

# The state of mind established in Dhyāna Yoga

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Yoga and meditation classes are too many today. There are several branded versions in these and a host of yoga specialised and socio-spiritual organisations claim uniqueness in the methods that they propose. It appears that there are a number of followers to these also. The western brand of yoga has also been imported into India which have a characteristic twist to Yoga. Amongst other things it is concerned about the costume we wear, the mat we use etc. There is a growing industry for yoga dresses, yoga mats, and even yogic tea. The western twist has also “productized” yoga. Therefore, one can have “power yoga” as a separate track of yoga practice. With these changes, the yoga that most of us are going after is in fact competing with aerobics and gymnasias outfits. In big cities you may find the same outfit offering gymnasias, aerobics and yoga all under one roof. We need to therefore return back to the fundamental question viz., what is the purpose of doing yoga or meditation?

## Why should we do Yoga or Meditation?

Notwithstanding all these finer differences and terminologies, they have certain things in common. Most of the yoga practices are perceived by the beneficiaries as methods to keep one physically fit. It helps one to be free from diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and rectify physical conditions such as obesity. Occasionally some of them also are considered as methods of regulating one’s respiration, improving digestive system and respiratory system. While we have a meditation angle to it many of them may have some chanting of *ślokas*, singing of *bhajans* etc., the idea is not to be religious but more spiritual.

In the context of these developments, we need to reconcile these with Patanjali’s *aṣṭāṅga yoga*. If we keep doing these yoga practices, say for an hour a day, where are we supposed to end up eventually. Will we become a better person? Will we stop taking medicines for hypertension and diabetes or will we live for 100 + years? Many feel that if we keep doing yoga diligently for a long time, our body will bend effortlessly like a bow. Is it all the end goal of yoga or are there better things to focus on?

The dos and don’ts that Shri Krishna has prescribed in chapter 6 of *Bhagavad Gītā* appear far more strenuous and amounts to a certain life style change that we need to undergo. What for should one make these amendments to their life style? Surely it needs to be more than bending one’s body effortlessly like a bow. Therefore in chapter 6 Shri Krishna addresses this aspect also and points to what can happen to one over time if he/she practises yoga in the manner He prescribed. We shall see two *ślokas* from chapter 6 to know more about this.

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## Effect of Meditation on an individual

Shri Krishna first defines the condition by which one is said to have achieved completeness in yoga practice. According to Him, when (*yadā*) one is able to transcend the domain of desire (*niḥspr̥haḥ sarvakāmebhyaḥ*) on a variety of external objects, entities and ideas and as a consequence of this able to rest one's own mind in himself (*cittam ātmanyeva-avatiṣṭhate*), then he is truly considered to have mastered the practice of yoga (*yukta ityucyate tadā*).

यदा विनियतं चित्तं आत्मन्येवावतिष्ठते ।

निःस्पृहः सर्वकामेभ्यः युक्त इत्युच्यते तदा ॥ 6.18

*yadā viniyatam cittam ātmanyeva-avatiṣṭhate*  
*niḥspr̥haḥ sarvakāmebhyaḥ yukta ityucyate tadā*

We need to understand the term “transcending the domain of desire” carefully. The sense objects and entities do not disappear from the world outside. They very much exist there only. It merely suggests that their presence or absence or the quality and quantity of their presence in no way affect an individual. In other words, the yoga practice creates some sort of a protective layer around our mind over long years of practice. This is what the long practice of yoga must lead one to. In order to communicate this idea unambiguously, he cites a simile.

A lamp protected from a windy place by a protective cover make it free from the effects of wind. A typical hurricane lamp is an example of this category. Just as a lamp (*yadā dīpaḥ*) which is free from the effects of wind (*nivāsthaḥ*) does not flicker (*neṅgate*), in the same manner a yogi whose mind is well protected and rest it free of vibrations and thoughts (*yatacittasya*) by the practice of concentration in himself (*yogamātmanaḥ*).

यदा दीपो निवातस्थः नेङ्गते सोमपा स्मृता ।

योगिनो यतचित्तस्य युञ्जतो योगमात्मनः ॥ 6.19

*yadā dīpo nivāsthaḥ neṅgate somapā smṛtā*  
*yogino yatacittasya yuñjato yogamātmanaḥ*

## Ultimate Goal of Dhyāna Yoga

Left to itself, the mind will run helter- skelter all over our world of experiences of the past and expectations of the future. In the process, it will generate enormous psychic vibrations and stream of thoughts at great speed. Our entire personality, behavioural responses and value systems are significantly affected by this great churn of the mind. When the mind is hyperactive, we lose control of ourselves and become a mere spectator and a bad victim of the tantrums of the mind. Therefore, the only way to take control of things and take charge

of our affairs in life is to bring down the vibrating mind from a higher level of frequency (of say 100 thoughts per minute) to one of a few thoughts per minute and eventually a state of no thought waves. In this state, the outside events and outcomes cannot affect an individual as the mind refuses to get into the processing mode as it used to be before.

The above *ślokas* exactly point to this trajectory for the mind and thereby provides an unambiguous goal for our yoga and meditation practices. The goal is to bring down the vibrations of the mind. All other things that we seem to be aiming for (such as reducing hypertension etc.) are lower order benefits. In fact these benefits are also incidental to the yoga practice. Focusing merely on them is not a wise idea.

Imagine that we go by air from Bangalore to New Delhi. While we undertake this journey, the airlines may provide a lounge facility at the airport, where we can relax. Also the airport may provide an array of shopping choices and eating places while we wait for our turn to board the aircraft. Once we are inside the airplane, the airhostess may offer complimentary drinks, and meals. Nobody plans an air travel keeping these benefits in mind. These are after all incidental benefits of air travel.

We must develop a similar orientation while engaging in a variety of yoga practices and meditation exercises. This is the central message Shri Krishna has for us. Once we develop this attitude to yoga, we are likely to gain enormously for the effort we put in the process of bringing down the psychic vibrations of the mind.