UNIT 11 – BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO ASHTANGA YOGA II

UNIT STRUCTURE

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11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, the students will be able to:

- To enable the learners to know the meaning of Pranayama.
- To enable the learners to know the meaning of Pratyahara.
- To enable the learners to know the meaning of Dharana.
- To enable the learners to know the meaning of Dhyana.
- To enable the learners to know the meaning of Samadhi
- To know the actual meaning of yoga sadhana.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

Ashtanga Yoga is a spiritual practice and conscious life method with eight limbs. It leads to self-awareness, emancipation and the cessation of personal suffering. Sage Patanjali organized the many levels of Yoga in the Classical Age with the Yoga-Sutras, a 196-verse treatise composed. All 196 verses are organized into four chapters. Ashtanga is a Sanskrit word that means "eight-limbed." Ashtanga Yoga is an eight-limbed approach to

attaining the stateSamadhi. Sutra 2.29 reads as follows: "Yama-niyama-asana-pranayama-pratyahara-dharana-dyana-samadhyaya-astavangani."
The eight limbs of yoga are yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyanaand samadhi. Here in this unit, we are going to discuss about the last four limbs pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

11.3 CONCEPT OFPRANAYAMA

Concept of Pranayama is the practice of regulating one's breath. In Sanskrit, "prana" denotes life essence, while "yama" means control. The breath represents prana and pranayama can be defined as ways for extending and expanding vital life force energy through purposeful regulation of respiration. Pranayama is a set of techniques for harnessing and manipulating universal energy, known as prana. It is an essential component of yoga, frequently included into asana practice or used as a prerequisite for meditation. Pranayama appears in several of the early Indian writings, where a wide range of objectives are described. The practice can be utilized for cleansing, liberation, mental focus, body stabilization or as an addition to other yoga techniques. Pranayama must be learned from a teacher. Initially, the relative duration should be 6:8:6. Finally, you can do 20:80:40. Here it becomes 1:4:2, which means one unit of time for puraka, four units for kumbhaka and two units for rechaka. A matra is the time required for two claps and one snap. If an aspirant can do pranayama for 20:80:40 matras, he is considered the best sadhaka. This is the finest pranayama. The quality varies with the number of rounds; eventually it becomes lengthy and subtle. The definition of pranayama given by the sage Patanjali in yoga sutra –

तस्मिन्सतिश्वासप्रश्वासयोर्गतिविच्छेदःप्राणायामः

Tasminsatisvasaprasvasayorgativichchhedaḥpraṇayamah - 2/49-P.Y.S.

Tasmin: on that; Sati: having been.Svasaprasvasayah: means inhalation and exhalation; gati: means movement; and vichchhedah: means break or cessation;Pranayama:

After doing the asana, pranayama is the cessation of inhaling and exhalation. After mastering the yamas, niyamas and asanas, the aspirant should begin pranayama. It is the end of inhalation and expiration. There is no rechaka or puraka; there is only kumbhaka.

It should be mentioned that pranayama does not involve deep breathing. Similarly, pranayama is not practiced by holding the breath for as long as possible.Pranayama is the controlled breathing that allows the breath to be retained. It is noteworthy to notice that serpents, elephants, tortoises and other animals have longer lives than humans because they breathe less frequently. A human being's life can also be extended by holding his or her breath, but this requires expertise and practice. Prana is believed to resemble a wild elephant. If you wish to tame the prana, you must exercise the same caution you would when taming a wild elephant. There must be consistency and patience; there should be no rush or haste. Retention must be done slowly and carefully. If there are any negative effects, either physically or mentally, the practice must be discontinued for a few days or months. Before commencing the practice, consider the following factors: atmospheric conditions, food habits, age, physical condition and so on.There should be enough prudence. In hatha yoga, it is expressly emphasized that breath control should not be used in physical asanas. Controlling one's breath in some physical postures is improper. Pranayama can also be done in different positions, but the student must be aware of which exercises to use and which to avoid. This requires a thorough knowledge of the definition of prana. It has nothing to do with the lungs, but everything to do with the life current.The ability to hold the breath is the ultimate goal of pranayama. Puraka, rechaka and kumbhaka are the three categories of pranayama. Kevala kumbhaka, the fourth type, comes in two varieties: antaranga and bahiranga. The physical body the brain and the spinal cord all experience changes as a result of holding their breath. Pranayama affects the brain via influencing the neurological system. The lungs have little to do with it. Puraka, kumbhaka and rechaka have distinct physiological consequences.

