

Brahma-yajna or Sandhya

The word 'yajna' is derived from the root 'yaj' which means 'to worship', 'to be in company', and 'to give.' Hence 'Brahma-yajna' means 'worship of Brahma, the Lord of all,' 'being with Him, in His company', and 'surrender of one's self unto Him.'

The meaning of the term 'Brahma' is Isvara, Lord God. The *yajurveda* (40, 17) says "Om kham Brahma." "Om is the Lord's own name. 'Kham' means that he is all pervasive just as Ether (all-space) is. And 'Brahma' means 'the greatest'. Hence 'Brahma Yajna' means worship of God, being in His company by removing the shadows of darkness and ignorance, and surrender of the self, giving up ones self unto Him. In other words, one is with the Lord only, having all other support, hope and expectations. Brahma-dana is an important term: Giving your self unto Him, and also giving to or sharing with others, your experience of the Lord's presence. The purpose of Brahma-yajna is worship, self-study and meditation, spiritual strength and self-knowledge, and the realization of God.

Sandhya means proper meditation, communion. Sandhya is that activity or experience of the self in which it performs three tasks at the same time—singing the praise of the Lord, praying to Him, and being close to Him. Know Him, love Him, be like Him, walking in His shadow. During Sandhya, the limitation of the self are broken through and the Light of the Lord shines through into the heart and soul. Sandhya is food for the spirit. Just as the body cries for food when it is hungry, so does the spirit cry for the Lord's company when it feels oppressed by its limitation and yearns for freedom and infinite love.

Sankalpa and Brahmacharya

Sankalpa means a conscious decision, as strong and unrelenting as it is noble. Brahmacharya means being and living with God. "The way to hell is paved with good intentions," is a famous saying. Good intention may fail you and may not stop your entry into hell—they might as well lead you to hell because, quite often, they are as weak as they are noble. Hence the value of Sankalpa, a decision, a determination—a noble intention which is strong and relentless. No casualness is allowed into the kingdom of the Lord.

Brahmacharya is often interpreted as control of the sex urge and preservation of the vital energy. How does the 'Company of God' suggest this other

meaning? Maharsi Vyasa also, in his commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali suggests that Brahmacharya means control of sex. The reason is that sex is the most powerful urge in the physical life of the human being. The more powerful, the more pleasurable too. But history shows that when great nations and civilization fell, they fell because of incontinence and indulgence especially in sex. The more powerful and pleasurable an urge is, physically speaking, the more exhausted. It is for the innocent, the simple and the strong.

Sometimes it is said that control of the natural urge means suppression, inhibition. Brahmacharya is not suppression of nature, not inhibition of personality, it is sublimation of nature and personality. Can a powerful current of water be stopped from flowing? yes. Control the flow, hold the water with a dam, release it into prepared and planned channels, and let it irrigate the fields of a planned economy. Sex energy in fact is energy of the mind. Provide the mind a proper field for sajour, canalize and direct the flow of its energy and you reach the goal you have set for yourself. When the energy of the mind flows inward, searching for the spirit, we live the life of yoga, when the energy flows outward, the mind following the senses and the spirit following the mind, we live a life of Bhoga (indulgence). Hence let the mind concentrate on the spirit and the senses will return from the outside, the mind will hold within, and there will be an explosion of light and spiritual energy. The Lord will call us—because He is for us and we are for none else.

The Miserable: Miserable are they who don't pray, because they do not hear the call. Manu says :—

न तिष्ठति तु यः पूर्वा नोपास्ते यश्च परिग्रामम् ।

स शूद्रवद् बहिष्कार्यः सर्वस्माद् द्विजकर्मणः ।। ऋ० २, १०३.

