

# Shivaratri talk by Swami Paramarthanandaji

Topic- Meditation - Chennai, 4th March 2019

*Gist of Swamiji's talk is reproduced:*



Lord Shiva in meditation all the time- shows importance and value of meditation. *Dhyanam*-- mental exercise- important discipline as per tradition. *Dhyanam*- part of each *pooja-nitya* or special- 16 steps.

First step is *dhyanam*. *Dhyanam*- first part of each *Parayanam* too. It should not be mechanical. *Japa-dhyanam* of the deity is done first. Thus, as per *sastra dhyanam* is a very important discipline. Primary purpose of *dhyanam*- skill to handle the mind. Mind should be handled by me and not that I should be dictated by the vagaries of the mind. Example - if car does not follow my instruction, then it will be very dangerous.

*Mano-nigraha*- mind management - very important for a spiritual seeker - required for others too. Mind is internal enemy, if undisciplined. *Dhyanam*- only tool for *mano-nigraha*. *Karma-yoga* and *upasana-yoga* must go hand in hand.

Important Principle of meditation: Involuntary thoughts are not backed by my will. Voluntary thoughts, on the other hand are backed by my will. Voluntary thoughts are more powerful than non-voluntary. Will backed thoughts involves two exercises

(1) Displacement of involuntary thoughts and

(2) Maintaining voluntary thoughts in the mind for a length of time.

Thoughts centered on *Bhagavan* are to be cultivated- *manasa-pooja* or *japa* or chanting *shlokas/parayanam*. Chanting should be mindful- not mechanical. Mind takes part fully. *Japa-dhyanam*- to develop *mano-nigraha* ( I instruct and mind obeys)

Preliminary steps--

1) *Shuklam bharadharam*- prayer to Lord *Vinayaka*.

2) *Pranayama*-Thought Displacing Step (TDS) method to quieten the turbulent mind. *Prana* and mind are products of same *pancha-bhoota*. *Prana* is *rajo-guna amsa* of *pancha-bhootas*. Mind is *sattva-guna amsa* of *pancha-bhootas*. Hence both are inter connected. It displaces the thoughts - but *pranayama* also to be done mindfully - deep breathing with awareness of *prana* going in and out. *Prana ayama* plus *prana vikshanam* to be done minimum 10 times.

3) *Mantra* to be chanted mindfully, to get benefit of *mano-nigraha*. Do the *japa-dhyanam* with full involvement of mind. Mechanical *japa-dhyana* will not work at all, especially in old age. We will struggle a lot if we are not equipped with *mano-nigraha*. Living with a hellish mind is the worst *samsara*. Hence, daily *japa-dhyanam* is necessary. Thought displacement and *japa-dhyanam*- only way to handle mind.

*Viveka, vairagya, mumushutvam*- by *karma-yoga*. *Samadi shatka sampatti*- by *upasana-yoga*. Keep trying. Allot sometime. Take resolve to do *japa dhyanam* - 10 to 15 minutes at least. *Mantra- Om Namah Shivaya* or any *mantra* can be taken by us which will vacate involuntary thoughts. It is a big accomplishment - if we are successful. Hence please practice regularly.

Mind is my instrument- do not allow encroachers. *Japa-dhyanam* is only solution- compulsory for spiritual seekers. Unpreoccupied mind- required for *sravanam*. *Mano-nigraha*- most crucial to handle worries/ stress. Even *jnanam* cannot help. *Jnanam* makes me understand that mind is *vyavaharika satyam*. Handling mind requires *japa-dhyanam*. Obedient mind can be used for higher forms of meditation too. Thus, *Japa-dhyanam* is very important for spiritual seekers.

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