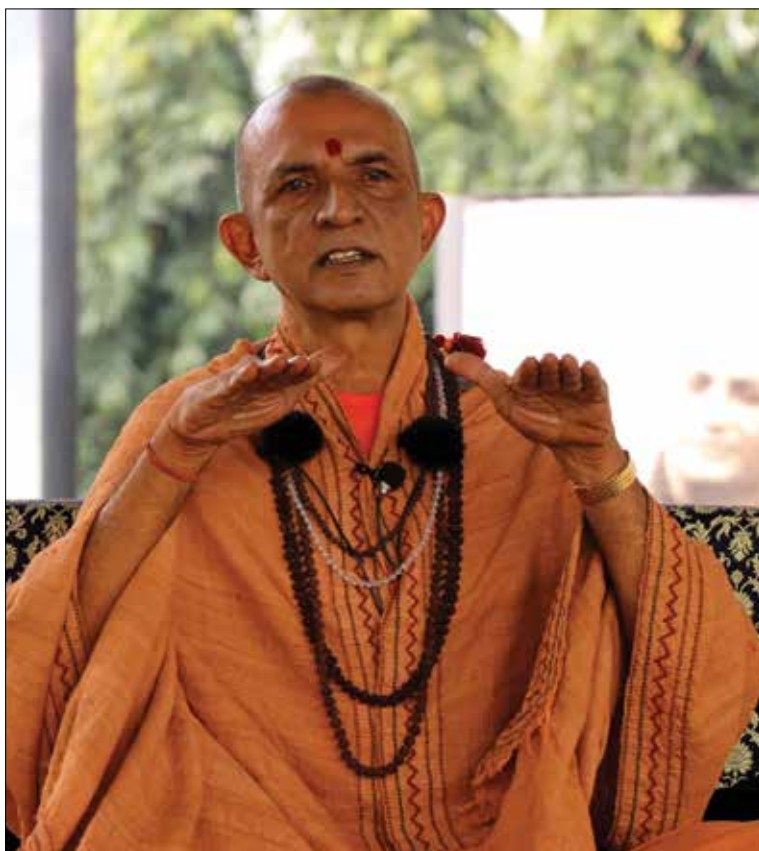


SWAN Speaks Kaya Sthairyam



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

SWAN Speaks
Kaya Sthairyam



SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI

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SWAN Speaks

Kaya Sthairyam

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Online Yoga Chakra Series



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

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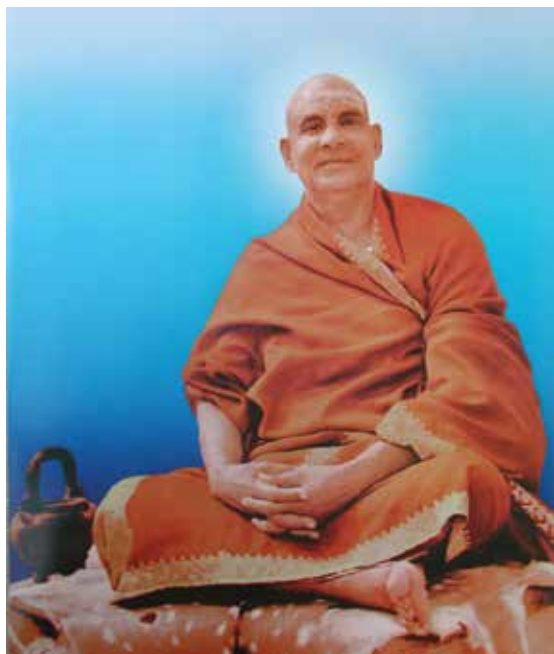
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*



Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our yogic and spiritual journey.*

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Preface

SWAN Speaks Series is a collection of yoga practices illustrating the depth inherent in the science of yoga or *yoga vidya*. Under the inspiration of Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, this series is another testimony of the Second Chapter of Bihar School of Yoga to take yoga from yoga practice to living it as a yogic lifestyle from moment to moment.

Dedicated to fulfil the mandate of his Guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, 'to develop yoga and explore yoga vidya', Swami Niranjanananda embarks on a novel method of sharing his knowledge and wisdom. Based on readings from the teaching of Sri Swami Satyananda, he establishes an expanded understanding of known practices. Each practice is seen from many angles and reference to classical scriptural sources is made. The relevance of the practice to all dimensions of human existence, be it the five koshas or the three gunas, is explained. The teaching comes alive as the significance of each practice in the daily life of aspirants is highlighted and the means to incorporate the teaching with simplicity and ease are given.

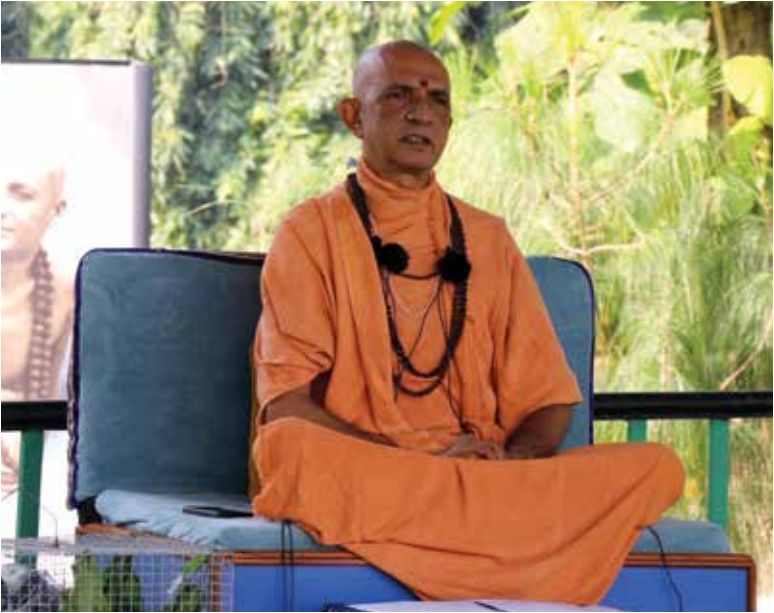
Each satsang and one specific angle allow aspirants to experience the importance, value and truth of theory and its practical application. Swami Niranjanananda offers the possibility to enlarge and deepen the connection to yoga vidya and make it a part of life.



SWAN Speaks Series is a tribute to yoga vidya, the eternal science of yoga, to Sri Swami Satyananda, who initiated the process of sharing this science with aspirants of all walks of life, and to Swami Niranjanananda. The series adds depth and complexity giving a new experience for serious aspirants.

1

Defining Meditation



Hari Om Tat Sat.

