

Discourses on Meditation

(with Guided Meditation)

by Swami Paramarthananda

Written form by Madduri Rajya Sri



Discourses on Meditation

by Swami Paramarthananda

Written form from audio by Madduri Rajya Sri

01. Introduction

Sada siva samarambham

Sankaracharya Madhyamam

Asmadacharya Paryantham

Vande guru paramparam

One of the complaints that many people make about Hindu religion and especially about Hindu scriptures is that it is extremely confusing. Many statements often look even contradictory whereas other religions and their scriptures seem easy to practice. They consider this as their strength and feel our religion as being weak. Hindu religion is not weak, but it is great. It is seemingly confusing because of several reasons.

Adhikari bedhaha - Differences in the level of seekers.

1. It caters to all types of people with different levels of maturity. In such a case the sadhanas prescribed can never be same to all. What is food for one is poison for the other. What is useful for one is redundant for the other.

If five boys seek admission into a school, first their present level will be judged and accordingly they will be asked to join in different classes. To be consistent, if they are asked to join the same standard it will be foolishness.

Some religions are simple because they cater to only one level of seekers. They cannot comprehensively guide all humanity, whereas Hinduism caters to all the people of all levels.

In Bhagavad Gita, in the beginning Lord Krishna points out -

Swadharme nidhanam sreyaha

Paradharmo bhayavahaha

3-35.

Dharma is extremely important for everyone. Even if one has to sacrifice one's own life, Swadharma should not be given up.

In another part, the very same Lord Krishna says-

Sarva dharmaan parityajya maamekam saranam vraja 18-66.

If we see both, we wonder what to do. Should we follow dharma or drop it? It is not, in fact, contradiction.

Even though Arjuna is one student, we should remember Arjuna represents the entire humanity, at different levels of spiritual path. So, it is not a contradiction, if we know to whom a particular statement is addressed .

2.Ardha vaada - Highlighting or Exaggeration

Scriptures use the method of ardha vaada or exaggeration to highlight a particular

point. This exaggeration is seen in different walks of life. In Ramayana, we see Rama's glory as a husband when he loses Sita in the forest. In Valmiki Ramayana we find Rama is extremely depressed and even goes crazy. He is seen talking to rivers and mountains and trees and stones. Then Rama put all his efforts, crossed the ocean and won back Sita. Rama the husband is highlighted there.

When the very same Rama comes back and hears a rumour in the country - that Rama has taken back Sita who has lived with a Rakshasa - Rama the king sends back Sita to the forest. When we read that portion of Ramayana, we should understand that Rama the king is highlighted there. People criticize Rama for giving up Sita who is pregnant. Do you think that Rama, who loved his wife so much, would have been cruel to Sita?

Certainly it is not a contradiction. What are we to understand? There we should understand that a king should be ready to sacrifice anything for his people. We should not study that portion to understand Rama the husband. If we want to study Rama the husband, we should go to the forest scene.

The greatest problem is we mix up both. This appropriate extraction of the meaning is extremely important if we want to study the scriptures. We have got a special methodology to arrive at the proper meaning. It is called meemansa.

Similarly with the story of Ekalavya and Drona, we are highlighting the story of Ekalavya, who is ready to give anything as guru dakshina including his own thumb. There we have to learn about Ekalavya and his guru bhakthi, but we focus on Drona and criticize him.

This wrong focussing can be a great danger if we don't know how to study scriptures.

The scriptures use a word with several meanings in different contexts.

Eg: Atma, Yoga, Brahma

It is not the mistake of scriptural language. We have such a confusion in English language also.

Eg: well - It seems a son wrote to his father, 'I am in the well and hope you are also in the same well.'

In one Upanishad we find...

Avidyaya Mrutyam Tirtva.

One should cross over mortality through avidya. It means one should attain immortality through Avidya. If we look into the dictionary avidya means ignorance. If that is so, we should have attained immortality long ago, because we are rich in ignorance. In fact that is the capital with which we are all born.

So avidya or mrutya has got a peculiar meaning. A word has got several contextual

meanings. They call it paribhasha sabda. If we do not know it, the scriptures will be confusing.

How to avoid it? Scriptures themselves give the answer. The best way to avoid confusion is never to study scriptures independently. That's why in those days it was never written. So a person cannot study independently. Veda came through Karna parampara.

So we should study the scriptures under the guidance of a guru only. Then the scriptures will help all the people at all levels.

Once we come under a guru, we will learn some fundamentals.

a. Jnanena - Mokshaha

A person can attain spiritual freedom or Moksha only through one - that is through jnanam.

jnanath evathu kaivalyam

thamevam Vidyan Amrutha iha bhavathi

One Upanishad even makes a humourous statement that you can get Moksha, If you fulfil one condition, you should roll the sky like a mattress. It means you cannot roll the sky and so you cannot get Moksha without jnanam

b. Guru sastra upadesena jnanam

To attain this jnanam, there is only one method - sravanam. That is - consistent, systematic study of the scriptures under the guidance of a competent teacher for a length of time. Scriptures do not give any alternative method. In Gita, we find.

tadviddi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya

upadekshyanti te jnanam jnaninastatvadarsinaha

4-34.

Arjuna, if you want knowledge, go to a guru and receive knowledge. In Upanishad we find...

tad vijnardham sa gurumevabhigacchet

samitpanihi srotriyam brahma nistam.

c. Meditation

Once we know this is our ultimate pursuit, to attain this jnanam from the guru, we have to go through lot of preparatory disciplines. Among many such, all of which are equally important one such discipline is meditation.

Once we know meditation is a preparatory discipline, we should know what exactly is the role of meditation.

Meditation is one of the most confusing disciplines. Hundreds of books are written about meditation. We should know - what meditation is meant for and what meditation is not meant for.

What is Meditation not meant for?

- i. Meditation is not meant for **liberation or spiritual freedom**, because scriptures uniformly point out that Moksha is our own intrinsic Nature or swaroopam. Therefore we need not get it. It is not a matter of getting, but is a matter of discovering.
- ii. Meditation is not meant for **knowledge**. Scriptures point out that jnanam can be attained by guru sastra upadesena. Otherwise Lord Krishna would have asked Arjuna to meditate.
- iii. Meditation is not meant for any **Siddhis or powers**. Our scriptures never recommend meditations for siddhis. It doesn't mean siddhis will not come through meditation. We do accept a person gets miraculous powers through meditation, but scriptures uniformly point out siddhis do not lead to liberation. In fact they can lead to greater bonding. There are also possibilities of misusing these siddhis eg - rakshasas. Even Ravana appeared before Sita in a different form because of siddhi only. Indrajit had siddhi when he fought with Lakshmana. Therefore siddhis are not helpful for a person's liberation or even for requirement.
- iv. Meditation is not meant for **mystic experiences**. They have nothing to do with liberation. All experiences deal with objective universe. We are interested in the experiences of the subject. They talk about the higher planes. A meditator can see - bhuvārloka, suvarloka etc., We don't deny the possibilities, but we say we are not even able to handle the bhooloka properly. So a spiritual seeker should neither be interested in siddhis nor in mystic experiences.
- v. Meditation is not for **health**. We accept meditation improves your health, but scriptures tell you meditation is not meant primarily for health. It is only a by product. It is like saying I go to temple for prasadam. It is an avantara phalam.

What is meditation meant for?

It is meant for the refinement of mind to receive knowledge from acharya. It is meant for **jnanayogyata prapti**. A refined mind enjoys certain important faculties which make the mind receive the knowledge.

Four faculties of a refined mind are -

relaxation - freedom from stress

concentration - capacity to focus

expansion - not confined to we two and our two.

Purification - detoxification of the mind.

Purification means weeding out unhealthy patterns of thinking. It is called sukshama buddhi. Upanishads point out - with a refined mind, a seeker can receive and retain a knowledge obtained from the guru.

This refined mind cannot be the beginning step of the spiritual sadhanam, because mind is a subtle instrument. It is intangible, invisible. It is extremely difficult to handle a subtle instrument, because it is difficult even to handle a gross instrument like the body itself.

So if we have to learn to handle a subtle instrument, we should first learn to handle a relatively grosser instrument. We don't have control over our hands and legs. Some people either keep on moving the leg or keep on biting the nails. Therefore we should start with the refinement of the grosser instruments. That's why Lord Krishna did not begin with dhyanam, it comes only in the 6th chapter.

This topic of the gradual refinement of the personality, starting from the exterior grosser part and gradually going towards the interior subtle part is beautifully described in Astanga Yoga written by Patanjali Muni. Even though the philosophy of Yoga Sastra is different from Vedanta and even Veda, the yoga abhyasa - the method of refinement - given in the Yoga Sastra is a beautiful method. It is called **Astanga Yoga** - It is an eight stepped refinement. Each two steps take care of one layer of our personality.

1. **Yama & Niyama** - **handle our external aspect of life.**
i.e. our character - moral personality.
2. **Asana & Pranayama** - **deal with physical personality.**
3. **Pratyahara & Dharana** - **deal with psychological personality**
4. **Dhyanam & Samadhi** - **deal with spiritual personality.**

It is a beautiful & comprehensive system. We will deal with them one by one.

Preliminary practice of meditation

- Be seated in any comfortable posture.
- You can keep your hands clasped together on the lap.
- Keep the body, neck and head erect.
- Close the eyes gently.
- Now relax your body giving special attention to the joints of the body.
- If I relax the body totally, I won't experience the body. I will feel bodyless.
- In sleep my body is relaxed, I don't feel my body.
- In meditation also, I relax the body consciously and I won't feel my body. I don't know where I am seated. I don't know where my legs are.

This is the indication of total relaxation.

- Just repeat to yourself mentally - I am relaxed.No stress, no tension, I am relaxed.

Santoham Santoham Santoham

Om Purnamadaha Purnamidam Purnaath Purna mudachyate

Purnasya Purna maadaya Purnamevavasishyate.

02. Yama - Thoughts & actions to avoid

All sadhanas other than jnanam have got only indirect role with regard to liberation. Jnanam alone is the direct means.

Jnanam has to take place only in a refined mind. With the help of the instrument of mind alone one has to gain self knowledge.

No doubt in some places we find that atma cannot be known with the help of the mind. They lead to contradiction. We have to resolve the seeming contradiction properly. It should be understood that an unrefined mind cannot know the atma. Wherever we find, mind alone can know the atma, it means refined mind alone can know.

Therefore our final version is - we require a refined mind for knowledge.

For refined mind we have many sadhanas and one of the important sadhanas is meditation. For a spiritual seeker, the primary aim of meditation is only a refinement of the mind and not in siddhis or mysterious experiences. With this he can go to a guru & gain knowledge.

Mind is a very subtle instrument i.e. not a tangible instrument. So it is not that easy to handle it. Arjuna himself says -

**Chanchalam hi manaha Krishna pramadhi balavadrudam
tasyaham Nigraham manye vayloriva sudushkaram. 6-34.**

It is extremely difficult to regulate the mind.

So we have to first regulate our own grosser instruments & then go to the subtle. In our regular education also, we go from concrete to abstract.

When talking about meditation, Lord Krishna talks about various other disciplines which are meant to regulate our grosser personality. Lord Krishna talks about even ahara niyama. If a person cannot regulate his eating habit, how is he going to regulate his thinking habit?

If we cannot regulate our sleeping - waking habit, entertainment - activity habit, how are we going to regulate our mind?

**Yuktaahara viharasya yukta chestasya karmasu
Yukta swapnavabodhasya yogo Bhavathi dukhaha. 6-17.**

In Patanjali Yoga Sutra it is presented in a beautiful graded manner. It is given in eight steps...

Yama, Niyama	-	moral personality
Asana, Pranayama	-	physical personality
Pratyahara, Dharana	-	psychological personality
Dhyanam , Samadhi	-	spiritual personality

Yamaha

It does not refer to Lord Yama or the bike. Yamaha is derived from the root Yam yacchati. To control, to restrain, to withdraw or to avoid.

In the first discipline, we are asked to avoid something. it is not a casual avoidance, but it is a resolve with a commitment. It deals with five things - panchavidha varjanam

a. ahimsa - It is not avoidance of ahimsa.

- i. It is avoidance of physical violence against three creatures - Jeeva Ahimsa Varjanam man, animal and plants.
- ii. It is avoidance of violence against three organs - Karana ahimsa varjanam - kayika, vak, manaha

i. Kayika - it is physical violence. The grosser form. We have to learn to stop that first because it is relatively easier eg- banging phone, throwing a stone, beating etc.

ii. Vak - Once we are reasonably successful in avoiding kayika violence, we have to be alert in our verbal interaction. It is extremely difficult because we are used to talk without thinking. Talking does not require any energy. Before we think of the quality of our words, we have to reduce the quantity.

Once quantity control is done, quality control becomes relatively easier. Therefore, we can be aware or conscious and find which word will hurt the other person. We mentally stand in other person's position and judge the impact of the word. This is verbal alertness - vachika ahimsa: It is tougher than kayika ahimsa.

iii. Manaha - If somebody harms us and if we cannot hurt him physically or verbally, we go on cursing him mentally. This is manasa himsa and the toughest one to get over.

To sum up - the first yama is kayika, vachika, manasa **himsa varjanam** with regard to human beings, animals and plants.

These are all supposed to be preliminary steps before coming to meditation, but we want to straight away practice meditation. Patanjali, who is an authority on meditation, gives dhyanam only in the seventh step.

b. Satyam - It is not avoidance of truth. It is asatya varjanam or anrutha varjanam

If we want to speak, we should speak truth only. If speaking is going to be either redundant or harmful to others, we should observe silence. What is more important is not mere speaking truth, but avoiding untruth. We need not call somebody and say you are unintelligent. If we are going to speak every truth we won't have time to do anything. So

Satyam vada means asatyam avada **anrutha varjanam**.

This is a discipline at verbal level.

c. Asteyam - Literally it means non- stealing. Any benefit that we get through illegal, illegitimate transaction is stealing. If a person has worked for us and deserves

hundred rupees, but we have managed to give him only eighty rupees, we may think we have the benefit of twenty rupees because of the urgent transaction, but it comes under stolen wealth.

So stealing does not mean breaking open a house at night. Any benefit we enjoy through unjust transaction is stealing. So it is **steya varjanam** - avoidance of stealing.

d. brahmacharyam - It has got several meanings in several contexts - Sankaracharya translates gurukula vasa antevasi. itself as brahmacharyam

Let us take the meaning given in the yoga sutra context. It is also relevant.

In all male-female transactions avoidance of inappropriate relationship at the physical, verbal and mental level. In sanskrit, it is translated as **maidhuna varjanam**.

e. aparigrahaha - avoidance of hoarding or accumulation of possession. It means not possessing beyond the limits or needs. In fact they translate it as Sanyasa also, but let us take an appropriate meaning. It is avoidance of over possession.

But the problem is - who will decide the limit? we have to go by our conscience. Even with regard to the minimum possession we have, it is better we don't claim the ownership. So aparigrahaha has two stages -

i. have the minimum required.

ii. never be possessed by your possession. Some flats are called ownership flats, but whoever has got ownership in flat, we should always remember that the only possessor is the lord alone. Lord has given us those things for a temporary use and he has the right to take away any one of them without advance notice.

makuru dhana jana yavvana garvam

harati nimeshatkalaha sarvam

maya maya mida makhilam, hitva

brahmapadam tvam pravise viditva

Let us be aware of this fact, whenever lord decides to take away, we have no right to complain, we are going to return it with thanks. This is called giving up mamakara. Then we are as good as a Sanyasi inside. Mamakara varjitheha sanyasi. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in the Gita -

Yam sanyasamiti prahuhi yogam tam viddi pandava

na hyasan yasta sankalpo yogi bhavathi kaschana

6-2.

So it is **sankalpa varjithaha and mamakara varjthaha**.

All the five put together, it is called Yamaha and in Yoga sutra it is said - they are **maha vratam**. great vows that every spiritual seeker should take diligently and follow alertly.

A few points to remember -

If we analyse these five values, we can easily arrive at these values if we have a simple common sense norm. We don't require sastra for this - The common sense norm is this -

What you don't want others to do to you, you should not do it to others.

If you don't want others to hurt you, don't hurt others.

If you don't want others to lie to you, don't lie

If you don't want other to accumulate too much wealth, don't do.

All the five yamas can be arrived this way. In Sanskrit it says -

atmanah pratikulani paresham na samachare

What you think is unfavourable to you, is unfavourable to others also, therefore, don't do it.

So our subconscious mind knows we should not do these five things. That's why even if a person violates these norms, he violates them secretly. This enlightened subconscious mind is called **conscience**.

So if we go against these norms, we are primarily, hurting our own conscience. Hurting the world is secondary, hurting our conscience is primary. It is expressed in the form of guilt. A guilty mind is a disturbed mind and a disturbed mind cannot practice meditation.

That's why Patanjali says, you have to follow Yama. Initially if we violate, guilt comes up, and if we repeatedly violate, then the mind will get blunted, conscience will be stupefied. Then there will be no pain and guilt, but the mind will become grossified. That gross mind can never gain spiritual knowledge.

Therefore if you value meditation, if you value spiritual knowledge, yama is an important stage.

