

Kaya Sthairiyam: Cultivating Body Stillness

Week 1 · Yoga Wise Meditation Course

Introduction

Kaya Sthairiyam is a Sanskrit term. *Kaya* means body and *Sthairiyam* means steadiness. This is a meditation practice that cultivates physical stillness as a doorway into mental stillness.

It is often thought that meditation involves trying to stop thoughts or empty the mind. In reality, meditation is the practice of becoming one-pointed, gently focusing the mind on a chosen object. In Kaya Sthairiyam, the object of awareness is the body itself.

Rather than trying to ignore physical sensations or discomfort, we include them in our awareness. The body becomes the field of observation.

This practice can be used as a meditation in its own right or as a preparation for other meditation techniques.

The Relationship Between Body and Mind

In everyday life, the body and mind are rarely still at the same time. When the body is restless, the mind is often restless too. Kaya Sthairiyam works with this relationship directly.

As the body becomes steady and still, the mind naturally begins to settle. This makes Kaya Sthairiyam a powerful and accessible starting point for meditation, especially for those who find sitting still challenging.

Although the practice is simple, it has a profound depth. Many practitioners find it remains a valuable and reliable meditation throughout their lives.

How to Practise Kaya Sthairiyam

Begin by settling into a comfortable seated position. Allow the spine to be upright without strain and the body to feel supported.

Once you are settled, bring awareness to the whole body. Notice the points of contact between your body and the floor, chair, or cushion.

Gradually allow the body to become as still as possible. There is no need to force stillness. Instead, invite the body to soften into stability.

As sensations arise, notice them without reacting. Sensations may include warmth, coolness, heaviness, lightness, tingling, or areas of discomfort. Rather than shifting position immediately, simply observe what is present.

If the urge to move arises, notice the urge itself. Often, the impulse passes if it is met with awareness.

Working with Discomfort

Discomfort does not mean you are doing something wrong. In Kaya Sthairiyam, discomfort becomes part of the practice.

We are learning to distinguish between pain that requires adjustment and sensation that can be observed. This discernment develops gradually over time.

If pain becomes overwhelming or sharp, it is appropriate to move mindfully. Otherwise, allow sensation to arise, change, and pass, noticing how even discomfort is not static.

Stillness, Steadiness, and Ease

One of the gifts of yoga and its sister science, Ayurveda, is the teaching that steadiness and ease can coexist.

This is reflected in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali in the phrase **Sthira Sukham Asanam**, often translated as “the posture should be steady and comfortable.”

Kaya Sthairiyam offers us an opportunity to experience steadiness and ease not only in the body, but also in the mind.

Integrating the Practice

Kaya Sthairiyam can be practised for a few minutes or for longer periods, depending on your experience and circumstances. Even short practices can be deeply settling.

You may notice that the qualities cultivated here, stillness, patience, and embodied awareness, begin to influence daily life. Moments of pause may arise more naturally, even during busy or challenging situations.

This practice lays a strong foundation for all the meditation techniques that follow in this course.

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