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Lecture Title

Pratyahara and Dhyana

Script

Hello students in our previous lectures we discussed about ashtanga yoga and its first four major limbs i.e. yama, niyam, asana, pranayam. Today we are going to discuss another four important limbs of ashtanga yoga they are pratyahara, dharna and samadhi in today's lecture we are going to discuss about Pratyahara.

Pratyahara

It is the fifth stage in ashtanga yoga

The process of controlling the mind through the medium of the senses is called Pratyahara. It is a practice of withdrawal from senses- a process for the prevention of mind wandering and indulgence to unhealthy thoughts, a psychological practice. Though Pratyahara appears to be control of senses by the mind, the essential technique is the withdrawal of the mind into itself.

It is a kind of abstraction so complete that the sense organs cease to function.

The regular practice of pratyahara makes an individual completely capable of becoming the master of indriyas or senses. He no longer remains their slave.

According to yoga, a human being loses patience due to attachments, particularly those forms of attachment where personal likes, wishes, desires, selfishness and

satisfaction are hidden. Attachment is linked to all these internal elements, because they merge together and give birth to attachments in their external form. Attachment is born from the union of the feelings of selfishness, desires, higher aims and ego.

Due to this attachment, the mental energies become scattered and restless instead of remaining one- pointed. It is said that restlessness is the nature of the mind, but it must be realised that the amount of rest the mind has in the steady state is not achieved in the restless state, and so restlessness cannot be the true nature of mind.

The mind can be compared to a small child who is very restless all day, who keep on running or jumping, but eventually reaches a point where he becomes calm and quite and sleeps. In the same way, it is the nature of mind to be restless, but the basic position of the mind is to be calm and in this calm state it once again charges itself with energy.

When the consciousness, awareness and intellect lose their balance in the heat of this restlessness, there is a lack of patience. When the balance is lost under the influence of the feelings, one feels like immediately doing something to fulfil the selfish motives and desires. The senses use their energies to make the mind restless and to fulfil that selfish desire because the energy of the senses is pleasure- seeking, and as a result they create imbalances.

Such imbalances manifest as obstructions to the development of consciousness. Due to this type of understanding, Sage Gheranda recognized that the balance should not be disturbed, there should be no lack of awareness and patience should not be lost. He said that the knowledge of Pratyahara eliminates the enemies of human beings such as selfish wishes, greed, desires, etc.

It is a Pratyahara Sadhna to maintain a normal state of mind even in difficult or adverse situations. One does not have to feel proud at the time of fame, or display happiness at the time of pleasure, or feel sad while in pain, or become angry in dishonourable situations.

Moreover, whenever the mind tries to run here and there and starts losing concentration, then with firm sankalpa Shakti, the power of resolution, it should again be brought back to its calm centre. A person who lives according to the situations,

does not encounter many problems, but performs tasks and lives according to the restriction of the time.

In the last we can say Pratyahara means stopping the flow of thoughts towards external things and reversing its direction. When this flow changes direction it is called the state of Pratyahara.

The task definitely appears to be tough, but when the senses are controlled through the practice of Pratyahara.

In the first stage of Pratyahara, an effort is made to observe the entire mental plane in just one glimpse, in one go, by rotating the perception like the second hand.

In the second stage, awareness is combined with it.

After this, the third stage is to observe subtle experiences, i.e. to observe the mind.

2. Dharana (Concentration)

The first five stages of astanga yoga, i.e. Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara slowly and slowly eliminate the external causes of mental distraction. Yama and Niyama are responsible for eliminating the disturbances which are caused by controlled emotions and desires. Asanas and Pranayama make the body strong eliminating physical body disturbances. Pratyahara detaches the sense organs from the mind and cuts them from the external world. It is only under these conditions that the other three stages can function.

According to Patanjali, concentration is the confining of the mind within a limited mental area.

Desha- bandhas- chittasya dharana.

Desha means "place" Bandhas means "binding or confining or fixing, Chittasya means "of the mind". Dharana means "concentration". "a state of mind" when it confines itself on a particular subtle or non-subtle object.

According to some yogies "concentration is the confinement of the mind in a place" the confinement of the mind in such places as the navel-sphere, the head, the shining part, the forepart of the nose, the forepart of the tongue, etc. or in any external object,

is the concentration. Concentration is the first step for the achievement of Kaivlya. It is a kind of worship of some object.

