

STEPS TO ACHIEVE 'DHYANA'

There is no single meditation technique which can be uniformly followed by all, As different persons have different temperaments and different dharma, so each has to follow the path that is most suitable to his individual needs,

The body is the vehicle through which meditation has to be achieved, '*Prana*' is the motive force.

To accumulate and conserve '*Prana*', one must have certain mental disciplines to conserve mental energy, Without '*prana shakti*', one cannot think, one cannot imagine, move, speak or understand. Therefore, every person who aspires to realize the deeper states of meditation must find a way to amplify and conserve '*Prana*', '*Prana*' is the vital energy.

'*Prana*' is responsible for maintaining unflinching awareness and steadiness of the mind during meditation.

The effective ways by which one can build up and conserve '*prana shakti*', and means of preparing the body and mind to experience '*Dhyana*' are

(i) Asanas and Pranayama :

These are not only for the cultivation of the body and to preserve better health, but these were also developed with the intention of providing a perfect means of preparing the body and the mind for meditation.

In mediation, we build energy physically, mentally and psychically.

Asanas stimulate the glands, purify the liver, heart, lungs and increase the supply of blood to all organs.

Not only the Asanas influence the body and mind, but also the emotions, attitudes and consciousness. They sharpen one's reactions, and relax and aid in balancing the passions, neuroses, anxiety and phobias.

Pranayama provides more '*prana*' to the body and revitalizes the nervous system.

Steady meditation postures can be maintained only when the breath is under control, the nervous system is coordinated, heart beat is rhythmical and all the glands are functioning properly. With greater quantity of '*Prana*' in circulation throughout the body, the mind automatically becomes calm and one-pointed.

2. Balancing Ida and Pingala :

In the human body, there are 72000 '*nadis*' or channels through which '*Prana*' circulates. There

are 10 important 'nadis' and of these the 3 most important are:

1. Sushumna-which is the main nadi flowing through the central canal within the spinal cord.
2. Ida.-situated to the left of the Sushumna.
3. Pingla-situated to the right of sushumna.

Sushumna is responsible for spiritual awareness, ida controls all the mental functions, and Pingala direct all the vital functions.

These 3 Nadis controls all the functions of the body.

Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna start at the Mooladhra Chakra in the Perineum and proceed to the end of the tail bone, and go right up the spinal cord to Ajna Chakra situated beyond the eye brow centre. Ida and Pingala cross at the various Chakras and end at Ajna Chakra, but Sushumna proceeds on to Sahasrara, the highest chakra at the top of the head.

Sushumna is the spiritual channel through which Kundalini rises. It portraits the part of the mystics and the path of Yogis who tread the narrow razor's edge balancing between Ida and Pingala. Ida is related to the breath flow in the left nostril and the parasympathetic nervous system. Pingala is related to the breath flow in the right nostril and the sympathetic nervous system.

During the day, the breath will be predominantly flowing alternately through the left and the right nostrils; but there are times when Ida and Pingala are flowing together and at such times there is greater degree of mental and emotional balance. Such balance of Ida and Pingala are ideal for practicing meditation. Balance between the nadis can be induced through the practice of Asanas and Pranayama.

3) Developing Awareness:

Awareness is the ability to stand back and observe one's mental and physical activities. In a state of awareness, a person becomes the spectator of his activities-both internally and externally.

Attachment to ego is the major obstacle to progress; and the most effective method of detaching the ego is to withdraw concern for it.

There are two modes of awareness.

Internal awareness, when we direct our attention towards the activities of the mind, and outward awareness when the attention is directed to the world of sense impressions or the activities of the body.

Yoga provides us with a systematic and direct method of developing awareness. Yoga Asanas make us more closely aware of our body and its feelings and they demand of us a certain amount of concentration which is gradually increased and intensified.

The techniques aimed at developing awareness are:

Awareness of the senses, Awareness of the past experience, awareness of the present, and mantra repetition.

Other techniques which help meditation are:

Antar Mouna, Japa, Ajapa Japa, Chanting of Mantras, Ishta Devata, and Yantras and Mandalas.