

VERSE 13

How the Body Posture Should Be in Meditation

13

Let one firmly hold the body, head, and neck erect and still, gazing at the tip of the nose, without looking around.

In the previous verses Lord Kṛṣṇa explained how to fix the seat and how to make the mind one-pointed for meditation. In this verse the Lord describes the proper body posture for meditation. In sitting for meditation the yogi should sit erect by aligning the spine, head, and neck in their natural curve. The body posture should be firm, but not stiff; the shoulders, hands, and legs should be relaxed, but should not be permitted to move. The body should not sway back and forth or from side to side.

In meditation the eyes of the yogi should be fixed on the **tip of the nose**. It has been observed that in meditation the eyelids naturally droop downward, leaving a small crack in the eyelids. If the yogi drops the eyelids, leaving a small crack, and fixes the gaze on the tip of the nose through that crack, without forcefully moving the eyeballs, the mind is stopped from wandering during meditation. In Śaṅkarācārya's commentary on the **Bhagavad Gītā**, the phrase "gazing at the tip of one's nose" is explained as follows: the "meditator should have the attention as though turned to the tip of the nose." The object of concentration is the Self or God, and the eyes need an object on which to fix while the mind turns inward and dwells in the Self.

The Lord also says that the gaze should be fixed and not allowed to wander. The mind naturally follows the eyes when they move to look around and so a yogi loses the flow of concentration. The main idea is not to shift the gaze, whether the eyes are open or closed. The eyes should be fixed in one position while meditating on God.

Śloka 14

प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः ।
मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्तो आसीत् मत्परः ॥ १४ ॥

*praśāntātmā vigatabhīr---brahmacāriv-rate sthitaḥ
manaḥ saṁyam-ya maccitto yukto āsī-ta matparaḥ*

प्रशान्तात्मा	<i>praśāntātmā</i>	serene minded
विगतभीः	<i>vigatabhīḥ</i>	fearless
ब्रह्मचारिव्रते	<i>brahmacārivrate</i>	in the vow of brahmacarya
स्थितः	<i>sthitaḥ</i>	firm
मनः	<i>manaḥ</i>	the mind
संयम्य	<i>saṁyamya</i>	having controlled
मच्चित्तः	<i>maccittaḥ</i>	thinking on Me
युक्त	<i>yukta</i>	balanced
आसीत्	<i>āsīta</i>	let him sit
मत्परः	<i>matparaḥ</i>	as the supreme goal

VERSE 14

Inner Discipline of a Meditator

14

Serene-minded, fearless, firm in the vow of brahmacarya, with mind controlled, fixed on Me and balanced, let the yogi sit having Me as the supreme goal.

By sitting regularly in meditation as instructed in the previous verse, the mind of a meditator starts developing internal quietness, and the disturbances caused by thought waves calm down. The mind of the meditator becomes serene. Internal peace is experienced by the meditator as joy and contentment.

When the mind goes deeper in meditation, its desire for worldly objects and attachments becomes weaker, but the ego of the meditator, who is still maintaining a separate sense of individuality, gets afraid of merging into nothingness. The natural fear of death rises up and the thought emerges in the mind, "I may exist no more." This fear of losing the ego of individuality pulls the mind of the meditator out of that state of quietude back into the outer world.

Even if the meditator overcomes this fear by the regular practice of meditation, or by the study of scriptures, still there is no assurance of attaining success unless one is firmly established in the vow of *brahmacarya*. *Brahmacarya* is loosely translated as sexual continence, but it is not only control of the sexual impulses; it is also control of all the senses, which continuously reach out lustfully for objects. *Brahmacarya* has an even broader meaning: *Brahma* means God, and *chara* means walking. Walking on the path of God, or living a godly life is *brahmacarya*. Living a godly life means to keep the mind engaged in the thought of God all the time. It is also called *brahma vicāra* (Self-reflection). By keeping the mind engaged in the thought of God all the time, the ego will not be able to pull the mind out to the world.

When a meditator becomes of serene mind, fearless, and **firm in the vow** of living a godly life (*brahmacarya*), the meditator's mind, intellect, and body naturally become controlled and balanced. This brings the utmost peace. In this way a meditator should continue meditation, keeping the aim of Self-realization, or God-realization, as the primary goal.

