



Sanatana Mitra

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Upcoming Events

May 6 - Chakra Level 2
Elleoru, Estonia

May 7 - Chakra Level 1
Elleoru, Estonia

May 8 - Opening Third-eye
Elleoru, Estonia

May 13 - Free Lecture
Ireland

May 14 - Emotional Healing
Ireland

To Know Your Citta

In my February journal, I wrote about the vrittis – the mental fluctuations which inflict our normal state of being. In addition to understanding the vrittis, we must also consider the substratum or ground upon which they manifest, that is, the citta.

The Sanskrit term “citta” is one of those terms that we do not know much about before Patanjali used it in the sutras of his Yoga Darshan and must be understood from that context rather than from later usage. The Vedantists beginning with Shankaracharya seem to have re-interpreted this citta from their philosophical glossary as sub-conscious mind. This can be misleading if we translate verse 2 of the sutras as “Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the sub-conscious mind.”

It is clear from the sutras that Patanjali is using citta as an umbrella term for all types of consciousness, not just sub-consciousness. There are therefore

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The Earth Dream

For the last four hundred years, successive waves of immigrants have made their ways to the shores of USA, in search of what we have since called the American Dream.

In the days of the early settlers, they may have abandoned their European homes because they hungered for religious and financial freedom. Certainly, the “new world” promised them a level of equality that could not be achieved in the more structured societies controlled by an elite of nobilities. It was freedom from unjust taxation that triggered the “Boston Tea Party” demonstrations and ultimately led to the war of independence from the British.

Over the centuries, the financial mo-

tive has been a consistent motive for new settlers – the early Chinese immigrants were lured to the “golden mountain” as indentured servants to work on the railroad and other labor intensive programs. In our life-time, it has been the legal immigrants and the illegal migrants from Mexico lured to provide labor for the fields or other non-attractive work. However, whether it was the Dutch, German, Swede, Irish, Polish, Italian, etc., the most enterprising and driven people journeyed here and made “yankee ingenuity” and success the catch-word and envy for the rest of the world.

In the 20th century, the American Dream has been defined as the free-

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Yoga is the State of No-Mind

To understand yoga as expounded by Patanjali, we must also study the Sanskrit term “nirodha” which occurs in the same sutra 2 as the terms citta and vritti.

Now, this nirodha has often been translated variously as restriction, suppression, inhibition and control in the context of sutra 2. These words do not seem to convey the fullness of nirodha to my satisfaction, as they all have certain shades of temporariness and imply that a constant vigilance and/or effort is required to maintain the state of yoga.

It is certainly true that one will need to make the effort and control the

fluctuations of the mind, most notably the thoughts that come and go, in the process of yoga. It is instructive to consider that just as the word yoga is both a process and a state, and while we practice yoga using the techniques of our chosen path, the state of yoga is beyond techniques and practice. The word nirodha is also both process and a state and during the process, control of the vrittis is necessary while the attainment of the state of nirodha would imply the cessation of the effort of control.

It is helpful to look at how the word nirodha is also used by the Lord Bud-

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The Earth Dream

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dom of the consumer – to be able to purchase whatever you desire. To own one's own home is an aspect of this Dream and unfortunately led to the financial crisis of three years ago. The accumulation of wealth is still an important part of the Dream and this has been responsible for an increase in materialism, if that is possible to imagine. We live in an ultra-materialistic society where everything, including spiritual success is measured in wealth.

Let us switch gear for a moment and up our consciousness to look at why we are here, I mean, why have we been born as human beings on this earth. If we look at the soul as an immigrant, then somewhere in the distant past, we re-located to this earth, to be born here, life-time after lifetime as human beings. We may have started out at something a little less developed as an early mammal or primate, whatever. The fact is that now we inhabit a human body. We had a reason – what dream did we

have to come to this earth?

It is certainly true that the human body has developed the capacity for pleasure but there is also the flip-side of pain from accident or sickness. We may have the dream to come for the enjoyment of the senses, but this has not been satisfactory for those of us who have developed their souls to a high degree. These beings whom we call the sages have announced a different dream – the evolution of our consciousness – the capacity of the human body and mind to help evolve the soul to the ultimate freedom of Self-Realization.

If we decide that our initial dream to come to earth was to enjoy ourselves, then certainly the American Dream can be part of this, since we are geared towards the pleasures and comfort and every desire imaginable. However, if we suspect that we came here to find a higher truth, to realize our highest potential, then the current American Dream is not in-line with our soul's

Earth Dream and we need to make some adjustment to our version of the American Dream so that it is not at odds with the soul's purpose here. Unfortunately, the mass consciousness is not yet ready to realize this truth and so those who try to live their Soul's Dream will become strangers or aliens in this land of consumerism, of materialism. We can work towards changing the overall consciousness but this will be slow and so those who have realized their true nature and gone on before us have worked to bring about shifts of mass consciousness at different junctures – the next one will be very soon, in 2012, as we have all been anticipating.

