

MEANS 5 – PRATYAHARA/ ABSTRACTION

Thoughts to Ponder Prior to Meditation

2-54 Pratyahara is the turning of the mind (and the senses), inwards, and restraining it (them) from going outwards.

1-12 The control of these modifications of the mind, is brought about through tireless endeavour and non-attachment.

“By the practice of dispassion and of non-attachment, and by the strenuous control of the desire nature it becomes possible for the man to re-orient himself so that his attention is no longer attracted outward by the stream of mind-images but is withdrawn, and fixed one-pointedly upon reality.” LS 399

Once outer conduct is corrected, inner purity is arrived at, right attitude towards all things is being cultivated and the life currents are being controlled, then is the time to begin the serious work of subjugating the outgoing tendencies of the five senses. That is, the work required to control the psychic nature (the emotional body tinged faintly with mind (kama-manas.)

Thoughts to register prior to meditation

In average man, the mind appears to be ‘fused’ to the senses. Whenever a sense becomes attracted to an external object, the mind follows, and so does the man. For example, a man is hungry, he thinks he would like a steak, he can taste its juiciness, he salivates after steak, so out comes the frying pan, and in goes the steak. As soon as the steam is turned on, the engine runs - as soon as things are before man, he responds. The mind modifications respond automatically.

The yogi must prove that he is not a machine, that nothing controls him. Controlling the mind, and not allowing it to join itself to the centres so that the senses and desires are stirred up, is Pratyahara.

When, through the practise of detachment, the senses are no longer tied to external sources, one can concentrate without being distracted by externals. Now all sense perceptions perform their legitimate functions. This results in ‘correct analysis’ - seeing things correctly, vision being uncoloured by the distorting effects of the mind or emotions.

As this work proceeds, external forms will gradually lose their hold, until eventually the yogi is liberated from their control, and he is the master of his senses and of all sense contacts.

In the Right Detachment technique, we:

- 1) Train the mind to stop slavishly following the demands of the senses; and
- 2) Lift our point of observation out of the ego, up into Higher Mind; then
- 3) Turn the mind back on itself, to observe what is going on in our psychological field, as if we were watching a movie. No thinking, no feeling, no trying to control what is going on in our “other side” - just steadily observe.

Prolonged steady observation helps us find out how the mind functions.

This is essential, for if we are ever to control the mind we must become familiar with its self-centred activities and the tricks it plays - the illusions, delusions, and imaginings. We must be aware of what is going on without any distortion, without any resentment, bitterness, explanation or justification.

The mind must be trained to be quiet and serene. This is the immediate goal - to develop a quiet, silent, attentive mind. A silent mind is beautiful. It hears more, and sees more. Silence is not only the end of noise but the complete cessation of all movement. Normally, the brain is active all the time, responding to stimuli with its own noise. Your task is to quieten those everlastingly active, chattering, brain cells. This is basically all that is required. Your job is to hold this quiet observation until the mind disturbance diminishes away.

When this work begins, it may seem the character grows worse. Horrible thoughts and distractions may arise. Everyone experiences this. As clean thoughts pour in the subconscious mind is disturbed. It is like a lake with a layer of mud at the bottom. If you stir up that mud, the whole lake becomes muddy for a time. Distractions, evil thoughts, wicked desires, will rise. Let them come up and then get rid of them.

Patiently pour in that clear water of God. Struggle to bring back the thought of God into the mind again and again. Practise constant recollection.

As these disciplines are applied, mind will calm down bit by bit. Each day It will become less restless, less violent, as desires and thoughts are reduced. You will begin to stop automatically identifying with your emotional states. You will start to feel release from the constant dramas of your lower nature. In the first few months the mind will have a great many thoughts. Later they will be somewhat decreased, and gradually, with persistent practise, they will become fewer and fewer until at last you will be able to entirely separate yourself from the mind and actually know it to be apart from yourself. This is how you bring the mind under control.

Definitions of Right Detachment

1. [Right Detachment is] “.. that inner, divine detachment which sees life in its true perspective... .. the Onlooker who is in no way identified with aught that may happen on the physical and emotional planes, and whose mind is a limpid reflector of truth. This truth is intuitively perceived because there are no violent mental reactions or emotional states of response; the vehicles of perception are quiet and therefore there is nothing to offset correct attitude.” DINA I 146

2. True detachment is not the development of a cold and insensitive attitude to people and life, and a withdrawal from normal human interaction.

What you are doing is ... “separating your real Self from the inertia of the body, from the glimmers of your emotional world and from the illusions of the mental realm.. With detachment you are dis-identifying yourself, but not separating... You are able to see the object as it is, free from your personal, mechanical reactions, and free from the imposing, forcing will of the lower self. According to your degree of success in detaching from any object, your soul love increases, your light becomes brighter, your will stronger and your joy deeper.” Saraydarian, *The Science of Becoming Oneself*.

3. [in Buddhism]... detachment doesn't mean one doesn't care about people or things, just that we understand that they inevitably change and eventually go away. What we “detach” from is our neurotic attempt to make things permanent or to selfishly have them go just the way we want.

