

śraddhā-bhakti-dhyāna-yogād avaihi

Eleventh and concluding part of the serial article continued from November 2019 issue.

Dhyana topic continues..

We have to train ourselves. We can give the mind some time for free thinking, but we cannot be fantasising all the time. So deliberate thinking, conscious thinking is important. For this purpose *dhyāna* is always advised, especially *japa-dhyāna*. In *japa*, a thought is repeated. More often, it is a *mantra* that is repeated like *om namaḥ śivāya* or *om namo nārāyaṇāya*².

Suppose you chant *om namaḥ śivāya*. Then the next chant also is *om namaḥ śivāya*. There is no connection between the two chants. Generally we have connected thinking. One thing is connected to something else, and it goes on. Here, we break that connected thinking. In order to achieve certain say over the ways of the mind, we break this connection.

Japa-dhyāna is not mechanical. If somebody says so, he or she has not understood it at all. It is not mechanical. It is deliberate. It is not repetitive either because it is clinched, in that, each occupation is a complete occupation. Completion is achieved after a given chant, *om namaḥ śivāya*, is over. In this, *saguṇa-brahma* is there, *mānasa-vyāpāra*, mental activity, is there and hence it fulfils the definition of *dhyāna*. At the same time, one chant is not connected to another chant. Every chant is complete by itself. It is unlike the Vedic chant: *om namaste astu bhagavan viśveśvarāya mahādevāya trayambakāya...* Here it is all connected. The Veda presents it in that form and it is how we learn it. It is different. But here, you have a chant, *om namaḥ śivāya*, and the chant is complete when you utter it once; again it is the same chant. One occupation, that is, one chant, is followed by another occupation; the second occupation is unconnected to the first occupation because it is the same, and it is complete. This is very important. The chain thinking is broken. You give myself an occupation wherein there is no chain thinking, no connected thinking.

The absence of any connection is asserted by the interval between the two chants. The interval also is important. The interval between two successive chants gives me an occasion to be conscious of the interval too, where there is no chant. There is nothing else either; there is just myself, with an awareness of Īśvara, myself without occupation. Without any particular occupation it is just myself, with occupation also, it is myself.

1 Unto the Lord whom I invoke by the word 'Śiva' my salutation.

2 Unto the Lord whom I invoke by the word 'Nārāyaṇa' my salutation.

What is the logic here in *dhyāna*? The logic is that I am quite aware of what is happening in the mind. I train myself to have an occupation, I give myself an occupation which helps me to learn how to be deliberate, how to think deliberately. Suppose, after chanting for a while, I give up the chanting. I can see for myself that I command certain fullness, certain *sānti*, composure. In *dhyāna* I am able to command this without waiting for it to happen by chance. I gain a certain inner space to be aware of the ways of my mind. It is what we call *citta-naiścalya* or *samādhāna*. Being just myself, I recognise the fact that I can be comfortable just being myself. This is one type of *dhyāna*, in keeping with the classical definition of the word. All other things are steps in order to do this *dhyāna*.

The steps include sitting posture, the seat on which you sit, the place where you sit, and so on. You sit with your body, head and neck in one line. No particular limb is burdened with the weight of the other part of the body. If one can sit erect, one should do so. If one can cross one's legs, one should sit cross-legged.

Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions in the *Gītā*⁴ that one should have an *āsana* also. *Āsana* is the place where you sit. There are two types of meaning for the word '*āsana*'. One is the posture and the other is the seat itself. The seat prescribed in the *Gītā* is a grass mat with a skin on top of it and then afterwards a piece of cloth⁵.

This is to protect you from dampness so that you do not develop arthritis. Why a piece of cloth on top? Skin has fur, and it will itch. It is simple logic, nothing big. These are non-essentials. You do not need all that. You just need to understand these things. You require an *āsana* to avoid dampness. Then, you do not sit on an elevated place like the tall stools seen in the bars. Generally, in *dhyāna* the body gets relaxed and sleep invariably happens. Then one may fall down. That is why someone said, "Whenever you get sleep in *dhyāna*, please go to sleep. Sleep comes because you need sleep." It is not right. You may need sleep, all right. But what happens is: whenever you sit for *dhyāna* sleep invariably will come. Afterwards, a time comes when, unless you do *dhyāna* you cannot sleep. When you decide to do *dhyāna*, you should do *dhyāna*. If sleep comes, you should just stop the sleep. What can you do for that? You can breathe deeply or get up and sit for some time, or put the head under cold water and then come and do *dhyāna*. Once or twice if you do it, sleep will never come again, because you have to face the cold water. This is how it is done.