We are going to start a new series of discussions in relation to meditation. Meditation is a word commonly used by practically everyone across the globe, yet the understanding of meditation is non-existent. Meditation is seen as a way to close the eyes and to go on a flight of imagination or thoughts,

and that concludes the mediation. Since time immemorial, people have been trying to meditate. Sometimes they pick up an idea and think about it, go deep into it. Sometimes they pick up an object to visualize. Sometimes they pick up an abstract idea and try to contemplate on that idea. In this manner, practically every civilization and every culture has developed their own way to meditate. But what is meditation?

If we look at the Latin root of meditation, it is *meditare*, and *meditare* defines two different concepts: one is contemplation and the other comprehension. Comprehension and contemplation equals meditation. In yoga the subject of meditation has been identified as dhyana yoga. It is a branch of yoga that stands alone without any support from other yogas, although the practices of mediation are given in all the different branches of yoga according to their aims and objectives. Raja yoga defines the eightfold path of yoga, such as yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. It is also known as dhyana yoga, for the majority of the components of raja yoga are connected to meditation and mind management.

From the yogic perspective, each branch of yoga contains a series of meditation practices which lead you to the goal of that particular yoga. So how can one practise meditation in the correct manner? You have to understand two parts: One part is the practice of meditation which all of us can follow in our life according to our culture, tradition and techniques available to us. The second part is the actual growth or progress on the path of meditation.

Meditation from the yogic perspective is not just comprehension or contemplation on an idea, a thought or object. It follows a systematic and gradual path to prepare oneself to access the deeper layers of the mind, to transform the mind and to transcend the mind. This is what yoga says. The world cultures which teach meditation do not talk of enlightenment, they talk of mediation to experience a state of mind, or to experience the object of contemplation, yet the progression of meditation is never defined. What is the

first stage, the second stage, the third stage, the fourth stage? How do we prepare ourselves to experience meditation?

Before we embark on this subject, it should be clear that the general meditation practices around the world do not follow a specific pattern or path; they are open to the choice of the individual. In yoga there is a systematic progression of meditation, and in a broad sense people speak of beginning the meditation with *pratyahara*, with *dharana*, coming to meditation in *dhyana* and experiencing the final state of meditation in *samadhi*. These are the four broad ideas given in raja yoga to understand the path and process of meditation. From the raja yoga perspective, meditation begins with learning how to withdraw the mind from the sense objects, which is *pratyahara*; how to focus the mind so that there are no distractions and dissipations on a particular idea, thought or object, known as *dharana*; immersion in that experience is *dhyana*, meditation; and *samadhi* is the final understanding or realization that comes in meditation.

People have understood meditation in this manner, which is good enough to begin with. Now we have to look at another approach, another angle as well. Everyone wants to control their mind without even knowing how the body or the senses function. How do the body and senses affect and influence the behaviour of the mind? Attacking the mind is not the right method to begin meditation, rather observing the body becomes the first step in developing the meditative ability. This is what we are going to look into in this series of discussions. Just as relaxation becomes the means to achieve deep relaxation, the basic practices of meditation become an incentive and the means to access the higher dimensions of the mind. This journey in yoga begins not with the mind but with the body.

Across the globe people try to close their eyes and control their mind, observe their mind, still their mind, yet many times they are not successful in attaining this due to dissipations and distractions which emerge from the depth of their own minds or which come from outside and disturb



their concentration. Yoga says before you begin the practice of mediation, you have to learn how to still your body and the senses. There are two ideas which have been presented in the hatha yoga scriptures. One idea says that the practice of asanas brings firmness to the body. The other idea is that the practice of mudras brings stability to the body. Firmness through asanas and stable mind through mudras: this is how the hatha yoga scriptures begin by making you aware of the body

and how you can still the body and the senses.

Asanas are clear, *sthiram sukham asanam* is the definition of asana. *Sthirta* meaning firmness, *sukham* meaning comfort and *asana* meaning the body posture. Whichever body posture you may adopt, known as an asana, you have to be comfortable and you have to be still. Stillness and comfort are the foundation stones of yoga and yoga practices. In the hatha yoga scriptures it is said that asanas will provide firmness to the body and mudras will provide stability to the body:

Asanena bhava dridham mudraya sthiratha chaiva.

Asana is a posture in which you have to be still and comfortable for some time. There are many asanas, some are dynamic and some static. There are many teachers who say you can practise mediation in any posture and they call it dynamic meditation. There is no such thing as dynamic meditation, there is only dynamic awareness. Meditation is never dynamic; awareness can be dynamic. If you walk and you say you are practising walking meditation, well you can say it to justify your intention and effort, yet in reality that is walking awareness, not walking meditation. How you walk,

what steps you take, how you breathe, which mantra you chant with every step – that is not meditation, it is awareness. Meditation means totally cutting off from all sensory and motor inputs. Meditation means total disconnection from the senses and sense objects. Meditation means experiencing the inner mind and to experience the inner mind, yoga says: make yourself physically still and make yourself mentally still.

Kaya sthairyam

The practice which we will be discussing is known as kaya sthairyam. This technique has been defined as the first step to meditation. *Kaya* means the total body, including all the systems of the body, not only the external, but also the internal. Total awareness of the total body is *kaya*. *Sthairyam* means stillness. It is the stillness of the total body which is the beginning of the pratyahara-dharana series. Four asanas have been defined which can help attain this physical stability. The first asana is the practice of siddhasana; second, padmasana; third, simhasana and fourth, bhadrasana.

People who know yoga may say, “Okay, siddhasana, as a meditative posture I can understand, padmasana as a meditative posture, I can understand it, but *simhasana*, the lion pose, how can that be a meditative posture? Or *bhadrasana*, the gracious pose, how can that be called a meditative posture?” From the perspective of the hatha yoga scriptures, it can, for each asana will lead you to a different level of visualization. It will lead you to a different level of awareness and it will lead you to a different level of experience. The practice of these four asanas have been described to perfect the technique of kaya sthairyam. Along with the asanas, they also speak of mudras. What are mudras? A mudra is a pranic and mental attitude. Here, attaining stability with the practice of mudra means balancing the mental and the pranic activity within yourself. When the physical body, the mind and pranic activities are in harmony with each other, then there is physical relaxation and meditation becomes easy to practise and to experience.

2

Process of Meditation



Meditation is a very ancient practice and each culture, each civilization, each belief system developed their own form of meditation. But what is meditation? Today the word ‘meditation’ has become generic and people use the word meditation with everything. However, meditation has a specific, defined and definite purpose. What is the meaning of the word ‘meditation’? In Latin the word is *meditare* and comprises of two different ideas. One is comprehension and

the other is contemplation. If you look at these two words, comprehension and contemplation, there can be many practices which you can associate with these two words, yet you will discover that contemplation and comprehension are activities of manas and buddhi. From the Latin perspective, meditation is engaging manas and buddhi.

