when there is no strong spiritual vision to build up an unselfish existence. *Tapas* makes the yogi more sensitive to the fact that things in the world fade away soon. It also brings into light our personal limitation and strength. Once we become aware of this reality, time and energy can be saved for a more sincere advancement along the path of liberation. "Every athlete, in training, submits to a strict discipline in order to be crowned with the wreath that will not last; but we do it for one that will last forever." (1Cor:9:25). Though so far we have been stressing the importance of *tapas* for advancing in a spiritual path, the fact is that any kind of excessive hurt to oneself

29. B.C.M. Mascarenhas. *op. cit.*, p. 60.

30. Satyananda Paramahansa, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

could not help in the long run. Nature takes back what it has been denied if there is no integrated choice and awareness behind the action of self-denial.

d) *Svadyaya*

The practice of *svadyaya* means education of the self. For this purpose scriptures and religious discourses are prescribed along with an earnest desire to know the truth.<sup>31</sup> According to the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali *svadyaya* means closing the eyes and observing the inner self. When it is continuously practised it enables the Yogi to concentrate deeply on God or God of his choice. (*Ishtadevata*)

e) *Ishwarapranidhana*

When the mind is devoid of all earthly cravings, it is receptive to higher and nobler accomplishments. Thus, with a total self-surrender and deep conviction of the limitation of human understanding, Yogi now meditates on God and attains an enlightenment.<sup>32</sup>

*Svadyaya* and *Ishwarapranidhana* are closely inter-related. According to Yoga the more we get into the self, the nearer we reach the transcendent consciousness. On the other hand, the more we are devoted to God the closer we come to the innermost self. However, Yoga does not claim to be a religion, though a religion is considered to be a means for spiritual liberation.

iii) **Asana**

Patanjali defines in his Sutra Asana as steady and comfortable sitting position (*Sthirasukhamāsanam*) (II.46). There are different types of *asanas*, with a manifold purpose. "The purpose of an *asana* in Patanjali is to balance the different nerve impulses, feeling of pain and pleasure, heat and cold and all other opposite sensations."<sup>33</sup> Although not mentioned by Patanjali, any other *asana* which brings about equilibrium in the body may be practised. Most of the books on Yoga say that since the ancient times the cross-legged position *Padmasana* has been practised in India.

31. B.C.M. Mascarenhas, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

33. Satyananda paramahansa, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

Some of the well known postures are as follows: *Talāsana* (palmtree posture), *Halāsana* (plough posture), *Matsyasana* (fish posture), *Dhanurvakrasana* (bow posture), *Bhujangāsana* (snake-posture), *Garudāsana* (bird posture), *Parvatasana* (mountain posture), *Chakrasana* (wheel posture), *Shavasana* (corpse posture), *Padmasana* (Lotus posture).

*Padmasana* is one of the most famous meditational posture of Yoga. It is very rich with symbolism and meaning. It is the posture of the balanced symmetry. The delicate beauty of *Padmasana* is combined with a humble receptivity to the unfolding of inward truth of the self. The higher stages of Yoga can be followed in this posture. Just as Lotus rises from dirty regions of a pool to open into a beautiful flower under the sunlight so also from the complications of a world of matter 'self' rises to its own nature of pure consciousness. In *Padmasana* one can experience God as indweller at the core of the 'inner self.'<sup>34</sup>

#### iv) Pranayama

The aspirant takes up *Pranayama* after he has perfected *Yama*, *Niyama* and *Asana* sufficiently. Patanjali defines *Pranayama* as the stoppage of the inspiratory and expiratory movements.<sup>35</sup> *Pranayama* is not deep breathing. *Prana* means breath, *ayama* is lengthening or widening through control. When breathing is controlled in order to retain the breathing, it is said to be *Pranayama*. It is said that *Prana* is like a wild elephant. If you want to tame *Prana*, you will have to take as much care as you would take while taming a wild elephant. "Just as a fire blazes brightly when ashes are blown away, the divine spark in man shines in all its brilliance when the ashes of worldly desires are blown by the practice of *Pranayama*."<sup>36</sup> Steadiness and patience in practice is essential to obtain the goal. The ultimate aim of *Pranayama* is to enable the aspirant to retain the breath. There are four types of *Pranayamas*; namely "*Puraka*, *Rechaka*, *Kumbhaka* and *Kewala Kumbhaka* which is divided into *antaranga* and *bahiranga*."<sup>37</sup>

*Pranayamas* are centred on effecting a state of stillness and emptiness. It does not mean the emptiness of a desert, but a kind of calmness which remains unaffected by storms of life.

