

A Guide to Systematic Meditation

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The Samaya Way

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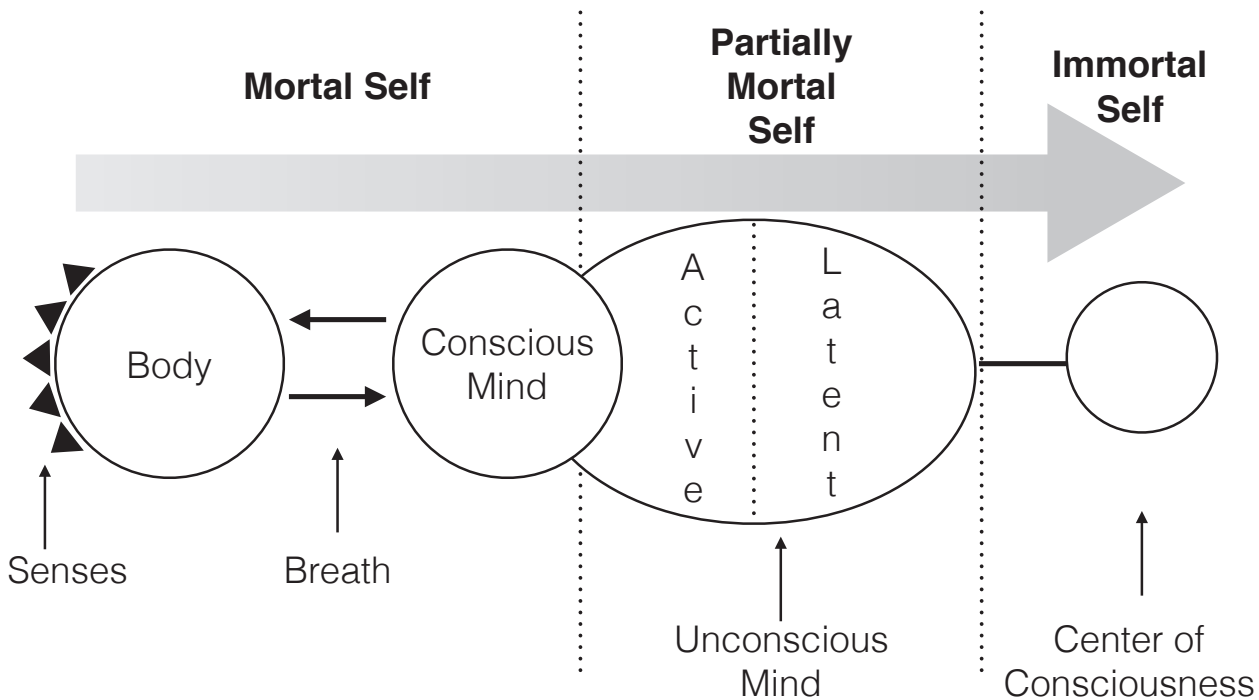
Mahājano yena gataḥ sa pathāḥ

Follow the path trodden by the wise sages.

PREFACE

This overview of systematic meditation practice was taught in a retreat by Radhikaji in January 2016 at Rishikesh, India. The overview was compiled by Sreeram Ramamoorthy during the retreat and edited subsequently by Radhikaji. This overview is not a substitute for guidance with a teacher of a living tradition teaching in an unbroken lineage. It serves merely as a reminder for those who are already training with Radhikaji in the Samaya way of internal practice.

The process of systematic meditation practice described in this overview is for the purpose of Self Realization. It may have benefits at a physical level but its purpose is not to promote physical culture or therapeutics.



General Information

The process of systematic meditation takes the meditator from

- the gross to the subtle
- the external to the internal
- the many-pointed to the one-pointed

If these three criteria are not met, then you are not following a systematic method of meditation.

Always follow the 6 main steps of the practice:

- Preparation
- Stretching & Asanas
- Breathing Exercises & Pranayama
- Internal Dialogue & Meditation
- Mantra Meditation (only for initiates)
- Prayer

Within these 6 categories you may include different techniques that suit your personality, phase of life, health condition and time constraints in consultation with your mentor.

