

Ingrid Howard has arrived from Canada. She is staying at Agnihotra House in Washington, D. C. A meeting was held on January 6th to introduce to her a group of Agnihotri ladies from the Capital, suburban and Baltimore areas. Doris led the group in meditation.

AGNIHOTRA POTS

Agnihotra is the process of purification through the agency of fire. We feel the need of Agnihotra pots of prescribed shape and size made from copper. It is now proposed to have them manufactured locally. Tim is studying the problem and will submit his report by the week-end.

AGNIHOTRA FIREWOOD

It is proposed to import from India firewood of prescribed species for preparing Agnihotra fire. A preliminary search was made to locate some of these varieties of trees in Virginia and Maryland. More work is required to be done on this project. Some of these varieties may be available in southern parts of the United States. Next summer, experiments will be made to grow some of these trees at Madison, Virginia.

Agnihotra fire is made from specific varieties of wood and dry cow dung. All these trees are noted for the purificatory effect after burning accompanied by specific discipline. Some of these are known to possess medicinal values. Clarified butter (ghee) and cow dung are two important materials in Agnihotra. Agnihotra is sometimes described as a process of fumigation.

Fresh cow dung possess the property to disinfect bacteria which causes fever. Many harmful germs are killed by its mere smell. In many countries of Asia and parts of Europe like Italy, cow dung used to be an important item in sanatoriums to disinfect the area. Only a couple of decades ago, it was the practice in Europe to give a drink of cow dung and water to patients suffering from chronic dysentery. Ancient treatises on medicine state that many bodily disorders could be set right by cow dung.

Fire should be prepared with branches of specific medicinal trees and cow dung. Offerings to fire should be made when it is fully ablaze. Raw rice and ghee are prescribed as offerings to fire in the smallest form of Yajnya which any householder can practice with great benefit. This is AGNIHOTRA. The oil obtained from rice embryo becomes thick and buttery. It contains much olein and albuminous substance.

The resultant chemical reaction depends on various factors, some of which are stated below:

- (1) Nature of the substance.
- (2) Proportion of the substances offered to fire.
- (3) Temperature range during various stages of combustion at various points of fire pot.
- (4) Quantity of air supply.
- (5) Interaction among the products.
- (6) The influence of various agencies (especially light) through which diffusion takes place.

Vapors so formed arrest putrefaction. They also help sterilization of household dust. This process acts as a powerful disinfectant. The non-bacterial parasites are also affected.

Carbon dioxide produced in Agnihotra acts as a mechanical vehicle to carry antiseptic and vermifuge products to surrounding areas.

Vibrations are the second input in Agnihotra process and cosmic radiation the third. Vibrations effect changes in the matter of bio-organisms. Music played to plants increases the yield and also brings about a qualitative change. Music played to cows tends to increase the milk yield. Vibrations have an effect on the atmosphere. The qualitative change in the mental realm will be borne out by scientists in the near future.

Sunrise and sunset are the timings prescribed for Agnihotra. At sunset, the intensity curve of pathogenic bacteria is steep, and the fumigation is an aid to undo the harm. There is also the effect of intensity variations in radiation from the cosmic objects. Full moon day and no moon day are some of the important occasions when the situation changes.

Changes in the atmospheric content through the agency of fire cause changes in the PRANIC content which brings an automatic proportional change in the mental attitudes of man. This is the modus operandi of a Yajnya. What cannot be achieved by years of effort is achieved within a few weeks by Agnihotra. The tension on the mind is reduced; some factors that go to depress the nervous system are eliminated. Our lust and greed are curbed. Thus, Agnihotra is an important material aid for the spiritual aspirant. This is especially so in the polluted conditions of our existence.

Practice AGNIHOTRA for purification of the atmosphere.

Practice DAAN (sharing your assets in a spirit of humility) for generating non-attachment.

Perform TAPA (self discipline, austerities, purification) for fruition of thy affirmations.

Perform KARMA (meritorious deeds) for self purification.

Perform SWADHYAYA (Self study) for liberation.

This is the Fivefold Path. Start the spiritual discipline today. The span of life will not be extended. What is given unto you is to utilize wisely every moment of your existence. Let us engage ourselves in meritorious deeds without expectation of reward in the form of name or fame. We live only in the present moment. The past is no more. The future is yet to be. Do not waste the precious moments in trivia.

