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PRATYAHARA, DHARANA, DHYANA AND SAMADHI

Yoga is a discipline to improve or develop one's inherent power in a balanced manner. It guide and offers the means to attain complete self-realization. The literal meaning of the sanskrit word yoga is 'Yoke'. Yoga can therefore be defined as a means of uniting the individual spirit with the universal spirit of god.

In this lesson you will learn about Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- Explain the terms Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi;
- List the special features of Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi;
- Describe the benefits of Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi; and
- Adopt the correct procedure for practicing, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.



Notes

4.1 PRATYAHARA

Pratyahara is derived from the sanskrit word - prati, meaning 'away' or 'against'. and ahara, meaning 'nourishment' or 'food'. Therefore, the whole word denotes a withdrawal from what nourishes the senses. Pratyahara means 'withdrawal of the senses'. It's a powerful way to master your mind, cultivate inner peace, and boost your focus and concentration. Before we can actually teach kids to control their senses, they need to understand what they are required to do. Start by identifying the five senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. Pratyahara is considered important in yoga helping the practitioner into concentration, meditation and, eventually, to the goal of samadhi (union with the Divine). By withdrawing the focus from the senses and the external environment, the mind can turn inward, deepening yogic practice.

The main objective of Pratyahara is about training the mind to withdraw from the senses.

Benefits

- It allows the mind to be peaceful so that good concentration can be developed.
- It helps to stay away from distraction or disturbance

PRACTICE PRATYAHARA

1. Reduce the physical stimuli as much as you can. This is crucial, especially at the beginning.



2. Sit comfortably on a chair, on the floor, or try to get into any other comfortable position of your choice. Probably it is not a good idea to lie down, because if you do, you might fall asleep. Remember, the idea is to remain conscious and not to doze off. Pratyahara is not relaxation, it is an exercise of awareness.
3. Close your eyes and try to move your body as little as possible for about 10 minutes.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- **Avoid gossips and negative talks**

Gossip is a bad thing for children especially when done with the intention is to say or spread words that are hurtful, damaging to a one's feelings or reputation.

- **Associate with good friends**

Once there was a fruit seller. He had a few mangoes in his basket. All the mangoes were good, except the one, which was rotten. He thought, 'If I leave this rotten mango in the basket full of good mangoes then that rotten mango too would turn to good'. So, he left the rotten mango in the basket full of good mangoes. However, a week later, when he opened the basket, he was shocked to see that, contrary to his expectation, all the good mangoes had become rotten. Keep this point in mind, and always try to remain in the company of good and well-mannered friends.



- **Observing the nature**

Observing the nature helps create a sense of wonder in you, which you can carry over to other aspects of your life. Being out in nature helps children to become more aware. Nature gives you the chance to engage all the senses. Enjoy the rising sun, full moon, gaze at the tree, observe the birds, listen to the chirping of the birds etc.

- **Listening to good music**

Singing and music play an important role in our culture, especially singing and listening to bhajans. Right from birth, parents instinctively use music to calm and soothe children, to express love and joy, and to engage and create interaction. Inculcate a sense of appreciation for Indian classical music, try to learn Tabla, Sitar, Santoor or Harmonium etc. These will have a great impact on developing positive aspect of the personality.

- **Observe your feeling before food and while having food**

You must be fond of food items such as vada-pav, pav-bhaji, pizzas, chinese food, biscuits, potato chips and cold drinks. But are you aware of the adverse effects of consuming these items in excess? These have a harmful effect on our mind and body. We think on the basis of whatever we eat and in turn act according to what we think.

Let us understand this with the help of this story

Once, a Monk committed a theft at king's palace after having his



meal. The king was shocked at this incident and sought to find out how even a Monk could commit a theft. While investigation, he found out that the cook who had prepared that day's meal had committed a theft. In this way, the food served, became a medium to pass the bad habit.

Homemade food is fresh, healthy and easy to digest. Not only it satisfies our hunger but also provides us with good nutrition.

- Wash your hands and legs before eating your lunch.
- Before having food, pray to Kuladevata (Family Deity) or the Upasyadevata (Deity of worship).
- Do not talk in between while having your food. Have food with a pleasant mind thanking the supreme for the food.
- Finish all the food in your plate. Do not waste anything.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.1

Fill in the blanks :

1. By withdrawing the ----- from the senses and the external environment, the mind can turn ----- .
2. The main objective of Pratyahara is about ----- the mind to withdraw from the -----.
3. Pratyahara is not -----, it is an exercise of awareness.
4. Nature gives you the chance to ----- all the senses.
5. For Pratyahara close your eyes and try to move your body as little as possible for about -----.



Notes

4.2 DHARANA

It is one-pointed concentration, or fixing one's full attention at one place, object, or idea at a time. Dharana is the ability to bring the mind into focus and to hold the concentration on a single point. In true dharana all body-consciousness and restless thoughts cease, enabling one to focus on the object of meditation without distraction. The mind will be free within the periphery of this area, but it should not cross the boundary. This exercise is known as Dharana.

