

What Is Self-Actualization (Nididhyasana)?

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The Purpose of Nididhyasana by Swami Paramarthananda

What is self-actualization (*nididhyasana*)?

Karma yoga is a preparation for *jnana yoga*, and *jnana yoga* leads to self-knowledge and liberation. *Jnana yoga* is three disciplines: (1) hearing (*shravanam*), (2) reasoning (*mananam*) and (3) actualizing (*nididhyasana*). Hearing is extracting the essential teaching of Vedanta by systematic and consistent study of the scriptures under the guidance of a competent living teacher, *mananam* is logically dwelling upon the teaching until all doubts with regards to the teachings are eliminated. It is understanding that Vedanta is flawless and factual. Actualizing is the internalization or assimilation of the teaching by dwelling on the teaching until it is spontaneously available during everyday transactions.

The process of liberation (*moksa sadhana*) is presented in Vedanta as consisting of three stages: (1) liberation while alive (*jivanmukti*), (2) liberation at death (*videhamukti*) and (3) the end of *samsara* (*samsara niviritti*), i.e. no future births.

The seeker starts the path as a doer with *sanchita karma*, tendencies toward good and bad actions accumulated from previous births. *Prarabdha karma* is that portion of the *sanchita* which is actively fructifying in the present birth, and *agami karma* is *karma* the doer accumulates during the current birth.

When the *jiva* gains self-knowledge through Vedanta *sadhana*, the knowledge destroys *sanchita* and *agami karma*, leaving the *jnani* with *prarabdha karma* only. This is called *jivanmukti*, liberated while living. And when this *jnani* exhausts all the *prarabdha*, the current birth and body caused by the *prarabdha* is destroyed, which is called *videhamukti*, liberation at death, so there is no reason to come back. This is called cessation of transmigration (*samsara*), moving from one body to another.

Nididhyasana

The final stage of Vedanta *sadhana* is *nididhyasana*, whose purpose is to internalize and actualize the teaching *Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya ājivo Brahmaiva Na āParaha*, "The self is real, the world is apparently real. There is no difference between the self and the *jiva*." It is a fact that I am only limitless existence/consciousness, but as a *jiva* I am ignorant of this fact, so I have to (1) claim my limitlessness and (2) negate the misconception that I am a *jiva*. Claiming limitlessness means claiming that I am not a doer/enjoyer entity. If I don't accept this fact, even though I know the scripture's point of view, I am not a *jivanmukta*. I am still at the doubt removal stage (*manana*). But if I am convinced that I am the limitless self and am not perfectly satisfied with my new identity, I must actualize it. I must:

(A) Get Rid of the Idea that I Did *Sadhana* to Get Liberated

The entire process of *moksa* from *jivanmukti* to *videhamukti* to the cessation of

samsara is based on the idea that I am a *jiva* with three types of *karma*. *Nididhyanam* negates the idea that I am a *jiva*, so along with it I need to negate my *sadhana*. The idea that I am a *jiva* and the idea of *moksa* are two sides of the same coin. I shouldn't think I did *sadhana* for *moksa*, because I was free when I was doing *sadhana*.

(B) Get Rid of the Idea that I Am Liberated

If I didn't do *sadhana* because I was always the self, I didn't get liberated either. So I have to get rid of the status of a liberated person because it is a misconception based on an incorrect notion of who I am.

(C) Get Rid of the Idea that I Won't Be Reborn

If I never was a *jiva* or a *jivanmukta*, it is also true of *videhamukti* and the end of *samsara* (*samsara nivritti*). So I can't say I will be liberated at death or that I won't come back again. These notions should be dismissed during the *nididhyasana* stage.

(C) Get Rid of the Idea that Qualifications Are Necessary for Liberation

The idea that qualifications are necessary for *moksa* is unconsciously formed during one's *sadhana* and needs to be deliberately negated because *moksa* is my nature, not something I gained, nor which I can lose. This is usually difficult for doers, but it is a fact. Persisting in this notion is tantamount to identifying with the doer.

(D) Redefining Qualifications

Even though qualifications are not valid as a condition for *moksa*, *sadhana* still is required for *nididhyasana*. Why? Keeping up your *sadhana* once you are liberated is the best gift you can give *Isvara* for bringing you to Vedanta. Neglecting it is the worst thing you can do. It is the best gift you can give your teacher also (*guru dakshina*). Neglecting it is the worst gift you can give the *guru*. Keeping up your *sadhana* is also the best publicity for Vedanta. And keeping up your *sadhana* is a blessing for the world (*loka seva*).

So you should keep the qualifications - discrimination, dispassion, etc. - but convert your desire to be free into the idea - which is a fact, incidentally - "I have always been free." If you think you achieved *moksa* you are still thinking of yourself as a *jiva*.

(E) Get Rid of the Conventional Experiential Definition of Liberation

Often people who are convinced that they are the self still long for some kind of epiphany to validate it, which means that they haven't completed stage two of Vedanta *sadhana* (*manana*). Since I am limitless awareness, I am always experiencing myself, so I needn't look for some kind of experiential validation of my nature.

(F) Redefine Liberation - Taking a Stand as the Self - Repeated

Internalization of Identity *Mantras*

I need to continually contemplate on and confidently assert: (1) I am of the nature of eternal, all-pervading existence/consciousness. (2) I am the only source of permanent peace, security and happiness. (3) By my mere presence, I give life to this material body and experience this material universe. (4) I am never affected by any event that happens in the material world or to the material body. (5) When I forget my real nature, I convert life into a burden. When I remember my nature, I convert life into entertainment.

Commit to memory this *mantra* from the *Kaivalya Upanishad* and repeat it until it becomes a continuous and automatic thought. Once it is continuous it will never be forgotten and it will drop out of everyday consciousness but be available always when it is needed, like your name:

“Everything is born in me, all things have their existence in me and everything merges back into me. I am that limitless awareness, the one without a second.”

Om Tat Sat