

Yoga: An Introduction and Definition

- Yoga is known today as both a subject of study and a practice.
- In the Indian philosophical tradition, Yoga is one of the six branches of knowledge, alongside Samkhya, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimamsa, and Vedanta.
- Within these branches, Yoga Darshan is a main branch that prescribes various rules to unite the soul with the supreme soul (Paramatma).
- Practitioners who follow these rules move towards achieving Kaivalya (knowledge/liberation).
- Ancient sages developed Yoga Vidya for the realization of the supreme soul.
- The term 'Yoga' originates from three Sanskrit roots according to Panini, each with a different meaning:
 - **'Yuj Samadhu'** (युज् समाधौ): From the Divadigaṇīya Dhatu, meaning **Samadhi (समाधि)** or **control of mental modifications (चित्त वृत्तियों का निरोध)**.
 - **'Yujir Yoge'** (युजिर् योगे): From the Churadi Gana, meaning **to join or unite**.
 - **'Yuj Samyamane'** (युज् संयमने): From the Rudhadigaṇīya Dhatu, meaning **to regulate**.
- In common usage, Yoga refers to Samadhi, where the practitioner focuses their mind by restraining its modifications to meditate on the supreme being.
- From a modern perspective, Yoga means **integrating and establishing unity in all aspects of human life**: physical, mental, intellectual, social, familial, and spiritual.

- **Definitions from various texts:**

- **Patanjali's Yoga Sutra:** "Yogas Citta Vritti Nirodah" (योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः) – **Yoga is the cessation of the modifications of the mind.**
- **Srimad Bhagavad Gita:** "Yogaḥ Karmasu Kauśalam" (योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्) – **Yoga is skill in action.** It also emphasizes performing actions without attachment to their results (Nishkama Karma).
- **Kathopanishad:** "Tām yogamiti manyante sthirām indriyadhāraṇam" (तां योगमिति मन्यन्ते स्थिरामिन्द्रियधारणम्) – **That steady state in which the senses become subject to the control of the mind, meaning the senses are restrained, is called the state of Yoga.** In this state, a person becomes conscious and aware.
- **Vaisheshika Darshan:** "Tadanārabhya ātmaye manasi śarīrasya duḥkhābhāvaḥ saṁyogaḥ" (तदनारम्भ आत्मय्ये मनसि शरीरस्य दुःखाभावः संयोगः) – **When the mind is tranquil and rests in the Self, the absence of suffering in the body is called Yoga.**
- The ultimate goal of Yoga, as understood from these various definitions, is **Samadhi or liberation (Moksha), self-knowledge (Atm Gyan), and the coordination of mind, senses, and vital breath (Prana).**

History of Yoga

The sources describe the history of Yoga across different periods:

- **Origin:** There is no definitive proof regarding the exact period of Yoga Darshan's origin. Various texts consider **Prajapati Hiranyagarbha as the originator of Yoga Vidya.**

- "Hiranyagarbha yogasya vaktā nānyaḥ purāṇaḥ" (हिरण्यगर्भ योगस्य वक्ता नान्यः पुरातनः।) – Hiranyagarbha is the primal exponent of Yoga, and there is no one more ancient than him. This is stated in Brihad Yogyagnavalkya Smriti and Mahabharata.
- Srimad Bhagavata Purana also refers to Hiranyagarbha as the divine form of Yoga, skilled in Yoga.
- This suggests that Yoga Vidya might have existed since the time of the Vedic Samhitas.
- **Pre-Vedic Period (पूर्व वैदिक काल):** Excavations of the Indus Valley Civilization reveal statues in Yogic postures. A three-faced male deity found with a goddess figure, seated in a special mudra with hands and feet folded on a high seat, led scholars to believe that Yoga tradition predates the Vedic Samhitas.
- **Vedic Period (वैदिक काल):** Yoga is described in its spiritual form. Rishis used Yoga Vidya in the form of Yajnas (sacrifices) and Jap-Tapa (chanting and austerities). Education in Vedas and Shastras was accompanied by Yoga education.
 - "Yasmāḍṛtena sidhyati yajño vipaścitānaḥ. Sa dhīnām yogaminvati." (यस्मादृतने सिध्यति यो विपि त न। स धीना ंयोगिम वित॥) (Rig Veda 1/18/7) – Without Yoga, the completion of sacrificial acts is not possible.
 - "Saṃghā no yoga ābhuvasa rāye spauraṃ yāma. Gamadvājebhirāsa naḥ." (स घा नो योग अ भुव स राय ेस पुरं याम। गमद ्वाजिभरा स नः ॥) (Rig Veda 1/5/3) – The Supreme Being is associated with our Samadhi. Realizing Him brings not only Samadhi and knowledge but also other Siddhis (Anima, Mahima, Laghima, Garima, Prapti, Prakamya, Ishitva, Vashitva) and welfare.

- **Upanishadic Period (औपनिषदक काल):** Yoga is extensively described in Upanishadic texts, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Srimad Bhagavad Gita. During this period, other paths of Yoga, such as **Jnana, Bhakti, Karma, and Raja Yoga**, became prevalent.
 - Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna on Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Jnana Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita. He mentions transmitting this Yoga Vidya to Surya, who taught it to Vaivasvat Manu, and then to Ikshvaku.
 - Yoga evolved from being just a spiritual system to a significant part of life.
 - Upanishads interpreted Yoga not as a physical practice but as connected to mental chanting and austerities.
 - The Gargi-Yajnavalkya dialogue in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad mentions discussions on Asana, Yogamudra, Pranayama, etc..
 - **Jain and Buddhist Periods:** No established philosophical system of Yoga is explicitly found. Emphasis was on social and individual conduct.
 - Buddha preached the **Ashtanga Marga (Eightfold Path)** for proper conduct: Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Samadhi.
 - The concept of 'Paramita' also describes six states of Yoga as human values: Dana (charity), Shila (morality), Shanti (peace), Virya (energy), Dhyana (meditation), and Prajna (wisdom).
 - Jainism mentions five Mahavratas (Great Vows) – Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Brahmacharya (celibacy), Asteya (non-stealing), and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness) – which are considered under the

Yamas of Yoga Sutras. This suggests the prevalence of ethical aspects of Yoga during this period.