Śloka 15

युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगी नियतमानसः ।
शान्तिं निर्वाणपरमां मत्संस्थामधिगच्छति ॥ १५ ॥

yuñjannevaṁ sadātmānaṁ yogī niya-tamānasaḥ
śāntim nirvāṇaparamāṁ matsaṁsthāma-dhigacchati

युञ्जन्	<i>yuñjan</i>	balancing
एवम्	<i>evam</i>	thus
सदा	<i>sadā</i>	always
आत्मनम्	<i>ātmanam</i>	the Self
योगी	<i>yogī</i>	a yogi
नियतमानसः	<i>niyatamānasaḥ</i>	one with the controlled mind
शान्तिम्	<i>śāntim</i>	to peace
निर्वाणपरमाम्	<i>nirvāṇaparamām</i>	that which culminates in liberation
मत्संस्थाम्	<i>matsaṁsthām</i>	abiding in Me
अधिगच्छति	<i>adhigacchati</i>	attains

VERSE 15

Achievement From Meditation

15

Thus always keeping the mind balanced and controlled, the yogi attains to the peace abiding in Me, which culminates in total liberation (nirvāṇa).

In verses 10-14, the Lord explained: 1) the proper mode of sitting for meditation, 2) the method of stabilizing the mind, 3) the correct body posture for meditation, and 4) how to observe inner disciplines in order to obtain control over the mind, intellect, and body. In this verse the Lord says that a yogi, by constant practice of meditation as instructed in the previous verses, achieves consistent inner peace in meditation. That infinite peace abides in the Self or God and by attaining infinite peace the individual self is established in its real and fundamental nature. This state is called supreme peace, a state of total liberation (*nirvāṇa*).

Śloka 16

नात्यश्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नतः ।
न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन ॥ १६ ॥

nātyaśnata-stu yogo'sti na caukānta-manaśnataḥ
na cātisvap-naśīlasya jāgrato nai-va cārjuna

न	<i>na</i>	not
अत्यश्नतः	<i>atyāśnataḥ</i>	of one who eats too much
तु	<i>tu</i>	verily
योगः	<i>yogaḥ</i>	yoga
अस्ति	<i>asti</i>	is
न	<i>na</i>	not
च	<i>ca</i>	and
एकान्तम्	<i>ekāntam</i>	at all
अनश्नतः	<i>anaśnataḥ</i>	of one who does not eat
न	<i>na</i>	not
च	<i>ca</i>	and
अतिस्वप्न शीलस्य	<i>ati svapna śīlasya</i>	of one who sleeps too much
जाग्रतः	<i>jāgrataḥ</i>	one who is awake
न	<i>na</i>	not
एव	<i>eva</i>	even
च	<i>ca</i>	and
अर्जुन	<i>arjuna</i>	O Arjuna

VERSES 16-17

*Rules and Regulations to be Observed to
Avoid Pitfalls in Meditation*

16

Arjuna, this yoga is neither for one who overeats, nor for one who does not eat at all; nor for one who sleeps too much, nor for one who is (always) awake.

After mentioning the methods and aim of meditation, the Lord further adds that an aspirant cannot achieve success in meditation if proper rules and regulations of eating and sleeping are not observed. The term “eating” pertains not only to eating food, but also to all enjoyments that are experienced by the senses. In order to achieve success in meditation, a yogi should be moderate in any indulgence of outer objects.

this yoga is neither for one who overeats, nor for one who does not eat at all - The physical body is called the food sheath; it exists as a result of eating food that nourishes the mind, body, and senses. If one does not eat food, the body cannot remain healthy for long, and will wither and die. On the other hand, if one overeats, the body will become sick because it will not be able to digest the food properly. Food that sits undigested in the stomach creates gas, mucous, and heartburn that will disturb a person in meditation. One can also become overweight by eating too much, which can lead to dullness, laziness, and loss of enthusiasm for meditation.

In contrast to this, if a person does not eat properly or fasts too much, that person will get weaker physically, and it will also affect the mind. The aspirant will not be able to sit properly and meditate. The mind will be disturbed and agitated. Therefore, for a yogi who practices meditation, it is very important to eat the correct amount of food.

nor for one who sleeps too much - One who has developed the habit of sleeping too much becomes dull and lazy, and the mind does not want to do anything. Moreover, it is a waste of time to sleep long hours when it is not needed. Therefore, one who sleeps too much does not achieve success in meditation.

nor for one who is always awake - If a yogi stays awake too much, that yogi will feel tired, weak, and exhausted, and will not be able to digest food properly or concentrate well. Such a yogi also cannot achieve success in meditation.

In summary, overeating, too much fasting, oversleeping, and not sleeping enough are harmful for one’s physical health and one’s meditation.