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JOY: First Lesson

excerpted from ***JOY: Journey of Yoga***
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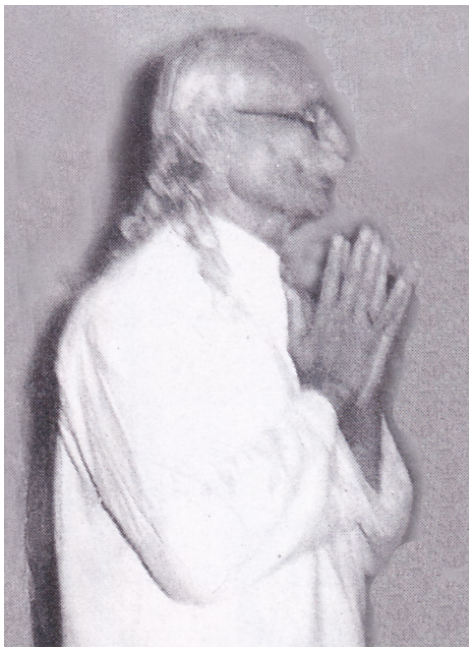
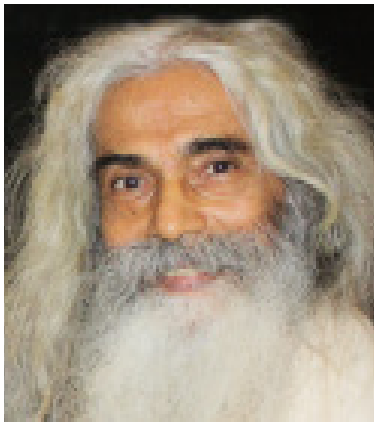


First Lesson
Wednesday
October 14, 1959

ॐ सह नाववतु ।
सह नौ भुनक्तु ।
सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु ।
मा विद्विषावहै ॥
ॐ शान्तिः! शान्तिः!! शान्तिः!!!

Oṁ saha nāvavatu /
saha nau bhunaktu /
saha vīryaṁ karvāvahai /
tejasvināvadhītamastu /
mā vidviṣāvahai //
Oṁ Śāntiḥ! Śāntiḥ!! Śāntiḥ!!!



Now visualize a hut, known as a Kuṭī, a simple dwelling approximately 11 feet wide and 20 feet long with one entrance and an annex.

As you enter, inside on the right is a chair for the teacher and a blackboard, and on the left are two desks and two long benches for the students.

It is the 14th of October, 1959. The time is 10 A.M.

In the Kuṭī sitting on the benches are two senior students, Om Prakash Tiwari and Ravi Sharan Dikshit, and three new students, Arjundas Batra, Lakshmi Narayan Garu, and myself, Vijayendra Pratap.

The teacher, Swami Kuvalayananda, is sitting on a chair. He is seventy-six years old.

In the morning, Swamiji's class starts punctually. We recite the Oṁ Sahanāvavatu prayer standing with folded hands and closed eyes. Then we open our eyes and sit in our places.

This prayer, chosen by him from Taittirīya Upaniṣad (and which occurs in 32 Upaniṣads), was recited by both teacher and students at the beginning of each class.

Then Swamiji explains the meaning of the prayer:

May God protect us (teacher and taught) together. अव् av, to protect

May God protect us (teacher and taught) together. भुज् bhuj, to protect

ॐ = om = symbol of God
सह = saha = together
नौ = nau = we, teacher and taught
अवतु = avatu = protect
सह = saha = together
नौ = nau = we, teacher and taught
भुनक्तु = bhunaktu = protect
भुज् bhuj, to protect

But the question arises as to why this "protection" is repeated twice in the same way in the verse.

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Here we have to understand the first as:

विद्या स्वरूप प्रकाशनेन्

vidyā svarūpa prakāśanen,
revealing the form of learning.

It means:

May God protect us in understanding the inner meaning, coming from inside, in a right way.

The second as:

तत्फल प्रकाशनेन्

tatphala prakāśanen,
revealing its effect,

That is:

May God protect us both teacher and student in learning अविद्या निवृत्ति avidyā nivṛtti, elimination of wrong knowledge, the effect of learning.

In other words we can say:

Oh God protect both of us teacher and taught in understanding the nature of learning and its result.

सह = saha = together
वीर्यं = vīryaṁ = strength
करवावहै = karavāvahai = achieve

Let us achieve strength together. Strength must be cooperative.

तेजस्वि = tejasvi = bright, fresh
नौ = nau = we = teacher and student
अधीतम् = adhītaṁ = to learn
अस्तु = astu = be

Let our learning be ever fresh.

मा = mā = not
विद्विषावहै = vidviṣāvahai = hate each other

Let us not hate each other.

Here we see that the teacher and student may hate each other due to mistakes done through inattention or carelessness on the part of either the teacher or student.

(प्रमादकृत् अन्यायाध्ययनाध्यापन निमित्तम्

pramādakṛt anyāyādhyanādhyāpana nimittam).

ॐ शान्तिः! शान्तिः!! शान्तिः!!!

oṁ śāntiḥ! śāntiḥ!! śāntiḥ!!!
oṁ peace, peace, peace.

The first explanation for saying śāntiḥ three times is:

Peace with oneself.
Peace with Rāṣṭra (nation).
Peace with all humanity.

The second meaning is:

आधिदैविक

ādhidaivika

Let gods, nature,(e.g. earthquakes, storms, etc) not disturb our peace.

आधिभौतिक

ādhibhautika

Let living beings, (e.g. humans, animals, reptiles, plants etc) not disturb our peace.

आध्यात्मिक

ādhyātmika

Let we, ourselves,(e.g. physical, mental and spiritual) not disturb our peace.

These disturbances may be either in actions, words or thoughts.

The lunch bell rings. It is 11:30 A.M.