



# Meditation For Building A Strong Character

**Dr. Kavita Sarkar**

**Assistant Professor**

**University of Calcutta**

## Abstract

Yoga in this article does not deal with the physical exercises or the Asanas but with the meditative process which helps to control the modifications of mind called Vrittis. The whole of human life and character is to do with Vrittis and Sanskaras. Character as Swami Vivekananda used to say is a bundle of Sanskaras. The kind of impressions one collects, creates and possess determines ones character at any given point of time. Our entire life is a product of our thought. Thoughts create life and not vice versa. Life doesn't create thought but our thoughts create our experience of life. So if we get used to positive vritti formation, positive modification of mind we will have a positive life. Actually education should be about the creation of Sanskaras, creating the right building blocks for a great character. When we think of something repeatedly, we create a sanskara which goes and lodges itself in the subconscious. These sanskars are responsible for our memories. So if we have the right building blocks and these have to be laid in early years of life, we can be sure our thinking, our perception, our attitudes and finally our behaviour in the outer world will be very good and reliable. Without this good, solid building blocks within us we can never know what kind of perverted thoughts, all kinds of attitude and deviant behaviour can come into our lives. So creation of good sanskars through repeated good conscious thinking and action is very important. Yoga through the process of meditation helps us to bring our mind into our own hands which means I will think only positive thoughts, my emotions will be very sweet, loving and positive and my joy will be within myself. I will not hunt it in hundred different outer objects. So I will not invest too much in the external. I will be happy by myself. This will be such a big gain in today's world.

**Key Words: Vritti, Sanskars, Yoga, Character, Meditation.**

## What is Vritti?

The concept of Vritti is borrowed from Yoga Psychology. It is a very important concept for all those who try to control mind, bring mind into their own hands, understanding exactly how the mind works and how thought is created in the mind.

Vritti comes from the dhatu Vrit which means to whorl. It is a kind of warping effect created by the mind due to any kind of sense perception. Whenever our senses fall on something the mind modifies according to the sense object. This warping effect of the mind or modification or fluctuation of the mind is called Vritti. The content of all vrittis is called Prateya. This vritti is the starting point of thought about the

object. Our senses are awake. They are constantly recording objects, taking in objects through sense perception and as a result the mind is modifying constantly. As a result, being in a vritti state is normal in human life. Only thing is that we can generate very positive regulated vrittis so as to guide our thoughts. We can also stop the creation of vrittis by practicing meditation. This gives a sort of control over the mind apparatus. It also brings us to a level of peace and fulfillment within ourselves and breaks our compulsive habits.

### How vrittis generate thoughts?

How vrittis generate thoughts can be explained with the help of an example. We have to just imagine a rubber sheet. If we throw a ball at this rubbersheet, the sheet undergoes a warping affect and accommodates the ball as it were until it falls down. So, this warping effect is vritti created in the rubber sheet. If the rubbersheet was the mind then this warping affect is vritti and the ball itself is prateya. Together they make a thought. There can be a warping effect without a prateya as in the case of Nidra. There may not be actual content or it may just be an imagination but still there is a warping effect. So, this is how thought is created in the mind. Yoga is all about stopping vrittis. If one is able to stop thought in a perfectly conscious state it leads one to self-knowledge.

Types of Vrittis There are five types of vrittis according to Patanjali Yog Sutra.

1. Right cognition or Pramana : Pramana vrittis are those which produce right cognition Under this head Patanjali gives us all the methods of knowledge which are six in number.

Pratakshya, Anumaan, Upaman, Arthapati, Anuuplabdhi and Shabda.

All these are the means of right cognition.

2. Misconception or Viparjaya : Viparjaya vritti are those which gives false knowledge. These are the vrittis thought modifications which are influenced by negative emotions as a result of which they deflect right knowledge.

3. Imagination/ Fantasy or Vikalpa : Any young person spends a lot of time in this because these are vrittis which one would like to experience not that it is the reality of his or her life or that it is the reality of the object in front of us but this that one would like to have.

4. Sleep or Nidra : Even sleep is classified as vritti. It is called as abav prateye vritti. There is no actual content to this vritti. But it is still a vritti nevertheless.

5. Memory or Smriti : When conscious thought is repeated it becomes Sanskara or impressions in the mind. This further when maintained there for a long time in the sub conscious fructifies into memories which again come to the conscious plane and appear like thought to us but they are recollections of past conscious thoughts.

Our entire knowledge, perception, thinking, emoting and willing are through vrittis. There is only one way of knowing and that is through vritti, so once we have a grasp on this vritti we will know how to handle it, how to keep it positive no matter what the circumstances, how to stop it at will and how to use it so as to get enough relaxation, peace of mind so that we are able to function in this world effectively.