Na tishthati tu yah pūrvām nopāste yaśca paścēnam ।

sa śūdravad bahiṣkāryaḥ sarvasmād dvijakarmaṇaḥ ।।

Meaning: Miserable is the man who does not daily pray morning and evening. Such a person is nothing more than a natural person who does not belong to the higher categories of educated and cultured people. He deserves only rejections from the ways and actions of the cultured people—simply because by action and behaviour he is not one of them.

How does man fall? Man is not essentially fallen. He is rational and understands his duties and obligations. If, knowing what he does, he neglects his duties then he falls to the level of the natural man, i.e., just an animal in the shape of man.

Time of Prayer : Maharsi Manu says :—

पूर्वा सख्यां जपंस्तिष्ठत् सावित्रीमार्कदर्शनत् ।

पश्चिमां तु समासीनः सम्यगुषतिभवनत् ॥

Manu 2. 210.

Pūrvām sandhyam japams̥stīṣṭhet savitrimārkadarśanāt ।

paścimām tu samāsīnah samyagr̥ksāvībhavanāt ।

Manu. 2. 210.

The time for prayer is from on hour before sunrise upto the sunrise, in the morning, and from sunset to the rise of the stars. Prayers should be said twice everyday at the time of the meeting of the day and night, as laid down in the **Pancha maha yajna-vidhi**. The duration of prayer should be one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening (Satyārtha Prakasa, ch. 4).

The place and its sanctity :—Let the body, mind and soul be clean, free of all disturbance. Thus while you are at peace with yourself, sit in a quiet place away from hustle and bustle and pray. The neatness and sanctity is both internal and external. If only the body is washed and cleaned but the mind is full of all kinds of dirty thoughts, prayer is empty and fruitless. Hence the purity of mind is essential. Manu says :—

अद्विद्यान्नाणि शुध्यान्ति मनः सत्येन शुध्याति ।

विद्यातपोभ्यां भूतस्मा बुद्धिर्ज्ञानेन शुध्याति ॥

5. 109.

Adbhiryānnaṇi śudhyānti manaḥ satyena śudhyati ।

vidyātāpobhyāṁ bhūtātsma buddhir̥ jñānena śudhyati ॥

The body is cleaned by water, the mind is purified by truth, the human soul is purified by self-knowledge and tapa, i.e., discipline of the body and mind, and the intellect is purified by knowledge.

The Result : Nothing goes unrewarded. The fruit of prayer is knowledge, specially knowledge of the self, mental and spiritual well-being, health of body and the highest attainment is realization of self and God. When the body mind and soul are healthy, one attains all the aims of life—fulfilment of Dharma, attainment of wealth, all earthly fulfillments and finally spiritual realization and freedom.

The value of regularity : Manu says in 4. 21 that one must not violate the principle of regularity in prayer :—

ऋषियज्ञं देवयज्ञं भूतयज्ञं च सर्वदा ।

नृयज्ञं पितृयज्ञं च यथाशक्ति ह्यप्येत् ॥

Manu 4. 21.

Ṛṣiyajnam devayajnam bhūtyajnam ca sarvada ।

nṛyajnam pitṛyajnam ca yathāśakti na hāpayet ॥

As far as possible, never miss the reading of sacred literature, prayer, meditation, sitting with the wise and the virtuous, service of the good, purity of body, mind and soul, cultivation of good qualities, homa, giving alms to the needy, contribution to education and the promotion of knowledge, feeding the birds and animals, hospitality to all the guests, service of the mother, father, and other seniors; these must be performed daily.

ऋत्विक् नारिन् अनध्यायो ब्रह्मसत्रं हि तस्मृतम् ।

ब्रह्माहुतिहुतं पुण्यमनध्यायवषट् कृतम् ॥

Manu 2. 106.

Naitvike nāristi anadhyaयो brahmasatram hi tatsmṛtam ।

brahmāhuti hutam puṇyamanaḍhyaya vaṣatkṛtam ।

Manu. 2. 106.

There is no interruption (holiday) in matters of daily routine. Just as there is no intermission in breathing, so there should be no holiday from prayers etc. Something good should be done without break. Something evil should never be done. Never be on holiday from good, be always or holiday from evil.