Practice of Meditation.

- Sit in comfortable posture
- Hands clasped together and placed over the lap.
- Body in attention, head erect, face looking straight, neither up nor down, close eyes gently. Now relax deliberately. Relax all your body joints deliberately.
- If the relaxation is complete, I lose my body sensation. I don't experience my body. I have come out of the body as it were. I feel light.
- It is the indication of the physical relaxation.
- Now I turn my attention to my breathing process - I feel my breathing.
- Air entering through the nostrils and coming out through the nostrils.
- I don't regulate my breathing.

- I am aware of my natural breathing.
- This is called Prana Veekshanam.
- The very awareness of the breathing will make it smooth and rhythmic.
- When the body and breathing are relaxed, the mind also calms down.
- I tell myself I am relaxed,
- No stress, no tension, no anxiety.
- I enjoy my relaxation.
- End your meditation with a prayer
- come out of meditation gradually.
- Avoid sudden activity immediately after meditation.

**Om Purnamadaha Purnamidam Purnaath Purna mudachyate
Purnasya Purna maadaya Purnamevavasishyate.**

03. Niyama - Thoughts & actions to follow.

Summing up Yamaha

It refers to the five fold avoidances.

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|--------------|
| a. | avoidance of violence | - | Ahimsa |
| b. | avoidance of speaking untruth | - | Satyam |
| c. | avoidance of possessing illegitimate wealth | - | Asteyam |
| d. | avoidance of inappropriateness with regard to
male, female relationship | - | Brahmacharya |
| e. | avoidance of accumulation of wealth | - | Aparigraha |

Second stage of Astanga Yoga - Niyama

Niyama is adding ni to Yamaha - Niyama means committed practice or committed pursuit of five things..

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------|---|------------------------|
| a. | Soucham | - | cleanliness or purity |
| b. | Santhoshaha | - | contentment |
| c. | Tapaha | - | austerity |
| d. | Swadhyayaha | - | scriptural study |
| e. | Eswara pranidhanam | - | surrender to the lord. |
- a. Soucham** - Cleanliness or purity at two levels.
- | | | | |
|-----|------------------|---|------------------|
| i. | bahya soucham | - | external purity. |
| ii. | aanthara soucham | - | internal purity |
- i. External purity** - It includes many things - Cleanliness of our surroundings.
- Bahya Soucham.** - Our house - not just the hall but every room including bathroom.

- Our dress - need not be gaudy & extravagant, but should be simple but clean
- Our physical body - especially nails & nails of toes.
- Our possession including books.

Orderliness is as important as cleanliness.

It means we must be able to locate and take whatever we want immediately. Some people search for today's newspaper in the afternoon. Even if they can find it, some papers are missing. Same is the case with pens.

Principle of orderliness is very simple.

Anything we possess - has a particular place and is kept in its place.

If cleanliness and orderliness are maintained, they will help in our way of thinking. The condition of the mind depends on the condition of the surroundings.

ii. Anthara Soucham - Internal purity - Maintenance of pure thoughts which are responsible for psychological health. Jealousy, fear etc., are asuri sampath. Weeding out asuri sampath and carefully maintaining devi sampath is the maintenance of internal hygiene. Only when I am physically and psychologically healthy, I can think of practicing meditation.

b. Santhoshaha - contentment or trupti. It means whatever we acquire through our effort, without violating the principles of yama, niyama, we are satisfied with that. We learn to enjoy that wealth without comparing with other people. Comparison leads to inferiority complex, dissatisfaction, therefore to violation of values.

Moodajaheehi dhanagama trishnam

Kuru sadbhuddim manasi vitrushnam

Yallabhase nija karmopatham

Vitham tena Vinodaya chittam

We should remember any amount of wealth is finite. If we think of higher amount we get dissatisfied. If we have hundred billion dollars we want thousand billion dollars. We eternally feel we are middle class and that gives eternal dissatisfaction.

So satisfaction has nothing to do with what we possess, but something to do with our bhavana.

There is a misconception. We think, if we are going to develop contentment, how can the country progress economically? People blame our religion for our poverty! They want a scapegoat.

We have to differentiate between two things - generation of wealth and ownership or possession of wealth. We need not have contentment at all with regard to generation or production of wealth.

It is with regard to what we own that we have to be content. For eg - If we generate plenty of wealth and are contented with little, we have surplus with us, which we are willing to share with society. If we are not contented we will not share even a small amount. Then the nation cannot be benefitted at all. There will be a big disparity between the rich and the poor, there will be revolution, day light robbery etc.,

So contentment is satisfaction with little possession or aparigraha. We continue to generate wealth and share it. Many industrialists arrange many welfare schemes for the employees, surrounding villages etc., Where there are contented people, the society will be a wealthy society. So, it is a positive virtue only. It is given as a niyamaha because we have to regularly repeat it in our mind.

Mind tends to compare and feel poor. Poverty is a sense and it is a nonsense. Richness is also a sense and it has nothing to do with what we have.

So I have to repeatedly suggest to myself.

I am happy. I am rich with whatever I have earned through my effort.

c. Tapaha - austerity - It has got different meanings but here it means - wilful, self denial to establish mastery over my own body, sense organs and mind.

When we do certain things regularly, initially we do them voluntarily, out of our own choice, but if we do them repeatedly, we get enslaved or addicted to that action. It becomes strong and we discover it very late. For many people, coffee is an addiction. They get headache if they don't drink it - both psychological & physical addiction.

If we are a slave of our own organs, where is the question of freedom from slavery of the world? How should we get out of this slavery? Whatever you regularly do, say no to it one day, for instance, to coffee and see the result. Mind will begin to bug. Even if you try to distract it, it keeps on saying coffee, coffee.

Who is responsible for this addiction? Yourself, some vratams in our culture like upavasam are meant for self mastery. Remember, self mastery should be voluntary. If it is forced by somebody, it becomes torture.

So if it is voluntary it is tapas, if it is enforced it is torture.

When we follow tapas, our body & mind become tough. If we are used to Upavasa on Ekadasi, we can withstand hunger. So when food is not available we can convert it to Ekadasi. Therefore tapas, toughness is our personality. We are ready for any hardship in life.

d. Swadhyayaha - scriptural study. This important niyama is unfortunately ignored by most of the spiritual people and unfortunately not emphasised by spiritual leaders. In fact they discourage study and emphasis on Sadhana.

Just as we gradually progress in the study of physics, our Sastras also give sys-

tematic teaching. Our scriptures point out that study without sadhana is incomplete. We should also add, sadhana without study will not fructify properly because we don't even know what that Sadhana is meant for.

Where does this Sadhana begin and where does it end? Every Sadhana has its own role to play, and once it has served its purpose we have to switch over to other level.

For eg - we should know which particular train we have to get into, how long we have to travel and which particular station we should get down. It means we should have a knowledge of the means that we are using.

Similarly any sadhana we do, we should know about it. Therefore scriptures emphasise study also along with Sadhana.

ritham cha swadyayapravachanecha. Satyam cha swadyayapravachanecha. tapascha swadyayapravachanecha. .. - Taitereeya sruti

Whatever Sadhana we do, it should parallelly go with study of scriptures. Scriptural study is called Brahma Yagna and it is one of the Pancha Maha Yagnas.

So we should study scriptures every day. If we study under a guru on a particular day, we have to revise on other days. Not only that if we study scriptures, all the misconceptions will go away.

One of the commonest misconceptions is this...

People say that in spite of leading a life of values, they find so many problems. But who told them that following a life of values will free them from the hardships of life? No scripture points out that you get immunity to hardships by following values. Hardships are caused by some other factor.

Answer for that : values in life are meant for spiritual growth. Embodiment of Virtues like Dharmaraja and Harischandra had hardships. Even maha jnanis had ups and downs in life.

Why should we have spiritual progress? It is to get two fold benefit -

i. We will get sufficient strength to withstand the ups and downs of life.

ii. We will get sufficient ananda in the inner discovery like the joy of motherhood right from pregnancy. The thrill and joy of motherhood is an ample price that all the hardships she undergoes pales into insignificance. That's why she is ready for the next child soon. Similarly the spiritual ananda gives us a thrill in front of which all the hardships of life will become insignificant, just as the stars fade away at sun rise. This is called **abhi bhavaha**. It means they are there but we don't feel their presence.

e. Eswara Pranidhanam - surrender to God. It consists of two important exercises.

i. Eswararpana bhavana:

Whatever we do in life are dedicated to the lord as pooja - constant Eswararpana

bhavana. The indication of Eswararpana is we are cheerful even when our duties are pleasant or unpleasant.

ii. Eswara Prasada Bhavana: More importantly, whatever we do, comes back to us as Karma Phalam. Every experience we get is the result of our own action, in this janma or the previous janma. We cannot blame anyone including the stars,so we pray, % Lord! whatever I experience I deserve, therefore I accept it as your prasadaha+

These two put together is called Eswara Pranidhanam or Karma Yoga. Thus Patanjali has very intelligently introduced Karma Yoga as a necessary step before successful meditation.

Practise of Meditation.

- Sit in a comfortable posture.
- Relaxation of the body.
- I am aware of my breathing process. I feel my breathing.
- The breathing is smooth and rhythmic.
- Now I relax my mind.
- Mental relaxation is not going along with the thoughts that occur in the mind.

Varieties of thoughts arise regarding family, business etc., I decide not to travel with those thoughts. Let these thoughts come and go. I want to remain calm and undisturbed.

- most of our life goes in worrying about the future or regretting over the past. I never live in the present.

- I have no time to enjoy the precious gift of the present life. I have a beautiful world around. The sun, moon and the stars animals or birds.

- I have no time to appreciate them.
- I have got a unique human birth.
- I have the capacity to enjoy this.
- Animals can never do that.
- Let me enjoy the fact that I am alive today.
- I have the beautiful world around.
- I am mentally relaxed.
- Let the future come in its own time.
- Let me just relax.

Santhoham Santhoham Santhoham

- I repeat these words and enjoy the relaxation.

Om Purnamadaha Purnamidam Purnaath Purna mudachyate

Purnasya Purna maadaya Purnamevavasishyate.

04. Asana or Pranayama

Yama consists of five fold avoidances.

Niyama consists of five fold positive pursuits. They are -

Soucham - doing everything required for purification.

Santosha - positively entertaining the thought that I am happy with whatever I have.

Tapas - Wilful self-denial to establish my mastery over my organs.

Swadhyaya - regular scriptural study.

Eswara Pranidhana - Surrender to the lord.

It is also called Karma Yoga.

Dedicating action at the feet of lord - Eswararpana bhavana.

accepting the fruits as prasad of God - Eswara Prasada Bhavana.

The last 3 niyamas - tapas, swadhyaya, Eswara Pranidhana - put together are called Kriya Yoga.

Patanjali mentions this in a particular sutra -

There are many books on Kriya Yoga, but Kriya Yoga according to Patanjali is not meditation. Thus **Kriya Yoga** is a preparation for dhyanam but by itself is not dhyanam or meditation.

Thus we have seen the do's and don'ts of Yoga Sastra. Put together there are Ten commandments - of Hinduism far superior far fundamental, far comprehensive. If we are following these ten commandments, then alone, we are ready for any other spiritual sadhana. They should not be followed at a particular time only. They should be followed throughout our life.

Asanam - third stage of Astanga Yoga

From the third stage there are disciplines to be taken care of just before meditation. The first two - Yama or Niyama - are to be followed throughout the day.

Patanjali defines Asanam as **stira sukha asanam**. Asanam has two meanings

a. **Sareera stitihi** - sitting posture.

Vyasacharya says in his Brahma Sutra, '**aseena sambhavath**'.

Meditation should be in a seated posture. We have three postures - sitting, standing, lying, Vyasacharya doesn't want to take anything for granted. He doesn't want to recommend lying posture because we doze off to sleep.

In standing posture, we have to bother about our balance. Since there is a strain in standing, it is ruled out.

Vyasacharya doesn't bother about sitting on the ground or a chair. Of course ideal one is sitting on the ground, but since it is difficult to sit down for many people, sitting on a chair is acceptable.

Patanjali adds - **Stiti sukham**. It means the posture should be steady posture. It means, once we have chosen the posture, we should not change it until meditation is complete, whatever be the duration.

Then Patanjali says it should not only be stable it should also be comfortable. If we choose Padmasana if we are comfortable with it, it is O.K. But some people they can put it, but don't know how to remove it. It gets stiff. So those kind of things won't work. It should be any comfortable posture.

For stability, the best recommended posture - the distance between two knee joints should be as much as possible. If they are too close, there will be tension, If there is a wide triangular base area it will be stable.

b. Spread over which we sit

There are few more allied topics. Some of them are discussed in Bhagavad Gita also. Let us see them.

Lord Krishna talks about the place of meditation and also the spread over which we are seated. The spread is also called asanam.

**Suchaudese pratistapya stiramasana matmanaha
natyuchritam natinicham chailajina kusottaram**

6-11.

i. A Vivikta desaha : a place which is separate from disturbances and also a place which is clean. Sankaracharya adds spiritually clean. For eg. a dining hall may be clean, but it may not inspire. By the law of association, it should inspire spiritual thoughts. So a pooja room or a room with photos of Gods, agarbathis, flowers and lamps will inspire us.

ii. Fix your asanam : Lord Krishna says, don't sit on the ground directly. He doesn't give a reason, but it could be for comfort.

iii. Suitable asanam : It should not be too high or too low. It should not be too hard or too soft. If it is too hard, there will be pain in the leg and if it is too soft, the body will bend.

iv. Time of meditation: Generally morning time is suggested because it is saathvik time. As the day advances, our rajo guna increases & activity also increases. As the sun sets rajoguna decreases and tamo guna sets in, because we are tired after rajasik activity and we are ready to sleep. In the morning, tamo guna is gone because of night's sleep and rajo guna has not yet started because sun is only rising up. So early morning time is an intermediary condition with, a quiet and alert mind. This is considered to be Satvika kala and so it is recommended.

But that is not compulsory. We can choose our own time, depending on our mental condition. But once we have chosen **the time, place and asanam**, it is better to maintain those three things. Regularity is important, because we are trying to develop a habit. Whenever we want to develop a habit, regularity and consistency are important.

v. **The posture of the upper part** : Lord Krishna says..

Samam kaaya siro greevam dhaarayannachalam stiraha

samprekshya naasikagram swam disasachaanavalokayan

6-13.

Kaya - the body, siraha - the head, greeva - the neck - all the three should be samam - in one straight line. Not only should they be in one straight line, they should be perpendicular to the ground also. The straight line should not be acute angle or obtuse, angle but should be right angle to the ground.

When the body is kept straight, the lungs are in ideal condition for smooth breathing. We will see more of it in Pranayama. If the body is in archform. breathing will be disturbed. Breathing and mind are connected. So we have to learn to sit straight. Initially it may be difficult, but by abhayasa it is possible to maintain that condition.

Pranayama - Fourth stage of Astanga Yoga.

Pranayama means the regulation of breathing. Ayama means regulation. Prana + ayama should not say prana + yama. itself is a separate discipline, it has been very elaborately discussed in different disciplines for various purposes, because our breathing and our health are interconnected.

We have five layers of our personality, but let us see three layers-

Annamaya kosa - Physical personality

Pranamaya kosa - Pranic energy. personality

Manomaya kosa - Psychological emotional. personality

Pranic personality is sandwiched between annamaya kosa and manomaya kosa. That means the condition of the pranamaya kosa will influence the other two kosas - annamaya & manomaya. Therefore, by regulating the pranic personality, we can take care of both our physical as well as our psychological health.

How can we regulate our pranic personality? Pranic personality has five fold aspects -01. Prana 02. Apana 03. Vyana 04. Udana 05. Samana

If we regulate any one of the five, the other four can be regulated. For eg. if we want to pull a table having four legs, we need not pull all the four legs. It is enough if we catch hold of one leg. If we pull one, all the other three will come because they are interconnected.

Similarly if we handle prana through our breathing regulation, we are directly regulating prana, and indirectly regulating the other four - apana, vyana, udana, samana. It means through breathing regulation, we are regulating the entire pranamaya kosa. Not only that, by regulating the entire pranamaya kosa, we are also regulating the entire annamaya and manomaya kosas also. Thus regulation of breathing has a great significance to the entire health of the individual.

That's why before any pooja, immediately after achamanam, we have prana yama. It means do pranayama. There after only Vigneswara Pooja starts. From that it is very clear that they consider pranayama as a very useful discipline to steady the body and to steady the mind.

Through pranayama when we steady the mind, then we can practice meditation. All through the astanga yoga, dhyanam is kept in mind and all the other exercises are indirectly going to contribute.

Pranayama is specially practiced for other purposes also. Sastra talks about tapping various powers also, which are in the body. After all prana is energy. We learn in science, that energy can be locked in anything eg. atom bomb. Similarly they talk about prana sakthi which is stored in our sareeram in the form of grandhi, chakra, kundalini.

Kundala means a coil. Any coil has got potential energy. Kundalini is a feminine form. It is not exactly a snake, but the word snake is used because a snake remains generally coiled. All these are pranic energy and through pranayama, a person can even tap the energy and get a lot of powers also.

