

## 6. Japa, Saadhana

I AM told that you are *saadhakas* (aspirants of spirituality), and so I shall speak to you something about *saadhana* (spiritual practice). Well. What is saadhana, fundamentally? It is '*upavaasam*,' '*upaasana*.' *Upa* means near, *Aasana* means sitting and *Vaasam* means residing. We sit near a cooler so that we may feel cool. We sit near God, so that we might derive some Godly qualities and get rid of ungodly characteristics. God is not an external contrivance or convenience like the air cooler. He is the *Antharyaamin*, the Inner Director, the Inner Reality, the Unseen Basis on which all this seeable world is built. He is like the fire-principle that is latent in wood, which can be made manifest, when one piece is rubbed vigorously against another. The heat that is produced consumes the wood in fire! *Sath-sangh* (Company of the good and the godly) makes you meet with other souls (individuals) of a like nature, and creates the contact that manifests the Inner Fire.

*Sath-sangh* means Meeting the *Sath*, the *Sath* which is spoken of while extolling God as *Sath-chith-aanandha*.

*Sath* is the Existence Principle, the *IS* that is the basic truth of the Universe. Align with the Truth, the *Sath* in you, the *Sathya* (Reality) on which the *Mithya* (false) is imposed by minds that do not see light. By dwelling in that *Sath*, the flame is lit, light dawns, darkness flees and *Jnaana Bhaaskara* (the Sun of Realisation) rises.

When there is hard rock below, you have to bore deeper for tapping the underground perennial pure water. The softer the subterranean soil, the quicker the success. Make your heart soft; then, success is quick in *saadhana*. Talk soft, talk sweet, talk only of God---that is the process of softening the subsoil. Develop compassion, sympathy; engage in service, understand the agony of poverty, disease, distress and despair; share both tears and cheers with others. That is the way to soften the heart, and help saadhana to succeed. *Sath-sang* is like quaffing pure crystal water. *Dus-sang*---the company of the vicious, the ungodly, the impure---is like quaffing salt water from the sea; no amount of sugar added to it can make it quaffable! It increases thirst.

### **Cultivate the Conscious of the One**

Krishna is named *Yogeshwara* in the Geetha. What does that mean? *Yoga* is defined by *Pathanjali* as the *nirodha* (control) of the *vritthis* (agitations) of the *chiththa* (mind-stuff). If the mind is stilled and free from waves produced by the wind of desire, then he becomes a *Yogi* and the Lord is the highest *Yogi*, for He is the ocean that is unaffected by the waves which agitate the surface. Krishna danced on the hood of the serpent Kaliya and forced it to vomit its poison, it is said. This is only another way of saying that he forced sensual desires to divest themselves of pernicious effects. *Yoga* of this type is the best means of attaining the *Yogeshwara* (the Lord of *yogis*); not breath control, but sense control is the prescription.

Transcend *anekathwa bhaava* (the consciousness of the many) and cultivate *ekathwa bhaava* (the consciousness of the One), that will end strife, grief, pain and pride. See all as but expressions of the same God, as appearances on the same screen, as bulbs lit by the same current, though of manifold colours and wattage.

Feel that you and they are able to talk and walk, think and act because of the God within. Differences that strike you while you cast your eyes are illusory; you have not yet developed the vision that makes you apprehend the unity which is the truth of all the seeming diversity, that is

all! The fault is in you, not the world. The world is One; but, each takes it to mean what pleases him most! The world is One, but, each sees it from his own angle and so, it appears as if it has multiple faces.

### **There is both truth and travesty in the world**

*The japamaala* teaches you the Unity, though it has 108 beads! If it is a *sphatika maala* (garland of crystal beads) you can see the string running in and through each bead, the inner reality on which all this is strung! If the beads are not transparent, you still know that the string passes through, holds together, and is the basis for the maala to exist! Why 108 beads? 108 is the product when 12 is multiplied 9 times, 12 is the number of *Aadhithyas* (Luminaries), that reveal the objective world, and so, symbols of the *Sakaara* aspect (the world of name and form, of manifoldness, the seeming variety, the fleeting pictures); 9 is the screen on which the pictures appear, the basis, the rope which deludes you as the snake in the dusk, *Brahman*, the Nameless, Formless, Eternal Absolute. 9 is the *Brahman* Number, for it is always 9, however many times you multiply it! It is immutable, for 9 multiplied by any number finally adds up to 9 only. So, when you turn the beads, impress upon yourself the fact that there is both truth and travesty in the world, that the travesty attracts, distracts and delights in deceiving you, diverts you into devious paths; the truth makes you free!

