



## Upcoming Events

**Dec. 11th - Kriya Review/Practice**  
Union City, CA

**Jan. 15th - Chakra Level 1**  
Union City, CA

**Jan. 16th - Kriya Level 2**  
Union City, CA

## Tame the Wild Beasts

One of the myriad names of the Divine is the Lord of Beasts – Pashupati, which is usually considered to indicate the Lord of created beings. However, from the internal perspective, wild animals are the internal emotions, uncontrolled desires and passions which ravage our peace of mind and an important part of attaining higher consciousness is to tame these wild beasts, becoming in a microcosmic sense, a lord of beasts ourselves.

We possess a menagerie, a veritable zoo within our minds – the lions of pride, the wolves of hunger, boar of lusts, the bison of ignorance, deer that run in fear and so on, as far as our imagination can reach. On the other hand, we also are aware of the emblems of domesticated animals such as the bull that attends the Lord or the lambs that came to witness the birth of a Jesus – these tame animals represent our human nature rising above our animal nature.

Higher consciousness is about rising above the animal consciousness to the human consciousness and staying in the human consciousness – this can only happen when the lower wild ani-

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## Applying Wisdom in Daily Life

There is a tendency, more pronounced perhaps in the West, of separating how we live our lives from what we have learned from our spiritual studies. Most of the people who study the philosophy or teachings of the yogis and sages, treat them as something interesting to discuss and argue about – they forget that the sages meant their teachings to be lived!

Of course, when one has direct inner experience, one's life will be changed as shown by the stories of the sages. However, without proper knowledge or guidance, the experience cannot be integrated properly and may actually lead to more confusion and greater ignorance. This has been evidenced by the exaggerated and dubious insights of many new-age proponents, espe-

cially those who have had near-death or traumatic experiences.

Even a superficial study of the teachings when applied and integrated into our lives can lead to greater peace and contentment. In fact, if one can apply the wisdom of the sages in our daily life, it may actually lead to our experiencing the higher consciousness states from which the sages derived their insights. We do not need to wait until we have our own experience before we change our life-style.

One of the great insights that the sages taught is the transient nature of phenomena and how that should affect our value system. Mentally, we can understand about the shortness of life and inevitability of death, of aging and the loss of youth and vigor, of disease

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## Developing a Grounded Practice

Last Thursday was Thanksgiving, a day to recognize all that we have to be thankful for. We give thanks to family and friends for their continuous support and to our various teachers for all that we have learned.

It is an opportune time to consider the gift of a spiritual practice that we may have been graced with by any spiritual teacher. Many sages have declared that a life is only worthwhile if one has had the good karma to be put on the path of spiritual evolution through the teachings of a true teacher.

The best thanks that any teacher can ask for is that his students can actual-

ize his teachings. For spiritual instructions, an effective or firmly grounded practice called a sadhana is necessary to achieve the goals for higher consciousness. How then to develop such a practice?

According to Patanjali, “a practice has a firm ground when attended to for a long time, without interruption and with devotion to the truth.”

First, it is taken for granted that success in a spiritual practice will require a significant amount of time – how long it takes can vary due to the intensity of individual effort as well as the individual karmic problems that need to

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# Applying Wisdom in Daily Life

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and the loss of well-being. However, emotionally we refuse to accept these truths and this warps our value system, for example, where we try to cover up aging through cosmetic means.

If we know that this body will perish soon, how does that affect our future actions? What do we value and will try to accomplish in the time that we have left? Some may try to accumulate more money or possessions but that cannot be taken with them at death and is futile. Some may try to enjoy themselves to the utmost but even the memories of their enjoyment cannot be taken to the next life.

The sages teach that the only lasting achievement in life is spiritual evolution towards a higher consciousness.

