

Satsang

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Twice Monthly

ILDSTEDET (DANISH FOR PLACE OF FIRE) INAUGERATED

The first community Place of Fire in Denmark was inaugurated by Vasant on Friday, August 23rd at Brovst, Jutland, Denmark. An Agnihotra copper pot was placed on a table against the wall symbolizing the process of purification of the atmosphere. Ildstedet is situated in beautiful surroundings in a field with heather and cows and hills on one side, sandy beaches far off on the other. Church type long window is in the back and a square window to the left. It is so lovely and perfect. At this place, Agnihotra will be performed at sunrise and sunset, and all the time silence will be maintained. Anyone is welcome to come and meditate.

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FIVEFOLD PATH IN SCANDINAVIA (Continued)

Vasant sailed to Oslo, the capital of Norway, from Copenhagen. Ingrid met Vasant at Oslo harbour. One day was spent in obtaining visas to some European countries which Vasant hopes to visit.

The first meeting was arranged at Britt's residence. Britt is a talented artist and Vasant had the opportunity to see her paintings which have been exhibited in several countries. Vasant talked on the Fivefold Path of Vedas and it's extreme relevance in the context of present conditions.

Two days later, another meeting was held at Sybil's residence where Vasant was staying. Vasant explained Agnihotra and the other aspects of the Fivefold Path. Iris and Knut presented Vasant with a copy of "Jonathon Livingston Seagull" which is currently popular in America. A single seagull, by utilizing his free will in the proper direction, soars high into strange worlds breaking all tradition. Later on, he takes other seagulls with him. Knut remarked, "The subject matter of today's talk has relevance to this story of the seagull".

Talks were held at Sybil's residence during Vasant's short visit to Norway. Ingrid and Sybil came to the pier to bid him von voyage. Brovst is about three kilometers from the North Sea to the west of Aalborg in Jutland, Denmark. Iain and Robert came to receive Vasant at Frederickshavn harbour.

Vasant reached Brovst late in the evening and was warmly welcomed by Sara Nielson, the founder of the Institutde at Fosdalsgard. During his nine day stay at the Institutde, Vasant gave detailed discourses every day on the various aspects of the Fivefold Path. Tapes of all his discourses were made and will be utilized in the future to train the teachers who will spread the message of the Fivefold Path in Scandinavia.

Every day new people were directed to Vasant by Divine Will and the movement started gathering momentum like a snowball.

The highlight of the week was the inauguration by Vasant of 'Ildstedet' (Place of Fire in Danish), the first Fire Temple in Scandinavia, on August 23rd. Before the inauguration, Vasant spoke on the Fivefold Path before the people who had come from various nearby towns. After the inauguration dinner was served, a question and answer session followed the dinner.

A separate building is kept for Ildstedet. Agnihotra is performed daily at sunrise and sunset at the place and silence is maintained all the time. Any person from the area is welcome to come any time and sit for meditation for as long as he likes. No questions will be asked and no discussions will take place at Ildstedet. It is a place of silence. An Agnihotra pot made of copper is placed on a table against the wall. This symbolizes the ancient process of purification of the atmosphere to bring about purification of the mind. Such places are needed in larger numbers, especially when the atmosphere is so polluted due to changes in lifestyles which are concomittant to the growth of technology.

Sara Nielsen was the embodiment of kindness and hospitality. She absorbed the message of the Fivefold Path with the alertness of a yearning soul. When the fresh breeze of spiritual experience blows, the lotuses start blooming.

From the day of the inauguration of the Place of Fire, more and more people were directed by Divine Will to the place.

On Monday, August 26th, a meeting was arranged at the beautiful seaside Bade Hotel at Svinklov. The hotel is owned by Ebbe and Else Sorensen who had attended the inauguration of the Place of Fire. Sara talked on Yoga and Agnihotra, the smallest process of purification through the agency of fire. She also talked on the Fivefold Path. Vasant made a short speech on some aspects of Hatha Yoga and Agnihotra as material aids to bring about tranquility of the mind.

