



## Kriya Yoga (Yoga of Action)

### Description

## Introduction

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### Context

- The second chapter of [Patanjali's Yoga Sutras](#) the portion on practice begins with a description of Kriya Yoga in Sutras 2.1 and 2.2.
- As expert I.K. Taimni explains, the mention of the three *niyamas* in Sutra 2.1 is of a more preliminary nature than that in 2.32.
- That is, Kriya Yoga is a way for those caught up in the world (completely under the influence of *kleshas*) to begin.

### Definition

- Kriya Yoga is commonly referred to as The Yoga of Action. It is also called The Three-Fold Yoga of Action or Yoga in Practice.
- Kriya Yoga consists of three practices.
- These three practices are the last of the five *niyamas*, described in Sutra 2.32: [Tapas](#) (discipline), [Svadhyaya](#) (self-study) and [Ishvara Pranidhana](#) (surrender).

### Purpose & Use

- Kriya Yoga is considered an entryway onto the path of yoga, a way for a person to start practicing, no matter their current state.
- Kriya Yoga minimizes or eradicates *kleshas*, also known as afflictions or obstacles.
- The ultimate purpose of removing the obstacles is to promote meditation and ultimately experience [samadhi](#), or realizing an already present reality.



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## Practices

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- The three practices that comprise [Kriya Yoga](#) are [Tapas](#), [Svadhyaya](#) and [Ishvara Pranidhana](#).
- [Tapas](#) may be described as inner determination.
- [Svadhyaya](#) refers to the self-examination necessary for transformation.
- [Ishvara Pranidhana](#) is surrender of the fruit of one's actions.
- Repetition of the [Gayatri Mantra](#) is said to help one understand [Kriya Yoga](#), to deepen spiritual understanding without the intervention of the mind.

### THE THREE NIYAMAS WORK IN CONJUNCTION

We understand that these Niyama work in conjunction with each other at all levels all the time, but we can look at them one by one to better our understanding of the purpose of each. — Beth Gibbs

### KRIYA YOGA IN SIMPLE CONCEPTS

When working with kriya yoga in my personal and professional life, I often translate its three gems—tapas, svadhyaya, and ishvara pranidhana—into simple concepts. I see tapas (the first step) as intention, enthusiasm, or passion—these are the catalysts for change; svadhyaya (the second step) is the self-awareness or self-examination necessary for transformation; and finally, ishvara pranidhana (the third step) is the faith beyond belief that is critical to creating lasting change. — Melina Meza

## Tapas (Discipline)

### Heart of the Teaching

- Enthusiasm
- Effort
- Self-discipline
- Burning off impurities

### Deep Teaching Support

- [Niyamas: Tapas](#)

### Practice

- [Asana](#)
- [Pranayama](#)

## Svadhyaya (Self-Study)

### Heart of the Teaching



- Self-reflection through study of self and spiritual texts

## Deep Teaching Support

- [Niyamas: Svadhyaya](#)

## Practices

- [Savasana](#)
- [Yoga Nidra](#)

## Ishvara Pranidhana (Surrender)

### Heart of the Teaching

- Surrender to whatever higher power or source we relate to.
- Yoga teachings respect each person's right to access the Divine in his or her own way; they do not dictate a particular type of worship; people of any spiritual orientation can practice surrender.
- Give up (surrender) the fruit of our actions.

## Deep Teaching Support

- [Niyamas: Ishvara Pranidhana](#)

## Practice

- [Meditation](#)

## The Gayatri Mantra

The same triad of power present in Kriya Yoga is reflected most simply in the ancient [Gayatri Mantra](#). By dedicated repetition of Gayatri, all the wisdom and practices of Kriya Yoga can be experienced. The sacred Gayatri Mantra is a unique way to understand Kriya Yoga. It deepens spiritual understanding without the intervention of the mind. Repetition of the mantra channels its vibratory meaning directly to the heart. — Nischala Joy Devi

## Deep Teaching Support

- [Gayatri Mantra](#)
- [Mantras & Chants](#)

## Expert Commentaries on Sutra 2.2

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### REMOVES OBSTACLES TO REALIZATION

The goal of Yoga is not to obtain something that is lacking; it is the realization of an already present reality. Yoga practice does not bring about samadhi directly—it removes the obstacles that obstruct its experience. — Rev Jaganath Carrera

### MINIMIZES IMPEDIMENTS TO MEDITATION

By reducing afflictions to a minimum or even eradicating them, Kriya Yoga promotes profound meditation, which is a precursor to samadhi. The purpose of this yoga is to minimize all impediments to meditation and thus bring the intelligence to full, vibrant life. — B.K.S. Iyengar

### WEAKENS KLESHAS

The *kleshas* are arguably the most challenging aspects of ourselves to confront, yet weakening and eventually removing them can be the most liberating part of our yoga practice. *Kleshas* cause us to suffer by producing negative thoughts and emotions (*klista vrttis*) in our heart-mind. Yoga describes three practices, collectively known as Kriya Yoga that can weaken these afflictions over time. — Nicolai Bachman

