

# Pranayama

Teachers Training  
Level 1 2023

Obstacles & Success  
in Yoga



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श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः हरिः ॐ

Om Om Om

Sri Gurubhyo Namah Harih Om

Salutations to the Gurus!

ॐ सह नाववतु ।  
सह नौ भुनक्तु ।  
सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।  
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

oṃ saha nāvavatu saha nau bhunaktu  
saha vīryaṃ karavāvahai  
tejasvi nāvadhītam astu mā vidviṣāvahai  
oṃ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

May that Brahman protect us together. May it nourish us together. May we both gain great vitality. May our learning be brilliant. May we never argue. Om peace, peace, peace.

# Obstacles in Yoga

1. Patanjali Maharshi was the sage who is known as the codifier of the Yoga Sutras
2. He was not the author, but the collector of existing information
3. Vyaas Maharshi was the codifier of the Four Vedas and Eighteen Puranas as well as the Ramayana and Mahabharata
4. His commentary on Yoga Sutras explains the terse meanings in depth

# Obstacles in Yoga

1. Patanjali collected, somewhere in the area of 200-400 CE, the existing teachings on Yoga from the Vedas, Upanishads, and other oral teachings, and arranged them into a comprehensive and systematic presentation within a philosophical context.
2. This form of arrangement of teachings on one subject in the Hindu tradition is called Sutra.

# Sutras

1. Sutras are part of the Hindu, Jain and Buddhist literary, philosophical traditions.
2. They are manuals of condensed text that then have commentaries written on them.

# Sutras

1. All Sutras are written in terse, concise language, sometimes without even verbs
2. The word sutra is where the english “suture” comes from: to stitch something together
3. It also means a thread
4. But a stitch is more evocative of how the philosophy of yoga is an active process

# Pratyahara

1. The first and most famous of commentaries was written by Vyaas Maharshi
2. Some Western scholars today think that Patanjali and Vyaas were the same person
3. Many Indian scholars disagree with this view

# Sutras

1. The Yoga Sutras contain four chapters
2. On complete concentration; practice; attainments; and liberation
3. Samadhi, the first chapter, is not a chapter on liberation, which is called Kaivalya, but on deep concentration
4. Samadhi is not the end goal of yoga, it is just the last step before Kaivalya

# Sutras

1. Chapter two, the chapter on practice, contains the teachings on kriya yoga, the kleshas, and ashtanga yoga
2. It is the most often taught chapter on yoga

# Sutras

1. This presentation will focus on a a few sutras from chapter two, that describe the obstacles that arise in yoga, and how to surmount them.
2. The obstacles are framed by the defining verses of the sutras,  
*“citta vritti nirodhah”*
3. Yoga, Sankhya, Vedanta, and other philosophies were created to deal with the problem of suffering

# Definition of Yoga According to Patanjali

## **Yoga citta vritti nirodhah**

Yoga is the selective elimination of  
the fluctuations in the field of the mind

**Hathasya prathamam gatvad asanam purvam ucyate |  
kuryat tadasanam sthairyam arogyam cangalaghavam ||**

Of the practice of Hatha, asana is said to be the first step.

By the practice of asanas, one gains steadiness,  
health, and lightness of limbs.

**Tritiya kalasto ravih svayam samharate prabham |  
tritiyangasthito yogi na vikaram manasa tatha ||**

As the sun in the third quarter of the day pulls back its brightness,  
so the yogi practicing the third stage of yoga  
will not have agitation of the mind.

# What in the Mind Needs to be Steadied?

## The six poisons

**Kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, matsarya**

Desire, anger, greed, delusion, pride, envy.

These are part of the inner instrument, the antahkarana.

# Practice Removes the Six Poisons

**abhyasa vairagyabhyam tan nirodhah 1.12**

**tatra stithau yatno'bhyasah 1.13**

Nirodhah is attained through both abhyasa and vairagya.

Abyasah is the practice of remaining established there,  
or in the present.

## **Vyadhi styana samshaya pramada alasya avirati bhranti darshana bhumikatva anavastitatvaani citta vikshepa antarayas cha 1.30**

Sickness, mental laziness, doubt, carelessness, sloth,  
non-abstention from addictions, confusion of philosophies,  
inability to obtain stages in practice,  
failure to maintain [your level of practice],  
these distractions of mind [that come naturally on the path]  
are the obstacles.

