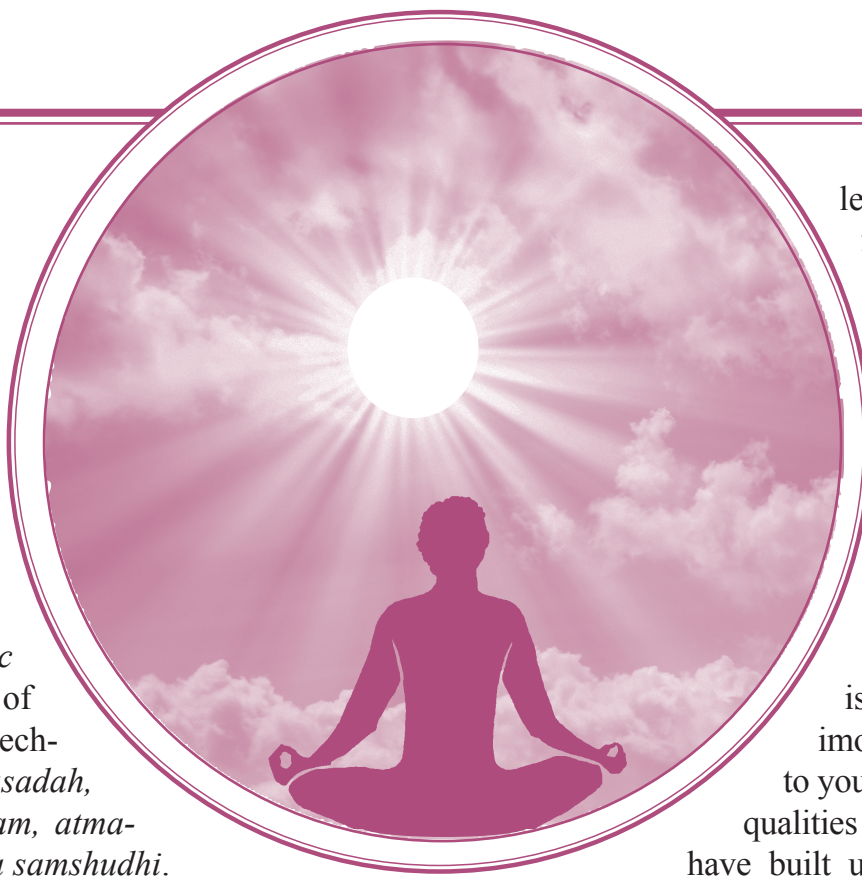


(Continued from
last month)

In Chapter 17 of *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna offers a deep insight into a Divine form of mental “austerity”—the promotion of a joyous and *satwic* mind by the practice of several powerful techniques: *manah prasadah*, *saumyatwam*, *maunam*, *atma-vinigraha*, and *bhava samshudhi*.

Bhava Samshudhi (Purity of Feeling)

The next austerity of the mind is *bhava samshudhi*. *Bhava* means feeling. All human experiences are based upon the feelings that you have. Within families, within society, the feelings that exist between different people play a great role. The same human being that gives you great joy today can give you great sorrow tomorrow if the feeling changes. Therefore, you must



learn to watch your feelings and observe the types of feelings you hold within your heart.

Develop the quality of grasping that which is positive in others so that your feeling is always magnanimous. Do not draw to yourself the negative qualities of others. If you have built up a bitter mind, each time you see other people, you

will notice that everyone has a particular type of error or defect in their personality. You may even conclude, “This world is filled with useless people. What is going to happen to the world?”

You must understand how much you are hurting yourself when your mind continuously focuses on the negative in others. As time goes by you realize how much negativity you have stored in your unconscious. Change your attitude in such a way that you continue to admire the

The Art of Positive Feeling *Part Twelve*



Exploring the Roots of Impurity



by Swami Jyotirmayananda

flowers and overlook the weeds. Recognize God shining through the eyes of every individual. Know that the Divine *prana* (life-force) is pulsating through them at every moment.

All people make mistakes. However, despite those mistakes there is always something in everyone that you can admire. If, at the moment, you can perceive no such admirable quality in the other person, then just keep your mind detached. But do not go on looking for defects and keep your mind filled with negative feelings.

One who is practicing *bhava samshudhi* will enjoy reflecting on this parable based on the Mahabharata involving Duryodhana, who was the embodiment of all forms of impurity, and Yudhishtira, who was the embodiment of virtue. Once Guru Dronacharya created a special project for those two disciples. Duryodhana was asked to go out into the world and find the best person he could find, a person who was absolutely faultless. Yudhishtira was asked to find the worst person he could find, a person full of faults. After a while they both returned to present their findings.

Yudhishtira reported to Dronacharya that he could not find anyone other than himself who was so full of faults and had so many defects to overcome. Because he was introspective, he did not care about the faults of others; his mind was concerned with his own faults. His whole focus was on improving himself, and his righteousness did not allow him to judge others. Therefore, he brought that report to his guru and Dronacharya was pleased.

