UNIT 3: DIFFERENT LIMBS OF YOGA

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3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

● describe the different components or limbs of Yoga
● explain the different parts of Yoga according of Patanjali
● describe the limbs of hatha Yoga and
● explain the definitions of Asanas, Pranayama, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi

3.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we have learnt about the historical perspective on yoga and its evolutionary phases. In this unit we shall discuss the different limbs of yoga is yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara etc. You will make yourself familiar with the classification of different asanas, principles for practising asanas and their effects which have contributed a lot in the improvement or development of the health of body and the mind. Here, we
shall highlight three parts of pranayama. We shall discuss in detail some important varieties of pranayama. We shall also touch upon the important issues related to the effects of pranayama. We hope, this unit will help to add some more information with regards to pratyahara and you will be able to observe the perfect mastery over the senses more systematically and contribute to their development in a better way. In this unit, you will also learn about dharana, dhyana and Samadhi, types of Samadhi and effects of dharana-dhyana-samadhi.

### 3.3 LIMBS OF YOGA

Yoga is constituted of certain components or parts which are called ‘Limbs of Yoga’(Yogangas). Patanjali, who systematised yoga in a scientific way had mentioned in his famous treatise, ‘Yoga Sutra’ eight components of yoga. These are (1) Yama (restraints), (2) Niyama (observances), (3) Asana (postures), (4) Pranayama (regulation of breath), (5) Pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses from sense-objects), (6) Dharana (concentration), (7) Dhyana (meditation) and (8) Samadhi (super-consciousness). The Hatha Yoga texts have added two more components, viz., (9) Sat Karma (six purificatory works) and (10) Bandha-Mudra (internal locks). Each one of the limbs is meant for controlling the internal and external nature and thereby awakening and developing the divine power, lying dormant within each individual and arriving at the final goal of yoga.

Now let us go through the limbs of yoga in the following sub-sections:

#### 3.3.1 Yama

Yamas are the first component of yoga which are nothing but some restraints imposed voluntarily by a practitioner upon himself/herself so that he/she can refrain himself/herself from immoral activities, physically, mentally as well as verbally. The yamas, according to Patanjali, are five in number. These are-

a) **Ahimsa** (non-violence)

b) **Satya** (truthfulness)
3.3.2 Niyama

According to Patanjali, Niyamas are five in number. They are-

a) Cleanliness (Saucha)
b) Contentment (Santosha)
c) Austerity (Tapah)
d) Study of spiritual scriptures and Enquiry into the Self (Swadhyaya)
e) Surrender to God (Iswara Pranidhana).

Yoga treatises like Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Darsana Upanishad etc. mention ten number of Niyamas. They are-

1) Austerity (Tapah)
2) Contentment (Santosha)
3) Belief in God (Aastikam)
4) Charity (Dana)
5) Worship of God (Iswara Pujanam)
6) Listening to discourses on Established Truths (Siddhanta Vakya Sravanam)
7) Modesty (Hrih)
8) Faith (Moti)
9) Prayer (Japa)
10) Worship with offerings (Hotam).

The two components - Yama and Niyama - together, form the foundation of yoga. Realising the importance of the two components in human life Ernest Wood, in his famous treatise on yoga, ‘The Great Systems of Yoga’ compares the ten Yama-Niyamas with the ten Commandments of the Bible. Practice of Yama-Niyamas brings mental serenity and self-satisfaction in the life, drives away emotional worries and anxieties and helps in establishing a peaceful society with love and friendship, co-operation and co-ordination.

### 3.3.3 Asana

Asanas are bodily postures done while standing, sitting and lying down in order to give the body and mind steadiness and poise (Sthiram and Sukham) and to bring balance in the functioning of the internal organs. In Asana the body is kept in different positions and the mind concentrated in such a way that the systems and organs of the body become strong and efficient in functioning, and finally, it improves the health of body and mind. These are some of the means to prevent disease and old age and developing or achieving physical and mental development.

Asanas are countless in number. The ancient treatises on yoga, like Goraksha Samhita, Gheranda Samhita, Dhyan-bindu Upanishad, mention that there are as many asanas as there are animals on the earth. However, out of the innumerable asanas, 84 asanas are considered to be important.

- **Classification of Asanas**

  Based on their effects, asanas are classified into three major groups. These are-
  
  a) Meditative Asanas (Dhyanasanas): Examples - Padmasana, Swastikasana, Siddhasana, Vajrasana, etc.
  b) Cultural or Corrective Asanas (Swasthasanas): Examples - Vajrasana, Sarvangasana, Dhanurasana, Tadasana, Trikonasana, etc.
c) **Relaxative Asanas (Vishranti Asanas):** Examples - Sarvasana, Makarasana, etc.