- **Philosophical Period (दार्शनिक काल):** Detailed and comprehensive descriptions of Yoga are found in the branches of philosophy, leading to Yoga Darshan becoming a separate branch. Many Yoga texts were composed, elaborating on Yoga rules.
 - **Maharishi Patanjali** compiled Yoga-related material from Vedic texts into the **Yoga Sutra**, containing 195 sutras that describe the purpose, limbs, rules, and benefits of Yoga practices.
 - Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga (Eight Limbs of Yoga) is considered the path of **Raja Yoga**. Its eight limbs are: **Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi**.
 - Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga is supremely accepted because its first four limbs (Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama) contribute to physical, mental, and social development, while the last four (Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi) lead to spiritual liberation (Moksha Prapti) and the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul.
 - Commentaries like Vyasa Bhashya, Tattvavaisharadi, Yogavartika, and Bhojavritti were written to further clarify Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.
- **Medieval Period (मध्यकाल):** Later scholars composed significant Yoga texts like Vasishtha Samhita, Yoga Siddhanta Chandrika, Yoga Sutra Vritti, Yoga Chandrika, Yoga Maniprabha.
 - Emphasis shifted from purely spiritual aspects to **physical practices like Asanas, physical Mudras, Pranayama, Dhyana, and Dharana**.
 - Different paths like **Hatha Yoga, Laya Yoga, and Kriya Yoga** emerged.

- Texts like **Hatha Yoga Pradipika** and **Gheranda Samhita** were composed, providing detailed descriptions of Yoga limbs. Hatha Yoga Pradipika, for instance, details various types of Asanas, their benefits, and precautions.
- **Modern Period (आधुनिक काल):** Yoga's expanded meaning, "Yogaḥ Karmasu Kauśalam" (Yoga is skill in action), became prominent, emphasizing its practical application.
 - The 19th-20th centuries saw **global propagation of Yoga**.
 - This period saw a synthesis of Jnana, Karma, Bhakti, and Raja Yoga paths.
 - Yogis like Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Paramahansa Yogananda, Maharshi Ramana, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Swami Sivananda, Swami Kuvalayananda, and Mahatma Gandhi spread the practical form of Yoga worldwide.
 - Yoga is now globally recognized as an important system.
 - Under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Damodardas Modi's leadership, Yoga received international recognition in 2015, and the **first International Yoga Day was celebrated worldwide on June 21, 2015**.

Paths of Yoga (योग के मार्ग)

To reach the ultimate state of Yoga like Samadhi, Moksha, or Kaivalya, various means have been adopted by practitioners, described in Yoga texts as different types of Yoga. These often aim for health benefits and liberation. Common types include **Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Laya Yoga, Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Mantra Yoga, and Kundalini Yoga**. The **Shiva Samhita** and **Goraksha Shataka** mention four main categories: **Mantra Yoga, Hatha Yoga, Laya Yoga, and Raja Yoga**:

1. Mantra Yoga (मंत्र योग):

- Related to the mind, it involves **focusing the mind through mantras to connect with the divine principle.**
- The word 'Mantra' means 'that which protects through contemplation' (Mananāt trāyate iti mantraḥ).
- It is about transcending the mind or focusing it.
- Yoga Tattvopaniṣad states that Mantra Yoga is for **beginners or those less skilled in Yoga Vidya.**
- In Mantra Yoga, the practitioner uses Japa (repetition). Japa awakens Sushumna Nadi, the six Chakras, etc..
- Japa has three components: **pronunciation, rhythm, and tempo.**
- Four methods of Japa:
 - **Manasika Japa (मानसिक जप):** Mental chanting without any physical activity.
 - **Vachika Japa (वाचिक जप):** Chanting in a low voice.
 - **Upamshu Japa (उपांशुजप):** Chanting where only the practitioner can hear the sound in a mild voice.
 - **Ajapa Japa (अजाप जप):** The highest state of Japa where chanting happens spontaneously and the practitioner can hear it themselves.

2. Hatha Yoga (हठयोग):

- Literally means **performing an action with force or determination.**
- In Hatha Pradipika, 'Ha' (ह) refers to the **Sun (सूर्य)** and 'Tha' (ठ) refers to the **Moon (चंद्र)**. Hatha Yoga is defined as the union of Sun and Moon.

- The body has thousands of Nadis (energy channels), with three main ones: **Surya Nadi (Pingala)**, representing the right nostril; **Chandra Nadi (Ida)**, representing the left nostril; and **Sushumna Nadi**, located between them.
- Hatha Yoga is the process where Prana is guided into the Sushumna Nadi through Pingala and Ida Nadis, leading to Samadhi.
- The number of limbs of Hatha Yoga varies across texts:
 - **Hatha Pradipika**: Four limbs – **Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha, and Nadanusandhana**.
 - **Gheranda Samhita**: Seven limbs – **Shatkarma, Asana, Mudra-Bandha, Pranayama, Dhyana, Samadhi**.
 - **Yoga Tattvopnishad**: Eight limbs – **Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi**.

3. Laya Yoga (लययोग):

- This state is achieved when the Yogi's ignorance (Jadara) is dispelled through Mantra and Hatha Yoga, and they begin to perceive the divine form.
- It is the state of **dissolution**, where the individual soul begins to merge into the divine form, and all mental modifications subside.
- When the Yogi's mind is constantly absorbed in meditation, it is called Laya Yoga.
- Yoga Tattvopnishad (22/23) describes it as: "Gacchanti na svapan bhunjann dhyayet kalamīśvaram sa eva layayogaḥ syāt" (गच्छन्ति न स्वपन् भुञ्जन् ध्यायन् कलमीश्वरम् स एव लययोगः यातुः). (II).

4. Raja Yoga (राजयोग):

- Considered **supreme among all Yogas**.
- **Maharishi Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga** is categorized under Raja Yoga.
- The subject of Raja Yoga is the **cessation of mental modifications**.
- For those with a collected mind, it suggests **Abhyasa (practice) and Vairagya (detachment)**, and for those with a distracted mind, it suggests the aid of Kriya Yoga to reach the supreme truth.
- Through these practices, all afflictions (kleshas) are destroyed, the mind becomes pure and disciplined, the light of knowledge spreads, and **discriminative discernment (Viveka Khyati) is attained**.
- "Yogāṅgānuṣṭhānād asuddhikṣaye jñānadīptirāvivekakhyāteḥ." (योगांगानुष्ठानादशुद्धिक्षये ज्ञानदीप्तिराविवेकख्यातेः॥) (Yoga Sutra 2/28).
- Patanjali's eight limbs of Raja Yoga are: **Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi**.
 - The first five (Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara) are **Bahiranga (external) limbs**, preparing the practitioner for the goal.
 - The last three (Dhyana, Dharana, Samadhi) are **Antaranga (internal) limbs**, aiding in achieving Samadhi.

