



Sanatana Mitra

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What is Kriya Yoga?

There are many different types of yoga systems and according to their proponents, each must be the best. This can be very confusing to sincere seekers but there may be no easy solution to differentiate these various paths in their minds. It is the nature of the mind to be confused due to karmic obstacles and desires which can lead one to ignore one solution and grasp for another. If the seeker strives to listen to the heart, then eventually the best path for this life-time will present itself. Until then, one should practice to one's best capacity whatever one has had the good fortune to learn.

It would not be prudent to present any one path as being the best or right one for all seekers since if that was true, then there would not be the necessity for so many different systems. However, it is possible to describe and compare different paths – this is a reasonable act in accordance with our discriminatory faculties.

Kriya Yoga is a system for Self-Realization that has been taught since time immemorial and so there is a lineage and a procession of realized Masters who have achieved their liberation through its practice. It is said to be the

Continued on Page 3

Nothing Seems To Happen?

Too often I hear from sincere seekers that they are trying their best and putting in persistent effort but nothing seems to be happening with their meditation. It gets very boring and they are tempted to give up. Doubts arise that maybe the meditation is not right for them or maybe they are not right for the meditation. What's up with this? Shouldn't there be a way to know what's happening with one's meditation?

It is critical to remember that no matter what form of meditation we are doing, the goal is to remove the obstacles that have accumulated in our mental, emotional, energetic and physical bodies that prevent us from experiencing our true blissful nature. In the physical body, our nervous system has been wired from birth with stressful obstructions

which need to be cleared away before we can regain our center. It is the same with our mental and emotional bodies. It is the reason that we seem to be overcome by mental and emotional blockages.

Remember that the practices of yoga are for cleansing the karmic blockages and so you know they are working when the thoughts and emotions arise during your meditation! These are the indications that something is being released. Unfortunately, we get hung up with what is being released and often-times, we try to fixate on that rather than maintaining our calm during this cleansing process. When you clean house, you don't keep the garbage that is the result, and so you should not

Continued on Page 2

Destiny and Free-Will

There is a constant friction in the minds of truth seekers when it comes to whether there is pre-destination or whether we can determine our own fates. This is natural because although we would like to believe that we have the freedom to choose our paths, more often than not, our experience is that things just happen and we feel powerless to make the changes that we might aspire to.

People seem to be drawn to the same situations and make the same mistakes over and over again. This is because of our habit patterns and the imprints that have accumulated in this present life-time as well as from previous births.

Even if you don't believe in re-incarnation and past lives, a little examination will confirm all the childhood and teenage imprints from parents, relatives, teachers, friends and enemies, as well as from the rigid norms of society.

What are these imprints? They are the automatic reaction complexes which have been set up in our mental and emotional minds. They are the programs that make us wince at certain situations or words and laugh at others. They are the prejudices that make us avoid certain people and places and attract us to some others. We hardly give any thoughts to the thoughts and emo-

Continued on Page 2

Nothing Seems To Happen?

(Continued from Page 1)

keep back the thoughts and emotions which are released during the meditation – they need to be let go of.

We are so used to projecting our minds outward that when we try to focus inward, we get confused and don't understand what is going on. Instead of practicing, we start thinking about what we should be experiencing. One must understand that the mind is continuously in motion. When one is awake, the mind acts as a sensory

computer monitoring the five inputs of sight, sound, taste, smell and touch and when one is asleep, the mind takes the memories and re-organizes them to provide dreams. Only when one reaches the state of dreamless sleep does one get a rest from the mind. In the same way, only after the cleansing of karmic blockages is achieved does the mind become restful and the soul can experience its natural Spirit nature.

Accept what is happening during

meditation and try not to judge or expect something different – it is what it is – it is what is now. A lot is happening during your meditation. When one says that nothing is happening, it means that what is happening is not what we expect should be happening – this is a mental trap that keeps us from our happiness. When a lot of thoughts come, it is progress and when very little or no thoughts come, it is also progress.

Relax and let the process unfold. Persevere in your practice and eventually, you will experience the bliss of your true Self.

Destiny and Free-Will

(Continued from Page 1)

tions that are triggered by advertisements, political rhetoric or our favorite songs. However, what goes well in one part of the country or with some ethnic groups will not work with others. The programs are different. The common factor is the lack of freedom.