Asanas can be performed in different positions like standing, sitting, sleeping, etc.

- **Principles for Practising Asana**
  
  While practising asana, one is to keep in mind that asanas are meant for conservation of energy, not for its wastage. Hence, importance is given on relaxation, not on stress and strain on the muscles and nerves.

  All asanas are to be done in slow motion with rhythm and not in a hurry with jerks or in swiftness.

  One’s mind must be kept concentrated on the parts of the body which are involved in the asana.

- **Effects of Asanas:**
  
  Practice of Asana -

  1. Brings stability and poise to the body and the mind;
  2. Removes stiffness of the joints and increases flexibility;
  3. Removes poisonous elements accumulated in the bone-joints, muscles and ligaments;
  4. Massages the roots of the nerves, supplies fresh blood and makes them active and alert;
  5. Regularises the functions of the endocrine glands;
  6. Increases lung capacity;
  7. Makes the heart, arteries and the vasso-motor centres healthy and improves their blood circulation;
  8. Strengthens the organs of the digestive system and the excretory system;
  9. Strengthens the muscles and removes unnecessary fat from the body;
  10. Increases general efficiency of the body and the mind;
  11. Increases power of tolerance of the physique as well as the mind.
CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How many components of yoga are identified by ‘Yoga Sutra’?
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Q 2: What are the ‘Niyamas’ according to Patanjali?
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Q 3: Name some meditative asanas.
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3.3.4 Pranayama

Pranayama, in simple words, means to control and manipulate breath with the help of which the vital energy is controlled, i.e., Prana. There are three parts of pranayama. These are – Puraka (filling in the lungs by inhalation), Kumbhaka (retention of breath) and Rechaka (emptying the lungs by exhalation). Before starting Puraka, the lungs are required to be emptied to the possible extent through complete exhalation, which is called Sunyaka.

The general ratio of Puraka, Kumbhaka and Rechaka in pranayama, as given in the principal treatises of yoga, is 1 : 4 : 2. Kumbhaka, i.e., retention of breath, is the vital part of pranayama. That is why, in many of the yoga treatises pranayama is mentioned as Kumbhaka. There are three processes of performing Kumbhaka-

(1) Holding the breath outside, after expiration;
(2) Holding the breath inside, after inspiration;
(3) Holding the breath wherever it is at the moment.

There is a fourth process where respiration is controlled to the point where the breath is suspended automatically. That is the highest kind.

- Varieties of pranayama

Mention of ten varieties of pranayama are found in the principal yoga treatises. Those are- 1. Sahita  2. Suryabhedana

**Pranayama** plays a very important role in the technique of controlling mind in yoga, because Prana has very close relationship with the mind. It is mentioned in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* that with the movement of prana the mind moves as will, and mind stops moving as soon as the prana stops to move. Prana is not the breath alone; it is the vital force that keeps up the activities of the physical body. Prana exists in all planes of manifestation and it is the connecting link between matter and energy on the one hand, and between consciousness and mind on the other.

### Effects of Pranayama

Regular practice of pranayama helps in –

1. Controlling the vital energy within;
2. Increasing the lung capacity and thereby in moving the vital index upward;
3. Purifying the navel and blood;
4. Supplying sufficient amount of purified blood to the brain and the centre and end of the nerves; thereby increasing the working capacity of the nerves;
5. Toning up the internal viscera and making the endocrine glands function normally;
6. Keeping the body temperature high or low, according to need;
7. Bringing tranquility of mind;
8. Destroying the veil upon illumination of the mind;
9. Making the mind fit for concentration.

### 3.3.5 Pratyahara

**Pratyahara** is the withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects of interest or attraction and their return to their maser, the mind. The senses (*Indriyas*) are always extrovert in nature. They always sense the outward objects; not those which are inside. We see outside objects, hear outward sounds, smell
outward scents, touch outward things, taste outward food and drinks. But when the mind, the master of the senses (*indriyas*) asserts its supremacy and firmly commands them to retreat from their objects of attraction they follow the mind meekly, like the bees follow the queen bee. This process of reverse movement of the senses is called *Pratyahara*.

The effect of Pratyahara is perfect mastery over the senses. In this stage, the mind become free from the outside world and gets ready for its inward journey.

### 3.3.6 Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi

Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi, the trio, are the three stages of meditation, Dharana, being the starting, Dhyana, the middle and Samadhi, the final stage. Dharana, i.e., concentration, is the keeping of the mind fixed or confined on a spot or area or object, outside or inside the mind. It is a continuous attempt to keep the mind confined to the object of its focus without any diversion to any other object. Mind is something like the mercury which does not remain constant at one place. Through the practice of Dharana the mind is systematically trained to remain calm and to settle down on one object or thought. Dhyana is the higher stage than Dharana where the mind settles down and remains fixed on the object or thought concentrated on, for a considerably long period, without any distraction. Samadhi is that stage of Dhyana where the subject is totally merged in the object of meditation. In this stage, the subject, the object and meditation, all the three mingle into one. In the Samadhi stage, the Third Eye of the meditator opens, clouds of ignorance covering true knowledge fades away, and he gets clear vision of the object meditated upon.