# Obstacles are not fixed

Distractions become obstacles when we dwell on them.

citta vikshepas (distractions of mind)

become antarayas (obstacles).

# What indicators do the distractions exhibit?

distractions become obstacles when we dwell on them

citta vikshepas (distractions of mind) become antarayas (obstacles):

**dukha daurmanasya angamejayatva  
svasa prasvasa vikshepa sahabhuva**

physical or mental pain, sadness or dejection,  
shaking of the limbs (anxiety, stress, restlessness)  
and interruption of the breath accompany the distractions

# Recap

1. Vrittis are thought patterns that are observable in the field of consciousness
2. Distractions such as sickness and laziness are to be expected, and only become obstacles if we identify with them
3. There are several strategies we can use to reduce and remove the distractions and bring about a mental fitness for meditation
4. They include breath awareness, sensation awareness, inner luminosity, stable mind and contemplating the stream of the mind

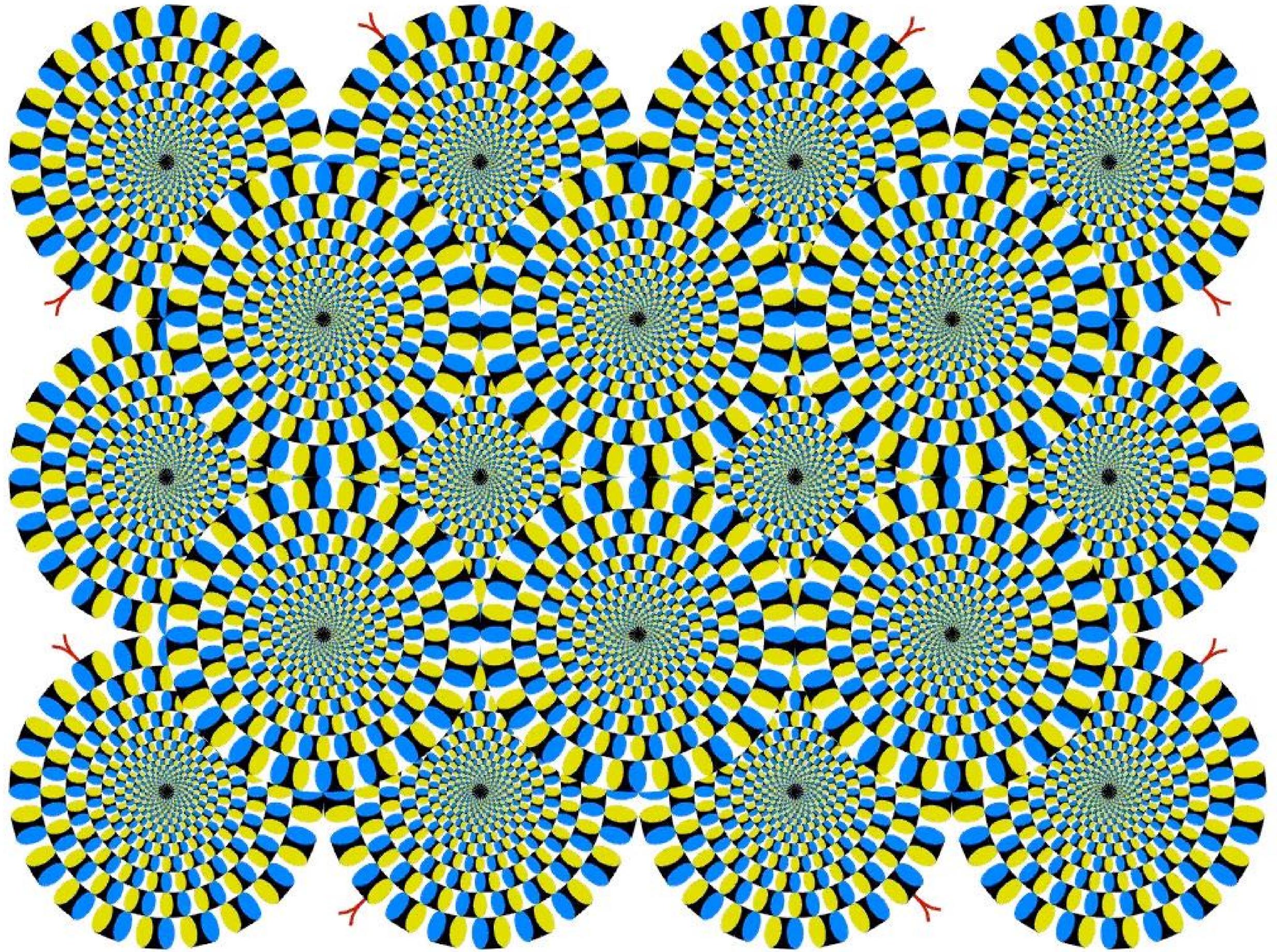
# Remedies

Most of these can be remedied through Ishvara Pranidhana, and if that doesn't work, then Patanjali has some other suggestions:

1. Four attitudes with people
2. Five suggestions for focus

**tat pratisheda artham ekatattva abhyasah**

for their stoppage, concentration on a  
single principle should be made



**maitri karuna mudito'upekshanam sukha dukha punya apunya  
vishayanam bhavanatas citta prasadanam**

the mind becomes clear and bright by feelings of  
friendliness to the happy,  
compassion to the sorrowful,  
sympathetic joy towards the virtuous,  
and equanimity towards the unvirtuous

In relation to breath and our nervous system:

**pracchardana vidaranabhyam va pranasya**

also by exhaling and restraining the breath

By meditating on subtleties of sensory experience:

**vishavati va pravrttir utpanna manasah sthiti nibandhani**

the development of higher objective perceptions

called vishavati stabilizes the mind

By way of the heart:

**vishoka va jyotishmati**

or by meditating on that which is sorrowless and effulgent

by meditating on the mind itself:

**vitaraḡa viśhayam va cittam**

also by contemplating citta as free from desires

failing that...

**yatha abhimata dhyanaad va**

or by contemplating on whatsoever one likes

# What happens when the obstacles are alleviated

## **Yogascitta vritti nirodhah**

Yoga is the selective elimination of the fluctuations (thought patterns) in the field of the mind

## **Tada drashtuh svarupe avasthanam**

Then, the seer abides in its own form