But an important warning! A spiritual seeker has nothing to do with tapping these energies because that has no connection with Moksha. All forms of energy belong to matter, matter is anatma and matter is decaying, limited and is connected to bondage.

Our physical body has a lot of energy. We can run a marathon race, but we cannot walk a little distance. It means the sports people are tapping the energy, but we are not doing it. Physical body has got lot of sakthi, mind has got lot of sakthi, pranamaya kosa has got a lot of kundalini. But a spiritual seeker is not interested in tapping those energies or siddhis, because they are all bondage.

What type of pranayama do we want?

We want a simple pranayama so that we can meditate on Eswara. Therefore, the powers are there no doubt, but we are not interested in raising the kundalini. Some people talk about jeevathma going up and joining paramathma.

Paramathma is not in the head. He is everywhere. If Jeevathma is sitting in one place and Paramathma is sitting in another place, both have to be joined like railway shunting. But remember jeevathma is paramathma and it is all pervading. Therefore, there is no question of raising & meeting.

That's why Lord Krishna doesn't mention about the Kundalini raising in the entire Bhagavad Gita at all. All the Dasa Upanishads, Brahmasutra and the Bhashyam have not recommended special pranayama for raising kundalini powers. It is not that they are not there, but it is not required for us, if we are interested in dhyanam and Moksha.

What is the pranayama we require?

A deep breathing in and a deep breathing out. A smooth and rhythmic breathing in and out. **Swasa Praswasa Yoho gati vicchedaha pranayama.**

It is not throughout meditation. If it is so, it becomes breathing meditation and not Bhagavad dhyanam.

Do for some time, watch your breath. See that it is smooth and rhythmic. Then forget that, since mind has to think of something else.

The terms associated with pranayama -

Purakam	-	inhalation
Rechakam	-	exhalation
kumbhakam	-	retention

When we practice pranayama separately all the three are O.K., but when we are doing pranayama as a preparatory stage for meditation, kumbhakam - retention is not required. Only deep purakam - inhalation and deep rechakam - exhalation are required. Lord Krishna has mentioned it in the Gita -

**Apane juhvati pranam Prane paanam tathapare
praanaapaanagati rudvaa praanaayaamaparaayanaaha**

Elsewhere Lord Krishna says...

**Sparsaan krutva bahirbaahyaan chakshuschaivaantare bruvoha
Pranapaanau samau krutva naasabyantaracharinau.**

It is not a special pranayama here, but before meditation inhalation and exhalation should be equal.

Practise of Meditation:

- Sit in a comfortable posture.
- relaxation of the body.
- the indication of total relaxation is, that I don't feel the presence of my body.
- initially it takes more time for this relaxation.
- by practice, I will get this instantaneously.
- I don't know where I am seated, I don't know where my hands, legs are.
- I am out of the body as it were.
- Now I observe my breathing mentally.
- I feel the exhalation & inhalation in my nostrils.
- it is smooth and even.
- this is called prana veekshanam
- now I relax my mind.
- It means I am indifferent to all the occurring in the mind.

- let the thoughts come and go, I don't welcome them, I don't judge them as good or bad, I don't push them out. I am indifferent to the thoughts.

- this is the relaxation of the mind.

- with this relaxed mind, I can practice different form of meditation.

- One form of meditation is mentally repeating any holy word.

- Let us choose one word for meditation.

- This is the earliest form of meditation. Any beginner can do.

± - Let us choose Om Sri gurubhyonamaha. The word guru can refer to any one guru in the entire guru parampara or the entire parampara itself and the adiguru, the lord himself.

- I chant the mantra mentally.

Sada Siva Samarambham sankaracharya madhyamam

Asmadacharya paryantham vande guru paramparam

Om Sri gurubhyonamaha repeatedly.

- I conclude the japa with a prayer verse and remain relaxed for a few seconds.

Om Purnamadaha Purnamidam Purnaath Purna mudachyate

Purnasya Purna maadaya Purnamevavasishyate.

05. Pratyahara & Dharana

The eight stages of Astanga Yoga

Yama & Niyama - are a set of values, dos & dont's throughout the life.

Asana & Pranayama

i. Asanas can be practiced independently also for fitness of body.

eg : Yogasanas.

We consider fitness of the body also as an important factor to be taken care of.

A sound mind in a sound body. Before all the Upanishads, Santhipata involves asking for physical health also.

**om aapyayantu mamaangaani vaak praanash cakshuh shrotram atho balam indriyani
cha. sarvani sarvam brahmopanishadam maaham brahma niraakuryam maa maa
brahma nirakarod aniraakaranam astvanirakaranam me astu tadaatmani nirate ya
upanishatsu dharma te mayi santu mayi santu. om shaantih shaantih shaantih.**

Even though Upanishads talk about revealing the atma only, we have prayer for physical health. From this we should know that taking care of physical health is not a materialistic approach, but it helps in spiritual progress.

Om Bhadram Karnnebhiih Shrnnyaama Devaah |
Bhadram Pashyema-Akssabhir-Yajatraah |
Sthirair-Anggais-Tussttuvaagasas-Tanuubhih |
Vyashema Devahitam Yad-Aayuh |
Svasti Na Indro Vrddha-Shravaah |
Svasti Nah Puussaa Vishva-Vedaah |
Svasti Nas-Taakssaryo Arisstta-Nemih |
Svasti No Vrhaspatir-Dadhaatu ||
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||

We should have stable and healthy limbs.

ii. Asanam should be taken care of just before meditation. It can not be done in any asana like sarvangasana, sirsasana, ardha matsyendrasana, dhanurasana etc., These are for general health. But before meditation, they should be padmasana, sukhasana, swastikasana, vajrasana etc.,

Asana done idipendently is called angi and asana just before meditation is called anga

Similarly pranayama has two fold application

i. independently practiced for general health, equally important, it is called angi.
ii. limited pranayama just before meditation. It is called anga. It only makes sure that our breathing is smooth, deep and even, different proportions are maintained in other pranayamas but, if it is done as part of meditation it should be even.

Pranayama is of two types

a. Agarbha pranayama

b. Sagarbha pranayama

Agarbha Pranayama : It is simple practice of pranayama without any mantra or swaram. Of course it will give benefits - physical, psychological. Even an atheist can practice it.

Sagarbha pranayama : It is pranayama done with some mantra. For every ritual, when they do pranayama, this mantra is chanted.

Om bhuhu, Om bhuhava, om suvaha, Om mahaha, Om janaha, Om tapaha,
Om satyam, Om tatsa viturvarenyam, Bhargo devasya dheemahi dhiyo yonaha
prachodayaat, Om apo jyothi rasomrutam Brahma bhurbuvassuvarom

From Om bhuh to Om satyam - purakam inhale.

We should use two fingers to close one nostril and thumb to close another nostril, of course, one after the other.

Om tatsaviturvarenyam to prachodayat - Kumbhakam

Om apo to vassuvarom - rechakam

Mantra sahita pranayama is sagarbha pranayama. Its advantage is, it is not only takes care of physical growth, it also contributes to our spiritual growth.

Pratyahara - Fifth Astanga Yoga

It consists of two portions - Prati + ahara.

Ahara has got a popular, general, well-known meaning - food.

But here it has a different meaning.

Ahar means to withdraw, ahara.

Food is also called ahara because you draw it towards yourself and consume. Here also ahara means drawing or withdrawing dasa indriyani, sense organs.

10 sense organs are...

5 jnanendriyani - eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin

5 karmendriyani - feet, hands, leg, organ of procreation and organ of evaluation.

Ahara is withdrawal and prati is from their respective fields.

It means withdrawal of sense organs from their respective fields. Each sense organ has a field of operation eg. eyes operate among forms & colours. Ears among sound.

Wherever the sense organs are moving about, the mind will be associated with that. In fact the sense organ brings the external world and presents it to the mind. In such a case, the mind will not be available for meditation. So sense organs have to be withdrawn- **indriyanam sasva vishayebhyaha nivruthihi pratyaharaha.**

This is yoga sastra language. In vedantic language it is called **damaha.**

This also has got two fold applications

1. general observation of this discipline throughout our life. The sense organs must be in our control. If there is any field which can create disturbance in our mind. We should not allow the sense organs to go into that field. For eg. A diabetic patient should know how to say no to his favourite sweet, though the powerful tongue asks for it. We should learn to allow the sense organs into the allowed field and also take away, the sense organs from risky field.

i. it becomes particularly necessary just before meditation. Three sense organs are highlighted because they are powerful.

1. Vakindriya - organ of speech.

It gives us lot of power because it gives us knowledge. It also creates problem. Too much of talking or no talking - both create problem. So vakindriya tapas is very important.

Lord Krishna in the 17th chapter, gives four conditions in using the words.

i. anudwegakaram - non hurtful

ii. satyam - truthful

- iii. priyam - pleasant
- iv. hitam - useful for both speaker & listener.

2. Vak as jnanendriyam - as an eating tongue. Tongue is unique. It is both speaking tongue and eating tongue. Lord Krishna insists upon the discipline of the eating tongue also..

Hita - good for physical & psychological health. fast food and drinks are bad.

Mita - Moderate, should stop eating when we can eat a little bit more.

Medhya - that which is spiritually nourishing, that which is sathvik food.

Vegetarian food is considered to be the most sathvik food. Non-vegetarian food is not recommended for a serious spiritual seeker, because it is non-sathvik food.

It becomes more sathvik if it is offered to the lord. Medyam means Yagna prasad Medhaha means yagnaha. Medhyam means food associated with pooja. Otherwise it is called Amedhyam.

3. Eye - when we sit in meditation what should be the condition of the eye? We should know what to see and what not to see even in day to day life. Eyes bring 90% of our information. Even though there are five sense organs, eye is considered to be the most powerful one. Eye and ear have audio visual effect.

What should be its condition before meditation?

Lord Krishna says

Samprekshya nasikagram svam disaschanavalokayam 6-13.

If the eyes are open, the attention may go to the object in front. for eg. an ant if the eyes are closed, we may doze off. So they should neither be closed nor open - should be in a half -closed condition.

Lord Krishna suggests that we should look at the tip of the nose. It is not somebody else's, but our own nose.

Lord Krishna himself contradicts, as it were, in the fifth chapter.

Sparshan kritva bahirbahyan chakshuschaivantarebhruvrha 5-27.

He says the eyes should be directed towards the middle of the eye brows. It means top of the nose.

Now should we look at the tip or top?

What we have to understand is - Lord Krishna is particular neither about the tip nor the top. If so he, would have insisted on one of them. It means the important thing is don't look around. We can even close our eyes.

Thus we have to take care of our ten indriyas. This is called pratyahara.

Dharana - Sixth Astanga Yoga

Prathyahara is sensory withdrawal.

Dharana is withdrawal of the mind, from the regular field of activity. In short from the world. In Yoga Sutra dharana is defined as **desa bandhana chitasya dharana**.

Desa - a chosen object, bandhana - fixing. So fixing the mind upon the chosen object of meditation. Naturally, if the mind has to be fixed on one object, it has to be pulled from all other objects.

If we have to look at the watch now, we have to turn our eyes away from the external world. Positively speaking, Dharana means fixing or focussing on an object, but on another side, it means turning away from the world. This is the most difficult exercise because our mind has got umpteen pre-occupations and with the world we have so many relationships with - father, daughter, wife, subordinate, business etc., In each relationship there is a strain. As long as we have such pre-occupation, the moment we sit, one of the relationships will be in vogue - putri dhyanam, business dhyanam, money dhyanam etc.,

So, taking the mind away is the toughest job. For that we should be convinced of the purpose of meditation. Unless we know the value and its importance, we cannot apply our mind to it.

People say they can't concentrate in meditation but concentration is not something they lack. When they are watching a T.V. Serial or when they are reading some juicy, sensational gossip about a film actor what a concentration they have! It is because they love those!

In meditation we are trying to create and stabilize a relationship with lord.. We should know the role and significance of the Bhakta - Eswara relationship.

An article dealing with husband-wife relationship says it is very sacred and very important. If we study all the relationships, the relationship which lasts for maximum length of time is husband-wife relationship.

The relationship with parents cannot last longer, because they are older and will quit the world sooner or later.

The relationship with children lasts only until they grow up and develop wings. They grow up, study and go to America - seemingly the only destination. Thereafter they have their own interests. Once they are married, they are committed to their own spouse and children.

Once the older generation is gone and the younger generation is gone far away, ultimately they have to look at each other. So husband - wife relationship is the only relationship which starts early and runs upto death. **"Until death do we part"** is the saying. We should grow old together is the meaning of our mantras.

In short the most stable and the longest relationship is this. Therefore it is important in two respects -

1. The disadvantageous part - If this relationship is a strain, it is going to be eternal headache.

2. The advantageous part - The article continues to say, we all require stable relationship for psychological balance. So it says never take husband - wife relationship for granted. You have to nourish it and retain it. Any amount of time spent to nourish it is worth it. However busy we are, we have to maintain and nourish that relationship. Once we know its importance, we won't feel the time spent on nourishing the relationship as a waste.

The article says we should also avoid all such actions which will weaken the relationship. In husband-wife relationship what one hurts most is - criticism of spouse's family, though they deserve it. One remark you make will be registered in golden letters. In your 97th year your spouse will quote "In 1953 you said this when we were in the 10th cross street on our way to market". We should know what weakens the relationship too.

Now Sastra says, among all other relationships husband- wife relationship may be best & trustworthy. Unfortunately even that has its own limitations. Husband - wife are never born together, so they don't go together mostly. So every human being is vulnerable.

Therefore, the Sastra says, we have to nourish another relationship which can withstand the upheavals and limitation of even husband-wife relationship. Sastra says, that relationship is with God.

If a person requires psychological balance and a more stable relationship to face the ups & down. he has to invoke and nourish relationship with God. There is no choice at all. Once we value that relationship, we are ready to spend time and energy to invoke and nourish the relationship.

There are two things to nourish bhakta - God relationship.

1. Systematic scriptural study- It is very important to understand the existence of lord, nature of God and functions of God. Unless I know these three, I cannot nourish a healthy relationship with God. Scriptural study is the most important exercise worth the time and effort. With this relationship, we can face all traumatic experiences in life. It is proven fact and everybody can try it for himself.

2. Spending sometime exclusively to invoke this relationship. Therefore, as a part of dharana, Kaivalya Upanishad says -

atyasramasthah sakalendriyani nirudhya bhaktya svagurum pranamya|. hrtpundarikam virajam visuddham vicintya madhye visidam visokam || 5||.

Temporarily become a sanyasi mentally. It means don't have any worldly relationship for sometime. For every sanyasi, there is only one nourishing relationship. If a sanyasi

should enjoy a healthy, cheerful, happy, balanced or resolved mind, it comes from only one relationship - relationship with God. Every grihasta need not become a sanyasi, but can become a devotee of the lord in meditation.

3. Invocation of guru

Kaivalya gives one more point - Invoke your guru. Invocation of the guru reminds us of the teaching and teaching reminds us of God.

Thus invoke Guru, sastra and Eswara and then meditation can easily take place. Don't meditate as a husband or father. Meditate as a bhakta. Bhakta alone can be a successful meditator.

Practice of Meditation

- sit in a comfortable posture
- relaxation of the body.
- relaxation of the breathing.
- relaxation of the mind.

Mental relaxation is being indifferent to all the thoughts that occur in the mind.

With this relaxed mind I can practice any form of meditation. One simple form which everyone can practice is repetition of any sacred word. Generally a nama of our Ista Devata, chosen deity, is chosen. But once we choose one name, we have to use the same nama for japa.

- japa can start with a small prayer and end with the same prayer.
- Here we will take up -

Om Sri Gurubhyo Namaha for repetition. You need not chant aloud. You need not use your mouth at all. Continue the thought of the name mentally. Try to be conscious of every letter. If other thoughts come in between ignore them.

Focus only on the letters of the nama.

- let's start, you only listen.

- Om Sadasiva samarambham Sankaracharya madhyamam

Asmadacharya Paryantham Vande guru paramparam

Om Sri gurubhyo namaha Om Sri gurubhyo namaha

Om Sri gurubhyo namaha Om Sri gurubhyo namaha

Om Sadasiva samarambham Sankaracharya madhyamam

Asmadacharya Paryantham Vande guru paramparam

Remain relaxed for a few seconds.

Om Purnamadaha Purnamidam Purnat Purna mudachyate

Purnasya Poorna madaya Purnamevavasishyate

Om Santhi ! Om santhi! Om santhi!

06. Dhyana & Samadhi

In Astanga Yoga, given by Patanjali	-	Bahiranga sadhanani
Yama, Niyama	-	general, broad preparation.
Asana, pranayama, pratyahara	-	specific preparations just before meditation. Antaranga sadhanani
Dharana	-	The actual preparation starts one turns the mind away from the world and focuses on the object of meditation. It is a preliminary stage.
Dhyanam, samadhi	-	make the progress and climax of meditation.

