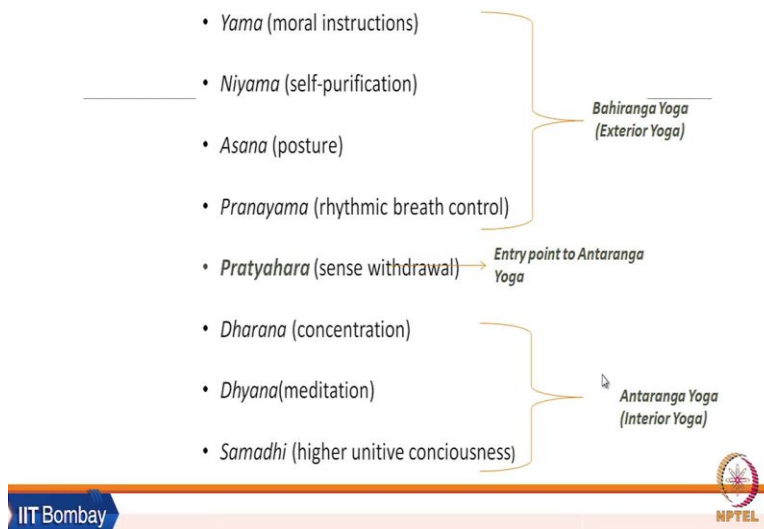


Yoga and Positive Psychology for Managing Career and Life
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Pratyahara as the Intervention for Managing Self and Career
Lecture - 82
Introduction to Pratyahara

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Pratyahar sits right at the middle of the bahiranga yog and antaranga yog. Bahiranga yog is where practices can be seen from outside means people can see we are following certain moral instructions, doing some purification process, performing asanas, performing breathing exercises or pranayam. And the antaranga yog which is difficult to validate from outside which is dharana which concentration, meditation or dhyana and samadhi. Pratyahar sits right between that.

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Pratyahara comprises of three Sanskrit parts.

*'Prati' means 'in response to , obverse, oppose to, against';
'a' denotes 'near, towards';
'hr' denotes to 'bring back properly'*

Thus, together it literally means 'the act of collection' or 'to step back purposely in order to attain the right mode of consciousness in a more powerful way'.

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Pratyahar comes from the word prati, a and hr. Prati means in response to, observe, opposed to or against; a denotes near or towards and hr denotes bring back properly. Together it literally means the act of collection or to step purposely in order to attain the right mode of consciousness in a more powerful way.

Assimilating ourselves is the simple term I use to convey the idea of pratyahar, getting back within, assimilating our alive energies so that I can reassess the situation better and employ my life energies in the right direction.

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According to Patanjali Yoga Sutra



स्वविषय-असम्प्रयोगे चित्तस्य-स्वरूपानुकार-इव-इन्द्रियाणाम् प्रत्याहारः ॥

“The state of physical cutting-off of contact between the sense organs and their respective objects ,i.e ., the reflections of the sensory world in the mind , is called pratyahara.

ततः परमा वश्यता-इन्द्रियाणाम् ॥

Regular practice of pratyahara leads to attainment of greater control over the senses and the functioning of the organismic system , and gradually the ability of complete attention and concentration is achieved.” (Yoga Sutra, 2.54-55).”

Cornelissen, M., Misra, G., & Varma, S. (2013). Foundations and Applications of Indian Psychology, 2e. Pearson India.

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According to Patanjali yoga sutra pratyahar is state of physical cutting and their respective objects. [FL] in the respective areas of dwelling of whom of the indriyas of the mental faculties. [FL] and disconnecting the chit and the moment of indriyas. So, that chit can dwell within that is the process of pratyahar.

Next sutra says that [FL], regular practice of pratyahar lead to attainment of greater control over the senses and functioning of organismic system. So, if we have to achieve dharana or dhyan we need to go through pratyahar that is the clear instruction in by Maharshi Patanjali in yoga sutra.

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Pratyahara in Bhagwad Gita



यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यःस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ २-५८ ॥

yadā saṁharate cāyaṁ kūrmo'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ
indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyastasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā

When, like the tortoise which withdraws its limbs from all sides, he withdraws his senses from the sense-objects then his Wisdom becomes steady.

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Come back to Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavad Gita gives excellent practical definition of pratyahar using the allegory or using the example of tortoise. What Bhagavad Gita says? [FL], when like tortoise which withdraws its limbs from all sides, he withdraws his senses from the sense object then his wisdom becomes steady.