5. Jnana Yoga (ज्ञानयोग):

- Involves **contemplating and merging with the divine essence**.

- Through the study of scriptures, chanting (Japa), austerities (Tapa), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), etc., the Yogi realizes the nature of the Supreme Being.
- They gain **knowledge of creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe** and realize only the Self.
- The Yogi understands the distinction between the illusory world, the individual soul (Jiva), and the Supreme Soul (Brahma) and progresses on the path of knowledge.

6. Karma Yoga (कर्मयोग):

- Implies **performing actions diligently without expectation of results**. Also known as Nishkama Karma (selfless action).
- Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita states: "Karmanye vādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadāchana." (कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन॥) – You have the right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action.
- Individuals should diligently perform their duties and enhance their efficiency, which is possible only through Karma Yoga. Its importance is widespread today.

7. Bhakti Yoga (भक्ति योग):

- Involves **worship of the Supreme Being with a spirit of surrender and without any desire for personal gain**.
- It teaches **faith in God without expecting any reward**.
- Through this Yoga, the practitioner considers themselves subordinate to God, performing Kirtan (chanting), Stuti (praise), Upasana (worship), and self-actions without expecting any benefit from God.

8. Kundalini Yoga (कु डलिनी योग):

- Prana Vayu (vital air) circulates throughout the human body via **Pingala, Ida, and Sushumna Nadis**, and through the **six Chakras** (Muladhara, Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha, Ajna), ensuring timely and proper functioning of the body.
- Yogis awaken this **Kundalini Shakti** through Pranayama and Dhyana practices as described in Ashtanga Yoga.
- This awakening allows the body to become stress-free, awaken its physical consciousness, and merge with the supreme principle.

Importance of Yoga (योग का महत्व)

Yoga Shastra, a branch of human life philosophy, unites the mind, body, and soul. Its scope is not limited to spirituality but has expanded into various other fields in the current materialistic age:

- **Health (स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र):**

- Considered crucial in the health sector since ancient times.
- Ayurvedic texts like Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita are based on Yoga Vidya.
- Yoga **destroys both mental and physical suffering and brings happiness**. Charaka Acharya states, "Yoga tu sukhānām kāraṇam samah" (योग तु सुखानां कारणं समः।) – **Yoga is the cause of all happiness**.
- It provides both mental and physical benefits.
- Many diseases can be easily cured through Yoga.

- **Social (सामाजिक):**

- Adhering to the Yamas of Ashtanga Yoga (Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha) helps an individual establish harmonious and gentle conduct in society.
- This not only benefits the individual but also contributes to the welfare of the entire world.
- **Efficiency in Work (कार्यदक्षता):**
 - Yoga practice **increases efficiency in work.**
 - The Bhagavad Gita states, "Yogaḥ Karmasu Kauśalam" (Yoga is skill in action).
 - Yoga Shastra physically enables individuals to perform their work appropriately and also regulates mental discipline, allowing them to work without suffering and become proficient in selfless action.
- **Mental Benefits (मानसिक लाभ):**
 - In today's stressful life, continuous practice of Yoga helps individuals overcome mental disorders such as lust (Kama), anger (Krodha), greed (Lobha), delusion (Moha), envy (Irshya), etc. .
 - Yoga **makes the mind focused and stable**, promoting proper development of both body and mind.
- **Spiritual Benefits (आध्यात्मिक लाभ):**
 - Some individuals are born Yogis with innate knowledge of the union of the soul and supreme soul.
 - Others, by following the external (Bahiranga) and internal (Antaranga) paths of Ashtanga Yoga, can experience the form of the supreme principle.
- **Economic Sector (आर्थिक क्षेत्र):**

- Knowledge of Yoga Vidya plays a significant role in the economic sector alongside social and spiritual fields.
- Many Yoga camps have been established where Yoga is taught, generating economic benefits.

Asana: General Introduction

- Asana is the **first indispensable limb for achieving a high state of concentration (Dhyana) or Samadhi**.
- It is a crucial aspect of the Yoga tradition, especially Hatha Yoga.
- Asana practice affects the practitioner on both **gross (physical) and subtle (subtle energy) levels**.
- Sages discovered that Asana practice is not just limited to gaining physical beauty but is also highly beneficial in **controlling breath and mind**.
- Asana practice develops the necessary **steadiness in the body**, which is essential for higher Yoga practices like Pranayama, Dharana, and Dhyana.
- Modern research also highlights the **therapeutic effects of Asanas** for various diseases.
- **Etymology and Meaning:**
 - The word 'Asana' is derived from the Sanskrit root '**As**' (अस्), meaning '**to sit**'.
 - It can refer to **the object one sits upon** (e.g., mat, deer skin, cushion) or **the posture/position of sitting**.
 - It also signifies a **specific physical posture** that represents something, like Dhanurasana (bow pose) or Mayurasana (peacock pose).

- Every human and even animal performs Asanas daily for various activities.
- **Definitions:**
 - **Maharishi Patanjali (Yoga Sutra):** "Sthiram Sukham Āsanam" (स्थिरं सुखमासनम्) (2/46 Yoga Sutra) – **That which is steady and comfortable is Asana.** It means sitting comfortably and steadily in a posture for meditation, where the mind can be focused (e.g., Padmasana, Swastikasana, Gomukhasana).
 - **Srimad Bhagavad Gita:** Describes sitting firmly in Asana, controlling all thoughts and actions to purify the mind, fixing it on one point. Keeping the body, neck, and head straight and steady, and fixing the gaze on the tip of the nose without moving the eyes.
 - **Trishikha Brahmana Upanishad:** "Sarvavastu yudāsīnabhāvamāsanamuttamam" (सर्ववस्तु युदासीनभावमासनमुत्तमम्) (2/29) – **Indifference towards all objects is the best Asana.**
 - **Tejobindu Upanishad:** "Sukhenaiva bhavettatra yasmai chintanam" (सुखेनैव भवेत्तस्मि जं चिंतनम्) (1/25) – **That in which one can sit comfortably and contemplate on Brahman is Asana.** This implies Asana is not merely a physical state but a state where one can continuously contemplate on the ultimate truth.
 - **Acharya Narayana Tirtha:** Defines Asana as that which is steady, motionless, and comfortable.
- Overall, Asana is a **natural state of body and mind** where the practitioner can remain for a long time to develop their consciousness.

