



Sanatana Mitra

SEPTEMBER 2010



RUDRASHIVANANDA.COM

Upcoming Events

Sep. 26th - Satsang & Kriya Review
Union City, CA 2pm - 5pm

Oct. 16th - Chakra Level 2
Union City, CA 10am - 5pm

Oct. 17th - Shakti Healing Level 1
Union City, CA 10am - 5pm

Learning About The Self

Once upon a time, there were two students who approached the Master for instruction into the nature of the True Self. They had been told that knowledge of the Self gives one knowledge of all things and were eager to master the universe.

The Master accepted these two students and they served him and were disciplined by him for twelve years. At the end of this period, the students approached their Guru and asked for the initiation into the nature of the Self.

The Master replied, "Go and look into a pan of water and what you see is the Self."

When they looked, they saw their own face and body. The first student jumped up with joy and proclaimed that the body is the Self. He thanked the Master and took his leave and returned to his homeland to teach his revelation – that the only reality is the material world and therefore, one should seek all types of enjoyment of the flesh. He became famous and many came to him from all over the world to learn this truth.

The second student pondered on the revelation and had a doubt because he

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Does the End Justify the Means?

Recently, during some news analyst program, the journalists were decrying the dishonesty of one of the major political parties in their spoken and unspoken lies being spread to bolster their position with the electorate. They basically proved that these political leaders were knowingly misrepresenting lies as truth because the lies evoke strong emotional responses from their supporters and may lead them to win in upcoming elections. This kind of activity seemed to be in-line with the philosophy that the end justifies the means – whatever it takes to win seems to be encouraged in the current American way. In another program, one political leader was asked whether he agreed with some outrageous position being spouted by one of their candidates –

that unemployment benefits was unconstitutional, and responded by saying that, "he agreed with whatever it takes to win the election."

It is not only in politics but we have seen it in our business leaders before and after the current economic crisis, in sports and in our education system. It seems that something is only "bad" if one is stupid or careless enough to get caught at it, in which case, one deserves to have the book thrown at one. In every aspect of our lives, there is a relativistic concept that a lie is as good or sometimes even better than the truth – whatever it takes to achieve a certain result.

There are many ways to approach this question, from moral, ethical, religious, or philosophical terms, but I

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Harmony For Higher Consciousness

We are generally not aware that much of Yoga is about harmony. We are in a continual state of disharmony due to our karmic programs and desires – these cause our stress and tension which alienate us from our reality.

Much of the yogic techniques seek to re-unify us to some aspect of our nature which has become alienated.

The practice of yoga asanas harmonize our physical nature within itself – the muscles and tendons with the stretched spine, the left and right side of the body, the front and back, dynamic movement with steadiness and so on. As one progresses with the asana prac-

tice, one harmonizes the body with the mind. Ultimately, the goal in the physical body is to unite and harmonize the functions of the two sides of our brain – the cooling right brain and the hot left brain.

We seek to harmonize with our life-force through breath practice or pranayama. We generally breathe in some disturbed and incomplete manner due to our stress and emotions – shallow and quick breaths rather than slow and long breaths. By slow and controlled breathing we are able to harmonize the breath, life-force and mind together. We can reduce stress and

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Does the End Justify the Means?

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would like discuss it from the perspective of the yogic spiritual law of karma.

Now, there may be three aspects of an action from the karmic perspective – the intent of the actor, the act itself and the results of the act. It seems from study of the relevant authority that intent seems to play a very small part in the karmic impact. We need to actually analyze the act and its results to get any insight. What we call the “means” could be a series of acts and “the end” may only be one desirable result from a series of consequences from an act. For instance, a desirable goal may be the winning of a war, but this may entail the result that millions of people may be killed and millions others suffer various hardships. The Law of Karma does not forget about the unintended consequences or the unavoidable side-effects.

There are certain acts that have been deemed a-priori harmful from a karmic perspective – they will always cause a negative karmic effect on the actor. Such are acts such as lying, harming others, stealing, etc. These are based on the accumulated wisdom and insight of past sages. So in order to accumulate good karma and avoid bad karma, one would tell the truth. In fact, it would go beyond that, since it actually mandates that one would need to make an effort to ascertain the truth because it is not enough that one thinks one is telling the truth when one is actually wrong.