The link will be given to you by Divine Will when you start practicing the above. You will be a better Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, whatever be your formal religious label.

KRIYA YOGA Class - (Following is a transcription of the tape of a discourse given by Vasant at Kriya Yoga Class in Washington, D. C., in December, 1973).

“ When you decide to follow the spiritual path, you can chart the course with others, but the mapping must be done individually. You take the first step and keep walking; and strength will be granted to you.

But first you must decide: Where is the necessity for me to follow this path? Do I have a need for it? Why should I make the effort? Unless you feel a need for it, you will not cooperate with body, mind and soul. You may wonder: Is it an intellectual experience? Is it just a side show? The experience of higher tiers of consciousness can never come through the eye of logic - from the level of intelligence. It comes only through intuition. What is the difference between the eye of logic of the intellect and intuition? On a dark night you are walking through a forest with a flashlight. You can see for several feet in front of you, enough to guide your path. All of a sudden, a flash of lightning appears. In a moment, you see the whole view of the forest and the hill towards which you are walking. Although you are walking with a flashlight, you will not get the same perspective which you get with a flash of lightning. The intellect is like the flashlight. Intuition is like the lightning whereby you get that grand and clear view in proper perspective. One thing is certain, and it is the experience of each and every traveler on this path - the intellect can only tell you there is such a power as Almighty power. Even if you go through all the known revelations and scriptures it can only tell you that perhaps the Almighty power exists. Or an atheist will say, "I go through all this and find nothing exists." The maximum intellect can tell you is that IT exists, but intellect can never lay its grasp on THAT. These are the limitations of human reason. Fortunately, the top-most scientists in the world have recognized that human reason has limitations, and we cannot go beyond these limits. This is one of the biggest achievements of modern science. Therefore, we say that henceforth the scientist is going to speak on behalf of Eternal Religion. Science unites the world. Similarly, this Eternal Religion which is the basis of all the scriptures is going to unite because the limitations of human reason are recognized.

To return to the question of the necessity of this path, I know that unless I feel the urge for it I am not going to take any step. My mind and intellect are not going to cooperate. The answer is simple - I want to be happy. Whatever means are available to me and I think are right must be utilized for my happiness.

From cradle to cremation, from birth to burial, everyone is working. What for? All our aim is to avoid misery and pain. That is the basis of all of our actions. Unless we recognize that man is not only body and mind, but body, mind and soul, we are not going to be happy. I know I am my body - I am so much one with it, as everyone else is. So I cater to my body's needs. If it is cold outside, I use a heating system; if it is hot outside, I use air conditioning to make my body comfortable. I also know that even if I look after my body by all possible methods, I am not happy; so something else is required. Then I come to know that my mind is tantalizing me by flitting around from one object of desire to another. It is scattered in various directions, seeking happiness but not finding it. This macabre dance of the mind must be eliminated or controlled, and only if I am able to do that will I be happy. This is the second conclusion a person comes to when he thinks of his mind, as well as his body. Then the person tries to cater to his mind and

tries to make it as steady as possible. He feels if he engages himself in sense enjoyment his mind will be happy. So he tries to pacify by indulging more and more through the avenues of sense enjoyment. He feels that if he goes in for more liquor, dope, sex and collecting material things he will be happy. But soon he comes to know that it does not bring real happiness. He finds that with so much of material comfort, so much intelligence and so much coordinated effort, there is more of psychiatry, disease, tension, broken families and people quarreling. We need not consult statistics. This is the picture all around us. It is done with the best of intelligence and best of intentions; but the road to hell is also paved with good intentions. Mere good intentions are not enough. You have to be armed with knowledge. It is like being stuck in mud. The harder you try to get out, the more you are bogged down. Similarly, people who try to exploit the avenues of sense enjoyment get more and more bogged down and happiness always eludes them. Then they say, "I have tried to look after my body and mind, but I am still unhappy." The third thing, which is everything - the soul -, has been neglected. Then they realize that unless they look in that direction they will not be happy. And therein lies the beginning of the path. Unless we search in the direction of the soul, we are not going to be happy; and once you do that, mind and body both will be taken care of. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all things shall be given unto you."