Swami sivananda explains dharana by saying that Dharana is fixing the mind steadily on any internal or external object or God or Brahman, the Absolute. The mind is ever –wandering. I ever runs to wards sensual objects. It ever thinks of sensual objects. It jumps like a monkey from one object to another. Steadying the mind through practice of vairagya and abhyasa is Dharanna.

In English language Dharana is called Concentration but there is a vast differences between what an ordinary man means by concentration and meaning of concentration in yoga. Modern psychology believes that mind can not be fixed on any object for a considerable time. In this sense, concentration is the controlled movement of mind within a limited sphere. But according to yoga philosophy through concentration begins with the controlled movement of mind, it can reach a state in which all movement or change stops.

3. Dhyana

One pointed awareness, ekagrata of an object or through process is dhyana, meditation. Dhyana seems to be considered an essential process in yoga for the attainment of real emotional stability and integration of personality. It is a technique which has recently become popular all over the world. Traditionally the aim of this practice has been “enlightenment” dharna is a state of restriction of activity of the mind. The mind usually goes on thinking endlessly, moving swiftly from one thought to another and this process hardly ever stops in the waking state of mind. It goes into a state of absorption in which there is a steady flow of mind along a single thought. This state of dhayana. In this state there is an awareness of one’s own being, an awareness of the object of concentration. This is what meditation means. According to Maharishi Patanjali:-“ Tatra Pratayayaikatanata Dhyanam”.

Tatra Means “There” (Place).

Pratyaya means “content of consciousness”.

Ekantata means “stretching without break”

Dhayanam means “meditation”. Uninterrupted flow(of mind) toward the object is meditation. The stage of dhayana is achieved after dharna or concentration. Through concentration, interruptions are reduced in frequency in a progressive manner. When the practitioner of yoga succeeds in eliminating the distractions completely and can continue the concentration on the object without any interruptions as long as he decides to do so, he reaches the stage of Dhaya.

Chitta is composed of mind(manas), intelligence (budhi) and Ahankara. Through Pratyahara comes dissolution of mind,Dharna makes the intelligence to become ripe so that it dissolves like the ripe fruit of tree whereas Dhyana dissolves Ahankara and brings humbleness to set in permanently. When manas, budh and ahankara drop out like withering leaves consciousness or chitta loses identity. This loss of identity of chitta is the springing up of Atma. This is true meaning of dhyana.now the question arise-what is the difference between Meditation and concentration.

Concentration is a process of effort in which threads of mental consciousness are kept confined within the limited area of the object. It aims at reducing progressively the frequency of interruptions and eliminates them completely to enhance the degree of alertness and attentions and to calm down the surface mind in order to enter within. But in it one never realizes the essential nature of object and touches only he external nature. In concentration stimulates the latent. However concentration stimulates the latent power of mind, relaxes nerves, soothes the troubled psyche and creates the chemical balance in the body but there is no radical transformation in the quality of life. Meditation is an effortless process which brings radical transformation in the quality of life where all duality dissolves and intellect is kept in abeyance to realise the absolute reality.

Some of the yogies mentioned the following characteristics of meditation:-

Meditation is a state of being in which there is choice less and effortless aware and absence of mental activity.

Meditation makes a man fit to live wisely and perform his roles without having attachment to them. Life is full of reactions is meditation.

Meditation cannot be taught but one has to practice.

A double transformation- mind which is at peace and moves with affection only in silence and the brain which implements message of mind with total energy, awareness and attention, is a state of meditation.

Awareness of becoming and being;- the process of becoming is inspired by the touch of being but this is only possible when “i-ness dissolves into the state of being.

4. Pre-conditions for meditation:-

There are many pre-conditions for meditations, but the following of them are important:

The place should be peaceful, away from noise. It should be clean and have natural surroundings.

It is believed that Brahma Muhurta (a few hours before sunrise) is the best time for meditation.

Pure vegetarian, simple and easily digestible food should be taken.

Generally, sidhasana, Padmasana and sukhasana are recommended for meditation

Meditation is more successful if it is done under the direction of a Guru

Obstacles in Meditation

Resistance from the body

Pain

Tiredness

Fear

Doubts

Undesirable thoughts

Suspicion, etc.

Benefits of Meditation:-

If we meditate for half an hour daily, we will be able to face the battle of life with peace and spiritual strength.

It kills all pains, suffering and sorrows.

It increases blood flow and slows the heart rate.

