



The Value of Sadhana by Bhaskar

Dada Diiptimanananda recently stayed at my home for a couple of days. In that short time, I learned a lot. One thing I learned about was the value of sadhana. Dada would mention more than once how something like being sick or healthy or eating the right thing or not eating the right thing effected his sadhana. He protected his sadhana the way a successful businessman would protect his business. Would you not agree that one's sadhana is more important than any business?

Time is valuable. Why? One reason is because we get to do sadhana. Many of us waste valuable time when we could either be doing sadhana or preparing to do sadhana. If you are honest with yourself, you will find that sadhana ranks as one of the most important if not the most important things you can do in life. One must not only find time for sadhana. One must also cherish sadhana and take care of it, tending it as if it were a garden. When you waste valuable time, you don't get it back again. When you don't take care of your sadhana, you lose that valuable time for meditation. It is like an athlete who must take care of the body so that he or she may be able to perform optimally during an athletic event. For sadhana, one must care for all koshas (layers of the mind), including the body.

Therefore, we have astaunga yoga: an eightfold system whereby one can care for every aspect of one's existence so that one's sadhana can become more and more powerful. Though maintaining

this system with regularity, punctuality and care is difficult, the results are so rewarding that they far outweigh the difficulty. Yama and Niyama, asanas, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi are the eight parts of astaanga yoga. (Respectively, Yama and Niyama are codes of conduct and morality; asanas are yoga postures; pranayama is breath control; pratyahara is withdrawal of the mind from external objects; dharana is the first lesson of Ananda Marga, a core lesson on which other lessons are built; dhyana is the sixth lesson of Ananda Marga, the other core lesson, which is complete absorption into Supreme Consciousness; samadhi is the result of all other practices, it is God-realization.) These parts of tantric yoga have such complexity that entire books can be written just on each part, and such books have been written and will continue to be written. As useful as it is to read about these practices, even more useful is the actual practice of them, which is a great challenge. Indeed, possibly the greatest challenge one will ever face in life is the striving and struggle to follow all parts of astaanga yoga. The reward is worth the challenge. We have been put on this earth to realize God.

The more highly one values one's sadhana, the easier it is to follow astaanga yoga. This is a secret to following the system: value your sadhana. What does it mean to value your sadhana? It means that you want all layers of mind and your physical body to be pure and healthy and at optimal performance so that your sadhana has these qualities. What we value arranges our life, giving priority to what we value most. If your sadhana is something you value highly, you will arrange your life in such a way as to make sadhana a priority. It will be abundant and of high quality. One basic measure of how to produce this effect is consideration of the three gunas, or bondages: satvic (sentient), rajasic (mutative), and tamasik (crude). Staying away from anything tamasik, and preferring satvic over rajasic, is a good way to begin to produce higher quality sadhana, moreover, any sadhana at all, as the practice of taking anything tamasik, such as

tamasik foods and media, and allowing one's mind to wander into dark places such as anger, bitterness, resentment and fear, will have a coercive effect. One will not want to do any sadhana at all! Conversely, if you stick with a sentient diet including sentient media (whatever your mind takes in has a strong effect on you), and if you stay, as much as you can, in a positive mindset and spend your time feeling loving and happy, you will maximize your sadhana and it will be optimal.