The Preparation :—One should leave the bed at least two hours before sunrise, i.e., at about four in the morning. Chant 'Om' while getting up. Wash the mouth and drink water for clearance of the bowels. After this chant the morning mantras as given below :—

ओम् प्रातरग्निं प्रातरिन्द्रं हवामहे प्रातर्मित्रावरुणा प्रातरश्विना ।

प्रातरभर्गं पूषणं ब्रह्मणारुणति प्रातरसोममुत् रुद्रं हुवेमः ॥

Om prataragnim prātarmitrān prātarmitrāvaruṇā prātar-aśvina । prātarmitrān puṣanam brahmanas-patim prātaḥ Somamuta rudram huvema ।।

Meaning : In this blissful hour of the morning, we invoke and pray to Agni, Lord of Light, Indra, Lord of Glory. In this blessed beginning of the day, we pray to the Lord dear as the very breath of life, the very first object and source of divine love and friendship. Glory do we sing of the Lord creator of the Sun and the Moon, Giver of all good fortune, who nourishes and sustains the entire Universe, the Lord who reveals all knowledge and is at the same time the ocean of infinite compassion and the dispenser of ultimate justice.

2. प्रातर्जितं भगमुग्रं हुवेम वयं पुत्रमदितेयो विधत् ।

आशश्विचक्रं मन्यमानरतुरश्वितराजा शिखं भगं भक्षीत्याह ।।

Prātarmjitam bhagam-ugram huvema yavama putram-aditeryo vidhartā । aśhvasśvid-yaṁ manyamānas-turasśvid-rājā cid-yam bhagam bhakṣiṣiyāha ।।

Meaning : In this blessed hour of the morning, we invoke and pray to the Lord wielder of the universe, the illustrious Lord of glory and victory, refulgent as the sun, child of the Heavens. He is the Ordainer of all that is, knows all, controls all, lights up everything into existence. He is our only choice for worship and service in meditation. Verily, He is the only one, I say.

3. भग प्रोतर्भक्तौ सत्यराधो भगोमां शिष्यमुदगा ददन्तः ।

भग प्र षो जनय गोविन्दरथैर्भरा प्र नृशिनृवन्तः स्याम ॥

Bhaga pragnetar bhaga satyarādhō bhagemām dhiyam-ud-ava-śīdadān-nah | bhaga prano janaya gobhiv-asāvair-bhaga pra nr̥bhir-nryantaḥ syāma ॥

Meaning : Lord of the universe, thine is the power and glory, thine is victory and the grandeur. Thou art the creator, the inspirer, giver of truth and intelligence. Give us the right intelligence and protect us always. Bless us with cows and horses, bless us with man by men all around.

4. उत्तेदानीभवन्तः स्यामोत प्रशित्व चत ख्ये अहन्ताम् ।

उत्तोदिता मद्यवन्त्सूर्यस्य वयं देवानां सुमती स्याम ॥

Utedānim bhagavantah syāmote prapitva uta madhye ahnām | utodia maghavan-t- sūryasya vayam devānām sumatāu syāma ॥

Meaning : And, Lord of Light and glory, may we, in this hour of sunrise, and at mid-day, and also in the hour of sun-set, be blessed with the power and the glory that is thine, and may we always be in the company of the wise and the virtuous.

5. भग एव भगवां अस्तु देवास्तेन वयं भगवन्तः स्याम ।

तं त्वा भग सर्व इज्जोहवीति स नो भग पुरस्ता भवेह ॥

Bhaga eva bhagavan astu devas-tena vayam bhagavantah syāma | tam tvā bhaga sarva ijohaviti sa no bhaga purataḥ bhaveha ॥

Meaning : Lord of power and glory, all the living creatures sing your praises in homage. Lead us into the path of light and truth so that by your grace we may be blessed with all the happiness and prosperity.