Therefore, pranayama means to stop the breath, either inside or outside. While the number of respirations per minute is reduced the ayama, or length of prana,

is enhanced. As a result, during pranayama, we only breathe once or twice each minute, compared to fourteen times per minute during normal breathing.

- **Types of Pranayama:**

There are four types of pranayama mention by the sage Patanjali in the verse no 50 and 51 in chapter two. Which are –

I. **BahyahVrttih**: Bahyakumbhaka is an example of pranayama. Bahya means "outside" in Sanskrit, while kumbhaka means "breath retention." This pranayama exercise involves holding the breath for several seconds after the exhalation is complete. Before practicing bahyakumbhaka, the yogi should exhale completely, expelling more air than typical from the lungs. Similarly, before performing antarkumbhaka, inhale slightly more air than usual to ensure that the lungs are thoroughly filled, by holding the breath out for one or two seconds, then up to 16 seconds over several month. Many disorders are assumed to be the result of abnormalities in the body's and mind's pranic systems. Pranayama helps to restore balance to this energy system.

II. **Abhyantara Vrttih:** The phrase is derived from Sanskrit, where abhyantara means "internal" and kumbhaka means "breath retention". It's also called antarkumbhaka. Abhyantarakumbhaka is a pranayama in which you hold your breath after inhaling.Abhayantrakumbhaka pranayama is the intentional holding of the breath after inhalation to raise our overall energy levels, reduce mood swings and help with anxiety and depression disorders. Abhyantarakumbhaka is intended to assist balance the body's energy system. Abhyantarakumbhaka is utilized as a pranayama technique alongside meditation and some yoga asanas.

III. **Stambha Vrttih:** The term stambha refers to breath retention, which is a variable in pranayama. StambhaVritti Pranayama, also known as sama pranayama, where a practitioner requires equal breathing time

for each of the steps of the breathing cycle: inhale, hold your breath, exhale and hold your breath again. This is the technique of pranayama where both pranayama i.e. bahyah and abhyantara retention is use in equal timing. Mastering this approach will help us focus and improve our meditation and yoga. Practicing this pranayama also serves as a basis for studying more advanced pranayama.

IV. Fourth kind of pranayama. The sage not mention the name of pranayama. In the verse no 2/51 of yoga sutra the sage mentions the technique of the fourth pranayama. The fourth pranayama transcends the internal and exterior objects. This fourth style of pranayama does not require either antaranga or bahirangakumbhaka. This is identical to the statement in the Bhagavad Gita, which states that apana should be united with prana and prana with apana. By combining the ingoing and departing breaths, the student effectively stops the entering and exiting sensations. Second, the ingoing breath should be connected to the ingoing breath itself. Third, you should perform kumbhaka simultaneously. The sensations must not be allowed to permeate. The external sensations of objects should be left outside, but the internal samskaras or experiences should be kept inside. In this case, the exterior manifestation should not be permitted inside, while the inner samskaras should not be allowed to manifest outside. That's the fourth pranayama. You can do it by breathing in and out in ujjayi while attempting to concentrate your thoughts on a certain psychic pathway without regulating or stopping the breath in the form of antaranga or bahirangakumbhaka. Gradually, you should be able to extinguish the experiences and block the path of sensory experiences. That is the fourth type of pranayama.

Sage Patanjali mentions that the fruits (results) of Praṇayama in Yoga Sutra 2.52 and 2.53 are as follows:

"ततःक्षीयतेप्रकाशावरणम्"

TataḥKṣīyatePrakāśāvaraṇam2.52- P.Y.S.

Meaning: As a result of that (praṇayama), the veil that covers the inner light is destroyed.