It is actually easier to agree on acts that should be avoided such as murder than it is to agree on which “ends” are good or bad. In fact, it may not be possible because of so many conflicting human desires and needs – for instance, nobody would object to peace but what if your leaders tell you that it takes a war to get peace. Is this war

an end or a means? While Karl Marx was concerned with the economic and political equality of the masses, he was not concerned with the proper means to achieve such equality and humanity has paid a steep price. A freedom fighter wants to achieve freedom for his people and employs terror tactics – is this justifiable?

Let us look at a simple situation. Would you lie to save the life of another person? One may be justified to say that the bad karma from lying would be outweighed by the good karma of saving a life, and one would probably be right. However, what if the person whose life was saved turned out to be a Hitler and caused the deaths of millions of innocents? Then the negative karma from the act of kindness would be very great indeed. This helps to point out a flaw in our human condition – we are incapable of being able to foresee the many consequences of even our simplest actions! This does not mean that we should then be frozen in inaction and agonize over even the simplest decision to eat or not to eat something. However, it should give us pause to examine our fallibility and this in turn should lead us to conclude that we cannot try to juggle or justify whichever means to achieve our desired ends.

If we can agree that certain acts are a-priori negative, then we should avoid those acts, regardless of whatever desired results may be achieved. This will restore to us the ability to act, without a constant consideration and balancing of possible consequences. Does this mean that we would not be subject to bad karma? Not necessarily, but it is the best that a human consciousness can achieve. If one can become a Buddha, then one can foresee all the consequences of an act and the complete

karmic results, but that is beyond our scope at this time.

I’m not saying that war is never justified because it involves killing which is a-priori a negative act, but I’m saying that those who start a war, no matter how justified they think it is, should be ready to take the heavy karmic burden. Sometimes, it doesn’t take long to figure out that a particular war turned out badly even for the winning side – that the situation that one country’s leaders wanted to achieve, such as greater security or chance of world peace, was not achieved and instead, one evil was removed that enabled a greater evil to grow unchecked.

Every action has its consequences and to think that the karmic effects of a series of actions will somehow be offset by a desired objective is delusory. One should strive to achieve one’s goals through the least harmful means and if that is not possible, then one should re-examine the goal and its desirability. If one still persists in achieving a desirable goal in spite of the possible negative acts, then one should be ready to take the karmic burden with courage.

Somehow, I don’t think that winning an election, a game or passing an exam is worth the hurt that unethical and harmful means will generate. It is only the illusionary hope that one can get away with it, that one would not be caught or that the immediate consequences of being found out would be negligible that power the ascendance of “the end justifies the means” in our society. We must try to remove this ignorance with education about the universal law of karma.

Harmony For Higher Consciousness

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lengthen our lives through the proper breathing techniques. The ultimate goal is to balance the left cooling energy channel called ida nadi and the hot cooling energy channel called pingala nadi – this is HaTha Yoga.

The tendency of our senses to turn outwards causes another level of disharmony with our basic nature which can be overcome by deliberately turning or withdrawing our senses inwards with the practice of pratyahara – a concentration at some internal point of focus. When we focus our senses outwards, we expend life-force energy and when we focus inwards, we conserve our life-force energy. This practice balances the external and internal energies.

The process of meditation seeks to find harmony within our disparate thoughts and emotions, to understand

the rising and disappearing of thoughts, to merge in the space between thoughts and ultimately to regain our innate awareness. Pen-ultimately, we are seeking to balance our rational and our intuitive minds, while ultimately, we seek to harmonize our soul with our spirit.

Although so far, I've been outlining what is mostly an inward journey, at the same time, we are continuing our sojourn in the world and engaged in the process of self discovery in which we seek to understand and harmonize the various complementary and conflicting aspects of our personality. It is necessary to maintain a certain façade in order to interact with the external world. However, we find that to the extent that the personality is harmonized with our internal reality rather than some fictional set of karmic, social or cultural

patterns, we become more and more harmonized with our external reality as well.

There is finally a continual effort to harmonize with others – in our relationships with people around us. Conflicts are continuously being driven by the breakdown of relationships which in turn are due to opposing needs and desires from the personalities of those involved. To the extent that one is able to achieve an inner harmony and peace within oneself, then to that extent, one is able to maintain a peaceful co-existence with others. True mutual harmony arises only when two beings are both able to achieve self-harmony in their nature first and foremost.

