

# Dhyāna Yoga – A tool to root out all sorrows

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A great performer in sports loses the game on a particular day and along with it loses the temper also. We have seen this in some Wimbledon champions. An apparently a good manager loses his temper on a day when the just released report paints his division performance in poorly. This person carries this feeling with him and passes it on to his/her subordinates, the spouse, the children and other family members. In some cases, people are unable to face the unfolding situations (especially if they are unfavorable or adverse) and they slip into depression, deep unhappiness etc.

These behaviours raise two important questions in our minds? First, why do we get into such a state, which not only spoils others' moods and feelings but also the person who does this. It also affects the health of the person in the long run. The second question is how can one overcome this limitation? Let us explore these questions in some detail.

## **The source of anger, sadness and depression**

The first aspect is the issue of anger, sadness or depression. In order to understand the source of these behavioural patterns we shall take a look at a few examples in our daily life.

- Think of a 3 year old child which cries, shouts and runs towards the mother on seeing an approaching dog. On the other hand, invariably, the grown up person neither shows fear nor starts running towards the source of security as the child does.
- Assume that the Central Board of Secondary Examinations (CBSE) is on the verge of announcing the final results of the 12<sup>th</sup> Standard examinations. The potential outcome of the examination generates an entire gamut of different behavioural patterns (of fear, sadness etc.) on say 1000 students awaiting their results.
- Every year the annual pay hike, promotions and career advancement decisions are made for all the employees in private organizations. You can see wide ranging responses of the employees. An employee who got a 20% hike could be slip into deep depression because he personally felt he deserved more than what was handed out to him. On the other hand, an employee who was denied hike and promotion can be a bit cool headed taking it in its stride (perhaps as an act of God, for some unknown reason). In between these extremes, you can have varying degree of sadness, anger, depression etc.

In fact one can go on narrating numerous examples from our daily life similar to these. Despite varying backgrounds and context all these experiences point to an important aspect of these behaviours, viz., these are mere patterns playing out of one's own mind. They have very little to do with the object or outcome in question, although we tend to think otherwise. If the fear or sadness has been because of the outcomes and objects (fear of dog or sadness arising out of denied promotion) then all of us must have more or less a similar behaviour, which is clearly not the case.

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If the mind plays the fool's paradise, then the second question is can mind control help us address this issue. In chapter 6 of *Bhagavad Gītā*, Shri Krishna prescribes methods by which one can attain a certain degree of mind control through *dhyāna yoga*. Therefore, we can look for His views on how yoga practice can help one address this issue. Shri Krishna discusses in some detail as to what happens to a *sādhaka* after prolonged practice of yoga in a few *ślokas*.

### Yoga frees one from Sadness

The expressions of fear, sadness and depression are nothing but manifestations of our inability to fulfill our expectations. If the wish list grows, the propensity for disappointments will also grow alongside. Since the root cause of the problem is our inability to manage the domain of expectations, the solution lies in addressing this aspect. Shri Krishna says that a prolonged practitioner of yoga will reach a mental state after obtaining the experience of yoga practice (*yam labdhvā*) that he/she does not pitch for anything bigger or greater than that experience (*cāparam nādhikam lābham manyate tataḥ*). This is because, by reveling in that state (*yasminsthitaḥ*) he/she will realise that even an event which has the potential to generate deep sorrow or heavy sadness (*guruṇāpi duḥkhena*) will not shake him even a bit (*na vicālyate*).

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।

यस्मिन्स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥ 6.22

*yam labdhvā cāparam lābham manyate nādhikam tataḥ*  
*yasminsthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate*

By virtue of our lack of training of mind control, we have a huge propensity to get upset, sad or depressed the moment events unfold in a manner that is contrary to our expectations. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that we are deeply entangled with sadness, or sorrow. Shri Krishna says that by mastering the art of mind control through yoga practices (*tam vidyāt*) one will be able to sever the contact (*viyogam*) from this deep entanglement with sadness (*duḥkha-samyogaḥ*). Since the practice of yoga provides these valuable benefits to an individual, Shri Krishna says that one must certainly (*niścayena*) make an effort to practice yoga (*yoktavyāḥ*) with a focused and concentrated mind (*nirviṇṇa-cetasah*).

तं विद्याद् दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् ।

स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ॥ 6.23

*tam vidyāt-duḥkha-samyoga-viyogam yogasamñjitam*  
*sa niścayena yoktavyo yogo'nirviṇṇa-cetasah*

## Motivating ourselves into yoga practice

One of the issues in *dhyāna yoga* is our inability to start the practice and sustain it over time. The ideas expressed in the *ślokas* may appeal to the intellect at the outset. However, that is not enough to motivate us towards the path of yoga. We need to deeply contemplate in the ideas expressed and in a repeated fashion before we can develop any affinity towards *dhyāna yoga*. Shri Krishna makes two interesting references in the above *ślokas*. One is deep sorrow and the other is severing contact from the deep entanglement with sorrow. It is very important for us to deeply contemplate on these two issues that he has raised. These are not mere poetic references to dramatise the benefit of yoga but a reminder to the crude reality that we face in our daily life when the mind is totally uncultivated and let loose.

First is the issue of deep sorrow. By that Shri Krishna means how deeply we have been drawn by the mind into the domain of sorrow, anger, sadness etc. We need to develop a high level of consciousness that even a flimsy incident or the other is just enough for an uncultivated mind to pull one down and make that person agitated, sad or depressed. We need to reflect on the silly reasons for which we get upset by objectively examining certain events and our behaviours in our daily life. Simple things such as the pen that I left on the table is not to be found or the book which was supposed to be kept in a particular place was kept elsewhere were enough to get angry or upset. Our journey in cultivating the mind begins with such simple but repeated deep observations on our own behaviours and realizing the potential of such a mind to put us in the mood of anger or sorrow very often.

On the other hand, the other reference to severing the contact from deep entanglement with sorrow is like a performance guarantee that Shri Krishna offers to those who want to genuinely practice yoga. A performance guarantee provides us with the needed confidence to further motivate us into trying out. If we have great faith on the Lord, this will provide us the ammunition to jump into the practice of *dhyāna yoga*. If we can believe in the Grace of Lord Krishna, He will lead us out of the vicious cycle of sorrow that we keep encircling in our daily life.