Do not pick and choose parts of the practice, such as, only asanas, only breathing exercises or only internal dialogue. This is not a systematic process. This approach is common among modern schools of physical culture and therapists. It is not the Samaya way.

If under time constraint, do the 6 steps of the complete systematic practice in a shorter and compressed form instead. In case of extreme time constraint, even "touching the mat" counts, however "touching the mat" must be the exception and not the rule.

Do the practice actively with dedication and do not just passively go through the steps while day dreaming.

Practice with complete awareness and relaxed concentration. Do not make any dramatic resolutions and do not expect quick results.

Wait for at least 2 hours after a light meal and 4 hours after a heavy meal to do the systematic practice.

Practice four times a day: early morning before breakfast, around noon before your midday meal, between 5-7 p.m. before your evening meal and between 9-10 p.m. before bedtime.

THE SIX STEPS
OF
SYSTEMATIC PRACTICE

STEP 1

PREPARATION

Preparation includes Prayer & Internal Dialogue.

The practice of Vichara is also known as Internal Dialogue. Prayer is a special form of Internal Dialogue.

Why?

- To become aware of presence of a higher power, that is, the center of consciousness.
- To prepare the mind for the systematic practice.

What?

- Before starting practice, remember why you have started on this journey.
- Pray to the center of consciousness and ask to strengthen your will, determination and courage to fulfill your purpose of life.
- Maintain a stance of humility during prayer.
- Seek to connect and listen to the voice of wisdom within.

Things to note

- Do not use egocentric prayer to ask for favors.
- Do not use readymade prayers such as shlokas or hymns.
- Always pray in your own language and in your own words.

Short Internal Dialogue

Why?

- A short internal dialogue may be included to resolve daily issues. It serves to quiet the mind in the beginning of the systematic practice so that small matters of daily concerns do not distract during the rest of the systematic practice.

What?

- It is useful in the morning to ask what has planned for the day.
- During the last practice before bedtime, it is useful to go over the events of the day with the mind. This helps improve the memory as well as resolve issues that may have occurred during the day so that they do not disturb the sleep.

Things to note

- Do not visualize characters for mind and buddhi.
- Do not ask very deep philosophical questions initially. Focus on building a relationship with the mind. Ask simple questions about daily activities.
- Give the mind time to respond. Do not rush from one question to the next for the sake of asking questions.
- The mind may respond either verbally or through images. Be aware of the subtle cues.
- Get into the same stance that you take when studying for an exam or working on an important project. Do not approach the systematic practice in a casual manner.
- Consciously slow down. Do not get caught up with hurried thoughts.

STEP 2 STRETCHING & ASANAS

Joints and Glands Exercises

Why?

- To bring awareness to the body level from the external world.
- To warm up the body.

What?

- Go through the routine systematically from the head to the toe.

Things to note

- Do each step quickly - this is only a warm up and preparation for asanas.
- Breath normally.
- If thoughts come during practice, gently ask the mind to postpone it till the next Internal Dialogue and remind the mind that this is the time to be with the practice.

Asanas

The asanas that are suitable for the systematic practice are some of the classical poses. These are static and practiced without movement. Dynamic asana practice is similar to physical culture such as gymnastics and is not conducive to systematic meditation practice.

Why?

- To bring awareness to the body level from the external world.
- To stretch, twist, and invert the spine and to bend it backward and forward.
- To increase flexibility so that you can sit longer.
- To calm down the nervous system through correct practice of static asanas.
- To get to know your body.

What?

- Tree pose in supine position/Vrikshasana
 - Relax and let the bent leg fall to the ground.
 - Stretch the straight leg as if being pulled.
 - Stretch the arms as if being pulled.

- Leg raise /Halasana
 - Keep the knees straight without bending.
 - Relax the shoulders and arms. Do not use arms and hands to raise hips off the ground.
 - Do not use the force of momentum to raise the hips off the ground. Raise and lower legs slowly.
 - Keep the upper back on the ground.

- Cobra pose/Bhujangasana
 - Do not rest the weight of the upper body on the hands.
 - Keep the hands relaxed on the ground and use only the back to raise the body.

