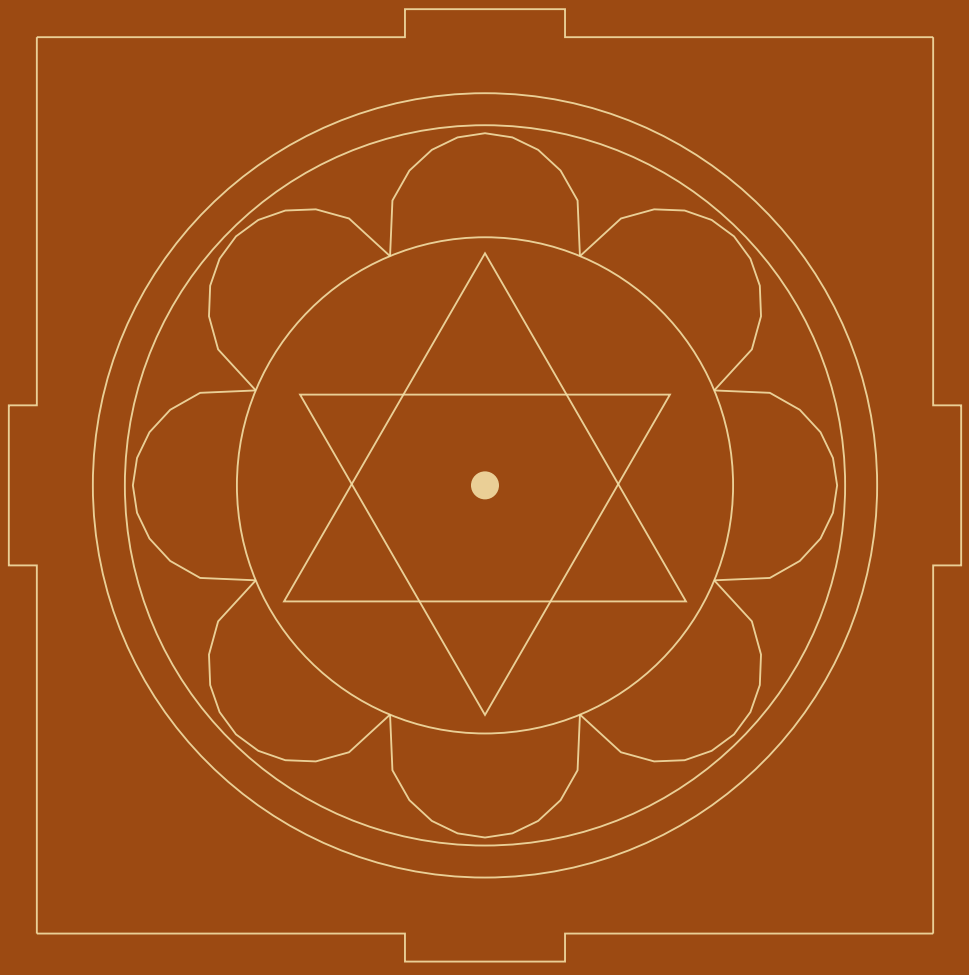
PRACTICE

Concentration: 40 Days of Dharana

The second step of meditation: Patañjali's concentration, the nine obstacles and seven supports of the Yoga Sutra, and a forty-day programme from 15 to 40 minutes



धारणा

dhāraṇā

YOGIDE

Free sample

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Before you begin

You have learned to sit. You can follow the breath for ten minutes, you have tried a mantra, perhaps a candle flame. And you have noticed what everyone notices: the mind does not stay. It leaves the breath for a plan, a memory, a worry, a song, and comes back, and leaves again. This is not a failure of meditation; it is the material of the next stage. The yoga tradition calls that stage dhāraṇā (धारणा), "holding": binding the mind to one place, and bringing it back, patiently, as many times as it takes.

This book is the second step of the meditation path of Yogide. The first, Meditation for Beginners: 21 Days, teaches you to sit and introduces four classical methods. The third, The 112 Meditations of the Vijñāna Bhairava Tantra, opens a hundred doors. Between them, this one trains the faculty on which all the others depend: the ability to hold one object.

It does four things.

First, it explains what dhāraṇā is in Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra: its place among the eight limbs, its relation to meditation (dhyāna) and absorption (samādhi), the obstacles that scatter the mind and the seven supports that the text offers to steady it, each with the Sanskrit and our own translation.

Second, it gives you a method: how to choose one support and keep it for forty days, how to lengthen the sitting from fifteen to forty minutes, how to count and note without obsession.

Third, it gives you the forty days, one page of instruction per stage, with a box to tick each day and a line to write.

