



# Sanatana Mitra

JANUARY 2010



RUDRASHIVANANDA.COM

## Upcoming Events

**Feb. 27th - Chakra Healing 1**  
Union City, CA

**Feb. 28th - Chakra Healing 2**  
Union City, CA

**Mar. 13th-14th - Kriya Yoga**  
Union City, CA

**Mar. 19th - Chakra Healing 2**  
Singapore

**Mar. 20th - Chakra Healing 1**  
Singapore

**Mar. 21th - Shakti Healing**  
Singapore

## A Lesson for Shankaracharya

One of the great Masters of Yoga was Adi-Shankaracharya who was born realized and was commanded by his Guru, Govindapada to go to Benares at the age of twelve to teach. By the age of thirty, Shankaracharya had become the greatest Master of the time. He had reformed Hinduism and setup major spiritual centers in the four corners of India as well as defeated all the major Buddhist and Jain leaders in debates – no one could withstand his brilliance.

Finally, he decided to challenge Mandana Mishra to a debate. Mandana was already aged, perhaps seventy years old and been undefeated during that time. Whoever loses would have to become the disciple of the other and since both of them had thousands upon thousands of followers, they would also have to come under the winner's umbrella.

Now, in order to decide who had won the debate, a judge had to be found and

*Continued on Page 3*

## Samkhya Philosophy in Yoga

Samkhya is one of the oldest knowledge systems in the world and has had profound influence on the philosophy of Yoga itself. The practices and insights of Yoga predate by thousands of years the organization of its philosophy which became necessary with the approach of the minor Kali Yuga around 600 BCE.

Samkhya was founded by Kapila, probably around 800 BCE, although it is not clear whether some texts ascribed to him were of that time-frame. Samkhya is described in the Bhagavadgita and is fundamental to Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

It is not my intention to give a full treatment of Samkhya here, as that would require a whole book, but just to introduce you to one of the revolutionary concepts developed by Kapila

which is a key to understanding our spiritual practice. It is the concept of the tattvas or material principles through which material evolution has occurred.

Samkhya introduced 24 principles or tattvas, from the primordial mother called Prakriti to the five great element or Mahabhutas which form the physical universe and in particular our physical bodies. From Prakriti arise Mahat (responsible for the higher consciousness called Buddhi), then Ahamkara or Ego, followed by Manas or the sense-bound mind, the 5 subtle senses (sound, touch, sight, taste and smell), the corresponding 5 sense-organs, the 5 organs of action (hands, legs, speech organ, organs of elimination and excretion) and finally the 5 great elements (space, air, fire, water and earth.)

*Continued on Page 2*

## What About the Ancient Mysteries?

Recently, there have been a spate of novels and non-fiction works extolling the ancient mysteries or trying to make them even more mysterious. What are these ancient mysteries and what is their relevance to spiritual seekers nowadays?

The spiritual teachings of ancient Egypt, Greece and eventually Rome were mostly kept among an elite group and not disseminated to the masses. These elite groups met in secret not because they had any fear but because these teachings were sacred. These mystery schools sought to instill their

acolytes with spiritual truths through enactments and ceremonies that caused deep transformations among them. They were effective precisely because their teachings and ceremonies were kept secret and the seekers had no preconceptions – for instance if they were blindfolded and threatened with all manner of weapons, they really feared for their lives and if they were put into a casket for three days, they had no idea whether anyone was going to let them out.

With the rise and dominance of Christianity, these mystery schools

*Continued on Page 2*

# Samkhya Philosophy in Yoga

(Continued from Page 1)

We can learn from this elegant model that the normal mind or manas is controlled by the Ego while the higher consciousness of Mahat or Buddhi is beyond the Ego. It is through the Buddhi that inspiration comes to us and only by transcending the Ego can we connect with the Buddhi. Much of yoga psychology is a development of the interaction between Buddhi, Ahamkara, Manas and the Indryas or 5 subtle senses.

This model also gives us the path for spiritual evolution which is the reversing of the path of the material evolution and so we must master the 5 great elements, the 5 organs of action, the 5 sense organs and the 5 subtle senses. Then we need to master the mind or manas and transcend the Ahamkara,

returning to the first evolute or Mahat. At this stage we have achieved super or higher consciousness but not Self-Realization, because from Mahat, we must liberate ourselves from Prakriti altogether in order to identify ourselves with Atma (Purusha) or Spirit, our True Self. Identification with Atma is Self-Realization or Yoga, in which state, mental fluctuations are restrained, and we abide in our true nature.

