

## DHYANAM (MEDITATION)

Dhyanam is the seventh step of yoga. It is easily achievable for those well trained in the practice of dharanai, the technique for concentrating the mind. Dhyanam is defined as the perfect scientific art of exercising complete control over the mind. Dhyanam can also be described as a state leading to cessation of all thoughts except one.

Under the guidance of a yoga expert, sitting in sukhasanam or padmasanam on a soft bedspread spread on an even floor, one can do meditation 20 to 30 minutes daily in the morning, evening and night and prevent or cure many stress related diseases. Meditation keeps us fresh throughout the day; ensures sound sleep for those who suffer from loss of sleep or disturbed sleep; increases the mental strength to face problems boldly and solve them efficiently.

Though all times are suitable for doing meditation, early morning (the time of Bramha Muhoortham) and evening during sunset are considered the best and the most beneficial. It is best to do dhyanam sitting on a bedspread facing north or east.

## SAMATHI

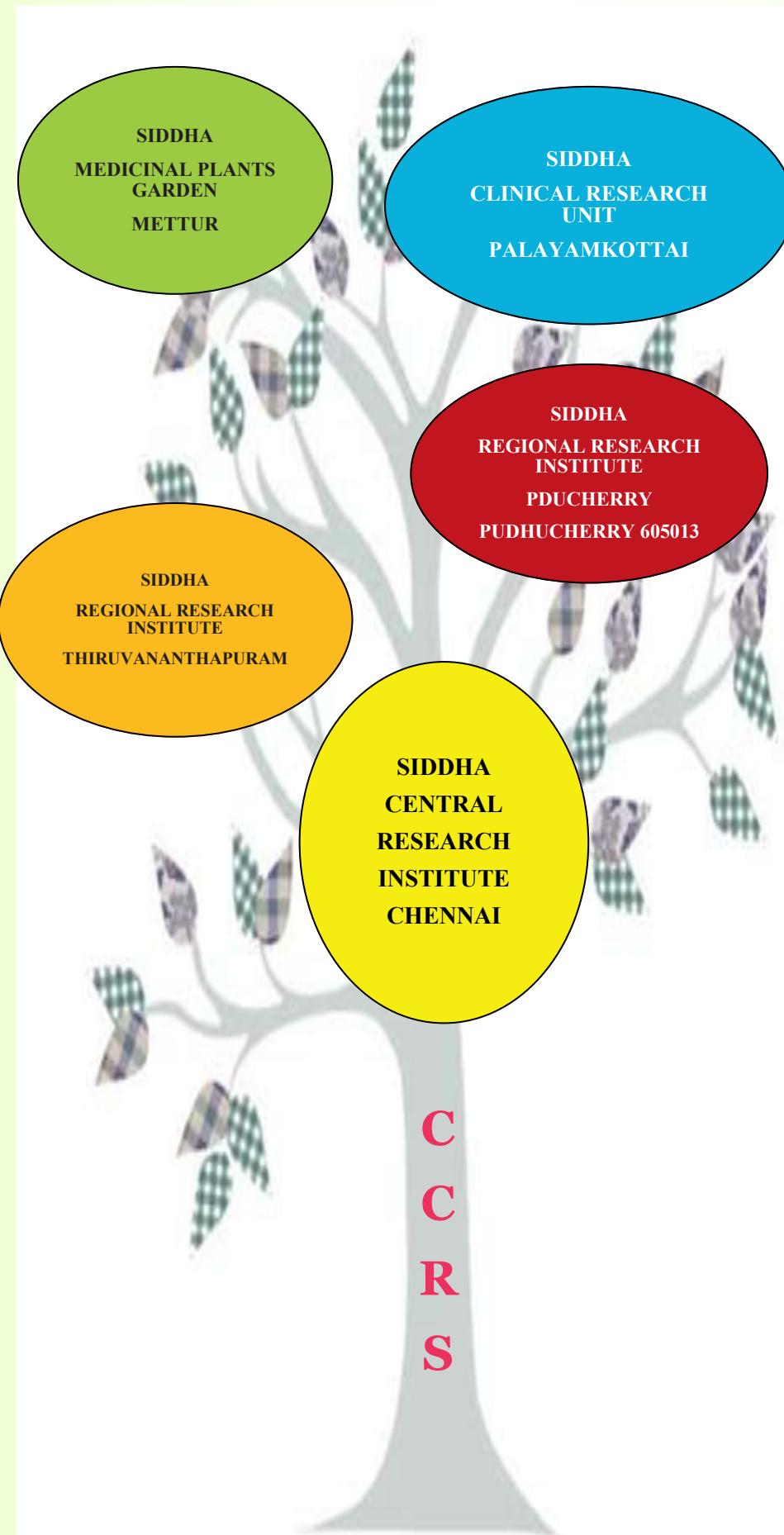
Samathi is the last step of yoga. The purpose of dhyanam is realized in Samathi. Siddhars, the spiritual scientists and Meignanis (persons of wisdom) have explained Samathi in different angles. Samam + athi = Samathi which means attaining the state equal to god. Samathi is a state in which Pasu, the Seevanma (the individual soul) by freeing itself from Pasam, the material bondage becomes one with Pathi, the Paramanma (the Universal soul).

