

In the early stages, failures, disappointments and anxieties hampered me in my quest and I was in two minds whether to continue or not in my quest. But years of forceful and uninterrupted practice had prepared my mind to accept the challenges of pains, failures and disappointments. With my determined will-power to endure, I began investigating and inspecting my own practice until my mind gained confidence. With this confidence I continued my practices until the comeliness in the body and lustre of elegance in the mind settled in myself.

I reflected on the defective movements of the muscles and joints affected by pain, comparing them to the correct sense of comfortable movements on the same parts of the other side. This made me un-do and re-do the *āsana* with proper adjustments to improve the afflicted side and to judge the actions of each muscle, tendon, fibre and flow of energy and intelligence in them, like the balancing scale of justice.

*tat-pratiṣedha-
-artham eka-tattva-
-abhyāsaḥ* (I.32) Correct adjustments in the unrhythmic musculoskeletal structure of the body, and the feeling of the non-movement or movement of intelligence in the various sheaths of the body through *āsanas*, which I practised with single-minded effort, became the key-note in my *sādhana*.

1. Sāghanā Krama

Sāghanā is a key concept. It implies the idea of effort, but actually the sense of effort goes beyond it. *Sāghanā* demands an investigating and examining mind if the action is to purify (*śodhana*). Desiccation and absorption (*śoṣaṇa*) are needed to remove the body's defects and for an auspicious presentation (*śobhana*). When the effortful efforts transform into an effortless state then one experiences the calm and soothing state of *śamana*. If all these four aspects (*śodhana*, *śoṣaṇa*, *śobhana* and *śamana*) are followed from the beginning with the precise performance of each *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* or *dhyāna*, then one can experience the stages that are explained on *saṃprajñāta samādhi* in I.17: *vitarka-vicāra-ānanda-asmitā-rūpa-anugamāt saṃprajñātaḥ*. In this *sūtra* I relate *śodhana*

to the *vitarka* level of logical study; *śoṣaṇa* to *vicāra* or investigation and synthesis; *śobhana* to *ānanda* or comeliness in the body; and *śamana* or lustre of elegance to *asmitā-rūpa prajñā* (awareness of the Self). Thus these four stages of *sādhanā* become the ground (*kṣetra*) for the *sādhaka*.

The next step, *śoṣaṇa*, is related to the *vicāra* stage where all the parts have been analysed and carefully rectified. This is the stage of absorption. The period of absorption becomes *ānanda* or *śobhana* (auspicious presentation). With this absorption, efforts and expressions subside; the *sādhaka* exists in the simple and pure state of *asmitā prajñā*, where there is neither loss nor gain, neither excess nor deficiency.

In the true *sādhanā*, one soaks the flesh in the stream of blood, rubs the mind with each cell and brushes the intelligence to burn the defective seeds so that *prāṇa* flows smoothly, invigorating the very core of the being.

To achieve this level, *āsanas* play a perfect role in positioning the joints, tissues, fibres and bones without any distraction, contraction or refraction.

Lastly, *āsanas* are meant to spread the Flame of the Self all over the body as if the Self is performing the *āsanas* using the body, mind, intelligence and consciousness as its agents.

This experience is the nectar of the *sādhanā* and should be savoured by all *sādhakas*.

Patañjali describes this profound *yaugika sādhanā* as having two facets. One is total surrender of oneself to the Supreme Being (*Īśvara praṇidhāna*), and the other is *aṣṭāṅga yoga*. If the former is the path of renunciation (*vairāgya*), or freedom from worldly joys and attachment to *Īśvara*, the latter is a method (*abhyāsa krama*) of practice.

Please remember that these two facets are complementary and supplementary to each other. They are interwoven as parts of the same *yaugika* process. If the eight limbs of *aṣṭāṅga yoga* are the indirect petals towards Self-realisation, *Īśvara praṇidhāna* (I.23) is a direct route for it.