Total mind

Many belief systems of the past as well as of today believe in contemplation. They can pick up an idea, a thought and contemplate on it. That contemplation is an expression of your own intellect. When you contemplate, you are following the path of jnana yoga, which is contemplation. You can contemplate upon “Who am I?” You can contemplate upon an idea or an object. You can contemplate on a flower. You can contemplate on nature. You can contemplate on the sun, moon and stars. Whatever is the contemplation, you are following a train of thought – to look at it, to perceive it, to analyze it and possibly to understand and comprehend it. Contemplation is manas and comprehension is buddhi, knowing. This has been one path that many of the belief systems of the world have followed and called meditation.

From the yogic perspective, meditation does not limit itself only to the manas and buddhi experience, contemplation and comprehension, it engages the total mind, including chitta and ahamkara. The whole mind is engaged in meditation; the whole mind is absorbed in meditation. From the yogic perspective, it is absorption in the experience, which is meditation. When I was about seventeen years old, I had my first experience of meditation. I used to practise my japa, my pratyahara sadhanas, my dharana sadhanas, like all yoga aspirants in the world. One day, when I was travelling in a car, I was sitting on the passenger’s side and we were going through a deep forested, hilly area. At one point, beside the road was a lake and a huge willow tree. I glanced at that lake and the willow tree as you would naturally do when you are looking at the scenery.

Somehow my mind identified for some moments with the lake and the willow tree, possibly for a few seconds, I don't know. It felt like hours. My experience was that I had *become* the willow tree and I could feel the roots in the mud, in the water, all squishy, all liquid. I could feel insects crawling on the trunk. I could feel the movement of the branches and leaves in the gentle wind. For some moments I forgot where I was, what I was doing. I lost the consciousness, the awareness of where I was. I just became the willow tree and I experienced that Swami Niranjan was not this body, but Swami Niranjan was the willow tree, with the same mind, the same consciousness, the same perception, but not as a human figure, as a tree. I don't know how long this experience lasted. It could have been for few moments, a few minutes or a few hours. Then I came back. In that state there was an awareness of infinite time, not moments, not identified minutes and seconds but of continuous time. There was no awareness of self, only the awareness that I have become the tree, my body is the tree, I am the tree. This is known as absorption and that absorption is meditation, being absorbed in the experience.

Therefore, yoga states that meditation is not a practice, rather it is a state of mind which you live continuously. People generally think of meditation as sitting down quietly, keeping the spine upright and straight, keeping the hands on the knees, closing the eyes and going into flights of imaginations, or into ideas, thoughts, concepts or visualizations. That is not meditation, that is preparing yourself to experience the meditative state. Preparing yourself to experience the meditative state is not meditation, for you are not absorbed in the experience. When you are absorbed then that becomes meditation. For example – a condition of the mind which overpowers your thinking, your emotions, your feelings, your sentiments is the state of mind which is the meditative state.

Positive and negative meditation

Take manahprasad, for example. *Manahprasad* means happiness. When you are happy and absorbed in that state, in that

feeling, in that experience of being happy, that is meditation. When you slip out of that state, distractions have taken you away from that experience of happiness. You have to make the effort to again reconnect to that experience of happiness. When you connect again and begin to experience that condition of mind, your meditation begins again. Meditation is not closing the eyes, sitting upright and chanting the mantras. Meditation is maintaining a positive state of mind, 24/7.

Another example: when you are sad, depressed, worried, it overpowers the mind. You are continuously thinking and brooding about the cause of your pain, suffering and worry. That is also meditation. You can't extract yourself, you are absorbed in that worry, you are absorbed in that anxiety and you cannot extract yourself. That is meditation, yet it is negative meditation.

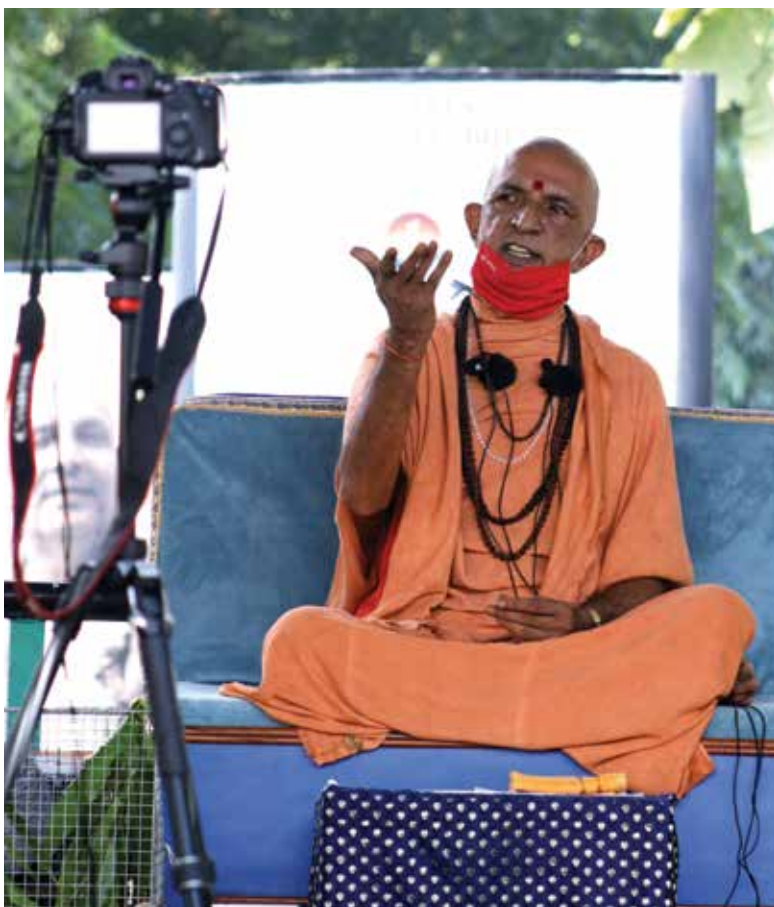
So there are two types of meditation, one negative and one positive. Negative meditation is what engages you in the world – your anxieties, fears, phobias, your dissipations and distractions. They engage you in the outer dimension and they grab hold of your mind and the nature of the mind, and that colours your perception, your behaviour and performance. That is negative meditation. When you are unable to extract yourself from anger and your behaviour and performance are coloured by that anger, that is negative meditation. When you are frustrated and worried and you cannot extract yourself from that state of thought and mind, that is negative meditation. It happens to us all the time. We are meditating all the time practically without knowing it, as that is the condition and state of mind which we are living all the time.

In yoga we are not talking of negative meditation, we talk of positive meditation. Yoga says that meditation is the expression of the latent, inherent positive qualities in our life. It is not discovering God. It is not communing with God. It is discovering, experiencing and expressing the latent, inherent, positive qualities of our life.

