Samadhi Yoga Study Group | Class 6 |

The Parināmas: Transformations of Chitta

Before continuing with the practical aspects of meditation, it is helpful to understand the concept of **parināma**, which is discussed in *Yoga Sutras: The Practice* on pages 55–60. These ideas can be difficult to grasp at first. Many students initially feel that the different parināmas seem to overlap, making it hard to understand how they differ from one another. This confusion is common. In time, however, as one practices and observes what actually happens in meditation, the distinctions become clearer through direct experience.

What Does Parināma Mean?

The Sanskrit word **parināma** means **transformation** or **change**. Transformation is constantly occurring in life. For example, when you wake up in the morning you move from the state of sleep to the state of wakefulness. That shift is a kind of parināma.

In the context of yoga, however, the Yoga Sutras describe **transformations of chitta**, the field of consciousness. These transformations relate to the gradual settling, purification, and refinement of the mind-field as meditation deepens.

The Importance of Nirodha

One of the most important transformations discussed is **Nirodha Parināma**. This concept is central to the entire practice of yoga.

The reason for its importance becomes clear in the very definition of yoga itself. Patanjali states that **yoga is the cessation (nirodha) of the fluctuations of consciousness**. Because this definition includes the term *nirodha*, we know that understanding and experiencing it is essential to the yogic path.

Without the calming and settling of the fluctuations of chitta, the deeper stages of yoga cannot unfold.

A Common Misunderstanding

There are practitioners who struggle with this idea. At one point, I spoke with a yogi who had spent many years studying yoga. Surprisingly, he claimed that the concept of **nirodha** was a myth—that it was not something that actually occurs.

This was puzzling, because nirodha sits at the very core of the Yoga Sutras. As we discussed it further, it became clear that the issue was not that nirodha does not exist. Rather, he was expecting it to appear as a dramatic, unmistakable experience.

In reality, **nirodha is often subtle**.

Recognizing Subtle Transformations

The transformations described in the Yoga Sutras are not always obvious. They are often **subliminal**, meaning that they are known more through their effects than through a direct, dramatic perception.

A simple example can illustrate this.

Imagine you are meditating outdoors and notice the position of the sun on the horizon. As meditation deepens, you become absorbed in the experience. When the meditation ends, you look up and see that the sun has moved across the sky.

You did not notice the passage of time while absorbed in meditation, but the change in the sun's position reveals that time passed and something occurred internally.

In a similar way, the **parināmas of chitta** are often recognized by the changes they produce in awareness rather than by a single striking event. Over time, the mind becomes quieter, more stable, and more capable of sustained concentration. These subtle shifts reveal that transformation is taking place.

The Three Parināmas of Chitta

To better understand these transformations, it is helpful to first look at the essential characteristics of the three **parināmas** described in the Yoga Sutras. These transformations refer to subtle changes that occur within **chitta**, the field of consciousness, as meditation deepens.

Nirodha Parināma: The Dissolution of Identification

Nirodha Parināma occurs when awareness is no longer identified with the movements of chitta. In this state, one is not defining oneself through thoughts, roles, memories, or personal identity.

It can feel as though the usual sense of "I" temporarily fades. Identity is not actively present, and awareness rests without attaching itself to any particular thought or mental fluctuation.

A simple everyday example can help illustrate this principle. Imagine driving along a familiar route that you have traveled many times before. Because the process is so familiar, you do not need to think about each step of the drive. You continue moving forward, and suddenly you realize that an hour has passed. During that time, you were not actively thinking about yourself or reflecting on your identity—you were simply absorbed in the activity.

That experience is not nirodha itself, but it offers a useful analogy. When attention becomes deeply absorbed in something, the ordinary sense of personal identity temporarily fades into the background.

In meditation, a similar dynamic occurs. As focus deepens and attention becomes steady, the sense of self that usually accompanies thought and perception begins to dissolve. This is an indication that **Nirodha Parināma** is beginning to function.

This transformation is closely related to one's **capacity for absorption**. The more deeply the mind becomes focused and engaged in the meditative process, the more naturally this quieting of identity can occur.

Although it can arise during many phases of meditation, it becomes especially noticeable during the more passive stages, when one stops actively directing the mind and instead observes the results of previous effort.

Samadhi Parināma: The Transformation Toward Absorption

The next transformation is **Samadhi Parināma**, which relates to a shift in the underlying tendencies of the mind.

In yogic psychology, these tendencies are known as **samskaras**—the habitual patterns that shape how the mind behaves. For example, one person may have a tendency toward distraction, while another may naturally gravitate toward sustained focus. These patterns are simply mental habits that have developed over time.