Fourth, it tells you honestly what research shows about attention training, and what can go wrong.

> **About the translations.**
>
> All translations of Sanskrit sūtras in this book were written for Yogide from the Sanskrit text. They are not copied or adapted from any modern published translation.

> **Before you practise.**
>
> Concentration practice is not free of risk. A systematic review found that unwanted effects (anxiety, low mood, unusual perceptions) are not rare in meditation, including in people with no previous history of mental illness (Chapter 8). If you live with a psychiatric condition, a history of psychosis, dissociation or trauma, or if you are going through a crisis, talk to your doctor or therapist first, and stop if you feel unwell. Gazing at a flame (trāṭaka) is not for people with epilepsy, and should be done only with a stable candle, away from anything flammable. Emergency numbers: 911 (US, Canada), 999 or 112 (UK), 112 (EU, India), 000 (Australia).

How the text is numbered

We follow the Sanskrit text of the Yoga Sūtra in GRETIL (Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages), as in our companion book The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali, Sutra by Sutra. Where we summarise the commentary attributed to Vyāsa, we follow the same GRETIL edition (Philipp A. Maas, from the Ānandāśrama edition, Pune, 1904).

How to use this book

Read Chapters 1 to 4 before you begin (two evenings). Choose your support (Chapter 3). Then follow the forty days (Chapter 5), one stage at a time, with the journal (Chapter 6). If you miss a day, do not start again: continue where you are, and add the missed day at the end. Patañjali's measure of practice is "a long time, without interruption, with care" (YS 1.14), not perfection.

Chapter 1. Dhāraṇā in the Yoga Sūtra

The sixth limb

Patañjali lists eight limbs of yoga (YS 2.29): restraints, observances, posture, breath control, withdrawal of the senses, concentration, meditation and absorption. The first five prepare; the last three are called "inner" (YS 3.7). Dhāraṇā is the first of the three.

The second chapter ends with a quiet bridge between breath and concentration:

YS 2.53

धारणासु च योग्यता मनसः ॥

dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ

Translation. And [from breath control comes] the fitness of the mind for concentrations. (Our translation.)

Breath practice prepares the mind; withdrawal of the senses (YS 2.54-55) turns it inward; then concentration can begin.

Three sūtras, one movement

The third chapter opens with three very short definitions.

YS 3.1

देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा ॥

deśa-bandhaś cittasya dhāraṇā

Translation. Concentration is the binding of the mind to a place. (Our translation.)

YS 3.2

तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम् ॥

tatra pratyayaikatānatā dhyānam

Translation. There, the continuous flow of a single cognition is meditation. (Our translation.)

YS 3.3

तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः ॥

tad evārtha-mātra-nirbhāsaṃ svarūpa-śūnyam iva samādhiḥ

Translation. That same [meditation], when only the object shines forth, as though empty of its own form, is absorption. (Our translation.)

YS 3.4

त्रयमेकत्र संयमः ॥

trayam ekatra saṃyamaḥ

Translation. The three together, on one object, are called saṃyama. (Our translation.)

Read them as one movement, not three techniques:

Stage	Sanskrit	What happens	An image
Concentration	dhāraṇā (धारणा)	the mind is tied to a place; it leaves, and is brought back	a goat tied to a post, wandering to the end of the rope and back
Meditation	dhyāna (ध्यान)	the cognition of the object flows without break	oil poured from one vessel to another, in a continuous thread
Absorption	samādhi (समाधि)	only the object shines; the sense of a separate meditator fades	a crystal taking the colour of what is near it

The first two images are traditional illustrations used by teachers, not quotations from the sūtras; the third comes from the Yoga Sūtra itself, which compares the mind in absorption to a clear jewel taking the colour of what is near it (YS 1.41). The Yoga Bhāṣya attributed to Vyāsa explains "place" (deśa) with examples: the navel, the heart, the light in the head, the tip of the nose, the tip of the tongue, or an outer object. A place, in other words, is any single support.

What this book is about

This book is about the first stage. Not because the others do not matter, but because they cannot be forced: meditation is concentration that no longer breaks, and absorption is meditation that forgets itself. What can be practised, day after day, is the binding and the bringing back. That is dhāraṇā.

Practise: one minute, counted

Sit. Choose the breath at the nostrils. For one minute (use a timer), count how many times you notice the mind has left and bring it back. Write the number. Do not judge it: it is your starting point, nothing else.

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already help your practice, and that they show how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, texts quoted with their source, nothing invented.

The full book has 23 pages.

Get it here: https://yogide.com/books/concentration-40-days-of-dharana/

One-time payment, instant PDF.