This should not be an alien concept because Paramahamsaji, Sri Swami Satyanandaji has stated, “The purpose of sadhana is to attain purity, it is to attain positivity and it is to attain transcendence.” Three things indicate the purpose of sadhana – purity, positivity and transcendence. Purity means being free of all the negative traits in life. You are pure, untouched by the gunas. You are not influenced by the gunas, you have risen above them, that is purity. You maintain your own wisdom, luminosity and clarity. Positivity is an indication of having connected with the latent, inherent positive qualities which takes you to transcendence of the lower natures and the tendencies of the mind. If the attainment of purity, positivity and transcendence is the purpose of sadhana, then meditation has to follow that path. For this reason, I have stated that meditation is the discovery, experience and expression of the latent, inherent positive qualities, which many times poke up their heads in our lives, yet we tend to ignore them because of distractions and dissipations.

Now we come to the meditator; us, the human beings, who like to believe and think that we meditate. What is the form of our meditation? It is only an intellectual path of contemplation. One of the biggest difficulties that people face in meditation is that they are unable to control the behaviour of their mind. They are unable to control the behaviour of their senses and emotions. So what happens? When you try to focus and the mind becomes introvert, it wanders off or goes to sleep. Then what do you do? You sleep and doze off instead of experiencing meditation. If you have to control your sleep, your dozing off, then you have to struggle with yourself, you have to struggle with your mind and then it is not meditation anymore. Rather it becomes inner self-wrestling. You wrestle with yourself, with a condition of your mind, and many times you are not even aware that this change has taken place.

Many times when you are meditating, you suddenly discover that you are miles away from your meditation, in some other city, in some other country, doing something



else. Then you have to drag yourself back to where you are at present and start again. Distractions and dissipations never allow a person to experience meditation. These distractions come from the senses and the body. These distractions come from the mind – manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. The impressions, the conditionings that we live, the *samskaras*, all become factors in creating distractions and dissipations of the mind. So, despite all efforts, instead of meditating people struggle with their mental condition and they cannot meditate.

Absorption and reconnection

Yoga is clear that meditation has to happen in two ways. One is the absorption in the state of experience and when you slip, reconnection; reconnect to that state of experience. This reconnection happens with dynamic awareness for you have to understand one important point here. As you meditate you are working with your awareness. Initially you have to expand and enlarge your awareness. That is also a practice of meditation, knowing how to expand and enlarge the dimension, field and scope of awareness. For example, you are hearing many sounds, yet you are not aware of them. You can listen to me, keep your attention on me, at the same time you can be aware of all the other sounds as well.

Attention and awareness are two different ideas. Attention is focused and awareness is enlarged. What people call dynamic meditation is a misnomer, what they mean is dynamic awareness. Dynamic awareness means enlarging your awareness, and as the awareness enlarges you are able to perceive more aspects which you had previously missed. It is that dynamic awareness which allows you to go back again to the source of experience.

If you slip from the state of happiness, if you slip from the state of positivity, if you slip from the state of joy, it is dynamic awareness that will take you back again. People call this dynamic awareness 'mindfulness'. It is a new word. In yoga there is no such thing as mindfulness, there is dynamic awareness. Dynamic awareness is an aid to experiencing meditation. Dynamic awareness keeps you in line and helps you maintain the positive mental state.

This is the meditation; the problem is with the meditators for they have to confront their minds. Therefore, in yoga, there is a sequence of learning how to concentrate, how to avoid the dissipations and distractions of the mind, how to focus and how to experience. This entire structure is known as *dhyana yoga*. *Dhyana yoga* means yoga of meditation. This yoga of meditation defines many different aspirations of meditation. Some aspirations are connected with *jnana yoga*,

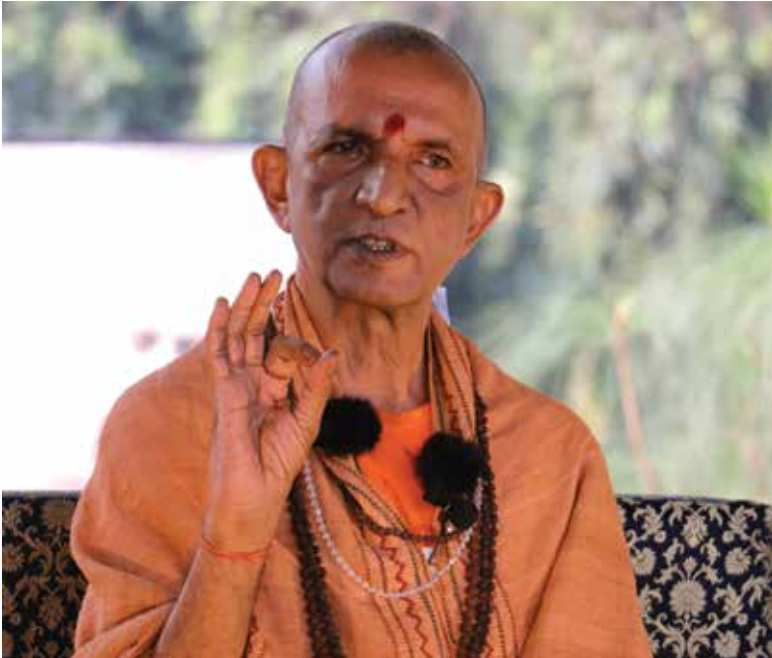
some with hatha yoga, some with raja yoga. All these different expressions lead us to experience a different dimension of meditation within our own fields of mind and consciousness.

The majority of people are unable to do that. Even san-nyasins are not able to remain connected with happiness, contentment, joy, peace, harmony or balance as a continuous experience in life, they fluctuate. So fluctuation happens everywhere. As a general rule, people cannot identify with something that transcends the body and mind. They have to use the tools of body and mind to discover transcendental reality. Therefore, kaya sthairyam is the kindergarten level for those who are unable to maintain the experience and expression of the positivity of mind. Kaya sthairyam is the kindergarten level practice for those people who are unable to maintain the experience and the expression of the positive qualities of mind. Kaya sthairyam is the first practice of dhyana yoga.

Why are we not able to maintain the experience and expression of the positive qualities of mind? Due to mental, emotional and pranic imbalances which are the causes of our dissipation and distraction. Kaya sthairyam is not just one practice of learning how to become still, but also of developing and balancing as well as awakening and realigning the pranas, and also knowing the extent of the sensorial experiences and learning how to manage them. Kaya sthairyam is a practice of stopping the dissipation of the mind and emotions and attaining final firmness, *dhridhta*, and *sthairyam*, stability. Firmness and stability are not only physical but also mental and emotional, and they allow you to experience the spiritual, transcendental dimension. Therefore, the techniques of kaya sthairyam are included in the hatha yoga, raja yoga and in higher kundalini yoga practices. It is not just one practice and its importance is shown with its inclusion in three major branches of yoga: hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga.