At the beginning of meditation practice, the samskaras that dominate the mind often support distraction. Thoughts move rapidly from one topic to another, and maintaining concentration can feel difficult.

Through consistent practice, however, this pattern gradually changes. The samskara of scattered attention weakens, while a new tendency toward **steady focus and absorption** begins to strengthen.

Over time, the shift becomes noticeable. In the early stages of practice it is easier for the mind to wander than to remain focused. After sustained training, the opposite becomes true. Remaining centered and attentive becomes natural, while distraction feels less compelling.

This gradual shift in the underlying tendencies of chitta is what is meant by **Samadhi Parināma**.

Understanding the Deeper Transformations of Practice

A Personal Illustration of Mental Training

At one time I attended a private retreat with Roy Eugene Davis. It was a small setting, not a large gathering, and he asked me to meet him at his office at seven in the morning. I woke very early that day—around three o'clock—and decided to spend the time meditating in the meditation hall before meeting him.

During that period my attention became very internalized and focused. Afterward I met with him for about an hour and a half, and I remained in that same inwardly concentrated state.

Later that morning I stopped by the office, where a staff member named Ron Lindahn—who enjoyed experimenting with gadgets—showed me a device that measured focus through brainwave activity. The game involved wearing a band around the head that transmitted signals to a small apparatus. The goal was to control a floating ball by focusing the mind: the more concentrated the mental state, the higher the ball would rise.

When he connected the device, the ball immediately shot to the highest point it could reach. No matter what I did, it would not go down. Eventually I realized that I had to deliberately scatter my attention—thinking about random topics like trees, music, or going to the mall—just to bring the ball back down.

The experience illustrated something important about long-term practice. With continued meditation training, **focused awareness gradually becomes the mind's natural state**, while distraction becomes less dominant. In the beginning it is easy for the mind to wander. Over time, it becomes easier to remain centered than to be scattered.

Samādhi Parināma: Resolving the Tendency Toward Distraction

This shift relates directly to **Samādhi Parināma**, which Vyaas describes as the transformation that weakens the mind's tendency to move outward toward distraction.

Ordinarily the mind is pulled by various **samskaras**, the habitual tendencies that drive attention toward one object after another. These patterns constantly encourage the mind to seek stimulation, novelty, or distraction.

Through sustained practice, however, these outward-pulling tendencies gradually weaken. When Samādhi Parināma develops, awareness becomes capable of remaining where it is without being constantly drawn away.

The samskaras are not entirely gone—they may still arise from time to time—but the practitioner becomes skilled at returning attention to the object of meditation.

A helpful comparison can be made with musicians or performers. A skilled musician can remain focused even if the audience is noisy or unpredictable. An amateur, on the other hand, might become distracted or overwhelmed by every interruption. The experienced performer continues playing because their training allows them to maintain steady attention.

Meditation works in a similar way. Practice develops the **skill of remaining present despite distractions**.

Ekāgratā Parināma: Unified Direction of the Mind

The third transformation is **Ekāgratā Parināma**, the transformation of one-pointedness.

This occurs when both the active and latent tendencies of the mind begin moving in the same direction.

To understand this, consider the difference between **active samskaras** and **latent samskaras**.

Active samskaras are the tendencies currently expressing themselves in thought or behavior. Latent samskaras are still present beneath the surface but are not currently being triggered.

For example, someone might have a tendency toward anger, but while attending a peaceful retreat they may appear calm and composed because nothing is stimulating that reaction. The underlying pattern still exists, even though it is not presently active.

Through deep practice, however, these latent patterns themselves begin to change. If the deeper tendencies of the mind become peaceful and balanced, then both the active and inactive samskaras reflect that same stability.

At this point, the mind moves in a **single unified direction**. As one mental moment passes and another arises, each continues the same pattern of calm and steadiness.

Continuous Flow of Awareness

Vyaas provides an illustration that helps clarify this process. Imagine pressing a doorbell.

If you press and release the button, the bell rings briefly and stops. But if you hold the button down continuously, the bell keeps ringing without interruption.

Similarly, when the transformations of chitta stabilize, awareness begins to flow continuously in the same direction. The processes of **nirodha, samādhi, and one-pointedness** begin supporting one another, producing a steady stream of calm and clarity.

This continuous flow is what the practice of yoga is gradually cultivating.

The True Aim of Practice

It is important to remember that the purpose of yoga is not simply to experience pleasant or blissful states. Nor is meditation meant to be an escape from the challenges of life.

Rather, the process gradually **refines and shapes chitta** so that it naturally rests in stillness, clarity, and stability. Day by day, moment by moment, the practitioner gently guides the mind in this direction.