Dharana, Dhyanam, Samadhi put together - are called meditation. In Yoga sastra they are called samyamaha. Patanjali Yoga sutra is -

Triam ekatra samyamaha

Once we come to this Samyamaha portion - the three stages, there are different versions to it by different people. Upto pratyahara, all people have uniform approach. From dharana onwards, the approach differs, depending upon the purpose of meditation, the philosophy the instructor has -

1. Secular meditation

If a meditation is presented as a secular exercise for management, sports, people belonging to different religions or even irreligious people, naturally their meditation will not have any name or form of God.

If at all they have to introduce any object, they will be secular objects. Now Omkara is becoming secular, even though it is vedasara. They are removing veda, the essence and they are presenting Omkara picture etc., as an object of meditation. Some people introduce various chakras also as objects of secular meditation.

2. Sunyatha dhyanam

Some people don't believe in object for meditation. To the already empty mind they want to empty the mind. They prescribe sunyatha dhyanam.

In short the philosophy will influence the type of meditation they prescribe. So let us see the type of meditation found in our tradition. There are different forms of meditation.

- relaxation meditation
- concentration meditation
- expansion meditation

- value meditation
- vedantic meditation

These forms of meditation are based on our vedic meditation. Let us see just one form of meditation for the sake of discussion of dhyanam and samadhi. This is a very simple and universal form of meditation. Any one can practice it, even if he is not exposed to scriptural study.

The only condition required is - he should be a religious person. We don't believe in secular meditation. In fact, whatever is secular, cannot be called meditation. It is only a mental exercise. Dhyanam minus God is only a mental exercise.

If you fall on the ground and utter the name of God, it is called sastanga namaskara. If you fall on the ground and get up without uttering the name of God, it is called pull ups. It is only to develop the triceps, shoulder muscles etc.,

So the meditation we are going to see now, involves a religion, a bhakthi. It is called **japa dhyanam**. It is used in the Upadesa saraha of Ramana Maharshi.

**uttamastavaaducchamandataha
cittajam japadhyaanamuttamam.**

Japa dhyanam is converting japam into meditation. Japam is defined thus

Eswara nama avruthihi

It means repetition of God's name. This repetition can be done at two levels.

1. Vachika avruthihi - repeating the name verbally. eg. Repeating aloud Om Nama Sivaya. It is called **Vachika Eswara nama avrutthihi**.

2. Manasa avrutthihi - When the very same name, we do mentally, without moving the tongue, without generating even a whisper of sound, then it becomes one form of meditation.

It is not the only form of meditation - several forms are there.. It is called...

Manasa Eswara nama avrutthihi

It means first we have to choose One Eswara nama. Any nama is alright, but generally we choose the name of our Ista devata.

If you do not have any ista devata, you can choose any particular nama. Even if that is difficult, put different namas before the lord and take a lot.

It is better to take one prayer verse also, associated with that devata. For eg. If it is

Om namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya or Om namo Narayanaya

We can take -

**Sa sankhachakram sakireetaakundalam
sapitha vastram sara siroruheshanam
sahara vakshastala sobhi kaustubham**

namami vishnum sirasa chaturbhujam

In this a discription of the deity is given. Prayer verse is of course not compulsory. We have to choose a nama. If it is short, it is sweet and inspiring, if it is long, we get tired.

Do we require initiation?

Initiation is not compulsory. We can assume the Lord himself as our guru, or we can involve any one as our guru, choose the mantra and can take it as an initiated mantra.

The purpose of initiation is - when we receive anything from a mahatma, naturally it will have a superior value. For eg. when you buy a banana from a shop, directly it goes into your mouth. But when you get it from a mahatma, it doesn't go into your mouth, it goes to your eyes. Banana is the same, but there is a change in the attitude.

Similarly if we receive a mantra from a Mahatma, it has an extra value. Not only that, it becomes some form of a commitment. Some Mahatmas give some kind of threat also, of course with some good intention - if you don't repeat the japa, we the gurus will get papam. The sishya doesn't want his guru to get the papam.

If you learn to value the nama and if you have commitment, you don't require any Mahatma for that. We are very good at excuses and postponements. You need not postpone the nama japa for want of a guru.

If you cannot choose any nama or ista devata, you can choose guru naama itself.

Guru Brahma, Guru vishnu

Even Om Sri Gurubhyonamaha is a nama.

It is even a versatile nama. It can represent a versatile guru or a guru parampara or even the adi guru who is none other than the Lord Himself.

Generally we don't recommend Omkara alone as a mantra because it is supposed to be a mantra to be chanted only by sanyasis. For non-sanyasis, mere Omkara is not generally recommended. It should be followed by a nama like

Om Nama Sivaya - Om Namo Narayanaya - Om Sri Gurubhyo namaha

Once a particular name is chosen, it is better to retain that, because we are developing a habit.

Sometimes some people ask face problem, when they are being initiated by some Mahatmas. Some Mahatmas are for our ista devata and then initiate a mantra in accordance with that. There is no conflict there. If our ista devata is Lord Krishna and if they give us Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya, there is no problem.

Some Mahatmas don't ask that and they initiate on their own with mantra like Om Nama Sivaya when we like Lord Krishna. One lady complained to the Swamy once in this aspect. Whenever I close my eyes, only Lord Krishna comes to my mind. The word Om Nama Sivaya, I generally associate with Lord Siva. I do know Siva is one of the names of

Lord Krishna also.

Sarva sarva siva stanuhu

Bhootadirindi ravyaya

So whenever I chant this, instead of getting peace of mind, meditation is creating a strain.

If you have any such problem, you have to choose a nama which is in agreement with the ista devata. Whatever mantra is initiated to you, do it 11 times or so and concentrate on you ista devata. This is the choice regarding nama.

How is the actual practise done?

1. Invocation of Ista devata -

First stage is dharana. We have come upto that. Before starting the nama we invoke the ista devata associated with the nama. If it is

Om Sri Ramayanamaha, Rama is invoked.

The prayer verse for Rama is

Vaidehi sahitam suradrumatale haime mahaamandape

Madhye pushpaka maasane manimaye veeraasane susthitam – agre

Vaachayati prabham janasute tatvam – munibhyah param vyakhyamtam

Bharataadibhihi parivrutam – raamam bhaje shyaamalam

If you don't know any prayer verse, you yourself imagine the ista devata. So invocation of the ista devata is the first stage of japa dhyanam. Thereafter mentally offer prostration and seek the blessings of the ista devata for successful meditation.

2. Understanding the meaning -

Thereafter we can think of the meaning of the mantra. If it is known, the involvement may be more. So Rama, Lord Krishna, Vasudeva, gurudeva - have a beautiful meaning.

Generally name is associated with namaha. It means I surrender. It means striking a relationship with the lord. For our psychological balance, we require one strong permanent relationship. We can never have such a permanent relationship with any human being because they are impermanent. Therefore the safest, the most stable, the trust worthiest is relationship is with the Lord.

Any relationship has to gradually grow and it requires understanding. So in love marriages they move about together to see if interests are matching, then get married. One psychologist said to a husband, %Your marriage seems to be in trouble, because you have not understood your spouse+. The other person retorted, %The problem arose because I have understood+.

So understanding is required for blooming, progress and stability. Therefore we

learn more and more about God through scriptural study and strike a stronger relationship with God. Namaha means we look upon this relationship as a stronger one. Everything else should become secondary, if we are a spiritual seeker, If we want Moksha.

3. Sabda pradhana repetition -

We enter into the repetition. Once the nama is repeated, any japa is mantra pradhana and not meaning pradhana. Meaning is remembered in the beginning, but once we enter into avrutti, we don't deliberately think of the meaning or the deity, because the mind can do only one job at a time. The meaning is kept in the sub-conscious mind and the conscious deliberate mind focuses only on one thing - Om na - mo-bha-ga-va-the-vasu-de-va-ya. It is sabda pradhana.

If it dwells on ardha, it becomes another meditation. Similarly between two nama repetitions, there is a silence. Then should we focus on the mantra or on the silence?

If we are focussing on the mantra - it is japa dhyanam.

If we are focussing on the silence - it is vedantic meditation. It requires lot of sastric study. In mandukya upanishad there is a mantra -

amaatraha chaturdhaha avyavaharyaha.

When we chant the mantra the first time it is called dharana. In dhyanam and samadhi our aim is in making it an avrutti repetition.. Having repeated the mantra, we conclude with the prayer once again.

In japa dhyanam we need not count the number. If we count, we miss the mantra., Only when we are doing it as a nitya karma, counting is required. About 15 minutes is enough.

The three stages of meditation.

1. **Dharana** - It is taking away the mind from everything and bringing it to the mantra.

Ekasmin namani manasaha bandhaha

2. **Dhyanam** - According to Patanjali -

Tatra pratyaya ekataanataa dhyanam.

If it has to be dhyanam, the next thought also has to be the same mantra.

Consider a photographer for instance. His first aim is focussing. He moves forward, backward, lie down, sits down in all positions. But focussing is not enough, he has to retain the focussed condition until shooting is done. Focussing is dharana, retaining it is dhyanam. If the first thought is Om Nama Sivaya, the second, third, fourth etc., thoughts should be Om Nama Sivaya.

Pratyaya is thought

ekataanataa is convergence

All the thoughts converge on only one nama

In vedanta they define it as

Sajatiya pratyaya pravahaha

It means flow of similiar thoughts

ajya-dharaya srotasa samam sarala-citanam viralatah param

If you pour a thick liquid like oil or melted ghee, it flows without any gap in between.

Similarly, the thought should flow.

In the 6th chapter Lord Krishna compares it to a steady, non-flickering flame.

Yatha deepo nivathasto nengathe sopama smruta

yogino yatachitasya yunjato yogamatmanaha

6-19.

3. Samadhi - can be translated as absorpition. Initially, when the thought flows, it requires our deliberate effort. The mind just goes out of focus.

For instance when you are chanting Om Namō Narayana, suddenly your thought goes to Narayana's son-in-law. He went to Abu Dhabi, his wife was waiting for visa, and did she get it or not- is your thought. From that Narayana, your thought went to this Narayana.

Yato Yato nischarati manas chanchalam astiram

6-26.

The tug of war comes. Only after the tug of war, we are able to keep the mind on one flow of thought.

If the mind puts forth effort deliberately, it is called dhyanam.

If it is effortless, without our will, if it gets absorbed in the mantra, then it is called Samadhi.

Samyak aadeeyate manaha

Dyeya vishaye yasmin saha samadhihi

Since in absorpition there is no deliberate effort, we don't feel we are practising.

We need not remember ourselves as a practitioner. So the meditator is forgotten. Only the object is remembered. The object here is nama. It becomes more and more real and overwhelming. Therefore the thought has got tremendous impact.

To understand this phenomenon, we can easily take the example of a dream. When we think of a tiger, tiger is an object projected by our thought. It does not frighten us. When we are awake. When we go to sleep, we get the same tiger thought as a dream. The tiger in dream also is an imaginary object of our thought only. But in the dream, it is no more experienced as a thought. It becomes the tiger itself. There we don't say, 'I am lying down on bed, I am entertaining a tiger thought.' We don't know it is a dream. We know it is a dream only after we wake up. In dream the thought has become so real that it is able to create a tremendous impact. It makes us even sweat when we wake up.

We are using the same principle with Lord's nama. We forget that we are sitting, that we are meditating. Just as the dream alone is there, the Lord alone is there, the nama

alone is there. If we are thinking of Aham Brahma Asmi, Brahman alone is there. This is called Samadhi - absorption.

When it is done deliberately it is called Savikalpaka Samadhi, when it becomes effortless and natural, it becomes Nirvikalpaka Samadhi. We can have that in any form of meditation including the japa dhyanam. This is the climax of meditation.

There is no mystic colouring to the absorption. It is a natural phenomenon. We experience this in all loutika activities also. For example when we watch a movie, initially we know it is a movie, but later we get absorbed in it and the terror becomes real.

We hear of challenges like if a person can go to the movie alone and watch it without running away, he will be given some reward, we have samadhi in watching movie, in watching cricket, in reading spicy magazines.

Samadhi is a natural phenomenon we all have and we apply that in the field of Vedanta.

This is the astanga Yoga. It is accepted in Vedanta also. All of them do not give liberation. They prepare our mind. Our mind is fit for going to a guru and listening to the sastra, do sravana, manana and then come to Vedantic meditation. Then re-do the meditation on the teaching we received from the Upanishad. That teaching is Aham Brahma Asmi. It gets internalised and relieves us from all sense of limitations. This is Vedantic approach to meditation in daily life.

Practise of Meditation

- sit in a comfortable posture.
- relaxation of the body.
- relaxation of the breathing.
- I will do japa dhyanam for a few minutes.
- I will take up the mantra, Om Sri Gurubhyonamaha.
- First I will chant the prayer verse and I will visualize the particular form of my Guru or my ista devata.
- any form can be taken as guru's form.

Sada siva samarambham sankaracharya madhyamam

Asmadacharya paryantam Vande guru paramparam

An individual can choose any nama, here a guru's name is chosen only as an example. When you chant alone, you chant the nama aloud for a few times and then stop and continue mentally. This will help you in viewing the pitch and the speed..

- When I chant, I need not think of any other thing except the words of the name.
- Om Sri gurubhyonamaha repeatedly.

Sada siva samarambham sankaracharya madhyamam

Asmadacharya paryantam Vande guru paramparam

- Mentally I offer prostration and remain light.
- This japa dhyanam can be practised 20, 30 minutes, once or twice a day.

**Om Purnamadaha Purnamidam Purnat Purna mudachyate
Purnasya Poorna madaya Purnamevavasishyate**

07. Five types of Meditation

Our scriptures refer to human problems by the technical word **samsaraha**. The scriptures themselves define the problem of samsara also.

The definition is -

Avidya kama karma prayuktaha

janma marana pravahaha samsaraha,

Only if we understand the definition, only then we can diagnose our problem. Only when the problem is diagnosed we can know the solution very clearly.

Any type of spiritual practice without knowing its purpose is futile exercise. Therefore, before entering into any spiritual exercise, we should know what our problem is and what we are aiming at.

We should understand the meaning of the definition - So let us analyse each word.

Avidya - Avidya means self ignorance. Ignorance of my real nature. According to the scriptures I myself am the only source of peace, happiness and security PHS in short.. The entire world other than me is not a source of peace, happiness and security. If we don't know this fact, it is called avidya, self ignorance. This ignorance leads to the consequent problem

Kama - Since we do not know that we can find PHS in us only we desire to get these three from outside. So we develop kama - desire. The desires are endless. If we analyse, all the Kamas we have - are only meant for any one of peace, happiness and security from outside. This desire, this extrovert nature is called Kama. It is the consequence of avidya.

Karma - Activity. This kama leads to the next off spring Karma. The desire to seek PHS from outside world, makes us do varieties of Karma - all kinds of activities - secular as well as religious.

What is the purpose of Karma? Through Karma, we would like to get things, get related to people, would like to control the set up, and make the world a source of peace, happiness and security.

Then avidya leads to Kama and it in turn leads to Karma. It is an endless struggle. Avidya kama karma chain will lead to continuous frustrations, failures and disappointments in life. In short, pain or sorrow.

Why is there pain or sorrow? It is very easy to understand. We saw already that we are the only source of PHS. When we try to get PHS from the outside world, which cannot give them, our struggle becomes a failure. This is called knocking at the wrong door. What we have to tap from ourselves, we are trying to tap at wrong place.

There is a story to illustrate this. A very devout person once went to Kumbhakonam. There is a sacred tank there. Once in every twelve years, there is an auspicious day, called Maha makham day. It is a belief that all the sacred rivers come to that tank on that day. It is a belief. If a person takes a bath in that tank that day, it is as good as bathing in all sacred rivers.

This devout person wanted to have a bath there. The tank is very small, but is filled with lakhs of people. There was hardly any moving place. While this person had a dip, this persons ring fell in the tank. He had to search for it. For that he had to bend. But it was very crowded. So he felt it was not very convenient to search there. So he wanted to search in another tank.

He found another tank where there was nobody. It was very convenient and comfortable. So he started searching for his ring there. Someone who saw this, wanted to do some social service and joined the search. Thus many more joined them in their search. One intelligent person asked, %What are you searching for?+

The devout person said, %I lost my ring.+The stranger further asked, %Where did you lose it?+The farmer answered %In that maha makam tank.+ Then he said %Fool, if you lost your ring there, how can you search for it in this tank? Even if you search for hours and years, you can never find it. You are searching for it in a place where it is not there!.+

When this story is narrated, we all laugh at the foolishness of this person. But the scriptures say that we are all of that category only, in our life. We too are searching for something in a place which is not there.

What are we searching for? **PHS**.

In which tank is it available?

The only tank in which it is available is I - myself.

Where are we searching for it?

In the world, which is the other tank, where we cannot find an iota of PHS. Thus we are ignoring the only source and are searching the non-available source. Therefore the consequent frustration is called sorrow or vishadaha or dukham.

Janana marana pravahaha : The scriptures point out that we not only have the suffering because of our futile struggle but the avidya kama karma leads to future lives also. This kama and Karma, not only lead to problems in this life, but they are also responsible for punarapi jananam, punarapi maranam... janma marana pravahaha.

