

# svastha traditional yoga

There are three things that help reduce suffering and create a clear, stable mind. They are;

**Tapas**, usually translated as austerity but it really means tolerating the discomfort of change. Even a change from patterns of suffering to patterns of pleasure is uncomfortable. Your mind will always resist change and the deeper the patterns of suffering are embedded the more uncomfortable change for the better seems to be. Keep focused on the objective of a good life and realise that all the concerns and doubts are your mind having a fit because it is losing control. The mind as a great servant but a terrible master.

**Svadhya**. Usually people think this means chanting some magic formula but a deeper understanding is something positive that you can always sing, chant, recite in your mind to give it something to do when it would otherwise not be occupied with positive actions. The mind will always move. If it doesn't have something to focus on it will tend to repeat old, destructive patterns. So some saying, piece of scripture, mantra or uplifting song that can be repeated when you are idle can prevent falling into negative thought patterns. This tendency to fall into negative patterns is what is meant by the Christian expression 'Idle hands do the devil's work'.

Svadhya also implies self study. When you engage in these positive mental activities you also reflect on your reactions and feelings more objectively and come to a deeper understanding of yourself and your behaviour. It helps to step back and see things more clearly. The meditation practices that are usually taught are a form of Svadhya and they lead to Isvara-pranidhana.

**Isvara-pranidhana**. Translated as surrender to God but Isvara is actually consciousness or awareness. If you really look into it, all sentient beings are really pure awareness - that which experiences - not the thing experienced. Isvara-pranidhana means surrendering to the reality of your own aware nature and not identifying with the ever changing procession of things we see and the patterns of mental activity. You are aware of your mind so you are not your mind. Rather you are the seer or experienter.

In summary, change is uncomfortable so if you want change you must tolerate the process. Putting positive things in your mind intentionally and reflecting on your reaction to the process leads to deeper self understanding and identifying with your true conscious nature leads away from the suffering caused by misunderstanding and ignorance and towards genuine awareness.