As these transformations deepen, the capacity for samādhi becomes easier to access.

Recognizing the Parināmas in Practice

These transformations are usually recognized **after the fact**, rather than during the experience itself.

For example:

- If you notice after meditation that you were less absorbed in personal worries or identity concerns, this suggests that **Nirodha Parināma** was active.

- If you find that you can maintain attention on a meditation object—such as the subtle flow of the water element—longer than before, this reflects **Samādhi Parināma**.
- When meditation begins to feel effortless and attention settles naturally without much struggle, this indicates the emergence of **Ekāgratā Parināma**.

At this stage, each moment of practice supports the next moment of stillness. The mind falls naturally into a peaceful rhythm.

The Natural Deepening of Meditation

Many practitioners eventually notice that meditation becomes easier and more enjoyable. What once required effort gradually becomes natural.

Some students who initially meditated for forty-five minutes or an hour later find they could sit for much longer if they wished. They do not extend their practice because they feel obligated to do so, but because the experience itself becomes deeply fulfilling.

As chitta becomes accustomed to this inner flow, meditation deepens naturally, and the subtler dimensions of yoga become more accessible.

Questions and Answers

Question

How do I know when to deepen my practice or when it is time to move on to another element—such as progressing from the water element to the air element?

Response

This course is designed as an introductory series, and the goal at this stage is simply to become familiar with the process and learn how to work with it successfully. As practice develops, it is natural to wonder how to move forward and how to recognize the next stage.

A helpful perspective on this question was offered by Swami Veda Bharati. He once explained that this process is much like driving down a road. If someone asks, "How do I know when the next curve is coming?" the answer is simple: keep driving. When the curve arrives, you will see it and respond accordingly.

The same principle applies in meditation practice. Once you understand the basic method and begin applying it consistently, the next steps tend to reveal themselves naturally. Guidance from teachers can certainly be helpful, but much of the understanding arises through continued engagement with the practice itself.

Navigating the Inner Landscape

One way to think about this process is that you are gradually learning to navigate an inner landscape. Just as a traveler learns the features of a physical terrain, a practitioner of yoga becomes familiar with the subtle terrain of consciousness.

This landscape has recognizable features. It operates according to certain principles, and it produces particular experiences. Because of this, many practitioners encounter similar stages along the way.

This is also why the guidance of a lineage can be useful. Those who have traveled this path before have already encountered the landmarks you are approaching. It is common for students to ask questions that closely resemble questions their teachers once asked their own teachers. When people genuinely engage the process, they often arrive at similar insights and challenges.

The experiences may vary in personal detail, but the underlying structure of the journey remains remarkably consistent.

Recognizing the Transformations

As your familiarity with the practice grows, you may begin to recognize certain transformations of awareness. For example, while resting in the nirvichara stage, you may notice that the process seems to continue effortlessly. When the meditation sustains itself in this way, you may recognize the presence of ekāgratā, the transformation toward one-pointedness.

These recognitions will often occur naturally, without needing to analyze them too closely. It is best not to become overly preoccupied with overthinking every stage, as doing so can interrupt the flow of meditation. Simply allow the process to unfold.

The Role of the Anvaya Stage

The anvaya stage provides a moment where one consciously acknowledges what is occurring. At this stage, the practitioner observes that chitta is fluctuating as the object of meditation—in this case, the water element.

By recognizing this, you implicitly acknowledge that your true identity is not the object being observed. What you are seeing is the movement of chitta, not the nature of the seer itself.

In classical Kriya Yoga language, this stage closely resembles what is sometimes called the parāvasthā state—the poised awareness that remains after the active phases of practice. One simply observes the effects that the practice has produced in the mind-field.

The Final Distinction: Arthavatva

The final step in this sequence is arthavatva, which emphasizes the clear distinction between the seer and what is seen.

Here the practitioner consciously recognizes that:

- chitta is the field of changing experience,
- the seer is the witness of that experience.

This recognition corresponds to the principle of viveka-khyāti, the continuous discrimination between the seer and the seen.

At first, this distinction may feel somewhat mechanical. The practitioner may simply repeat the idea mentally. That is perfectly acceptable. Even these deliberate reflections serve a purpose: they guide the direction of chitta and reinforce the correct understanding.

Over time, this recognition becomes more natural and intuitive. The practitioner gradually becomes less entangled in the mistaken belief that they are identical with what they perceive. Instead, the awareness of the seer as distinct from the movements of chitta becomes increasingly clear.

Question

A student shared the following reflection about the Bhūta Jaya practice:

"There are many things to say about this practice, but one particular experience stood out to me. It relates to the distinction between *drashta* (the seer) and *drishya* (the seen).