Duryodhana, reporting the results of his research, said, "I could not find anyone, anywhere, who was absolutely perfect except myself. Even in you, Guru, I find many faults!" Needless to say, Dronacharya was not pleased with his arrogant disciple.

As the story leads us to understand, one must be tolerant of others' defects, but never of their own. By the practice of persistent introspection, learn to recognize your weaknesses and strive to overcome them. Develop compassion towards the weaknesses of others, but never justify your own.

It is much more important on the spiritual path to focus your attention on your own shortcomings. If you do, there is a concrete, tangible advantage. On the other hand, if you focus your attention on finding mistakes in others, you have accomplished nothing. You have done nothing to help others, and merely crowded your own mind with negativity. It is a much better policy to look at the good qualities of others and thereby be inspired by what you see.

If you are truly practicing mental austerity through the techniques of *manah prasadah*, *saumyatwam*, *maunam*, *atma-vinigraha*, and *bhava samshudhi*, the impurities of your personality will gradually be destroyed. The potentiality of your spirit will shine forth, just as gold shines when it is melted. The purpose of austerity is to purify the unconscious, which will then enable you to enjoy higher levels of spiritual experience.

Come Closer to God

The art of spiritual life consists in shortening the distance, so to speak, between yourself and the Divine Self. It is the art of coming closer to God until there is absolute Union. In actuality, the Divine Self, Who is the source of all forms of happiness, is nearer than your very heart, and yet that Self seems so far away. This is a great paradox.

When the mind is filled with anger, hatred, greed and passion, the spirit within you turns

away from the Divine Self, and a distance appears to grow between you and your innermost Self. However, when the mind is filled with love, cheerfulness, contentment, and other Divine virtues, the distance is shortened. This is implied in the saying, “You take one step towards God and God takes one hundred steps towards you.” When the mind shines with perfect purity, there is no distance at all. Through the clear mirror of mind you realize, “I am He!” and become free of the cycles of birth and death.

Detach and Attach

Sri Shankaracharya said: “*Satsangatwe nihasangatwam, nihasangatwe nirmohatwam, nirmohatwe nishchaltatwam, nishchaltatwe jivanmukti*h.” — “*Satsanga* (association with those who are enlightened or spiritually advanced) leads you to detachment, detachment destroys *moha* (delusion). Free of delusion, you become rooted in God within yourself, unaffected by the world. That state then leads to *jivanmukti* (Liberation).”

The concept of “detachment” is poorly understood by the majority of people. To most people the word implies becoming cold and indifferent. Nothing could be further from the truth. Philosophical detachment is quite the opposite. Detachment frees you from delusion, selfishness, bitterness and cruelty and fills you with the compassion and joy that are the qualities of your true inner Self.

In leading you to detachment, *satsanga* helps you to discover that the spirit within you is the same as the universal Spirit, the Self, and as such you are not dependent upon anything in this world for your happiness. Through *satsanga* you break the chains of psychological dependence on people and objects and gain an internal sense of freedom. This form of detachment brings to one’s personality a special integ-

riety and sense of majesty that is the source of all that is truly wonderful in life.

A person who is dependent on the world, whose mind is complexed and filled with illusions, may have many wonderful, virtuous qualities; yet, there will be other areas of their personality that remain as rough and jagged as broken glass, and can be very destructive and hurtful to others. One who is bound to the world through attachments invariably experiences bitterness and hatred—in direct mathematical proportion to his attachments—towards anything that interferes with that attachment.

It is the deep-seated urge of every soul to affirm that the all-pervasive, all-encompassing Divine Self alone exists, that the world is filled to the brim with the existence of God and nothing else. With this affirmation, the soul becomes one with *Brahman*, just as a patch of blue becomes one with the vast blue sky and a wave becomes one with the ocean. However, due to the limited and complexed mind, this longing for “attachment” to the Self becomes perverted into the degrading affliction of *raga* (attachment to the names and forms of the world).

Similarly, it is the deep-seated urge of the soul to negate all names and forms, all individualization, all sense of “I-ness and mine-ness.” However, again due to limitations of mind, this longing to push away the entire illusory world of time and space becomes perverted into *dwesha klesha* (the urge to be rid of anything that brings pain to the ego). It is through *satsanga* that an aspirant gradually learns to see *raga* and *dwesha* in the light of wisdom.

As you begin to practice the art of detachment, learn to notice what happens each time you become happy in a particular situation. You begin to listen to the subtle whispers of illusion and develop a desire to again and again experience that situation, enjoy the company of that person, or possess that pleasing object. At first the glue

is not so strong; it doesn't stick much and you could have walked away from the object. But if your fascination lingers day by day, and you continue reminding yourself, "How wonderful! How wonderful!" the glue increases in strength. Eventually it becomes so strong that suddenly you realize you are trapped and you cannot escape even if you wanted to!

