

The Principles of Astanga Yoga (Samadhi) are materialized in Folk Festivals of Koshal Region : a metaphysical discovery

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Ever since the dawn of human civilization man has searched for eternal peace and happiness. All our culture, religion and scriptures have

centered round this eternal peace and happiness. For this eternal peace Lord Krishna has taught Arjuna the principles of Yoga in Srimad Bhagbat Geeta, five thousand years ago. Geeta teaches the mankind the essence and the principle of non-attachment. After two thousand and five hundred years of Mahabharata it was Maharshi Patanjali of Aryan Age who propounded the practical aspects of Yoga through Astanga Yoga, Yama Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyna, Samadhi. It is again after two thousand and five hundred years of Maharshi Patanjali, Maharshi Sri Aurobida who could descend supramental into his body said, "True spirituality starts after Samadhi." Much before Sri Aurobinda, Swami Vivekananda the scientific sage said. "A fool goes to sound sleep returns a fool, a fool goes to Samadhi returns a sage. "This means a fool having no knowledge of yoga and sadhana can also enter into the state of Samadhi, the Trance. In 1956 in the "World Federation of Mental Health" the Nobel Laureate Julien Huxley said, "The Western scientist should learn from their Eastern counterpart the art of controlling breath and entering trance. "This again means yoga is nothing but pure science and thus spirituality is nothing but the science of sciences. It is through this science of yoga one can enter into the state of trance, the Samadhi. In this state of Samadhi union of Atma with the Paramatma

is possible. It is called by Sri Aurobinda the Jeebanmukti, which means the salvation in the present life. It is only in the state of Samadhi the supramental descends. The descendance of supramental is possible only in the state of Samadhi and entering into the state of Samadhi is based on certain scientific principles with some precise mathematical formula which is worked out in the 'Bali Yatra' and Maheswari Yatra of Subarnapur and many other such festivals in different parts of Koshal region, Chhatar Yatra, Dalkhai Yatra, Dhunkel Usha, Bail Yatra, Kalashi Yatra etc.

Subarnapur is a tiny town of temples in Koshal region. Once upon a time this town was the capital city of erstwhile Koshal Empire. There are one hundred and eight temples with the temples of Asta Chandi, Asta Shiva and Asta Vishnu. The town is situated on the holy confluence of the rivers the Mahanadi and the Tel. It is at this place the most enchanting spiritual phenomenon takes place where the illiterate farmer and labour class people through "Sabda Brahma", the beat of drum known as "Sohala Varani" are taken from meditation to the lower Samadhi, the state of trance. The Sabda Brahma or Sohala Varani drum beats are based on Sakta Pramoda Badya Tatwa composed by one Adivasi Saint named Madhavacharya of Subarnapur. The sixteen different types of drum – beat symbolize the sixteen different types of states of body and mind of the Barua passing through the state of varani to chhadni. The drum-beat eclipse the mind of the Barua and helps him in pratyahara and dharana (concentration). The Concentration automatically leads to meditation and finally to the state of Trance (Samadhi).

The lower Samadhi according to the book "Patanjali Yoga Sutra" written by two



authors of international reputation on Yoga, Swami Pravabananda Saraswati and Christopher Isherwood where they have said that if the mind is concentrated on one point for 12 seconds it is concentration. If that concentration prolongs for 2 minute and 24 seconds that becomes meditation. If that meditation prolongs for 28 minutes and 48 seconds that becomes Lower Samadhi. If that lower Samadhi prolongs for 5 hours 45 minutes and 36 seconds that becomes the Nirbikalpa Samadhi, in which the transmigration of soul is possible. In sonapur Bali Yatra and maheswari Yatra the principles of lower Samadhi are followed. The same principles are also followed in the Kalasiyatra, Dhunkel Usha, Dalkhai Yatra, Lankeswari Yatra where Barua is the hero and where Sakta Pramoda Badya Tatwa plays its parts.

In the Lower Samadhi the spirit descends into the body of the Barua, the man in meditation and at this stage his body and mind go from voluntariness to involuntariness. He loses the sense of pain and pleasure, sin and virtue, foe and friend truth and falsehood and there manifest seven symptoms in his body and mind. They are Spandan (tremor), ghurni (zyration), udvav (levitation), ananda (elation), nidra (drowz), murchha (sooning), jagruti (awakening). It is the awakening of the mind which is the most important and which is termed by Maharshi Patanjali as Tad Jaya Pragyana Lokah. By this the power of mind is increased manifold and the man in trance can see the unseen and know the unknown. He speaks some language quite alien to him and sometimes forecasts the past, future and present. It is through this process the spirit or the supramental descends down the body of the Barua. Then he is adorned like a God or Goddess with vermilion and flower and marches ahead into the society to bless the people. The people offer him puja with great reverence. In the Baliyatra cartload of Samidha and pure cow ghee were burnt in homa and Yagnya in early days. In both Baliyatra and Maheswari Yatra of Sonapur there are specific tests for trance. The Barua in a state of trance