3

Two Tools



We have been talking about meditation and the tools required to prepare oneself to experience meditation. People need to understand that meditation is not merely the act of sitting down in a posture, closing the eyes, contemplating something for a limited period of time and then they are back in the

reality of the world. This meditation does not take you to the experience of the meditative state of peace, joy, contentment, harmony and equilibrium. It is just a moment of relaxation from the hectic schedule of the day when you are closing your eyes and thinking of something different to the normal thoughts that come to your mind.

Yama and niyama

The process of meditation has been clearly defined in yoga. There is a set of one yama and one niyama associated with meditation explained in the Yoga Upanishads. To perfect meditation, the particular yama and niyama have to be followed. The yama is:

Dehendriyeshu vairagyam yama iti uchyate budhaih.

Vairagya means dispassion, *deha* means the body and *indriya* refers to the senses. If you are able to maintain dispassion from the body and the senses, that is a yama. The niyama is:

Anurakti pare tattve satatam niyamah smritah.

Anurakti pare tattve, constant longing for the Supreme, is the niyama. If you are able to understand this yama and niyama, the object and path of meditation become clear.

The requirement of meditation is *vairagya*, detachment or dispassion from the body and the senses. You have to train yourself for that. You cannot just sit down and say, 'I am not this body, I am not the senses, I am not the mind'. That is only an unrealized intellectual ideation which does not help you in any manner. Making an effort to control the distractions of the body and the senses is the *sadhana* which prepares you for meditation. That is the first yama. The niyama is *anurakti pare tattve*, a constant longing for higher awareness, for the supreme, the benevolent, the uplifting, positive expression. That becomes the focus which allows you to enter into higher and deeper meditative states, as you have an aim, a goal, an aspiration to achieve and experience in meditation. The niyama is to always maintain the goal, the aspiration and the

aim: the attainment of positivity, purity and transcendence by going beyond the gross, mundane awareness. When this awareness becomes permanent, then the niyama helps to attain the fulfilment of the yama – detachment or dispassion from the body and senses. This is what has to be understood when we begin to take the basic steps towards meditation.

The first step towards meditation is the practice of kaya sthairyam. *Kaya* means the total body, including body parts, all the organs, systems and senses, the karmendriyas and the jnanendriyas, the entire body system including the brain with which we live in this world. Everything that is material, organic and functions through the karmendriyas to allow us to experience light is *kaya*. *Sthairyam* means stillness, firmness. In the hatha yoga scriptures it has been stated that the stillness of the body can be achieved by the practice of asana and mudra. These are the two tools that have been given to perfect the first level of kaya sthairyam. With these two tools, asana and mudra, you are able to achieve the basic or primary stillness which allows you to practise other techniques of meditation and go deeper into swadhyaya. *Swadhyaya* is self-analysis, self-understanding, self-correction and it happens through meditation. Meditation leads to swadhyaya and swadhyaya leads to the experience of purity, harmony, positivity and transcendence.

When you practise kaya sthairyam and stillness of the body is achieved, that becomes a condition, a state which is both physical and psychological.

Sarva vastuni udasin bhava asanama uttamam.

This is the definition of kaya sthairyam given in the Yoga Upanishads. You are indifferent towards all objects; there is no attraction and no repulsion; there is acceptance and understanding of the role that each thing plays in creation, in your life, in your home. In this manner, there is no attachment, no attraction, no detachment, no repulsion. You are accepting, utilizing and maintaining all objects with an indifferent attitude and using them for your own growth and

development, your balance and harmony. When there is no attraction and no repulsion, that is the balanced state which in Sanskrit is called *samya bhava*, the balanced feeling, the balanced condition, the balanced state. In English it is known as an indifferent attitude which is not an accurate translation. Hatha yogic scriptures say that the two tools of asana and mudra bring firmness and stability to the body:

Mudrayah sthiratah chaiva asanena bhavet dridham.

Asana brings firmness, *dridhta*, solidity; and *mudra* gives *sthirta*, stability, fixity.

Mudra

The word mudra comes from the Sanskrit root ‘*mud*’ which means to be happy, to be pleased. In another context, mudra is used as a term for the food grains that we eat/consume. Mudra is also used as a term for money and I am sure that having money or having food in the stomach brings *mudita*, happiness to the mind. So, the word mudra is associated with money and grains. Literally speaking, mudra means a pleasing attitude, a healthy awareness. When is this pleasing attitude and healthy awareness experienced? Many people will say when the mind is calm and relaxed or when the body is calm and relaxed. They miss one very important point. Not only body and mind, but the *pranas* are also relaxed. Mudra is a practice which affects the pranic dimension, the *pranamaya kosha*, by using *nadi vijñana*, the knowledge of nadis or meridians. There are many kinds of mudras, postures and attitudes that one can adopt at different times in the practice of asana, pranayama, meditation and even in daily life.

Here we are talking about yogic mudras. For example: in the practice of jnana mudra or chin mudra, what is the position adopted? One way is when the top of the finger and thumb touch each other while the other three fingers remain straight. Another way is when the top of the index finger is at the middle of the thumb at the first line and pressure is



applied there. The third way is when the index finger presses at the second line of the thumb and in the fourth variation the index finger presses at the bottom part or root of the thumb. So there are these four movements in this simple mudra. Tip of the thumb, first line of the thumb, second line of the thumb, and the bottom or root of the thumb.

When you practise jnana mudra or chin mudra and you press the thumb and the index finger together, what is happening? First of all, according to *nadi vijñana*, the science of nerve meridians, the tip of the thumb influences the brain centre. When you press the top and maintain this posture with a pressure of about twenty percent on the tip of the finger and thumb, you are actually stimulating the meridian which balances the frontal and the back lobe of the brain, the left hemisphere and right hemisphere of the brain. Alpha activity begins with the practice of this mudra and beta activity which relates to distractions subsides gradually.

When you press other parts of the thumbs, you are influencing the endocrine gland systems, like the pineal and pituitary glands, the thalamus and further down you have the thyroid and para-thyroid glands. All the glands of the endocrine system are being regulated and balanced with the practice of jnana mudra or chin mudra bringing about a state of balance and harmony in the physical body as well as in the mind. That is one example.

Another example is *nasikagra drishti*, the practice of nose-tip gazing. The nose-tip is the centre for the heart. When you gaze at the nose-tip, the coming together of the eyes also affects the region of the third eye and the liver. So *nasikagra*



drishti is affecting, balancing and harmonizing the functions of the liver and heart. When you practise shambhavi mudra, it influences the liver, kidneys and pancreas which are stimulated by this positioning of the eyes. In the physical dimension, the three main functions of the liver are detoxification, synthesis and storage. The three functions of the ajna chakra are to detoxify the psyche, synthesize energy and store shakti.