After the chanting of the mantras given above, complete the daily chores of the morning, toilet, mouth-wash, bath etc. Then sit straight on a comfortable and stable seat in a comfortable posture for sandhya. Let your mind be totally disburdened of all thoughts and worries except the thoughts of

God and spiritual well-being. Maharsi Patanjali in his yogasutras defines meditation as freedom from the worldly flow of the energy of the mind. This flow can be controlled and managed with sustained prectice and non-attachment. Sit in that mood of composure—bodily comfort and mental freedom. According to kapila, author of the Sankhya sutras, meditation is possible only when the mind is free from all thoughts of worldly objects (6, 25). Hence all those ways of worship in which the senses have to be occupied with anything external and objective—an image or idol for example, are not the ways of meditation—they may be ways of ritual all right. Idol worship Namaz, etc., are obstacles in the way of meditation.

The point to think on is : What is the end and aim of human life? What is the purpose of this human body and intelligence? The end and aim of human existence is the realization of the self and of God. Meditate on this and internalize it. Realization of God is the gist of all sacred teachings. The achievement requires dedication.

Meditate on one point only—the awareness of God. Nothing else about one's personal life, family, property, politics, etc. should disturb that One and only awareness. Sometimes people are lost in the thoughts of the beauty of their body. The beauty of the body, prestige of the family, honour and reputation, all these are facts of existence but not the ultimate facts of the highest awareness. The awareness of God transcends all transitory considerations. Nothing of me and mine should intrude. All that is mine is not really mine, it is given to me by God, He alone is the Master. I am using all that is mine only as things in a rest house. I am a traveller, my destination is God. If I am tied down to the resthouse on way, my journey comes to a dead end. Why should I die a spiritual death.

I am in God and Gone is in me. There is not a single particle, the smallest one, Param-anu is which He does not pervade. His presence is eternal and immediate. Just look within and see Him there. But if there is anything other than He, you will see only the other thing and find as if he has evaporated. Further the agent that sees, experiences or realizes is the I, not the mind or intellect. The mind and intellect in themselves are not intelligent. The soul is intelligent, and the mind and the intellect are its instruments, the desire to realize God originates in the mind when the soul experiences the Grace of God. Hence be a master of the mind, concentrate on your self, and see the presence of the Lord residing there. Since He is the Spirit, He can be seen in the spirit by the spirit when the physical eyes (all senses) are closed.

See the Presence, and be with it. Don't look away even for a split second. This is the state of Isvara-Pranidhana, leaving yourself entirely unto Him. "The omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, just and compassionate, formless, just the Presence, that is in me. He watches me, every action of mine, thought and feeling of mine, everything, then, must be in accordance to His will. This is the Way." Just as a T.V. announcer is watched by a million people and has to be careful for that reason, so the man of God has to be pious because he is watched. And he has to be careful not out of fear so much as out of love in faith, because everything done carefully in love and faith is acceptable to the father, and the mother and the friend. Once you establish the relation of immediacy, surrender and obedience, you are ready for the experience of the bliss.

Thoughts on Isvara, Jiva and Prakṛti

Normally, we think of God, we don't feel His presence. When we think of Him, we believe, without knowing it, that He is a third person, somewhere far away. This is not right, because He is just here, everywhere around and within. Therefore eliminate the distance. Don't think about Him, speak to the immediate presence, feel It. At the closest feel It as you, and discover it within you. If you try to feel the spirit immediately outside you, you miss it within. So feel it in you. The relation between you and the Presence is that of the pervaded and the pervader. Hence feel it, see It, within yourself, then you will find that the distance is eliminated. You cannot eliminate the distance outside your self because you are confined to the body and you cannot move out. Hence the only 'place' where you and the Presence are together is the soul within. Be there, keep within, permit nothing else to intrude, and you will experience the presence.

