

Trataka

Description:

“Looking intently with an unwavering gaze at a small point until tears are shed is known as trataka by the acharyas (teachers)” HYP, Verse 31, Ch 2

This practise is cleansing and strengthening for the eyes. The eyes are focussed usually on a small object or the flame of a candle in a dark room, without blinking. Advanced variations involve gazing at a portrait of a deity or even imagining it in your mind's eye.

There are two forms of trataka, external, known as bahirunga, and internal known as antaranga. The external practice can often lead seamlessly into the internal practice, particularly with candle gazing.

The room must be draft free if using a candle as the flame must be steady, also the object must be at eye level, so a suitable stand or table should be available.

For insomnia, the practise should be performed before bed.

Trataka should be performed on empty stomach.

Before starting this exercise, you can start off by movement of the eyes without moving the head, where you roll your eyeballs up and down, sideways and from corner to corner diagonally. Initially, you can make this movement with the open eyes and then repeat them with the closed eyes. This will give the requisite exercise to the eye muscles.

Technique:

- In a dark room free from drafts, place a candle at eye level, approximately at a distance of 3 ft
- Sit in a comfortable seated position
- Relax and prepare with eyes closed and breath awareness, until calm
- Open eyes and stare at the candle flame for as long as possible without blinking
- When needing to blink, gently close the eyes and try to maintain the image of the flame internally making that your focus.

For the duration of the practise, to begin with, students can move between open eyes and closed. With experience students can choose to maintain external focus until the eyes water if desired.

Precautions

Epileptics, migraine sufferers and people with eye ailments should use a steady object to gaze at, such as a black dot on a white background or possibly the symbol, om.

The time spent practising trataka should be gradually increased, beginning with 1-2 mins increasing gradually over a period of time to 10 mins.