The complete process, starting with Dharana and ending with Samadhi, is called *Samyama*. By mastering the technique of Samyama, the practitioner gets Liberation (*Kaivalya*), enters into the realm of Reality and experience Existence-Knowledge- Absolute Bliss.
Types of Samadhi

Patanjali, in the *Yoga Sutra* has discussed ten types of Samadhi. Each type of Samadhi occurs at different levels of consciousness. Broadly they can be divided into -

1. Sabija
2. Nirbija and
3. Dharma-Megha

Sabija can be further sub-divided into -

(a) Samprajnata
(b) Asamprajnata

Effects of Dharana-Dhyana-Samadhi (Samyama)

1. Metabolic activities in the cells decreases. As a result, the machineries inside the body get rest.
2. The cerebral functions become restfully alert.
3. A balanced equilibrium comes in the functioning of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nerves of the Autonomic Nervous System.
4. The endocrine glands function harmoniously.
5. The functions of the visceral organs become controlled.
6. A sense of lightness and freshness takes over the body and the mind.
7. The frequency of brain waves come to the minimum. As a result the mind becomes calm and tranquil.
8. Concentration of mind becomes very deep due to which the latent talents get unfolded.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Fill in the gaps.

(i) .............................................. means to control and manipulate breath, with the help of which the vital energy is controlled.
(ii) This process of reverse movement of the senses is called

........................

(iii) The complete process, starting with ................. and ending with

.........................., is called Samyama.

(iv) ...................... is the transition state between two levels of

consciousness.

3.4 LET US SUM UP

- Patanjali, who systematised yoga in a scientific way had mentioned in his famous treatise, ‘Yoga Sutra’ eight components of yoga.

- The yamas, according to Patanjali, are five in number. These are- 
  Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), 
  Brahmacharya (celibacy) and Aparigraha (non-possesiveness).

- According to Patanjali, Niyamas are five in number. They are 
  Cleanliness(Saucha), Contentment (Santosha), Austerity (Tapah), 
  Study of spiritual scriptures and Enquiry into the Self (Swadhyaya) 
  and Surrender to God (Iswara Pranidhana).

- Asanas are countless in number. However, out of the innumerable 
asanas, eighty-four asanas are important. Asanas are classified into 
three major groups, viz., Meditative Asanas (Dhyanasanas), Cultural 
or Corrective Asanas (Swasthasanas) and Relaxative Asanas 
(Vishranti Asanas).

- Pranayama, means to control and manipulate of breath, with the help 
of which the vital energy is controlled, i.e., Prana. There are three 
parts of pranayama. These are – Puraka (filling in the lungs by 
inhalation), Kumbhaka (retention of breath) and Rechaka (emptying 
the lungs by exhalation).

- The effect of Pratyahara is perfect mastery over the senses. In this 
stage, the mind become free from the outside world and gets ready 
for its inward journey.
**Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi, the trio, are the three stages of meditation, Dharana, being the starting, Dhyana, the middle and Samadhi, the final stage.**

### 3.5 FURTHER READING


### 3.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Ans to Q No 1:** Eight - Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi

**Ans to Q No 2:** According to Patanjali, Niyamas are five in number. They are Cleanliness (*Saucha*), Contentment (*Santosha*), Austerity (*Tapah*), Study of spiritual scriptures and Enquiry into the Self (*Swadhyaya*) and Surrender to God (*Iswara Pranidhana*).

**Ans to Q No 3:** Swastikasana, Siddhasana, Padmasana, etc.

**Ans to Q No 4:** (i) Pranayama (ii) Pratyahara

(iii) Dharana, Samadhi (iv) Asamprajnata Samadhi
3.7 MODELS QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Questions

Q 1: What is Asana?
Q 2: Mention ten varieties of Pranayama.
Q 3: Name some Relaxative Asanas.

B. Short Questions (Answer in about 150 words)

Q 1: Write a note on the classification of Asanas.
Q 2: What are the Yamas and Niyamas mentioned in different Yoga Texts?
Q 3: Mention some of the benefits derived from practising Asana.

C. Long Questions (Answer in about 300 - 500 words)

Q 1: What is Pranayama? What are its different varieties? Discuss the effects of pranayama on the body and mind.
Q 2: What are the different types of Samadhi? Explain the benefits derived from practising meditation regularly.