I am still in the early stages, but for the first time I felt a very distinct sense of the seer. It is incredibly subtle and difficult to describe. During the shift to *arthavatva*, I felt an awareness of seeing that was calm, full, and still.

Occasionally I can call forth that awareness outside of meditation. I find this significant."

Is this a normal experience, and does it develop further?

Response

Yes, this is a natural development in the practice.

Experiences related to the seer are often extremely subtle and difficult to describe because they occur beyond the ordinary activity of the mind. In meditation, practitioners may begin to sense a quiet witnessing presence that is distinct from the thoughts, sensations, and perceptions that appear within awareness.

As practice deepens, it becomes easier to recognize this presence. What begins as a fleeting glimpse during meditation can gradually appear at other times as well—while driving, cooking, or having a conversation. The recognition begins to surface spontaneously within ordinary life.

The essential point of this practice is becoming familiar with the fact that you are the seer, rather than becoming lost in the ever-changing movements of experience.

A Helpful Parallel: Dream Awareness

A similar principle appears in practices related to dream awareness or lucid dreaming.

One technique often used to develop lucid dreaming is to ask oneself several times throughout the day: *"Am I dreaming?"* By doing this repeatedly, a subtle imprint—or samskara—is placed within the mind. Eventually, the question may arise spontaneously during a dream, allowing the dreamer to recognize that they are dreaming.

This illustrates an important principle: what we repeatedly bring into awareness while awake influences the states that arise later, including during sleep.

Meditation practice works in a comparable way. As the recognition of the seer becomes familiar in meditation, it begins to appear more naturally in everyday life. At the same time, consciously remembering the seer during daily activities can support deeper meditation.

A Practical Suggestion

A simple exercise can help strengthen this recognition throughout the day.

At occasional moments—without turning it into an obsessive habit—pause briefly and acknowledge:

- "What I am seeing is **chitta**."
- "I am the **seer** observing it."

For example:

- When looking at a tree, recognize that the perception of the tree appears in chitta.
- When speaking with someone, notice that their face and your reactions are movements within chitta.
- When teaching, listening, or working, recognize that the seer is simply perceiving what arises.

This does not require long reflection, not should it be turned into an obsessive/compulsive practice or overly dramatized. A brief acknowledgment is enough. These small recognitions reinforce the understanding that the seer is distinct from what is being observed.

Supporting the Subtle Nature of Practice

It is also important to follow the recommended readings and practices from ***Kriya Yoga and the Primordial Powers of Creation***, and to begin integrating those principles into daily life.

The more one cultivates **sattva**—clarity, calmness, and balance—the easier it becomes to recognize subtle inner experiences. These realizations are delicate. They can easily be missed if the mind is restless or overwhelmed.

One might compare them to noticing a butterfly during a storm. If the mind is turbulent, the subtle movement passes unnoticed.

This is why the yogic traditions emphasize a **simple, balanced lifestyle**. When life becomes less cluttered and the mind is calmer, chitta becomes clearer and more illuminated. In that clarity, subtle transformations—such as nirodha or the recognition of the seer—can finally be perceived.

Without that clarity, a person may practice for many years yet fail to recognize what is actually occurring within the mind.

For this reason, simplicity, calmness, and consistent practice create the conditions in which deeper realizations become accessible. Over time, the practitioner moves beyond merely discussing samadhi and develops the capacity to enter it directly.

Question

These practices seem to help reduce attachment to what is happening in daily life. Does this mean that the more time we spend each day observing and practicing this awareness, the better? Is it really about prioritizing this way of living?

Response

Yes, this way of living is important, but it should be approached in a balanced and sustainable manner.

A useful comparison is physical training. If someone wants to become stronger, they do not go to the gym for nine hours straight and attempt every exercise possible in a single day. That would only exhaust the body and potentially cause injury. Instead, effective training involves exercising to an appropriate level, allowing the body to recover, and returning consistently over time.

Meditation practice works in the same way.

The key is to practice until you reach a point where you feel **present and engaged** with the experience. When you recognize that you are clearly aware of what is happening—when the practice feels meaningful and stable—that is a good place to stop for the day.

Then return to the practice the next day and repeat the process.

What is not helpful is forcing yourself to practice for long periods while struggling or feeling exhausted. If someone pushes themselves to meditate for three hours but spends most of that time fighting fatigue or frustration, they reinforce a pattern of **strain and discouragement in chitta**.

Instead, the goal is to cultivate a pattern of **success and clarity**.

More practice becomes beneficial only when the practice itself flows naturally. If someone can comfortably remain in meditation for extended periods, then longer sessions may arise organically. But if the natural capacity is thirty or forty minutes, it is far more effective to practice well during that time and then live the rest of the day with calmness and clarity.