Janma means rebirth, marana means redeath for the rebirth. Both our kama and karma determine our future cycle. The Upanishads point out this.

Kamanya Kamayathe manya manaha with whichever unfulfilled desires a person dies, they lead to his next janma. Even Karma determines rebirth.

Yoni manye prapajyante sarithvaya dehinaha

..... **yadha karma yadha srutham**

The avidya kama, karma promotes cycles of janma marana -

In the next janma also, between birth and death there is struggle. It is struggle for PHS. Again janma. Again struggle for PHS. Then maranam.

Avidya kama, karma prayukta caused. janma marana pravahaha samsaraha

The desires and activities caused by the ignorance lead to the continuous flow of rebirth and redeath. This is samsara.

This is the sastric definition of the human struggle. Having diagnosed the human disease - samsara roga or bhava roga - the scriptures themselves suggest the remedy also.

What is the beshajam, the medicine - for this human struggle?

We can easily understand. If we know the cause, we can easily find out the remedy. Without diagnosing the disease, no doctor should give medicine. He cannot say, I don't have time, so take this medicine.

The scriptures say, that for the entire flow of the problems, the beginning happens to be avidya- ignorance. So the culprit, the root of the problem is avidya. If avidya is the bacteria, what antibiotic is to be taken? For virus there is no remedy, we have to suffer. That's why the word bacteria is selected. For the avidya bacteria, the only antibiotic available is Vidya. Therefore Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in the Gita,

Ajnanena avrutam jnanam tena muhyanti jantavaha 5-15.

Jnane na tu tadjnanam esham naasithamaatmanaha 5-16.

Because of the root cause of ignorance, all human beings are struggling in life. When that ignorance is rooted out with the medicine of knowledge, we never seek PHS outside. We use the outside world for other things like hunger, thirst etc. We clearly know what we should seek from the world and what I should not seek from the world. There is no confusion. If we want shoe, we go to shoe shop, we don't go to cloth shop as we have been doing earlier. If we want PHS, we should go to the only shop - that is ourselves.

Therefore, scriptures point out that jnanam is the only solution for all human struggle. The famous purushasukta mantra says -

Tamevam vidya amrutha iha bhavathi

naanyaha pantha ayanaya vidyate

The man of wisdom or knowledge alone gets out of samsara. There is no alternative path. The Upanishads do not accept many paths as a solution. In Gita also, Bhagavan says -

gatasunagatansuncha nanu sochanti panditaha 2-11.

Only the people of wisdom, will give up grief in life. Therefore, self knowledge is not one of the remedies. The scriptures present self knowledge as the only solution for human grief, human frustration, human disappointment, human fear, human anxiety, and psychological problem.

ajnana sarpa drastasya Brahma Jnana Aushadam vina na yogena

Sankarcharya says in his Viveka Chudamni, for ajnanam problem jnanam is the only solution.

Now we have understood the problem and we have also understood that the remedy is jnanam. Now we have become seekers of knowledge. We are called jijnasu.

Now, how should we get knowledge?

There are two important factors about jnanam. If we don't know them, our spiritual sadhana will be like a rudderless boat. It is like getting into a bus and telling the conductor. %don't know where to go?+How can you get into a bus without knowing the destination?

How can you practice any spiritual sadhana, without knowing its role in the entire gamut of spiritual sadhana? So we should know two important things about jnanam.

1. Any knowledge has to take place in the mind alone. You may call it intellect. In sanskrit it is called antahkaranam. The knowledge can be material or spiritual, non-self knowledge or self knowledge.

The fact that knowledge takes place in the mind is very clear from our experience. If the knowledge takes place in the body, if you go to any lecture, you can allow your mind to wander anywhere. But you know that unless your mind is there, you cannot hear and gain the knowledge. So from experience we know that mind is the locus of knowledge, is the instrument of knowledge.

If your experience does not convince you, look into the sastras also. The sastras very clearly point out that knowledge has to be gained by mind alone.

Yeshonuratmaa chetasaa veditavyaha- mundakam

Manasaa eva idam aaptavyam neha naanaasti kinchana

No mind means no knowledge.

Therefore, in short, any jnanam takes place in the antahkaranam.

2. With regard to self knowledge, mere mind is not enough. An independent mind, an unaided mind, is not sufficient to get self knowledge. We require another extra aid also.

To understand this, let us see an example. We have a pair of eyes reasonably in good condition. We are wearing spectacles, let us say.. With these eyes, we can see everything perceptible. But the problem comes when we wish to see our own eyes. We have been listening to the praises about them, so would like to see them.

What do we do for that?

Do we use telescope or microscope? No! what is the method? There is only method. We require a mirror! The mirror becomes an external help to see ourselves.

Now, if somebody has a mirror before him, but he is blind, can he see? No! The eyes must be functioning and also must have an additional help - the mirror - to see themselves. If this is understood, we can apply it to self knowledge.

We saw that the mind has to get knowledge. The ordinary mind is designed to get the knowledge of outside world, just as the regular eyes are designed to see the external world. For the eyes to see themselves they require a mirror, for the mind to get knowledge about the self, it requires an external mirror.

What is that mirror?

It is not mirror you can buy outside in a shop. For self-knowledge, you require a special mirror. That mirror is called Guru, acharyaha

For every seeker of self-knowledge, his preceptor, his guru serves as a mirror to help to discover his own nature.

Therefore the scriptures point out, that however intelligent a person may be without the guru mirror, self-knowledge is not possible. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in the Gita,

Tadviddhi pranipatena pari prasnena sevaya

upadekshantite jnanam jnaninasatvadarsinaha. 4-33

tadvijnanardham sadgurum eva abhigachet - Mundakam

One has to go to a guru who has self knowledge

acharyavan puroscho veda

Only one with an acharya will know the self.

Acharyat eva vidya vidita sadistam prapati

Whatever you get through self study without the help of acharya, would not be fruitful.

How about certain people who have gained self knowledge without the help of a guru?

The answer for that is - When we are talking about a general rule, do not talk about an exception. Every rule has an exception is the exceptional rule. For instance, we have to follow the traffic rules like keep to the left, don't jump signals etc., If you argue, %Ambu-

lance does not follow traffic signals, then, why follow them?+it is meaningless.

Here we are talking about a general rule- everyone requires an acharya. If somebody has got it without a guru, he is an exception. If somebody claims, I am an exception, we say, %wish you all the best.+ We do not come under exception.

In fact, even after learning with Guru, we don't get knowledge. Then how can we imagine to get it without the help of a guru?

If the eyes are there and there is no mirror, you cannot see the eyes. Mirror is there, but a person is blind, he cannot see the eyes. So he requires two things - functioning eyes & mirror. Similarly for self knowledge we require mind and guru.

To sum up

1. we should use the mind. The instrument
 2. We should also use the external help - the guru.
- eyes+ mirror = perception of the world
mind + guru = self knowledge.

To gain any knowledge - secular or spiritual knowledge - we require appropriate qualifications. Mere interest is not enough. A person might like to join I.I.T. but he has failed eighth standard, the third time. He cannot be successful. The same way to go America, he has to qualify himself in many tests. To study for them, there is another course. So there are courses for courses.

So the mind requires qualifications. In Sanskrit we say - Yogya antakaranam. We should go through the necessary disciplines, the necessary exercise to get Yogyata - otherwise, when the professor gives lecture, instead of getting knowledge, we get sleep.

For any knowledge Yogya antakaranam is required without which no knowledge takes place. So the scriptures point out that for self knowledge also one requires Yogya antakaranam. We have got several exercises for developing that eligibility.

Yogyatha sampadaka sadhanani

They are sadhanani for acquiring the eligibility. If that eligibility is acquired, we get self knowledge from a guru.

Now, we know where we stand.

That it is not enough.

The scriptures point out, that after getting the knowledge, it should be soaked in the mind. It should get **imbibed** in the mind like the well soaked pickle.

In the construction work, they talk about curing. They sprinkle water after building a wall. More curing you do, the more it is set. Similarly, the knowledge acquired must stay in the mind, should get assimilated and it should nourish the mind. The mind which is nourished by the jnanam is called nista well set. antakaranam.

It is not the amount of food you eat that helps you, but, the amount of food absorbed in the body. Some people eat plenty, but no absorption takes place. Similarly it is not the amount of jnanam that you require that matters, but the amount of jnanam that you have digested that counts.

Thus, the process goes this way -

1st stage - Yogya Antahkaranam

2nd stage - Should get jnanam from guru.

3rd stage - Nista antahkaranam.

To get Yogya antahkaranam & for nista antahkaranam, the scriptures point out several exercises. Among such several exercises, dhyanam is the most important sadhana to acquire yogyatha initially and to acquire nista later.

The word dhyanam is generally used for meditation. This dhyanam can be divided into two types:

1. Yogyata sampadaka dhyanam - the meditation which gives us eligibility, qualification for gaining jnanam from a guru. Such meditation is preparatory meditation and it is called **Upasanani**. Thus Upasanas are preparatory meditation practised before gaining knowledge.

2. Nista sampadaka dhyanam. The meditation which helps in assimilating the knowledge gained from a guru. We can call it assimilatory meditation. Assimilation comes only after gaining knowledge - In Sanskrit it is called **Nidi Dhyasanam**.

To see the three stages again...

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Upasana | - | preparatory meditation |
| 2. Guru Upadesa Sravanam | - | listening to guru's teaching. |
| 3. Nidi dhyasanam | - | assimilatory meditation. |

Upasana

In this Upasana we have to develop all the faculties before studying Vedanta. Since difficulties are to be developed in the mind, the Upasanas can be framed in different ways. Each type of Upasana develops different faculty.

Four types of Upasana

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Relaxation meditation | - | to enjoy a relaxed mind. |
| 2. Concentration | - | to enjoy a focussed mind. |
| 3. Expansion | - | to enjoy a generous expanded mind. |
| 4. Value | - | to enjoy a refined, cultural, healthy mind. |

Then we have to gain knowledge.

The third step is assimilated meditation. We can call it Vedantic meditation. We can treat Vedantic meditation as the fifth type of meditation. We will see them one by one.

Talk - 8

Relaxation Meditation

There are two forms of meditation.

1. Before gaining self knowledge - preparatory meditation - Upasanam.

Jnana yogyatha sampadakam, na tu jnana sampadakam

They give only eligibility for the mind, but not jnanam.

2. After gaining knowledge - Assimilated knowledge - nidi dhyasanam

In between these two stages, is the guru upadesa stage.

Classification of Upasanam to develop particular facility of mind -

1. Relaxation
2. Concentration
3. Expansion
4. Purity or refinement

Before going to any Meditation, let us see some preliminary steps, common rules, for all types of meditation.

Five Common rules as discussed by Lord Krishna in Gita

Lord Krishna discussed them elaborately in the sixth chapter of Gita. They are...

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|------------------------|
| a. desaha | - | place of meditation |
| b. kalaha | - | time of meditation |
| c. asana | - | seat of meditation |
| d. sareera stitih | - | body posture |
| e. karana samyamaha | - | control of instruments |

DESAHA :

Place of meditation.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| It should be quiet | - | so that we don't have disturbances. |
| It should be clean | - | so that there are no insects around. |
| It should be secluded | - | so that we don't talk with others. |
| Spiritually inspiring | - | by the law of association, the mind will have the pattern of thinking. |

So it should be a meditation-friendly place. Adi Sankaracharya talks about going to a cave or a river. We need not do that. We can choose an appropriate place in the city itself.

KALAHHA - Time of meditation.

It should be such that in which our mind is sattvik. Sattvik mind is neither over

active highly restless. nor over passive sleep..

Our mind is so active that it travels all over the world 24 times in 2 minutes. Even the fastest express or a plane also will be defeated. This ones active mind is called **Rajasik**.

The other extreme is, if there is no activity, it goes to sleep. The over passive state is called **Tamasik** state.

An alert, but quiet mind is called **Sattvik**. This Sattvik state is ideal for meditation. If we feel our mind is never in such a state, our scriptures point out a particular time for us. Generally early morning is conducive, because we have given enough sleep to the mind, and the day's activity has not yet started. This time is called Brahma muhurtaha. It is before sunrise. It is sattvika avasta.

It is not compulsory. Any other time, when our mind is alert can be chosen.

It also includes duration. A person cannot do meditation for a long time and it is not required also. Quantity is not important, quality alone counts. The ideal duration can be 15-20 minutes for a regular gruhasta.

ASANAM : Seat of meditation.

Lord Krishna says one should be seated over an asanam, but not on the ground. It should neither be too high nor too low also. It should neither be too hard nor too soft. If it is too hard, it may cause pain in the leg and it may become leg meditation. If it is too soft, the back will bend, If so it will disturb the breathing process and this in turn will disturb the mind also.

SAREERA STHITIHI : The posture of the body. The ideal posture/ the sastras prescribe, is to be seated on the ground. One special sutram in Brahmastura discusses this.

Aseenaha sambhavath.

If you lie down, you doze off. If you stand, you have to balance yourself.

If you cannot sit down, you can sit in a chair. The idea is, you should be seated comfortably.

Stira sukha asanam.

Once the posture is fixed, it should not be changed.

When you sit down, the legs should be folded.

Then alone you have balance. If you stretch them, again balancing becomes a problem. There should be a maximum base area, like a pyramid.

The upper part of the body - the body, neck and head should be perpendicular to the ground. It should be one straight line.

samam kaya-siro-grivam dharayann acalam sthirah

Body should be erect, but not stiff.

The hands can be placed in any convenient posture -

On the two knees,
clasped together and placed on the lap. The idea is - they should also be steady.
The face should be looking straight - neither down nor up.
The eyes should be half closed - looking at the tip of the nose.

sampreksya nasikagram svam disas canavalokayan

If the mind is also directed towards the nose, it will be nose meditation. The eyes can be gently closed.

To sum up -
folding the legs,
sitting down,
keeping the body erect
face looking straight
eyes gently closed.
This is sareera stithi.

KARANA SAMYAMANAM - withdrawal of all the organs from the external world. If we have two minds, one mind can practice to worry about the family and another mind can practice meditation.

Unfortunately, we have only one mind. It means if it is engaged in the world, it cannot practice meditation.

The things to be withdrawn from the world -

1. Jnanendriya nigrahana:

For instance if our nose is sensitive to the smell of the breakfast being prepared in the kitchen, adjacent to our pooja room, it becomes breakfast meditation. So we should die to the smell. We should die to sabda, sparsa, roopa, rasa, gandha. Lord Krishna elaborately talks about them in the sixth chapter of Gita.

2. Karmendriya nigraha : hands, legs etc.,

Keeping the hands or legs quiet is very difficult for some people. All this is called karana chesta - monkey business - Let the entire body be withdrawn from their activities for 20 minutes.

3. Mental sanyasa : Nigraha / withdrawal of the mind from the world. It is the toughest job. Some people say, mentally become a sanyasi temporarily and say that nothing belongs to you.

Ananyaashchintayanto maam ye janaah paryupaasate;

Teshaam nityaabhiyuktaanaam yogakshemam vahaamyaham.

Temporarily handover all the family responsibilities, company responsibilities to the Lord. In fact Lord will take care in a better way. At the end of meditation, you can pick up

your own worries - Nobody wants them, but for 20 minutes mentally **die** and **dye** in Kashaya robes.

4. **Sare guru pranamya** - Kaiveilya Upanishad adds one more. Offer namaskara to your guru i.e. invoke only guru - sishya relationship, cut off all other relationships like father, husband, in-law etc.,

This is **Karana nigraha** or **Karana Samyamaha**.

All these have to be followed before all the five forms of meditation.

08. Relaxation Meditation

In this meditation, as the very name suggests, we are not going to concentrate on anything. That is different. Here, our aim is just to enjoy relaxation at all levels.

Life should be a balanced life. If you are only given to work and work and work and no relaxation, it is called workaholism. It is equally problematic like alcoholism. Therefore Lord Krishna says in the sixth chapter -

Yuktaahaaravihaarasya yuktacheshtasya karmasu;

Yuktaswapnaavabodhasya yogo bhavati dukkhahaa.

Life should be a balanced one. There should be time for activity and also all -round relaxation also. That is our aim now.

This relaxation has to take place at different levels of our personality.

1. Annamaya relaxation:

The grossest level is the physical personality. We mentally visualize every part of the body - top to bottom - and see every part is deliberately relaxed. we start from the neck muscle onwards going gradually to shoulder muscles, hands, elbows, wrists, fingers, the front part, the back part, the hips, the thighs, calf muscles, ankles and toes. From top to the toe every part is gradually relaxed.

As we relax, initially the body becomes heavier and heavier. The sleeping child becomes heavier in your hands when you are lifting the child. Similarly, the body becomes heavier and we can specifically feel in our hands, because they are kept on kept in our lap.

If we further relax, we observe we are as though becoming free from the body. As we relax completely, we will be withdrawing from the body. It is like separating from the body. In sound sleep, we are not aware of the body, because we are withdrawn from the body. Since we are not aware of the body, we are not aware of the world also. So we don't know where we are sleeping, the locus of the body etc., That's why some people, when they get up, they would be in the reverse position. It is because they become - **deha abhimana rahitha**.