We are proud to salute the flag that symbolizes that we are the land of the free, but most of us have not made any effort to free ourselves from our programs. We do not think, speak or act freely but under the control of our programs which force and limit our response whether we are aware of it or not. Some become aware of their imprints but feel helpless to do anything about them. Others think that by rebelling against their parents and society will make them free – this is an illusion as found out by the hippies in the 60's. The change must be internal, not external, through removing the imprints and not through drugs or bizarre behavior.

The practice of yoga is to attain freedom from our imprints and to be able to think, speak and act freely.

The innate sense of suffering and unhappiness that humanity feels is because of the lack of this freedom, with-

out which, we find ourselves trapped in the wheel of destiny. However, destiny happens only because we follow our programs. If we act according to these imprints, it is like we are following a well-tread path and not deviating from it – of course, this means that it is easy to predict where one will end up!

Humanity has been obsessed with mapping our destiny, whether from the stars, the palms, the face or tea-leaves, entrails, bones, numbers or geometric figures. The staggering amounts of effort put into these endeavors indicate that there is a certain predictability to our lives.

However, it is also taught that we have free-will. However, this elusive free-will is an illusion because even our choices in the food we eat and the clothes we wear are determined by our imprints. Why does one have this favorite color and not that one? A myriad of other why's that we never ask determine our choices. What is free-will if we never truly exercise it?

It is the goal of higher consciousness to be able to free ourselves from the imprints and habit patterns that limit our free-will. The more we are able

to exercise our free-will, the greater the possibility of achieving higher and higher consciousness and in a high-five to the virtuous circle, the higher the level of your consciousness, the greater capacity for free-will.

As we no longer think, feel, talk or act in an automatic and robotic manner, we become less and less predictable and therefore free from destiny. We become independent agents of change and the paths that we tread are no longer clear to the readers of the stars or any other indicators of destiny.

It is now clear that most of slumbering humanity is subject to the grinding wheels of destiny and have little influence over their successes or failures but there is always the pathless path of those who have chosen to exercise their free-will to de-program themselves and achieve freedom for themselves and become beacons of light for their brothers and sisters. May you decide to wake up from destiny's sleep and see the light of free-will.

What is Kriya Yoga?

(Continued from Page 1)

practical system that underlies the Yoga of Patanjali and from which he derived his descriptive sutras. There is a great deathless being called Mahavatar Babaji who has initiated many Masters such as Shankaracharya and even some Avatars (manifestations of divinity to help humanity) into Kriya Yoga.

In modern times, Babaji has once again graced us with this practice through his great disciple Yogiraj Shri Shri Shyamcharan Lahiri Mahasaya who received it on our behalf in 1861 in the Himalayan ranges. The present lineage of Masters included Swami Shri Yuteswara and Paramhansa Yogananda. The living Himalayan Master, Yogiraj Siddhanath is from this lineage. The lives and teachings of these Masters attest to the efficiency and effectiveness of Kriya Yoga.

One of the distinctive marks of Kriya Yoga is its power and simplicity to achieve Self-Realization. It utilizes both meditation on the primal sound of Om and spinal breathing techniques. According to Lahiri Mahasaya, "Aum and Kriya constitute the secret of meditation. By meditation on Aum and the

practice of Kriya pranayama, the fulfillment of the highest spiritual aspiration is attained."

The spinal breathing meditation works on the spinal energy centers which evolve human consciousness to superhuman consciousness, speeding up our spiritual evolution. As Yogananda explains in his Autobiography of a Yogi, "The Kriya Yogi mentally directs his life energy to revolve, upward and downward, around the six spinal centers (medullary, cervical, dorsal, lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal plexuses) which correspond to the twelve astral signs of the zodiac, the symbolic Cosmic Man. One half-minute of revolution of energy around the sensitive spinal cord of man effects subtle progress in his evolution; that half-minute of Kriya equals one year of natural spiritual unfoldment."

