



ĪSVARA & RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE

PŪRNA VIDYĀ VEDIC HERITAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME

HOMework

Review: Upavāsa

- Upavāsa is a religious vow involving fasting along with prayer and contemplation
- It strengthens the mind
- It evokes devotion for the Lord

**FESTIVAL:
THANKSGIVING**



Thanksgiving

- Why do we celebrate Thanksgiving in America?
- How do we celebrate Thanksgiving?
- When should we give thanks?



Thanksgiving

- Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism teaches us that all is Īśvara
- Īśvara is the creator and simultaneously in creation because Īśvara is both the intelligent cause and the material cause
- We can look at a beautiful sunrise, vibrant colors of flowers, a running stream, wind against our skin or a golden sunset and just experience the inherent peace and joy in creation
- We feel a sense of completeness in such moments
- We are thankful to BE in that moment



Thanksgiving

- Every moment should be an occasion to give thanks
- It is said that a person with an attitude of gratitude is happy no matter what circumstances he/she faces
- Each being we encounter is there to teach us something about ourselves – we can be thankful for that!
- Mother, father, brother, sister, grandparents, teachers, friends, pets, they all deserve our thanks



Thanksgiving

- How will you express your thankfulness and gratitude?
- Each of us should take a moment or two to remember someone or something in our lives and share with the rest of group about how we will express our thanks

JAPA



What is Japa?

- It is an oral form of worship
- It is a mental activity that helps us recognize our thinking patterns and gain a tranquil mind
- We need to understand how our mind works in order to understand how japa works!

What is the mind?

- The mind is a flow of thoughts
- Do you know what your next thought will be? No!
- Even though the mind appears to be logical we do not seem to have control of our own mind
- Japa helps us understand our mind
- Japa helps us become more aware and alert of our thoughts



Japa

- In japa one chants a mantra or the Lord's name
- There are three types of japa
 - **Uccha-japa** (loud repetition of a mantra or Lord's name)
 - **Manda-japa** (vocal chanting but softly)
 - **Citta-japa** (purely mental)
- Citta-japa is also called dhyāna or meditation



Japa

- One should chant the mantra and pay attention to its meaning when chanting – that is most effective
- When the mind is given the task of repeating a mantra, it quietens down because it knows what to expect as the next thought (the same mantra!)
- This creates a situation where thoughts in the mind are predictable



Japa

- The practice of japa helps the meditator learn to dismiss random thoughts by bringing the mind back to the mantra
- Slowly the meditator becomes aware of his/her thinking patterns and gains more mastery of his/her mind



Japa

- A more significant purpose of japa is to know the nature of the self as silence
- Japa helps eliminate the connecting pattern between two different thoughts
- The silence between two successive thoughts (chants) becomes the focal point of attention - the same thought (mantra) is repeated



Japa

- This silence between thoughts is *śanti* or tranquility
- We *need not do* anything to *achieve* this tranquility or *śanti*
- Contemplate on this
 - “*Our nature is silence; every thought arises out of silence, exists in silence and merges back into silence*”



Japa

- Japa is not merely a technique but it is a mental prayer
- Chanting meaningless words is not meaningful
- Chanting with the Lord's name or form or attribute in mind, evokes a sense of sanctity about the japa practice
- The devotee-Lord relationship is the same as the individual-total (*vyaśti-samaśti*) relationship
- Chanting has to be done with awareness of the Lord



Japa Mantras

- Om namaḥ śivāya
- Om namo nārāyanāya
- Om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya
- Many others.....
- Which one do you use in your japa?



Japa Mala

- The japa mala has 108 beads + 1 central bead (called *meru* bead)
- There are 54 vowels and consonants in Sanskrit; repeated forwards and backwards that makes it 108
- The number 108 represents the Lord

Using the Japa Mala

- Hold the japa mala in your right hand
- Hold the ring and little fingers together and let the mala hang on the ring finger
- Grasp a single bead between the thumb and middle finger and move it towards the palm while chanting the mantra
- Continue till you reach the *meru* (large central bead)
- Turn the japa mala around and repeat the chanting

Using the Japa Mala

- This process is called “telling the beads”
- Using the japa mala is useful - it gives the meditator one more tool to know when he/she has been distracted
- If the movement of the japa mala stops, it means that the meditator is distracted
- He/she can become aware of this and bring the mind back to the japa

Glory of the Japa

jakāro janmavicchedaḥ pakārah pāpanāśanaḥ

janmakarmaharo yasmāt tasmājjapa iti smrtāḥ

The syllable “*ja*” signifies the end of the cycle of birth; the syllable “*pa*” stands for the destruction of all impurities

Therefore that by which the cycle of birth (and death) and impurities are all destroyed is japa

Gītā and the Japa

- Lord Kṛṣṇa says (Gita 10.25): “Yagnānām japa yagnosmi...” or “I am the japa amongst all the yagnas...”
- Japa is considered here by Lord Kṛṣṇa to be the best form of yagna!

महर्षीणां भृगुरहं गिरामस्म्येकमक्षरम् ।

यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि स्थावराणां हिमालयः ॥ १०-२५ ॥

Homework

- Write a paragraph saying why you are thankful to EACH of your parents (or anyone who is taking care of you)

Present it to each parent (or anyone who is taking care of you) on thanksgiving day during lunch or dinner – read it aloud!

- Practice *ucca-japa* and *citta-japa*

Chant “**Om! Namaḥ Śivāya...**” 11 times (chant slowly with your eyes gently closed)

Then silently repeat the mantra with your eyes closed for a few minutes and watch your mind!

Concluding Śānti Mantra

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम् पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

- Om pūrṇamadah pūrṇamidam pūrṇātpurṇamudacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate ॥
Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥

That is fullness, this is fullness. From that fullness this fullness came. From that fullness (when) this fullness (is) removed, what remains is fullness. Om peace, peace, peace