### GRADUALLY DIMINISHES CAUSES OF AFFLICTIONS, LEADING TO SAMADHI

Kriya yoga is to be practiced with the purpose of developing samadhi and for thinning out the *kleshas*. Samadhi need not be discussed now. It is one purpose of Kriya Yoga. The second purpose is to overcome the *kleshas*. The causes of afflictions are gradually diminished and for this purpose Kriya Yoga is to be practiced. — Swami Satyananda Saraswati

### WITHOUT KRIYA YOGA, CANNOT OVERCOME OBSTACLES & REACH SAMDHI

Here, Patanjali explains why Kriya Yoga should be practiced: to minimize obstacles and to get into samadhi. He puts everything in very simple terms, but we should know and remember the vital importance of Kriya Yoga. Without it we can never overcome the obstacles and reach samadhi. Mainly all we do in the name of Hatha Yoga, Japa Yoga, and living in yoga institutes and ashrams is all part of our Kriya Yoga—our preparation for meditation and samadhi. — Sri Swami Satchidanandam

## Going Deeper

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### YOU CAN START PRACTICING FROM WHEREVER YOU ARE

Reaching a state of samadhi as described in the first chapter of the Yoga Sutra is beyond the scope of most people. Should we simply forget about practicing yoga because we do not have a disciplined, focused, purified, and perfectly still mind? No. The practice described in chapter 2 is specifically for those whose minds swing from disturbed to distracted to stupefied to one-pointed to perfectly still and back again. We are all endowed with limitless capacities. Our dormant potentials are immense. Even



the most unhealthy person, with the right planning and sustained effort, can become healthy in body and clear in mind. According to Patanjali, putting together a plan to discover one's core strength and executing that plan systematically is called Kriya Yoga, the schematic practice of yoga. With this kind of yoga, you can start practicing from wherever you are. â?? Pandit Rajmani Tigunait

#### OFFERS A LIFELONG PRACTICE TO HOUSEHOLDERS

Who among us doesn't have responsibilities for partners, parents, children, pets, jobs, or our personal home environment? Embracing the contemporary view of Kriya Yoga provides a solid structure on which to build a lifelong practice in the midst of our lives as householders. â?? Beth Gibbs

#### NOTE THAT THESE PRACTICES ARE MENTIONED TWICE IN THE MINIMALLY-WORDED SUTRAS

The last three of the five elements of [niyama](#) enumerated in 2.32 have been placed in [Sutra 2.1] under the title of Kriya Yoga. This is rather an unusual procedure and we should try to grasp the significance of this repetition in a book which attempts to condense knowledge to the utmost limit. Obviously, the reason why Tapas, Svadhyaya and Ishvara Pranidhana are mentioned in two different contexts lies in the fact that they serve two different purposes. The purpose of these three elements in 2.1 is of a more preliminary nature than that in 2.32. It is neither possible nor advisable for anybody who is absorbed in the life of the world and completely under the influence of *kleshas* to plunge all at once into the regular practice of Yoga. If he is sufficiently interested in the Yogic philosophy and wants to enter the path which leads to its goal, he should first accustom himself to discipline, should acquire the necessary knowledge of the Dharma-Sastras and especially of the Yoga-Sastras and should reduce the intensity of his egoism and all the other *kleshas* which are derived from it. â?? I.K. Taimni

#### WEAVES YOGA INTO OUR EVERYDAY WORLD

Kriya Yoga, or Yoga in Action, seamlessly weaves the teachings of Yoga into our everyday world, becoming a template for our hands, heads, and hearts to follow. When mixed in the correct proportions, action, thought, and feelings harmonize completely, allowing our inner spirit and the outer worlds to unite. â?? Nischal Joy Devi

#### YOGA IS NOT PASSIVE

Yoga is not passive. We have to participate in life. To do this well we can work on ourselves. Yoga means attentiveness in action, which is necessary if we want to achieve a point or a posture that was previously unattainable. The yoga of action, kriya yoga, is the means by which we achieve yoga as a state of being. Although it is only one part of yoga, kriya yoga is the practical branch of yoga that can lead to a change for the better in all aspects of our life. â?? TKV Desikachar

#### KRIYA YOGA ATTENUATES KLESHAS & LEADS TO SAMADHI

Kriya Yoga not only attenuates the *kleshas* and thus lays the foundation of the Yogic life but it also leads the aspirant to *samadhi*, the essential and final technique of Yoga. The more the *kleshas* are attenuated, the greater becomes the capacity of the *sadhaka* to practice *samadhi* and the nearer he



draws to his goal of *kaivalaya*. When the *kleshas* have been reduced to the vanishing point he is in habitual samadhi, at the threshold of kaivalya. • I.K. Taimni

#### DEVELOP HEALTHIER SAMSKARAS

Kriya yoga practices are designed to develop new, healthier *samskaras* (subliminal activators), • the indelible imprints left behind by our daily experiences• that dictate our behavioral patterns. •  
Andrea Ferretti

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