34. Pearl Drego, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

35. *Yoga Sutra*, 11:49, p. 171.

36. B.C.M. Mascarenhas, *op. cit.* p. 64.

v) **Pratyahara**

At this fifth stage of the eight-fold path aspirant already possess a calm and clear mind. It is now further purified by withdrawing its attention from the activity of the senses. Senses normally fill the mind with images derived from external world. So *Pratyahara* means control of the senses. It is not a negative form of renunciation, but a higher form of fulfilment. *Pratyahara* is the real beginning of self purification. Without silencing our senses we can never enter into depth. The excited senses carry away even the mind of a wise man, who strives for perfection. Senses are as impetus as wild horses newly harnessed. Riding on them is risky to life. At the initial stage an aspirant suffers innumerable defeats at the hands of senses. An uncontrolled mind is just like a ship without rudder. As a rudderless ship does not reach its destination, so the misdirected mind does not contact with the real self in man. "Brooding on the object of senses, man develops attachment. From attachment comes desire, from desire anger sprouts forth. From anger proceeds delusion, from delusion confused memory. From confused memory the ruin of reason, due to the ruin of reason he perishes."<sup>38</sup> Senses themselves are instruments in the hands of mind. Mind is just like clay which allows itself to be moulded into any form. A mind that is burned by the profane desires of senses, is like baked clay. It is incapable of taking divine moulds.

The ideal *Pratyahara* is neither escape from objects nor immersed in it, but to be totally involved in it, yet above and beyond it. A man of ideal *Pratyahara* becomes highly sensitive, physically, mentally and emotionally, at the same time remains in equilibrium. Restlessness is the result of desire for objects. The *Gita* says: "a disciplined *Yogi* moves among the objects in tranquility, free from attraction and aversion."<sup>39</sup>

vi) **Dharana**

Patanjali defines *dharana* as the 'steadfastness of the mind', that is to say, bringing about one pointedness of the mind.<sup>40</sup> Mind is both an 'obstacle' and 'means' to enter in the depth of the self. In the former case mind makes inner world clumsy by bringing in the world images. In later, as

37. Satyananda Paramahansa, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

38. *Gita*, 11:62-63.

39. *Gita*, 11:64.

40. *Yoga Sutra*, 11:53.

'means', mind has great power to concentrate. With this unique power of concentration, silencing the process of becoming and focussing attention on 'one' thing alone we can get in touch with the innermost self. This is known as *ekagratha*. Patanjali calls this *ekagratha* as *Chittavridh-inirodha*. This in fact is the goal of Yoga itself.

After curdling the milk is to be kept undisturbed in one place so that it may coagulate into good curds. Change of place make adverse effect. Likewise, mind is to be fixed on the Lord that it may become calm and divine, says Sri. Ramakrishna.

### vii) Dhyana

It may be translated as contemplation or absorption. An aspirant reaches this stage when the contemplation becomes spontaneous. Then it is a natural process for the mind of Yogi just as thinking is natural for everybody else. Therefore, *dhyana* is defined as uninterrupted stream of the content of consciousness.<sup>41</sup> If mind is slipped away this will not happen. *Dhyana* includes two things: one, an unbroken continuous flow of consciousness of the single object, and secondly, the awareness that one is practising unbroken concentration.