The next morning, Vasant talked with two teachers from nearby towns on the subject of preliminary practices to control lust, greed, anger, temptation, envy and pride.

Susan Hejl from Arhus came to spend the weekend with Vasant and Sara. She returned to Arhus carrying the torch of the Fivefold Path.

Susan invited Vasant to Arhus to meet her husband John and to address a group meeting. At this meeting, Agnihotra was demonstrated and Vasant spoke on the Fivefold Path. Questions and answers followed the discourse.

It was decided to procure a place, a hall where a Place of Fire for the community could be established. This shall serve as the focal point for the spread of the process of purification of the atmosphere in the University town of Arhus.

Susan worked fast and an application was presented to the authorities to make available a room in the building complex for the purpose of "Ildstedet" as the whole community would be benefited by the process of Agnihotra.

For Susan, the weekend she spent with Vasant at Sara's residence was a turning point in her life. "Operation Fulfillment" is the aim and the path is lit by Divine Grace manifested through the Son of Man.

Sara drove Vasant to Grena where he took the ferry to Sweden. By Divine Will, the seed of the Fivefold Path is planted firmly in Scandinavia. We are all instruments, conscious if we will.

Karen returned to U.S.A.

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Sara Nielsen
Brovst, Denmark

Dear Friends on the Fivefold Path!

We send you greetings from Denmark where we have recently been blessed by the visit of Vasant.

"We" are the current participants of the school-community called Bhedanta, which is located in the northernmost part of Denmark on the North Sea. Our school which is only a year-and-a-half old has, to date, consisted of small pioneer groups who have helped to build and promote our work while at the same time giving attention to each one's own spiritual edification. Besides our practices of silence, meditation, simple foods, and the contact with nature which we have here, there are also study groups in comparative religion, metaphysics, mythology and the like. Basic to our approach to life and learning is the assumption we hold in common that there is Reality greater than the one we daily grasp with our waking consciousness, that it is possible to become more in tune with this Reality, and that such attunement makes life deeper, finer and more satisfying for oneself and others. Bhedanta is a center open to people of all creeds and ideologies - people whose first loyalty is to Love.

One day a notice appeared in the mail telling about Agnihotra and the Fivefold Path (this came from Karen Jeffreys). We were invited to learn about this Path through the visit of a gentleman named Vasant from India. Such a visit was soon arranged and in the warmth of the first sunny days we have experienced here during this summer, Vasant related to us each aspect of the Fivefold Path on which so many of you have embarked. There was a good, companionable feeling in our house during these days. Quietly, softly we came to know that there was more to the Fivefold Path than is immediately apparent.

Here at Bhedanta we study and are inspired by the Vedas and much else that is available to us from the tradition of Indian spirituality. Therefore, although much of what we heard was not new in essence, Vasant's formulations were so very alive and renewing. Each day we experienced the genuineness, sincerity, and integrity of the man who came to us, as he did, as a messenger.

How can I relate to you what happened in those rapid ten days of lifeflow, generated from and through Vasant among all of us? I want to convey our experience to you without saying it; for truly I cannot say it. The words are inadequate and unworthy of that Reality. However, in order to do that, I would have to call into play the force of our winds, the stillness of a deep meditation, the gentle reassurance of a mother's kiss. It is all beyond me. Therefore, I send to you news of events and leave the touch of the Avatar to be read between the lines.

On Friday, the 23rd of August, the first community "Place of Fire" in Denmark was inaugurated by Vasant. That is what we call the site of community Agnihotra here. In Danish we say "Ildstedet". The word conjures up images of warmth and nourishment and the gathering of people. It makes one feel good. There were a number of local people invited to celebrate the inauguration with us. Some had come from nearby places. Vasant explained to them the nature and impact of what was about to happen and then together we entered the little chapel with its arched window to the west revealing the view of the hills through the tiny panes.

The house is furnished simply with the special Agnihotra pot given to us by Vasant, placed on a table against the wall. A single plant and the daily Agnihotra copper pot sit on the floor which we have lined with a saffron coloured carpet which protects us from the cold floor. Already the room is filled with strength and calm and power.

