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Perform Agnihotra • Heal The Atmosphere

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**Homa and Dance as Healing
The Whole World Hurts
Agnihotra Biggest Material Aid to Meditation**

Editor

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Cover

Maria Broom combines Homa and dance for healing.

Homa and Dance as Healing

The audience is seated, the music starts. One-by-one, two-by-two Dance Bringers step out, subtle movement to the beat. Maria Broom dances out first, bearing a tray which holds an Agnihotra copper pyramid. Dancing feet move into a circle, bodies stand straight and tall like Egyptian statues, then gracefully sit. Maria lights the fire and chants:

BhooH Swaha Agnaye Idam Na Mama
Bhuwah Swaha Wayawe Idam Na Mama
Swah Swaha Sooryaya Idam Na Mama
Bhoo-Bhuwah-Swah-Swaha Prajapatye
Idam Na Mama.

Amazed, all eyes are on the fire. Movement throughout the hall ceases.

Om Tryambakam Yajamahe
Sugandhim Pushti Vardhanam
Urvaarukamiva Bandhanaan
Mrityormuksheeya Maamritat Swaha.

All the dancers chant "Swaha" as ghee is added to the fire. The mantra rings out again and some in the audience join in with "Swaha." The mantra is repeated as the sound of "Swaha" fills the hall. The fire continues to burn in the copper pyramid sending the aroma of burning dry cowdung and clarified butter, and the resultant peace and harmony, throughout the space as the atmosphere becomes healing.

The Sanskrit mantra tapers off and, without warning, holds its tune while taking on new energy, new words.

Peace and joy upon the earth
And to the people of the earth
Let the babies grow up free and strong
With minds of peace and happiness
In Love.

As the fire and the chanting subside, the dancers rise, joyfully, triumphantly, having readied themselves, the others and all of nature for the celebration of life which is to come.

So begins each performance of the Dance Bringers of Baltimore. Led by Maria Broom (also known as Rafika Samira), this troupe of dancers, musicians, and performing and visual artists is becoming widely known as the people who bring the dance, the peace and the healing pyramid fire. Organized in 1980 for the purpose of providing instruction in dance, movement, Yoga and the performing and cultural arts, the Dance Bringers have introduced hundreds of people – women, men and children – to practices which enhance health, personal growth and development, and peace. Incorporating the practice of *Homa* therapy (use of copper pyramid fire prepared under prescribed conditions of nature's biorhythms to purify and nourish the atmosphere) to begin classes, meetings and performances was a decision made by Maria and her company. *Homa* is used because it purifies the space, making it suitable for dance, movement and breathing. *Homa*, simultaneously, promotes creativity; Maria's experience with *Homa* and movement, which dates back to 1976, shows that by following the performance of *Homa*, music, dance and art are automatic and natural responses.

Maria Broom, founder/directrix of the Dance Bringers, has been a dancer for over twenty years. She has studied, taught and performed throughout the USA and abroad. Known and loved in her native city, Baltimore, Maria leads numerous who's who lists. An outstanding career at Morgan State University, a Fulbright Scholar, dance experience in Europe and a blossoming career in television combined to make her one of the area's best known celebrities. Billboards all over the city carried her picture, and the slogan "Viva Maria" became a symbol of pride for her numerous old and new friends. At the height of her television career, however, Maria left that stage to devote more time and attention to popularizing dance as a healing art.

Maria was quoted by the *Baltimore Sun* (May 30, 1982) on this point as saying, "Dance is a survival art, a healing art that needs to be taken out of the category of leisure arts or entertainment." She sees no separation between the dancers and the audience. Everyone, she maintains, can and should be actively involved in movement as a healing process. Drug addicts, recovering alcoholics, prisoners, teenagers, little children and a host of others benefit from dance therapy and dance instruction provided by Maria on a daily basis. A movement workshop to be offered through Agnihotra University will combine dance and *Homa* and will attract members of the performing arts community of Washington. In addition to conducting workshops for a variety of participants all over the country, Maria and the Dance Bringers are committed to performing dances which transmit the oneness of all creation and the need for peace.

The repertoire of the performing company includes, as one would anticipate, dance movement from around the world. For example, their December concert, "Holy Days for All," was a two-day celebration at St. Mark's Church in Baltimore and included dances which were Egyptian, East Indian, Afro-Brazilian, North African, Hawaiian, West African and South American. Given as a benefit by the Dance Bringers for the church, the concert ended (like all the classes, rehearsals and concerts) with movement learned from the universal language of the deaf. The stage became filled with dancers and musicians who, in silent unison, used sign language to chant:

Peace and love for ourselves
Peace and love for our friends and family
Peace and love for the whole world
Thank you.

