

# REPETITION OF THE DIVINE NAME

by  
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*Swami Yatiswarananda, formerly Head of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, is at present preaching the message of Vedanta in different countries of Central Europe. We are publishing in the Vedanta Kesari for the past few months notes of his class talks at Wiesbaden, Germany. The present instalment, which forms the sixth, throws some light on the practice of Japa.*

## I

FAITH is most essential before taking up Japa or repetition of Divine Name. It does not matter even if it becomes mechanical to some extent. The beginner will find that his centre of consciousness is continually shifting, going up or coming down. This is a most difficult situation for all aspirants. You must never allow yourselves to get into a drowsy state during your attempts at meditation or during Japa. This is most dangerous. Sleep, drowsiness, and meditation should never be connected in any way. If you feel very drowsy while you are doing Japa, just get up and pace the room till this drowsiness leaves you.

In the beginner there are mostly two states of mind. In one the mind becomes awfully restless, in the other it falls down to the subliminal plane. Both are to be avoided if you want to make some real progress.

When the mind is awfully restless and out-going, you

should doggedly persist in your Japa, even do it mechanically, without giving way to this restlessness. In that way part of your mind is always engaged in Japa. Thus the whole mind cannot become or remain restless.

The other state, that of drowsiness, is most dangerous, and should be avoided at all costs. There are people for whom sitting for meditation is an invitation to sleep. A restless, terribly out-going mind is even better. One is Rajas, the other Tamas; and Tamas is even lower than Rajas. Hence it can have no place in spiritual life or striving.

Imagine that along with each repetition of the name of your Ishtam or your Mantra your whole body, your whole mind, senses, etc., are purified. This faith must be made very firm because in a way, this is the idea underlying Japa. The name of the Ishtam soothes one's nerves, calms the mind, changes the body. When the mind is in a state of great tension or is depressed, begin at once humming the name, and imagine that this is bringing about a balanced state, a new sort of rhythm, in the body and in the mind. Actually you will feel how it soothes the whole nervous system, how it stops the outgoing tendency of the mind more and more. Rhythmic breathing brings about calmness and a certain rhythm in the nervous system, and this again facilitates spiritual practices. The Holy Thought brings about a certain rhythm in body and mind. Think with each repetition of the name of your Ishtam or of your Mantra that you are becoming purer and purer. You cannot know the effect all at once; but if you go on for some time steadily and doggedly you will feel it; and then after some years, you will be astonished to find what a great change has come over you. There is great scope for experiments. This body is to be polarised and made rhythmic, at least to some extent; and the nerves too are to be polarised and made rhythmic. Through practice, we must

make the body, the senses, the mind and the breath rhythmic; then only we come to have the proper mood for spiritual practices and meditation, and we can begin them in right earnest. Everything!S. Else belongs to the preliminary steps.

## II

While doing your breathing exercises, try to give the following suggestions to your mind: I am breathing in purity, breathing out all impurity. I am breathing in strength, breathing out all weakness. I am breathing in calmness, breathing out all restlessness. I am breathing in freedom, breathing out all bondage. These suggestions may be given even while doing your Japa. They are very helpful in preparing the ground for the real practices.

Strict regularity and a fixed daily routine for all spiritual practices are very much wanted; deep thinking is very essential in the aspirant's life. Then in the fullness of time through habit, the right mood just comes and makes everything else easier. Once this habit is formed, you will make greater progress and feel the strain of all these practices much less.

Everything is difficult in this path. Visualisation is difficult, control of the mind is difficult, meditation is difficult. Japa is difficult, but if done properly a little less so. So new strength must be gained. And for this the suggestions I mentioned are very helpful. Make use of the great power of sound and sound-symbols. Man is a psychological animal; we must know how to calm our mind and body. Just as this mind of ours is ever ready to deceive us, we must be ever ready to deceive this mind, taking the help of something higher.

You must try to feel that the Holy name, the Holy Mantra,

purifies you. If you just try for some time, this feeling is sure to come. Make the experiment yourself. Verify everything that is being told you. If you do not realise these truths yourself, it would be ever so much better to burn all the books on religion, to throw all the holy scriptures overboard.

You cannot realise the great effect of Japa now. This rhythmic repetition of the name of the Ishtam has a great effect and is one of the most essential practices in the life of the beginner. OM is a very fine rhythmic syllable. So we should take its help.

### III

Immediately after sitting down for meditation with folded hands, one says: “Whether impure or pure. Under all conditions whoever remembers the word, becomes purified inwardly and outwardly.”

The aspirant thinks that along the Sushumna-canal the Jiva (individualised soul) is taken to the centre in the head and is connected with the Universal Spirit. And then he thinks that the gross and the subtle bodies are burnt away, and he himself becomes one with the Absolute. I am He, I am He!

*“Do Thou appear here, do Thou stay here, do Thou be steady, do Thou come near me and accept my worship.”*

Right prayer requires first great intensity, great concentration and one-pointedness.

Without these, no prayer will be of any avail.

*“Do Thou save me, O Lord, Thou who hast taken this form of the Universe.”*

Saying this Mantra we remember the All-Pervading Being, the Being with these thousands of heads, thousands of eyes and thousands of feet, who envelopes and permeates this whole universe, nay, even exists beyond,

*“Being subject to the limitations (workings) of the vital energy, intellect and the body, whatever sin has been committed by me in the states of waking, dream and deep sleep, in thought word and deed, by means of the different organs of senses—may all that be offered to Brahman. I surrender myself, with all whom I call my own at the feet of the Lord.”*

#### IV

Transcend both good and evil; for wherever there is good, there you unavoidably get bad too. Happiness and misery always go together. The moment you accept happiness you must take misery too. All the pairs of opposites go together, so you can never have one without getting the other also. The only solution is to transcend them and reach a plane beyond all relative good and evil all relative happiness and misery. There is no such thing as absolute good or absolute evil, absolute happiness or absolute misery, on this phenomenal plane.

Cheerfulness is a sign of great progress, but many people do not understand this. Spiritual life eases all heart-burn, so it makes people cheerful.

*“Let us meditate on the excellent glory of that Divine Being who illumines everything. May He guide our understanding.”* (Gayatri).

Always take the help of the sound symbol, for sound and thought are inter-related. Thoughts manifest themselves in

different sounds. Is there any eternal relation between the thought and the sound? Take for instance the word cow. We express this 'thing' 'cow' with the help of different sound-symbols. For each language a different sound-symbol is used to express the thought 'cow'. The bovine idea finds its expression; and there is an inseparable connection between this idea and its sound-symbol.

Now we find that the Divine idea finds its expression in different Holy Names; and there is an inseparable connection between the holy idea and the sound. That is why we make use of the sound in our spiritual life. It becomes easier for us to call up the thought with the help of the sound. We should see that we pass from the sound-symbol to the thought; otherwise the sound does not help us.



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