Throughout the next days, many people visited the place, all interested in learning about the Fivefold Path. One of these was Susan Hejl, one of the original founders of Bhedanta. For Susan, these days were a turning point in life. On the evening of August 26th at a local seaside hotel, we held a lecture and demonstration about Yoga which we will teach to the people of the community. The evening presented a fine opportunity to tell the people about Agnihotra and to announce to the public that Ildstedet (Community Place of Fire) now belongs to all of us, members of the local community and residents of Bhedanta alike.

The day after that lecture, Vasant, myself, Susan and Iain (Bhedanta staff from Kenya) travelled together to Aarhus, Denmark's second largest city. There, another talk was given by Vasant and Agnihotra was demonstrated before a large audience. Vasant spoke on Agnihotra and at sunset there was an opportunity for those attending to experience the effect of Agnihotra. Before the evening was out a petition was signed requesting the housing complex (the home of ten thousand people) to provide a room for community Agnihotra for the benefit of the residents. It is expected that the second "Ilsted" (Place of Fire for community) in Denmark will be opened in a short time. Already a carpet has been received as a gift for the proposed room.

A letter from Karen Jeffreys before her return to the United States tells of some others in Copenhagen who have begun Agnihotra and we will try to keep in touch with these soul-fellows so that we all have a point of contact with one another. Karen did a beautiful job of translating some of the important material written by Vasant in Satsang from English into Danish and soon we will get those things duplicated to distribute to the people who wish to know more about the Fivefold Path. Already a local Folkehojskole (residential adult education) has asked to hear more about what we are doing here and will visit us to learn about Agnihotra during their course on ecology. People attending a meditation course at a local hotel this week, a ladies club in Aalborg and many others, will soon be hearing about Agnihotra and the Fivefold Path. It feels as though wave upon wave will burst, catch the sunlight and quickly become a vital part of the spiritual evolution of many seekers here in Scandinavia.

It was with quickened heartbeat that I bade farewell to Vasant as he left for Sweden on the morning of August 28th. It couldn't be otherwise when so much truth and light had been channeled through him to us. Nonetheless, my step was light and I left the docks after waving the ship out of sight. The knowledge of a new and deeper way of being in touch, being touched and soaring beyond all ties, even the ties of affection, is freedom and promise dearer by far than any simple proximity. The work will go on in Denmark now just as it will in each place in which Vasant comes to move and speak to people brought together for just this purpose.

May the rising sun and the setting sun find us all seated beside leaping flames blessed by Grace.

.....Sara

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HAPPINESS HERE AND NOW

...by Sybil Loberg, Oslo, Norway

My first confrontment with Agnihotra and the Fivefold Path was like standing in a supermarket and being asked to try a new brand of candies, offered free. My first reaction was naturally skeptical. I said to myself, "I have too much else to do. There is no time for this sort of thing."

What with the usual tensions and strain which people experience today (financial problems, children, relations and a host of hidden demons ready to pounce around every corner), I thought that the last thing I needed was to have to be tied once again to the time span of the clock, that is, devoting myself to something which, in my naivety seemed so utterly 'primitive' as Agnihotra, the first aspect of the Fivefold Path.

I had read about Agnihotra in Satsang - - how by practicing it at sunrise and sunset every day, it relieves anxiety and tensions on the mind - - but I was skeptical. Ultimately, by hearing about it from someone else's own experience, I decided that the only valid test would be simply to try it for a while. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." Despite being one of the world's heaviest sleepers and also a staunch skeptic regarding any new-fangled 'path to happiness and contentment', I nevertheless decided to launch myself onto "Mission Impossible". Because Agnihotra originated with the Vedas and is now given in simplified, concise form, I thought I might give it a try.

After only a short time of experiencing Agnihotra, I came to consider it both a necessity for reducing tensions on the mind and as a beneficial springboard into one's inner self. Agnihotra for me is without doubt, now, one of the happiest highlights of my daily life. It leaves me in a state of utter peace and relaxation and an unbelievable sense of body-mind purification.

