

Namaskar

Continuing with the layers of the mind, we are now up to the Causal-Subtle layer of mind and the fifth chakra.

Regards

Dharma

### The Subtle Causal Mind

The most subtle layer of the Causal Mind is called the Subtle Causal Mind. Here we've almost reached direct experience of Supreme Consciousness. There is only the separation of a thin veil of ignorance. In this layer lies direct awareness of the unity of the whole universe. Peace of mind increases as the experience of the inner flow of infinite bliss deepens. We see the universe more and more as an expression of the infinite source of bliss within. The feeling of universal love for all created beings increases as we embrace all as brother and sister, the whole universe as our home. Here lies the realization that "all is one."

The mind has developed up to this stage through clash. Physical clash is felt physically and psychic clash is felt mentally. But here we come to a different means of development - the attraction for the Great. That's the intense desire to experience the Cosmic Bliss. This happens naturally as one progresses on the path of self-realization. The attraction for the Cosmic Consciousness gradually increases and this is accelerated by regular and continuing meditation.

Once a student asked her guru, "When will I attain enlightenment?" The guru took her to a well and put her head in the water and told her to leave it there. She couldn't else she would drown. She pulled her head out. Afterwards the guru said, "When your desire for the Supreme is as strong as your desire for air was just now, then you will attain enlightenment." Well, you don't have to go through the near-drowning experience yourself! Just continue with your meditation.

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### The Fifth Cakra

At the level of the throat is what's called the *Sidereal Plexus*. This is the fifth chakra or psychic centre of the mental makeup. It controls the ethereal factor, and is itself controlled by the Subtle Causal Mind. The ethereal factor has up until recently not been recognized as having any real substance. We have considered space to be a vacuum, but recent scientific research has shown that space is in fact a substance in itself, albeit a very subtle one. It's associated with sound, because – somewhat at odds with traditional scientific theory – it's not air by itself which carries sound, but the ethereal factor within the air. Sound is quite subtle.

This fifth cakra controls speech, and through the hormone thyroxin secreted by the thyroid gland, the

whole body metabolism is controlled. The thyroid has two lobes located on either side of the throat. It is also the “thermostat” of the body, controlling the body's temperature. Normal thyroid secretion produces the quality of self-reliance. In men it also deepens the voice and stimulates the moustache to grow. Under-development of this plexus gives rise to irrationality and a quarrelsome nature.

The parathyroid glands (two on each side of the thyroid) regulate the metabolism of calcium and phosphorous in the body via the secretion of their hormone PTH (Parathyroid Hormone). Normal secretion of PTH gives the qualities of intellectuality and rationality. Under-secretion leads to vanity. An interesting point here is that the development of the parathyroids is inversely proportional to the development of the lymph glands. In other words, the more developed the parathyroids, the less developed the lymph glands, and vice versa. The lymph glands give athletic ability, so generally [statistically] we find that the more athletic someone is, the less inclined to intellectuality they are and vice versa. That is, the mind inclines towards a certain skill set depending on the development of the parathyroid glands. Note, importantly, that we're talking about intellect (the desire to study and learn theoretical knowledge) and not intelligence. Intelligence does not depend on intellect!

There are two asanas (performed as a pair) that have a direct effect on the thyroid and parathyroids, because one (the "shoulderstand") bends the neck forward, and the other (the "fish") bends it backward, massaging the glands and regulating their hormone secretion.

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Healthy Hints:

For the maintenance of healthy body metabolism and energy, two things are important here: relaxation and sleep.

Throughout the day get into the habit of consciously checking that you're doing everything in a very relaxed and efficient way. Most of the tension we feel is not really necessary – we just convince ourselves that we're in a stressful situation and get tense as a result. The deep relaxation that you do after asanas (yoga postures) will help to a great extent. You can also do it during the day as well, as many times as you like. It's especially important to do deep relaxation regularly if your work and activity involves a lot of thinking.