Objectives of Asana (आसनो का उद्देश्य)

1. To provide **physical and mental stability** to the practitioner for higher stages of spiritual practice without physical hindrance.
2. To achieve **lightness (Laghavata)** in the body, enabling easy and prolonged meditation.
3. To establish **coordination between body and mind**. A healthy body leads to a stable mind, and a happy mind prevents bodily diseases.
4. To **purify the 72,000 Nadis (energy channels)** in the body, ensuring smooth flow of Prana (vital energy), which is essential for excellent health.
5. To achieve **physical and mental steadiness**. Prolonged stillness in an Asana influences the mind, reducing its restlessness.
6. To impart **freshness, flexibility, and strength** to the body.
7. To establish **control over breath** through physical Asana practice.
8. To achieve **complete health** by fulfilling all dimensions of well-being.

Classification of Asanas (आसनो का वर्गीकरण)

Asanas are primarily classified in three ways:

1. **According to the nature of the Asana (आसनो की प्रकृति के अनुसार):**
Maharishi Gheranda classifies Asanas into three types:
 - **Sharira Samvardhanamak Asanas (शरीर संवर्धनात्मक आसन)**
– **Body-Strengthening Poses:** These create positive tension and stretch in muscles, increasing the flow of Prana energy and blood circulation to every cell, providing strength and enhancing functionality. They are important for health preservation and disease treatment. Examples: Garudasana, Vrikshasana, Gomukhasana, Matsyasana, Simhasana, Kukutasana, Mandukasana, Uttana Mandukasana, Paschimottanasana, Utkatasana, Mayurasana, Ushtrasana, Sankatasana,

Kurmasana, Uttana Kurmasana, Shalabhasana, Bhujangasana, Dhanurasana, Matsyasana.

- **Dhyanatmaka Asanas (ध्यानात्मक आसन) – Meditative Poses:**

These help the practitioner stabilize their body and mind for higher Yogic practices like Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. They involve minimal physical movement to achieve higher states of consciousness.

Examples: Padmasana, Siddhasana, Bhadrasana, Muktasana, Swastikasana, Vajrasana.

- **Vishramatmaka Asanas (विश्रामात्मक आसन) – Relaxative Poses:**

These are practiced to alleviate physical and mental fatigue, leading to a deep state of relaxation that regenerates spent energy and revitalizes the practitioner. These are easier than other Asanas and cause no pain, making them suitable for everyone. They are also helpful for returning to a normal state after difficult Asanas. Examples: Shavasana, Makarasana.

2. **According to the position of performing the Asana (आसन करने की स्थिति के अनुसार):**

- **Standing Asanas (खड़े होकर किये जाने वाले आसन):** Involve standing, bending forward, backward, or sideways. Examples: Tadasana, Triyak Tadasana, Kati Chakrasana, Padahasthasana, Ardha Chakrasana, Trikonasana, Garudasana, Natarajasana, Virabhadrasana, Hamsa Padasana.

- **Sitting Asanas (बैठ कर किये जाने वाले आसन):** Involve sitting and bending the waist forward or backward, and sideways. All meditative Asanas also fall under this category. Examples: Padmasana, Siddhasana, Gomukhasana, Paschimottanasana, Matsyendrasana, Vajrasana, Dandasana, Mandukasana, Vakrasana, Purvottanasana.

- **Prone Asanas (पेट के बल लेटकर किये जाने वाले आसन):**
Performed lying on the stomach. Examples: Bhujangasana, Dhanurasana, Makarasana, Shalabhasana, Sarpasana, Matsya Dandasan, Balasana.
 - **Supine Asanas (पीठ के बल लेटकर किये जाने वाले आसन):**
Performed lying on the back. Examples: Uttana Padasana, Halasana, Matsyasana, Setubandhasana, Markatasana, Karnapidasana, Shavasana.
 - **Inverted Asanas (सिर के बल किये जाने वाले आसन):** Performed in an inverted position (head down, feet up). These require physical strength and stability and should be practiced with extreme caution. Examples: Shirshasana, Vrikshikasana, Sarvangasana, Salamba Shirshasana, Adhomukha Vrikshasana.
3. **According to the complexity of the Asana (आसनो की जटिलता के अनुसार):**
- **Beginner Level (आरंभिक वर्ग):** Easy to perform and suitable for new practitioners. Complex Asanas should be avoided initially, gaining proficiency in beginner poses before moving on. Examples: Pavanmuktasana series, Dhyanatmakasana, Tadasana, Triyak Tadasana, Kati Chakrasana, Vajrasana.
 - **Intermediate Level (मध्यम वर्ग):** Slightly more complex than beginner poses. Should be practiced only after achieving full proficiency in beginner poses. Requires more stability, strength, and concentration. Examples: Backward bending poses (Ardha Chakrasana, Ardha Ushtrasana, Dhanurasana), Forward bending poses (Padahasthasana, Paschimottanasana, Janu Shirshasana, Kurmasana), Inverted poses (Sarvangasana, Shirshasana, Adhomukhasana), Balancing poses (Vrikshasana, Natarajasana, Garudasana), Spinal twists (Vakrasana, Ardha Matsyendrasana, Kati Chakrasana).

- **Advanced Level (उच्च वर्ग):** Highly complex, requiring extreme control over body muscles. Should be practiced only after gaining mastery in beginner and intermediate poses. Avoid rushing, and if possible, practice under the supervision of a qualified Yoga instructor. Examples: Adhomukha Vrikshasana, Mayurasana, Vrikshikasana, Bakasana, Ashtavakrasana, Poorna Matsyendrasana.

15 Asanas Described in Hatha Pradipika

Hatha Pradipika, authored by Swami Swatmaram, describes 15 Asanas with their method, benefits, and precautions.

1. Swastikasana (स्वस्तिकासन):

- **Method:** Place both soles firmly between the knees and thighs, keeping the body straight and balanced.
- **Precautions:** Avoid if lower back pain or sciatica, or knee problems. Avoid unnecessary force.
- **Benefits:** Very helpful for Pranayama and Dhyana. Increases physical and mental concentration. Regular practice is beneficial for the spine.