In other words samathi is the state of realization of god or the truth within oneself. Samathi may be called as thoughtless self-meditation. It is a state fully free from consciousness and feeling.

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# YOGA IN SIDDHA



In Siddha System of Medicine, Yogam (Yoga) forms an important part. Many Siddhars have dealt with yogam. Among them Siddhar Thirumoolar is notable. He details nicely the Attangayogam i.e. the eight steps or eight stages of yogam in his work 'Thirumanthiram'.

The term 'Yogam' means 'union'. Siddhars have defined yogam as an art which controls the mind by preventing it from distracting through sense and sense organs and unite it with the divinity after realizing the true entity of eternal bliss. Yoga is defined simply as "A perfect scientific art that unites the mind with the God or the Truth".

The eight steps or stages of yogam are serially presented in a verse of Thirumanthiram:

"Iyama niyamame ennila athanam  
Nayamuru pranayamam prathyaharam  
Sayamihu dharanai dhyananam samadhi  
Ayamihu attangamavathumame"

'Attanga yogam' is also called as 'Agathavam Ettu' in Tamil i.e. Iyamam, Ni-yamam, Asanam, Pranayamam, Prathyaharam, Dharanai, Dhyananam and Samadhi.

'Yogam' is one of the kayakalpam (rejuvenation) methods that preserve physical and mental health by preventing the approach of grey hair, wrinkling, disease and death.

## IYAMAM

Iyamam means ‘learning discipline’. It is an internal practice of cleansing or purifying the mind. Impurities of the mind can be removed by exercising control over the mind which gets distracted by the five senses leading to sensuality. The practice of purifying the mind is called ‘Iyamam’.

## NIYAMAM

‘Niyamam’ means ‘Purity of action’. This is the second stage of yogam. Observing purity or truthfulness in one’s activities is Niyamam. We have seen that it is only the thoughts arising from the mind that manifest as words and deeds. Observance of Niyamam becomes easy for those who become well trained in the observance of Iyamam.

If the day to day activities carried out by everybody during lifetime prove to be useful and harmless in any way to him and others it becomes Niyamam. Acts such as smoking, drinking, consuming drugs affect both the body and the mind. Leading a life by earning money by fair means alone will benefit all.

Learning the principles of Niyamam and living according to them are the way of achieving success in the second step of yogam.

## ASANAM

This is the third step or stage of yogam. Asanam means posture or pose. As asanam forms a part of yogam it is also called as yogasanam.

All the asanams prove a good training to both body and mind. Keeping the body/ parts of the body steady and motionless in a particular posture for a specific time is asanam.

By learning yogasanams through proper training under a guru (teacher) one can derive benefits for the body and the mind.

By doing specific yogasanams one can stimulate specific internal organs according to need and regulate their functions.

Thus the practice of yogasanams becomes a kayakalpam and lengthens one’s youth and lifetime and maintains the beauty. It drives away laziness and increases energy, clear knowledge and memory. It helps control the senses and increases the power of concentration of the mind.