Mudras are effective in regulating the prana and thereby the physical functions of the glands and inner body systems. Mudras bring pranic and mental balance. *Mudra siddhi*, the perfection of mudra, is *tatah abhyasat manah sthairyam*, the practice of mudras enables you to still the mind. When the pranas are balanced, mental activities are influenced and regulated by prana shakti, and when the senses are already under control, the mind becomes still. That is when mudra becomes an attitude. It is not a practice. You have to maintain that condition, that state which you have achieved with the practice of mudra. Maintain the positivity, happiness, contentment, maintain the balance and equilibrium for that will take you into the practice of kaya sthairyam.

4

Attainment



We have been talking about the practice of kaya sthairyam and the tools of kaya sthairyam which is the practice of mudras and asanas. What remains to be understood is the state which one attains with the practice of mudra. The word 'mudra' indicates a degree or level of happiness in the

mind which is the outcome of the balance between mind and senses. It is the outcome of stopping the distractions of the senses and the wandering of the mind. This happiness has to be understood in the right manner. What is happiness for you? Think about it and figure out what makes you happy.

Happiness

According to yogic understanding the happiness which we experience in the world is an associate of raga. Your happiness comes out of your raga. Your happiness comes out of your attachment. Your happiness comes out of the idea or the understanding that 'If I have this thing, I will be happy'. The entire concept of happiness in human life is based on raga. This raga defines happiness for everyone in the world, however is this real happiness? For example, there is a need; we demand the requirement be met, yet we do not get it instantly. There is a delay, we throw tantrums saying, 'I have not received what I wanted'. The moment we receive what we want, we feel happy, whether it be a pair of shoes or a cleaning cloth. Acquiring the shoes or the cleaning cloth makes you happy. If you don't have it you are fighting, demanding and being aggressive.

So, what is happiness for everyone? Nothing but knowing 'I have what I want and that makes me happy'. When you have the things you desire and crave, you are happy. What makes you unhappy is when you don't have the things you desire or crave. This idea of happiness is a lopsided or distorted idea of happiness, limited to 'me, my needs, my demands, my cravings and desires'. Therefore, despite people wanting to be happy, they are never happy.

What is happiness from the yogic perspective? There is a word which appears often in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali – *santosha*. *Santosha* means contentment, and it is an idea very much related with Asian spirituality. Asian spirituality and western spirituality have different perspectives. The perspective of Asian spirituality is to be detached and free from desires, expectations and needs. There is a saying:

*Chah gayi, chinta miti, manava beparva;
Ja ko kachu na chahiye, vahi shahenshah*

Desire is gone, anxiety is finished, the mind is
without any worry;
The one who does not need anything is the true
Emperor

The one who does not require anything is the king of kings and that has been the foundation of Asian spirituality. It is what yoga also holds onto. It is through freedom from *vasanas* cravings, and desires, that we seek to attain harmony, balance, peace and transcendence. Therefore, the word *santosha* or contentment indicates a nature of wholeness or completeness where one is fulfilled, where one is not associating with raga, attachment or craving. That *santosha* is the yogic state of happiness.

Human beings confuse pleasure with happiness. Can you distinguish between pleasure and happiness? Your body does, you don't. How does the body know the difference between pleasure and happiness? By secreting a specific hormone. Serotonin lifts up the mood, it makes one light, optimistic, positive and makes one look forward to something nice; it makes one happy. Dopamine is pleasure-oriented and creates habits which are difficult to get rid of. If you analyze your own life and your own understanding of happiness, you will discover that a lot is connected with the search for pleasure and not happiness. A lot of what makes you happy is connected with self-gratification and the absence or lack of self-gratification makes you unhappy. There is no contentment in life, there is no *santosha* in life, there is no balance and no peace in life.

Udasinta

The practice of *kaya sthairyam* brings the feeling of *udasinta*. *Udasinta* in English is translated as indifference which has a negative connotation. *Udasinta* does not mean indifference; *udasinta* means finding a balance in your raga – your craving,



desire, expectation and need. If you can understand this secret, you will know the secret of meditation as well. Raga is the primary seed which binds us to this material world and consciousness and dwesha is the fruit of raga. There can be raga without dwesha for dwesha is always the fruit of raga, and raga is the primary seed. This raga is the attachment

we develop with everything in life. Now we have to become 'non-attached' and that is the cultivation of vairagya – from attachment you move to non-attachment.

I am not using the word detachment. We are not detaching, we are not separating from anything, we are simply changing an awareness, a perception and an attitude where we can keep ourselves separate from the object, the situation or the event of our experience. When we are separate without getting involved, attached or being associated with it, that is the state of non-attachment or you can call it objectivity. An objective, dynamic awareness is the *udasin bhava*, the feeling that 'I am not indifferent to anything, but I am free from the craving. I do care but I am free from the association, the craving, the desire and the perceived need'.

That is the state that comes with *kaya sthairyam*. Take *kaya sthairyam* as an example for physical steadiness. When you are physically steady and there is an itch on the right hand, you immediately want to scratch that itch. It is a normal reaction. The body will want to move. At that time, you have to stop that movement of the body. Don't scratch your itch. Let it dissipate by itself, and it will. I have had the experience many times in meditation or even while relaxing that I am lying down or sitting still and there is an itch. I observe the itch and it goes away after some time. I did not even remember that I was feeling an itch at this place earlier. When you stop the distraction which is created by the body, the senses and the mind, and you hold your awareness, your focus and concentration helps to give stability to body, prana and the mind as well.

The same principle applies to the mind. If you are sitting and meditating, that is *sthairya*, stillness of the mind. Then the mind jumps and goes to some other location, some other experience or event. You are not aware at that time to bring the mind back to its place of concentration. You follow the mind and then later on you realize, 'I am thinking of something different'. Your meditation is already broken as you are not able to maintain your focus, your awareness.

You followed the mind, it dissipated and distracted your awareness and attention, so there was no meditation. If you hold the mind back and do not allow it to move from the object of concentration, if you stop the mind from moving, just as you stop scratching your itch, then that becomes *manah sthairyam*, mental stability. This leads to an objective, dynamic awareness, a non-participative awareness in which you become the *drashta*, witness.