At another recent performance at the Central Library for a city-wide tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a Nobel peace prize winner, the Dance Bringers used Eastern and Hawaiian movement set to African music. The dance was reverent, lively and a delight to the standing-room-only audience. Although the program included numerous celebrities and community leaders, it was most interesting to note that the feature in the *Baltimore Sun* the following day (January 16, 1983) focused on the performance of the Dance Bringers and carried a photograph of Maria sitting cross-legged before the burning *Homa* copper pyramid, chanting mantras and adding ghee to the fire.





Through the Dance Bringers, the message of Homa and dance as healing has found a way to spread itself. Maria and the dancers, therefore, plan to extend their commitment to include workshops and performances to numerous communities outside of this area. They plan, as well, to extend the use of *Homa*, chanting, lectures on natural diet, Agnihotra ash medicines, natural clothing and other sciences as complements to the healing process.



The Whole World Hurts

The title of this piece comes from an article written by none other than the London correspondent of *The Washington Post*. Immediately below it (August 8, 1982) is another one titled "One Depression Leads to Another: Canada's morale is even lower than its stock market." Though both articles primarily address economic issues, the words that are used to describe the psychological and emotional moods pervading the world are enlightening. And, in fact, the second article ends with, "Canada seems unable to deal with its *Spiritual* program." (That the article was written by the Post's New York *financial* correspondent is also interesting.)

It was many years ago that *Satsang* first mentioned that worldwide economic depression would be thrown into the barrel of problems already besetting us (pollution, addictions, suicides, etc.). We would have to learn to make do with three-room houses instead of five rooms, we were told. Some countries would perhaps find themselves at standards of living lower than those of the World War II era. And this referred to some "developed" countries, not the developing ones (a sad enough story in its own right). Britain has fewer people working now than at any time since 1939, it is reported.

The Canadians "live for the second home in the country and many yearn for the return of the American gas-guzzling car." How sad and how reminiscent of what is written in *Satsang Volume One* (publishers Agnihotra Press, Inc. \$12.00):

"Ultimately, we will find that unless a person understands that he has a purpose in life he will not make much headway towards happy living. This can come only when the missing dimension is brought into play. The missing dimension is "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all other things shall be added unto you."

I am often asked for my impression of the USA when I return there after absences of about one year. In 1981 I detected attempts by many people to *act* as if they were happy. In 1982 even the attempts were largely missing. About Canada it is written, "For a visitor from the USA, Canada's gloom is striking. Here are people who outwardly seem a lot like us, who drive our cars and play our baseball, but who have lost their optimism. Optimism has long been one of North America's natural resources." In Canada, "Seldom, if ever before, has such an impending sense of panic pervaded our society." Sadly in USA optimism seems to be decreasing also.

The economic figures are known well enough not to belabor them. *Satsang*, furthermore is not an economic journal. As a symptom of a global malaise, however, we may think this subject relevant to our concern with happiness.

Surely the first two aspects of Fivefold Path offer a way out. *Agnihotra*, the burning of specific materials in a copper pyramid at sunrise and sunset to the accompaniment of

Sanskrit intonations seems to give a push to the mind so that we find ourselves inculcating the habit of sharing our material assets. *Daan*, the sharing of assets then helps us "get used to the discipline of parting with or receiving material possessions without concomitant pride or dejection. The habit begets detachment and grants you the correct perspective to look at things material." (From "Ten Commandments of Parama Sadguru," publishers Agnihotra Press, Inc.)

The London correspondent concludes by citing a statement of one of Britain's leading economic advisers who said that "The main lesson to be drawn from the global crisis is that no one has the answers any more, no matter how adamantly politicians might insist that they do. For the moment, there is no horizon to look over; getting all this sorted out is going to take a miracle – at the very least."

Perhaps it is no coincidence that Agnihotra and Fivefold Path have been labelled "miraculous" by many. A miracle needn't be supernatural. But it often relates to something rare – like being happy in a hurting world in the 1980s.

Nine years of clinical and experimental trials have pointed to the fact that Agnihotra cures depression – economic or psychological. It is through the medium of the mind that we experience what we label happiness or unhappiness. The rich can be unhappy; the poor can be happy. It is mind that matters.

