



Why Tapas?

His Holiness Paramahansa Nithyananda

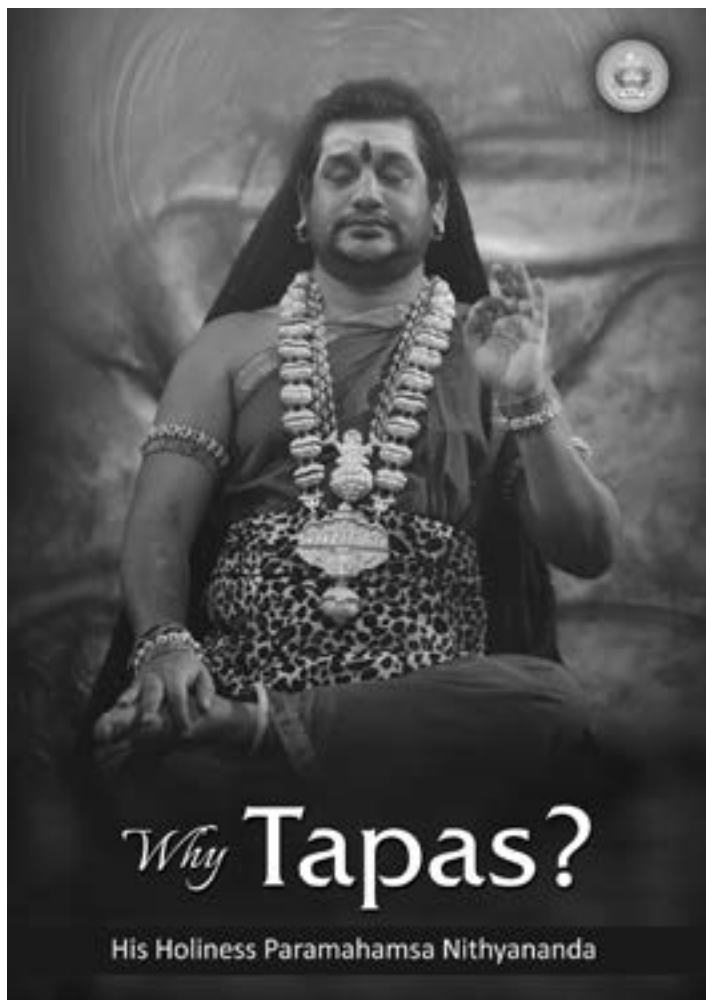


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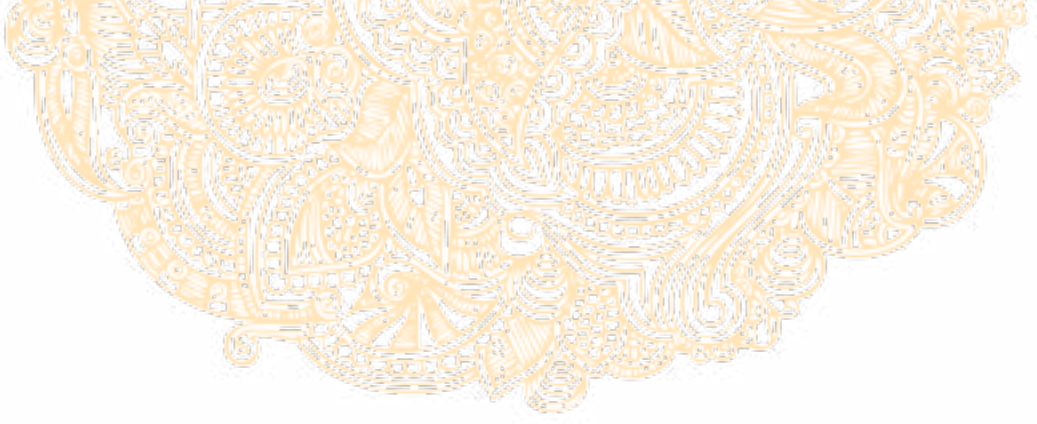
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What is Tapas?



What is Tapas?

*Working on your body, your thoughts, your emotions -
what is this if not tapas?*

The word 'tapas' has become so loaded with different meaning nowadays! We have forgotten the original meaning of the word 'tapas'.

Tapas is derived from the Sanskrit word 'tapasya'. The root word 'tap' means 'heat,' whether from fire, weather, penance, pain and suffering. So tapas refers to spiritual concepts and practices that develop heat or inner energy. It also means deep meditation, and the effort used to achieve self-realization through diet, meditation, spiritual practices, self-discipline, simple and austere living, and bramacharya (celibacy in thought, word and action).

Tapas is the 'inner fire' that motivates you to live your life from simple things

such as brushing your teeth, to doing yoga, and to making changes in your life. It also means to cleanse. It is the heat that is generated as our internal purification happens.

Some of the earliest references to tapas have been found in many ancient Hindu scriptures. In the Hindu texts tapas is described as the process that leads to spiritual birth. Tapas is described as one of the elements on the spiritual path and essential to self-realization in ancient scriptures.

Tapas does not only mean going up into the mountains and undertaking all kinds of spiritual practices, and performing all kinds of rituals. Tapas does not mean going without food or clothes, or living in a dark cave, or torturing the body unnecessarily in any way. When you deprive your body in any way, there is always the danger of focusing more on the deprivation than on the meditation.

If I make you go without food for even twenty-four hours, you may stop eating food, but you will start meditating on food instead! You will be able to think of nothing but food.

Real fasting does not mean meditating about the food that you haven't eaten; it means forgetting about food altogether. But not many people can see this difference. That is why the path of tapas is not for everyone.

