



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

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Sadhana: Practice & Process #s

Sit. Stay.

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Something wonderful happens when you simply sit. No phone, no music, nothing to read, to say or to do. Whether you're under a shady tree or in a quiet indoor spot, you gradually settle into an easy motionlessness — your body becomes still. Then your mind becomes still, like when the ripples on a lake dissolve back into the lake.

This is why people have a chaise lounge in their back yard, to stretch out and gaze at the plants, to watch the birds and butterflies. After a few minutes, you're not seeing anything anymore. You're settling inside. Most people fall asleep or drift in a dreamy sleep-like state. You have done this so many times. But on the way inward, you can take the other fork in the road. Instead of settling into unconsciousness, you can delve into the bliss of Consciousness within. This is yoga's promise, that when your mind settles, you experience your Self — called svaroopā.

Tadaa dra.s.tu.h svarupee 'vasthaanam — Yoga Sutras 1.3

As your mind settles, you are established in your own Divine Essence (svaroopā).

How do you get your mind to settle? One of the easiest ways is to use your body:

Sthira-sukham aasanam. — Yoga Sutras 2.46

Asana means to sit, in easy motionlessness.

In the beginning, you may need to scratch your nose, even cough and yawn. All that will soon settle down and you will be at ease. This is even a military command, "At ease, soldiers." It's useful for everyone.

Everyone practices it, even unconsciously, maybe lazing in bed during snooze-alarm minutes. Not sleeping, not really awake, coasting the inner edge, it's quite blissful. It is even more bliss-filled when you take the road less traveled, delving into the deeper dimensions within. This is called meditation.

In English, the word meditate comes from the Latin meditatus. It was first used in English in 1560, referring specifically to inward reflection.¹ Meditatus comes from the Latin mederi which means to heal or remedy, also the root of the word medicine. Yes, meditation's healing power has been proven in over 300 recent studies with thousands of participants.

You can meditate at any time of day, for any length of time, in any location you choose, using any methodology you choose. This is cited as a way to clear and empower your mind.

Yatha-abhimata-dhyana va.² — Yoga Sutras 1.39

...clarify your mind by meditating in any way you choose.

Many different meditative systems are available in the West, including phone apps. Any of them will help you with your mind. Yet yoga says that meditation has a greater goal, as described in many ancient texts from India.

These verses are from a 3,000-year-old text. Yet it says again and again, "...thus it has been said elsewhere," meaning these teachings were well known from earlier times.

When, after cessation of the mind's activities, he sees his own Self... he obtains imperishable bliss. — Maitri Upanishad 6.20

Meditation is directed to the highest Being within, after having been directed to the objects (body, mind, OM), then the indistinct understanding becomes distinct. — Maitri Upanishad 6.24³

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

² Yathaabhimata-dhyaanaad vaa.

³ Muller, F. Max, The Sacred Books of the East, Vol XV (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1884), pages 320-322

This means meditation is to give you the inner experience of your own Self, “imperishable bliss.” Plus you must cultivate a “distinct understanding” of the Consciousness that you are. Thus you must have both meditation and understanding, which is why I share these teachings with you.

We have now journeyed from being “at ease” to directing your attention inward to the highest Reality. There is a world of difference between these approaches. Yet they are equally valid. It all depends on what you want and how much you are willing to put into getting it.

By the time I found my way to the meditative systems, I had already learned that if I wanted anything, I had to work for it. From my schooling and athletic endeavors, as well as in my relationships and career, everything demanded that I put forth effort.

I always got more out of it when I threw myself into it, actively and enthusiastically. The same is true of yoga and meditation. While Shaktipat opens access to the deeper dimensions within, you are the one who has to look in that direction.

How do you do this? Meditate: anyplace, anytime, any methodology that works for you. All meditation approaches are beneficial, yet you must pick one and stick with it to get results. This is true for pro golfers as well. They work with a coach to perfect their swing, then practice doing it the same way over and over again.

Tad-bhumikah sarva-darshana-stitayah.⁴ — Pratyabhijñāna-ṛdayam 8

The perspectives of the different systems are simply various roles being played
by Consciousness.

This sutra is radically inclusive, embracing all meditative systems as well as all religions. Like different trails on a single mountain, they all give you a pathway to upliftment. Yet not all trails end up in the same spot. Some end at a lookout point on one side of the mountain, while others go up the other side. Some end in a beautiful meadow partway up, others take you to the highest point.

Why are there so many systems? Because there are so many different kinds of people. In manifesting as the universe, Shiva has designed spiritual paths appropriate for every single person. Yoga has four basic approaches, depending on your readiness when you begin your sadhana:

- 1) Raja Yoga — the yoga of meditation, named after the kings (rajas) of ancient India, who were taught to meditate by the forest sages.
- 2) Jñāna Yoga — the yoga of study, learning from the present-day masters and their teachers (yoga texts)
- 3) Karma Yoga — the yoga of work, giving your energies and efforts to God and Guru by supporting their work in the world
- 4) Bhakti Yoga — the yoga of devotion, expressing your love for God and Guru through ceremonies, songs, flames and flowers.

Our practice is a Maha Yoga, encompassing all. This means we include all these practices in everything we do. You see it in our satsangs (meditation programs). In addition to meditation (raja yoga), we study the teachings (jñāna yoga), chant and do a candle flame ceremony (bhakti yoga), all supported by yogis who give their time and energies to make it happen.

Yet the most powerful force is your own desire for upliftment.⁵ When you yearn for God, when you long for liberation, your sincere desire keeps you focused on the process. And it motivates you to do yogic practices, which speed you along. This is sadhana, the practices and the process. This is the way you make your heart pure enough and strong enough to hold the knowledge of the Truth within.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, “SADHANA: PRACTICE & PROCESS”

To reach our teachers or to learn more about Svaroopa® Yoga & Meditation, contact us at
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⁴ Tad-bhumikāḥ sarva-darśana-stitayaḥ.

⁵ Yoga Sūtras 1.21