Asana kriyai are the movements involving the whole body or part of the body at a particular step or stage of an asanam or at its summit. By this kriyai specific internal organs can be stimulated and activated.’

Asanams are countless. However, one can learn and practise daily some important and basic asanams and maintain his physical, mental and spiritual health. It is enough if we allot half an hour to one hour daily for asanams and practise them regularly. Some of the important asanams described by Siddhars are Padmasanam, Sarvanganasnam, Machasanam, Vajrasanam, Mayurasanam, Halasanam, Bhujangasanam, Dhanurasanam, Pachimottanasanam, Siddhasanam, Arthamachendrasanam, Badhrasanam, Savasanam, etc.

## PRANAYAMAM

The perfect and scientific art of controlling one’s breathing is called Pranayamam. It is also called as ‘vasi’ and ‘vasiyogam.’ By bringing to control the breathing going on normally automatically in a regular rhythm and fixing the duration and amount of breathing differently as described by Siddhars, different types of Pranayamam are devised.

Normally during respiration we inspire twelve inches of pranic energy. But only 8 inches are being utilized by us. The remaining 4 inches of the pranic energy are wasted during expiration. Pranayamam is the technique which ensures that the entire pranic energy is efficiently absorbed and utilized. Pranayamam is one of the rejuvenation techniques which prolong one’s lifetime.

There are 3 phases of breathing namely, Poorakam, Kumbakam and Rechakam. Poorakam is the act of breathing in during respiration. Rechakam denotes the act of breathing out. The act of retaining the inspired air for a specific time is generally termed as kumbakam. ‘Kumbakam’ can be interpreted as the time taken for the act of absorbing inspired oxygen by blood circulation. However adopting certain rules, kumbakam, the act of voluntarily holding the breath for a specific time can be observed along with some Bandhams and Muthirais. The durations of poorakam, kumbakam and rechakam are different for different types of pranayamams. The best time for practising pranayamam is the morning in empty stomach after brushing the teeth and evacuating bowels and bladder.

As indicated in the Siddha literature, one can do pranayamam 4 times a day-- one and a quarter of an hour since dawn, middle of the day, one and a quarter of an hour before and after sunset and midnight.

Pranayamam is not only useful in the treatment of diseases of lungs and respiratory tract but proves beneficial as main or supportive therapy in the treatment of diseases of skin, nervous system including brain and diseases of the mind. It is useful in developing and preserving body resistance and also in increasing the memory and mental concentration. It removes bad odour from the body and renders good health.

As indicated by Siddhar Sivavakkiyar, pranayamam enhances the beauty and strength of the body without losing the youth. ‘Poorana Sutthi Pranayamam’ ‘Mathrika Pranayamam’, Adasuthi pranayamam and Nithirai Pranayamam are some of the pranayamam techniques described by Siddhars.

## PRATHYAHARAM

The practice of controlling or withdrawing of senses is known as Prathyaharam. The five senses namely, taste, sight, touch, hearing and smell are perceived through the five sense organs namely tongue, eye, skin, ear and nose respectively. Gnanenthiriyyams form a link between senses and sense organs. That is to say, Gnanenthiriyyams are the instruments which work the senses through the sense organs.

“Suvai oli ooru osai natramendru ainthin  
Vahai therivankatte ulagu”

i.e. this world is functioning only with knowledge of those capable of working (applying)the five senses – touch, taste, vision, hearing and smell-- sensibly by reason.

By the practice of Prathyaharam i.e. controlling senses, all the energy can be conserved to strengthen one’s spirituality and by strictly adhering to the pathway of yoga, one can reach the state of godhead, the eternal bliss.

## DHARANAI

The sixth step of Attangayogam, next to Prathyaharam is Dharanai. Dharanai is the method or practice of concentration or fixation of the mind. For achieving a goal or even for performing our normal activities concentration of mind is indispensable. By exercising control over our five senses, one can increase the power of concentration. An individual’s personality depends upon his or her mind and it differs from individual to individual depending upon the power of concentration of mind.