2. Gomukhasana (गोमुखासन):

- **Method:** Place the right heel at the left hip and the left heel at the right hip, forming a cow-face shape.
- **Precautions:** Avoid if knee problems. Do not force if shoulder stiffness. Do not practice only by watching books or movies. Avoid competitive mindset.
- **Benefits:** Strengthens shoulder, chest, and waist muscles. Positively affects the respiratory system. Beneficial for asthma and other breathing problems, increasing lung capacity. Increases blood circulation in legs.

3. Virasana (वीरासन):

- **Method:** Place one foot on the opposite thigh and the other foot under the other thigh.
- **Precautions:** Avoid if leg or waist problems. Avoid if joint pain. Practice according to physical capacity. Practice under qualified instructor's guidance.
- **Benefits:** Regular practice increases physical and mental stability. Positively affects organs around the abdomen like liver and kidneys. Good for spiritual progress.

4. Kurmasana (कूर्मासन):

- **Method:** Place both heels under the anus, with toes spread outwards, resembling a tortoise.
- **Precautions:** Never practice if lower back problems. Avoid until muscles are flexible. Avoid if suffering from hernia.
- **Benefits:** Regular practice is very beneficial for the digestive system. Helps the practitioner become introverted. Promotes mental peace and reduces anger.

5. Kukkutasana (कुक्कुटासन):

- **Method:** Perform Padmasana, then insert both hands between the knees and thighs, place palms firmly on the ground, and lift the body above the ground, balancing on the hands.
- **Precautions:** Pay special attention to hand strength. If body weight is too high, reduce weight first. Clean excessive hair on hands and feet before practice to avoid unnecessary pain.
- **Benefits:** Increases arm muscle strength. Helps prevent heart-related diseases. Increases body stability.

6. Uttanakurmasana (उत्तानकूर्मासन):

- **Method:** Perform Kukkutasana, then hold the neck with both hands and lie on the back like a tortoise.
- **Precautions:** A difficult Asana; only practice when the body is very flexible. Difficult with excessive body fat. Clean excessive hair on hands and feet. Do not practice without an instructor.
- **Benefits:** Increases physical and mental concentration. Positively affects the respiratory system. Increases body's balancing ability. Helps calm a restless mind.

7. Dhanurasana (धनुरासन):

- **Method:** Lie on the stomach, hold both big toes with both hands, pull them towards the ears from the back, forming a bow shape.
- **Precautions:** A difficult Asana; gain proficiency in simpler poses first. Completely prohibited for pregnant women. Avoid if suffering from hernia. Do not practice if recently had surgery.
- **Benefits:** Strengthens back muscles. Relieves waist stiffness and increases flexibility. Very beneficial for abdominal and respiratory problems. Can help alleviate menstrual problems. Helps reduce excess body fat.

8. Matsyendrasana (मत्स्येन्द्रासन):

- **Method:** Place the right foot at the base of the left thigh, and encircle the left foot around the outside of the right knee. Twist the body, holding both feet with opposite hands. This Asana is named after Shri Matsyendranath.
- **Precautions:** Avoid if stomach-related problems like peptic ulcers. Prohibited during menstruation. Prohibited for pregnant women. Avoid if heart problems.
- **Benefits:** Extremely helpful in preventing diabetes. Very beneficial for regulating the digestive system. Relieves waist

stiffness. Very beneficial for the excretory system, helping maintain kidney function. Also helpful in treating jaundice.

9. **Paschimottanasana (पश्चिमोत्तनासन):**

- **Method:** Extend both legs straight on the ground like a staff, hold both big toes with hands, and try to touch the forehead to the knees.
- **Precautions:** Avoid if spine problems like slip disc or cervical. Avoid if high blood pressure. Requires high flexibility in legs and waist; do not force. Stop if excessive pulling sensation in the waist.
- **Benefits:** Tones abdominal muscles. Regular practice helps prevent waist-related problems. Very beneficial for worm infestations. Also beneficial for the digestive system and increases digestive fire (Jatharagni).

10. **Mayurasana (मयूरासन):**

- **Method:** Place both hands firmly on the ground, position both elbows on either side of the navel, and lift the body like a staff above the ground, resembling a peacock.
- **Precautions:** Weak individuals should not attempt this initially. Not for women. Avoid if peptic ulcers. Avoid if hernia. Practice only under proper guidance.
- **Benefits:** Yoga texts state that it neutralizes the effect of poison. Increases arm strength. Improves digestive system and strengthens digestive fire. Increases physical and mental concentration.

11. **Shavasana (शवासन):**

- **Method:** Lie on the ground like a corpse on the back. Shavasana removes fatigue and provides mental peace.

- **Precautions:** Do not sleep during practice. Do not allow any tension in the body.
- **Benefits:** Relieves physical and mental stress and provides peace. Very helpful in treating insomnia. Helps calm a very restless mind. Also beneficial for heart-related diseases.

12. **Siddhasana (सिद्धासन):**

- **Method:** Place one heel firmly at the perineum (Muladhara Sthana) and the other foot on top of the genitals firmly. Place the chin on the chest (Hridaya Desha), control senses, and gaze at the mid-brow point, remaining motionless. This is Siddhasana, which breaks the door of liberation (Moksha Dwara Bhedana), i.e., leads to liberation.
- **Alternative Method (Hatha Pradipika 11/36):** Place the left foot's heel above the genitals and the right foot's heel on top of that. This is also Siddhasana.
- **Precautions:** Avoid if leg or waist problems.
- **Benefits:** Creates physical balance, essential for higher practices like Dhyana. Provides mental stability. Balances blood pressure.

13. **Padmasana (पद्मासन):**

- **Method:** Place the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. Then take both hands behind the back and firmly hold the right big toe with the right hand and the left big toe with the left hand. Then place the chin on the chest and fix the gaze on the tip of the nose. This Padmasana, as described by Yogis, destroys all diseases.
- **Alternative Method (Hatha Pradipika 11/45-46):** Place both soles upwards on the opposite thighs. Place one palm on the other palm in the middle of the thighs. Raise the Prana slowly,

gaze at the tip of the nose, and touch the tongue to the roof of the mouth. This is Padmasana.