Towards that end, we need to balance our work, our family, our enjoyment with our spiritual practice. Should we just abandon our work, family and enjoyment? The work and family are considered to be part of our duty or dharma and abandonment would constitute a running away from our duties which can cause more karmic problems in future lives. Discharging our duties in the best possible way is considered to be a way to work off our karmic debt and is also spiritually evolving. The enjoyment of the senses may be minimized for a time but unless it is totally transformed through a higher state of consciousness, the desire for it will be stronger in the next life.

All spiritual seekers need to perform

this balancing act in their lives – sometimes work and family take a bigger focus and then later in life, more and more time may be given over to the spiritual practice. If someone young does not need to work and has no desire for family or sensual enjoyment, then that person through effort in previous life-times has already worked out the proper life-value and may in this life be wholly devoted to the path of spiritual evolution. However, this should be verified by a competent spiritual guide and not be the outcome of deluded ego-desires.

When you next study the teachings of the sages, try to see how their wisdom can be integrated into your life. Don't wait for enlightenment before you make the effort, for that cannot come without an effort to change our values and life-style now.

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## Outer Space Meditation

The following meditation based on ancient prescriptions from the Upanishads is a useful one to connect with one of the major cosmic building blocks of the universe – the space element or akasha. There are two major ways to connect with the space element, first from an external perspective and second from an internal perspective.

We are sometimes overwhelmed with our personal problems and lose touch with our larger nature. This meditation helps to put things in its proper perspective as we learn to connect with the underlying ground of the dynamic universe and begin to integrate our lower and higher natures.

Method:

1. Sit comfortably and firmly with the least amount of movement. Focus on your breath and let the body be still.
2. After a few minutes, let go of your breath and become aware of the still body again. Let your awareness float to

the top of the head and look down on your face, the front, back, left side, and right side of the still body. Look at the clothes you are wearing.

3. Next, float to the ceiling of your room and become aware of your position in the room, as well as the rest of the room's contents. Look at the door and the windows.

4. Rise higher still above your house. If necessary, feel your awareness being connected to the body a golden thread of light. View the different rooms in your house and the furniture in them.

5. As you rise higher still, you become aware of the town or city – the streets, the buildings and parks.

6. Now, move your awareness to an orbital level around the earth and become aware of the continent your city is on and the surrounding seas. Let the earth rotate and view all the continents and oceans.

7. Let the earth become smaller and

smaller as you move further away until the solar system is just a star among many of the milky-way galaxy. As you move further and further, even the galaxies become tiny lights within the void of space. Become aware of the space all around you. Become one with the space but still separate through your awareness. Rest in this state.

8. Slowly, become aware of the galaxies around you and move towards our galaxy. Become aware of our solar system and move into orbit around the earth with its continents and blue oceans. Descend to your city and then to the house and back above your head. View your still body and examine it while you slowly become aware of the physical body once more – the head, the neck, the arms, torso and legs. Slowly move a hand and turn your head slightly, taking long, deep breaths and open your eyes.

# Tame the Wild Beasts

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mal nature is tamed. Moreover, higher consciousness is about rising above even the human consciousness to the level of Divine consciousness – a superhuman feat.

In the first phase, to tame the wild beasts, we need to apply self-control. In our society of excesses and consumerism, self-control is thrown out the window – the popular society encourages a level of letting go – from over-eating to over-sexing, from over-acquiring to over-emoting. Self-control is confused with repression in pop psychology and discouraged – accordingly, it is better to let out some steam than control the anger.

In most spiritual traditions, it has always been recognized that controlling one's thoughts, emotions, speech and actions are the first steps in attaining the goal of higher consciousness. In yogic traditions, we have narrowed it down to no more than five areas for self-control:

1. Tell the truth and don't lie – this includes living your truth as well –

walking the talk, so to speak!