Praṇayamaeliminates mental impurities that hinder inner light, clarity and discriminatory awareness (viveka). The veil of ignorance that obscures the light of genuine truth begins to dissipate with Pranayama (breath control), resulting in inner clarity and spiritual awakening. This sutra states that by regulating the breath, the mind's innate brilliance, which has been obscured by rajas (passion) and tamas (inertia), is revealed, allowing for a more accurate assessment of reality.

धारणासुचयोग्यतामनसः॥

Dhāraṇāsu ca YogyatāManasaḥ2.53- P.Y.S.

Meaning: And the mind becomes fit for concentration (Dharaṇa).

The purified and clarified mind becomes capable of sustained concentration and higher meditative practices.The practice of Praṇayama (breath control) prepares the mind for Dharaṇa (concentration or focus), removing distractions and preparing it to hold a single point of focus. This is a crucial step towards deeper meditation.

11.4 CONCEPT OF PRATYAHARA

Pratyahara is a Sanskrit word that means "withdrawal of the senses." It refers to the withdrawal of the mind and senses from their things. It is the fifth limb of Ashtanga yoga. Sage Patanjali described Pratyahara as –

स्वविषयासम्प्रयोगेचित्तस्यस्वरूपानुकारइवेन्द्रियाणांप्रत्याहारः

Svaviṣayasamprayogechittasyasvarupanukaraivendriyaṇampratyaharaḥ.

2/54 P.Y.S.

Sva: one's own; viṣaya: object; asamprayoge: not coming into Contact; chitta: mind; svarupa: own form; anukarah: imitating; iva: as if; indriyaṇam: of the senses; pratyaharaḥ: withdrawal.

Pratyahara is essential stage of the mind, senses by withdrawing them from their respective objects.It should be understood that pratyahara involves separating the mind from the objects of sense experience and that the senses act in accordance with the mind, not vice versa. The senses of smell, taste, sight, touch and hearing are separated from their objectsand the senses begin to follow the intellect inward rather than outward. This is the withdrawal of the mind from sense activities, causing the sense organs to become introverted alongside the mind; they imitate and follow it inside. Pratyahara is thus linked to the citta, which includes the intellect and its appendages, the sense organs. So, according to the sutra, the specific meaning of the term Pratyahara in astanga yoga is the withdrawal of the sense's inward towards their source, namely the mind and ultimately, the citta. When the sadhaka becomes proficient in Pratyahara, the senses appear to lose the ability to make contact with, i.e. experience and enjoy, the objects and subjects that are the customary targets or domains of experience for them. In this way, the senses appear to have been drawn in towards the source of their ability of experiencing, which is becoming aware and comprehending, viz. the mind and even further in the citta. In a sense, they take on the form of citta, becoming integrated into it and hence having no independent activity or existence outside of it. Because these connections to the outer world are not working, the mind and citta do not get any messages or communication from any subject or object outside. Clearly, this is a precondition for the subsequent stages of meditation, namely dharana, dhyana and samadhi. If the citta continues to receive distracting signals from the outside world through the agency of the senses, there will be no cittaprasadana and the citta will never be able to go deep into its own inner recesses, which is what generally happens during dharana, dhyana Samadhi. As a result, in order to achieve an efficient citttaprasadana, Pratyahara must be completed satisfactorily. In this light, Pratyahara becomes the first stage, or at least the threshold and is almost an integral component of the meditational process. Patanjali does not specify how to obtain Pratyahara. The reason for this is that it arises naturally as a result of extensive and earnest practice of the first four angas, as well as a very long and rigorous practice of pranayama. An indication of this is the fact that when a complete novice, who may not have even heard the name of Yoga or pranayama, is taught a technique of

pranayama of any type, even Hathayogic, and practises it correctly for a few days, his eyelids will droop and the eyes may be completely closed or at least remain in the usually so-called nasagra. This will occur even if the newbie is unaware of the effect or is not told about it, as it is a natural byproduct of pranayama breathing. This occurs as a preliminary change on the path to Pratyahara, because the eye is the most dominant of the five senses and has a shutter-like appendage of the eyelid that, when closed, can significantly reduce its activity. Such a closure occurs automatically, as it is an essential step for the Pratyahara of the sense of vision. Nature did not offer analogous shutters or damping devices for the other four senses. However, a long and intensive pranayama practice gradually reduces the acuity of all five senses, until they are so weakened that they are unable to receive and respond to outside vibratory or other types of impacts or impulses that normally stimulate them and thus they do not communicate anything from outside to their master, the manasendriya. Pratyahara is largely self-motivated, thus there isn't much that can be done.The fruits (results) of Pratyahara as mentioned by Sage Patanjali in Yoga Sutra 2.55, which is:

ततःपरमावश्यतेन्द्रियाणाम्॥

tataḥparamāvaśyatendriyāṇām2.55 P.Y.S.

Meaning: From that (Pratyahara), arises the supreme mastery over the senses. This sutra outlines the outcome of correctly practicing Pratyahara, the fifth limb of Ashtanga Yoga. Pratyahara is the withdrawal of the senses from outward objects, allowing the mind to concentrate inward. This mastery allows a yogi to direct their attention and energy at will, free of extraneous stimuli or cravings. This level is an important stepping stone toward the last phases of yoga, which include concentration (Dharana), meditation (Dhyana) and finally, spiritual realization (Samadhi).

11.6. CONCEPT OF DHARANA

Dharana, or Concentration, is the sixth limb of Ashtanga yoga. It refers to mental concentration achieved by focusing attention on a certain thing. Whereas Pratyahara teaches us to shift our concentration from the outward to

the interior, Dharana teaches us to 'zoom in' and focus solely on one item. Each of the eight limbs of yoga prepares us for the next. In chapter three verse one of yoga sutra define dharana as-

देशबन्धश्चित्तस्यधारणा॥

Desabandhaschittasya dharana – 3/1 P.Y.S.

Desa: place; bandha: binding; chittasya: of the mind; dharaṇa: Concentration

Concentration (dharana) is the process of confining the mind to a single location. Place here refers to a mental or physical location. According to several religions, a learner can choose amongst three bases: objective, subjective, or visionary. So, dharana refers to the limitation of the mind to a single place, object, or space. The Mahabharata provides a superb illustration of one-pointed attentiveness. While training the Pandavas archery, their guru Drona inquired as to what object they could perceive. Arjuna stated that he could only see the bird's eye, which was the target. This is a demonstration of concentration. When the mind is focused on a certain spot, perception becomes intense. When the eyes are closed, the item, which could be a concept, an idea, or a word, appears vividly in consciousness. The mind does not move or leave the focus of concentration. Vikshepa refers to something that moves. Vikshepa signifies oscillation. Concentration should be focused solely on the desha. It is sometimes believed that you can have two regions of concentration. For example, when performing japa, the mantra is one component, while form is another. For a beginner, focusing japa on two aspects is preferable. Later, one may concentrate without japa. While blood flows into the brain, there will be vibrations and difficulty concentrating. The blood flow should be slowed and there should be no vibrations. We use an optic system to accomplish this. The optical system reduces the vibrations of the physical brain. If you look at one location with your eyes open, don't blink for a while and then close your eyes, you'll fall asleep in five minutes. Just as you may stop the waves or ripples on the surface of water in a vessel by keeping the water calm, you can also stop the vibrations in your brain by removing various irritating stimuli. Even the physiological brain will be stopped. For this, we focus the attention on a single place, such as a chakra in the body like mooladhara, manipura, or ajna, and fix our consciousness on it. Do not allow the thoughts to fluctuate. Thus, cerebral

activity ceases for a period of time, during which concentration occurs. Initially, it is impossible to concentrate the mind for an extended period of time. Concentration is not forgetting. Shoonya samadhi or laya occurs when you forget everything, even the object, whereas concentration requires awareness of a single object. If you're concentrating on a mantra, you should be aware of it at all times. If there is a gap, it is concentration; otherwise, it is dhyana. It is important to remember that when concentrating, you are always aware that you are doing so. Meditation is not unlike concentration; it is simply a greater level of it. Dharana involves awareness of the object, which is occasionally broken throughout the process. Hearing an outside sound or having diverse thoughts enter the mind might disrupt one's awareness. Thus, dharana combines concentration of consciousness with pauses. Sometimes the breaks are so overwhelming that it is impossible to refocus. This is called vikshepa. It's a nuisance, a distraction. This is always challenging for a beginner. He can sometimes bring his mind back to the area, but not always. This is because the physical body is not stable. With the slightest movement of the body, the heart begins to beat quicker and respiration increases, causing disturbance. Concentration becomes firm when the body is perfectly steady, as if it were a stone. This is why maintaining a steady posture is crucial.