Even just thinking about harmony and moving away from conflict is a first step in the journey of self-discovery towards higher consciousness. Let us reflect on how we can bring more harmony into our lives now.

Learning About The Self

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had been taught that the Self was immortal but the body ages, sickens and dies. He again approached the Master and asked for further instruction.

After another six years, he approached the Master for the answer. The Sage said, "What you see in dream - that is the Self." The disciple sat and pondered for a while and rejected this also as dreams were only reflections of the waking state and their appearances were transitory and not permanent.

He asked to stay for another three years, after which he again approached the Master for the truth. The Master then said, "What you see in the state of deep sleep, that is the Self." The disciple reflected deeply for some time and once more rejected this as deep sleep was experienced as darkness and nothingness and brought no revelation.

The Master asked his disciple to yet stay another three years at the end of which, he would impart the wisdom sought. With folded hands and empty mind, the disciple once more approached the ancient One and asked for initiation.

The Master smiled and placed his hands on the disciple's head in blessing and an immediate realization of the truth blossomed. The disciple realized his Self was not the body that decays and dies, nor yet the mind that sleeps and gives rise to transitory dreams. Yet after the darkness of deep sleep, there is still a continuous identity on waking – an unchanging Existence, a Being that is beyond body and mind – unaffected by the experience of pain, aging, sickness, sorrow and death.

At that moment, he became aware

and realized all transitory experiences and changing states as ripples of mind matter dependent on the ground of Consciousness. It was utterly beyond words or thoughts – indescribable, only realizable. He understood why the truth of the Self could not be imparted by the mind to another mind. Finally, he was aware of deep Bliss as the wisdom of the universe was revealed to him.

He who was the disciple realized that the Self is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss – Sat Chid Ananda.

He touched the feet of his Master and both embraced. No word was spoken as the awakened One departed to spread the truth of the Self to those ready to experience it.

Overcoming Our Three Mental Defects

Our minds suffer from three primary defects that prevent us from evolving into higher consciousness. Over time, these defects have been called different names and various prescriptions have been given for their removal.

The first defect is called mala which means dirt. This is the inability of one's mind to accurately reflect reality – the mind acts more like a dirty mirror which distorts and clouds what it reflects. This confusion about the nature of reality causes us to be attracted towards external sensory stimuli and becoming enamored of them.

The best antidote to mala is swadhaya, often called self-study. For our purpose, swadhaya is the effort to turn our attention inward and study one's mental processes. There is great resistance and fear to being "alone" with one's mind – that is an affect of mala. The seeker needs to study the appearances and disappearances of thoughts, their nature and source so that she can detach from them. When the seeker no longer identifies with the everescent thoughts then he has overcome the first mental defect.

However, not everyone can practice swadhaya successfully and an alternative is the practice of self-less work or karma yoga. If one does one's duty without expectations or desires for reward, the mirror of the mind is purified, since it is our desires which continuously muddy up the mirror of our minds.

The second defect of the mind is vikshepa, the fickleness or inability to stay focused. This causes us to move from one attraction to another, one thought to another, without being able to penetrate the thoughts or stabilize them mind. The best antidote is the practice of tapas or austerity. For our purposes, we are talking about the practice of concentration which involves keeping the body still and focusing the mind on a single object or subject. Over time, this will change the nature of the mind and overcome its fickleness.

For those unable to practice tapas, an alternative is puja or japa – ritual worship or the recitation of mantras. These help to control the mind's wandering nature and restrict it to a certain set of

thoughts and visuals.

The third defect is the innate ignorance of the mind called avarana. It is the veil that hides our innate nature from our wandering mind. If you think of the mala as affecting our knowledge of the sensory world, then the avarana is affecting our knowledge of our true nature, to access our higher consciousness. Due to avarana, we cannot tune inwards and so tune outwards instead. The antidote to avarana is iswarapranidhana or surrender to the Divine Will. It is the acceptance that there is a veil between our limited consciousness and the wisdom of the Divine. It is the acceptance and cultivation of inspiration and intuition. It is the willingness to let go of our own desires, wishes and even well-being in order to act according to our understanding of the divine will as directed towards the well-fare of others.

By the practice of tapas, swadhaya and iswarpranidhana, which the sage Patanjali collectively called Kriya Yoga, one can steady the mind, clean the mental mirror and rent the veil of ignorance.