

SAMYAMA

The last three limbs of yoga, when singularly focused, are known as *samyama*. *Samyama* represents the ultimate union or integration that yoga promises for the dedicated practitioner. *Dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi* work together to focus the whole of the mind on one thing, until the yogi becomes absorbed in the object itself. In *samadhi*, the subject becomes one with the object, i.e., the ego goes on hiatus.

Mastery of this practice can provide great insight and wisdom (*prajna*). The mental discipline required is quite a workout for the brain. The practice also works to rewire the brain by stripping us of old habits and patterns (*samskaras*). Suspending the ego's influence lets us see things with fresh eyes when we return to everyday life.

Scientists know that specific tasks like solving math or language problems are best performed when the two sides of the brain are working together. The left hemisphere of the brain governs logical or objective thinking, while the right hemisphere manages creative or subjective thinking. Further research has shown that the left brain tends to be more detail oriented, while the right brain manages big-picture thinking. Problem-solving, creative solutions, and innovation occur when the whole brain is engaged. Integrated, if you will.

As we start on the yogic path, we work with the external limbs of *asana*, *pranayama*, *yama*, *niyama*, and *pratyahara* -- this is known as *bahiranga samyama*. We continue on to the internal limbs of *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi* -- *antaranga samyama*. *Antaranga samyama* unites the intellect of the head and the heart -- reason and intuition; left brain and right brain. B.K.S. Iyengar says that nothing prepares the mind for meditation better than yoga *asana*. Balance in the body sets us on the path for balance in the mind, and every step along the way is important.

This is just a summary of a complex and powerful subject. For more in-depth study, read Nicolai Bachman's *The Yoga Sutras*, and B.K.S Iyengar's *Core of the Yoga Sutras* and *Light on Life*.