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Editor-in-Chief

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Concentration in Yoga Education: Essentials of Practice

Ravi Vishwanath Gola

Introduction:

Proper exercise act as a lubricating mechanism for the joints, muscles, ligaments, tendons, and other parts of the body, by increasing circulation and flexibility. The fundamental difference between Yogic exercises and ordinary physical exercises is that physical exercise emphasizes violent movements of the muscles, while Yogic exercises promote slow and conscious movements of the body, thus avoiding the build-up of lactic acid in the muscle fibers, avoiding fatigue. There are a few essentials to be followed before the actual practice of concentration. They are about the place, time, bodily condition, food, and the technique of practice.

Place. The place of practice should be neat, clean and peaceful. Fresh air should be available there. The place has not to be of any special type, but it should be pleasing to the eyes of the practitioner. Practise at the same place regularly unless it is extremely necessary to change. Practise alone, if possible. Avoid the presence of any onlooker.

Ravi Vishwanath Gola: Physical Education Director, GP Porwal Arts, Commerce College and V.V. Salimath Science College, Sindagi, Vijaypur (Karnataka) India.

Time: Choose the most convenient time available to you. This means that the time of your practice should be such that it requires the least of your physical and mental activation. Such time could be before or after your regular routine working hours. Practise at the same time every day. If due to some unavoidable circumstances, you cannot practise every day; practise at least five days in a week. Practise only once within twenty-four hours. Those individuals who practise yoga asanas, may practise concentration during the same session. In this case, the practitioner must rest for a quarter of the period devoted to asanas before practising concentration. For example, if you do asanas for forty minutes, rest for ten minutes first. Then practise concentration.

“Yoga is a life of self discipline built upon the tenets of simple living and high thinking. If you follow these five points, which compose a true holistic approach to our whole system of body, mind and soul, you will gain strength and balance in this demanding stressful world. Obstacles become stepping stones to success, and life is a school for the development of character and compassion and the Realization of the Divine all-pervading-Self” Swami Vishnudevananda in the “Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga.”

Bodily Condition:

Your body should be light, untired, clean and normal at the time of practice. This implies, brushing and cleaning the mouth; washing face, hands and feet; wearing clean and light clothes; having only light food and being free from the influence of any intoxication. The body should not be tired, nor it should be under any excessive physical pain. Since your stomach should be empty at the time of practice, eat two hours before the practising time or eat afterwards.

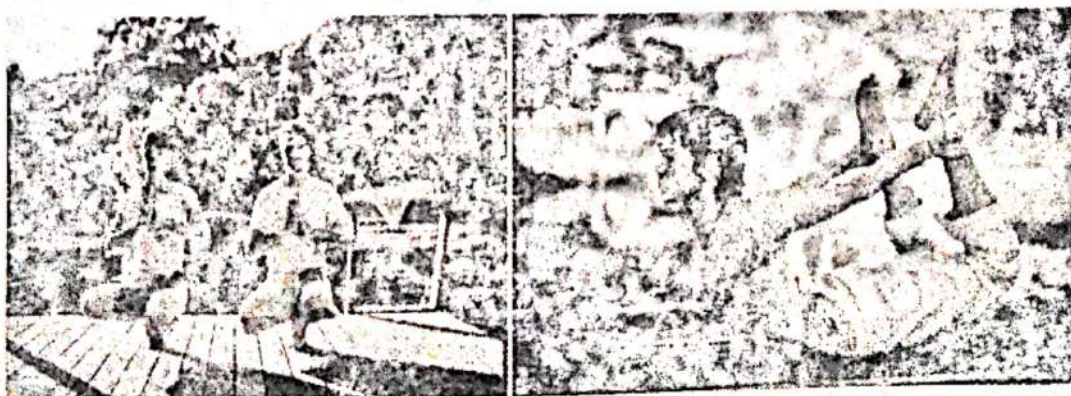
Mental Condition:

Try to keep the mind free from anxiety, worries and any strenuous involvement for the moment. Feeling of jealousy, hatred, anger, revenge should be discarded. If feeling of harming others crops up in mind, consider that you can better yourself without

hurting others. Keep the mind free from any burden to the best of your ability.