Kriya Yoga is a scientific process to enable our evolving soul to gradually realize its fundamental unity with the immortal Spirit. Swami Satyananda, another disciple of Shri Yukteshwar is quoted as saying, "Kriya sadhana (spiritual practice) may be thought of as the

sadhana of the practice of being in Atman (Spirit)"

The process of Kriya Yoga requires the raising of our dormant potentiality called Kundalini. A modern Master, Yogiraj Siddhanath has said, "By the ceaseless movement of the Kriya life-force breath, one's prana, breath, vital fluid and mind become one to form the evolutionary life-force energy called kundalini."

Kriya Yoga is a means of overcoming all our karmic obstacles to happiness and contentment. It is the path towards liberation from suffering, a goal that can be achieved within a single life-time if performed with dedication and perseverance. Unlike some other paths, it does not require its practitioners to leave their family, friends and vocation to stay in the hidden caves of the Himalayas. Kriya Yoga is meant for contemporary householders and to help them to be in the world but not of the world while pursuing life's greatest goal.

My Blog

I'm pleased to let you know that in order to increase the interactivity and frequency of my articles, they will now be available on my new blog at:

www.sanatanamitra.com

The blog format will enable me to post shorter and timely responses to your queries and world events while my journal will be used for more in-depth teachings of the yogic treatises such as the Upanishads. There will be some overlap as I'll be posting some of the journal articles to the blog.

The blog format and graphics is a work in progress but I hope you will enjoy my posts and encourage you to let me know your thoughts. Please do visit the site and subscribe to it so that you will be notified of new postings as they occur.

The Power of Initiation

One of the hallmarks of almost all spiritual traditions is that of the rite of initiation. It is also something that is hardly explained or couched in so much mystery that either one is in awe or one becomes extremely skeptical. In the yogic tradition, initiation is a necessary preliminary to entry on the chosen path of spiritual realization because of the power and protection that it confers on the initiate.

At the most primal level, physical birth is our initiation into the present life – it confers on us all the benefits of being a human being and with it, the

protection of our parents and ancestors, as well as the protection of the society in which we are born. When we are initiated into a spiritual tradition, it becomes a second birth – we are re-born and receive the benefits of this new life, together with the protection of the initiator and the lineage of spiritual teachers (living in this or some other plane of existence) in whose names and by whose power the initiation is made.

Why does the initiate need protection? Just like the new-born baby, the initiate is new to the spiritual path and

Continued on Page 4

The Power of Initiation

(Continued from Page 3)

all the wonders and traps that abound on that path. The Masters of the lineage have committed to guide and protect the initiate to overcome those obstacles and to protect her from those who may seek to harm her out of jealousy, spite or inherent darkness.

There are three types of initiations. The first is the initiation into a spiritual organization. The initiate needs to have the aspiration for their higher Self to qualify for this initiation and seek to better himself. The one who initiates has to be a qualified member of the organization and can also act as a mentor or can designate a mentor.

The second type is the initiation into a spiritual path and this requires the initiate to commit to sincerely try his best to practice the techniques required on this path for no progress can occur without the regular and persistent effort of the initiate. There are generally different levels of initiations as the prac-

titioner ascends the path. The initiator should be an Acharya or spiritual preceptor who has the authority and power to commit the Masters of the lineage to the guidance and protection of the initiate and who has himself traversed the path and reached the goal.

The third type of initiation is directly into a super-conscious state of awareness. This requires the initiate to have been initiated and achieved certain goals of a spiritual path and is seldom given excepting in the rare cases of high initiates such as world teachers and divine beings with a world mission.

The first type of initiation is very common as it is the model of most religious organizations in which the initiation is called a baptism or sacred thread ceremony.

It is the second type which spiritual seekers are concerned most with since there is a wide variety of simplicity or

complexity and requirements for the initiation into a spiritual path. Much depends on the path and the initiator, since an initiation can vary from a simple prayer with or without physical touch to elaborate ceremonies taking hours. The importance should be given to choosing the right path and the right teacher – all else being secondary. The better prepared the initiate, the more profound the effect of the initiation. If the initiate is not as well prepared, results may be slowed but this can be compensated for by persistent practice.

It is recommended that the seeker should not try to make their own way and try to forge their own path without a proper initiation. It would be like trying to climb Mt. Everest without the benefit of any guides or proper equipment or borrowed equipment that they have not learned to use properly. The probability of success is slim at best for such intrepid souls.