

As we move into the more subtle aspects of Raja Yoga we must remember that whilst the PYS is an indispensable guide to the journey, we can only fully understand all the nuances from the direct experience of our own practice. Indeed it is ultimately impossible to move into the more subtle inner practices unless we are willing to let go of intellectual concepts and simply practice.

The need for Pratyahara: the fifth limb

The turning point from the outer to inner limbs is outlined in the very last part of book two with the practice of pratyahara. There is little said about pratyahara in the Sutras yet we should spend a moment looking at this pivotal limb.

- 2.54 *When the senses withdraw themselves from the objects and imitate, as it were, the nature of the mind stuff, this is pratyahara*
2.55 *Then follows supreme mastery over the senses. (Carrera translation)*

'Prati' means 'away or against' and 'ahara' means 'food' or anything we take into ourselves' so a translation is 'gaining mastery over external influences'. B.K.S Iyengar says "It is the friend who releases you from the snares of the external world, and leads you towards happiness in the delight of the soul." P.Y.S. p161

In essence pratyahara ultimately does not just mean we close eyes so we cannot see form, it is the withdrawal of all of the senses so we are less or completely unaware of sound, touch etc. In this way our nervous system and brain is no longer excited by our senses.

Now as we move into book three the inner limbs of dharana, dhyana, samadhi and samyama are explained.

Moving from Dharana to Dhyana to Samadhi

Dharana can be translated as **concentration** where the word dharana comes from the root 'dhr' meaning 'to hold or support' indicating how the practice of concentration is to make the mind strong, stabilizing the whole field of awareness, because the strength of the mind is ultimately in its power of attention. **Dhyana** can be translated as **meditation**, coming from the root 'dhyai' meaning to contemplate or meditate. **Samadhi** can be translated as **absorption** or more specifically 'to acquire integration or wholeness' where 'sam' means 'together or integrated', 'a' meaning 'towards', and 'dha' meaning to 'to get or to hold'.

In the Carrera translation of the Sutras we are told:

- 3.1 *Dharana is the binding of the mind to one place, object, or idea*
3.2 *Dhyana is the continuous flow of cognition towards that object.*
3.3 *Samadhi is the same meditation when the mind stuff, as if devoid of its own form, reflects the object alone*
3.4 *The practise of these three (Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi) upon one object is called Samyama.*

To illustrate the difference between concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana) and absorption (samadhi) let us imagine we are endeavouring to concentrate upon a specific object as symbolized by the letter A. The process of moving from dharana to samadhi would look something like this:

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1)	A	A	B	C	C	A	A	A	B	B
2)	A	A	A	A	B	B	A	A	A	A
3)	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
4)	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
5)	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A

1) Here at first we are trying keep our focus upon A but occasionally other thoughts as symbolized by B & C arise. It is hard to concentrate the mind at first.

2) Then with practice we gradually become able to keep the mind focused upon object A for longer periods with thoughts interrupting our focus less often; at this stage we are still practicing concentration (dharana).

3) With practice we begin to keep the mind focused upon object A, this uninterrupted flow of attention is now meditation (dhyana).

4) Eventually as we continue to meditate at some point we will lose our sense of self-awareness as illustrated by the shading upon the figure A yet at first this will be a fleeting experience.

5) Finally we will enter a state where the sense of individual self is lost completely, the state of absorption (samadhi). Here there is a merging of the subject and object, so when we focus upon an object there is no 'I' only the experience of the object and ultimately there is no 'I' only the experience of Purusha or Pure Consciousness as we go deeper into consciousness.

So this is a process where little by little, we move from practicing concentration until the effort of concentration is eclipsed by an effortless flow of attention and we have entered the state of meditation. It is very important to realize that **as teachers we can only offer the situation in which meditation can arise** and when we say we are practicing meditation what we are actually practicing is concentration so that one day spontaneously meditation can occur, to be followed one day by samadhi where our entire perception shifts!

Samadhi

So Samadhi appears when we have quietened all of our 'mental movements' within the mind field (chitta vrittis) i.e. our thoughts and emotions. It is beyond words i.e there is mental stillness. This allows us to gain spontaneous knowledge which comes to us in a 'download' of knowing or intuition. It is one of the routes to 'right knowing' we saw previously. Significantly samadhi is also to ultimately reach a state of consciousness that is beyond our sense of individuality and sense of time and place. As Carerra states in his translation (page 52) in yoga we often find that higher states of awareness are generally referred to by the term 'Samadhi' which is often translated as a superconscious state or absorption.

To place samadhi in context there are many types of samadhi or absorption, some of which can be experienced in a more everyday state of consciousness. And here we can see samadhi in the context of the Gunas of Tamas, Rajas and Sattva colouring the mind.

The Lesser Samadhis

These are samadhis of the 'ordinary' mind such as listening to an orchestra, playing sport or watching a sunset. The lesser samadhis will be necessarily transient in nature and cannot bring permanent peace to the mental field. They are also outside our control, dependant upon circumstances and may become a source of disturbance since they can breed attachment and addiction.

