

YOGA RESEARCH

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The procedures of Yoga bring a balanced working of body and mind. Dhyâna is the main sheet-anchor in this whole technique. However, Dhyâna cannot be practiced as long as the body and mind are under strong divergent pulls, and in a highly imbalanced state. Only when the mind and body are a bit stabilized can one resort to the practice. Dhyâna seems to be an essential process in Yoga for the attainment of real emotional stability and integration of personality. This process has to be practiced in a very relaxed way to attain the beneficial results claimed for it. The first attempt in this is towards arresting one's customary images.

Strangely enough, Dr. Trigant Burrow (of the Lifwynn Foundation, Westport, Connecticut), working independently on his own hypothesis regarding deviation in behavior, seems to have come practically to the same conclusion.

One of the earliest and direct students of Freud and Jung, Dr. Burrow belonged to the first group of psychiatrists who introduced psychoanalysis in America. He soon came to realize, however, that the "underlying determinants of Man's social interrelations" lay not in this individual or that, but in man as a phylum. Therefore, the species of 'man' was the essential material requiring investigation and adjustment. This phylic approach to the problem of human behavior led him and his associates to "an analysis of the physiological patterns of tension and stress that entered into the structure of neurosis or of human conflict."

The main difference between phylo-analysis and psychoanalysis lies in the fact that whereas the psychoanalyst asks his subject to let his ideas flow freely and spontaneously, as they happen to come, the subject in phylo-analysis takes recourse to arresting customary images. The subject in phylo-analysis is the researcher himself, the experimenter being there only to control the apparatus, measure the objective phenomena, and, at times, to act as a control. The subject in phylo-analysis tries to shut off all ideas and attempts to "recall himself to himself" (cf. "manasâ mana âlokyâ" — "observing the mind with the mind" H.Y.P.-IV54). The fixated images are heightened again and again along with their effects. The procedure is somewhat as follows: the subject sits straight in a relaxed way, with the eyes

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closed. This is intended to maintain a steadfast internal sense of balance, and tension connected with the eyes. Looking in front, at a curtain of uniform blackness, as it were, an attempt is to be made to rest the eyes on a point (not visible of course) that is felt kinesthetically to be directly in line with the normal visual axis. (There are several "such cerebro-ocular" Mudrâs in Yoga — Unmani, Khecari and Sâmabhavi being found in general usage — and fixation of eyes on a point is common to them all.) This, as Dr. Burrow states, leads to a "sustained awareness of an indeterminate physiological process" that can only be appreciated by the organism subjectively.

If such a cerebro-ocular posture is sustained over a period of time (only a few seconds in the beginning), the subject's customary affect images are automatically eliminated. As Dr. Burrows describes, "the mental and emotional pain and disappointment resultant from the frustration among us of ditentive social feelings and impulses was suddenly dissipated." If the practice is continued, the initial feeling of tension in the region of the eyes and inside the head gives place to a sensation of steadier tone or balance of tension within the body musculature as a whole. Thus, Burrow could consistently differentiate between two systems of neuro-muscular tension, (i) the superficial

secondary associational system of tension, and (ii) the deeper organismic system of tension. The first one is regarded by Dr. Burrow as socially conditioned, the second being the primary and unconditioned. He calls the first state 'Ditention' and the second one 'Cotention'. A subject is likely to lapse again and again into the ditentive state, his mind darting back into its customary images automatically. To come back to the contentive state, one has to repeat the whole process again.

During the experiments, when the subject passed from one state to another, his respiratory curves and those of the controls were recorded by means of an electrically driven Kymograph. The average respiratory rate was found to drop from 13.22 movements/min. in ditention to 4.63 movements/min. in cotention and this change was not brought about by any voluntary control but occurred automatically as the states of tension altered.

continued

Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters

by Annie Dillard
Harper & Row, 1982

Dillard does indeed recount some expeditions: to the Galapagos Islands, the Arctic Ocean, along a river in the Ecuador jungle. She's a patient, meticulous observer, and writes well, so that these accounts in themselves are interesting. Fortunately for us, Dillard does not stop there. Like a jazz musician she riffs off into philosophical musings. Encounters with flora and fauna lead to encounters with God. Polar explorers, she notes, went "partly in search of the sublime, and they found it the only way it can be found here or there - around the edges, tucked into the corners of the days."