³ *Samam kāya-siro-grīvaṁ dhārayan acalam sthiraḥ...* (Bhagavad Gītā 6.13).

⁴ *...sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ - having arranged one's seat in a clean firm place* (Bhagavad Gītā 6.11).

⁵ *Cailājina-kuśottaram* (Bhagavad Gītā 6.11): *caila* - cloth, *ajina* - skin (of a deer or a tiger, which had a natural death), and *kuśa* - grass; *uttaram* - one above the other (in the reverse order).

In the sitting posture, you do not look to this side or that side, nor do you look up or down. Your eyes are closed softly, with the upper eyelids touching the lower ones gently. Then, you do not think of external objects. Lord Kṛṣṇa beautifully says, “All the things that are outside, keeping them outside...”⁶The people whom you are connected to and for whom you have affection, they are all outside. You keep all of them wherever they are. Who am I to keep them outside? They are already outside. Even though they are physically outside, they are also inside you. You want to change some of them; you do not like them—they are inside. Some of them you like; they are also inside. They all sit permanently inside. Just unload all of them, keep them outside the mind. You can have love and affection for people. It does not mean that they should sit inside your mind and irritate you.

This is a very good habit. Whether you do meditation or not, you can unload people from your mind. The people you want to change cannot change. This is how they are, in your perception. They become sources of frustration, and therefore, pray for them. Keep them outside. You freely relate to them, you care for them; our caring will not cause you any problem. Let them be outside. You do what is to be done. Pray for them; this is all you can do. Then the external world is kept external. Thereby, you can be with Īśvara in *dhyāna*.

In the beginning, you can visualise an altar and do a small *pūjā*. At least, place a flower, say a prayer and then afterwards do *japa*. This is *dhyāna*. In this, you take care of the problem of the mind getting strayed.

We have some advice given by Gauḍapāda regarding *dhyāna*: “Wake up the mind when sleep comes. When the awakened mind wanders, once again, bring it back. When the mind is under the grip of some unmanifest desires, know them to be from the unconscious. One should not disturb the mind that has gained tranquility after the said obstacles have been tackled. Do not enjoy the *ānanda*, joy, in that tranquil state. Be dispassionate to this *ānanda* by proper understanding.”⁷ *Laya sambodhayet cittam*: Laya is sleep. When sleep comes, then wake up the mind. How should I do that? When sleep comes, I am not there to wake up. When sleep comes, it does not tell me that it is coming. How should I wake up? Before sleep comes, the stupor, the feeling of slumber comes—you know that sleep is coming. Sleep will never come without sending a pilot. Yawning will come, and you know sleep is going to come. Then do some *prāṇāyāma*, deep breathing, trying to blow out more air than usual. In the process you wake up.

6 *Sparśān kṛtvā bahiḥ bāhyān ... (Bhagavad Gītā 5.27).*

7 *Laya sambodhayet cittam, vikṣiptam śamayet punaḥ. Sa kaṣāyam vijānīyāt, samaḥ prāptam na cālayet. Nāsvādayet sukham tatra, nissaṅgaḥ prajñayā bhavet (Māṇḍūkya Kārikā 3.44 and 3.45)*

Vikṣiptam śamayet punaḥ: When the mind moves away, bring it back. Make a *saṅkalpa*, “Whenever the mind moves away, I will bring it back.” Then, when the mind moves away, you will be reminded because of the *saṅkalpa*, and you can bring it back. *Sa kaṣāyam vijānīyāt*: When the mind is quiet after doing some *japa* or *dhyāna*, all kinds of thoughts may arise in the mind. Understand them to be from the unconscious. These are from the unconscious. Welcome them.

Samah prāptam na cālayet: Do not disturb the mind when it has gained tranquility. Welcome anything that occurs in the mind. *Nāsvādayet sukham tatra*: Do not begin to enjoy that state. Understand, ‘This is myself’. *Nissaṅgaḥ prajñayā bhavet*: With the understanding, ‘this *ānanda* is myself alone,’ remain free.

Śraddhā bhakti dhyāna yogād avaihi. So *śraddhā* takes you to the teacher, it takes you to Vedanta classes. Then your daily prayers—*kāyika*, *vācika*, *mānasa karmas*—prepare you, make you an *adhikārin* for this knowledge. When you keep listening to the *śāstra*, the vision of the *śāstra* becomes clear in time.

Om tat sat