Over time, the duration and depth of practice will naturally expand.

Question

Before joining this study group, I was studying your book *An Essential Guide to Kriya Yoga Practice*. In the book you describe the stages of practice as **sthūla (gross), sūkṣma (subtle), and kāraṇa (causal)**. Since this sānyama practice emphasizes those distinctions, is it possible to integrate that framework more directly into Kriya Yoga techniques?

Response

Yes, and this integration is one of the purposes of the **advanced Kriya Yoga training**.

After completing the Kriya Yoga Apprenticeship program, students who wish to go further can enter a more extensive course that includes additional lectures, material, and guided practices. In that setting, the relationships between these stages and the Kriya techniques are explored in much greater depth.

However, the basic principle can already be applied within your current Kriya practice.

For example, during Kriya pranayama, you might begin at the gross level. At first you simply notice the obvious mechanics of the technique—drawing the current up the spine and being aware of the movement of breath and energy. You may even speak to yourself internally about the process: recognizing the upward movement, noticing sensations such as coolness or flow.

After establishing that awareness, you gradually release the internal commentary and begin to sense the subtle movement of the energy itself. Attention becomes quieter and more refined, and the experience deepens.

This same progression—from gross to subtle—can also be applied when chanting through the chakras or practicing other internal techniques. By the time a practitioner is contemplating Oṁ, many of these stages have already been passed through naturally.

In this way, the stages of sthūla (gross), sūkṣma (subtle), and kāraṇa (causal) can be understood as part of the same progression described in the sānyama practice. They correspond closely with later stages such as anvaya and arthavatva, where the practitioner recognizes the deeper nature of what is being experienced.

The essential idea is that meditation gradually moves from the obvious and tangible toward increasingly subtle levels of awareness.

Question

I appreciate seeing how the different aspects of practice support one another. When I meditate more regularly, I naturally feel drawn to eating fresh food and exercising. And when I eat better and exercise more, it seems to improve my meditation. I've also noticed that I can stay in the subtle state longer on the days we meet for group meditation. Is this a normal part of the process?

Response

Yes, that is a very natural development. Much of what we are doing in this training is essentially a process of preparation and conditioning.

Think of it the way an athlete trains for a sport. If someone wants to play basketball well, they do not only play games—they also run, strengthen their body, and develop specific physical abilities that support their performance.

The same principle applies to other skills. A musician, for example, may spend hours practicing scales without ever playing a solo. Those exercises build the capacity that eventually makes the solo possible.

Meditation works in much the same way. Many of the practices we do are exercises that prepare the mind and body for deeper experiences.

With Kriya pranayama, for example, we often begin by intentionally encouraging awareness of subtle sensations in the spine—the feeling of energy moving upward or downward. At first this may require effort and attention.

However, when the practice deepens, these sensations arise without effort. The practitioner is no longer trying to generate the experience. Instead, the subtle flow is simply present.

The same is true of the recognition of the seer. When that awareness becomes clear, it is not something you actively create. It appears naturally, and you simply recognize it.

Understanding "Involuntary Kriyas"

People sometimes refer to physical movements—such as twitching or jerking during meditation—as "involuntary kriyas." In many cases, however, these movements are simply the body releasing tension.

A more meaningful form of involuntary kriya occurs when the inner energetic process begins spontaneously. For example, you might be sitting quietly in meditation without intentionally performing breath techniques, and suddenly a distinct sensation appears within the spine—a coolness, warmth, or subtle current flowing upward and downward.

When that happens without any deliberate effort, it reflects a deeper internalization of the practice. The body and mind have become so accustomed to the process that it begins to unfold naturally.

In a sense, this is what people refer to as grace. But that grace is not separate from effort—it arises because the practitioner has developed skill through consistent practice.

Question

Since meditation is similar to exercise, could it help to use intervals—like runners who take short breaks so they can run longer? I sometimes take short breaks during meditation and find that I can continue for longer periods afterward.

Response

That is an excellent approach.

Even great yogis used similar methods. For example, when Lahiri Mahasaya spent long periods in meditation, he did not simply sit motionless the entire time. After practicing kriyas for a while or sitting for an extended period, he would often perform Mahamudra or stretch the body.

This is one of the reasons Mahamudra exists within the Kriya system—it helps maintain circulation, release tension, and keep the practitioner engaged.

In practical terms, if you want to meditate for a longer total period, you do not need to force yourself to sit continuously for several hours. Instead, you might:

- meditate for 30–45 minutes,
- stand up and walk briefly,
- stretch or breathe deeply,
- then return to meditation.