Good for people with high blood pressure as it brings the B.P to normal.

It increases serotonin production which influences mood and behaviour. Low levels of serotonin are associated with obesity, depression, insomnia and headaches.

It is most powerful tonic for mental and nervous stimulation.

It removes varied kind of doubts and builds self-confidence.

Reduces Pre-mensis syndrome

Enhances the immune system. Research has revealed that meditation increases activity of 'natural-killer cells', which kill bacteria and cancer cells.

Meditation reduces activity of viruses and emotional distress and makes life management easy.

It reduces anxiety attacks by lowering the levels of blood lactate.

Types of Meditation

Meditation is of three types:-

1. Sthoola Dhyana
2. Jyoti Dhyana and
3. Sukshma Dhyana

Sthoola Dhyana (gross or physical meditation) is that in which one meditates on the physical form (of one's ishta Deva). Jyotirmaya Dhyana (Dhyana full of light) is that in which one meditates on or visualizes the brilliant flame form of Brahman. Sukshma Dhyana (subtle Meditation) is on Brahman as Bindu, as Kundalini Shakti. This is the real meditation. It is only said that on reaching this meditation one attains self-realization. It is becoming one with the soul or higher self.

Samadhi

While it is true that no one is able to describe the state of Samadhi, still the saints and sages have given some guidelines based on their experiences. Samadhi has been described differently in the yog-sutra, Hath Yog pradeepika, Gheranda Samhita and other texts, but all the sages and thinkers agree on one point:- that Samadhi is a state which can be achieved by mankind.

According to Bhagvad Gita

Lord Krishna defines samadhi as a state in which one is liberated from bondage. In this state, worldly bondages such as likes and dislikes, greed and delusion, cunning and ignorance no longer have any influence, the same attitude is maintained in every situation.

According to Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he made two statements about Samadhi. One was that in the state of Samadhi, the individual soul, jivatma, merges with the supreme soul Paramatma. The second statement was that self-realization can be attained in the state of Samadhi. From these statements we can understand that the individual soul (I) and the Supreme self, that limitless existence, become one. So in other words we can say that Samadhi is a state of super-consciousness. It is a state of union with God. It is a state which is full of all bliss, joy and peace. In Samadhi, the sadhak loses his individuality and becomes totally identified with the supreme-self just as the river joins the ocean. This blissful divine experience arises when the ego and mind are dissolved. In the state of Samadhi, the meditator is not conscious of any external or internal objects. There is no thinking, hearing, smelling or seeing.

Samadhi may be defined generally as a process of living into the deeper layers of one's consciousness which function through different grades of mind through

different mechanism which are called vehicles or Koshas and that are Annamaya Kosha, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vigyanmaya and Anandmaya Kosha.

Three stages of Meditation leading to Samadhi are:-

1. The mind is kept continuously engaged in the consideration of some object (Good or any other of concentration) and brought back immediately as soon as the connection is broken.
2. Interruptions in concentration are reduced in frequency in a progressive manner.
3. When there is a consciousness and not of mind, it is the stage of Samadhi.
4. Dharna, Dhyana and Samadhi are the three different phases of same mental process, each succeeding one in the degree of depth of concentration. The complete process beginning with Dharna and ending in Samadhi is called Samyam.

Essentials of Samadhi

Maharishi Patanjali has prescribed four qualifications for practice of Samadhi and these are:- “Shradha Virya Smriti Samadhi Pragnapuruaka itresham.”

1. Faith (Shraddha)
2. Energy (virya)
3. Memory (Smriti)
4. Intelligence (Samadhi Pragnya)

Technique's for attaining the state of Samadhi:-

In sage Gheranda's teachings there are a total of Six techniques for attaining the state of Samadhi.

1. In the first technique Sambhavi mudra is practised. It is called dhyana yoga Samadhi.
2. The second is nada yoga Samadhi, for which bhramari Pranayam is essential.
3. Laya Sidhi Samadhi is the fourth Samadhi and its success lies in yoni Mudra.
4. The fifth Samadhi is bhakti yoga Samadhi.

5. The last technique is called manomoorcha Samadhi.

These Six Samadhis are included in the raja yoga aspect of Sage Gheranda's Tradition, and a sadhok should practice them in a sequence.

Conclusion

So friend's today we discussed about the rest four limbs of ashtanga yoga i.e. pratyahara, dharna, dhyana and samadhi.

Thank You