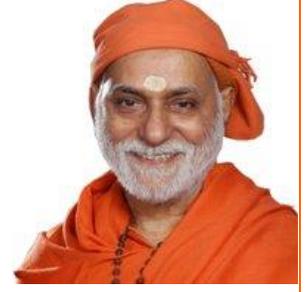


swādhyāya Is the Way to Improve the Mind

prabhāta-raśmiḥ

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Swami Bhoomananda Tirtha

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

Our three months' session on Experiential Vedanta is coming to a close. The session will conclude on the second of this month.

This has been a very intense and wholesome exposure to the participants. To that extent, we, who speak to the participants, have also been intensely and wholesomely involved in it. I would like all of you, not only the participants, to think as to what exactly are we to do in order to improve ourselves! Actually the purpose of religion, philosophy, spirituality, or devotion is to make the human a better person. What is this betterment or improvement? You must become good, nice, soft, amiable, noble, liberal, benevolent, kindly, helpful, tolerant, taking people together always, never keeping away and unnecessarily blocking himself or the others,... all these are good qualities. I don't think even the most foolish person will resent that these are qualities and I don't want it. He will not say that! So, all these are good qualities.

Now, the question arises as to how to bring about this goodness in oneself. I would like to tell you that the first and the last factor is self-examination. You must be able to examine yourself. Whenever we have a health problem, we try to go into it and because it is body and we are not aware of it, we go to a doctor. They examine clinically, pathologically, and may be further, and arrive at a conclusion as to why the ill-health is caused. This is a regular subject and process. Okay!

Now we are concerned about the inner personality and its improvement. How can this be brought about? It is a very simple question. You should develop the habit of inner observation.

You must have an ample stock of good and benevolent thoughts, filling your system, so that they will come to you even unasked and unsought. This is accomplished by

exposure of this kind. Not only that, by reading, it is called *swādhyāya*. You should make it a point to read *śāstras*! What are *śāstras*? *śāstras* deal with your mind, your intelligence and a right application of these. And the *śāstras* provide an abundant measure of literature for you. We have the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and a number of other compositions. Two of them - Ramayana and Mahabharata are epic, therefore in a large measure both of them contain historic facts and figures. In mythology it is all imaginary and dealing with gods and goddesses. When you go to the Vedas, it is of a different type. And ultimately when you come to the Upanishads, it is a question of enquiring, pursuing the enquiry with dedication, arriving at fulfilling answers and clarity. These Upanishads are again dealt with in Bhagavad Gita, a number of prakarana Granthas, like *vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, *aparokṣānubhūti*, *ḍṛgḍṛśyavivekaḥ*, *sarvavedāntasiddhāntasārasaṅgrahaḥ*, *dakṣiṇāmūrti stotram*, *upadeśapañcakam*, *kaupīnapañcakam*, *prauthānubhūti*, *yogatārāvalī*, *swātmaprakāśikā*, *anātmaśrīvīkarhanan*, so many texts are there.

If you're an intellectual, read these intellectual and vedantic texts. If you are a little less, read the epics, and if necessary, the puranas. You should develop a fondness for them. Why are you reading? Only to collect within you as a stock, a number of noble, good and penetrating thoughts and virtues. I am sure that every day your mind is thinking unnecessarily. The unnecessary thinking habit should be replaced by the necessary thinking. But what will you think unless you have inputs?

Generally our inputs are only from the world through our interactions. They don't generally contain any philosophy, spirituality, or nobility, whereas, if you think about Sri Rama or Sri Krishna or Arjuna or Yudhishtira or Draupadi or Janaki, all thoughts will be noble. So, make it a habit to fill your mind with noble thoughts. These cannot come to you from the daily, secular, domestic, professional, or societal interactions. So read them. Let there be an ample stock of nobility in you in the form of reading and memory. Make sure that the mind never indulges in unnecessary thinking. So there is a method of avoiding unnecessary thinking and incorporating rite useful thoughts. Try to know about it. And always engage the mind in such noble thinking. This is a must. I do not know how many will agree with me. You should tell me, every day how much is the unnecessary thinking in your system, and what are you going to do about it?

Mind you, your own mind is the focus for everything in this world. Every activity is designed and sought by the mind. The mind alone employs the organs of the body to pursue the act, and the act when completed terminates in the mind to remain as a memory. You cannot separate the mind from any of your action or involvement. Body without the mind can hardly do anything. Mind without the body can do many things.

That is how you have your dream, without the body. If there is a comparison between mind and the body, the causal and the most important is the mind. This mind is given to thinking, thinking... until it sleeps, ever since it wakes up. We cannot avoid the thinking as such, but we can replace the useless thinking or harmful thinking with innocuous, harmless ones. *swādhyāya* is a method whereby this can be accomplished. How long do you have to do *swādhyāya*? I would like to say - at least 40 minutes to an hour.

Consider this as imperative, as inevitable for your inner mental health and well-being. Let your mind have full of noble thoughts ... so much so that the noble thoughts will always be exceeding the other secular, ignorable ones, if at all! This is a secret.

As parents, you should be able to expose your children to noble items. Who has done? I think it is very important. Yesterday a boy working in United States came here. I was discussing Ashtavakra Samhita. I was discussing in a very lofty and spiritual manner, with a lot of inspiration and even ecstasy, I can say, some of the very, very lofty and magnificent propositions, Ashtavakra makes to Janaka. I asked for the reaction and response from every participant. Finally I asked the boy. He said, "It is the only Truth. I may not be able to implement it all of a sudden, but that is the only Truth." Later on the mother told me, he was attending Bala Vihar, later on the youth camp of Chinmaya Mission. "Oh, you were exposed to all this right from the beginning. That is why you suddenly, unexpectedly appreciated what I said, and you also said it is the only Truth." Just see the result of an exposure.

So the parents are actually deluded. They don't know where in lies the inner strength, the well-being of their own children. So mere secular interactions will not be able to help you or elevate you. You must have spiritual, philosophical, and other devotional interactions. *swādhyāya* provides you all this. Remember this, evaluate it, discuss it, and also speak to as many people as possible!

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

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