I work in a heavily polluted area in downtown Oslo and on particularly windstill days (Oslo lies in a valley) the pollution seems to seep through your clothes and your very being. One can almost taste it on your noon-day sandwiches. Everyone complains about this and many dream of eventually making enough money in the city in order to purchase their own little homesteads beside a crystal clear lake in the bacteria-free air of the Norwegian countryside. However, from the scientific facts of world-wide pollution today, we know that this super-scrubbed dream bubble of 'clean country atmosphere' is already bursting. Even here in sparsely populated (3.8 million) scenic Norway, a country most people think of as the paragon of healthy life, we already have "fresh air" in spray cans and special cartons guaranteed "pure" which sell at an expensive rate and grace many Norwegian tables! Agnihotra is a gift given free to each and every one of us as an antipollutionary measure which purifies the atmosphere.

Having been brought up in a strict "God will punish you" atmosphere in my childhood, the idea or philosophy of any 'Thou shalt not' religious rhetoric turned me towards agnosticism in adult life. Recently the Fivefold Path was brought to me. All the aspects of the Fivefold Path are such pure logic and good sense for showing anyone, anywhere how to be a happier and more loving, giving and tolerant person in everyday life. The Fivefold Path craves no supernatural or mystical understanding and it brings us a joyous awareness of ourselves and others which before seemed impossible to reach.

DAAN, the second aspect of the Fivefold Path is an uncomplicated act. The act of giving is the natural outlet of true love and compassion. Give of your material assets when and where you really feel the time and place are right and without having your giving broadcasted.

Self-discipline (TAPA), the third aspect of the Fivefold Path, is something we are all subconsciously aware of, although we tend to convince ourselves that life is just one intolerable self-restraint in any case! However, by contemplating on what self-discipline really means for you, yourself, as a human being is what matters. This is something as feather-fine and apparently indefinable that only the individual conscience can decide what one defines as self-discipline or self-control. Also, if one really thinks about it, self-discipline is a natural precondition for unfoldment of the latent powers within us which takes us to higher realms.

KARMA is the fourth aspect of the Fivefold Path. Truly good Karma to me is basically instinctive good action, whereas premeditated good action may sometimes be clouded in one's self-gratification and "what's in it for you". I believe that the fruits of the actions should not be dwelt upon by the doer. Also, one shouldn't tend to think, "Well, today I did this good action, tomorrow I'll do that good action". This is like keeping a karma statistics graph!

Self-study (SWADHYAYA), the fifth aspect of the Fivefold Path, appeared to me in such a way that it was like being able to jump out of your skin, or look upon yourself while at the same time experiencing different situations. It is looking upon yourself and the situation as a detached spectator. This way one tends to 'keep one's cool' in the situation at hand and there are no disturbing impacts on the mind.

The Fivefold Path is something which I find so totally rewarding and refreshing as a total way of thinking and living. It is particularly refreshing in the sense that it embraces all religions and all peoples of the world and it does not ask you to belong to any particular school of thought, philosophy, religion, guru, or whatever. Practicing the Fivefold Path in it's entirety involves nothing less than pure human love and understanding, reached firstly through an understanding of oneself, one's actions, and one's expression.

By grasping the essence of the Fivefold Path and practicing it in one's daily life, one reaches a plane of awareness of self and others much easier and much more fully than by merely identifying oneself with outward symbolic 'isms' and 'ologies', e.g. church meetings, group therapy, indoctrinated ritualism, etc. Fivefold Path is simplicity and truth. Fivefold Path is not enwrapped in any rigorous bric-a-brac and time-wasting piety which often is a mere false crutch on which to hobble through life. Also, the Fivefold Path offers complete privacy for the individual. One doesn't have to appear at any encounter group, church gathering or social debate. The Fivefold Path gives you everything in the privacy of your own home. Surely, the Fivefold Path is the

simplest and most uncomplicated way to happiness, especially in present day conditions.

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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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