**But if not....**

## **Vritti sarupyam itaratra**

Otherwise, conformity with the vrittis

# How to get rid of obstacles for good

**yoganga anusthanad ashuddhiksayat jnana diptih aviveka khyateh**

By the practice of the limbs of yoga, the removal of impurities, and the shining of the light of knowledge that leads to discrimination between the seer (consciousness) and the seen (patterns)

The Hatha-yoga is a sheltering monastery for those scorched by all the [three] types of pain (tapa).  
To those engaged in the practice of every kind of Yoga, Hatha-yoga is like the tortoise that supports [the world].

*Adhyatmika (Bodily & mental - cause ourselves)*

*Adhidaivika (Planetary influences - floods etc.)*

*Adibhautika (Creatures - tigers, snakes)*

# Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1.11

The Yogin desirous of obtaining siddhi should keep the Hatha-yoga very secret. For it is potent when kept secret and ineffective when [injudiciously] revealed.

# Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1.15

Yoga fails by the six [causes]  
overeating,  
over-exertion,  
excessive talk,  
the observance of [unsuitable] disciplines,  
promiscuous company  
and unsteadiness.

# Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1.16

Yoga succeeds by the six [qualifications]  
zeal,  
bold determination,  
courage,  
true knowledge,  
firmness [of belief in the words of the Guru]  
and renunciation of company of [unsuitable] people.



*"Boy, I'm going to pay for this tomorrow at yoga class."*

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः  
सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।  
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु  
मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत् ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

oṃ sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ  
sarve santu nirāmayāḥ  
sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantu  
mā kaścid duḥkha bhāgbhavet  
oṃ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

May all be happy, may all be free from disease, may all see goodness,  
may none suffer from sorrow.

ॐ असतो मा सद्गमय ।  
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।  
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥ हरिः ॐ तत्सत् ॥

asato mā sadgamaya  
tamasomā jyotir gamaya  
mrityormāamritam gamaya  
Om śhānti śhānti śhāntiḥ harih om tat sat

Lead me from changing existence to unchanging being,  
lead me from the darkness of tamas to the light of knowledge,  
lead me from death to immortality. Harih om that is truth.