

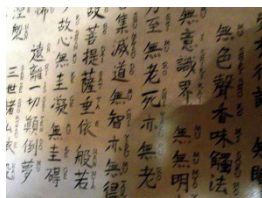


Patanjali

Patanjali, a famous Indian sage, was active around 200 B.C. and authored important texts on medicine, grammar and yoga among others. His 196 verse 'Yoga Sutras' is possibly one of the most well-known of all yoga texts and is widely studied.

Georg Feuerstein, a modern day authority on historical yoga, has this to say:

"Patanjali, who is by the way often wrongly called the "father of Yoga," believed that each individual is a composite of matter (prakriti) and spirit (purusha). He understood the process of Yoga to bring about their separation, thereby restoring the spirit in its absolute purity. His formulation is generally characterized as philosophical dualism. This is an important point, because most of India's philosophical systems favour one or other kind of non-dualism: The countless aspects or forms of the empirical world are in the last analysis the same "thing"—pure formless but conscious existence".



With his 'yoga sutras', Patanjali is also credited with presenting the modern form of the famous 'eight-limb' (ast-anga) path of classical yoga.

Astanga Yoga (Pathabi Jois' popular Astanga Vinyasa school includes this system but Astanga is not exclusive to his school)

This system is perhaps the most well-established and formalized dualistic Yoga path. Adepts of Astanga Yoga may be said to be following the Classical Yoga path. Prior to Patanjali's time their existed an earlier 'six limb' path. (*ṣaḍaṅgayoga*)

The eight limbs or 'arms' are:

- 1 Yama – Community, social and ethical codes of conduct.
- 2 Niyama – Personal moral and ethical codes.
- 3 Asana – Posture training
- 4 Pranayama – Breath training
- 5 Pratyahara – Sense withdrawal.
- 6 Dharana - Concentration
- 7 Dhyana – Meditation

8 Samhadi – Merging of our perception with the chosen object of concentration. In Yoga this object is Atman. Universal consciousness or if you prefer, God.

1) **Yama** and its complement Niyama, represent a series of "right living" or ethical rules within Hinduism and Yoga. The five yamas of Patañjali's classical yoga system are commitments that affect the yogi's relations with others and himself.

Ten yamas are listed in many texts including the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Then as many as sixty yamas are listed in still more old Hindu, Buddhist and yoga texts.

The five yamas listed by Patanjali in his yoga sutras are:

1. Ahimsa: non-violence or non-harming other living beings and oneself.
2. Satya: truthfulness, non-falsehood within oneself and to others.
3. Asteya: non-stealing.
4. Brahmachara: loyalty to one spiritual purpose.
5. Aparigraha: non-avarice non-possessiveness.

2) **Niyama**

The second limb of Patanjali's eight-limbed yoga system contains the five internal practices of Niyama (observance). These practices extend the ethical codes of conduct provided in his first limb, the Yamas, to the practicing yogi's internal environment of body, mind and spirit. The practice of Niyama helps us maintain a positive environment in which to grow, and gives us the self-discipline and inner-strength necessary to progress along the path of yoga.

1. Shaucha (purification) Sacred Spiral Yoga places the emphasis on impurity being a divided condition of body, soul, mind and spirit.
2. Santosha (contentment) is not craving for what we do not have as well as not coveting the possessions of others.
3. Tapas (asceticism) is a yogic practice of intense self-discipline and attainment of will power.
4. Svadhyaya (self-study) is the ability to see our true divine nature.
5. Ishvara Pranidhana (devotion) is the dedication, devotion, and surrender of the fruits of one's practice to a higher reality.

3) **Asana**

Asana commonly refers to yoga posture. This is usually understood as the practice of physical exercises within the hatha yoga context. Interestingly, one of Hatha Yoga's

important texts the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* by *Svatmarama*, includes only a handful of actual yoga postures as being important. (less than twenty). Eighty four postures is a commonly found number, while other exponents have come up with many hundreds of poses.