When you take short breaks like this, something interesting happens. Your chitta becomes increasingly settled. Even after a brief break—five or ten minutes—your mind and nervous system are already operating at a calmer baseline when you sit again.

Because of that, the next meditation period often becomes deeper than the previous one.

So there is nothing wrong with briefly getting up during longer sessions—whether to stretch, walk, make tea, or attend to practical needs. The key is simply to remain inwardly calm and maintain the meditative orientation.

When you return to the seat, you will often find that the mind settles quickly and the practice continues to deepen.

Question:

I understand intellectually that my greater Self is more than my physical body and personality. But the saying "wherever I go, there I am" still seems true. Is recognizing myself as the seer something different from that?

Response:

Yes, it is different, though there are related aspects.

The phrase "wherever I go, there I am" usually refers to the fact that our psychology and habits travel with us. If someone struggles in relationships, changing partners may not solve the problem if the underlying pattern remains the same. Similarly, if a person feels psychologically distressed, relocating to another city will not necessarily change that, because the same mental patterns are still present.

The seer, however, is something more fundamental. The seer does not come and go. It is always present.

Part of yoga practice involves learning to recognize that distinction. When strong emotions or reactions arise—whether related to the body, personality, or psychological patterns—you can pause and recognize:

- That reaction is chitta, the movement of the mind.
- I am the seer, the one aware of it.

For example, anger might arise. If you are conscious of the seer, you are not compelled to react automatically. Instead, you can evaluate the situation. Perhaps expressing firmness or anger is appropriate in order to set a boundary or correct a problem. In another situation, you may realize that the reaction is excessive and allow it to pass.

Recognizing the seer creates space for conscious choice.

Question:

When I sit on the floor to meditate, my body sometimes begins moving side-to-side rhythmically, almost like a pendulum. I can stop it if I want to. Should I allow it to continue, or try to stop it?

Response:

This could simply be a phase, but it might also reflect a subtle habit pattern or distraction.

As someone familiar with bodywork and somatic approaches, I do think it can sometimes be beneficial to allow the body to release tension through movement. However, meditation itself is not the place for extended physical processing.

If a movement arises briefly, it may be fine to allow it to resolve naturally. But if it becomes repetitive or continues for a long period, it is better to address it outside meditation.

For example, you might explore it with a qualified practitioner—such as a massage therapist, craniosacral therapist, or somatic psychologist—to understand what the body is releasing. The goal is to resolve the pattern so that when you sit to meditate, the body can remain relatively still and free from distraction.

If the movement continues consistently, it is worth investigating why. Otherwise, simply relaxing and letting it settle may resolve it.

Question:

During the water meditation you mention the breath, but sometimes my breathing becomes extremely subtle or almost stops while I remain focused. Does this mean I'm going deeper?

Response:

Yes, that can be a natural development.

Breath and mind are closely connected. As the fluctuations of chitta become quieter, the breath often becomes more subtle as well.

You can think of the body and mind as operating through rhythmic patterns—breathing in and out, the heart pulsing, sensations arising and dissolving. These alternating movements allow experience to appear.

As attention becomes more internalized and the mind grows still, these fluctuations begin to diminish. The breath may become very quiet or even seem to pause.

In this context, when we speak about the breath, we are also referring to the "breath of chitta"—the subtle movements and fluctuations within consciousness. As those movements settle, the whole system becomes calmer.

Question:

You often recommend meditating in a chair rather than sitting on the floor. Why is that?

Response:

The main reason is comfort and sustainability.

I'm not opposed to traditional floor postures. If someone can sit comfortably in cross-legged positions without strain or distraction, that's perfectly fine.

However, many people today were not raised sitting or squatting on the floor regularly. For them, trying to maintain those postures can cause pain in the knees, hips, or back. That discomfort then becomes a distraction during meditation.

Personally, I often sit in a chair for that reason. Occasionally I sit cross-legged on a couch when it feels comfortable, but I do not practice full lotus, and I have never felt compelled to train my body to do so.

Meditation does not depend on achieving a particular posture. What matters is maintaining a stable, relaxed position that allows attention to move inward.

It is best to let go of romantic ideas about what a yogi should look like and simply use the posture that supports your practice.

Question:

When working with dreamlike states in meditation, could this lead to spontaneous out-of-body experiences or astral projection? Is that something we need to prevent?

Response:

Generally, no. In fact, this practice tends to produce the opposite effect.

The training encourages you to inhabit your body more fully, not to dissociate from it. As awareness becomes deeper and more stable, the sense of being present within the body actually increases.

If someone frequently experiences dissociation or a sense of leaving the body during meditation, it may indicate unresolved psychological material that would benefit from professional guidance.

