

Samatvam: Evenness of Mind

Bhagavad Gītā 2:48

*Yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhanañjaya Siddhyasiddhyoḥ
samo bhūtvā samatvaṃ yoga ucyate*

"Perform action, O Arjuna, being steadfast in Yoga, abandoning attachment and balanced in success and failure! Evenness of mind (*samatvam*) is called Yoga."

(Translation of the verse is Swami Sivananda's)



In Sanskrit, the word 'sama' can be translated as "same" or "equal", and the suffix '-tvam' means "quality of" - similar to our suffix '-ness' in English. Therefor the term 'samatvam' refers to having the quality of equanimity or balance amidst the changing circumstances of life.

When our experiences in life meet our expectations and desires, or when success comes our way in one form or another, there can be a tendency to feel elated. On the flip-side, when circumstances in our life go against our expectations or desires there may be a tendency to feel frustrated, despondent, or even down-right depressed.

A central aim or purpose of true yoga practice is to help us to develop the ability to remain calm amidst the ups and downs of life. We can learn to 'stay centered' through it all.

Many yoga practices can help us to develop Samatvam. Meditation in particular trains us to come back to a steady point of focus, thus cultivating the quality of equilibrium. Regardless of the external circumstances unfolding in our life, a regular and well-tended to meditation practice becomes like a steady rock which is always there to support us through thick and thin.

We are then able to move closer and closer to a sense of peace and abiding joy which is not dependent upon external circumstances. This is true freedom.

Om Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ Śāntiḥ

(Om Peace, Peace, Peace)