Only in sleep it happens naturally. In meditation, we consciously bring about sleep

- like condition in which we are dead to our physical condition. Therefore we feel light and even floating. Different people have different experiences, but the idea is - the body is relaxed.

2. Pranamaya kosa relaxation: Annamaya relaxation should be followed by pranamaya relaxation.

Here it is not a practise of pranayama, our aim is to make our breathing smooth, slow and rhythmic. Just relaxed breathing. In fact when body is relaxed, breathing will be relaxed, when breathing is relaxed, body will be relaxed, because each one is inter-connected.

A simple observation of the breathing itself will bring about this relaxation. This is called **Prana Veekshanam**. Veekshanam means awareness. Prana means the process of breathing. We generally are not aware of our breathing, because it doesn't stop. What is the proof? We are alive! Because we are alive and because the breathing is naturally continuing, we are never aware of that. But in this we are aware of the air moving.

Praanaapaanau samau kritwaa naasaabhyantara chaarinau

In the two nostrils the air is going and we feel the air through touch. The very observation will make the breathing smooth, slow and rhythmic. Rhythmic means - the inhalation and exhalation becomes a natural cyclic process.

3. Manomaya kosa - relaxation of the mind. This is the toughest part. It is now called a **stress management**. The organisers are worried that this stress management course should go without any obstacles.

In the dharma sastra it is called anayasaha - It is a very important value. They say-religious life develops asta gunas - 8 fold virtues. One of them is **anayasaha**. Life for a really religious person, one who follows the religious life prescribed in the vedas, there is no stress. He doesn't know the words stress and strain.

To relax the mind we can use several techniques.

a. Visualisation of nature : Nature is always relaxed. Imagine a beach, mountain, garden - anything, where there is santataha.

b. auto - suggestion - Using some words associated with relaxation like om, santhihi, santhoham etc., Any word you use indicates relaxation and you associate the word with relaxation. So it becomes conditioning the mind.

c. Surrender to God - most effective method. Develop the patience to wait for the future. All our tensions are because we cannot wait for the future to unfold in its own way. Tomorrow will come only after 24 hours. But we are so impatient to get tomorrow, today itself. We are very eager to know future, but remember future will shape up only in its own way. When the traffic red signal falls, there is a duration for it to turn green. Before the green

signal falls, we are already in the middle of the road. One minute also we cannot wait.

As we progress more and more, as we are able to do things faster and faster, we do not have the patience to wait for an event to unfold in its own way. When the future unfolds, we cannot predict it, because it is not totally in our hands. Therefore, let us repeat to ourselves, let future unfold in its own way. I am relaxed. When the future comes, it may be favourable or unfavourable, but I am ready to face it. So readiness to wait and readiness to face will give us relaxation.

This surrender to God's will and the consequent readiness to wait and see is one method. We don't have any other job in relaxation meditation.

Practise of meditation:

- be seated in any comfortable posture
- hands clasped together and placed on the lap.
- body, neck or head erect.
- face looking straight.
- eyes gently closed.
- this is the posture.
- now relax every part of the body.
- the indication of total relaxation is, I feel bodiless - just as I don't feel the body in sleep.
- By practice, we can attain this instantaneously.
- Now observe your breathing.
- it is smooth, relaxed and even
- now come to the mind.
- I tell myself let the future come to me in its own way. I cannot force the future. God shapes up the future, in His own time. It may or not be as I expect. I am contributor to my future, but I am not the controller of my future. I will wait, I will face as the future unfolds. I am relaxed.
- Just repeat these words mentally and enjoy the relaxation.
- I am relaxed...

**Om Purnamadah, Purnamidam Purnat Purna mudachyate
Purnasya Poorna madaya Purnamevavasishyate**

09. Concentration Meditation

To sum up Relaxation Meditation:

It is the first form of meditation.

It teaches the art of remaining relaxed - not only during meditation, but at all times-

A relaxed mind alone can enjoy its full potential. Some children learn very well for the exam, answer all the questions to the parents before they go to the exam. But once they go to the exam hall, see the question paper, there is a tension, especially when they don't know the first question. Because of this tension, they forget all the known answers also. This example shows that a stressed mind loses its faculties. It cannot learn, remember or concentrate. That's why before Vedanta Vichara, we start with the santhi pata. The very purpose of santhi pata is santhi, freedom from tension.

Thus relaxation is important not only in spiritual sadhana, but to progress in any field. In the sastra different words are used for this. They are

Anayasa - used in Dharma sastra.

Upamaha - used in Vedanta sastra.

It is one of the shatka sampathi.

Santhi - It is required for general health too. Continuous stress and strain can lead to headache, B.P. etc., Even to enjoy a nice TV Programme you require a relaxed state of mind. Therefore relaxation meditation becomes very very useful.

This meditation has two roles -

- a. can be practiced independently.
- b. can be a preparatory step for other meditations.

Concentration Meditation

Concentration means a capacity to focus. If relaxation is important, concentration is an equally important value. In Sanskrit, it is called **Chitta ekagrata**.

Two types of focussing -

a. Immediate focussing - short term focussing eg - listening to the talk of Swamiji without straying away from his words for an hour - For many people their attention span is only for 5 -10 minutes, after that they survey the audience, they watch the people, their dress, their keenness and again come back to the lecture. Again their mind wanders. Thus there will be blackouts in between. So one hour focussing also is a great capacity.

b. Ultimate focussing : Long term focussing - We may have many intermediary goals in life, we have to focus on them, but we do have an ultimate goal or Moksha, we should never lose sight of it.

**Chittaigrayathu sa lakshaye,
Samadhanamiti sputam.**

Sa lakshaye is the ultimate goal. In that chitta ekagratha - not losing sight of it - is called samadhanam - or samadhi.

Samadhanam, samadhi, ekagratha, all these talk about one faculty of mind - focussing faculty. It is required not only for spiritual goals but also for material goals. Even

in sports if a batsman should survive, he requires tremendous concentration. The opposite players, try to distract his attention.

Even the solar rays, when they fall on a place they don't have that much temperature, but if we use a magnifying glass to convulge the rays on a particular object, the convulged heat can even burn it. Similarly when our thought rays are dissipated, our capacity is limited, but if through concentration prism, if we can convulge our thoughts, our thought power is infinitely higher. Therefore ekagrata is another faculty.

The Upanishad says -

**drusyate agrayaha buddya
sukshmaya sukshma darsibhihi**

Self knowledge is gained only by that mind which is agraya - which is sharp concentrated.. Therefore concentration is important. Therefore concentration meditation is important.

Let us see how it has to be done.

We give a job to the mind for 15--20 minutes. The mind should obey us and should confine to that job alone, without wandering or straying away.

Sajatiya Pratyaya Prvaha

We should have a flow of thoughts connected to that particular job alone.

What is concentration?

Vijathiya pratyaya anantarita sajatiya pratyaya pravahaha.

In English it means - flow of similar thoughts sajathiya pratyaya. undistracted by dissimilar thoughts vijatheya pratyaya., is called concentration & ekagrata.

Aajya dhaarayaa srotasaa samam

Sarala chintanam viralatah param - Upadesa saram.

Like the flow of ghee which has no gap in between.

What type of field should be chosen?

Any field can be chosen. Some people draw concentric circles, put a dot in the centre and concentrate on the dot. We can concentrate on flame too.

You may mentally type a letter to your son, but sastra doesn't accept it as meditation. It may be a mental exercise, it may develop concentration, but according to sastra, it should be associated with God. The very definition of meditation is -

Saguna Brahma vishaya, manasa vyaparaha. Manasa vyaparaha means mental exercise. It is associated with Saguna Brahma - Eswaraha . Later it is associated with nirguna Brahma. Here it is not a question of saguna or nirguna Brahma, it should be associated with God. Otherwise it cannot be called dhyanam. It can be called only a mental exercise.

Since we are interested in spirituality, the job given to the mind should be Eswara Vishaya.

Three types of mental activities

They are in a graded manner.

1. Manasa pooja : Mental worship of the Lord. We give this job to the mind and we want it to be confined to this job alone. In this mental activity, we have a wider field to move about.

- We can do shodasa Upachara pooja.
- Can have the deity on a beautifully decorated place.
- Can be decorated artistically.
- Can do all the stages like asanam samarpayami

padyam samarpayami

arghyam samarpayami

achamanyam samarpayami

If we don't know the order, we have many slokas on manasa pooja.

ratnaih kalpitamaasanam himajalaih snaanam cha divyaambaram

naanaaratna vibhusitam mrugamada modaamkitam chandanam |

jaati champaka bilvapatra rachitam puspam cha dhupam tathaa

dipam deva dayanidhe pasupate hrutkalpitam gruhyataam

Hrutkalpitam....

Hrutkalpitam means, Oh Lord! I am not physically offering them, but through hrudayam mind.. The advantage is, we can do a very grand pooja mentally because no expenditure is involved.. We can offer not gold plated, but gold vessels themselves, studded with diamonds. We can offer flowers like jaji, champaka etc.,

Sankalpena samarpitam

Again sankalpena means, we are offering them mentally. This Shiva manasa pooja we can get it by heart and offer everything mentally. We can do ashtothara, sahasranama or even rudram. It all depends on our attention span.

Suppose our time and attention limit is only for 2 minutes, we have got short cut pooja also. That is the glory of Hinduism. You can do anything for two hundred years or two minutes. We can just put a flower, do namaskara, show harathi and say pooja is over.

There are many manasa stotrams in the name of Siva, Devi, Mantra matruka pushpamala stavam. Dakshinamurthy etc.,

If you don't know the pooja, you can imagine yourself attending a pooja in a temple or in an ashram. You need not necessarily do, but can visualize the priest doing it in your favourite temple.

This is the first exercise at the grossest level because the mind has got a wider field of travelling.

2. Manasa parayanam : Your freedom will be curtailed here. Parayanam means chanting a stotram mentally. You should know Vishnu Sahasranama, Lalitha sahasranama, Geetha Guru stotram or anything else by heart, because you have to close your eyes and do it. It need not be in Sanskrit. It can be in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil or any other language.

In manasa pooja many things are involved, but here the field is reduced. Here we have only words and words, Parayanam is always sabda pradhanam. While doing parayanam you don't deliberately try to think of the meaning. In fact, if you think of the meaning, Parayanam will stop. For example, when you chant Vishnu Sahasranama...

Om vishvam vishnur- vashatkaaro bhoota-bhavya-bhavat-prabhuh

bhoota-krit bhoota-bhrid bhaavo bhootaatmaa bhoota-bhaavanah.

If the meaning runs in the background of your mind, let it run. You need not stop.

You don't deliberately think of the meaning of each word like Viswam, Vishnu, Vashatkarha etc.,

You can do only one job at a time deliberately. If you concentrate on sabda, ardha is gone and if you concentrate on ardha, sabda is gone.

Therefore in Parayanam, you try to be aware of every word, every letter as even you mentally chant. If you want to chant it aloud in the beginning, nothing wrong. After chanting aloud for sometime, continue it mentally.

3. Manasa japam - This is the highest level. Here the field is further curtailed. You don't have many words. In Parayanam itself, many objects are gone. In the third level., there is only one nama -

Om Ganeshaya namaha or Om namo Narayanaya or Om namassivaya or

Om Mahadevyai namaha

Thus take one nama. Generally we add Om namaha and repeat it. This repetition of one word is called manasa japaha. It is japah because it has got sabda avruthi. Sabda means word, avrutti means repetition. It is called manasa japaha, because the repetition of the sabda is not done verbally. If it is done verbally, it is called vachika japaha. Here we are practicing manasa japaha.

Chittajam japa dhyanamuttamam, Manasa japaha is supposed to be highly efficacious. It forms a part of meditation also. If a person cannot come to manasa japah straight away, then sastra gives stages -

1. Uchcha japaha - a loud chanting. A chanting which you can hear and others too can hear.

2. Manda japaha - sufficiently loud chanting. A chanting which you can hear, but others cannot hear.

3. Manasa japaha : It is also known as Upamsu japaha or chittaja japah - chanting silently. The tongue or even throat does not move.

We require tremendous focussing capacity for Manasa japam. Remember, japaha like parayana is also sabda pradhana. The moment you think of the meaning, it becomes ardha pradhana. It doesn't come under japah.

If you think of the meaning, it comes under another form of meditation.

We may wonder what is the use of parayanam or japam without knowing the meaning. We may feel mere chanting becomes mechanical. The scriptures have an answer for that. They point out that with regard to scriptural words the very words themselves are sacred. Not only the meaning but the very sound is auspicious, because they are coming from the very Lord Himself in the case of Veda Mantras. or from the saints, the utterance of the word itself will spiritually purify you. That is why even now parayanam is part of our culture. Many people do it without knowing the meaning.

If you study the meaning and do it, certainly your involvement will be more. It is certainly superior. But even without knowing the meaning, if you chant, you will be purified. So we need not concentrate on the ardha in manasa parayana or manasa japaha.

We need not concentrate on the silence in between . That is another form of meditation. In fact it comes under Vedantic meditation. To meditate upon silence, one has to study Vedanta. It doesn't come under preparatory meditation. It comes under assimilation meditation.

Thus we have three of them -

Manasa pooja, manasa parayanam, manasa japam. You can do all three, but it requires a lot of time.

Instead of focussing on all the three, in one particular session we can do in any way like this -

- a. elaborate manasa pooja, one parayanam, 11 times one japaha
- b. one minute manasa pooja, chant Vishnu Sahasranama elaborately, 11 times one nama japah
- c. one minute pooja, one minute parayana, 15 minutes japah.

You can change the proportion of these three and can practice concentration meditation.

If you know the meaning of japa mantra, you don't think of the meaning at the time of japa. You can do it, before you start. So you can do manasa pooja, manasa parayanam and think of the meaning of the word you are going to chant in manasa japah.

For example - Om Namō Narayana. Before starting the Narayana mantra, you see the meaning. Narayana has many meanings. One meaning is - Narayana samoohaha naaram. Another meaning is - Naaram ayanam yasyasaha narayana.

Naaram means all the living beings. Ayanam means abode. So it means that lord whose dwelling place is every living being.

Eeshwarah sarvabhootaanaam hriddesherjuna tishthati;

It means Narayana is there in you, me and even a mosquito. This is a good meaning, because when you see this, you will think God is there in you also.

Having meditated upon the meaning, come to the japaha, but now don't deliberately dwell upon the meaning. If the meaning runs in the background, let it run.

You can start it with relaxation meditation and end it with relaxation meditation. It means, at the end of the meditation, you remain relaxed for a few minutes or few seconds and then get up.

An additional note on concentration meditation.

Visualization of the deity :- The very visualization itself can become a meditation, if it is done in a systematic way. This is also a part of our scriptures. We have got a set of stotrams.

Padadi Kesavaantha Varnana Stotram - description from the feet to the hair of Lord.

Kesadi Paadaantha Varnana Stotram - description from the hair to the feet of the Lord.

In each set, every part of the Lord is described. In the first set it begins with toes and toe nails and goes up describing the ankles, the stomach, arm, face, lips, hair such a stotra we get such a stotra in the name of many deities. Sankaracharya himself has written many kesadi paadaantha varna stotrams on Goddess Devi, Lord Siva, Lord Vishnu, Lord Krishna etc.,

agre pasyaami thejo nibhidatara kalayaavall lobhanlyam

peeyooshaaplaavithoham tadhanu tadutare divya kaisora vesham

taarunyaarambha ramyam parama sukharasaa svaadharomaanjithaangai-

raavltham naaradhadyai: vilasathu upanishadh sundarl mandalaisccha

- Narayaneeyam

Bhagavata Puranam gives a description of God's avayavas. Prudhagavayava stotram it is called. It describes each distinct limb of the Lord. This also you can meditate upon, if you can remember the verses & visualize.

This visualization can be given anywhere, but often it is done in Surya mandalam. In the daily sandhya vandanam itself.

Dyeya sada savithru mandala Madhya varthi

Narayana sarasijasana sannivishta

Keyuravan makara kundalavaan

Kiriti haari hiranya vapur drutha sankha chakra

Savithru mandala means the solar disc. There we visualize the deity in concentration meditation.

Chakra meditation :

Some people talk about various chakras in the body - mooladhara, swadhistana, manipuraka, visuddhi, ajna etc., Then they visualize a particular deity in one chakra or the other with bijaakshara. They describe it as lotus, along with the no. of petals. That is perfectly O.K, but should remember one point. The meditation should be associated with God. The very definition says -

Saguna Brahma Vishaya manasa vyaparaha.

Will Kundalini meditation help?

Kundalini Meditation :- Some people claim that Kundalini sakti can be taken as jeevatma and that on the top in the Sahasra Chakra there is paramatma. They say jeevatma rises and travels upto paramatma, breaking open one chakra after the other and finally merges with paramatma. In fact they identify this as spiritual practice.

We do not accept this particular view because this is not supported by the Vedanta. According to Vedanta Jeevatma does not travel to reach paramatma. Why? The very description of Paramatma is that it is all pervading.

Sarvatragamachintyam cha kootasthamachalam dhruvam

So it is neither logical nor supported by Vedanta. A person is free to believe in Kundalini, we don't force others, but such a view is not given out in the Veda, Vedanta or Gita.