- Bow pose/Dhanurasana
 - Keep the knees together.

- Locust pose/Shalabhasana
 - Keep arms under the thighs.
 - Keep knees together and toes outstretched.

Things to note

- Practice the asana with awareness on the body.
- Relax in the pose.
- Coordinate the asana with the breath. When the chest and stomach are compressed, breath out. When the chest and stomach are expanded breath in.
- Whilst holding the pose, breathe normally. Hold the pose for a minute or two. This is unique to the traditional, static approach to asanas.
- While holding the pose feel the stretch and keep awareness on it.

- Select asanas that bend the spine backward and forward, as well as twist, stretch and invert it.
- Select only 3-4 asanas initially.
- Do not force yourself into any pose. Be gentle, else you will injury your muscles.
- Beginners should start with asanas lying on the back, to prepare themselves for the various classical asanas.

STEP 3

BREATHING EXERCISES & PRANAYAMA

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Why?

- To unlearn harmful breathing patterns learned unconsciously.
- To learn and strengthen the habit of breathing diaphragmatically.

What?

- Lie on stomach in Makarasana with palms on the elbows.
- Keep chest raised, legs apart with toes pointing outward.
- Feel the abdomen rising and falling with each breath.

Things to remember

- The chest should not raise and fall. This indicates shallow chest breathing.
- Focus on the abdomen rising and falling.
- You can also train diaphragmatic breathing in Shavasana or in seated pose with hand on your abdomen.
- This is the single most important breathing exercise.

Shavyatra - 61 points

Why?

- To bring attention to subtle body and take awareness deeper.

What?

- Move awareness systematically through the 61 points in the body.
- Dwell briefly on each point long enough to be aware of it. Move quickly through the points. Do not go too slow, you may fall asleep.
- Do not visualize lights, colors or symbols at the various points.

Things to remember

- Do not fall asleep. If this happens repeatedly, you will form a wrong habit.
- Do not flow from one point to the other. Jump from point to point.
- If thoughts come, ask mind gently to postpone it until Internal Dialogue.

Equal breathing in seated position

Rechaka - 2:1 Breathing in seated position

Why?

- To breathe without noise and jerks.
- To elongate the breath.
- To establish a fine breath without a pause.
- To allow the attention to transition from the body to the breath.

What?

- Always start with exhalation.
- Check the base count of inhalation and exhalation. If one is shorter than the other, then the shorter count is the base count.
- Observe the quality of the breath: noise, jerks and pauses.
- Elongate the breath in counts of 2 every week.

Things to remember

- Do not do use shallow chest breathing.
- Elongate the breath gradually, but do not push beyond comfort zone.
- Breathe naturally using diaphragm, but focus at nasagre (between the nostrils)
Remember to check if the trunk, neck and head are aligned and the shoulders relaxed.

Kapalabhati

Why?

- To remove toxins from the body.

What?

- Forceful exhalation only.
- The exhalation is active, while the inhalation is passive.
- Use the diaphragm to exhale. No chest breathing.
- Even though you are using the diaphragm, the attention should be around the nostrils. Diaphragmatic breathing should be natural.
- Do not bend forward, ensure that the upper body is straight.

Bhastrika

Why?

- To churn up the energy levels.

What?

- Forceful exhalation and inhalation.
- Exhalation and inhalation is active.
- Use the diaphragm to exhale. No chest breathing.
- Even though you are using the diaphragm, the attention should be around the nostrils. Diaphragmatic breathing should be natural.
- Do not bend forward, ensure that the upper body is straight.

Nadi Shodhanam without Vishnu Mudra

Why?

- To train the mind to be one pointed.
- To open both nostrils without using hands.
- To feel the subtle flow of the breath.

What?

- Find the active nostril, the base nostril.
- Start with exhalation.
- Practice all three versions of Nadi Shodhanam in the given order.

Things to remember

- Do not use hands.
- Keep the focus on the entrance of the nostril always and feel the breath.
- Keep the breath smooth and elongated without noise, pause or jerk.

Sushumna Kriya

Why?

- To train the mind to be one pointed.
- To open both nostrils.