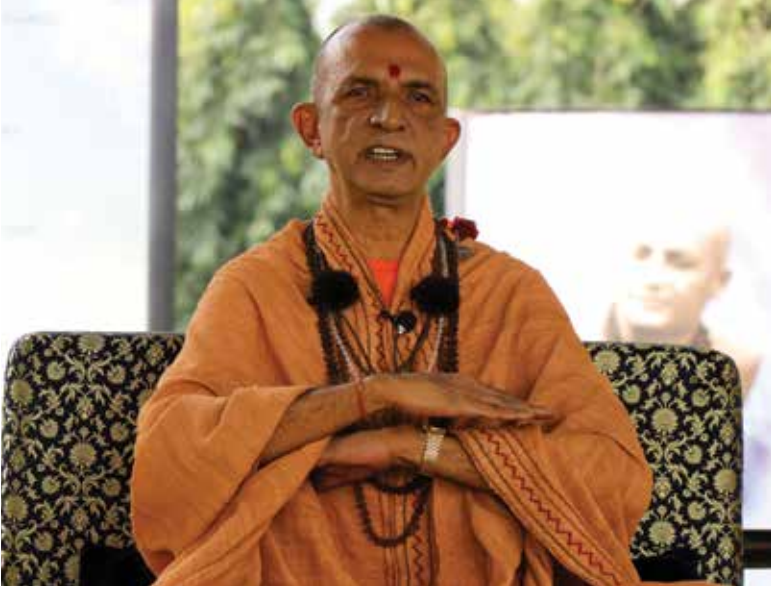
Take the example of little children. They want everything under the sun – this toy, this chocolate, this item, that item. They throw tantrums, demand, cry, throw things around. Imagine that they are living with their grandfather. What will the grandfather do when children throw a tantrum? He will look at them, give them a benevolent smile, pat them on the back and say, “We’ll find a way to get it later on, don’t worry now.” Grandparents will always give the child throwing a tantrum a benevolent smile, a pat on the back and say, “Okay, we’ll look after your need later on, not now. Right now something else is happening.”

Can you be a grandfather to your own mind? How can you become a grandfather to your own mind? Ask yourself three questions: First question is “Do I desire it?” If the answer is affirmative, then ask the question, “Why?” Second question is “Do I want it?” If the answer is affirmative, ask “Why?” Third question is “Do I really need it?” Ask yourself these three questions: “Do I desire it?” which means it is an unconscious need; “Do I want it?” which means it is something that I thought I could use; and “Do I need it? No, not really. I can do without.” If you ask yourself these three questions, you will be able to sort out a lot of the petitions in the mind which indicate desire, expectations and ambitions. You can sort out all those petitions and know which is the petition that you need to look into now, and then work for that.

Clarity, objective dynamic awareness and contentment come with *kaya sthairyam*. They all become part of the *udasin bhava*, the balanced awareness, achieved with *kaya sthairyam*.

5

Creating a Solid Base



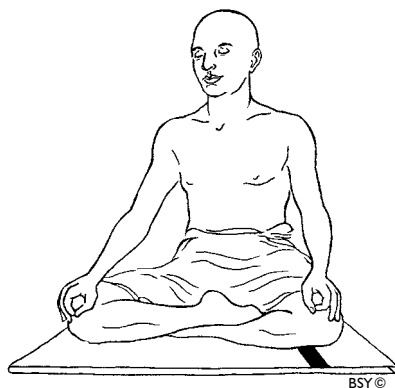
Let us discuss the postures used to perfect *kaya sthairyam*. *Kaya* means the complete body, the physical and psychological components both constitute the word *kaya*: body, senses, mind, emotions and pranas. According to yogic principles, there are five subtle experiences or dimensions in the body which are recognized as body experience. These dimensions or body experiences are known as *koshas*. The material body

is the *annamaya kosha*, the vital energy body is the *pranamaya kosha*, and the mind or the mental dimension is the *manomaya kosha*. From the yogic perspective, annamaya, pranamaya and manomaya koshas constitute kaya, the physical body interactive in the sensorial world. It is this kaya which has to be stilled, and the word *sthairyam* is stillness.

According to yogic ideas and understanding, one should be comfortable and still in any situation and posture, at any time, at any place. That indicates the state of harmony and balance between the activities and functions of the senses, pranas and the mind, yet we are not conditioned to stop the function of the senses or the mind. Therefore, when people try to meditate, they generally struggle with the mind, trying to still it, calm and stabilize it instead of experiencing the mind and the positive nature of the mind. That struggle with the mind defeats the whole purpose of meditation, concentration and kaya sthairyam.

Asanas

One of the conditions of yoga is that there should be no struggle either with the body or the mind. You do not have to try to control or dominate the body and mind but simply guide the functions, the awareness, the understanding, the attractions and emotions in the right, correct and positive manner and direction. The scriptures have defined four specific postures to practise kaya sthairyam. One posture is known as *siddhasana*, the adept's pose. To practise siddhasana, you sit on the floor with your legs in front, bring the right heel close to the body and press it against the perineum. Then bring the left heel and place the left heel on top of the right heel pressing against the pubic bone pushing the right toes in

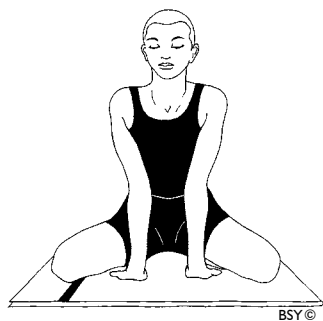


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the crack or space between the thigh and the calf muscle, and pull up the left toes in the crack or space between the thighs and the calf muscle. Placing the hands either in jnana mudra or chin mudra on the knees, close your eyes and become still. This is siddhasana, a practice used to perfect kaya sthairyam.



Another asana used in the practice of kaya sthairyam is *padmasana* or the lotus pose, well known as a yogic pose throughout the world. Yogis, tapasvis and rishis who practised yoga sadhana, meditation and long austerities have practised and perfected padmasana. This is the second posture.



The third posture is *simhasana* or the lion pose. To practise simhasana, you sit on your knees, bring the toes together, separate the heels and sit in between the heels. Then separate the knees in front and place the arms in between the knees, either with fingers facing forwards or backwards, keeping the head straight, closing the eyes and supporting the whole body with your arms. Generally, simhasana is also roaring however in this practice of simhasana, you are not roaring like a lion, you are adopting the pose of the lion, that's all.



The fourth posture is known as bhadrasana. You separate your toes and heels, continue to sit in vajrasana, though this

time the perineum is on the floor, with the feet separate and with knees separate keeping the hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. These are the four asanas that have been used to still the senses, the pranas and the mind.

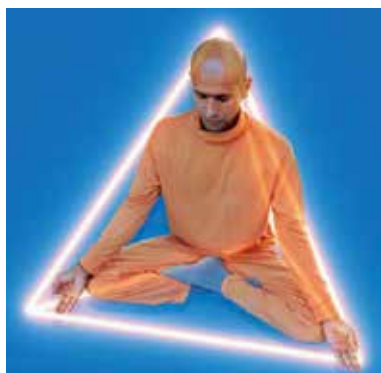
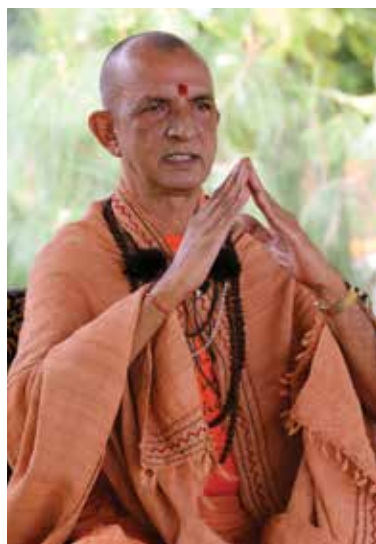
Siddhasana

What happens to the body when we are practising these asanas? In which seated yogic posture are you most stable and firm? You would say that in any of the four asanas, one can be stable and firm. Why?