If somebody says Kundalini sakthi is not jeevatma, but it is a power, which we can tap by meditation, we agree with that. We accept that Kundalini is a potential power, tapping is possible, by tapping it a person can get extraordinary powers. This is not against Veda. But we will add a note. It is very important.

Tapping that power will not promote our spirituality in any way. On the other hand, it can even become an obstacle to spirituality. More than that, it can be a risky affair also. So our general approach to kundalini is negative. If a person wants to get extraordinary powers, it is his or her choice, but a Vedantic seeker generally ignores that totally.

But if a person wants to visualize the chakras and wants to meditate on the devata located in the chakra, we don't mind. There the emphasis is not on Kundalini rising, but it is on the visualization of the deity.

So deity visualization also can form part of concentration meditation, in addition to the other three forms. In fact deity visualization can form part of manasa pooja itself. For

manasa pooja, a deity has to be invoked -

dhyayami

avahayami...

Practice of Meditation

We are going to focus on japa.

- go through the preliminary stages
- we will start with a small manasa pooja to Lord Narayana.
- Imagine offering a flower to Lord Narayana
- I offer a namaskara, I am seated in front of the Lord.
- A small manasa parayanam

Santhakaram bhujaga sayanam

Padmanabham suresam

Viswadharam gagana sadrusam

Meghavarnam subhangam

Lakshmikaantam kamala nayanam

Yogi hrudhyan gamyam. Vande

Vishnum bhava bhaya haram

Sarva lokaika nadham

- Now I will do the japaha.

Om Namo Narayanaya.

You know the meaning now. You surrender to the Lord Narayana, who dwells in every one.

- Chant aloud for sometime.
- **Om Namo Narayanaya...**
- then continue mentally
- Now drop the mantra and remain relaxed for a few seconds.
- the mantra may continue in the background, but you don't chant deliberately.
- remain relaxed.

Om Purnamadaha Purnamidam Purnat Purna mudachyate

Purnasya Poorna madaya Purnamevavasishyate

10. Expansion Meditation

We have seen two forms of preparatory meditation.

1. Relaxation Meditation
2. Concentration Meditation.

Concentration Meditation has 3 levels.

- a. Manasa Pooja
- b. Manasa Parayanam
- c. Manasa Japa.

We do Pooja, Parayanam, Japa in the mind only.

Additional note:

Chakra meditation or Kundalini meditation, one may do, but Vedanta doesn't accept it as spiritual progress.

Meditation means - **Saguna Brahma Vishaya Manasa Vyaparaha.**

If visualization of deity is done in chakras, then it is considered as manasa Pooja.

Expansion Meditation

It is meditation on the very cosmos, universe. **Viswaroopa Eswara dhyanam**

If a person is transferred to, say, Bangalore, he first explores the surroundings -

- finds out about the neighbours
- where vegetables are available.
- where gas is available.
- what the temples are nearby.

So when we are in a set up, it is very natural to know about the set up in which we have to live for quite sometime. If this is natural, we should remember that we all belong to this wonderful cosmic set up in which we are going to live for atleast a few decades. If that is the case, shouldn't we know about creation, the cosmos in which we are living?

It is compulsory to know a little bit about creation. In schools and colleges we have studied about solar system, planetary movements. This is not a new thing. Even our scriptures talk about Brahmanda Varnanam. Any puranam describes the 14 lokas, the cosmic time, the cosmic space etc.,

Knowing about the cosmos is a unique privilege to man. Animals cannot learn about it. Therefore for Viswaroopa Upasana, the basic qualification is a little bit understanding about the whole world. All the time we are bothered about our house, our crowded streets etc. We have become narrow minded like the frog in the well. Therefore, we should spend some time to learn a little bit of astronomy.

Let us recollect what we already know. You know there are millions of galaxies in the sky. A cluster of stars is a galaxy. There are millions of such galaxies in the cosmos. You can imagine the vastness. Each galaxy's width, depth, height goes to light years. Light year is the distance travelled by light in one year. The distance travelled by light in one second is 1,86,000 miles or 3 lakh kilometres. To calculate the number of seconds in one year - 365 x 24 x 60 x 60. Multiply it with 3 lakhs.

One galaxy runs many light years away, millions of galaxies are moving around. It is mind boggling. One such galaxy is our galaxy, milky way - akasa ganga.

In the milky way, there are millions of stars. One of the ordinary stars is our Sun. Our Sun is like a dust particle. The explosion of star is called nova. If the Sun explodes in super nova nothing happens. It will be like a mosquito bite. The world will continue. Nine planets move around the Sun. One ordinary planet is our earth. It is not even the biggest planet. Jupiter is the biggest planet. That is why it is called guru.

Compared to Jupiter earth is smaller and compared to Sun, it is like a dot. Millions of earths can be accommodated in it. Thus earth is almost invisible in the cosmos.

On the earth, three-fourth is water and only one fourth is land. In that land there are seven continents. One of them is Asia. In Asia vast areas are gone in deserts, forests. A small area is populated by living beings. Among millions of varieties of living beings, one happens to be the dangerous human being. Among some five billion human beings, we are some one billion occupying some hanging part of Asia. If the Indian Ocean decides to move a little bit to the north, we are out. If the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal wish to shake hands, we are finished.

In that hanging, one part is India, one part is Bangalore, one part is Malleswaram, one part is M.V.S. College, one part is the hall where Swamiji is delivering this lecture, in one corner, on one's lap of another person is an individual.

In front of this vastness of creation, we are making a big fuss about the small eighty kilos of matter - dust matter. It is going to live here for only a few decades and disappear. We are so much bothered about the biography of that dust matter, that we are missing out the Viswaroopa.

The scriptures say, forget your worries and family problems for a few minutes atleast and appreciate the cosmos.

Advantages of this appreciation -

1. The very appreciation gives a **unique joy**. It is a privilege of human birth.

As W.H. Davies said -

What is this life, if full of care?

We have no time to stand and stare!

If we don't use this privilege the Lord may say, let this person become a buffalo.

2. There is a **wonderful order** in the creation. Nothing is accidental. Nothing is arbitrary. Everything happens according to strict cosmic laws. How do you prove?

The Sun regularly rises. Imagine there is a strike in the planetary motion. We will be in trouble. The earth is moving round its axis, thousand miles per hour and round the Sun sixty miles per hour. We are violently moving round the axis, even though we are fat and incapable of moving. That is how it takes one year to complete the cycle.

All the movements are taking place strictly according to law. The entire cosmos is working according to laws. They are never violated and should never be violated. If any law is violated the creation cannot function. The more we study about the laws of creation, the more we wonder about the gravitational law.

Once we know there are inevitable laws, we being part of the cosmos, we accept these as inevitable. We surrender to the laws and never resist them. Once we surrender without resistance, many events in our life are just natural events. They are not tragedies at all. Universal laws means, things will have to constantly appear and disappear.

Jaatasya hi dhruvo mrityur dhruvam janma mritasya cha;

Even stars explode and disappear and new stars are formed. If this is an inevitable law regarding stars, what about this physical body? We should accept the fact that this body also is formed in the cosmic process, out of matter and so it has to disappear. Then, how can we call death as Amangalam? Death becomes as much mangalam as birth is.

Imagine we don't die at all. Already world population is crossing five billion. In India it is one billion. Imagine our forefathers of the 12th century are still surviving. Don't we want them to disappear so that the present generation can come and occupy? If the previous generation has to vacate for us, by the same token, we should gracefully vacate for our children to live and enjoy.

Our philosophy is - let everyone vacate, except me and my family. Me alone is not enough. The slogan is ~~We two, ours two~~. This is called lopsided thinking, confused thinking.

Death is a part of cosmic process. Similarly growth and decay are part of cosmic process. We should accept that the decay of the body is inevitable. Similarly association and dissociation are part of cosmic process.

This is another law we find in the universe, Variety - No two human beings are the same. See the glory of human creation. Your thumb impression is taken as a sample because there is no second thumb impression like yours. The forensic department is finding newer and newer things. Your teeth alignment is unique. The skull markings Brahmajijñāna writing. are unique. Ear lobes are unique.

If this is true of the physical body, it is true of the mental make up also. No two minds need agree or can agree. Therefore never expect your children to be like you.

Variety is the law of nature. Learn to appreciate the variety, accept the variety. If you want to contribute, contribute for the growth of the child in the way a child has to grow. Let a jasmine become a jasmine, let a rose become a rose, don't expect a jasmine to become a rose. Both the flowers are beautiful in their own way.

The moment we appreciate this cosmic law, we learn to accommodate people, adjust with people. If children are different, we don't treat it as a tragedy.

Thus what we call tragedies are not tragedies, but they are facts and beauties of creation.

3. Humility : Once we appreciate the cosmic process and see ourselves in the totality, where do we stand ?

When our galaxy itself is one of the ordinary ones. When the sun is a dot, we are inconspicuous dust in that. Then how can we have ego?

The more we appreciate the totality and our insignificance, our bloated ego is punctured and deflated, we become an embodiment of humility, just as Arjuna's ego was punctured at the end of the 11th chapter,

Disho na jaane na labhe cha sharma

Arjuna's prayer in the 11th chapter is the most sincere prayer, born out of humility. It is born out of the appreciation of the smallness in front of the Lord.

4. When we appreciate the cosmos in line with the scriptures, we will not see them as inert matter, but as the live body of the Lord. The panchabhutas are devatas. The invisible intelligence of the lord pervades the creation. Therefore the world can be called **Viswaroopa Eswara.**

Once we have the changed perspective, whatever experience we get in life, even the most painful one, we look upon them as experience given by the Lord. It comes through the laws of karma. There is no injustice in the creation. Everything happens according to Lord's will. So we look upon everything as Lord's prasadam. The very appreciation dilutes the pain. Mother's prasava vedana is unbearable, but the happiness of motherhood makes her go through it. You can make a big line smaller, by drawing a bigger line beside it.

Pain doesn't go, just as the prasava vedana doesn't go, but it appears small in front of appreciation. That's why mother is ready to go through it for the next child soon. Viswaroopa darsanam dilutes the pains of life.

Expansion: Viswaroopa darsanam expands the mind for Aham Brahma Asmi - spiritual knowledge. A narrow minded person cannot say I am infinite Brahman. The expanded mind helps in learning and assimilating Aham Brahma Asmi wisdom.

Therefore Viswaroopa dhyanam is very important for all people and especially important for vedantic seekers.

For Viswaroopa dhyanam, scriptures persons like Bhagavatam are useful. They describe the viswaroopa of God very elaborately and in several places. The body of Vishnu is compared to different lokas like atala, vitala, sutala etc.,

The hair of God is often compared to trees. Just as hair is very important for an individual's health, similarly trees play a very important role for the health of the creation. So we can quote that verse and say, don't cut trees, because it is like plucking hair from Lord.

The rivers are compared to the blood vessels of the Lord. It means whenever rivers are choked, Bhagavan is having health problem. Therefore you should respect rivers.

We find this description in Upanishad also, but the Viswaroopa varnanam is ...

agnir murdha chakshushi chandra-suryau

dishah shrotre vaag vivritashcha vedah

vaayuh praano hridayam vishvam asya

paadbhyam prithivi hy esha sarva-bhutaantaraatma - Mundaka.

We find it in 11th chapter of Gita also, but Bhagavatam gives very elaborately.

Therefore study of scriptures is important and useful for Viswaroopa dhyanam. The first two meditations can be done without the study of scriptures, but the third one requires some study of scriptures.

Practice of Meditation:

- the Lord gives darsan to all of us in the form of Viswaroopa Eswara.
- the five elements, the stars & the planets, the animals and the plants - all these are limbs of the Lord, but I have no time to appreciate this.
- the more I am away from the Viswaroopam, the more miserable my life becomes.
- let me learn to be a part of the Viswaroopa Eswara, a part of the nature, a part of the cosmic rhythm.
- Whatever happens in my life, is perfectly according to the laws of the creation.
- Whatever I get, I deserve.
- God is never unjust.
- I don't resist any experience however painful it may be.
- My only prayer is - let me appreciate the will of the Lord, the laws of the Lord.
- Let me surrender my individual will to the cosmic will.
- Let me remember, I am never away from the Viswaroopa Eswara just as a

wave is never away from the ocean.

- I am an integral part of the Lord.
- Let me see the whole creation as the body of the Lord.

**Bhoo paadau yasya naabhir viyadasu ranilaschandra suryau cha nethre
Karnaavasaasiro dhaumukhamabhi dhahano yasya vaasteyamabhdhi**

**Anthastham yasya viswam sura nara khaga go bhogi gandharva dhaityaihi,
Chitram ram ramyathe tham thribhuvana vapusham vishnumeesam namami.**

- remain relaxed for a few seconds. Even if thoughts occur ignore them
- mentally repeat it yourself. I am relaxed, I am relaxed, I am relaxed.

**Om Purnamadaha Purnamidam Purnat Purna mudachyate
Purnasya Poorna madaya Purnamevavasishyate**

11. Value Meditation

Three types of preparatory meditation before Value Meditation are -

1. Relaxation meditation
2. Concentration meditation
3. Expansion meditation.

They are preparatory to self-knowledge. **atma jnana Utpatyardham**

Value meditation

It is important to make our mind healthy, refined and cultured. In Sanskrit refinement is called %Samskara% So value meditation is called %Chitta Samskara dhyanam%.

Any samskara or refinement consists of two processes.

1. **Elimination of the impurities - dosha apanayanam.**
2. **Value addition - guna aadhaanam.**

This is not with regard to mind alone, but also with regard to body. Every morning our first job is supposed to be sareera samskara or body refinement. We wash our body with water, soap, shampoo etc., After removing the doshas, we stand before the mirror and apply - vibhuti, chandana, kumkum, powder, snow, scent etc., They all come under guna aadhaanam. It includes wearing a new dress also.

Daily we do samskara to our body. This is not for others, but for our own sake. We know a samskrita sareeram is a healthy body. If we don't do it regularly, the body will get deteriorated slowly and the body will ultimately fall sick. Therefore for a healthy body, samskara is required.

If this is understood at body level, what about the mind? The scriptures ask us, %Have you ever thought about chitta samskara? Have you ever worked for chitta mind. dosha apanayanam and Chitta guna aadhaanam?+If we don't do that, our mind will be

asamskrita chittam, unrefined mind. An unrefined mind will soon become a silly mind, incapable of accomplishing anything in life, leave alone - Moksha.

If we want to acquire any purushartha, we require a samskrita chittam. This chitta samskara is the aim of value meditation.

How do we know what virtues to be cultivated and what weaknesses to be eliminated? On enquiry we know, that we ourselves know the vices and virtues. We need to study the scriptures to know the gunas and doshas.

We can apply a simple law. What is it? Vyasacharya writes else where..

**srooyatam dharma sarvasvam
strutva chaiva avadhaaryataam
atmanaprathi kulakoolani
paresham na samaa chare.**

We can find out what is dharma and adharma very easily. Whatever we want others to do to us, we should practice that to others. When we ask somebody how to reach a particular place, our question presupposes that we expect truth from others, our first value should be - we must speak truth to others.

If we don't want others to insult us, we should not insult others. That is another value. If we don't want others to be angry with us, we should not be angry. Thus we have got the do's and don'ts with regard to others' behaviour.

What are we to do? Whatever we know with regard to others to practice, we should try to practice it in our life. This is dharma - adharma vibhagaha. Dayananda Saraswathi Swamy beautifully says it is commonsense value. You don't require a dharma sastra. Even a thief knows stealing is not right. How do we know that he knows it? It is because he does it at night! If he considers it perfect, he should come straight to us, take money from our pocket and walk out. Why should he do it secretly?

Therefore, ignorance of values is not our problem. Implementation is our problem. Therefore scriptures need not teach virtues and vices, but they elaborately give a list. Somebody said, 'Commonsense seems to be very much uncommon'. So, scriptures don't want to take anything for granted. So they give the list of vidhi - do's and nisheda - don'ts.

In Gita Lord Krishna gives an elaborate list of virtues in the thirteenth chapter.

**Amaanitwam adambhitwam ahimsaa kshaantiraarjavam;
Aachaaryopaasanam shaucham sthairyamaatmavinigrahaah.**

In the sixteenth chapter, he gives again a big list of virtues to be followed.

**Abhayam sattwasamshuddhih jnaanayogavyavasthitih;
Daanam damashcha yajnashcha swaadhyayastapa aarjavam.....**

These virtues will make a human being as good as God on earth. So they are

called Daivi Sampathi. All the weaknesses to be avoided are called asuri sampathi.

**Daivee sampadvi mokshaaya nibandhaayaasuree mataa;
Maa shuchah sampadam daiveem abhijaato'si paandava.**

All these virtues are Vedanta-friendly virtues which means they all promote spiritual growth and self-knowledge. Generally this is called dharma sastra. Without dharma, without values Moksha is not possible. An immoral, unethical person can never benefit from Geetha or Upanishadic study.

Dharma is the foundation for self study. In fact, Upanishads go one step further and say dharma is not only for Moksha but also for artha, kama purusharthas. It means not for spiritual happiness, but also for material happiness.