- **Precautions:** Avoid if less flexibility in legs or any problems. Avoid if waist-related problems like sciatica.
- **Benefits:** Highly suitable for higher Yoga practices like Pranayama and Dhyana. Helps balance the body. Regular practice helps reduce high blood pressure.

14. **Simhasana (सिंहासन):**

- **Method:** Place both heels below the testicles, at the sides of the perineum. Place the left heel at the right side of the perineum and the right heel at the left side. Place both hands on the knees with fingers spread out. Open the mouth wide and gaze at the tip of the nose, remaining still. This Simhasana, revered by great Yogis, simplifies the practice of the three Bandhas.
- **Precautions:** Avoid if knee pain. Avoid if recent surgery.
- **Benefits:** Regular practice makes the voice sweet. Helps focus the mind. Beneficial for throat-related disorders.

15. **Bhadrasana (भद्रासन):**

- **Method:** Place both heels below the testicles, at the sides of the perineum. Place the left heel at the left side of the perineum and the right heel at the right side. Firmly hold the front part of both feet. This Bhadrasana destroys all diseases. Siddha Yogis also call this Gorakshasana.
- **Precautions:** Avoid if knee pain.
- **Benefits:** Highly aids in calming the body and mind. An excellent meditative Asana that helps Yoga practitioners in their practice.

Principles of Asana Practice (आसन के सिद्धांत)

To derive benefits and avoid negative effects, certain principles should be followed:

1. **Selection of Place:** Choose a clean, airy, and well-lit place.
2. **Use of Mat:** Use a suitable mat or rug for comfortable practice.
3. **Slow and Gentle Practice:** Do not rush; practice slowly and comfortably.
4. **No Competition:** Avoid competitive feelings during practice.
5. **Practice within Capacity:** Assess your physical capacity and practice accordingly.
6. **Shatkarma before Asana:** Practicing Shatkarma (Dhauti, Basti, Neti, Nauli, Trataka, Kapalbhati) before Asana makes the practice easier.
7. **Empty Stomach:** Always practice on an empty stomach, keeping at least a 2-hour gap between practice and meals.
8. **Timing:** Morning is best. If not possible, evening practice on an empty stomach is also acceptable.
9. **Pranayama after Asana:** Pranayama is essential after Asana to regain energy expended during Asana practice.
10. **Sweat Management:** If sweat appears, rub it back into the body; it brings radiance and strength. If excessive, use a clean cloth.
11. **Rest:** Take short breaks after each Asana.
12. **Balance:** Balance forward bends with backward bends, and one-sided movements with the other side.
13. **Breath Awareness:** Maintain continuous breath awareness during practice to avoid dizziness.

14. **Clothing:** Wear loose, comfortable, and preferably cotton clothes, considering the weather.
15. **Avoid Accessories:** Do not wear unnecessary items like rings, belts, watches, or other jewelry.
16. **No Self-Learning:** Do not learn Asanas solely from books or videos.
17. **No Immediate Bath:** Do not bathe immediately after Asana. Wait until sweat dries completely.
18. **Qualified Teacher:** New practitioners should always practice under the supervision of a qualified teacher.

Pranayama

- **Pranayama is the fourth limb of Ashtanga Yoga.**
- It is derived from two words: **Prana (प्राण)** and **Ayama (आयाम)**, meaning **control or regulation of vital energy**.
- **Patanjali's Yoga Sutra:** "Tasmin Sati Śvāsa-Praśvāsayor Gativicchedaḥ Prāṇāyāmaḥ." (तस्मिन् सति श्वास-प्रश्वासयोर्गतिवच्छेदः प्राणायामः।) (Yoga Sutra 2/49) – **After mastering Asana, Pranayama is the regulation of the flow of inhalation and exhalation.**
- **Śvāsa (श्वास):** Air entering the body from outside.
- **Praśvāsa (प्रश्वास):** Air going out from inside the body.
- Pranayama is the **regulation of these inhalation and exhalation movements according to one's capacity**. This regulation is done by Prana Vayu.

Types of Prana Vayu (प्राण वायु के प्रकार)

There are five main types of Vayu (air) in the body:

1. **Prana Vayu (प्राण वायु):** Moves upwards and resides in the front part of the nose. Its main function is respiration. Located in the heart region.
2. **Apana Vayu (अपान वायु):** Moves downwards and resides in the lower parts like the anus. It activates excretory and reproductive organs. Located below the navel.
3. **Vyana Vayu (व्यान वायु):** Moves in all directions and spreads throughout the entire body. It distributes energy from breath and food throughout the body.
4. **Udana Vayu (उदान वायु):** Resides in the throat and moves upwards. Its function is speech and accepting food and other elements.
5. **Samana Vayu (समान वायु):** Resides in the middle part of the body (navel) and digests consumed food. It performs digestive functions.

These five Vayus operate their functions in all parts of the human body.

The **union of Prana and Apana Vayu is called Pranayama.**

"Prāṇāpānasamāyogaḥ Prāṇāyāma itīritah." (प्राणापानसमायोगः प्राणायाम इतीरितः॥) (Yogiyagnavalkya 6/2).

Upa-Prana (उप-प्राण)

Five sub-Pranas are also mentioned:

1. **Naga (नाग):** Causes belching and reduces abdominal burden.
2. **Kurma (कूर्मा):** Activates the eyes and performs blinking.
3. **Krikara (कृकर):** Causes coughing, sneezing, and increases hunger.
4. **Devadatta (देवदत्त):** Causes yawning and regulates sleep.
5. **Dhananjaya (धनंजय):** Resides throughout the body, nourishes it, and is the last to leave the body after death.

Types of Pranayama Based on Breath Movement (प्राणायाम के प्रकार)

The regulation of inhalation and exhalation movements is based on three types of Pranayama:

1. **Bahya Vritti (बाह्य वृत्ति) / Rechaka (रेचक) / Praśvāsa (प्रश्वास):** Stopping the natural movement of exhalation (expelling breath outwards).
2. **Abhyantara Vritti (आभ्यंतर वृत्ति) / Puraka (पूरक) / Śvāsa (श्वास):** Stopping the natural movement of inhalation (drawing breath inwards).
3. **Stambha Vritti (स्तंभ वृत्ति) / Kumbhaka (कुंभक):** Stopping both inhalation and exhalation movements for a definite period.