walks on the fire, sits on the thorny swing, rubs on the body the Indian Nettle leaves and sometimes even drinks the raw blood from the fresh shivered trunk of an animal. In the Bali Yatra and Maheswari yatra of Sonapur all the principles of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra are adopted to take the Barua from the state of meditation to state of Samadhi. The purohit or the priest is the most important person in this spiritual act who controls the activities of Barua being assisted by four associates known as chargharias. Those who hold the chhatra (umbrella) are known as chhatrias. Those who hold the torches are known as masaltis. Thus achandala Brahmana including the king of princely state were associated with this Baliyatra. This yatra is celebrated in the most spiritual and festive mood in royal regalia par excellence. This festival of sacrifice which means the sacrifice of ego and not sacrifice of animal takes place in several temples of goddesses at sonapur from the newmoon day (Mahalaya) to the next day of full moon day (purnima) of the month of Aswina every year. Its beginning can be dated back to the days of Lord Parshuram, the Aryan hero who performed yagnya near the confluence at sonapur the sacred place is popularly known as Khaulgad.

Sacrifice in Baliyatra of Sonapur does not mean the sacrifice of animal, but it means the sacrifice of the self, the sacrifice of the ego which is the cardinal principle in yoga. The Barua belongs to Sakama a near by village of sonapur town. They lead a pious and peaceful life. Their wives and family members are extremely happy for this kind of spiritual performance and realization. Like yoga the festival has degenerated into an act of animal sacrifice. It may be noted that all the 16 days of Baliyatra sacrifice of animals does not take place and in Maheswari yatra animal sacrifice does not take place at all. In roll of time the sacrifice of the self has turned to sacrifice of the other self which finally culminated in human sacrifice which scarcely took place in this





Baliyatra during the rule of Chauhans long before independence. The popularity of Subarnapur Baliyatra can attain international height by exposing more and more yogic excellence and less and less animal sacrifice. Will the people understand the subtle scientific principle of spirituality and yoga and stop unnecessary and unethical sacrifice of innocent animals, for the purpose of attaining spiritual excellence and cherish God's blessings. In fact the people of Subarnapur, as well as the Koshal region, have suffered untold misery due to lack of faith in their established culture and tradition. There is spritual degeneration in every sphere of their life. One need not be surprised to learn that the people of the Koshal region have become the poorest people in the whole world according to UNDP. That they have become self centered, indolent and instead of sacrificing their ego, they have started sacrificing the animals in spiritual festivals which might have brought them the around downfall by way of wrath of the Gods and Goddesses. The age old festivals of Subarnapur and Koshal region are pregnant with the scientific principles of yoga which is becoming very popular among the people of the whole world. If the people can revive such festivals to the taste of the outsiders then tourists from outside will rush to Subarnapur and Koshal region. Thus the economic and social problems of the people of this area can be solved in no time. The Government, the administration and the general public should have a proper understanding of the importance of such festivals and take steps to highlight the magnanimity of those festivals which will provide the people not only God's blessings but also provide bread and butter.

The festival of Baliyatra of Sonepur is unique of its kind and unparallel in the whole world. No such festival is ever celebrated in any part of the world at any point of time in such grand manner with the involvement of so many persons, so many places and so much time. The Baliyatra of Sonepur demands

recognition of highest order, but as ill luck would have it the local intellegentia has also no knowledge of its gravity and grandeur. Like the musk deer with the musk (Kasturi) in its naval searching after its fragrance outside frantically, the people also search after their key to development outside such spiritual excellence and hold every other person responsible for their own decadence. The people of Kosharl region have been thoroughly exploited by their Utkal counterpart. The development of their language, culture, spirit have been seriously affected. This has degraded their economic and social existence. They are leading a miserable life under pressure and suffering due to unpardonable regional imbalance. It is high time that they stand up and agitate for their own existence and try to straighten their cultural and linguistic problems by way of reviving the traditional spiritual folk festivals where lies their secret of real upliftment. In the words of Swami Vivekananda the scientific sage, "The only development is the spiritual development." There is no doubt that all other developments automatically follow the spiritual development. Therefore, the people should be united to revive the past glory of their native land which will enhance the beauty of the Mother India and the Mother Earth.

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N.B. - Somebody may ask about the rewards of Samadhi. To answer this question in the words of Swami Shivananda – "The meditator and the Meditated become one. One attains highest knowledge and supreme Eternal peace. This is the goal of life. This is the aim of existece. This is the final beatitude of life. One will be absolutely free from pain, sorrow, fear, doubt and delusion. One will experience "I am the Immortal self. All indeed is God. There is nothing, but God."