4. “‘Right’ detachment is not self-protection or of self-immunisation or of aloofness, but that soul detachment which works from soul levels and—seeing all life in the light which streams from the soul—regards everything from the standpoint of eternity. You will then see the real values involved and the true perspectives of the picture.” DINA I 130

5. “The process of abstracting one's mind from all imposed thoughtforms—imposed by one's background, one's tradition and one's social group—is a very difficult and subtle undertaking. It must definitely be learned, prior to mastering the science of thoughtform building. The disciple has to stand free from mental impression and mental concepts before he can successfully create under direction of the Ashram.” DINA II 693

Points to remember when applying the technique

1. The goal is to observe your inner state, holding a neutral and impartial state of awareness.
2. It is important to remember that while observing, there must be no self-criticism. In the beginning it is difficult to acquire a neutral attitude, but this is the goal. Until we adopt an attitude of indifference, we cannot see ourselves as we really are. Think of your mind and astral fields as disruptive and wilful children who need to be lovingly but firmly trained in social skills.
3. This work will be greatly assisted if consciousness is centred high up in the head at a location which feels just right, or in the ajna centre. Bear witness to things in the world from this viewpoint.
4. An essential part of this technique, it to vertically “lock” yourself in to an alignment with your soul/ light/ God, etc. From that perspective - you then “look” at what is going on in that other side of your nature.
5. If you do not do this alignment, you will find that you are easily ‘sucked’ back into identification with the ego's turmoil. Additionally, the alignment brings in the presence of your soul, who will ‘go into battle’ for you, and strengthen your will and resolve.
6. While observing, continually reinforce the vertical alignment with the Light, or tell yourself, “I am witnessing.” This helps avoid losing the detached viewpoint.
7. The state of mind to achieve, is as if you were watching a movie.

8. You deliberately try to stop all thought form producing - and just observe.
9. If your emotional disturbance is powerful, you might briefly think "I am feeling afraid, or angry" - but then, just observe the emotion. You may choose to use the river channelling observation technique given in the Emotional Body section. Or you may just be aware of emotions churning like clouds, or bubbles rising from deep in a pool. The point is to stop thinking and observe the emotions.

Applying the Technique of Non-Attachment

1. You are aware you are in conflict or turmoil.
2. You quickly look up at your soul/ the Light/ God - then align with that spiritual point.
3. Lift your point of observation out of the ego, up into that higher point.
4. Turn your inner eye either sideways or downwards, and watch what is going on in that "other side" as if you are watching a movie. No thinking, just steadily observe.
You might deliberately employ the mind to 'see' the turmoil as either:
bubbles rising up in a pool or ocean, or ripples on the surface; or
as boiling clouds scudding across a sky;
or a racing river.
5. If it helps, continually tell yourself, "I am witnessing", or reconnect with the Light
6. As the fuss subsides, see:
All clouds disappear and only clear, blue sky remain; or
All bubbles and ripples subside leaving only quiet, glass-like sea; or
The river quiet in lovely country scene - green fields and flowers.
As a last resort, if the turmoil is threatening to overwhelm you, create one of these scenes, and hold it in your mind; or use breathing or muscle relaxing techniques to release tension from your nature.
7. Bask in the silence.
8. Lift your eyes to the Light or soul and give thanks.
9. Practise patiently every day. It is a tremendous work, not to be done in a day. Only after a patient, continuous struggle for years can we succeed and control the mind at will.

MEDITATION

1. Basic Meditation Alignment

1. Sit comfortably with spine erect.
2. Breathe easily and relax your physical.. emotional.. and mental fields.. OM
3. Focus high within your head.
4. Visualize the light, love and power of the soul pouring into your three personality vehicles. OM
5. Pause for assimilation.
6. Imagine yourself as the thinker focused within the soul-illuminated mind. OM
7. Say the Gayatri.

**"Oh Thou, Who givest sustenance to the universe.
From Whom all things proceed, to Whom all things return,
Unveil to me the face of the true spiritual Sun, hidden by a disk of golden light.
That I may know the truth and do my whole duty, as I journey to Thy sacred feet." OM.**

2. Meditation:

Meditate upon the following "seed-thoughts", seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning behind each thought. Apply the exercise

What, in your understanding, is the meaning of "pratyahara" or abstraction? What to you is the value of the "pratyahara" process? How do you think your life would improve and your

consciousness expand if you were able to withdraw your attention from the myriad outer attractions?

Exercise: practise the right-detachment technique.

Align with your soul. Anchor your point of observation high in your head. Turn your inner eye downwards, and observe what is going on in your physical body (EG. any aches, or tension); your emotional nature; then your thought life. Observing the mind is the main goal. Just observe as if you are watching a movie. No thinking, just steadily observe. Allow thoughts to move through the mind without grasping after them. If you find you have lost your focus and become submerged in your thoughts, when you remember, just say "I am observing" and restart your observation - without recrimination. Do this for only one or two minutes to begin with. Then build up the time period as you grow more confident.

If you were a yogi who had achieved pratyahara, how would your ability to serve the Divine Plan and Purpose of God be enhanced?

3. Lower Interlude: With deliberation bring the meditation to a close, and imaginatively reaffirm your focus in your mind, and then your brain. Quietly review and interpret any insights you received during meditation, summarising with clarity, what these insights were, and what they mean to you. This work is very important. It will ground your consciousness back into your brain - helping to overcome the problem of "spacing out", and will also train your mind to do the necessary working of interpreting intuitive insights.

4. Distribution: Sound the Great Invocation followed by the Sacred Word OM, three times, visualizing as you do so, the redemption or upliftment of humanity and the Earth.

THE GREAT INVOCATION

**From the point of Light within the Mind of God,
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
Let Light descend on Earth.**

**From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.
May Christ return to Earth.**

**From the centre where the Will of God is known
Let purpose guide the little wills of men—
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.**

**From the centre which we call the race of men
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out.
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.**

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth

OM, OM, OM

Practise the right-detachment technique throughout the day, every day, for the rest of your life.