The theory of tattvas is fundamental to all forms of Yoga although some later philosophies have added to the 24 tattvas. Rishi Patanjali added Ishwara or a superior Atma that is not available to guide us through spiritual evolution. Others have developed more complex models but the basis is still the 24 tattvas proposed by Kapila.

---

## What About the Ancient Mysteries?

(Continued from Page 1)

became illegal and were suppressed. Those that survived to preserve their ancient wisdoms now kept secret out of fear of persecution. From the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries, some of these surviving schools were able to come out of the closet and the most influential of them apparently were the Masons, who set up strongholds in American colonies. Some of the founding fathers were Master Masons such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. The Masonic influence has been well-documented and re-introduced into some major movies and books in the last few years. Unfortunately their effectiveness as a mystery school has been undermined by the public documentations of most of their ceremonies in the twentieth century and the transformation may no longer occur since people know a lot about the ceremonies.

What about their teachings? These have also been disseminated widely and we are now awash with all the sacred teachings from the past – just go to the world-wide-web. Additionally, the teachings from the sacred land of India have also now been made available to the West. Where-in lies the mysteries of life and death that have not been revealed to one and all – the obstacle is not the knowledge, but the realization.

It is said that the goal of the mystery schools was a form of apotheosis or the transformation of human to Divine. This is the very goal of Yoga – of the many varieties of Yoga- which is replete with all the tools necessary to achieve Self-Realization. It is not enough to read about the ancient mysteries, it is necessary to transform oneself and that can only be done reliably by the practices of Yoga.

## Is Sex an Impediment on the Spiritual Path?

This is one of the more frequently asked questions that I'm emailed about and it seems to be at the root cause of a lot of stress among spiritual seekers.

In the history of humanity's spiritual efforts there has always been an ambivalent attitude towards one of the most basic instinct and pre-occupation of human beings. The sexual instinct is the animal urge for the survival of our species while the pre-occupation with the sexual act is conditioned by the gratification of sensual pleasure and consummation of emotional love.

How then did it get such a bad rap? At the root of our attitudes is the realization that the life-force and energy required and released during sex is the most powerful force that can be accessed by normal men and women. In the ancient mysteries and religions of the West, there were actually ceremonies and festivals which sought to harness these energies under controlled conditions and for higher purposes. However, over time these practices degenerated into merely gratifications of pleasures and resulted in newer religions which sought to control the energy by making sex into a sin in fact if not in name. The rise of Christianity and Islam has burdened humanity with a major guilt trip, including the popular misconception that Adam and Eve got kicked out of Paradise because they had sex and St. Augustine somehow related his concept of original sin to sex as well. The current status is that sex and spirituality seems to be contradictory and celibacy a requirement for a truly religious or spiritual person – priest, monks, nuns etc.

In the East, during ancient times, all the great spiritual Masters were mar-

*Continued on Page 4*

# A Lesson for Shankaracharya

(Continued from Page 1)

Shankaracharya decided to ask Mandana's wife Bharati to be the judge since she was also renowned for her great wisdom. After weeks of debate on all spiritual aspects, Bharati declared the young Shankaracharya as winner. However, she also declared that since she was the better half of Mandana, he had only half lost and that the young acharya would need to defeat her as well for a full win.

Reluctantly, Shankaracharya agreed and asked Mandana to be the judge. Now, Bharati knew after the weeks of debates that there was very little under the Sun that she could challenge the young Master on but she had identified a weakness and so she pursued the topic of sex. This perplexed Shankaracharya because he had always been celibate and had no knowledge of the subject.

Therefore he asked for an adjournment of forty days. He then asked his disciples to find out if any royal personage had recently passed away because he had decided to enter another body in order to find out more about sex and what better body to use than a king's!

The disciples found that a nearby king had passed away that very day and Shankaracharya went into a cave to meditate. He asked his students to take good care of his body and also gave special instructions to his chief disciple to go get him if he had not returned to his own body within the set time. Then he left his own body and entered that of the king and enjoyed the delights of sex. However, after some weeks, he began to forget who he had been and became immersed in his role and enamored of the king's life.

At the set date, the disciple came to the king's court to tell him to return to his own body by reminding him of the debate he was having with the lady Bharati but the king could not remember. Finally, the disciple gave a discourse on the Shankaracharya's teachings and this woke him from his slumber and he immediately returned to his body. He then went back to the debate and answered all of Bharati's questions to her satisfaction and she declared him the winner.

As he returned to his students, the great acharya gave a discourse on the dangers of sensual gratification on the spiritual path – it can make even a renunciate forget his realization. He also declared that if a householder can achieve Self-Realization, it was a greater achievement than for a monk to do so!