At this stage, the penetration of the essence of contemplation becomes complete. This technique enables the mind to approach reality as such "from inside" which is supra-sensory supra-intellectual way of cognition.<sup>42</sup> This leads to final stage called *Samadhi*. *Samadhi* brings self realization. In the *gita* it is said that when the intellect, having been perplexed by hearing the words of scriptures, stands immovable in *samadhi*, you shall attain self realization.<sup>43</sup>

The last three steps *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* are collectively known as *Samyama*.

### viii) Samadhi

a) *An introduction to the stage of Samadhi*

*Samadhi* is the crown of Yoga endeavours in Patanjali's system. *Samadhi* can be translated as unification. It is the fully conscious and factual unification of Yogi's vision. *Samadhi* is not a simple experience.

41. *Yoga Sutra*, 111:2.

42. Karel Weerner, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

43. *Gita*, 11:53.

It is realized in stages, though the stage cannot be distinguished exactly. Different stages are only approximate guidelines for the Yogī to measure his progress.<sup>44</sup>

b) *The nature of Samadhi*

*Samadhi* is the last stage of *astanga marga*. At this stage, a Yogī who has gone through all the rest of the stages of eight – foldpath is in complex experience of *Samadhi*. He has now penetrated into the essence of his 'true self'. He has now come to the point of knowing reality in its wholeness. The *Yoga Sutra* III, 3 explains precisely what *Samadhi* is.<sup>45</sup> Satyananda Paramahansa in his commentary on this Sutra says that when the object alone appears without the consciousness of one's own self, that state become *Samadhi*.

We have already seen that consciousness is being broken in *dharana* and *dhyana*. But in *samadhi* it becomes one with the object of concentration. Even the consciousness that one is practising concentration also disappears. In some books on Yoga and Upanishads we find the idea that in deep concentration the object disappears. This does not seem to be the true meaning of the *Sutra*. On the contrary, object alone prevails. As we go deeper into the stages of *samadhi* the object of meditation becomes clearer. "Thus the two chief characteristics of *samadhi* are:

- i) Object alone shines and
- ii) There is no awareness of the process."<sup>46</sup>

At the stage of *samadhi* the aspirant comes to know the essence of truth. And when a Yogī comes to the realization of the full impact of this last stage, he gains the power of full knowledge, because it is the experience of universality about the 'pure self'. This must be the full, direct and global vision of truth. "In its perfect from this highest experience of *samadhi* is called *dharma-megha samadhi*."<sup>47</sup> It represents a point of saturation. The next step following this point of saturation is the abandonment of the last trace of mental process. It is also *samadhi* but devoid of any trace of conceiving. It frees the mind of Yogī totally.

44. Karel Weerner, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

45. *Yoga Sutra*, 111:3, "The same (Contemplation), when there is Consciousness only of the object of meditation and not of itself (the mind), is *samadhi*."

46. Satyananda Paramahansa, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

47. Karel Weerner, *op. cit.*, p. 139.



In this absolute absence of anything conceivable the real status of 'self' is discovered. Thought comes to stand still, and the 'self' alone remains. Then the self is pure and boundless. The result of it is total freedom. "The Yogi who has realised this total freedom of self during his life time is looked upon as saint."<sup>48</sup>

### 3. The Results of Yoga Practice

At the stage of *samadhi* it is said that a Yogi is totally free from all kinds of fears. There would be no fear of death, illness, shortcomings... etc, and so also the experience of a Yogi will have no end as the self-realization goes on and on. There will be a new horizon always in the search. What seemed to be goal in the beginning will become another starting point for a new and higher realization. With this experience which is equal to bliss and joy there is an experience of timelessness. We can get a glimpse of the experience of this stage by looking into certain forms of experience we have in our ordinary life. For example, an audience, which has been absorbed in a superb programme that has lifted it out of its mundane-world, may sit spell-bound and silent for a moment even after the end of a concert to absorb and enjoy the mood created by the concert. In a far deeper manner the person who has realized his own 'true self' that is within may slip into silence being unable to recount what he has experienced. He neither has any desire to express it. But the whole world would be radiant and others can see that he has a deeper realization of reality.

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48. *Ibid.*, p. 140.