## What is Yog ?

Patanjali Yog Sutra gives us a very important concept of What Yog is ? Yog actually means stopping the modifications of mind so that the witness consciousness, one who is witnessing the thought form can turn towards its source. Otherwise, we tend to identify with our vrittis, our modifications of mind. The normal functioning of a normal mind is to identify with the thought process. So occasionally if we can stop vrittis, by reaching the state of yoga we can dis identify with the entire thought process. It is only through the thought process that we identify with the body, mind or with the objects around us. No matter what our circumstances are, what objects are there around us , what ambience we are in, finally our vrittis are ours. We can handle them, regulate them, stop them, make them positive or negative. So this art if we learn by ourselves, we start generating our experience of life from within ourselves. Our experience is not dependent on something outside. It is created from within.

## Concept of Meditation

Meditation is continuous flow of thought to the point of absorption on an object which is satvick, which is elevated and which is at a higher plane of consciousness. Pantanjali in Yog Sutra describes meditation as a long stretched out thought. Vivekananda used to say Meditation is the actual spiritual life because it unfolds the highest divinity within oneself. He says it is the one moment in our daily lives when we are not at all material.

## Preliminaries of Meditation:

We don't get a new mind when we sit for meditation. The same old mind which keeps us busy all the time will work. So, unless the mind is ordered to a certain extent, unless it is regulated and kept in a proper positive state it will be very difficult to attain a state of meditation. That is why Patanjali in his Ashtang Yog, gives eight steps to the state of yoga. The highest state of Yoga is Samadhi and meditation is the seventh step there just below Samadhi. The first two steps are **Yama and Niyama** which constitutes certain basic moral discipline which is required for a steady mind. Calmness is required for the mind to meditate. Unless one is established in these preliminaries' meditation will not occur.

1)**Yama** constitutes five disciplines These are Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigriha. These are briefly explained as follows:

i) Ahimsa is non violence especially in thought. We may not be very violent in our deeds but our thoughts could be very violent. Anger, hatred, jealousy all these constitute mental violence. Being free of this requires great effort. So this purification process is required to generate the state of meditation.

ii) Satya means commitment to truth in thought, words and deeds.

iii) Asteya is non stealing. It means not appropriating to oneself what does not belong to him.

iv) Brahmacharya is celibacy. It means keeping the body and mind pure by keeping the vital energy at the heart centre so that it awakens.

v) Aparigriha which means not taking gifts because it obligates one to the giver. So to keep a free mind one must be a giver and not taker.

2) **Niyama** includes in Sanskrit terms Shouch, Santosha, Tapas, Swadhyay and Eshwar paridhan.

i) Shouch means general cleanliness of the body and mind.

ii) Santosha is contentment

iii) Tapa means the spirit of austerity should be there in a spiritual aspirant.

iv) Swadhyay means self-study. Daily some elevated study is required.

v) Eshwar Paridhan means surrender to the divine must be there and not an egoistic attitude.

Even it is mentioned in the Bhagwad Gita that Yoga delivers one from sorrow if it is practiced regularly. If one has steady living habits, regulated life style which means regulated food, drink, sleep he will readily attain the state of meditation. A very erratic life style will take one away from the state of meditation because the mind will be restless naturally.

**3) Posture or Asana:** The next step after Yama and Niyama in the Ashtang yog comes Asanas or Posture. It is called Asan Sidhi in yoga which means ability to maintain one posture for a long time. If possible, Padma Asan is to be adapted. The essential thing about the Asana is that the spine is to be kept erect as spine is the axis of our being. When the spine is erect the organs do not droop, they suddenly become active and alive. So, maintaining erect posture of the spine is important in Asana. Asana helps to understand our body. It helps to develop a lot of awareness about the body.

**4) Breathing or Pranayama:**

Breath is actually a link between the body and mind. Both breath and mind are the expressions of our vital energy. The more the breathing is long drawn out and steady the more the mind is calm. Both the breath and mind are the expressions of our vital energy or Prana. If we regulate this vital energy through breath or through thought we will achieve the state of meditation. So, breathing can be used as a means to calm the mind completely.

**5) Pratyahara :**

Once the breath is regulated the mind enters the next state of mind call Pratyahara. This is withdrawal of the mind from objects of senses, from objects of interest deliberately. We tend to abuse our sense organs. We over eat, over sleep, overdo some physical activity, do everthing in excess. Pratyahara is to have control over the sense organs.

**6) Dharana**

When we sit for meditation, the mind listens to us for sometime but after sometimes it goes its own way. Again, it rushes to the object of interest. We again have to bring it back. Again, it will rush. Again, we will have to bring it back. The more we bring back the mind the more we are conditioning the mind to dwell on one particular thing. Brain is plastic. The more we train it, it will create that habit. So, we can train the

mind to remain rivetted at one point. So in Dharana our mind does not go in different directions but comes in towards one point

### 7) Dhayana

Once the mind stays rivetted on the object of meditation for a long time we enter the state of what is called Dhyana. In this state the mind is very stable and quiet, not distracted and one can grasp the nature of object very well. It is a magical state, beautiful and restful. If the object of meditation is a deity one understands its bhaav and gets a clear knowledge about it.