The meditative postures create different angles in the body. When you sit on the floor in a cross-legged position, you are creating a base triangle, with two points as the knees and with the coccyx forming a triangle. If you place your weight towards the back, it is easy for you to fall back. If you lean a bit forward, it is easy for you to fall to the front. So the legs have to be placed in such a manner where they are comfortable, and in this triangle of the legs you are firmly placed on the floor. Each part of your lower legs, upper legs and spine is firmly seated on the floor.

So that is one triangle, the leg triangle. The second triangle is the triangle of the arms from the spine to the arms on both sides. The third triangle is the frontal one. When you bring all the triangles together what happens? You make a pyramid. The base of the pyramid is the





solid and flattest area and the tip of the pyramid which happens to be the head is the apex. The whole body is visualized in form of a triangular pyramid. When you visualize the body as a triangular pyramid and focus on the stability of your physical body on the floor, then you experience absolute immobility and stillness of the body. This happens in siddhasana with the added benefit that you are pressing against the perineum and activating mooladhara chakra; you are also pressing against the pubic bone activating swadhisthana chakra. With the activation of the earth and water elements in the body, they become stable, still, fixed and firm. That is *sthirta*.



Padmasana

When you practise padmasana, you place your heels on top of the thighs and the heels protect the body from falling forwards. In deep meditation, as you gradually lose control over bodily functions, muscles and bones, you are not able to maintain the body upright and straight. With the introversion



of the mind, the body begins to move forwards, sideways or backwards and eventually sleep sets in. The lotus pose prevents the body from falling forward while keeping the body upright and straight and enables the aspirant to practise meditation properly without falling asleep. Those of you who cannot sustain a pose for a long time have to gradually train yourself in these positions so that you are comfortable and at ease with yourself and can remain still.

So you have to start with five minutes of practice and gradually increase one minute every day. Today you start with five minutes of stillness, sitting in one of the postures. Tomorrow you do it for six, then for seven minutes, then for eight minutes and gradually increase the time of stillness by a minute per day.

Bhadrasana

There are many people who find it difficult to remain upright and they do not need a triangular base but a square base to sit upon. That square base is attained in bhadrasana, as the knees and feet are in one straight line with the perineum in the middle on the floor. It is like a square base with the body resting on the floor in the middle. Bhadrasana becomes another practice in which you can truly experience physical stability and firmness. *Bhadra* means a gentle person so bhadrasana is the pose of a gentle person. Initially, you



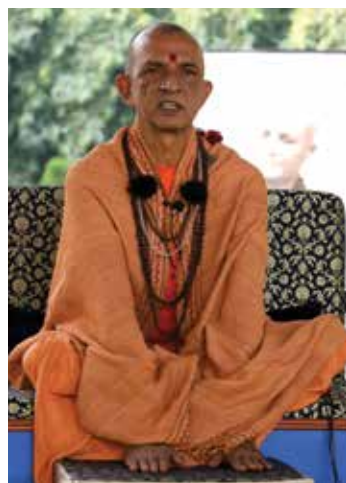


may practise this posture for a few seconds. Gradually when the joints loosen up and flexibility comes in, you can practise this posture for a longer period. It is an important meditative posture used in yoga to deepen the experiences of pratyahara and dharana.

Simhasana



There are also some people who are unable to restrain themselves and find it hard to become still for the pranas are haywire in their bodies. Even though they may be comfortable in a particular posture, they cannot sit still. For such people, there is the practice of simhasana in which you sit in vajrasana, separate the knees and place the hands in front in between the knees, either facing forward or with the fingers pointing towards you. Keeping the head straight, simply close the eyes. In this posture, you are supporting your body, you are supporting your back, being comfortable, keeping the eyes closed, and you use the techniques of kaya sthairyam which regulate your prana shakti. So kaya sthairyam can be practised in the posture of *simhasana*, the lion pose, as well.



The postures of bhadrasana and vajrasana are not easy postures in which to practise stillness of the body. If you are able to master bhadrasana and simhasana to practise kaya sthairyam, these two postures will take your awareness to another area, another dimension of kaya sthairyam.

The first practice of kaya sthairyam is stillness of the body and stillness of the senses. The second practice of kaya sthairyam is stilling the pranas and the third practice of kaya sthairyam is stilling the mind. So, when we are working with the senses and the body, we use the postures of sukhasana, siddhasana, padmasana. When we work with pranic movement and pranic flow, we adopt the pose of bhadrasana and simhasana. When we are working with the mind, we come back to padmasana or siddhasana. These are the practices and the postures of kaya sthairyam.

Kaya sthairyam is a progressive technique. All these techniques have to be learnt under the guidance and supervision of a competent yoga teacher, as there are different components that have to be taken into consideration, not only the posture performed by the body but also the activity of the pranas and the agitations of the mind. Kaya sthairyam is not a practice of just sitting still but also of monitoring and regulating the autonomic activities, for then the movements of the body are stilled.

The first time is always a struggle yet by the time you practise for the seventh or eighth time you are very much at ease. People think that they should be able to do it perfectly the first time, which is a big fallacy. How can you do everything properly the first time when you don't even know what you are doing? That is where people struggle with themselves. There should be no mental tension in the mind of the meditator, thinking, 'I am not able to do it quick enough'. If you have that tension, be assured that you will never progress in meditation. Patience is a virtue which people do not have, and therefore they cannot meditate. They try to force their meditation and there is no comfort and no shanti in what they do. Success to meditation is having patience, not anxiety.

Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.



SWAN Speaks Series takes yoga to the level of yoga vidya, where practice is seen as a wholistic application of ancient wisdom so pertinent to modern life. *SWAN Speaks Series* is a tribute to *yoga vidya*, the eternal science of yoga, to Sri Swami Satyananda, who initiated the process of sharing this science with aspirants of all walks of life, and to Swami Niranjanananda. The series adds depth and complexity giving a new experience for serious aspirants.

SWAN Speaks Kaya Sthairyam gives a new understanding to the practice of body stillness or *kaya sthairyam*. The body with its physical, mental and pranic systems is balanced and made still to create a firm foundation for further practices of pratyahara and dharana. The feeling of *santosha*, contentment, and *udasin bhava*, balanced awareness, is attained.