11.6 CONCEPT OF DHYANA

Dhyana refers to meditation. It is the seventh limb of Ashtanga Yoga, following Dharana (concentration). Dharana is the first step toward meditation, whereas Dhyana is the actual stage of meditation in which deep levels of focus are acquired. Sage Patanajali define dhyana in chapter three verse two –

तत्रप्रत्ययैकतानताध्यानम्॥

Tatra pratyayaikatanatadhyanam – 3/2 P.Y.S.

atra: there (in the desha); pratyaya: basis or content of con sciousness; ekatanata: continuity; dhyanam: Meditation.

Dhyana is the uninterrupted flow of conscious content. Pratyaya refers to the basis of consciousness, which can be a concept, a sound, or anything, subtle or gross. If the consciousness in dharana becomes continuous, with no breaks or

interruptions caused by other thoughts, dharana is replaced or transformed into dhyana. Dhyana can occur while doing dharana. Dhyana involves an uninterrupted flow of consciousness. Dhyana is defined as 'pratyaya-ekatanata', which means 'an unbroken continually stretched awareness of a very exactly uniform experience of the subject' and was chosen for these meditational processes. The subject's consciousness should be so consistent throughout the dhyana process that there should be no variation in its awareness or cognition. Clearly, there will be a pure consciousness of the subject's pleasant existing or 'blissful beingness', which is thus incompatible with the concept of pratyayaikatanata, or the state of dhyana. That is, there will be no thinking about the subject during dhyana, because any thinking or ideation will immediately result in the possibility of an alteration, however in a minor way, of this thought. If the modification occurs, the pratyayaikatanata will be broken, resulting in an interruption of dhyana and a regression back to the dharana state. As a result, we might conclude that dhyana occurs when nirvicarasamapatti approaches perfection. This condition of thoughtless, or idealess, consciousness of pure pleasure-giving existence (in the citta) of the meditation subject, on the other hand, lasts for quite some time. Finally, it transforms into a samadhi.

11.7 CONCEPT OF SAMADHI

Samadhi is the final step of the octa-partite discipline known as Ashtanga yoga. Samadhi is the full stilling of the mind, which permits the individual to be united with the universe. In this stage, the yogi is fully disconnected from the material world and focuses solely on merging his or her awareness with a higher spiritual power. It is a delightful kind of total meditative absorption that occurs after the practitioner has completed the early steps on Patanjal's eightfold path. Samadhi has deep spiritual importance since it represents self-realization and the ultimate relationship with the Divine. Sage Patanajali define samadhi in chapter three verse three as -

तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासंस्वरूपशून्यमिवसमाधिः॥

Tadevarthamatranirbhasamsvarupasunyamivasamadhih – 3/3 P.Y.S.

Tadeva: the same; artha: the object of dhyana; matra: only; nirbhasam: appearing; svarupa: one's own form; sunyam: empty; iva: as if; samadhih: Samadhi.

That state becomes samadhi when simply the object appears, with no awareness of one's own self. It is worth noting that dharana transforms into dhyana, which transforms into samadhi. In dharana, consciousness is interrupted; in dhyana, it is continuous and in samadhi, it merges with the artha, or object of focus. It could be a large or subtle thing. In samadhi, there is no awareness that one is practicing focus. It is commonly believed that in intense concentration, the object disappears, yet this sutra teaches us that the thing does not disappear; rather, it alone triumphs. Thus, if you are concentrating on Aum, the sign Aum, known as artha, will appear in samadhi. It will not vanish, but it will be the exclusive focus of attention. As you go through the phases of samadhi, the object of meditation becomes increasingly distinct and vivid. Another key element to consider is that you are not conscious of your own existence, nor are you aware that you are practicing concentration.