To understand this definition let us read this story:

A farmer own a calf. The calf want to roam around in different directions. To control the calf from such wandering in different directions, it was not possible to tie it up to a particular point. So the farmer tie a cord of certain length to its neck and then ties the other end of the cord to a hook in the ground. The calf freely moved in the circle, the radius being the length of the cord, but cannot go out of that circle. Thus the farmer had a control on the calf and also the calf is not at a loss either, as it gain a controlled freedom. This attitude and the idea is important. The mind, which is just like the calf wants to roam around everywhere. It is not possible to engage it at a particular point or location.

Dharana is focusing on a single point which could be -

- your breath,
- a mantra,
- a word, or
- any object.



In the beginning, focusing of the mind is difficult; therefore a beginner can start meditating for a few minutes only and later on can increase its duration. Concentration is direction of attention to a single object. We all have the ability to concentrate. Think of the times when you watch movies, play games. It is total concentration.

But at other times your thoughts are scattered, and your mind jumps from one thing to another. It's for those time that you need to learn and practice concentration.

Learning a skill takes practice whether it is dancing, writing, or concentrating. The practice of concentration can be developed by performing asanas, breathing practices, pranayama and meditation.

Benefits

Dharana trains your mind to be attentive and attain aware.

PRACTICE OF DHARANA

- Sitting quietly observing your breath.
- Sitting in Padmasana, close your eyes and observe your inhalation and exhalation. As you inhale your abdomen bulges out and as you exhale the abdomen sinks.
- Do A-U-M chanting
- Chanting (A-kara , U-kara, M-kara, A-U-M) in a sequence and focusing on the picture of OM will help you in Dharana or focusing. This is also called as Nadanusandhana which also gives a soothing effect to our whole body.



Notes

4.3 DHYANA

Dhyana is a sanskrit word meaning ‘meditation’. It is derived from the root words, dhi, meaning ‘receptacle’ or ‘the mind’; and yana, meaning ‘moving’ or ‘going’. An alternate root word, dhyai, means ‘to think of’. Unfortunately, the word dhyana is usually translated as meditation, implying a state of calm. Let us briefly see what dhyana is. Earlier to practicing dhyana, the relevant steps of yoga, namely, Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, and Dharana should be practiced. Som dhyana is a continuation of dharana; your meditation is a more mature state of your concentration.

FEATURES OF DHYANA

- Slowness of breath
- One focus point awareness
- Effortlessness and
- Wakefulness

Practice of Dharana i.e. on Breath, Omkara continuously leads to Dhyana.

Benefits

- It helps you to get rid of negative emotions like fear, anger and develops positive emotions like love, compassion, friendliness and cheerfulness.
- Meditation keeps the mind calm and quiet.

- It increases concentration, memory, clarity of thought and will power.
- Rejuvenates body and mind.



4.4 SAMADHI

Samadhi is derived from the sanskrit, sam, meaning ‘together with’ ‘completely’ and dha, meaning ‘put’. It means a complete state of concentration. According to system of Patanjali, samadhi is the eighth and final step in the meditative process before the self is released from its self-ignorance and enters the ultimate condition of kaivalya, ‘aloneness’.

In samadhi, the process of concentration, the object of concentration, and the mind that is trying to concentrate or meditate all become one. The mind is no longer focusing on the object in an objective manner.

Samadhi is sometimes called self-realization. Self-realization means getting to know yourself better. In the process, you learn to love yourself more. It's about accepting where you are today at this very moment and moving from a place of honesty. Tolerance is needed so much in the world today and more so in our own country. It starts at home in our own mind. When we can move from a place of truth and acceptance of ourselves, we can begin to accept and respect others.

Practice

- Sit in a comfortable position.



Notes

- Close your eyes and breathe freely through your nose for a few minutes.
- Undertake conscious breathing or pranayama .
- Repeat the practice everyday. Increase the duration of focused breathing slowly.
- Before you enter a state of samadhi, there is a joy of experiencing stillness.
- This effortless state of samadhi is called dharma megha samadhi. From this emerges an indescribable state of awareness devoid of all desires.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 4.2

In one sentence explain the following:

1. Pratyahara
2. Dharana
3. Dhyana
4. Samadhi



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

- Pratyahara
 - o Special features
 - o Objectives
 - o Benefits
 - o Correct procedure



- Dharana
 - o Special features
 - o Objectives
 - o Benefits
 - o Correct procedure
- Dhyana
 - o Special features
 - o Objectives
 - o Benefits
 - o Correct procedure
- Samadhi
 - o Special features
 - o Objectives
 - o Benefits
 - o Correct procedure



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Explain the procedure of the following:
 - i. Pratyahara
 - ii. Dharana
 - iii. Dhyana
 - iv. Samadhi



Notes

2. List the prescribed guidelines for Pratyahara
3. What are the benefits of Dhyana?



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

4.1.

1. Focus, inward
2. Training, senses
3. Telaxation
4. Engage
5. 10 minutes

4.2.

1. Pratyahara - Pratyahara is a sanskrit term meaning 'withdrawal of the senses'.
2. Dharana - Dharana is focusing on a single point.
3. Dhyana - Dhyana is a sanskrit word meaning 'meditation'.
4. Samadhi - It is the eighth and final step in the meditative process before the self is released from its self-ignorance and enters the ultimate condition of kaivalya, 'aloneness'.