2. Refrain from harming other living beings – this includes looking after your own well-being also.

3. Refrain from wasting your life's energy on non-essential activities – you can enjoy yourself but not over-indulge.

4. Refrain from stealing – this includes taking credit for the work of others.

5. Do not be attached to things – all things are transient.

The sages have determined that if we practice these five rules, we can tame the wild animals. For instance, we lie or harm others because of fear or desire to gain something, or because of pride and so refraining from lying or harming others control the animal passions of fear, desire and pride. As we look forward towards celebrating the birth of Jesus, let us consider the rules of self-control that we may tame our animal nature and eventually have our own Christmas day.

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## The Case Against Ritualism

I have found that rituals can have a positive effect for spiritual practitioners when done properly and for the right reasons. However, it is also true that even something noble when taken to excess or performed blindly or even for wrong reasons can become detrimental. I'm reminded of this because today marked the celebration of the birth of a yogi saint called Nanak who taught in the sixteenth century. One of his teachings was to give up external rituals and focus on the internal state of consciousness.

Of course, ritualism in the middle ages had been taken to an extreme in that the focus was all on material gain. In ancient times, each householder per-

formed the proper prescribed rituals for well-being, health, prosperity and spiritual evolution as handed down through the generations. However, due to five hundred years of foreign invasions and occupation, by the 16th century, much knowledge was lost and even simple rituals required the priestly caste to perform and the rest of the population followed blindly. Most of the great spiritual philosophies were forgotten and suppressed. It was in this kind of situation that Nanak found himself.

Nanak saw how the masses were forgetting the Divine and getting mired in rituals out of desperation. He pro-

## Developing a Grounded Practice

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be cleared. We do not start at the same spot like in a race – everyone starts at a different state and some will reach their goal sooner while others will reach a little later and therefore we need to give up any expectations of success within a set time-frame. We tend to get bored and lose interest when we have to do something over and over again for years – this is a great obstacle that has to be overcome. Remember that success may come in little steps or may come in large jumps depending on the type of path and amount of blockages.

Second, there needs to be continuity in the sadhana. A regular practice is more effective than one characterized by stoppages and intensive effort of short duration. Imagine what kind of result you would get by brushing your teeth every 7 days instead of every day. Even fifteen minutes or half an hour once every day is better than two or three hours of practice sporadically.

Finally, we need to be convinced that the practice can give the results desired – this is what is meant by being devoted to the truth. Before we start the sadhana, we need to have a basis for the faith that the practice actually will work – this comes from the given lineage of previous successful practitioners on the same path and from the example of the teacher as well. Without a foundation for the faith, it would be difficult to persevere for the many years of regular effort required.

Let us keep the words of Patanjali in mind as we give thanks for the spiritual grace that we have received, that we may keep alive the flame of sadhana within us during these difficult times.

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# The Case Against Ritualism

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claimed, “If they were to know the nature of the Divine, they will realize that all rites and beliefs are futile,” and also reminded his listeners of their priorities, “Cursed be the ritual that makes us forget the Beloved Divine.”

He advocated a raising of consciousness and mental development instead of following religious prescriptions, “Let compassion be your mosque, faith your prayer carpet and righteousness your holy book. Let modesty be your circumcision and uprightness your fasting. Thus you will become a true devotee of the One God.”

Even as child, he seemed to have

displayed a similar attitude as shown from the following story – Nanak was brought up as a Hindu and between seven and ten years old, it was customary for a child to be invested with the sacred thread, a symbols of the “twice-born” – when the priest was called to perform the ceremony, it is said that Nanak refused and spontaneously sang out the following:

Let mercy be the cotton, contentment the thread,

Continnence the knot and truth the twist.

O, priest! If you have such a sacred thread,

Do give it to me – one that doesn’t wear out or get soiled.

Neither burn nor get lost.

Whether the story is true or just symbolic, it is true to Nanak’s message that instead of focusing on external emblems, or rituals performed by others, or even external rituals performed by one-self, it is better to put one’s energy in finding the Divine within oneself. It is better to develop the higher consciousness that encompasses compassion and love for one’s fellow travelers on the road than to lavish our attention on things that are transient. It is what is developed in the temple of our hearts that matter.