When the practice unfolds properly, the experience of subtler elements—such as the air or ether element—is not like observing yourself from outside the body. Instead, the feeling becomes something quite different.

Rather than leaving the body, it can feel as though the body itself becomes space.

In these states there is no sense of separation between observer and location. Awareness expands in a way that feels spacious and inclusive. The body may seem vast, almost cosmic, rather than confined.

This connects to descriptions in the Yoga Sutras about abilities sometimes called siddhis. These descriptions are often misunderstood as literal transformations, such as becoming gigantic or shrinking to a tiny size. In practice, they refer to the capacity of awareness to identify with both the vastness of space and the subtle interior of existence.

You become capable of recognizing the immensity of space while also perceiving the subtle infinity present within even the smallest point of existence.

In such experiences, the body is not abandoned. Instead, it becomes the field through which this expansive awareness is known.

Question

What role might therapy have in working with saṁskāras compared to the transformation of chitta described in the *Yoga Sutras*? Can meditation weaken suffering while leaving the underlying psychological pattern unresolved?

Response

Yes, that can happen.

A person may become highly accomplished in meditation and still carry unresolved psychological patterns. This helps explain why some spiritually advanced practitioners may still behave in confused or unhealthy ways. They have learned to enter profound states of awareness, but the structure through which consciousness is expressing itself—the field of mind, personality, and body—may still contain unhealed fractures.

A useful analogy is the physical body. If someone has an old injury that never fully heals, consciousness is not diminished by that injury, but it still has to function through that body. The body may limp even though consciousness itself is whole.

The same principle applies psychologically. The mind is also a structure, and if that structure contains deep wounds or distortions, meditation may reduce identification with them without fully repairing them. A person may feel calmer, less reactive, and less defined by those tendencies, yet the deeper pattern may still be present.

This is one reason therapy can be valuable. If part of the mind can be healed, therapy may help restore integrity to that structure, reducing the struggle through which consciousness has to function. Meditation gives spaciousness and freedom; therapy can help mend the broken places.

Over time, a practitioner may come to understand both strengths and weaknesses more clearly. One can know oneself as spirit, know oneself as the seer, and still have to navigate certain limitations of body and mind. Yoga does not erase the fact that consciousness is expressing through a particular human structure.

For that reason, therapy can be an important complement to practice. Meditation helps loosen the patterns. It reveals what needs attention. Then the work of the yamas, niyamas, self-observation, and skilled therapeutic support can help reorganize what has been brought to light.

Years ago, a Kriya teacher described Kriya practices as scrubbing the chakras—loosening the karmic debris and impressions stored there. That scrubbing is valuable, but once the debris is loosened, one still has to work with what comes up. Some of that work can be done through ethical living and self-discipline. Some of it may require qualified help from a counselor or psychologist.

Spiritual teachers may offer philosophy and technique, but psychological material is often best addressed by those specifically trained to work with it. Guru's don't necessarily always have that skill.

Question

Can a person who reaches kaivalya still experience emotional suffering due to psychological patterns?

Response

When one is truly established in kaivalya, no.

Kaivalya is beyond chitta, beyond prakṛti, beyond all fluctuations and modifications. It is not a state in which emotional suffering or psychological patterns can operate, because those belong to the field of change, and kaivalya is beyond that field altogether.

That is the entire aim of yoga: to abide as the seer alone.

However, there is an important distinction to make. A practitioner may have glimpses or deep experiences related to kaivalya without being permanently established in it. In those cases, there may still be a movement back and forth. During meditation or at certain moments, one may be absorbed in the Self. At other times, when karma and mental momentum resume their movement, one may re-enter ordinary experience.

The difference is that such a practitioner now has wisdom. Even when patterns arise, there is a knowing: *I am not this suffering; I am not this pattern.* This is not dissociation. It is discernment. It allows greater freedom in how one responds.

So even before full stabilization in kaivalya, there can already be tremendous freedom. One may still experience patterns arising, but one is less compelled by them and more capable of choosing wisely.

Question

If chitta is constantly changing due to prakṛti and the guṇas, how can attention ever become truly one-pointed?

Response

That is an excellent question.

Attention becomes completely one-pointed only in kaivalya. Up to that point, practice is a gradual movement toward greater and greater one-pointedness.

As concentration deepens, chitta becomes subtler. A practitioner may enter states where awareness is almost entirely absorbed in a single vibration, such as Oṁ, or a vast sense of being without ordinary personality. These are profound states, but they are still not kaivalya, because there is still subtle activity present.

