

🔊 Dhāraṇā - धारणा

One-pointed concentration, fixing one's full attention on one place, object, or idea at a time. It is the sixth limb, or requirement, to attain full Self-realization as outlined in the Yoga Sutras attributed to the sage [Patanjali](#).

Dharana is the ability to bring the mind into focus and to hold the concentration on a single point. In true *dharana* all body-consciousness and restless thoughts cease, enabling one to focus on the object of meditation without distraction.

In the Hindu epic, *The Mahabharata*, Arjuna demonstrates *dharana*. Dronacharya, the teacher of archery, is holding a contest. There is a statue of a vulture placed high in a tree, and its head is the target. As each student approaches to take his turn Dronacharya asks him what he sees. One replies, "I see you, my teacher, the tree, sky, and all who have gathered around." This student misses his shot. The next



Methods to improve concentration power through yoga.

The following Yoga Poses help in improving Dharana / Concentration:

- Tree Pose (Vrikshasana)
- Eagle Pose (Garudhasana)
- Warrior III (Virabhadrasana III)
- Half Moon Pose (Ardh Chandrasana)
- Dancer's Pose (Natarajasana)
- Extended Hand-to-Big Toe Pose (Uthhita Hasta Padangusthasana)
- Side Plank (Vasisthasana)
- Crow Pose
- Headstand (Salamba Sirsasana)
- Forearm Stand (Pincha Mayurasana)

All these Poses help us to improve our focus & concentration. When we are able to concentrate & focus on the mat, that can equate to us being able to focus and concentrate off the mat as well.

Methods of concentration:

The two main dependable techniques for achieving Dharana is :concentration upon the mark AUM, and upon the breath using the optional silent mantra of So-Han with each breath. Two things wipe out concentration-monotony and fear. Fear is forever a effect of your objectives being put too high in relative to your abilities. For instance, if someone grips a gun to your head and you know fear, it is a straight consequence of your goals being set too high. You desire to live, and this is no longer within your aptitude to manage, and so you experience fear. If you can allow go of the aim to live, and decide a fresh aim, in keeping with your capacities in the present condition you can once more achieve focus. Maybe your original aim could be to appreciate the person holding the gun. Once you decide a suitable aim and reclaim your powers of concentration, you are capable to plan more proficiently and outcomes get better.

Steps:

Sit in a relaxed Yoga Asana, hold your backside and shoulders straight, and the head in the continuation of the spine. Close your eyes and get ready to go through the following steps:

1. Relax rapidly and intensely from the bottom up. Pertain here all the rules of relaxation.
2. Adjust your breath until it gets calm and silence.
3. Turn over your attention inwards, retreating your senses from external stimuli that might divert you. Start by isolating your mind from any thought that appears, making a brief but solid attempt to swing the process of thinking.
4. Focus your mind on an object of your option.

It is the mere obsession you require to do while practicing Dharana: to keep your mind focused on the object selected for concentration. It is powerfully recommended that you do not force and that you are not tense. Be calm, quiet, and focused. You will understand that, in the last part, the mental concentration is a still process: throughout concentration the mind is blocked, thinking stopped and the mental activity balanced. The merely mental activity permitted is to bring the mind back to the object of concentration when it has the tendency to diminish the focus. Mental concentration can be depicted by *not acting*. The ZEN practitioners call it ZAZEN (to simply stay). During the perform of concentration, the mind should be like a reflect: it will only mirror the object of the concentration.

Many yoga practices live to get better concentration and train the mind from the recurrence of *mantras* in japa, ajapa and ajapa-japa form, to visualizations, concentrations upon convinced inner sounds, and the utilize of external concentration devices such as a yantra. Centering closely upon certain features of the body during asana practice can also be a form of dharana. The jnana yoga kriyas are also powerful practices for the development of dharana, because their incredibly nature is to contain the mind within a strict visualization. Some of the jnana yoga kriyas to advance concentration taught through the yoga training programs at International Yogalayam consist of:

- Nishpanda Jnana Kriya
- Prana Jnana Kriya
- Nadi Jnana Kriya

- Inana Surya Kriya
- Kshitijan Kriya
- Om Japa Kriya
- Antara Drishthi Kriya

The hatha yoga asanas, kriyas and mudras all hold a concentration point to be held during their practice. The similar is right for pranayama, where certain points of concentration are used while controlling the breath, or in some cases, the breath itself is the tip of concentration.