Each of these three types of Pranayama (Rechaka, Puraka, and Kumbhaka) can be further categorized based on **place (देश)**, **time (काल)**, and **number (संख्या)**.

Importance and Benefits of Pranayama (प्राणायाम का महत्व एवं लाभ)

- **Mental Stability:** Practice Pranayama for mental focus and peace. It brings stability to the mind.
- **Life Regulation:** Regulates life force by controlling breath, thus controlling life and death.
- **Body and Mind Controller:** Air (Vayu) supports the body, controls all senses, activates all movements, and controls and stimulates the mind.
- **Overall Well-being:** Vayu performs all bodily functions smoothly and is instrumental in increasing longevity and health. "Vāyurāyurbalaṃ vāyuvārṇadhātā śarīriṇām. Vāyuvārimidaṃ sarvaṃ bhūvāyusca kṛtaḥ." (वायुरायुबलं वायुवातधृता शरीरिणाम्। वायुवरिमदं सर्वं भूवायुश्च कृतः॥) (Charaka Samhita 28/3).

- **Destruction of Ignorance:** Pranayama destroys ignorance, leading to discriminative wisdom.
- **Intellectual Development:** Pranayama practice develops and enhances intellect by ensuring proper airflow to the brain. Patanjali's Yoga Sutra states that continuous Pranayama practice removes the veil of ignorance, spreading the light of knowledge. "Tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśāvaraṇam." (ततः क्षीयते प्रकाशावरणम्।) (Patanjali Yoga Sutra 2/52).
- **Purification of Senses:** Pranayama removes impurities of the eleven senses, similar to how impurities are removed from metals by heating. Amritopanishad states: "Yathā parvatā dhātūnām dahyante dhamatā malāḥ. Tathaiṇḍriyakṛtā doṣāḥ dahyante prāṇadhāraṇāt." (यथा पर्वता धातूनां दह्यन्ते धमता मलाः। तथैडियकृता दोषाः दह्यन्ते प्राण धारणात्॥).
- **Concentration Ability:** Pranayama practice enables the mind to concentrate (Dharana), leading to stability and the ability to differentiate between inert and conscious. "Dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manah." (धारणासु च योग्यता मनः॥) (Patanjali Yoga Sutra 2/53).
- **Nadi Purification:** Pranayama purifies the Nadi system, removing all impurities, allowing Prana Vayu to enter the Nadis. It develops cognitive ability, brings knowledge, and joy to the mind. Gheranda Samhita states: "Prāṇāyāmātaḥ khecaratvaṁ prāṇāyāmādroganāśanam. Prāṇāyāmādbodhayeccha prāṇāyāmā manomanī. Ānando jāyate citte prāṇāyāmī sukhī bhavet." (प्राणायामातः खेचरत्वं प्राणायामाद्रोगनाशनम्। प्राणायामादबोधये छ प्राणायामा मनो मनी। आनन्दो जायते चित्ते प्राणायामी सुखी भवेत्॥) (Gheranda Samhita 5/56).
- **Disease Prevention/Cure:** Proper Pranayama practice destroys all diseases. However, incorrect practice can lead to diseases. "Prāṇāyāmād yugena sarvarogakṣayo bhavet. Ayugābhyāsayogena

sarvarogasamudbhavah." (प्राणायामा दयु ेन सवरोग यने भवते। अयु ा
यासयोगने सवरोगसमु वः ॥) (Hatha Pradipika 2/16).

- Pranayama is not just a breathing exercise but a special method that calms the mind, stops mental modifications, and leads the mind towards Samadhi.

Nadi Shodhana Pranayama (नाडीशोधन प्राणायाम)

Nadi Shodhana Pranayama is considered a very important practice for purifying the 72,000 Nadis (energy channels) in the body, through which Prana flows. Once the Nadis are purified, Prana flows smoothly, making the mind calm and focused, leading to natural Dhyana.

Concept of Prana and Nadi

- **Prana (प्राण): Life force** or subtle energy that enables a living being to survive. Breathing is a gross symbol of Prana. One can live without breathing for some time, but not a single moment without Prana. Prana spreads throughout the body and performs various functions.
- **Nadi (नाडी):** A complex and vast system of subtle channels spread throughout the human body. The word 'Nadi' comes from the root 'Na' (ना), meaning 'flow'. These subtle Nadis cannot be perceived by ordinary consciousness but only at higher levels of consciousness.
 - Their number varies in different texts, but most agree on **72,000 Nadis**.
 - Their origin is considered the **Kanda (कंद)**, an oval-shaped region two fingers above the anus and two fingers below the genitals in the center of the body.
 - Among all Nadis, 14 are considered important, as mentioned in Shandilya Upanishad: Ida, Pingala, Sushumna, Saraswati, Varuni, Pusha, Hastijihva, Yashaswini, Vishvodari, Kuhu, Shankhini, Payaswini, Alambusa, Gandhari.

- Among these 14, **Ida (left nostril), Pingala (right nostril), and Sushumna (between Ida and Pingala) are considered most important. Sushumna Nadi is supremely important** because the flow of Prana through it leads to the highest states of Dhyana (Samadhi).

Method of Nadi Shodhana (नाडीशोधन की विधि)

- **According to Hatha Pradipika:** Nadi Shodhana Pranayama is not included among the eight Kumbhakas but is recommended to be performed regularly before other Pranayama practices.
 - Swami Swatmaram states that after mastering Asanas, with controlled senses and appropriate diet, the practitioner should practice Pranayama under the guidance of a Guru.
 - There is a direct connection between Vayu (breath) and Chitta (mind). When Vayu is restless, the mind is restless; if Vayu is controlled, the mind becomes steady.
 - Impurities in the subtle Nadis hinder the proper flow of Prana, causing diseases. Hence, Nadi Shodhana is essential.
 - It should be practiced **four times a day**: morning, noon, evening, and midnight.
 - Gradually increase the number of Kumbhakas to **80 each time (20x4)**.
 - **Three levels of Pranayama practice:**
 1. **First (Arambhik):** Sweating occurs.
 2. **Second (Madhyam):** Trembling occurs.
 3. **Third (Uttam):** Prana reaches the Bhrumadhya (middle of eyebrows).
 - **Sweat** generated during Pranayama should be rubbed into the body; it brings strength and vitality.