If there is the vibration of Oṁ, there is still a subtle movement or activity. If there is an expansive sense of being, there is still a faint sense of location. These are extremely refined expressions of the guṇas, but they are still within the field of prakṛti.

This does not diminish their value. Such states are highly significant and should be cultivated. Yet truly one-pointed awareness lies beyond even these most subtle forms of mental activity.

This is a long process. It takes time. But that should not be discouraging. Deep transformation in any discipline takes years. Yoga is no different.

The important thing is to remain committed to the process and not get overly distracted. If you do that, the distractions themselves gradually weaken.

The Upward and Downward Flows of Consciousness

A helpful way to understand this process is through the image of two currents or rivers.

One current flows downward into creation. This is consciousness moving outward, becoming identified with the changing world, the body, the mind, and all the dramas of life. Most people are carried primarily by this current.

The other current flows upward, back toward Spirit. At first, for most practitioners, this upward current is weaker than the downward one. That is why the world, thought, habit, and identity continually pull awareness outward again.

Yoga gradually strengthens the upward current. Through meditation, Kriya Yoga, and disciplined inner practice, attention is repeatedly given to that return movement toward Spirit.

Eventually, there comes a point where the upward current becomes stronger than the downward one. When that begins to happen, life changes. Things that once felt important may begin to lose

their hold. Ordinary ambitions and distractions become less compelling. This can even bring a sense of loneliness or disorientation, because one feels less aligned with what most people value.

Yet this is also a sign of real movement inward.

As the upward current strengthens further, it becomes the dominant flow. At that stage, one is moving steadily toward awakening. Life gradually reorganizes itself around that deeper pull. The path becomes easier because the momentum is now working in the right direction.

This is why Patanjali emphasizes long, steady practice joined with non-attachment. That is what builds the momentum that carries awareness home.

Conclusion

The Samadhi Yoga Study Group has presented a practical and progressive approach to inner realization. Throughout this work, the emphasis has remained on direct experience rather than abstraction alone. The teachings of the *Yoga Sutras* have been approached as living instructions: to be studied carefully, practiced patiently, and confirmed within one's own awareness.

Again and again, the same essential principle has emerged: yoga unfolds through refinement. The outer disciplines prepare the ground. Ethical living, simplicity, fresh food, balanced activity, mantra, pranayama, and supportive routines help stabilize body, mind, and energy. These are not secondary concerns. They create the clarity and steadiness that make deeper meditation possible. When life becomes more sattvic, the inner landscape becomes easier to perceive.

From that foundation, the practice of saṁyama opens the inner limbs of yoga. Through Bhūta Jaya, attention is trained to move from the gross to the subtle, from physical sensation to energetic perception, from absorbed experience to recognition of the seer. What begins as deliberate effort gradually becomes natural momentum. Chitta learns to remain where it is placed. The practitioner begins to notice the transformations described in the tradition: the settling of fluctuation, the increasing ease of absorption, and the gradual establishment of one-pointedness.

A major theme of this study has been the distinction between the seer and the seen. This discrimination does not remain a philosophical idea. With sustained practice, it becomes experiential. One begins to notice that thoughts, emotions, sensations, and even profound meditative states are all movements within chitta. The seer remains prior to them, aware of them, and untouched by them. This recognition may first appear as a subtle intuition, then as a more stable inner certainty, and eventually as the basis of freedom.

The study group has also made clear that progress in yoga is not measured by dramatic experiences alone. What matters is steadiness, sincerity, and the gradual restructuring of consciousness. Meditation deepens. Attention becomes less scattered. Reactivity softens. The practitioner becomes more capable of remaining present in both silence and activity. Even brief glimpses of inner stillness begin to reshape daily life.

At the same time, this path asks for honesty. Unresolved patterns do not disappear merely because one has touched subtle states. The work of healing, ethical refinement, discernment, and practical self-understanding remains important. Yoga and psychological healing can support one another. The more integrated the instrument, the more clearly the light of consciousness can shine through it.

In the end, the aim of this path is kaivalya: the freedom that comes when identification with fluctuation ceases and the seer stands alone in its own nature. That realization may seem distant when viewed intellectually, yet the study group has shown that the path toward it is walked in immediate steps: one sitting, one breath, one stage of attention, one moment of discrimination at a time. The process is gradual, lawful, and trustworthy. Those who engage it sincerely begin to encounter the same inner landmarks described by the sages, because the terrain itself is real.

For that reason, the true conclusion of this class is also a beginning. The teachings have been given. The structure has been outlined. The practices have been introduced. What remains is to continue: to study, to practice, to simplify, to observe, and to let the current of awareness move ever more deeply toward its source. In that steady return, samadhi ceases to be merely a concept and becomes an opening into what has always been present.

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