Deep relaxation:

- Elicits the "Relaxation Response"
- Relieves stress
- Decreases blood pressure
- Relaxes the nerves and muscles
- Decreases the need for sleep
- Strengthens the heart



Sleep is important, but don't oversleep! Sleep early and rise with the sun: 9 pm (or 11 pm) to 5 am would be ideal! Regular meditators can sleep much less than others and 6 hours should be sufficient after years of meditation. Remember that an hour's sleep before midnight is worth two after. So, by practicing meditation regularly you may even find that you need less than 8 hours – you could even get down to 6 hours or less. Sleep on a firm bed (better for the back) and lie initially on your left side for digestion (ie your right nostril is open). However, eventually turn over, because the left nostril being open during sleep is better as it gives a more subtle experience.

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WHAT IS MEDITATION?

One of the fundamental teachings of Ananda Marga is to experience the Infinite within oneself. We give expression to the unique Dharma (spiritual nature) of human life by focusing our awareness on the inner self - on the reflection of the Supreme. This process is the practice of meditation.

Many people think that meditation is like some instant product, just add water (or just sit down) and the process works magically, dropping the meditator into a thoughtless world of pure bliss, stillness and shining lights. Not only do people think this, but they suppose they are doing something wrong or that their mantra is defective when the instant stillness doesn't happen in the first week, and consequently many people discontinue the practice simply because they do not know what to expect.

So what does happen in the first weeks / months or periods of meditation? In some respects it depends on each person's mental characteristics that have been built up in the past. But, "The mind is like a mad monkey stung by a scorpion", said the great yogi Ramakrishna, and all of us who start meditation and try concentrating on a mantra know there is some difficulty when commencing. Especially in the beginning, the mind is unruly. As you sit down so many thoughts arise in your mind. You get your mantra going and then you drift off thinking of something else. Sounds and noise from without may sidetrack your internal concentration, your body won't stay still, and you finally get up thinking that nothing has happened.

But it has. By constantly bringing your mind back to the mantra you are building your capacity to hold your mind steady in the future. Much as an athlete in training, the body acquires great physical strength and stamina, so too, the struggling meditator is developing mental strength and the capacity to concentrate. It is concentration which we are practicing in the beginning stages and it is only after a time that one will come to the stage when you can truly fix your mind on the object of concentration, and hold it there ... then a person will be performing meditation with clarity.

Another puzzling experience for the new meditator is that the mind may appear even more unsteady after commencing meditation. More thoughts than usual may come to the mind. And this is often taken to mean that the process is not being done correctly. Here, just the opposite is true. The function of the mantra is to internally work upon our minds by clearing out all the distortions and impressions which our past actions (karma) and thoughts have registered upon our subconscious. You have to go through it. The ego won't dominate forever! Thus, the repetition of the mantra acts to revive memories and thoughts of what has come before. It's like cleaning house; in the middle of the process the house arrangement may look odd - different to when you started, but by persevering, and not quitting in the middle, we are better off. Cleanliness and clarity is gained. The same is true for the mind; as we continue to meditate, our mind will get clearer and clearer.

Meditation is the effort to control and develop the mind; to realise one's true nature. It is the means by which we can realise our full potential on all levels of existence, physical, mental and spiritual.

The tool we use to control and elevate the mind is called mantra. Mantra is a Sanskrit word which literally means "that which liberates the mind"; it is the means by which one's personal or individual vibration is brought into harmonious resonance with the Cosmic vibration. Yes, it does involve such a lofty and inspiring outlook! Were it not so, the goal would be more limited. But the goal of meditation is the Unlimited. It is one's true Self. The most significant difference between a mantra and an ordinary word or sound is that a mantra has been injected with spiritual force, and it is this force which gives it its elevating power. All this has to do with the subtle science of inner acoustics and various aspects of mind and the resonating and uplifting influence of sound and ideation. That you learn from experience and practice.

Such a mantra comes from a fully realised spiritual preceptor - a Guru. As we are all different individuals, so too the technique is different - hence mantras will differ from person to person. Ananda Marga teachers known as Acaryas ("one who teaches by example") give personal instruction in the science of meditation and mantra, but to begin with, a person can meditate with a general mantra.

The mantra used for singing and introductory meditation is composed of three words:

BABA NAM KEVALAM.