What?

- Start with exhalation.
- Gently move the awareness down from top of the head to the base of the spine with exhalation and then from the base of the spine to the top of the head with inhalation.
- Elongate the breath and move as slowly as possible.

Things to remember

- Move the awareness in a straight line and not along the physical contour of the spine.
- Do not visualize any chakras or lights, but simply move the awareness down and up along the spine.
- The movement is along the back and not in front.

STEP 4

MEDITATION & INTERNAL DIALOGUE

Sandhya Kriya

Why?

- To make the mind one pointed.
- To allow the awareness to transition from the breath to the mind.
- To purify the samskaras.
- To get to know the unconscious mind.

What?

- To open a closed nostril, using the power of awareness.
- Keep the awareness at nasagre, between the two nostrils.
- Gently breathe in and out. Sit still, watching the breath.
- If a thought or image comes, allow it to rise. Do not interfere or try to control it.
- Try to witness the thoughts arising without getting caught up with them.

Things to remember

- Keep the attention at nasagre, between the two nostrils.
- If you get caught up in a train of thoughts, gently bring your awareness back to the space between the nostrils.
- If a thought comes up repeatedly and disturbs the mind, do internal dialogue to resolve the conflict.

Internal Dialogue

Why?

- To build a healthy relationship with mind.
- To develop a philosophy of life.
- To resolve internal conflicts.
- To get to know yourself.

What?

- Talk to the mind as a friend.
- Listen to the mind. Do not fall into an unconscious monologue.
- Do not give the mind "pep talks".
- Resolve conflicts or issues that repeatedly come up to disturb the mind.

Things to remember

- If you get carried away by the train of thoughts, do not condemn yourself. Instead allow your awareness to gently return to the point of focus at nasagre.
- Do not visualize characters for mind and buddhi.
- Do not rush from one question to the next for the sake of asking questions.
- Mind may respond either verbally, through images or emotionally.
- Ensure that the head, neck and trunk are in a straight line, shoulders are relaxed.

STEP 5

MANTRA (FOR INITIATES ONLY)

Why?

- To go deeper into the mind.
- To allow the mantra to guide you.
- To prepare you for the transition known as death.

What?

- If the awareness moves automatically to the ajna chakra between the eyebrows or to anahata chakra at the heart center, allow the attention to rest there.
- If the mantra rises spontaneously and naturally within, be aware of it.
- Listen to the mantra. Feel it reverberate within.
- If the awareness does not rise to ajna chakra or rest at anahata chakra, end the mantra practice with a prayer.

Things to remember

- Purushcharana, a special mantra practice, is only for a definite period of time.
- After a purushcharana, the mind needs some time to integrate the energies released before it can take up another practice.
- Mantra practice should be guided by a competent teacher or a living teacher who has validated the teachings.

STEP 6

PRAYER

In this special form of Internal Dialogue, the dialogue with the Divine within is a prayer of gratitude expressed in your own words and language.

Why?

- To become aware that the center of consciousness has infinite powers and loves unconditionally.
- To strengthen the dimension of gratitude.
- To open yourself for all that is good and the auspicious.
- To end the session of systematic meditation.

What?

- Express gratitude for all the gifts you have received.
- At the end the session of systematic meditation gently open your eyes and continue to perform your duties.

The systematic practice is an island of solitude you can return to four times a day to regenerate yourself.

About the Authors

Radhika Shah Grouven is a teacher of Samaya Srividya. She has been teaching and writing on Yoga, Advaita and Samaya Srividya Tantra since 1992. She founded the organization THATfirst in 2009 to promote the authentic teachings of the Oral Tradition to students from different parts of the world. She leads retreats and gatherings in Germany and India. She was born in Mumbai, India and is currently based in Germany.

Sreeram Ramamoorthy has been a student of the Samaya Srividya tradition training with Radhikaji since 2015. He is a householder, lives with his wife and two children, and works for a tech company. Since joining this tradition, he has been working on integrating the teachings and practices into his daily life. Having found this tradition and his teacher after a long and painful search, he is working on making the best use of this opportunity to make as much progress as possible while managing his other commitments.