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## **AMS Board Notes**

The AMS Board of Directors held its annual meeting on June 15, 2008, immediately following the summer retreat. Included in the agenda was the approval of the yearly budget and the appointment of officers.

The administrative officers for AMS for the next year are: Vidya Anderson, president; Roopa Morosani, vice president; Sujay Anderson, treasurer; Harry Hall, comptroller; and Margy Boll, secretary.

During the summer retreat, board elections were held, and three open positions were filled.

The board of directors are as follows: Praseela Feltenstein, Buzz Hume, Sutriya Johnson, Lilavati Lofgren, Nora Oakes, Pashya Spellman, and Emma Woods.

New board members take office August 1, 2008.

## **The AMS Scholarship Fund**

On the summer course there was an amazing auction! Captain Jack Minnow (Panu) with help from The Lady Beckie and The Lady Pashya were able to raise over \$3,000 for our scholarship fund.

The purpose of this fund is to financially assist those who would like to attend a retreat. If you are considering attending one of our retreats and don't quite have enough to make it happen, then contact Rita at [RitaGardens@verizon.net](mailto:RitaGardens@verizon.net).



Rita is our scholarship administrator and will work with you to make it happen.

## **The Practice of Tratak**

During the summer retreat we studied the practice of tratak. We have included here a few excerpts that we discussed. The following are taken from talks that Gururaj gave in England and the United States.

### **UK 78-18**

People in the modern world in the twentieth century tend to scatter all their mental energies, especially with all the tensions and various duties that they take upon themselves. So our minds are scattered. How many of us can really sit down in contemplation and take a thought from A and lead it systematically to Z? Very few of us. You'll start with ABC and then you'll start thinking of lunch. EFG and then another thought will come, and like that another thought will come, my wife asked me to bring a pair of stockings but I've forgotten the size. Things like that happen all the time because our minds are not concentrated.

Now what happens with the practice of Tratak, which is a very, very important practice, is that without concentrating, we are developing the powers of concentration. ....When proper visualization takes place, know for sure that all your mental energies are now focused, because without visualization, and just looking at the flame, you will still have all kinds of things going through the mind. When it comes to proper visualization, thoughts will still come, but you would be apart from the thought. In mantra meditation, you become the mantra. In Tratak you become the flame.

The purpose of Tratak meditation is to take all our scattered energies of the mind and bring it to a focal point. Now, this is very practical in one's daily life. The difference between success and failure in any undertaking is due to the lack of concentration or proper concentration. A person who has a concentrated mind can be successful, and a person whose energies are scattered will find failure, depending how much the energies are scattered. So it has a very practical effect in our daily living.

Now that is not the only thing that happens. The other thing that occurs is the effect on the Ajna Chakra, or the third eye, the eye that can perceive things



which the ordinary two eyes cannot perceive. When you are fully established in visualising the flame, then you progress to a more difficult object, like a flower. When you look at the flower with open eyes, and you close your eyes and visualize the flower, you're doing Tratak on the flower, and then the details that you have missed with open eyes will be seen with closed eyes. This happens because you have activated the subtle sense of perception, and that which is more subtle is definitely more powerful. People that want to develop the art of clairvoyance for example, (we don't want that, but just to mention it), would do very well starting off with Tratak, because the details missed in the flower with open eyes and so well captured with closed eyes. This is nothing but clairvoyance, the insight into things.

Another aspect would be that science has a hypothesis that the Ajna Chakra is connected to the pineal gland. Unfortunately, science has not been able to dissect the pineal gland, because the only way they could reach the pineal gland is when a person dies, and when the person dies, the pineal gland becomes calcified and they cannot really find anything in it.

When one does Tratak, one activates the Ajna Chakra. The Ajna Chakra has a physiological counterpart in the pineal gland. By activating by activating the Ajna Chakra we are also stimulating the pineal gland. When the gland is stimulated the pineal gland secretes a hormone called melatonin. This is secreted in very minute quantities, but it has a regenerating, rejuvenating effect on the entire glandular system of a person.

So here we have seen that through Tratak, we benefit mentally, we benefit psychologically, we benefit psychically, and adding melatonin to the glandular system, we benefit physiologically. So it has an all round benefit.

Why do we use a flame? You could have a white sheet of paper and a black dot on it to do Tratak. Or you could use a black sheet of paper with a white dot, and still do Tratak. The reason that I recommend the flame it is that the eyes have the capacity to have something called after image. That is a great help for the beginner, because from that little after image that is retained momentarily, one could slip into visualization much, much more easily. That is why we use the flame. But when a person has advanced, anything can become Tratak. I could close my eyes now and see her so, so clearly. Anything can be used for Tratak. This practice is very important.



Tratak practice is thousands and thousands of years old. It's no invention of mine; I am like the doctor prescribing a medicine that has been discovered by other scientists.