Yoga concentration techniques for the development of dharana
Trataka

Trataka /steady gaze is a method whereby the eyes are fixed upon a certain external point such as the horizon of the sea.

Trataka1

Steps:

- ❖ Take a relaxed seated position outdoors, where objects at various distances between you and the horizon can be viewed.
- ❖ Choose at least 4 objects (approximately spaced equal distance), the first being near the feet and the furthest at the horizon.
- ❖ Starting at the nearest object, concentrate upon it for 60 seconds.
- ❖ Move your attention every 60-seconds to each successively further object until the final one at the horizon has been reached.
- ❖ After focusing upon the last point for 60 seconds, reverse object by object (again concentrating 60 seconds on each) back to the first point.

Trataka2

Steps:

- ◆ Position a candle upon a small table, whereby the flame is at eye-level.
- ◆ Sit a distance of between 6 to 10 feet away and place your concentration upon the flame.
- ◆ Do not to open and close the eye and try to hold your concentration for between 30 and 60 seconds.
- ◆ Shut your eyes for 30 to 60 seconds and try to reproduce the image of the flame in your 'mind's eye'.
- ◆ Do again this process 3 to 6 times in one sitting.

Nasarga Drishthi

Steps:

- ≈ Get a comfortable sitting position and gaze open-eyed at the tip of the nose.
- ≈ Grip this concentration until you feel tension in the eyes, then
- ≈ Close your eyelids, but imagine that you are still gazing at the tip of the nose.
- ≈ Hold this visualization for 15-20 seconds and then re-open the eyes.
- ≈ Do again this process several times.

Steps:

- ≈ Again, take a relaxed sitting position and turn the gaze to the base of the nose, creating a 'cross-eyed' position.
- ≈ Increase the eyes slightly, so that this cross-eyed gaze now falls directly between the eyebrows, then...
- ≈ Close your eyelids and hold this point of concentration 'inwardly'.
- ≈ Sporadically open your eyes to see if this point is being maintained, then close them once again.
- ≈ Clasp this concentration for several minutes

There are asanas that assist to expand the faculty of concentration, particularly balancing poses, such as

Mindfulness vs. Concentration

Mindfulness is related to, but different than, concentration. When one is concentrating, one's entire focus is on the object of concentration in an almost trance-like manner - whether the object is a lotus, one's own breathing, or a television program. But to be mindful of something is to think about it and observe it carefully. It is not only to focus on a television program, but to comprehend its content. It is not only to block out everything but breathing; it is to observe what the breathing is like and attempt to learn something about it.

Japa is directly connected with dhyana

Socialisation and Meditation:

Meditation process helps in the process of socialisation

Kakasan or Vrikshasan. When the mind wanders you can no longer hold the posture. Through practice we can extend the period of concentration and uphold the place for longer. According to Patanjali, concentration involves fixing the mind on one place, maintaining an continuous thread of alertness within the incompletdarea of the object. In the case of external objects, one begins by practicing confining concentration to the specific entity chosen. In the initial stage, concentration is realized by confining the mind within the limited sphere of the object of concentration. The mind is conscious of only the object on which the attention is fixed, other senses are withdrawn and, thus, do not play any position in the process. This is *pratyahara*-based concentration.

Pranayana and *pratyahara*/sense pulling outdirect to the state of *dharana*. As the energy flows through the body are synchronized through breathing routines and will power is strengthened, these practices help the practitioner realize that the mind tends to yield easily to the pull of distractions. Once this realization comes, the power of will is developed further. Each time the mind wanders off, one practices letting go of any distracting thought and the mind is refocused. This primary stage of concentration is achieved by confining the mind within a limited

area of the object of concentration. If there is a minortraveling of the mind it is brought back to that restricted region. With sustained practice these interruptions are less and less unruly and the mind learns to be still. In this state the first two ingredients of three-fold energies like :*gunas, kriya, rajas* and *stithi, tamas*, are slowed down. This clears the mind and, the third constituent, *prakasha*, the radiance or *sattva*, takes on the main role of eliminating the external interferences.