Thus, samadhi has two characteristics: first, only the object shines and second, there is no awareness of the process or the self. Because there is no consciousness except for the object in samadhi, the mind appears to be inactive, but it is not blank; thus, the term iva is used. Samadhi is regarded as the pinnacle of all spiritual and intellectual activity, in addition to being a precondition for attaining samsara (release from the cycle of death and rebirth). In yoga, samadhi is considered to be the state in which individual and universal consciousness unite. It is a blissful form of total meditative absorption, reached once the practitioner has moved through the preliminary steps on Patanjal's eightfold path.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: What do you mean by Ashtanga Yoga?

Q2: Define Pranayama

Q3: What is Pratyahara?

Q4: What is concept of Dharana?

Q5: Define Dhyana mention by the sage Patanjali.

Q6: Samadhi refer to?

11.8 LET US SUM UP

Yoga sadhana is more than simply physical exercise; it encompasses mental and spiritual disciplines. It has a broad scope, embracing a variety of aims.

When a seeker expands his sadhana to include Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana and Dhyana, he can better understand the purpose of yoga sadhana.

It is a comprehensive practice that combines physical postures, breathing methods, meditation and ethical conduct, with the goal of uniting the mind, body and soul, making it far more than just physical activity.

11.9 FURTHER READINGS

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Karambelkar,P.V.Patanjala Yoga Sutra, Kaivalyadhama, Lonavla.

Vivekananda, Swami. Raja Yoga, Calcutta, Advaita Ashram.

Edwin Bryant. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Rutgers University, New Brunswick.

✓ 11.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: What do you mean by Ashtanga Yoga?

Q2: Define Pranayama

Q3: What is Pratyahara?

Q4: What is concept of Dharana?

Q5: Define Dhyana mention by the sage Patanjali.

Q6: Samadhi refer to?

Answer to Q1: The eights limbs are together known as Ashtanga Yoga. Which we have found in Patanjali's yoga-sutra. The eight limbs are the spiritual practical practice practices which led to us into the raja yoga.

Answer to Q2: Pranayama is the practice of regulating one's breath. In Sanskrit, "prana" denotes life essence, while "yama" means control. The breath

represents prana and pranayama can be defined as ways for extending and expanding vital life force energy through purposeful regulation of respiration.

Answer to Q3: Pratyahara is essentialthestage of the mind, senses by withdrawing them from their respective objects. It should be understood that pratyahara involves separating the mind from the objects of sense experience and that the senses act in accordance with the mind, not vice versa.

Answer to Q4: Dharana teaches us to 'zoom in' and focus solely on one item. Concentration (dharana) is the process of confining the mind to a single location. Place here refers to a mental or physical location. Each of the eight limbs of yoga prepares us for the next.

Answer to Q5: Dhyana is the seventh limb of Ashtanga Yoga, following Dharana (concentration). Dharana is the first step toward meditation, whereas Dhyana is the actual stage of meditation in which deep levels of focus are acquired.

Answer to Q6: Samadhi is regarded as the pinnacle of all spiritual and intellectual activity, in addition to being a precondition for attaining samsara (release from the cycle of death and rebirth). In Samadhi, there is no awareness that one is practicing focus. It is commonly believed that in intense concentration, the object disappears, yet this sutra teaches us that the thing does not disappear; rather, it alone triumphs. Thus, if you are concentrating on Aum, the sign Aum, known as artha, will appear in Samadhi.

⍰ 11.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

Short questions:

1. What are the five limbs of Bahiranga Yoga?
2. How many limbs are there in Antaranga Yoga?
3. How many types of Pranayamas are there?
4. What is the meaning of Pratyahara?
5. What is the final goal of Astanga Yoga?

Long questions:

1.What do you mean by Pranayama, explain it in details.

2. Explain the various types of Pranayama found in Patanjali's yoga sutra.

3. What do you mean by Pratyahara, explain it in details.

4. What do you mean by Dharana, explain it in details.

5. What do you mean by Dhyana, explain it in details.
6. What do you mean by Samadhi, explain it in details.