That's why the order of the Purusharthas is dharma, artha, kama, Moksha. If a person violates dharma and acquires lot of artha, kama, they may give physical happiness but they cannot give inner happiness. We are mistaking comfort for happiness. A samskrita mind is required to enjoy happiness.

So samskrita anthakaranam is required for both material and spiritual seekers. Since we are spiritual seekers, it is more important for us than the materialistic people. Yama dharma Raja says in his katopanishad teaching...

Naaviratho duscharithaath naasantho naasmaahitaha

Naasaanthamaanaso vaapi prajnaanena yenamapnuyath 1-2-24 Kata

If we don't have morality in our life, then however much we study the scriptures, knowledge does not take place. Even if it takes place, it will not continue in our day to day life and it cannot produce the peace that is produced by Vedanta. So the mind should be prepared.

If a person studies Gita and doesn't get any benefit, the mistake doesn't lie in Gita, it lies with the receptacle that is not prepared. That is why the scriptures give two beautiful examples.

1. Cultivation of the land - If we have to sow a seed, the ground should be well prepared. If it is a barren land or unprepared land, the best seed cannot grow. Similarly if our mind does not have virtues, even if Bhagavan comes and gives Upadesa, it falls flat in our mind. It doesn't grow into wisdom. Just as cultivating the land is important before sowing the seed, cultivation of virtues is important before gaining self knowledge.

2. Following Pathyam - Sankaracharya gives it in his Viveka Chudamani, whenever we want to remove a disease, we are given a medicine. But along with the medicines, doctor prescribes some disciplines too.

For a sugar patient he asks him to walk and avoid sugar items, for a B.P. patient, asks him to avoid salt, for an ulcer patient, asks him to avoid bitter things.

The do's and don'ts he prescribes is called pathyam in medical terminology.

Aushadam is the medicine; pathyam is the condition on which the above medicine works. Suppose a sugar patient takes insulin from one side and gulps Tirupathi laddu from the other side, it won't work.

pathyamau shadhasevaa cha kriyate yena roginaa .

arogyasiddhirdrishyu thaasya naanyaanushThitakarmanaa

An ethical life is pathyam, scriptural study is aushadam. These two should go hand in hand, but most of the people give up one of the two. Some are scholars in scriptures but they are unethical. Some wonder if they have to study scriptures because they lead a virtuous life. Mere pathyam will not do. It should follow aushadam, here spiritual study.

How to cultivate values?

Our commonsense gives us values. The scriptures also give them. We know we have to speak the truth but we don't do that. For example a person interviewed a young boy to choose him as his son-in-law. The conversation was as follows -

%Do you smoke?+

%No, sir!+

%Do you drink?+

%No, sir!+

The list went on, but came the reply %no sir+to every question. The man was about to select him as his son-in-law, but casually asked,

%What is your weakness?+

%I have only one weakness. I tell lies+

Therefore the problem is - we know the values, but we don't know how to cultivate them. Several methods are there.

1. Prayer to the Lord : In fact, if you study the shanti patas to Upanishads, they ask for virtues.

tadaatmani nirate ya upanishatsu dharmastemayi santu..

Oh Lord, may I have all the virtues required for gaining self knowledge.

2. Moving with virtuous people : We always unknowingly imbibe the character of the people with whom we move. That's why scriptures say satsanga is important and dussanga has to be avoided.

dussangaha sarvada tadyajaha - Narada Bhakthi sutras

Mind has got sympathetic vibrations. If we move with powerful people, unknowingly we gather their thoughts. People who have values need not be jnanis, but we can follow them. their

Satsangatve nissangatvam

Nissangatve nirmohatvam

Nirmohatve Nishchala Tatvam

Nischala Tatve Jeevan Mukti.

Thus these two methods are simpler, because our effort is minimal.

3. Vichara method - This is the most important method, because we work for developing the virtue. Here we study the importance of every virtue and how it helps us spiritually, how we lose if we don't follow it.

By constantly doing the Vicharaha, our mind becomes more and more sensitive and a sensitive mind will see the spiritual loss as a very great tragedy in life. Now our condition is so gross that we look upon material loss as a tragedy in our life. By vichara, even if we are going to gain one crore rupees by violating dharma, we consider it as a spiritual fall, when we weigh the material loss and spiritual gain, we will vote for spiritual gain even if it means a loss of ten crores. But it requires tremendous sensitization of the mind.

Let us see the loss we face when we violate a virtue. Every time we violate a virtue, we are going to have an inner conflict. It is because our inner conscience knows what is right and wrong.

Our conscience tells us to speak the truth. Everytime we tell a lie, our outer mind is doing the opposite of the inner mind's command. This is called prick of the conscience. Every such prick indicates adding poison to our personality. It is a warning signal. Any time, there is a pain in the body, it indicates some health problem. If your stomach aches, for instance, it is not a curse, it is a warning signal for you.

The same way, everytime your conscience pricks, it indicates your health is in danger. If you don't listen to the signal, poison gets added gradually. After sometime the warning signal gives away. It means, it doesn't prick you at all. It means you can comfortably lie. The cumulative poison will make you sick. You will lose your inner strength, and a time comes when the situation is irreversible. If you have lost your mind for material pleasures, certainly you have lost your mind for spiritual joy.

To use Lord Krishna's expression, once you have lost your sensitive mind, you have lost your human life.

buddhi naasath pranasyati...

So it means every time you violate, there is a conscience prick. If you don't nourish it, and act immediately you are going to destroy your mental health. This we have to do constantly and practice in the form of meditation.

So value meditation is a part of this vichara alone and in this we tell ourselves that we are never going to violate the virtues for material gain. We consider inner growth more

important than material gain. Inner growth is primary, material gain is secondary. Later we can take up each value and practice, but the general value is - inner growth is more important.

Practise of Meditation

- peace and happiness can be enjoyed only by a healthy mind.
 - possessions cannot guarantee peace and happiness.
 - even without possessions, a healthy mind can enjoy peace and happiness.
 - therefore, I value my mental health only by following values of life.
 - possessions may tempt me and I may tend to violate the values.
 - I take a strong auto suggestion, a strong vow that I will resist temptation.
 - I may not feel the poisoning immediately but I know damage is pain done gradually.
 - I want to keep my mental health.
 - I want to keep my mental strength.
 - I will be alert throughout and listen to my inner voice.
 - the society may tease me, I may lose materially, I may not get those comforts which others get by violation but I am very very clear.
 - I have no conflict.
 - I value the virtues.
 - Dharma is important to me, not ardhha wealth., not kama pleasure.
 - ardhha, kama are secondary to dharma.
 - I know dharma alone can give Moksha.
 - I am a dharmica purushaha.
 - I respect dharma.
 - I respect the values.
 - the very decision gives me spiritual strength.
 - I am relaxed.
- just repeat these words and enjoy the relaxation.
Thoughts may occur, ignore them.
- I am relaxed.

**Om Purnamada Purnamidam Purnat Purna mudachyate
Purnaschya Poorna madaya Purnameva vasishyate**

12. Vedantic Meditation

There are four forms of preparatory meditation. Many people talk about other forms too either for extraordinary experiences or for getting extraordinary powers.

But, remember, vedantic knowledge does not require any extraordinary experiences at all. Mystic or abnormal experiences are not required or extraordinary powers. As far as a Vedantic seeker is concerned, he should not be interested in any of them. Getting interested in them can become risky obstacles to Vedanta. Therefore we have only four forms of meditation which develop the natural and normal faculties of the mind. These forms are enough for gaining self knowledge and liberation.

Therefore we require all these four faculties. It means mind should enjoy relaxation all the time. They have the capacity to focus on the short term goals as well as the ultimate goals. Certainly the mind should not be a selfish narrow minded instrument. It should be sufficiently expanded, because the ultimate knowledge is. I am, the all pervading substratum of the Universe.

mayyeva sakalam jaatam

mayi sarvam pratistitam

mayi sarvam layam yaati

tadbrahmaadvayam asmyaham.

The ultimate teaching is - all these galaxies are born out of me, they are all moving about in me and they will resolve into me. That all pervading, space swallowing formless atma I am. If I have to accommodate the whole creation, what a vast mind I should enjoy! If I cannot accommodate my neighbour, where is the question of gaining this knowledge?

Therefore certainly, I have to get an expanded mind. Finally values are also important . Without a refined mind, this knowledge is impossible.

Therefore, one should practice all the four forms of meditation, though there can be a change in the proportion. If a person has more stress and strain, he can do more of relaxation meditation. If a person's problem is with values, there can be more concentration on values. In one particular session, practice only one form of meditation. If you try all the five in one session, you may get up with a headache. They cater to different faculties and so we have to use one at a time. All the four are called Upasana or preparatory meditations. By practicing all forms of meditation, we enjoy a qualified mind which is called **Yogya antahkaranam**. Remember, we attain only a qualified mind, but not wisdom.

None of these meditations is capable of giving self knowledge. Therefore after doing these meditations, we have become a qualified, ignorant person. Previously we were unqualified ignorant person. Dayananada Swamiji jocularly says, previously he was

an agitated fool, now he is a quiet fool. Foolishness continues. Fool here refers to ignorance.

Therefore this qualified person has to put forth effort for gaining knowledge. The fifth meditation is possible only after working for self knowledge. So between the first four meditations and the last meditation, there will be a big gap.

What is the intermediary sadhana? Working for knowledge. Remember, eyes can perceive the muscles only by using a mirror. Similarly if we have to gain knowledge about ourselves, no instrument at our disposal will be useful because all the instruments are turned outward. Therefore we have to go to an external mirror like aid and that is guru sastra upadesa. In simple English - teaching.

Without spiritual teaching, self knowledge is impossible. It is divided into two steps...

1. Sravanam

2. Mananam

The Upanishads clearly say -

**Atmavaa arey drastavyaha, srotavyaha,
mantavyaha, nidi dhyasitavyaha.**

Unfortunately the teaching part, nobody emphasises. Everybody prescribes meditation as a means of self knowledge. No traditional sastra prescribes meditation in the beginning as a means for self knowledge.

Lord Krishna talks about meditation only in the sixth chapter, after consistent teaching of five chapters. Patanjali Yoga sutra talks about dhyanam not as the first stage, but as the seventh stage. It comes after yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara and dharana. But since people do not have time now a days everybody wants to give crash course and crash them also.

You cannot teach in this crash course. Teaching requires time. Knowledge requires quality time, commitment, consistency. Since this is a difficult part, people try to eliminate that. We have to admit that there is no short cut for knowledge.

You can believe in something which requires only one minute. If somebody tells you, %here is Heaven and believe it because, I say so+, you believe it. Any knowledge you gain, comes after years of struggling. Ask your L.K.G. teacher how much she struggled to teach you $1+1 = 2$. If this ordinary knowledge takes time, what about spiritual knowledge?

Therefore there is no replacement for Sravana, mananam.

Sravanam : It is a consistent and systematic study of spiritual scriptures for a length of time under the guidance of competent acharya. Arjuna required sometime, thought he was learning from the best teacher. With the best teacher, Arjuna developed some doubts and Lord Krishna repeated the something. Arjuna repeated the same doubt - is

sanyasrama better or grihastasrama better? He asked it earlier and again, after many chapters, asked in the 18th chapter. The teacher should not get angry also.

If there is a short cut for self knowledge, Lord Krishna also would have taught that way. He was teaching in the most inconvenient place - the battle field. If there is a short cut - Lord Krishna could have said, "Close your eyes and ask who am I, you will get the answer". The problem would be solved. Why should Lord Krishna teach so elaborately? By touching if knowledge could be given, Lord Krishna would have done it. Chinmaya calls it spiriticution like electrocution.

Systematic means step by step.

Once you start sravanam and try to understand, your intellect begins to manufacture doubts. Doubtful knowledge is as good as ignorance. Therefore sastra allows to raise as many doubts as required. It is never afraid of doubts because the teaching is not a matter of belief but a matter for knowing. Until the last doubt is answered, questions are allowed. In fact the teacher welcomes doubts. If the student doesn't have doubts, the teacher teaches him how to raise doubts.

Lord Krishna says -

Swadharma nidhanam sreyaha ...

Lord Krishna elsewhere says - **Sarva dharman parityajya ...**

There seems to be a contradiction - you should raise a question - should I give up dharma or follow it?

This process of removing the doubt is called mananam, reflection, churning. Through sravanam and mananam self knowledge will get converted into conviction. We will get nissansaya jnanam.

Nididhyasanam

Prior stages

Qualified mind through meditation.

Knowledge through sravana, manana.

Nididhyasan is also known as Vedantic meditation. It is not for knowledge, or even for conviction. It is for assimilation of the teaching so that it becomes part and parcel of our personality.

This knowledge must be available for us - at home, when there is problem all around, when business is down, when banking system is collapsing, when stock market is down sliding, prarabda is waiting along with our slippers. So Vedanta should become assimilated knowledge. It is called nista. Nista means, we can invoke the knowledge whenever needed, effortlessly.

If you are asked your phone number, do you say, %wait, let me think!+, No! As even you are asked, you rattle out. Have you been thinking of your phone number throughout the day? No! But when needed it comes automatically, spontaneously, effortlessly. You have got phone number-jnana nista.

Similarly, this knowledge that I am ever free in spite of the situation, should spontaneously come to you when needed. You need not call everyone and declare, Aham Brahma Asmi.

Vedantic meditation mixes the knowledge with our innermost personality. It is like adding sugar to coffee. If you just add sugar, it is not enough. Coffee will not taste sweet. Now should mix it well. Sugar particles should mix well with every droplet of coffee. Then any part you taste, it is no more bitter. Similarly, every cell of our personality should throb with the wisdom and this internalization, this striving is the purpose of Vedantic meditation.

Since we haven't learnt Vedanta systematically now, let us see one particular aspect of Vedanta and let us try to practice it. Primarily, the Vedantic teaching is discovery of the real self, because according to Vedanta, the understanding we have about ourselves is a misconception.

Right from birth we have misunderstood ourselves, just as we have been thinking that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. A few centuries before, entire humanity thought that the sun is going round the earth. They also thought that the earth is flat and stationary. We have concluded this and never questioned our belief.

Then one scientist came and said, the sun does not rise or set, but it is the earth that rotates round the sun. We all know it now, when this was declared for the first time, the person was a minority. Everybody laughed at him. He was even persecuted. But he had a thorough knowledge and he said a fact is a fact whether majority agree or not. Even if hundred people call a person a donkey, will he get a doubt?

We have formed certain ideas from birth and we have taken them for granted without questioning. When that fact is questioned, our initial response is resistance. When sun rise and sun set were pointed out as misconception, it took lot of time to accept it.

In the same way Vedanta is a minority. It questions our fundamental concept about ourselves. When we listen to it, we show resistance to that knowledge. So, instead of giving up our notion, we give up the guru, just as we rejected the scientist mentioned above.

Therefore we have to study, understand, assimilate and change our very perspective. The first and foremost misconception that Vedanta negates is - %I am the body.+This is the strongest misconception, because we feel when the body is born, I am born. It means indirectly we are saying we are the body. There afterwards we have added miscon-

ceptions like

5q11+ height

78 Kgs weight

fair complexion

long hair

becoming old.

Most of our activities in life are based on this basic misconception. Therefore the scriptures take a loooooong, powerful effort to dismiss that. Even after we are convinced that we are not the body, the instinctive identification will continue. So, one part of Vedantic meditation is seeing the body as part of the world. I am only some one different from the body, using the body as we use a temporary spectacles for transaction and then remove them. Similarly the body comes from the world, is made of the five elements. made of mud. It is called pardhiva sareeram. Only thing is it is a very very refined clay. Whether you like it or not, it has to go back to mud. So, I am not this inert body but a conscious being, different from the body, using the body,

Vasansi jeernani yadha vihaya ...

When this body goes away, another body is taken, I have nothing to do with it. I use it, but I am different from it. The user of a pen is not a pen. The user of a donkey is not a donkey. You can understand this better and you don't require a Ph.D for it.

Practise of meditation

- the physical body is only a temporary medium for my transactions.
- when the body is not used, my transactions end.
- even without transactions, I continue to exist
- in deep sleep I don't use the body, I don't have transactions.
- body may not function, transactions may not happen. In sleep I am there.
- in death this body stops functioning. The transactions end, but I continue to survive.
- the surviving I cannot transact with the world, because the medium of transaction is not available.
- therefore, I should change my attitude towards the body.
- I use the body as an instrument like a car or scooter.
- the instrument has to be cleaned, it has to be kept in good condition. It has to be repaired when required, but I should remember the end of the instrument is not my end.
- Mortality of the body is not my mortality.
- I am immortal.

- nityaha aham
- I have no fear of death.
- the body has to come and go.
- that is a natural phenomenon.
- I accept the mortality of the body without resistance.
- I remember I am immortal.
- nityoham, nityoham
- repeat these words mentally and own up this fact.
- other thoughts may occur, ignore them.
- I am immortal... nityoham

**Om Purnamadah Purnamidam Purnat Purna mudachyate
Purnasya Poorna madaya Purnameva vasishyate**

THE END