Know that God is the End, the great Destination of the Soul, the Soul is the traveller, and everything else in existence, the world of nature, is the means. God is the *Sadhya*, the soul is the *Sadhaka*, and nature is the *Sadhana*. Be very clear on this and you will not go astray.

Let us know one thing clearly : Thinking of or thinking on the nature of God is one thing, feeling His presence is another and closer, and being with Him and in Him is yet another and the closest. But each one of these is good and relevant to the total process of Sadhana. Thinking of His nature is necessary in order to know what He is like. It helps us to choose the right path

of sadhana. Feeling His Presence is necessary because, unless you feel someone's presence you don't acknowledge it, not are you admitted into the presence. And being with the presence and in the Presence is the experience of the Presence. In that state all distance is eliminated. When you have reached the destination.

The Nature of God :—The nature of God is described in the Veda, the Yoga-sutras of Patanjali, and the first and second principles of the Arya Samaj. These are clear statement, no loose ends, no doubts. Let us refer to yajurveda, 40, 8 :

स पर्याय्युक्रमकायमणमन्तविर शुद्धमपवदिद्म । कविर्मनीषी परिभूः
स्वयम्भूर्धातव्य तौष्ट्यं न्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समभ्यः ॥
sapatryagac-chukrām-akāyam-avraṇām-asnāvīram śuddham-
apāpa-viddham । kavir-manīṣi paribhūḥ svayambhūr-
yāthāthayato' arthān vyadadhāre-chāśvatabhyah
samabhyah ॥

Meaning : The Lord is omnipresent, powerful ordainer of all, without body, free of all existential defects or weakness, with no sinews, and pure, free of all sin whatever. He knows all inside out, moves all through the mind, Lord of all and master, true existent by himself, and since and for all eternity ordains, creates and maintains everything in perfect manner for His creatures—knowledge of Veda, Law of nature, and the system of cause and effect. We should worship only He, the one and only one, since no one shares power with Him.

Here is a description of Divine Nature as recaptured in a state of thought and language from the experience of Communion with Him in Samadhi (yogasutras, 1-24 to 27).

क्लेश-कर्म-विपाकारशेषरामुष्टः पुरुषविशेष-ईश्वरः ॥

तत्र निरतिशयं सर्वज्ञवीजम् ॥

स एष पूर्वेणमपि गुरुः कालेनानवच्छेदात् ॥

तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः ॥

Kleśa-karma-vipākāraśeṣarāmuṣṭhaḥ puruṣa-viśeṣaḥ
Iśvaraḥ ॥ Tatra nirātiśayam sarvajñāna-vījam ॥

sa eṣa pūrveṣām-api gururḥ kālenānavacchedāt ॥

jasya vācakah pranaṅvah ॥

Meaning : The Lord is the Supreme Soul unique by Himself, free of all pain and ignorance, involvement in action, the consequential results of action

and the burden of memory and mental residues. He is totally unsoiled and unconditioned. He is the first and the last Omniscient Mind, the ever eternal guru of our ancient sages. His own and immediate name is Om.

The Lord is Existent, Intelligent, and ever Blissful. He is not subject to the laws of nature as the different bodies of creatures are. He is Self-Existent, knows by Himself, abides by Himself, during before and after creation. He is not subject to Time because Time and space all exist in Him. He is eternal and infinite.

God is existent, intelligent, blissful, formless, omnipotent, just, merciful, unborn, changeless, beginningless, unique, all sustaining, Lord of all, omnipresent, omniscient, unaging, immortal, fearless, eternal, pure, and creator of the universe. He alone is worthy of worship.