After viewing and being transformed by a solar eclipse, she and other observers go to breakfast. Here, Dillard segues into the old dichotomy of mind and "the dear stupid body...easily satisfied as a spaniel."

The mind wants...to know all the world, and all eternity, and God. The mind's sidekick, however, will settle for two eggs over easy.

Dillard also faces the question of suffering. Speaking of a man who's had excruciating burns not once, but twice, and of a deer that persists in getting painfully entangled in a rope:

This is the Big Time here, every minute of it. Will someone please explain to Alan McDonald in his dignity, to the deer...in his dignity, what is going on? And mail me the carbon.

Dillard justifies her travels as "simply to see what is there. We are here on the planet only once, and might as well get a feel for the place," and for the great variety of life that "is always and necessarily lived in detail."

She stresses the importance of being a witness to all these details, "the whole inhuman array." For without human witness, "the show would play to an empty house...That is why I take walks: to keep an eye on things."

Through her writing we, too, keep an eye on things. But her message is always laced with whimsy. Who else would respect God's power by saying that churchgoers should be issued crash helmets in case of a divine response?"

— KERRY BIRNBAUM, M.L.S.



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much time to deep concentration."*

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DHYĀNA, *continued*

Jone's Basal Metabolism apparatus used in the experiments showed that in the state of ditiontion the average volume of air inspired per minute was 6.95 litres, while in the state of cotention it was only 4.08 litres.

When the respiratory rate and the volume of inspired air were compared, it was found that though the respiratory rate in cotention went down, the average intake of air per respiration in cotention was greater than the one in ditiontion, i.e. the respiratory movements were deeper in cotention than in ditiontion. Though the total air inspired per minute was not equal in the two states, the amount of oxygen absorbed per minute was practically the same, namely 0.22 litre.

The movements of the eye in the course of experimentation were not only observed by direct inspection and measurement of inter-pupillary distance but were recorded both photographically and

electrically. It was found that the frequency of both the eye movements as well as lid movements was reduced markedly during cotention.

Electro-encephalographic records showed reduction in the percentage of alpha-time and a decrease in the amplitude of the alpha wave during cotention, indicating a general diminution in cortical potential.

The subject's subjective state was also noted. Thus, in *Neurosis of Man*, Dr. Burrow's states, "With his increasing observation of the sensation caused by the partitive stress of the affecto-symbolic segment or of the separate 'I' persona, there develops concurrently the sense of a larger background that is not affective, partitive, ditentive, that is not the 'I' persona, but that is the primary organism of man in its native spontaneous continuity and solidarity."

Yoga, too, seems to have resorted to

this phylic approach in the processes of integration of personality. The procedure followed by the ancient Yogins in Āsana (meditational type) is very similar to that of Dr. Burrow and his associates, and the claims made by them are also the same. Every meditational posture requires its practitioner to fix his gaze in a particular way and Śāmbhavi Mudrā or resting of eyes on a point far away but directly in line with the normal visual axis is a common practice advocated in Yoga.

And the claim made by Patañjali for Āsanās fits in exactly with the one made by Dr. Burrow after years of research, that, the sensation of a separate 'I' persona with its consequent 'I' versus 'you' dichotomy or 'dvandva' ceases.

— excerpted from —

SWĀMĪ KUALAYĀNANDA & DR. S.L. VINEKAR
(1963). *Dhyāna as a Great Tranquilizer. Yogic Therapy.* (74-77) Lonavla, India: Kaivalyadhama

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