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In the case of lesser samadhis they occur when the unpurified mind comes under the temporary control of one of the gunas and through this merges back to its core at the level of the gunas and we momentarily forget all else; inevitably however the other gunas must assert themselves and the samadhi ends.

We can examine samadhi through the five different levels of consciousness:

The chitta bhumis the five states of mind

1. Deluded mind (mudha)
2. Distracted mind (kshipta)
3. Imaginative mind (vikshipta)
4. One-pointed or focused mind (ekagrata)
5. Calmed mind (nirodha)

Samadhi of deluded mind

These include sleep, comas, alcohol & drug induced states. The mind is absorbed into a blank state where consciousness of the body is obscured or even lost. The mind is absorbed into a non-feeling state and we may lose control of the mind. Here the guna of tamas is prevailing.

Samadhi of the distracted mind

Here a mind is absorbed into an activity or sensation so that it forgets itself. The mind is calmed by the sheer weight or intensity of sensory stimuli. This state is behind most ordinary achievements in life and can include any sport, sexual activity or work. The guna of rajas dominates here. Note that even negative occurrences can be included where any intense emotion concentrates the mind.

Samadhi of the imaginative mind

Here the mind is absorbed in its own projections so that it forgets itself. The guna of sattva is more dominant. Examples of this type of samadhi can include the musings of philosophers, the vision of an artist or the discovery of a scientist. We can also include transient spontaneous religious or mystical experiences. In the west this type of genius is held in high regard but yoga states that here the mind remains unpurified and the gunas of tamas and rajas will again bring pain to the mind.

Often samadhis are in fact a mixture of these three states of consciousness and one state can lead to another; this is due to the fact that the gunas are always fluctuating. According to yogic thought these lesser samadhis help to determine the background state of mind and the external conditions that we create for ourselves; whatever experiences have most impressed the mind go on to colour and distort it.

Samadhi of the one-pointed or calm mind

Yoga as a spiritual discipline is concerned with samadhis of the one-pointed or calmed mind, which are sattvic in nature. These are the greater or yogic samadhis, which are arrived at through our deepening embrace with awareness and are under control of our deeper intelligence.

The Greater Yogic Samadhis

Generally speaking the greater yogic samadhis can be divided into two main categories **sabija** which translates as 'with seed' and **nirbija** which translates as 'without seed'.

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This refers to the difference between the initial states of samadhi where we do not burn away our samskaras (seeds) and our conditioning remains both during and after the meditation and finally the state of without seed or sabija where our experience of samadhi has 'burnt' away even our latent conditioning – it is as if our experience replaces or rewrites what was present resulting in Kaivalya or Liberation from our karma. In essence we are reborn.

See our summary sheet for Samadhi to provide a general overview of the stages of samadhi we see in the Sutras.

At each stage of samadhi the mind is further purified and each new stage will be gradually stabilised, and in the Sutras we are told:

- 1.47 But on **refinement** of the fourth stage of absorption (Nirvichara Samadhi), there is the drawing of the spiritual light of the Self.
- 1.48 This level is ritambhara, where consciousness perceives only the truth.
- 1.49 The knowledge gained through ritambhara is qualitatively different from that gained in the usual way through testimony and inference. The former means is intuitive and sees things as they are in their totality, whereas the latter means is partial.
- 1.50 The impression born of ritambhara prevents the accumulation of further latent impressions. (Samskara born of Samadhi counters the formation of other samskaras)
- 1.51 And when even the latent impression of ritambhara has been brought to a settled state, then all activity ceases and Nirbija Samadhi, the unbounded consciousness of the Self, alone remains.

So here we see that it is only as we enter the final two stages of samadhi that we stop accruing new karma as the higher experiences take precedence in our consciousness. And as we are told in 4.25 & 4.26, "All confusion about the nature of the Self vanishes for one who has seen its glory, Then, truly the mind begins to experience the Self as separate from activity, and is naturally drawn towards Enlightenment."

Nirbija Samadhi

We are told for **Dharma Megha Samadhi** or the state of unclouded Truth:

- 4.29 One who has attained complete discrimination between the subtlest level of mind and the Self has no higher knowledge to acquire. This is dharma megha Samadhi ~ the state of Unclouded Truth.
- 4.30 It destroys the causes of suffering, and the bondage of action disappears.
- 4.31 Knowledge that has been freed from the veils of impurity is unbounded. Whatever can be known is insignificant in its light.
- 4.32 This Samadhi completes the transformations of the gunas and fulfills the purpose of evolution.
- 4.33 Now the process by which evolution unfolds through time is understood.
- 4.34 The gunas, their purpose fulfilled, return to their original state of harmony, and pure unbounded consciousness remains, forever established in its own absolute nature. This is Enlightenment.

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What does the Sutras tell us about this state of Enlightenment?

We will have returned to our natural state, uncovering what was always present. Our perception is unbounded and knowledge comes to us as needed. There is no more suffering as we are whole, being fully identified with the Self, knowing that all else is transitory and is not who we are.

In 4.7 we are told that “the actions of an enlightened being are neither black or white, those of others are threefold.” meaning that all of our actions come from the silence within, where the gunas are in a harmonious state, and as such we become a vehicle for the expression of the highest qualities of love & compassion.