God is extent, real, and ever the same. No place for doubt or skepticism. He is ever the same through all time, past, present and future, and remains before and after time too. He is lit, i.e., intelligent and aware of everything that exists. He is all Bliss, there is no pain in Him. He is formless, no icon of him, no idol, no colour. He is all powerful, He does everything of and in the universe, and needs nobody's help. He creates, sustains and then recalls all. God is just and merciful both. He dispenses the fruits of action by Himself. The act of creation is an act of mercy, even justice is a form of universal mercy. God is not subject to birth, age, change and death, and therefore He has neither beginning nor end. Birth, death, change, growth, increase, decrease, all these take place in the world of nature. Nature is subject to the law of God, God is free—just Being who works out the Becoming in the world of Nature. He is alone by Himself, no second like Him, no parrallel. He holds all, He abides by Himself, nothing else holds Him. Since He creates all, He is the Lord, Master and Ruler of all. Nothing is hidden from Him since He watches whatever happens even in the tiniest bit of the universe since He is present in the tiniest bit. He knows whatever happens in our mind as well since He is there. He is never tired, never ages, never ages but always inspires from without and within, Him alone we should worship. Miserable are they who miss Him and worship any other power or presence.

Thoughts on Jiva (The soul) : The soul is. It is existent, it is a reality—no doubt about it. It is intelligent also. But it is limited in its nature, character and power. It is free to act, but not free to choose the consequences. The soul is eternal, the body is not. Our contact with the body is temporary. But the soul comes into contact with the body according to its actions, this law is eternal. The soul in the human body is free to act, but in any other form of the body it

is not free. Man is free in action, but bound by the law in suffering the results. He is also conditioned by the consequences of his previous actions. So the human being is free as well as bound. All other forms of life are bound. Man is a doer as well as a sufferer, all other forms are sufferers.

Therefore, we need prayer. Let us pray : O God grant me knowledge, sense of right and wrong, the vision to see the truth, discrimination that while I may fulfil my obligations to the people around—my family, friends and our society—I may know that my relations in this life are temporary. My relation even with the body is temporary. My relation with you alone is eternal. Give me the power to rise and the Grace that I have the vision and the bliss. I am neither wretched—because I am the soul. But neither am I a favourite of a personal God—because all souls, whatever their body, are alike, eternal souls. So, I pray only for the right knowledge, will and love so that while I do my earthly duties without neglect, I shine in the Light of you and ultimately come to you. Grant me the strength to travel, the will to keep the direction and the vision of the destination.

Prakriti (Nature) : Prakriti is inanimate, soul, less. It is just matter inclusive of mass, motion and mind, i.e., sensitivity (tamas, rajas and sattva). Whatever appears to be animate appears because it is pervaded by God, the Supreme Soul and invested by the soul (the jiva). Prakriti is subservient to the jiva and obedient to the laws of God, the distinction between Prakriti, jiva and God is :—

Prakriti is sat (real, existent), only sat and not more. Jiva is sat and cit (intelligent, aware, conscious). God is sat, cit, and Ananda (bliss, all Happiness and Purity). Change and variation is part of the nature of Prakriti. Jiva remains constant, it doesn't change, but it fluctuates in its associations with Prakriti and God, and if it is absorbed in the beauteous change of natural forms, it forgets its real nature and is lost in the fluctuation. It can, however, recover itself and re-discover its path to God. God is constant, unchanging and uninvolved—the unmoved Mover of the world of Jiva and Prakriti.

About the nature of Prakriti Maharsi Kapila says in his Sankhya Sutras :—

सत्त्वरजस्तमसां सास्यावस्था प्रकृतिः, प्रकृतेर्महान्, महतीऽहंकारोऽहंकारात्
 पंचतन्मात्राणि-उभयमिन्द्रिय तन्मात्रेषुः स्थूलसूक्ष्मि गुण इति पंचविशतिर्ममः । ।
 Sattva-rajas-tamasām sāmyāvasthā prakṛtiḥ, prakṛteṛmahān,
 mahatō' ahankāro' ahankārat pancatannātrāny-ubhayaṁ
 indriyam, tannātrebhyah sthūla-bhūtāni puruṣa iti pañcavi-
 śatir-gaṇaḥ । ।