Patanjali defines 'Asana' as 'to be seated in a position that is firm, but relaxed'.

Patanjali further mentions the necessity to be able to sit for extended periods.

By far the most fascinating comment by Patanjali is his method for gaining Asana . . . 'to relax and merge one's attention with endlessness'

Sanskrit: आसन *āsana* 'sitting down'

4) **Pranayama** is the art of yogic breath and energy development. Generally practiced in a sitting position but some can be done standing or lying down.

Pranayama if practiced regularly, increases lung function and capacity with the direct result of enhanced oxygenation of vascular systems. As with Asana, some Pranayamas have a calming effect and others stimulate us.

Some of the common pranayama's are:

- Nadi Shodana – alternate nostril breathing
- Ujjaya – three stage (complete) – ujjaya means 'victorious' or 'flying up'
- Viloma – interrupted breathing (against the hair)
- Bastrika – bellows breath, breath of fire
- Sitali – tongue manipulation breathing

The traditional posture for Pranayama is sitting and the chin lock (Jalandhara Bandha) is usually applied to control energy surges into the head and maintain the general flow of energy around the mid-section of the body. To perform Jalandhara Bandha we tuck the chin into the small cleft hollow at the head of the sternum and lift the chest up to meet it. The chin lock is naturally performed in Plough pose. (Halasana)

5) **Pratyahara** or the 'withdrawal of the senses' is the fifth limb of the eight stages of astanga yoga. It is also the first stage of the six-branch yoga (*ṣaḍāṅgayoga*) of the Buddhist Kālacakra tantra, where it refers to the withdrawal of the five senses from external objects to be replaced by the mentally created senses of an enlightened deity. This phase is roughly analogous to the physical isolation (*kāyaviveka*) phase of Guhyasamāja tantra.

For Patanjali, it is a bridge between the *bahiranga* (external) aspects of yoga namely the first four limbs and the later four limbs, the *antakaranga* (internal) yoga. Having actualized the *pratyahara* stage, a practitioner is able to effectively engage into the practice of Samyama (last three limbs)

At this stage of *pratyahara*, the consciousness of the individual is internalized in order that the sensations from the [senses](#) of taste, touch, sight, hearing and smell don't reach their respective centers in the brain and takes the [sadhaka](#) (practitioner) to next stages of [Yoga](#), namely [Dharana](#) (concentration) and [Dhyana](#) (meditation), and [Samadhi](#) (mystical absorption), being the aim of all [Yogic](#) practices.

Pratyahara is derived from two Sanskrit words: *prati* and *ahara*, with *ahara* meaning food, or anything taken into ourselves, and *prati*, a preposition meaning away or against. Together they mean "weaning away from ahara", or simply ingestion.

Types of Pratyahara:

Withdrawal of Senses or Indriya Pratyahara

This involves withdrawal of senses, or sensory inputs into our physical being, coming from our five senses, namely organs creating a sensory overload, and hence hinders collection of the mind, as in [Dharana](#), the next stage of Yoga.

Withdrawal of Prana or Prana Pratyahara

Control of our senses requires mastery over the flow of prana, as that is what drives the senses. To stop the scattering of valuable vital energy of the body or [prana](#), we need to seek control over its flow, and harmonize it. This is done through various practices including bringing the entire focus to a single point in the body. (Ekagrata) These two lead to the subsequent two types of pratyahara, the Control of Action or '[Karma](#) pratyahara', which entails not just control of motor organs, but also right action or work, and [Karma Yoga](#), surrender of every action to the divine and performing it as an act of service. This leads to the final form of pratyahara - the Withdrawal of Mind or 'Mano pratyahara', which is practiced by consciously withdrawing attention from anything that is unwholesome or distracting for the mind such as withdrawing attention from the senses, and directing it towards ones chosen object.

[Article resource](#)

6) Dharana - The Sixth limb of Astanga Yoga.