- Initially, **milk and ghee-rich diet** is best. After proficiency, these rules may not be necessary.
- Pranayama practice is compared to taming a lion, elephant, or tiger slowly. Rushing can be harmful.
- Correct practice destroys all diseases, but incorrect practice causes issues like hiccups, asthma, cough, headaches, eye/ear pain.
- **Signs of Nadi purification:** Body becomes thin and radiant, digestive fire (Jatharagni) increases, inner sound (Nada) is experienced, and health benefits are obtained.
- **Specific Method (Hatha Pradipika 2/7-9):**
 1. Sit in Padmasana.
 2. Inhale through the **Chandra Nadi (left nostril)**.
 3. Retain breath according to capacity (Kumbhaka).
 4. Exhale through the **Surya Nadi (right nostril)**.
 5. Then, inhale again through the **Surya Nadi (right nostril)**, slowly filling the abdomen.
 6. Perform Kumbhaka as prescribed.
 7. Exhale through the **Chandra Nadi (left nostril)**.
 8. Always inhale through the nostril through which you just exhaled, retain breath until the urge to exhale arises, then exhale slowly through the other nostril, never forcefully.
- Continuous practice in this manner purifies the Nadi system in just over three months.

Precautions for Nadi Shodhana Pranayama (नाडीशोधन प्राणायाम की सावधानियाँ)

- **Guru's Guidance:** Practice Pranayama under the guidance of a Guru, with controlled senses and appropriate diet. "Athāsane dr̥ḍhe yogī vaśī hita-mitāśanaḥ. Gurūpadeśṭa-mārgena prāṇāyāmāḥ samabhyasate." (अथासन े दढे योगी वशी िहत-िमताशनः। गु प द ट-मागण ाणायामा सम यसते ॥) (Hatha Pradipika 2/1).
- **Sattvic Intellect:** Practice daily with a sattvic (pure) intellect. "Prāṇāyāmaṁ tataḥ kuryād dīryaṁ sāttvikayā dhiyā." (प्राणायामं ततः कुर्यािदं साित्वकया धिया।) (Hatha Pradipika 2/6).
- **Regularity:** Practice four times a day (morning, noon, evening, midnight), gradually increasing Kumbhakas to 80.
- **Diet:** Initially, a diet of milk and ghee is recommended. This rule may not be necessary after proficiency.
- **Correct Technique:** Incorrect practice leads to diseases. "Ayuktābhyāsayogena sarvarogasamudbhavaḥ." (अयु ा यासयोगने सवरोगसमु वः।) (Hatha Pradipika 2/16). Practice with extreme caution under proper guidance.
- **Shatkarma:** If the body is heavy or has excess phlegm, practice Shatkarma before Pranayama.
- **Avoid Harmful Foods:** Yoga Tattva Upanishad advises avoiding salt, oil, sour foods, hot and spicy foods, green vegetables, asafoetida, other spices, excessive exposure to fire, sexual activity, excessive walking, fasting, and any other self-inflicting pain.
- **Gradual Practice:** Shandilya Upanishad states that fast practice can destroy the Yogi. Maintain a gentle pace.

Benefits of Nadi Shodhana Pranayama (नाडीशोधन प्राणायाम के लाभ)

1. **Nadi Purification:** Most important benefit is the purification of Nadis, allowing proper Prana flow, essential for higher Yoga practices.

2. **Strength and Vitality:** Rubbing sweat back into the body increases strength and vitality.
3. **Disease Destruction:** Proper Pranayama practice destroys all diseases. "Prāṇāyāmena yuktena sarvarogakṣayo bhavet." (प्राणायामे न युक्ते न सवरोग यो भवेत्।) (Hatha Pradipika 2/16).
4. **Physical Radiance:** Body becomes thin and radiant.
5. **Enhanced Digestion:** Digestive fire increases.
6. **Inner Sound:** Experience of Nada (inner sound) occurs.
7. **Health:** Overall health benefits are gained.
8. **Mental Stability:** Control over Vayu leads to control over the mind, making it steady.
9. **Reduced Waste:** Reduces excretions (urine, feces) and decreases sleep.
10. **Eliminates Odors:** Yogi does not experience dirt, nasal discharge, phlegm, sweat, or bad breath.
11. **Perfection (Siddhi):** The Yogi attains great perfections.
12. **Respiratory Control:** Regulates the respiratory system and increases oxygen levels in the body.
13. **Stress Reduction:** Helps reduce excessive stress.
14. **Brain Enhancement:** Makes the brain alert, active, and sensitive.
15. **Enhances Other Pranayamas:** Increases the effectiveness of other Pranayama practices.
16. **Therapeutic Benefits:** Very beneficial for asthma, cough-related diseases, skin issues, blood pressure control, migraine, and sinus problems.

Dhyana (ध्यान)

- **Dhyana is the second internal limb of Ashtanga Yoga**, leading to Samadhi. It follows Dharana and precedes Samadhi.
- **Definition:** Continuously fixing the mind on the object or area of concentration (Dhyeya Vastu or Desha) where the mind's modifications are focused.
- **Patanjali's Yoga Sutra:** "Tatra Pratyayaikatānatā Dhyānam." (तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम।) (Yoga Sutra 3/2) – **The continuous flow of thoughts towards that single object of Dharana is Dhyana.**
- **Samkhya Darshan (Maharishi Kapila):** Defines Dhyana as the absence of attachment to worldly objects. "Rāgopahitatadyānam." (रागोपहितत ध्यानम।) (Samkhya 3/3) and "Dhyānaṁ nirviṣayaṁ manaḥ." (ध्यानं निर्विषयं मनः।) (Samkhya 6/65) – **A mind free from worldly objects is Dhyana.**

Benefits of Dhyana (ध्यान के लाभ)

- Provides the ability to **focus the mind on a single object.**
- Leads to a **complete and clear perception of the object of contemplation.**
- Practice of Dhyana leads to the **absence of attachment to worldly objects.**
- Ensures that **knowledge regarding the object of contemplation remains uniform.**
- The **mind (Chitta) achieves stability.**
- The mind progresses towards the states of **Samprajnata Samadhi and Asamprajnata Samadhi.**
- Dhyana is instrumental in attaining **Kaivalya (knowledge/liberation).**

6967000021 Yoga Philosophy and Practice (VAC)

This comprehensive overview covers the key aspects of Yoga, Asana, Pranayama, and Dhyana as presented in your sources.

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