Now about the beads, Before everything you must know the symbolism of the fingers. The thumb represents *Brahman*, the eternal Absolute, the Immanent Principle. The forefinger, the index one, which indicates this and that, you and other, is the *Jeevi*, the Individual, feeling separate and distinct. When these two are joined at the tip, held in that position, it is the *Jnaana mudhra*, the Gesture of Wisdom, for, wisdom consists in the *Jeevi* becoming One with the *Brahman*, the Mergence of that which felt that it had emerged! The other three fingers, represent *Prakrithi* the Objective World, which is negated when the mergence is effected. They are the three *Gunas*, the *Saathwik*, the *Raajasik* and the *Thaamasik* (qualities of purity, passion and inertia), that by their interplay create the phenomenal world.

### **Japa must become the very breath of life**

Hold the rosary over the middle finger, keeping the three *Guna* fingers together. This means that you are now transcending the world of attributes and qualities, of name and form, of multiplicity that is the consequence of all this transformation, and proceeding towards the knowledge of the UNITY. The *Jeevi* finger now slowly passes each bead towards the thumb (*Brahman*), touching the tip of the *Brahman* finger when the bead passes over, so that the mergence is emphasised with every bead and every breath, for, while the fingers learn and teach the lesson, the tongue too repeats the *manthra* (holy formula) or the Name, with the *Pranava* (the primal sound of OM).

*The japamaala* (rosary) is very useful for beginners in saadhana, but, as you progress, japa must become the very breath of your life and so the rotation of beads becomes a superfluous and cumbersome exercise in which you have no more interest. '*Sarvadhya sarva kaaleshu sarvathra Hari chinthanam*'---Always, at all times, in all places, *Hari* (the Lord) is meditated upon. That is the stage to which the *japamaala* should lead you. You should not be bound to it for ever, it is only a contrivance to help concentration and systematic contemplation. The belt has to be discarded when you have learnt to swim, the crutches when you are able to walk.

### **One can win *Guru's* Grace by earnest prayer**

Be regular, in the beginning, in the hours you devote to Japa. On Sundays, when you have no worry of office or shopping, do more *Japam* until nine-o'clock in the morning. Do it with love and enthusiasm. It should become natural with you to do so. Of course the Grace of the *Guru* helps a lot; Vivekaanandha was sliding into atheism and agnosticism the more books he read, but a touch from the hand of Raama-krishna Paramahansa transformed him completely. You can also win this Grace, by your efforts and earnest prayer.

Before you start *dhyaana*, your meditation session, chant *Soham*, inhaling *So* and exhaling *Ham*. *Soham* means 'He is I,' it identifies you with the Infinite and expands your Consciousness. Harmonise the breath and the thought. Breathe gently, naturally; do not make it artificial and laboured. It must flow in and out, soft and silent; if you have some flour on your palm and hold it near the nostrils, it should not get fluttered the least; the breath has to be soft as that! The faster the breath, the sooner you are burnt up, the shorter becomes your life span! Slow breath quietens and calms the emotions. The mood of relaxation produced by this *Soham* recital is a pre-condition for a profitable session of meditation.

Other things are also needed for this relaxation have no thorn of hate in your mind, *develop prema* (Love) towards all. Desire is a storm; greed is a whirlpool; pride is a precipice; attachment is an avalanche; egoism is a volcano. Keep these things away, so that when you do *japa* or *dhyaana*, they do not disturb the equanimity.

Let love be enthroned in your heart. Then, there will be sunshine and cool breeze and gurgling waters of contentment, feeding the roots of faith.

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*Make your home the seat of virtue, of morality, of love. Control anger and greed. That is the sign of the genuine bhaktha, not unrestricted speech and movements. You may claim to be a devotee and declare yourself as such, when you speak; but, unless your egoism has gone and you love all equally, the Lord will not acknowledge your devotion.!*

*Sathya Sai Baaba*