Food:

Eat whatever food you like, vegetarian or non-vegetarian. But the thing to remember is not to make it TAMASI (hot stuff). Don't use excessive spices in food. Eat a balanced diet which means including salad, fresh fruits and fresh vegetables in your everyday diet. Eat only 85% of your capacity at a time and eat slowly. Avoid excessive intake of coffee, tea, alcohol and drugs. More than two cups of coffee or tea and more than two alcoholic drinks in a day would be excessive. What would constitute excessive in case of drugs, judge yourself. If you can avoid regular intake of alcohol and drugs, that would be highly desirable. This limitation about food should be maintained in your day-to-day life. However, when there are occasions to participate in modern-day dinner parties and social get-togethers, enjoy yourself to the fullest, without in the least caring about the limitations. But remember, yoga means a science of equilibrium or balance. When your life will be governed with this principle of equilibrium, you will have known the secret of this science.



Method of Practice:

It is strongly suggested that please read the whole method of practice first. Do not try to start practicing, while making the first reading. When the first reading of the methodology is completed, and it is fully understood, only then begin the actual practice.

As already mentioned, there are various ways of practising concentration. But what is common in all these is the fixation of

mind to some object-which could be on internal or on external part of the body of the individual himself or herself; or it could be on any other object. The practice with the internal or the external part of the self is complicated, difficult, and also dangerous. But the practice with some chosen object is easier, free from danger, and most rewarding, and thus, very desirable for modern men and women.

What type of object? Though the selection of the object is the individual's own choice, certain suggestions are being made. In yogic practices the commonly used objects are flower, candle, statue, photo and painting. We do not recommend candle, as there is some danger of hurting the eye-sight; and also some danger of self-injury and fire when not practised with caution. Among the other items noted above, a practice with flower is recommended because it is the easiest and the best for any person in the initial stage of practice.



Selecting the Object:

Select the kind of flower you like most. You need only one flower in the beginning. Therefore, the size of the flower should be larger and bright in colour, such as a rose, a marigold, a sunflower or similar others. If the natural flower is not available or if it is too costly, then buy some artificial flower which may be available at any place. Whereas the natural flower has to be changed when it begins fading, the artificial one could be used for unlimited period of time. But in case you are using the artificial flower, wash it at intervals to keep it always clean.

Arranging the Object:

First, put the flower with stem intact into some small pot, such as, a glass, a vase, or into a similar other pot. In case of natural flower, put some water in the pot to keep it fresh. The position of the flower in the pot should be straight and not crooked. This arrangement of the flower can be done by using some leaves of the same flower or of other flowers. The point to keep in mind is that the flower should stand out clearly above the leaves.

Placing the Object:

Place this arranged flower on some small-size household furniture, such as, a stool, a chowki, a morha, a chair without arms, or a side-table. Now, consideration of height. The placing of the flower-pot should be such that the height of the top of the flower becomes the same as the height of the eyesight from the ground in a sitting position. This height may vary according to the height of the individual but generally speaking, it should be about two and a half feet.

Next is the consideration of distance between the sitting position of the practitioner and the flower. This distance between the object of practising and the practitioner should be about four to five feet as shown in Figure 3. There should be enough light on the object. Understanding of Visionary Power, Before describing the actual practice, some clarification about the visionary power of the mind needs to be given in order to convey the full understanding of this system. According to yoga, we possess two types of visionary powers: one through the power of the eyes, and another, through the power of the inner eye. The yogis believe that we all have inner eye, the location of which is in the frontalis, that is, in the area between the eye-brows. The latent visionary power of the internal eye can be developed by practice. When the power of the internal eye is developed and sharpened by practice, the yogis claim to see things which is not possible to see through the outer eyes. Whereas the outer eyes can have the visibility of things only seen out-wardly: the inner eye can have the visibility of things presently unseen and at the farthest distances. Yogis of

religious faith and values, devote a great deal of their time to enhancing this power of their inner eye in order to see the bodily presence of their chosen deity whom they worship. Since our purpose is not worshipping or visualizing some deity, we will make only limited use of this power.

This self-imposed limitation is from the point of view of relevance. We, being primarily concerned with what is essential, have to leave out what is unessential. Thus, our interest in the inner visionary power is only to the point where an understanding of its working and nature is helpful in its proper and useful development.

Conclusion:

The significance of the above clarification will be easily known when you will begin the actual practice. But let it be pointed out in order to simplify the process that when you see a thing through open eyes and then try to see the same thing through the inner eye, you will, by its requirement, begin an exercise in concentration. As will be the progress in visibility through the inner eye, so will be in proportion the progress is gaining concentration, It follows, then, that the length and period of practice will depend upon the need and preferences of the individuals.

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