

[Self-Transformation Through a Daily Vigil](#)

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Performing religious practices at the same time each day is the key to steady unfoldment on the spiritual path

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When we study and practice our religion, we are not necessarily performing deepsadhana. We are simply dispatching our religious duties. These duties are concisely outlined in the pancha nitya karmas, the five minimal religious obligations of Hindus. These are dharma (proper conduct), upasana (worship), utsava (festivals), tirthayatra (pilgrimage) and samskaras (rites of passage). The performance of personal sadhana, discipline for self-transformation, is one step deeper in making religion real in one's life. Through sadhana we learn to control the energies of the body and nerve system, and we experience that through the control of the breath the mind becomes peaceful. Sadhana is practiced in the home, in the forest, by a flowing river, under a favorite tree, in the temple, in gurukulas or wherever a pure, serene atmosphere can be found. Being a personal discipline, a vrata, vow, is often taken before serious sadhana is begun. The vrata is a personal pledge between oneself, one's guru and the angelic beings of the inner worlds to perform the disciplines regularly, conscientiously, at the same time each day.

Who sets the course of sadhana? The course of sadhana can be set by an elder of the Hindu community. It can also be set by one's satguru. Your mother and father, who are your first gurus, can also set the course of sadhana for their children. Or, it can be set by yourself, from a book. There are many fine books available, outlining the basics of sadhana and meditation.

You will first discover that when the breath is regulated, it is impossible for the thinking mind to run wild, and when the breath is slightly held, it is impossible for more than one thought to remain vibrating in the mind at a time. You will experience that when the nerve currents are quieted through diaphragmatic breathing, it is impossible to be frustrated, and it is possible to absorb within yourself, into the great halls of inner learning, into the great vacuum within you, all of your problems, troubles and fears, without having to psychoanalyze them.

Through the regular practice of scriptural study, which is a vital part of your daily sadhana vigil, you will soon find that it is possible to touch into your subsuperconscious mind and complement that study with your own inner knowing. After you are well established in your sadhana, you will enjoy a greater ability to discipline your body, your breath, your nerve system and your mind.

Sadhana begins in the home, and it begins with you. It must be practiced regularly, at the same time each day--not two hours one day, one hour the next and then forgetting about it for three or four days because you are too busy with external

affairs, but every day, at the same time. Meeting this appointment with yourself is in itself a sadhana. In the technological age nearly everyone finds it difficult to set one hour aside in which to perform sadhana. This is why you should promise yourself--take an informal vow--to dedicate only one half hour a day. In the agricultural era it was easy to find time to perform sadhana two to three hours a day. Why? The demands of external life were not as great as they are now, in the technological age. Half an hour a day, therefore, is the amount of time we dedicate for our sadhana.

Ask yourself, what you put first in your daily life. Do your emotions come first? Does your intellect come first? Do your instinctive impulses come first? Does your striving to overcome worries and fears and doubt come first inside of you? Does your creativity, your love for all humanity, your search for God and peace within yourself come first inside of you? What are your priorities? The pancha nitya karmas outline our basic religious priorities. Your inner priorities in implementing these five duties must be just as well defined, and you must define them for yourself and, therefore, come to better "Know thyself."

When you first begin your daily sadhana, it is likely to begin in an awkward way, and you may come to know yourself in a way that you don't want to know yourself. Don't be discouraged when the mind runs wild as you sit quietly and are unable to control it. Don't be discouraged if you find that you are unable to even choose a time to sit quietly for one half hour on a regular daily basis. If you persist, soon all this will be overcome and a firmness of mind will be felt, for it is through the regular practice of sadhana that the mind becomes firm and the

intellect pure. It is through the regular practice of concentration that awareness detaches itself from the external mind and hovers within, internalizing the knowledge of the physical body, the breath and the emotions. Concentration of the forces of the body, mind and emotions brings us automatically into meditation, dhyana, and into deeper internalized awareness.

The spiritual practice should be reasonable, should not take up too much time, and should be done at the same time every day. Often seekers who become associated with Hindu sadhana go to extremes and proceed with great vigor in an effort to attain results immediately. Sitting two or three hours a day, they exhaust themselves and then stop. Here's a formula for beginners: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, twenty minutes to half an hour of sadhana at the same time every day; Saturday and Sunday, no sadhana.

The keys are moderation and consistency. Consistency is the key to the conquest of karma. If you go to extremes or are sporadic in your sadhana, you can easily slide backwards. What happens when you slide backwards? You become fearful, you become angry, you become jealous, you become confused. What happens when you move forward? You become brave, you become calm, you become self-confident and your mind is clear.

It is often feared that meditation and religious devotion cause a withdrawal from the world. The practice of sadhana I have described does not detach you from or make you indifferent to the world. Rather, it brings up a strength within you, a shakti, enabling you to move the forces of the world in a positive way.

What is meant by "moving the forces of the world"? That means fulfilling realistic goals that you set for yourself. That means performing your job as an employer or as an employee in the most excellent way possible. That means stretching your mind and emotions and endurance to the limit and therefore getting stronger and stronger day by day. You are involved in the world, and the world is in a technological age. The sadhana that you perform will make your mind steady and your willpower strong so that you can move the forces of the physical world with love and understanding, rather than through anger, hatred, antagonism, cunning, jealousy and greed. Daily sadhana performed in the right way will help you overcome these instinctive barriers to peace of mind and the fullness of being.

Through dailysadhana you will come to know the body, you will come to know the emotions, you will come to know the nerve system, you will come to know the breath and you will come to know the mind in its totality. All this and more can be unfolded from within each one of you through your daily practice of sadhana.

When your sadhana takes hold, you may experience a profound calmness within yourself. This calmness that you experience as a result of your meditation is called Satchidananda, the natural state of the mind. To arrive at that state, the instinctive energies have been lifted to the heart chakra and beyond, and the mind has become absolutely quiet. This is because you are not using your memory faculty. You are not using your reason faculty. You are not trying to move the forces of the world with your willpower faculty. You are simply resting within yourself. Therefore, if you are ever

bothered by the external part of you, simply return to this inner, peaceful state as often as you can. You might call it your "home base." From here you can have a clear perception of how you should behave in the external world, a clear perception of your future and a clear perception of the path ahead. This is a superconscious state, meaning "beyond normal consciousness." So, simply deepen this inner state by being aware that you are a divine soul.

Announcement: Gurudeva will be happy to hold prasnottara satsanga, questions and answers, over the telephone with any Hindu religious societies, Hindu youth groups, radio talk show hosts, etc. Arrangements may be made in advance by sending an e-mail to Gurudeva's publicity manager at deva@hindu.org.