Do not allow the world to stick to you. The objects are not reality. What should stick to you is the awareness that the Divine Self is the underlying reality of your existence. Therefore, become less and less attached to the objects of the world, and increasingly attached to God. Become one with the Divine Self—your own essential nature.

When the full moon casts a lovely reflection in a vessel of water, you look up from the small vessel to admire the real moon, the source of the reflection, shining in the sky. Similarly, each time you see a lovely reflection in a situation, object, or person, lift your "eyes" to the Divine Self, which is the source of that joy, beauty, and goodness. Do not stop at objects and conditions, but expand your vision. See God shining in everything and everyone, just as you see the moon shining in different reservoirs of water. In this way, you break the illusion that binds you to objects as the source of your happiness.

Similarly, each time something painful presents itself, instead of feeling, "Let me get rid of that, destroy it," learn to see the Divine plan urging you through the painful situation to become stronger and more enduring so that you can eventually go beyond the fragile ego and discover the imperishable, transcendental reality of your personality.

Your sense of individuality is only a reflection of the Absolute Self in the pool of the mental process, like the trembling reflection of the radiant full moon in a small pool of water. Like that trembling reflection that is ever disturbed by every fish, frog and breeze that blows, the reflected

Self in you is always dependent upon the mind and its vicissitudes. The smallest disturbance can unsettle your mind. Through *satsanga*, you realize that you are actually the radiant full moon of the Self, no longer confined to a little pool of water, dependent upon everything that influences the water from morning to night. You are not confined to your body, you are not confined to a world of time and space. You are *Brahman* the Absolute.

Demons Are Gods-in-the-Making

In the Indian scriptures like the Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Devi Mahatmya, mental impurities and afflictions are described as demons who battle against the gods and great incarnations. It is particularly interesting to note that when Rama destroys Ravana or Krishna destroys Shishupal, for example, there emerges from the demon a wonderful light that enters into the Divine being. How could it be that these terrible beings simply merge spontaneously with the Deity at the time of their death?

The fact is that Ravana, Shishupal, and all the other demons are nothing but "short-circuited" gods, just as anger, greed, jealousy and the other mental impurities are nothing but spiritual energy gone haywire. When electricity is short-circuited, it becomes dangerous. Correct the short-circuit, and the energy flows in the right way. Similarly, the impurities within you are short circuits of your spiritual energy. When the Divine within you slays your demon impurities, the energy within them becomes spiritual.

What is anger? Nothing but love that has been obstructed. What is desire? Nothing but inner contentment that has been veiled. All negative qualities are obstructed views of the innately positive within you. The positive is your nature; the negative is the result of obstruction. When you are sick, the diseased state is not your nature. Your healthy state has become obstructed. Once

this is remedied, health flows. Similarly, as you remedy the inner illness of spiritual ignorance, virtuous qualities begin to flow spontaneously.

Therefore, in Vedantic psychology, it doesn't matter when anger began, or what factors in your childhood encouraged it. The Vedantic psychologist—the guru—reminds you that what matters is to understand that the impurity isn't really there. By enhancing the positive within yourself, the negative will simply vanish.

With this we conclude a brief study of the *shadripus*. May you not be harassed by these enemies of the soul, but handle them well, and make them tools for your evolution and ultimate victory. As you pursue the process of integration day by day you will find that the serious evils of your past will drop away from you, like the old bark from trees. As the tree goes on growing, the old bark drops away, without surgery, without injuring the tree. Much in the same way, without much difficulty the negative will drop away from you. If you sincerely resolve to attain perfection even in this birth, you will be able to do it.

A person with a small flashlight in his hand may think, "This flashlight illumines only four yards of the road. How am I to go four miles with the help of this lamp?" That is foolish. Let him continue his march; and the flashlight will illumine the path ahead as he goes along.

Similarly, however feeble your will may seem at this moment, if you take recourse to good association, study elevating scriptures, practice selfless service, develop love of God, meditate and inquire, "Who am I?" you will move forward on the path of purifying your heart—and as you advance, the power of that Divine flashlight illumining your way will continue to increase more and more.

You are essentially a fountain of strength. Be positive. Vibrate with power and confidence. You have within you the cosmic source of all truth, beauty and auspiciousness. You are not this mortal personality. You are the immortal Self, the epitome of Perfection!



FROM SWAMIJI'S KITCHEN

Whole Wheat Paratha

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 small onion, finely grated and fried gently in butter
- 1/2 teaspoon caraway seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- salt to taste
- *Ajwain or oregano, a pinch
- *Mangarel, a pinch
- oil or ghee

Make a stiff dough with water. Knead it thoroughly. Add the fried onions, spices, and salt.

Break off small balls and flatten each ball with the help of a rolling pin. Spread flour on the board to avoid sticking.

On a heated skillet over medium to high heat fry each paratha on both sides by using spoonfuls of oil.

This dish can be eaten with any vegetable preparation, or alone at breakfast or with lunch.

* These spices are available in Indian shops.