Then I realize that if I want to be happy the only thing necessary is to go towards the science of the soul. Let me try to understand as far as possible with my intellect. Then I will know it is necessary for me. Otherwise, I will not be happy. Happiness is a condition and not an action. Happiness has everything to do with the mind, because it is the reactions of the mind that determine whether I am going to be happy. To know more about mind, to tackle my mind, I have to become subtle. That is the next step. A jeweler weighs carats of diamonds on a delicate scale. He could not weigh them on a supermarket scale for vegetables. Similarly, for dealing with the mind I have to be more subtle. The difference between a condition and an action can be seen in the following example. If I say I am going to bed, this is an action. But if I am sleeping, this is a condition. Meditation is a condition, not an action. If I say, "I am meditating," it is not true. Meditation is a condition into which one is ushered through the practise of concentration; just as sleeping is a condition into which one is ushered by going to bed. Similarly, happiness is a condition of the mind. I know that I want to be happy and my happiness depends on mind. Since mind is subtle, I have to become subtle to achieve this. There is no way for me but to go through this process, and if this process is simplified, it is easier. This process of becoming subtle is simplified and explained in the path of the Masters which is covered by the Fivefold Path. My whole object is to attain Self-realization (true happiness) while living the life of a householder. Liberation and Self-realization are possible in this context. You need not be a recluse, even though such a practice may escalate a person's progress on the path. The Fivefold Path is for the average person to attain great heights while living his day to day life full of worldly activity.

When you deal with the mind, you find that the mind is a tyrant, a dictator; it is oppressive. The mind has become the master, and you have become the servant. The first thing on the spiritual path is to reverse this position. You have to make mind your servant and cognize that you are the master. How to do this will be further explained.

5.

We want to get things done in the shortest possible time without mincing words or wasting words, to get to concrete matters and not waste time with logical syllogisms, philosophy or metaphysics. The question is, "What am I to do now?" Start with Agnihotra for mental purification. This process of purification will take you beyond the mind of modern psychology which is limited to thinking, feeling and volition. This is done by Agnihotra. Agnihotra is the smallest form of YAJNYA, the process of purification of the atmosphere through the agency of fire. In the old days, Agnihotra was much more complicated and a much stricter discipline was involved. But, by Divine Will, a more concise form of Agnihotra was given by the Master to suit modern conditions. And when this small token is performed by the householder, then His blessings are with him.

The Master's name is not important. The eternal principles of religion are important. When you follow the path, you receive His blessings in your own home, wherever you are. Efforts in meditation will quickly be fruitful. It is not necessary to emphasize the Avatar or His name. We do not want to open another shop. This is something special. Today, it appears, there are more "gurus" than disciples. In the United States they will soon go into the Yellow Pages of our telephone book.

To start with, we must make certain decisions which we will implement in our lives. By doing this, the will is strengthened, and the path is made easier. To prevent our search from degenerating into mere intellectualization, we start with certain concrete decisions and actions. They are:

1. I will not find fault with others.

If you get into the habit of finding fault with others, you also get in the habit of making someone a scapegoat for your own short-comings.

There is a possibility that the person with whom you find fault is not at fault.

If you go on brooding over his faults or your own lapses, then you create channels in your own mind which bear the imprint of that dirty thing. It is like bringing someone else's trash can into your living room and spreading it all over the floor. It is the same thing when you find fault with someone and brood over it. Think, "Do I now have these faults myself?" Maybe I have them in larger measure. At least I have them in some measure.

If you think that by finding fault with him you will improve him, most likely you are wrong. The dictum is, "Develop yourself first. Then you can think of improving the world." When a mother, with all love, chides her child or a teacher chides his pupil, it is not fault finding. It is a method of teaching.

Always remember, "I have enough trash of my own. I do not want to bring the other person's trash and spread it in my living room."

2. I will always act up to my power of discrimination (power of discrimination = power to discriminate between right and wrong).

This power of discrimination is granted to each and every one of us on the day we are born in the human frame. It is not dependent on culture or education. Culture and

education can only make it finer and more refined, but that power of discrimination is always there. It is this power which differentiates man from all other animal species. Animals go by instinct; man goes beyond instinct by intelligence. Therefore, the supreme aim of human endeavor is Self realization - to find out, "Who am I?" A famous philosopher said, "Man, know thyself." This is Swadhyaya, Self study. Animals can never come up to man in that standard. Some animals are able to count, to do simple arithmetic, but this is the limit to which an animal can go. Animals have no power of discrimination to discern right from wrong. This power of discrimination allows man to go beyond intelligence and shows the direction of his evolution. If man accentuates his efforts in this direction, it will take him to bliss. We have the power to escalate evolution; and to do so we must go through all this.

Very simply, to follow my power of discrimination means that whatever judgment is pronounced by my power of discrimination will be carried out in my actions. If my power of discrimination says that it is wrong to do a certain action, I will not do it, regardless of my desire to do it. I may feel that I am put to a loss, but ultimately, by not acting up to this power of discrimination I will suffer the consequences of my wrong action one way or another. So, in fact, I am saving my own time and trouble by always doing what I know is right. If my power of discrimination tells me not to indulge in lust and greed, then I will follow this judgment. This is the basis, the key, for any spiritual discipline. Only when I lay stress on this do I start treading the spiritual path. This is so because intellect and action act and react. If I commit a wrong action my power of discrimination is weakened, my judgment is likely to be faulty, and that will again lead to wrong action. The power of discrimination is an aspect of intellect, and that is how intellect and action act and react.

If you stick to the decision given by your power of discrimination, you always perform right action. And by performing right action, your power of discrimination is strengthened. The process is reversed, and from a vicious circle you move to a virtuous circle. You set in motion a circle conducive to right action. What is this vicious circle? It starts with the attitudes of the mind. For example, I have a desire. Desire is the substratum which is always feeding the attitudes of the mind. That desire gives rise to certain attitudes of the mind. At that moment, the power of discrimination tells me it is wrong to do that act, I should check it then and there. If I do not check it, that attitude becomes a propensity. That is, it gains force. When an attitude becomes a propensity, it is more difficult to check. So, an attitude becomes a propensity if unchecked. At least, at this moment I should use my power of discrimination and halt. If I do not do that, it starts troubling my intellect. That is, a signal goes to my intellect which tells the intellect to find means for gratification of my desire. That is how the intellect is dictated to by that propensity. And, intellect will always find ways and means to get things done - if not by the right way, by devious methods. Somehow the gratification of the desire

will be obtained, thus weakening the power of discrimination. Then judgment becomes faulty. But, if I check my action at that time, then my action becomes virtuous, and, again, my power of discrimination is strengthened. This is the difference between the vicious circle and the virtuous circle. Thus, we see how this is the basis of all endeavor. We are constantly forced to perform either physical or mental action. By using the power of discrimination, proper judgment is pronounced, and I do not involve myself in any further bad karma. The process of putting an iron chain on my feet is stopped. The evil effect of karma, which one day I will have to reap, is stopped because I am doing the right thing. The Law of Karma, law of 'Reap as you sow', is inviolable.

But, again, this is not enough. Even if you go on doing only good actions, that alone is not enough to help you. This is a ticklish point. Even though you are doing good actions, you reap what you sow. That means you will have to reap the good results of your meritorious actions. In the last case, it was an iron chain; in this case, it is a golden chain. But it is still a chain. These good deeds may land you in paradise, but they will not bring you the Kingdom of Heaven that is within you. That is the difference. When the good karmic account is exhausted, again you have to start the journey in human birth. So why not do it now? Therefore, the answer "You have to do the action without clinging to the fruit thereof." Since you are unable to judge the value of your actions and, therefore, cannot see the resultant karma, it is best to think only of the action, itself, and not the consequences. Thus, if you do not cling to the results of your karma, there is nothing binding on you. This is how we transcend the law of karma. This is why it is said, "Do everything for the Lord. Do everything for the Master." As Jesus said, "Not my will, but THY will be done."

3. I will give one-pointed attention all the time.

If I am going to the bathroom or buying vegetables in the supermarket, is it necessary give the same one-pointed attention as I do at work or when I am in class? Will it put me to more strain and effort?

"Efficiency in action is yoga." All of you are performing Agnihotra regularly, and for a short while or a long while you concentrate every day. What do you do when you concentrate? You train your mind to go into the habit of one-pointedness. Now, any time during the rest of the day, when your mind is not one-pointed, it is going in exactly the opposite direction. Therefore, you undo the effect of concentration. Whether the work is small or big, with every event a unit of time is consumed. That means a chunk of your life is bitten off. Do you want this to be spent efficiently or wasted? With one-pointed attention, you are more likely to bring efficiency. Therefore, you should be one-pointed. You might feel there is strain, but in a short while you will find the strain is gone, and you are naturally one-pointed in all of your activities."

Vasant

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