BABA = Infinite Consciousness, Infinite Love, or Most Beloved

NAM = Name or Expression

KEVALAM = Only or Everything

Thus, BABA NAM KEVALAM means: "Only the name of Infinite Consciousness" or "Everything is the expression of Infinite Love - all is Love" or "The Most Dearest is Everywhere" or similar sentiments.

Meditation is a very direct means of understanding and realising oneself - the inner self, where that essence of humanity must lie. It can't be determined by intellectual capacities alone, for here too there is much scope for conflict and argument. In order to be truly mentally free, all types of mental bondages will have to be shed. Through meditation, the layers of insecurities, weaknesses and ignorance are peeled away, revealing the unadulterated, clear thinking and peaceful self.

The deeper the meditation, the more real is the awareness that the human mind is in fact not bound by narrowness and selfishness. It is this expanded mentality which inspires the inner courage necessary to oppose negativity from within and from the environment (and society). One's search for inner peace and fulfilment goes hand in hand with a dynamic and meaningful commitment to life.

Ananda Marga's philosophy and practice is based on the ancient teachings of Tantra ("that which expands and liberates from bondage"). Tantra is a science of life; it is an understanding of cosmic laws relating to humans and how they are to live in order to develop one's full potential. It teaches that one must take an objective look at everything in life and live positively - to always do those actions which help our evolution, our advancement towards the Supreme - it provides the guidelines to distinguish between that which takes humanity to greatness from that which leads to confusion, darkness and ignorance. Tantra is a science with its application in everyday use, for all people

The inner essence of meditation and why it is necessary is also explained in the following extract from the works of Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, who founded Ananda Marga and systematised Tantric meditation practices for the whole of humanity's benefit. It is said, that the Supreme Entity is your own true Self, your highest consciousness.

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WHY MEDITATE?

BY SHRII SHRII ANANDAMURTI

It is the nature of human beings to seek happiness. Let us see what one does to achieve it and whether it is achieved by those means.

In the search for happiness humans are first attracted by earthly enjoyments. They collect wealth, try to

achieve power and position, and run after myriad desires to satisfy their longing for happiness. One who has a hundred is not satisfied with it. The person strives for thousands but even possessing thousands does not satisfy them - now they want a million and so on. Then it is seen that a person having influence in a district wants to extend it over the province. Provincial leaders want to become national leaders and when they achieve that, there creeps in the desire for world leadership. Mere acquisition of wealth, power and position does not satisfy. The acquisition of something limited only creates increased desire for acquiring more, and the quest for happiness finds no end. The hunger for possessing more is unending. It is limitless and infinite.

However dignified or lofty the achievement, it fails to set at rest the human being's unlimited quest for happiness. Those who hanker after wealth will not be satisfied until they can obtain unlimited wealth. Nor will the seeker of power, position and prestige be satisfied until they can get these in limitless proportions, as all these are earthly objects of the world. The world itself is finite and cannot provide things infinitely.

Naturally, therefore, the greatest worldly acquisition even if it would be the entire globe, would not secure anything infinite and permanent. What then is that infinite, eternal thing which will provide everlasting happiness?

The Cosmic Entity alone is infinite and eternal. It alone is limitless. And the eternal longing of human being for happiness can only be satiated by realization of the Infinite. The ephemeral nature of worldly possessions, power and position leads one to the only conclusion that none of these things of this finite and limited world can set at rest the everlasting urge for happiness. Their acquisition merely gives rise to further longing. Only realization of the Infinite can do it. The Infinite can be only one and that is Brahma - the Cosmic Entity. Hence it is only Brahma (or the Supreme Entity) that can provide everlasting happiness - the quest for which is the characteristic of every human being. In reality, behind this human urge is hidden the desire, the longing for attainment of the Supreme (ie Brahma in Sanskrit). It is the very nature of every living being. This alone is the dharma (fundamental characteristic) of every human.

The word "dharma" signifies "property." The English word for it is nature, characteristic or property. The nature of fire is to burn or produce heat. It is the characteristic or property of fire and is also termed as the nature of fire. Similarly the dharma or nature of human being is to seek Brahma - the Supreme Blessedness.

(slightly edited for clarity)