### **UK 81-05**

Because of our habitual selves and not having the Ajna Chakra sufficiently opened, because many are too lazy to do the Tratak Practice, we think the old way. To find a happier life, awareness must be developed. Through yogic means, through Tratak Practice, which is part of Raja Yoga, the awareness can be developed. With that awareness, greater and greater understandings are gained. When understandings are gained, one finds the sameness in everything. Then how can one hate another when everything is same? Now that is the truth behind the Biblical injunction 'Love thy neighbor as thyself'. And you can't do it unless you have sufficient awareness in recognizing that everything around you is none different than yourself. There is no saint that never has had a past and there's no sinner that has not a future. People are different just in surface degrees, but in essence, one. In essence, everything is one. And knowing that oneness is love, and love is God. So you have it all here. You don't need to go to Heaven to find that. Find it here. Heaven and Hell is here and nowhere else. Actually there is no such place as nowhere. There is no such place as nowhere. If you analyze the word, it is now here, 'Now here'. It could spell 'Nowhere'; it could also spell 'Now Here'.

### **UK 81-10**

What are the benefits of this exercise which has been practiced for the past five thousand years? It's an exercise for the Ajna Chakra. By opening the third eye, you develop a greater awareness of things around you. You don't see with two eyes only but you begin seeing with the third eye and see in greater depth. This flower you see with two eyes, will assume a far different proportion when you see it with three eyes because you will be able to see far deeper than the surface value of the flower and the flower becomes more beautiful to you.

Tratak as with other practices, are an aid to unfold yourself to the Divine energies of God. You see, how important these things are. When practices are given to you, remember they are given with great thinking involved, great



experience involved. A true guru will only give a chela a practice for their benefit; otherwise he is wasting his time. The duty of the chela is to do it, to be obedient, to do it, for their own benefit. The guru doesn't come along with a stick and ask, "Have you done it or not?" Or "Come, sit down and do your practices." No, it is your free choice. It is the greatest gift of God, for these are gifts are given for the benefit of humanity. That's the way we help people and you in turn help others. It becomes an ever widening circle like a pebble thrown in the pond with ever widening ripples and the ripples extend to the edge of the pond. In our case the ripples extend to the vast ends of the universe.

### **US 80020**

In the practice of tratak, the mind becomes calmer, the physical body relaxes, and breathing becomes slower. With tratak practice one gains physiologically, biologically, psychologically, psychically. With these conditions, naturally the spirit in man shines through. A simple practice like this has such far reaching effects. Doing tratak, you will not be devoid of thought. Let thought come and go, let it have its fun. The children are playing in the park, let them play. You sit on the bench and watch them play. I love that. Whenever I have some time, I go to a children's park and I just sit on the bench and watch the children play. How beautiful, that innocence, that loveliness. They fall, they cry, they laugh, they get hurt, they bruise their shins, they shout; it is so beautiful. So, we sit in the park and watch those thoughts play. Some thoughts laugh and some thoughts cry. So what? As long as we can just observe them. By being able to observe, the sting is gone because it does not leave an impression.

### **US 82067**

By practicing tratak, your mind becomes more concentrated. And a concentrated mind is a mind that can remember better. If a person is very forgetful in the ordinary little things of life, then tratak will help him concentrate the energies of the mind and they will forget less.

The third eye is the ajna chakra which is also known as the chakra of wisdom. There has to be development of a certain number of brain cells before the ajna chakra opens.

*American Meditation Society*



## *Newsletter*

### **US 83042**

People don't look, they see. Seeing comes from mental conditioning where you see things according to the condition of your mind. If your mind is patterned in a certain way you will see a thing in a certain way. Something might be very beautiful, but would seem grotesque to you because of past experiences. To look is to look totally innocently, without any preconceived idea. When you look at your beloved you look at her and using the eyes just as organs to first see the outer face. When you gain or know the art of looking, another factor emerges. Another factor is activated where you stop looking with the eyes and you look with the inner eye at the inner self of that person. That is why I put so much emphasis on the practice of *tratak*, where we learn to look. It brings about that innocence no expectations. And you dive deep down in your beloved and what do you find? You find divinity, for everyone is divine. I tell my beloved that (God forbid) even if you should be shriveled and burned and become gnarled and ugly, I will still love you just as much because what do I really love? I love God and you are just an outward symbol of the Divinity I love. So when a person learns to look, he sees the Divinity within the object, within his beloved. And then he comes to the recognition that "Hey! Wait a minute! That Divinity that I am seeing is but me!" There's no difference.

### **Knoxville weekend retreat**

Spend a weekend in Fall meditating in the beautiful Smoky Mountains! The Knoxville Weekend Retreat is **October 3 - 5**, 2008 at Smoky Mountain Retreat Center, in Walland, TN.

Full details to follow in next month's newsletter.