---

## Remove the Three Faults for Higher Consciousness

Traditionally, when a seeker is accepted into a path of higher consciousness, the spiritual guide begins by giving instructions into the obstacles that prevent the attainment of higher awareness. These are very important but often neglected and forgotten over time and need to be revived every now and then.

It is necessary to continually guard against the three faults as they prevent us from evolving our consciousness and can stunt our spiritual growth.

These three faults are often compared to imperfect vessels. The first fault is that of an upside down vessel – one that is blocked off from further input. It is a reminder to stay receptive. We are often so full of our own ideas and discoveries that we are more interested to tell others about what we think we know rather than be aware of our inherent ig-

norance and be ready to listen. Let us learn to listen and never stop learning.

The second fault is that of a leaky vessel – one that cannot retain anything. This is an analogy for a seeker who cannot retain the knowledge and wisdom that is being imparted by spiritual guides or even from the books they study. Sincere students need to develop their power of retention – first by paying attention, followed by stronger memory.

The third fault is that of an impure vessel – one that is filled with prejudice, misconceptions and delusions that lead one to misunderstand liberating teachings. Instead of the truth, an impure vessel fills with illusion. The sincere student should strive to remove all such taints that can prevent the pristine perception of reality in the words

of those who are imparting the fruits of higher consciousness.

Let us all strive to overcome these three faults so that we can maximize our opportunities to learn and achieve higher awareness.

# Is Sex an Impediment on the Spiritual Path?

(Continued from Page 2)

ried householders with children and demonstrated that sex was not an impediment. However, during the advent of the minor Kali Yuga or materialistic age around 600 BCE, there was a movement to harness the sexual energy for spiritual purposes by emphasizing celibacy. This led to the founding of first the Buddhist monastic order and later to Hindu swamis. The premise then was that householders could not be serious about the spiritual path. The emphasis was the saving of the energy which would somehow be used to speed up spiritual evolution.

Naturally, not long after occurred the counter-trend to utilize the sexual act itself which led to the rise of Tantra. This has given rise to an absurd amount of confusion for spiritual seekers over the last two thousand years and Sexual Tantra has become a major trend among the pleasure seekers in the West.

My purpose in going over this historical outline is two-fold: it shows that our attitudes toward sex shifts and changes over time and in different cultures and also that provides a foundation for how the attitudes can affect our spiritual life.

To wrap up the outline, I wish to point out that we finished the minor Kali Yuga in 1800 CE and are now in the Dwapara Yuga, a somewhat more

enlightened era. In 1862, the immortal Babaji initiated a householder into the sacred science of Kriya Yoga – Lahiri Mahasaya went on to sire children even after his initiation and becoming a Master, to demonstrate that sex itself is not an impediment to spiritual attainment.

However, his enlightened teaching which matches those of the ancient Rishis is to utilize as much of your energy, including sexual energy in one's practice, as possible. Engage in marital sex if there is a need or duty or if one feels the desire, especially for procreation. This is no different than if one is hungry or thirsty, one should eat or drink. Sex is a natural part of our human and animal heritage. Eventually, by the persevering practice of Yoga, the spiritual seeker attains to Realization in which his/her energy system is wholly and totally harmonized and under effortless control in all activities – there is no separation into material or spiritual anymore.

There is the danger that some neophytes try to integrate their spiritual practice into their sexual activities in the hope that this will speed up their progress. However, this is almost always a big trap for a practitioner as only a Master can maintain the necessary self-control in the midst of sensual

and sexual activity. The trap is that the instead of overcoming the attraction and attachment to the five senses, the seeker justifies indulgence in the name of spirituality becoming more and more attached to the five senses. The theoretical logic of sexual tantra breaks down in the practical sphere of sensual gratification.

One should also keep in mind that much of the Tantric literature, the right-hand path, is concerned with meditative activity utilizing the emotions and released energies for spiritual purposes through transformation – there is no actual sexual activity, apart from the male and female energies within oneself.

I'm not saying that sexual tantra is all wrong, but a Tantric Master may be more difficult to find that anyone realizes. Therefore, my recommendation is that one should engage in spiritual practice and sexual activities separately and let them have their own sphere. It is easier to bring the fruits of one's realization into different spheres such as work, family and sex, social activity etc, as one's consciousness is raised. The important point is to relinquish any guilt associated with sexual activity or any doubts about the attainment of higher consciousness while still engaged in worldly activities. Don't let the left-over lower consciousness of the Kali Yuga affect your spiritual progress.