Dharana is the practice of Concentration. Most minds lack Dharana to a greater or lesser degree and thus are scattered, agitated, distracted, foolish or dull. Without the ability to concentrate and focus, nothing meaningful can be achieved.

Once Dharana has been learned, the mind becomes closely attentive and the mental faculties are focussed upon a single point. Such a person has superior mental powers, and knows his desires.

The two most commonly used techniques for achieving Dharana is concentration upon the symbol AUM, and upon the breath using the optional silent mantra of So-Ham with each breath.

[Article Resource](#)

7) **Dhyāna** means 'meditation', which is a deeper awareness of the inherent unity of everything, inclusive of perception of body, mind, senses and surroundings, yet remaining unidentified with it".

Dhyana is the natural progression in ones development on the astanga path paves the way to the last limb, Samadhi.

Meditation as such, is the extended ability to concentrate (dharana) upon one's chosen object. This may indicate long periods of silence as our consciousness is absorbed into a unity of perception with our object.

8) **Samādhi** is the last stage of astanga yoga and is the ultimate stage of meditative absorption.

Samādhi is 'oneness' with the object of meditation. There is no distinction between act of meditation and the object of meditation. Samādhi is of two kinds: with and without support of an object of meditation.

Samyama, the sixth, seventh and eighth arms of astanga yoga, taken together as a process. This process is employed to attain samhadi.

Sixth limb - Dharana. In dharana, the mind learns to focus on a single object of thought. The object of focus is called a pratyaya. In dharana, the yogi learns to prevent other thoughts from intruding on focusing awareness on the pratyaya.

Seventh limb - Dhyana. Over time and with practice, the yogin learns to sustain awareness of only the pratyaya, thereby dharana transforms into dhyana. In dhyana, the yogin comes to realize the triplicity of perceiver (the yogin), perceived (the pratyaya) and the act of perceiving. The new element added to the practice of dhyana, that distinguish it from dharana is the yogin learns to minimize the perceiver element of this triplicity. In this fashion, dhyana is the gradual minimization of the perceiver, or the fusion of the observer with the observed (the pratyaya).

Eighth limb - Samādhi. When the yogin can: (1) sustain focus on the pratyaya for an extended period of time, and (2) minimize his or her self-consciousness during the practice, then dhyana transforms into samādhi. In this fashion then, the yogin becomes fused with the pratyaya. Patanjali compares this to placing a transparent jewel on a colored surface: the jewel takes on the color of the surface. Similarly, in samādhi, the consciousness of the yogin fuses with the object of focus, the pratyaya. The pratyaya is like the colored surface, and the yogin's consciousness is like the transparent jewel.

[Article reference](#)

The art of Posture and Breath control builds mind/body development and prepares us for the process of Meditation & Relaxation (sense withdrawal)

Concentration and meditation take us forwards and into 'absorption' – in the yogic case, contemplation and absorption into the supreme consciousness (Ishvara Pranidhana). Yogic philosophy speaks of a kernel or seed of this universal energy dwelling within our own hearts (Jivatman). This is not 'God' in the western sense of a deity outside of our-selves, but rather an all pervading consciousness that is within all animate and inanimate things, indeed throughout the perceivable universe.

Samadhi is the state of attaining a sense of union with this universal awareness. Described as a state of supreme bliss, (Ananda) it is the outcome of spiritual practice and following the dedicated astanga path.

Links:

[Yoga Sutras](#)

[Patanjalis Yoga Sutras](#)

[Patanjali daily readings](#)

[Astanga](#)



Assignment:

- 1) Make sure you are clear on the difference between Pathabi Jois' Yoga system and school called Astanga Vinyasa and Patanjali's codification of 'Astanga' (Eight Limb Path) If you need to, go back to the first week's module and re read up on 'schools and styles'.
- 2) Write down with a brief summary each of the eight arms (limbs)