So, Lord Krishna is giving example of tortoise [FL] like tortoise which recollects all its appendages within [FL], in the same way the mental faculties the indriyas as well as the action faculties when they are assimilated brought into within or is centered in this process wisdom arises.

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Pratyahara in Upanishad

- Introverted state of mind (*Trisikha-Brahmana Upanisad, 30*).
- Detachment of senses from their respective objects (*Mandala-Brahmana Upanisad,1.7; Yoga Cudamani upanisad, 120*).
- It is a pleasant state of consciousness that observes the mind preoccupied with the impact of objects of senses (*Tejobindupanisad, 34*)

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Pratyahar was also mentioned in Upanishad like Trisikha-Brahmana Upanisad says pratyahar being a introverted state of mind detachment of senses from respective object that's what pratyahar is detachment of senses from their respective objects. Tejobindu Upanisad says that it is a pleasant state of consciousness that observes the mind preoccupied with the impact of objects of senses.

So, as mentioned earlier Patanjali yoga sutra beautifully compiles the wisdom spread in hundreds of Upanisad and many other texts in the form of sutras. And we can actually trace Patanjali yoga sutra in the Upanishadic literature as well these are some examples.

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Pratyahara: In the Sandilya Upanisad and the Darsanopanisad

- Forcible withdrawal of the sense organs from the objects of sensual pleasures with which they interact.
- Looking upon everything as one sees as atman, the true self.
- Giving up the desires to attain the fruits of one's actions.
- Turning one's attentions away from all material things and thoughts.
- Projection of *pranic* (vital) energy and mind on the 18 vital regions of one's body (*marmasthanas*) by shifting attention from one point to another.

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In the Sandilya Upanisad and Darsanopanisad there are 5 characteristics given about pratyahar. One it is forcible withdrawal of sense organs from object of sensual pleasures with which they interact. Second looking upon everything as one sees as atman as true self, that is the outcome of pratyahar. Third giving up desires to attain the fruits of one's action, that is pratyahar in action.

Turning ones attention away from all material things and thoughts, that is another sign of pratyahar. And fifth is projection of vital energy what we call prana the pranic energy or vital energy and mind on the 18 vital regions of one's body by shifting attention from one point to another.

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Levels of Pratyahara



In yogic thought there are three levels of ahara, or food.

1. **Physical food** that brings in the five elements necessary to nourish the body—earth, water, fire, air, and ether.
2. **Impressions**, which bring in the subtle substances necessary to nourish the mind—the sensations, emotions, thoughts
3. **Our associations**, the people we hold at heart level who serve to nourish the soul and affect us with the *gunas* of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*

Pratyahara is twofold. We cannot control our mental impressions without right diet and right relationships, but pratyahara's primary importance lies in withdrawal from or control of sensory impressions, which frees the mind to move within.

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David Frawley very beautifully summarized that pratyahara happens at three levels, at the physical level, at the level of mental impressions and at the level of our association. Physical levels it is most connected to ahar our food or whatever we take as food. So, that it that can be the sound, that can be smell, that can be of course, taste and the stuff we take inside.

Impressions these are mental ahar, mental food which bring in the subtle substances necessary to nourish the mind. So, emotions, sensations, thoughts these create impressions. And these are also connected with the physical food, these can be independent of the physical food or physical aspects of the life as well.

They can be more abstract, they can be more into the subject to experience, that also come under the purview of pratyahara, that also needs to be controlled. And third is pratyahara at the level of our association. People we hold at the heart level who serve to nourish the soul and affect us with the *gunas* of *sattva*, *raja* and *tama*, our association with the different people also brings some *sanskaras* or some impressions.

These impressions can be *satvik* impressions or related to elimination, light, knowledge, activity. These impressions can be related to *rajasik* impressions that can be about ambition, about

expansion, about intense activity. These sanskar can be also tamasik in nature which is more like inertia or inactivity. In our relationships we keep accumulating these impressions.

Pratyahar that is why has to be performed at all three levels. We need to control our physical food, we need to need to have pratyahar or anti ahar at the impressions level and we also need to have anti ahar, prati ahar at our us at the level of our association, our relationships.

Pratyahar is two fold, it is level one, it is about controlling the inappropriate impressions, physical food and association. And at another level attracting and absorbing right food, right impressions and right relationship or associations. But the process of pratyahar is about going within centering and we are going to look at that.

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In our senses, controlling our action, controlling our vital energy and withdrawing our mind from the senses enjoying from the outside.