However, it is best to keep in mind that the shift in consciousness will help those who are ready for it but may have negative impact on those who resist it. This will actually cause a greater polarity and larger gap between those who live their Soul's Dream and those who want to live the old American Dream. Let us pray for a New American Dream that aligns to a more spiritual purpose.

To Know Your Citta

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various "cittas" and they are all capable of hosting vrittis and moving us away from the state of yoga and so sutra 2 would be: Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations in Consciousness.

What the in this consciousness? Citta is not one of the tattvas or universal evolutes such as the purusha (spirit / soul) or prakriti (matter) but would be of the material substance rather than a characteristic of the spirit. It is of very subtle matter and seems to have been stimulated into existence by the pusa-sha's interaction with prakriti.

The tattvas which would seem to comprise citta must include manas (the normal mind), ahamkara ("I-ness" or personality) and buddhi (the supernormal mind) – these are all constituents

of our consciousness. This rather loose definition makes it possible to distinguish between the citta of someone who is mostly using her buddhi rather than the manas from the citta of someone who has the ahamkara as the primary mode of consciousness.

The constitution of the cittas must also include the subtle substratum which contains the karmic activators or samskaras as well as their active combinations into karmic programs called vasanas. It is these karmic programs which make it possible for the rising and falling of the fluctuations in response to sensory input.

It is sufficient at this time to appreciate the grosser distinctions of citta in order to have clarity in our spiritual practice of yoga. The fluctuations that occur in sub-consciousness, normal consciousness and even super-

consciousness must be controlled and stopped by the practice of nirodha (refer to another article in this journal for explanation). Focusing on only one aspect such as the sub-conscious would lead to a state less than that defined by Patanjali.

In the super-conscious states, that is those in dhyana and samadhi, citta is still present and so can be subject to fluctuations. The dhyana cittas are numerous, as are those for the samprajnata samadhi such as the ananda chitta (consciousness of bliss), one level of the samadhi with object. Only when one has gone beyond the asamprajnati samadhi (samadhi without object) and pierced the dharma-megha, does one become free from chitta. Only when one is completely free from chitta can one be completely free – the state of kaivalya.

Yoga is the State of No-Mind

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dha before the time of Patanjali – he used it in the sense of extinction as in “dukkha nirodha,” the extinction of suffering, one of the noble truths he expounded upon his enlightenment.

It would seem that cessation or extinction is a better fit for sutra 2: “Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of consciousness,” as it removes the need for constant effort in the attainment of the state of yoga. Although there are significant differences in the usage of certain Sanskrit terms between Maharishi Patanjali and Lord Buddha and it would be erroneous to use the Buddhist meanings in most cases, I think that this is one occasion where it may

be more to the point.

According to Patanjali, there are various levels or layers of consciousness or chitta (refer another article in this journal) and consequently there are corresponding levels of nirodha. At the level of the state of dhyana consciousness, the process of control is over the vrittis directly and one can attain to dhyana- nirodha or a no-thought state which leads to the next chitta level of samprajñata samadhi or ecstasy of duality. At this level, no gross thoughts arise but there are abstract forms of thoughts or “presented ideas” called pratyaya and nirodha has to be applied to them.

When pratyaya nirodha is accom-

plished, one attains to the chitta level of asamprajñati samadhi or non-dual ecstasy at which state, no forms arise but the karmic samskaras or stored impressions appear into our awareness so that we can apply the process of nirodha. When in the course of time, samskara-nirodha is attained, one is then ready to pierce the cloud of unknowing and experience dharma-megha samadhi in which one can extinguish even the three mighty principles of existence (gunas) – tamas, rajas and sattva and resolve them into their constituents. At this level, one accomplishes sarva- nirodha or complete cessation, a state with no chitta, no-mind or consciousness, but a state of complete awareness

Five Verses On Spiritual Practice

The great spiritual reformer and teacher, Shankaracharya wrote voluminous commentaries and treatises but when asked to give the core essence for spiritual seekers, he composed five verses called the “The Essence of Spiritual Practice in Five verses.” Let us look at the first two verses:

Study the scriptures diligently

Perform well the rituals and actions as described in the scriptures

Worship god through the performance of ritual

Keep the mind from desire-originated actions

Let your sins be destroyed

Let the seeker inquire into the defects of re-incarnation

Make a firm resolve to attain to the True Self

Leave your own home immediately

Verse 1

The first verse is the preparatory phase – the phase of the worldly person engaged in activity who is making

an effort to learn more about spirituality. One should refer to reliable and time-tested works of wisdom to engage in the study of the self –this should be done regularly in order to overcome the resistance of our materialistic tendencies. In the days of the Shankaracharya, it was customary for each person to perform his or her own rituals of worship, rather than go to a priest and every youth was taught the proper methods and mantras for this purpose. We are advised not to utilize the rituals for the sake of material gain or for pleasure but for the sake of removal of negativities so that we can move forward towards liberation from karma. A meditation that the acharya recommends is to recollect the pain and suffering involved with re-birth driven by the wheel of karma. Once sufficient positive tendencies and good habits have been cultivated and a distaste for cycle of birth and death, then one is ready to make the resolution to seek Self-Realization. The advice to leave one’s home should be understood from

the perspective of the time when it was necessary to journey great distances to find a Master who could guide the seeker towards the final goal and also the need for staying at an ashram for extended periods of time in order to gain the wisdom necessary. At the present time, it may not be necessary to go to such an extreme as with the communication age, everything seems to be within reach – spiritual teachers travel all over the world and there are workshops and retreats galore. However, it is good to keep in mind the level of dedication that the acharya is advocating and examine our own use of time and resources. Certainly, a re-alignment even for the house-holder is necessary as a serious spiritual practice requires a minimum of several hours per day!

