

free from cravings, owning nothing, the Yogin ought to apply himself to Yoga incessantly.

One should practice meditation regularly. It should not be a sporadic practice. Sitting in a secluded place, at a Satvika time, all alone, keeping the body and mind in control, apply mind in meditation.

Even in Patanjali's Yoga shastra, meditation is only the seventh step. Thus, he talks about the following eight stages: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, prathyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

Yama and Niyama are code of conduct and regulations to be followed in life. Asana's are meant to keep the body fit. Only then can one forget the body during meditation. Think of it like a shoe that does not fit and see how uncomfortable one feels wearing it. However, the moment your shoe fits you do not even think about it, anymore.

Pranayama helps one with control of the mind. One's desires should not create anxieties in the mind. Desires that are legitimate such as, a parents concern for the welfare of their children are fine. However, this concern should not result in anxiety. Only way to get over anxiety is through Sharanagathi or surrender to the Lord. " I am not the controller of my family. I do my best for the family and leave the rest to God", should be the approach taken. Nonbinding desires are good while binding desires can disturb the mind.

Simple living and high thinking should be practiced. High living requires a lot of materials and they need to be maintained. Vedas refer to this condition as Yoga Kshema. Yoga means accomplishments and Kshema means maintenance. Now, Nirashi, non-binding desires reduce Yoga while Aparigraha (non-possession) reduces Kshema. Parigraha means possession. Shankaracharya has defined Aparigraha to mean Sanyasa as well.

Even a Sanyasi has possessions like a rudraksha, paduka etc.

So, offer all possessions to God. Feel you are a trustee of Lord's property. Feel you are without ownership during meditation. Even one's children, consider them as children of God, not as mine. Remember children are not of you; they only have come through you. So, reduce possessions and give up ownership and have the idea of trusteeship. All these are preparations for meditation.

Shloka # 11:

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Setting one's firm seat in a clean spot, neither too high nor too low, covered with a cloth, or hide, and kusa grass, one over the other.

Sri Krishna gives another condition for the place of meditation. He says the place should be clean physically and spiritually. Spiritually means it is a place that helps us with spiritual thoughts. Thus, lighting a lamp, keeping God's picture etc., can make the place of meditation sacred. A spiritual place can even be a temple or an ashram.

Discussing asana or the seat, Sri Krishna says, it must have three layers. Bottom most layer must be Kusha grass, on top of it must be Adhinam or deer skin and the top most layer should be a piece of cloth called Chailam. Kusha grass is supposed to help with concentration, deer skin is supposed to protect us from negative forces and the piece of cloth is meant for making the seat comfortable for meditation. The deerskin is also used in the sacred thread ceremony.

In today's world we have to take the spirit behind this teaching. So long as the seat is not too hard or too soft it is acceptable. The asana also should not be too high or too low. The asana should be a firm place to sit down upon for meditation.

Shloka # 12:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
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Sitting on it, making the mind one-pointed, controlling the activities of the mind and senses, let the practitioner apply himself to Uoga for self-purification.

After fixing the asana one should sit on it. One should then withdraw from all activities of the karmendriyas and Gyanenindriyas within the mind. Having withdrawn the mind, direct the mind to the chosen object. In this process I stop all wasteful flow of mental energy and direct it. It is like building a dam to stop the river water from being wasted by flowing into the ocean. So, when I build a dam, the water is conserved and that stored water is channelized for irrigation purposes. Otherwise the water will go waste.

Another analogy would be like the sun's rays concentrated by a lens resulting in an energy that can burn objects. One Vedic fire lighting ritual is through such a lens.

Purpose of meditation is atma shudhi or purification of mind. Meditation is not for knowledge or self-realization. That can come only through study of scriptures. Purpose of meditation is to remove impurities of the mind called malam and vikshepa (extrovertedness of mind).

Malam means unhealthy ways of thinking. Thus, ragah- dveshah; kamah, krodhah; lobhah, mohah; madah, matsaryah etc., are all called malam. Uncultured, unrefined, indecent thoughts are called malam.

Vikshepah is the second impurity and it means extrovertedness of the mind or restlessness of the mind.

After purifying the mind one has to study scriptures for Gyanam. Thus:

Meditation before study of scriptures is called Upsana and meant to remove mala and vikshepa.

Meditation after scriptural study is for nidhidhyasanam. Here one is purifying oneself from habitual vasana's of body identification, which is called deha vasana or deha abhimana vasana or also called viparitha bhavana. These are all our deeply entrenched habits to which we continue to fall back upon. Therefore, in meditation, I have to train my mind to think, " I am not this body", and the removal of this deha vasana is called atma vishuddhaye.

Shloka # 13:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 6.13 ॥

Holding the body, head and neck evenly and steadily, the resolute Yogin fixes his gaze on the tip of his nose, not looking around.

Here Sri Krishna talks about posture during meditation. Sitting on ground with folded legs is best method to obtain steadiness and balance. This, however, is not compulsory. Nowadays many people have knee problems and other such problems. In this context one can sit anywhere or even lie down. Meditation is a job of the mind. All other ideas are suggestions only.

Upper part of the body should be erect and straight. Kaya means the body from hip to neck, then griva, means the neck, shirah, means the head, these three must be in one straight line, perpendicular to the ground.

They say even musicians need to sit straight to allow full flow of sound. So be firm and erect.

Withdraw sense organs from sensory field. It means withdrawing the mind from sense organs especially, the eyes, as they are

the most active of all organs. Keep eyes focused on tip of one's nose. Keep eyes partially closed.

Sri Krishna does not talk about breath regulation here. He did discuss it in chapter five. Make sure eyes do not distract you. You can even close the eyes. Make sure breathing is slow and even.

In fact, they say prana vikshanam, is a very good discipline; as different from prana ayama; pranayama is regulation of breathing; prana vikshanam is observation of the breath; and when I observe, I am aware of the breathing process, the very awareness of the breathing process, makes it smooth and even; so that is called prana vikshanam.

Take away:

Purpose of meditation is atma shudhi or purification of mind. Meditation is not for self -realization.

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy