

Satsang

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PRANAYAMA (Rhythmic Breathing)

...Vasant

Mind and PRANA are linked. PRANA may be translated as Vital energy. On the physical body, we have a well laid out nervous system. If you can imagine something subtler than the nervous system on another sheath which we wear, it may correspond to what is described as the NADI system in the ancient science of Yoga. The day is not far off when the material scientist can start exhibiting the sequential flow of this PRANA under various stimuli. PRANA may be depicted not per se but by the emanations of energy patterns.

The knowledge that PRANA and mind are linked is a great asset to the applied scientist. In AGNIHOTRA, the smallest process of purification of the atmosphere through the agency of fire, the same principle is involved. When the effect of AGNIHOTRA is experienced by persons coming from various cultural backgrounds, professing different religious faiths, belonging to different nations, surely this is enough basis to begin to investigate this process from the point of view of modern sciences.

Here is another proof of how PRANA and the mind are related. Any person who has been practicing PRANAYAMA, the rhythmic Yogic breathing, for some time, knows the tranquility that comes by its practice.

The word PRANAYAMA was wrongly translated into English as breath control by the people who were not so familiar with this science. PRANA is not breath. The movement of a fan blade is dependent on electricity but it is different from it. So is PRANA different from breath. The movement of rhythmic breath sets into motion something that works on the NADI system. A few minutes of proper PRANAYAMA helps keep one fresh and energetic the whole day.

Now please listen carefully to what I say. You will have a big asset in hand if you learn PRANAYAMA. However, you have to learn it from a proper teacher. PRANA is described as SHAKTI (power). By proper practice of PRANAYAMA you acquire control over this power. Control over this power is synonymous with victory over the mind.

"God said let there be light and there was light." This is how Creation takes place. Hence, in the Vedas, it is described as SANKALPA, i.e. affirmation of the Divine.

Mind is all SANKALPA. By achieving victory over the mind you acquire the Yogic SIDDHI (thaumaturgical power) which is called SANKALPA SIDDHI. It is victory over all atoms of Creation. It means redemption from the cycle of birth and death. It is the merging into universal consciousness. It is the first experience of "I and my Father are one".

PRANAYAMA is the science of controlling the PRANA SHAKTI. To be able to do this, one has to study the ASANAS, i.e. Yoga postures first. PRANAYAMA is to be achieved with slow practice. One should not rush things while learning PRANAYAMA. It is risky to do so and is likely to do more harm than good. Steadily, brick by brick, the structure is to be built. The physical frame has to be tuned up and made agile. The conductance of the wire has to be increased to be able to bear the voltage that rushes in. It is a victory which leads to the highest reward of human existence. The highest reward is liberation from the clutches of desires of TANHA as Buddha, the Blessed One calls it. This leads to NIRVANA or liberation.

An important suggestion for those who have had some practice of PRANAYAMA. With implicit faith meditate on the meaning of the following Mantras:

1. SHUDDHOHAM: I AM PURE

The dross accumulated due to attachment to worldly things is dissolving. My mind is unburdened. I have no attachment to the fruit of my actions. I offer all fruits of action to the Lord. Each one of my actions is for self-purification. I have no hankering after desires. My mind is reaching that stage of no-desire. Whatever comes is His Will.

2. BUDDHOHAM: I AM ENLIGHTENED. I am Buddha.

I am not the sense organs. I am not the mind. I am not the intellect. I am the Spirit that is beyond these three. The strings that bind me to the cycle of birth and death are being snapped.

3. MUKTOHAM: I AM FREE

I have snapped all the bonds of Karma. I am free from the cycle of birth and death.

4. SWIWOHAM: I AM MADE IN THE IMAGE OF MY FATHER

My qualities resemble His. Verily I say, I and my Father are One. I have the command over all Creation.

SWADHYAYA (Self-study) is the fifth aspect of the Fivefold Path given through the Vedas along with Creation and reiterated by all the prophets, saints, Avatars and Divine incarnations. It is self-study. It is study of the Self.

While meditating, do the above SWADHYAYA. While moving about in the world, be in the world but not of the world. SWADHYAYA knows no vacation. The ex-

perience of this state is the summum bonum of human frame. When this is achieved there is no duty left as such to perform. There is nothing that remains to be achieved. Knowing this there is nothing that remains to be known. "I and my Father are One."

TAPA (SELF-DISCIPLINE)

TAPA is the third pathway of the Fivefold Path. TAPA teaches you detachment and unlocks the door which will give you a glimpse of the forgotten treasure to which you became an heir on the day you were born in human frame.

Like a stray dog, the mind is whirling far and wide in objects of pleasure and pain, love and hate. It is never tired of its incessant motion and feels recouped with every new sense object. In an instant it can travel four corners of the globe. It appears near impossible to arrest the fantastic frolic of the mind from searching after desires anew. For lasting mental peace we must learn to curb the distractions and achieve wisdom in steadiness. To seek refuge in evenness of mind is Yoga. Pleasure or pain alike should cease to ruffle the mind. For this, our intellect has to be trained to establish itself firmly in Self. Neither hankering after worldly pleasures nor getting dejected by discomfitures represents true wisdom which is the result of disciplined intellect. Neither attraction nor aversion disturb the tranquil. For this, firmness is necessary and it can come only as a result of knowledge about our destination. Fear, hope or selfishness fail to sway a yogi. The thirst for action culminates in clinging to the fruits of action. Whatever be our allotted task, if we perform it with this nonchalance in the spirit of an offering to the Almighty, such action sublimates the mind. Control over the senses generates this attitude of mind and this is known as TAPA (Self-discipline). Performance of daily AGNIHOTRA and practice of DAAN makes the soil fertile for realizing of non-attachment. One must try to reduce the dependence on body, sense objects and the mind. When we say 'my house' your controlling the reins is implicit. But ponder with what laxity we use the phrase 'my body' for it is the body which dictates your action and not vice versa. Consciously or unknowingly we have grown to okay the dictates of the bodily frame. This human frame, the tabernacle of the Heavenly Father, is cluttered up in various cobwebs of silk or iron where the entanglement petrifies by neglect. An immediate attempt must be made to usher in the fresh breeze of knowledge for the process of disentanglement to take root. If you are too harsh with yourself in untying the chains and force the pace, chances are that you might be bruised half way and feel too fatigued to carry on the noble task until the laurels are won. Hence, caution is advised in performance of TAPA, the third aspect of the Fivefold Path.

Even if knowledge dawns on you that for an ounce of pleasure there is a pound of pain that precedes or succeeds, it will not suffice to pull you out of the quagmire of tantalizing desires. Disappointments and defeats in the arena of worldly pursuits will not necessarily lead you towards a search for the Divine Path, and even if fortuitous circumstances lead you to it, mere recognition of reality may not prove equal to the task of uplifting you from the vale of ignorance and putting you on the Path of Illumination. On the other hand, per-

formance of AGNIHOTRA and DAAN are the best external aids that lighten your burden and inaugurate the process of AVADHUTA, that is, cleansing from below. You are safe on the Divine escalator that takes you higher up without much strain on your faculties.

You have to figure out for yourself how you will be able to reduce this dependence on body, mind and sense objects. The contra action which might tilt you back is already under check since you perform AGNIHOTRA and practice DAAN. Your efforts have more chances now to translate into victory. But a firm resolve is required to give that push button thrust to set things in motion. Clarity of thought now gives you the ability to deliver the 'coup de grace' to push button and lo, the illumined Path has unfolded itself before your very eyes. Practice of TAPA unscrews the holds in your Heavenly tabernacle and funds of energy are released to which you are heir but knew not before. You experience that miraculous powers which were latent have become patent. The dross is dissolved in the mystifying experience and your further progress is assured. Here your free will has to be diligently assuaged by intellect lest you revert to the past mode of living. Armed with the release of unknown powers, you may be able to attract people around you or even show them some signs. But here you have to beware and conserve your strength and not let it dissipate in miracle mongering or in pursuit of additional material perquisites which you do not need.

A thing may be TAPA for one person while the same thing would not hold true in another case. If you are used to a life of luxury, kindly ponder over those items which you can do without immediately. If you try to list them I am sure you will be surprised how big the list is. Your attempt to reduce your dependence on those items may mean straining your mind as well as your physique initially. But rest assured, you will be amply rewarded soon. The very fact that it is yours for the asking should embolden you in your experiment towards partial renunciation. Slowly you have to develop habits which you would term comforts and not luxury. Carrying the process further, you may go up to necessities.

While you are attempting all this you must see that none of your family members or dependents are deprived of their way of life simply because you are positioned in a different cruise for yourself; on the contrary, you have to take extra care that they do not suffer by default. If you force any member of the family to practice this TAPA it will not amount to TAPA in his case as it would be a coercion. It will also detract from your TAPA as you have performed a wrong act in imposing a thing which by its very nature should be voluntary.

You have to exert much control over your palate. You must avoid the temptation of exhibiting to others that you are poised for TAPA and are in some way superior to those around you. You must keep your tongue tied whenever there is a temptation to dilate your views on TAPA to others on the only ground that as a traveller in the Divine Path you have started TAPA yourself. Even a small digression in this regard is likely to dissipate the potency you might have acquired and again there are chances that such things might go to your head and start nourishing the famished ego.

If your way of life is what might be termed comforts you have to reduce it slowly to necessities. And even from necessities you have to attempt towards bare

necessities. Please remember well that you are not to force the pace. Slowly you have to unfasten the chains one by one, which bind your body and mind to slavery. If you attempt to gulp more in a single dose the chances of reversion are many and hence this caution.

As soon as you embark on this Path you will get a glimpse of true happiness which you have to consolidate for yourself. There is a qualitative reformation and the physique whose slave you were a few months ago now obeys to your dictates. From henceforth you may not need much external aid except nourishing your intellect by SWADHYAYA, i.e. knowledge about the Self, the objects and the Supreme Being.

For all this TAPA you are not to leave your home whether palatial or humble. You are not to part company with your family members for performance of TAPA. On the contrary, you have to be with them and be a part of them. They need you now even more with your enlarged view of knowledge. If you leave home you will not have your family members to look after you with care and hence leaving home is not at all necessary. If you are staying in a noisy locality you need not on that account alone leave the place as you will soon find that internal symphony can drown the cascade outside.

For TAPA you need not leave your profession, service or business; on the contrary, now you become more adept in all these matters as your vision is enlarged and your wants are reduced. Your personality will take a new shape and its penetrating effect on others will be helpful to yourself as well as to society. Splendour is irresistible and the pristine glory which will stamp your visage will serve as a passport for all your worldly affairs. You soon learn the impossible trick of eating a cake and still keeping it. Only after practising TAPA will you realize the essential character of knowledge.

The mode of life of two families in the same income bracket is many times divergent. So what may amount to TAPA for one may not necessarily mean TAPA for the other. If one is used to a dozen dresses and reduces the number it is TAPA; the other who is habituated to overfeeding reduces the diet to minimum requirement it is his TAPA. One who used to spend higher percentage on nonessentials reduces the same is performing TAPA.

You have to resolve to fix a few minutes out of your daily routine for the practise of TAPA. During this period you have to attempt to concentrate your mind and try to curb its incessant roaming. Once you start this practice you will realize that it is more elusive than you ever dreamt of. But, if you continue the practice exactly at the fixed timings you will realize that day by day you come to know more about this galloping phenomenon and its vital aspects. As soon as you begin this practice you will learn that the mind is full of sense and nonsense and knows no limits of geography or ethics. At every forage of the mind you calculate a check point and ask it to come back. This way you will have established the thin end of the wedge to arrest its leapings. With more practice you may adopt the attitude of the Sessions Judge in a criminal case. Yes, what next? He would say to himself nonchalantly after every sentence of evidence. He is aloof from the reconstructed drama of the witness box although he has to execute perspicacity and erudition in the case. With a little more practice you will come to know the weakest link in this capering frolic of the mind. If it suits its taste

it will stick to anything good or evil. Now you will know how to catch it by the forelocks and bundle it up. The canoe which needs two people to push it from the sandy shore to sea during ebb could be pushed with a gentle touch of a child during tide. The big log of wood which was burdensome could be reduced to ashes and your way is clear. So now you know the secret where the mind is most vulnerable. You have to see that it is interested in some good aspect of behavior and once it acquires this taste it will stick to it, come what may. You may try to concentrate it on the image of your Guru or some Avatara or the Cross or any other thing which has an association of purity in your concept. Or you may think of that aspect of the Divine which is most palatable to you.

In the matter of TAPA, speed is never the essence of your resolve. Progress can never be galloping and is neither expected to be so. Slow but sure wins the race. More coercive measures may lead to rebounds and hence are not advisable.

For bodily TAPA you have to check up your items of food and drink, raiment and apparel and all other perquisites. One by one you have to attempt to reduce these items. Eat to live and not live to eat shall be the ideal before you. A body working in scorching sun or deafening cold can equally live harmoniously as would a body in an air-conditioned apartment provided the practice of TAPA is attempted bit by bit. You should not try to jump at reduction as you may thereby lose sight of the goal and it would prove most strenuous.

TAPA of the mind starts with attempts at concentration at regular fixed timing every day. The fixity of timings is an essential ingredient. If for some reason beyond your control you have to miss it on some occasion let us not cry over it. But this is only an exception. Image of Sadguru, an Avatara, a messenger, Linga, Flame, anything you may choose as an initial aid.

Only when you make some progress in this direction do you come to realize the extreme importance of Time which once lost can never be purchased for any amount of gold. You automatically fall into the habit of gentle speech and periods of silence. At this juncture, you will experience that certain miraculous powers locked up in your bodily frame which were dormant till now have started exercise. The recognition of these powers will render strength to your resolve to practice TAPA more ardently.

With all the precautions stated earlier, you will be able to tame this invincible demon of a mind and happiness is your reward. No effort made in this direction, howsoever little, is ever lost.

SOCIAL INTERACTION IN THE BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON AREA

...By Karen Jeffreys

Once again it is springtime in this part of His world. I am continually coming face to face with more and more people as we are getting out of our

cars, working around our homes, sitting in the sun or walking in the parks. Everywhere smiles are being passed back and forth. They seem to be conveying the same message.

"Do you know you are He?"

"Yes, there is a place in me that does know."

And the smiles become infectious. We lose track of who smiles first and the smiles melt away time and distance amongst us. His joy and His blessings through the Fivefold Path are alive in our hearts and we pass into a land beyond exteriors, the land of happiness, we-ness, eternal Springtime, His love.

At a recent talk in Washington, D. C. we in the audience were reminded of the following: We are here to work out our Karmic predicaments, except for a few very special people who are here out of choice since their Karmic predicaments were worked out long, long ago. One such person who physically graced this planet was Jesus Christ. His greatest sacrifice was not dying on the Cross on Good Friday. His greatest sacrifice was being born into human form with one purpose: to relieve human suffering through words and deeds.

There are truly never-ending blessings through the practice of the Fivefold Path. Shree's presence on our planet is for resuscitating the ancient wisdom of the Fivefold Path which forms the basis of all scriptures. His love surpasseth all understanding.

Practice AGNIHOTRA for purification of the atmosphere.
Practice DAAN (Sharing of 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.

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

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Parama Dham (House of Almighty Father)

RFD #1, Box 121-C

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All SATSANG correspondence should be directed to SATSANG Editor

Agnihotra Press, Inc.

P. O. Box 13

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