Seek the company of the wise in satsang

Develop firm devotion to Brahman

Develop virtuous qualities mental tranquility and restraint of senses

Let him renounce all rituals

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Five Verses On Spiritual Practice

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Let him approach a wise sage

Let him serve the sage

Then let him inquire about the indestructible Brahman

Let him hear the mahavakyas – the essence of the Vedas

Verse 2

Once we have started on the spiritual journey in earnest, then one should cultivate the company of the spiritual Masters and try to listen to them whenever possible – even watching videos or listening to CDs are acceptable. One should now drop all rituals or worship and focus on devotion to the one Di-

vine with meditation on the vastness and orderliness of the universe and by singing praises of the Eternal Now. The acharya recommends simultaneously the cultivation of virtues such as non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing etc., in order to qualify for becoming a spiritual disciple. It is necessary to make a search for a sage – one who has attained to the state of Self-Realization – the search should include common-sense research to ensure one is not taken in by someone who is either deluded or making a pretence of their level of perfection. Once one has decided on the Master and prepared

one-self appropriately, one can then approach such a Master with humility and an attitude of service. In olden days, the seeker would be required to stay at the ashram from one to three years taking care of the place and looking after the needs of the Master, during which time, he will be tested time and again to ensure that he is ready for the higher teachings. Nowadays, the service would be more fund-raising or organization-oriented and will be defined by the Master. When the Master indicates that the seeker is ready, then the seeker becomes a disciple and will be given the appropriate guidance and direction whether by the imparting of wisdom or the bestowal of a spiritual

Finding Our True Nature

According to Patanjali, when yoga is achieved with the state of no-mind, then one rests in one's essential state, one's true nature. However, what is that essential state? There is great difficulty in understanding something that cannot be described in our limited mental state but only realized in the yogic consciousness. From ancient times, the acharyas have made many attempts to point towards our true nature.

The following is one attempt to give a glimmer of the mystery of our Self or Atman, which pervades all existence but defy our attempts to isolate it. It is a dialog from the Chandogya Upanishad between Uddalaka and his son Svetaketu.

Uddalaka said: "Svetaketu! Have you ever asked your teacher for that instruction by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive that which cannot be perceived and by which we know what cannot be known?"

Svetaketu said: "Sir, what is that instruction?"

The father replied, "Just as by a

single lump of clay, all that is made of clay is known, even so the products of clay being differentiated with separate names does not alter the fact that they are still clay. That is the instruction."

Svetaketu: "I don't understand. Please explain further."

Uddalaka: "Bring me a fruit from that banyan tree"

Svetaketu: "Here it is, revered sir."

Uddalaka: "Break it."

Svetaketu: "It is broken, revered sir"

Uddalaka: "What do you see in it?"

Svetaketu: "These seeds, small like particles, revered sir."

Uddalaka: "Break one of these seeds, my son."

Svetaketu: "It is broken, revered sir."

Uddalaka: "What do you see in it?"

Svetaketu: "Nothing, revered sir."

The father said to him, 'Dear boy, this subtle essence which you do not perceive, it is growing from this subtle essence that the large Banyan tree thus stands. Have faith, dear boy.'

"That Being which is this subtle essence (cause of all), even That all this world has for its Self. That is the truth. That is the Atman. That thou art, O Svetaketu."

Svetaketu: "Revered sir, please explain it further to me."

Uddalaka: "So be it, dear boy."

"Put this salt into water and then come to me in the morning."

Svetaketu did as commanded.

In the morning, the father said, "Bring the salt, my child, which you put into water at night."

Having searched for it, the son did not find it, as it had completely dissolved.

The father said, "My child, take a sip from the top of this water. How is it?"

The son replied, "It is salt."

Uddalaka: "Take a sip from the middle. How is it?"

The son replied, "It is salt."

Uddalaka: "Take a sip from the bottom. How is it?"

The son replied, "It is salt."

Uddalaka: "Throw this water away and then come to me'.

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Five Verses On Spiritual Practice

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Svetaketu did so (and returned saying), “It is there always.” That is the Atman. That thou art, O Svetaketu.”

The father said to him, “Dear boy, as you do not see what is present in this water though indeed it exists in it, similarly, (Being exists) indeed in this body.

“That Being which is this subtle essence (cause of all), even That all this world has for its Self. That is the truth.

In the first instruction, the sage was trying to explain how the cause of existence cannot be seen but yet cannot be denied while in the second instruction, he was trying to explain how the spirit pervades all of existence and is not restricted to one place or person, while