Our studies confirm Vedic theory which states that the self-healing potential of mind/body is released when regular performance of Agnihotra is undertaken. What usually requires years of training or therapy seems to unfold almost automatically in weeks for those regularly exposed to Agnihotra atmosphere.

The world seems to be moving at a quickened pace now. Karma is speeded up. All reasonable help is needed. It is up to us, as individuals, to do the most we can to help ourselves and others. "Love is the answer; Love is the key; it's full of Love we all must be."

Agnihotra Biggest Material Aid to Meditation

Agnihotra is a material aid to meditation through the agency of fire. To perform Agnihotra a person needs a copper pyramid, some organic materials and matches, an almanac for knowing when the Sun rises and sets, the words and tune to a short chant or mantra, and finally, a place to sit. The most obvious advantage the meditator might be aware of when he uses Agnihotra to aid his meditation is the fact that he is provided with something (the fire) to focus on while sitting. The energies that emanate from the copper pyramid at Agnihotra time are healing.

The open pyramid shape allows for maximum energy to be released into the atmosphere around the meditator, and he won't feel sleepy during his meditation. The Agnihotra copper pyramid is of fixed shape and size. Copper and gold are the two metals prescribed since they are excellent conductors of electricity and have healing properties as well. The meditator would place the pyramid on a brick or tile when the fire is lit as the Agnihotra pyramid gets hot.



The sticks of wood are coated with ghee and arranged in the Agnihotra pyramid in a log cabin fashion. Ghee is spread on a few pieces of dried dung and the pieces are placed loosely on top of the sticks of wood in such a way that air can still circulate and the fire, when lit, won't choke. Finally, a little quantity of raw rice is mixed with ghee and kept in a plate next to the Agnihotra pyramid ready for offering to fire.

The materials for Agnihotra are a few flat pieces of dried cowdung, ghee (which is clarified butter from cow's milk) and raw brown rice. You can use firewood for ignition. However, do not use firewood from trees which bear bitter fruit or trees which have thorns. There are some prescribed medicinal trees for Agnihotra fire, and one may use firewood from them to give additional effect. However, dried cowdung is a must. Firewood one may or may not use. If you use only dried cowdung then you may apply ghee to pieces of cowdung and light one of the pieces by a match and use that piece to light others. Keep one piece of flat cowdung in the bottom of the pyramid and put three pieces of cowdung in a triangular shape so that the top is open. Light another piece and put it inside the triangle.

The meditator should have with him a chart showing sunrise/sunset timings. If he purchases an almanac, the timings would be listed throughout the year, but he needs the local times for sunrise and sunset. Those can sometimes be found in local newspapers or obtained from the Naval Observatory (a computer chart will be sent for a small fee). You may write to *Satsang*, c/o Agnihotra Press, for timetables.

The words and tune to a short chant or mantra are also needed for performance of Agnihotra. At sunrise the meditator would chant:

Sooryaya Svaha, Sooryaya Idam Na
Mama

Prajapataye Svaha, Prajapataye Idam
Na Mama.

At sunset:

Agnaye Svaha, Agnaye Idam Na
Mama

Prajapataye Svaha, Prajapataye Idam
Na Mama.

A tape with this chant or mantra is available without cost as long as supplies last from Agnihotra Press, P.O. Box 13, Randallstown, MD 21133.

A few minutes before sunrise or sunset, the meditator needs to find a quiet place to sit. With the Agnihotra pyramid in front of him, he lights the fire. It needs to be fully ablaze at the exact time the Sun is said to rise or set (actually the Sun never rises or sets. What we observe is a view of the Sun from a planet, Earth, that is rotating on its axis). At the moment of sunrise or sunset, the meditator chants the short mantra, adding half of the portion of rice mixed with ghee to the fire on the first "Svaha" and the remaining portion on the second "Svaha." He can now sit back and focus his mind on the dancing flames from the Agnihotra pyramid. With a little effort and help from the Agnihotra atmosphere, relaxation is soon achieved and the experience can best be compared to a mini-vacation from which the meditator emerges

refreshed and renewed. Agnihotra, as a material aid to meditation, enhances the meditator's ability to cope with stress and tension in today's world and is a positive step in the direction of improved physical and mental health.

(Karen teaches Yoga meditation at the Columbia Association and Howard Community College, Md.)