The object of meditation gets fixed and the mind does not move from there. The mind remains completely rivetted to the object of meditation. A long stretched out thought is generated. If one can maintain this state for a period of 144 seconds one attains the state of Dhayana.

### 8) Samadhi:

Beyond this 144 second the mind enters the state of Samadhi. The mind retains the same prateye and hardly modifies. That is a state of meditation. One bout of strong meditation transforms one's life. That is the power of meditation. The mind no more exists because the Vritti gets completely vanished. Only prateye remains and shines in all its glory. One becomes merged with the object. That is becomes one with the object. This is the highest state of existence where the mind has transcended its normal function. Mind is nothing but thought. When there is no thought there is no mind. This is knowing by being, not knowing as an object and this can only be known through the practice of meditation.

### Advantages of meditation:

- 1) Meditation stills our mind. It gives us intense power of concentration and memory.
- 2) Meditation clears the mind and gives a deep sense of balance in our lives.
- 3) It gives positivity and intense focus and withdrawal of focus where ever necessary.
- 4) Meditation is the secret of success because it keeps the will one pointed .
- 5) It gives great inner peace and balance.
- 6) Meditation is the cause for happiness. There is no parallel to it.

## Obstacles to meditation :

Laziness, distractions, addiction to sense pleasures, disease in the body are some of the obstacles to meditation.

What is required for meditation is a deeply committed will . This will lead to highest meditative states which is actually unfoldment of awareness. Happiness is the function of awareness. The more aware one becomes, the more conscious one becomes from within. And thus, happier without any external objects. Awareness contributes to happiness. So, this is the fulfilment of a meditative life.

An example from our own culture will explain the glory of a meditative life. This is a story of Sukhdev , the knower of Brahman. He had the knowledge of Brahman even at the young age of 16. He was the son of Rishi Vyas. Vyas realizes that he has nothing much to teach to his child so he sends him to King Janaka of Mithila who was a Raj Rishi. When they hear of Sukhdev coming, the entire palace prepares for his coming. But Janaka gives strict instructions to his courtiers to remain silent and not to allow him in as he wanted to see his reaction. Janaka knew that Sukhdev was a remarkable boy who has had the highest knowledge and so he wanted to test this boy.

So, when Sukhdev arrives in Mithila there was no one to welcome him. He was just ignored. He wasn't even offered the bare hospitality required to be offered to a guest. But there was absolutely no change in Sukhdev's face. He was neither angry, nor hateful, nor resentful nor wanting to go back. He remained with a completely tranquil mind and heart exuding peace and joy. After some time he was ushered into the palace and there for a week he was given extra hospitality – all kinds of good stuffs like good clothes to wear, fragrant bath, good food and was kept in luxury. Again, there was no change in Sukhdev's radiant face. He was extremely calm, established in himself exuding peace and joy. Then he was ushered into the court of King Janaka. Janaka sees him for the first time and tells him that he has a test for him. He gave him a bowl of milk which was full upto the brim. He asked him to go around the court room seven times and he would see if a drop of milk will fall or not. In the court room there were all sorts of distractions : Heated debates were going on, music was going on, there were beautiful girls dancing about. But this young man carried that bowl of milk seven times around the court room and not a single drop of milk fell. His hands and eyes were so steady because his mind was so steady. His mind was rooted in Brahman. When Sukhdev comes back with a same tranquil face, king Janaka tells him that he has nothing to teach him and that he bows down to him as he has attained the highest. This is the glory of a meditative state in our culture. The man of highest wisdom is naturally a man of meditation.

**Conclusion:**

Our mind keeps us busy all the time because of the constant modification it suffers. Our senses are awake. They constantly keep recording objects through sense perception. This modification of mind called vrittis due to sense intake is normal in human life. Only thing is that we can generate very positive regulated vrittis so as to guide our thoughts because after all our life is a creation of our thoughts. Yoga through the process of meditation helps to control the thought process. The man of highest wisdom is naturally a man of meditation. If we fill our mind with positive thoughts and sweet emotions of love, care, kindness, service we will experience bliss from within. We will remain happy and joyful without collecting any external objects. We will have an inner balance and can live in this world maturely.

**References:**

Nikhilananda, Swami. (1949) The Upanishads, A New Translation Volume 1, Advaita Ashram Publication, Kolkata

Nikhilananda, Swami .(1952) The Upanishads, A New Translation Volume 11, Advaita Ashram Publication, Kolkata

Nikhilananda, Swami ,(1956) The Upanishads, A New Translation Volume 111, Advaita Ashram publication, Kolkata

Nikhilananda, Swami .(1959) The Upanishads, A New Translation Volume 1V, Advaita Ashram Publication, Kolkata

Nikhilananda, Swami.( 1932) DRG-DRSYA-VIVEKA An Inquiry into the Nature of the 'Seer and the Seen' Advaitya Ashram Publication, Kolkata

Vivekananda, Swami. (2021) Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, Fingerprint Publishing, New Delhi.

Vivekananda, Swami. (2022) The complete Book of Yoga, Fingerprint Publishing, New Delhi.