

Devotion and Yoga

Every entity has both a physical as well a subtle body. The Upanishads define the soul as the inner self or transmigratory entity dwelling in all beings that travel from the inhabited physical to the subtle body. Post-death, the soul of the indwelling being gets associated with the subtle body. A wise person is not bewildered by the change of soul at death. The embodied being passes through several phases from the inhabited gross physical body to the subtle body after physical death. The Upanishads describe the soul as the all-pervasive, shining, and glorious consciousness that illuminates the thoughts, emotions, and minds of all beings. The hidden inner consciousness of all beings is the same which endows the physical body with life and sentience. Though there is one source of universal consciousness, the individual subtle body exhibits life during the dream phase and can be discriminated against individually from one another supporting concepts of soul travel. The soul is like the essence or fragrance of a flower and like a king ruling over his palace. Diving deep into this concept, the presence of the subtle body allows individuals to experience life through the physical body. Will force can only be associated with executing the idea of discrimination through the sense of individuality or independent identity. With the cumulative support of multiple subtle body particles, the individual consciousness achieves a precariously balanced state for consolidated existence. However, there is no question of maintaining individuality on achieving the highest, consolidated stage of enlightenment or awakening as one gains ultimate awareness. Every sapling of the Universe has the potential to bloom and over-grow the Universal consciousness to facilitate the governance of the entire Universe. Nature is coherently attentive to every tiny detail of structure and operation of creations with precision and perfection.

In practical spiritualism ('tantras'), the entire central channel is regarded as 'Jivatma' and the 6 centers ('chakras') stand for different states of the soul's existence. At the first three lower centers, the 'Jivatma' remains dormant according to the 'tantra' theory. Where the 'Jivatma' remains dormant, we are identified with physical and mental experiences, but the moment it awakens and becomes self-aware, only then consciousness is raised to the level of the fourth center, which is the center located at the bosom, represented as a blue lotus with twelve petals. In some well-known scriptures, it is also pictured as an eight-petaled red lotus, just below the heart center, where the mental worship of one's chosen deity is to be performed. The lotus symbolizes the mystic symbol, which represents certain supersensuous experiences. The heart center is the point of convergence for several powers. According to the prevalent

‘tantric’ critics, the three lower chakras stand for the levels of unconsciousness, whereas the three higher centers stand for levels of superconsciousness. According to the ‘tantric’ school of spiritualism, the heart is regarded as the actual shrine of true consciousness, the source of self-awareness. The heart is the sheath of intelligence or self-awareness of dynamic faith. Each of these layers of consciousness is an extremely vital power center through which we receive guidance to discover directions from the cosmic nature. Consciousness, limited by the five sheaths, appears as five different selves, with five different identities that discover directions. Individual willpower is a static aspect of the 'Jivatma'. In ordinary life, willpower is regulated by lower instincts and directed outward towards sense objects. When the same will force is freed and directed inward, it becomes a spiritual force or dynamic faith. True faith is the motive force leading a person’s spiritual progression, considered the head of the sheath of intelligence or the heart center. Individual consciousness being a part of cosmic truth, is always trying to align with cosmic truth. This is what devotion is all about.

It is pivotal to understand how devotion has been refined in various traditions. In the framing of the syntactical nature of the idea of devotion, God is considered as an object of devotion, and the devotees as agents of devotion in their performance of devotional acts in the phenomenal world which gives rise to interesting philosophical scenarios. The perennial impulse to submit to the ultimacy of God is contested by the deep devotion and loving relation with God. Devotional activity is both the method and goal of attaining perfection. The main concern of devotional ideas is to marshall philosophies, scriptures, and hermeneutics for eternal realities. However, the idea of the ultimate sense of contentment is founded on a broad, vast, and expansive concept related to peace, joy, and blissfulness, achieved only through devotion. The distinct compartmentalized zones of contentment powerfully overlap to give the ultimate sense of blissfulness. The three forms of contentment are – worldly pleasures of the awakened state in the physical body, gratification through the dream state, and the absolute saturation or the ultimate sense of contentment through the deep sleep state. However, all three forms of contentment and consciousness can be achieved in one stroke by the easy path of ‘mantra’ meditation. The word ‘Aum’ represents everything in its symbolism - the past, present, and future. The concept of time is a trick in reference from the standpoint of Physics and a trick of the mind when spiritually investigated. Where there is no mind, the concept of time does not function there. Mind is a matter too and when the mind is in conjunction with life, it gains a similitude of activity in its sentience and conscience. Subjectively, ‘Aum’ represents the matter along with the spiritual center enveloping it all. Meticulously investigating the very nature of our core identity. To those intellectually

immature and spiritually untrained, it may seem scandalously absurd at first glance, how it is revolutionizing along with certainness or truth on the canvas of reality.

The soul has four distinguishable quarters or fields of activities. Analyzing our subjective life, there are three planes of consciousness in which we live daily - the waking state, dream state, and deep sleep state. The deep sleep state is a condition in which neither the organs of knowledge function nor does knowledge act, and at such a moment we resign to a strange realm unknown to us. The awareness in the deep sleep stage is a homogeneous mass of pure consciousness, illuminating nothing in particular but giving a sense of pure blissfulness. The true soul is reflected in the fourth stage which has the divine spark of pure light present in each one of us, which is un-inferable, incomprehensible, unthinkable, and unseen by any sense organs but essentially belongs to the self alone.

In the 'Ram Narayan Ram' mantra delivered by Thakur, the first Ram - represents the sharp and powerful dream state, Narayan represents the waking state, and the last Ram represents the deep sleep state along with the sense of not confronting anything, which is the extension of deep sleep to the fourth stage of the 'Samadhi' which is beyond the deep sleep stage. Here lies the magnificent significance of chanting 'Ram Narayan Ram'.

Yoga is the meeting of the main soul of the self with the cosmic self. The spiritual heart is the seat of self-awareness and will-force, where one comes in touch with the psychic life force. The profound insights into the mystery of creation that the Vedic sages gained are by the combination of the two forces - life force and will force. This is why the heart is where the worship of one's chosen deity is performed. Every aspirant passes through 3 stages - purification of the mind, illumination of the self, and the ultimate union with the Absolute. Without the former two, one does not deserve to be united with the Absolute as per Upanishads. All these stages are a part of the whole, and none is superior to another. The discovery of the Golden Vessel or Spiritual heart and experience of the light of the soul belongs to the stage of illumination of self.

However, even during the purification of the mind from the remnants of past learnings, pains, and sufferings, still we can be ever-connected with the omnipresent, just with our sheer persuasive love for the Absolute. There is nothing to be achieved. What is to be achieved is always there. Therefore, at every moment it is ever-possible to be connected with the Absolute. If it isn't there there is nothing Absolute.

Derived from sacred discourses where Beloved directed the spiritual seekers on the path of self-awareness and devotion.