Of course, these are all different routes, just different ways of handling the body. Some meditators take the path of disciplining the body through austerities. But it is not necessary that everyone should follow that path.

A small story:

A yogi spent many years in the mountains perfecting the rites of austerity. He mastered complicated rituals and mantras, studied holy books and spent countless hours in contemplation. After fifteen years, when he felt his tapas to be complete, he came down into the plains to

educate other people on the importance of spirituality in their lives.

As soon as he arrived in a town, the news spread about the arrival of the holy man, and he was invited to a spiritual gathering. One of



the other invitees was a modern young Master who didn't believe in the traditional rites of tapas.

As the yogi entered, the man turned in his direction and spoke some harsh words.

The yogi was amazed to find that a wave of anger was rising inside him, on hearing the man's words. After all these years, after all these efforts! A few words from a stranger, and anger was raising its ugly head again.

Without replying, the yogi turned and walked out of the hall silently. When someone ran to apologize and ask him to return, the yogi replied, 'I see that my tapas is not yet perfect! I am still a beginner. I must leave now, to start my work. I will return when I am truly ready.'

The toughest tapas is working on oneself, understanding and transforming oneself.

There is no greater tapas than cleansing your body, thoughts and emotions. And you can do this tapas right now, right where you are. Tapas leads to a healthy body and a healthy mind. Ultimately, tapas is all about preparing the ground; creating the right foundation for meditation.

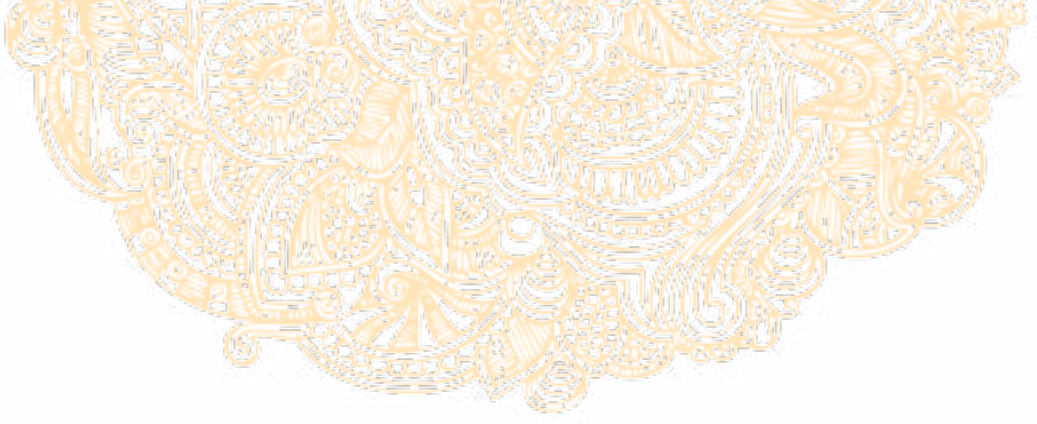
In this book you will understand the many different facets of tapas, how it can help you to discover who you are, and how tapas leads you to enlightenment and completion.



Three levels of Tapas

There are three levels of tapas:

1. Sattvic tapas – this is tapas done with clarity and with the right purpose. If you have nothing to achieve, and you are already clear as to what you want, it is called sattvic tapas. Here you are traveling from fulfillment to fulfillment, and fulfillment to overflowing.
2. Rajasic tapas – this is tapas that happens out of greed. If you want something and you do tapas to achieve it, it is rajasic tapas.
3. Tamasic tapas – this is tapas that is done when you want someone to lose something. It benefits neither the one who practices nor the ones whom it aims to impact.



Deeper insights into tapas



Tapas is Intelligent Effort

When you add intelligence to your effort, your effort will become effortless.

Many times, people undergo tapas just to prove something to themselves or to society. In such cases, there is a big danger of tapas itself becoming an act that comes from the ego.

In the same way, many seekers fall into the trap of trying to make some extraordinary spiritual effort, just to prove that they can do it. They torture

themselves to prove something to the world.

There are two types of people in society:

1. The so-called worldly people: These are the people who are caught in the attractions and sufferings of this world. These people are tortured by the desires and fears of their body and mind. Their life is completely controlled by the desires and fears of the body and mind. But at least these people know that they are caught.

2. The so-called speakers or spiritual people: These are the people who continuously torture their body and mind in the name of tapas. I have myself seen in India, people sitting or standing on nails for five years! I have also seen people standing on one leg, rolling on the ground or walking on hot coals, all in the name of tapas.

There is no need to do all this and torture your body. Actually, you torture your body because you think that it is torturing you! Sometimes, when life is gracious to you, it gives you an intense 'crash course' in tapas, where you do not sink into depression or explode into



violence, which is the period when an identity to which you have been clinging too hard is being removed from you.

But tapas does not always have to be a painful process. In fact, real tapas happens naturally, out of your intense longing for the Truth. Anything done by force is not going to help you or society. When your seeking for the Truth is intense, each false identity that is removed from you can only bring joy, not pain.

A person who knows how to enjoy the body and mind is totally at ease with himself. He feels relaxed with his body and mind. He enjoys intensely all the pleasures and the comforts, but he never abuses the body or mind.

One should know the difference between enjoying the body and abusing the body. At one extreme, you have people torturing their bodies in pursuit of sensual pleasures, and at the other extreme, you have people torturing their bodies in the name of penance or suppression. Both do not know how to handle the body and the mind.



Real Tapas is always Effortless

Usually, when people who have spent their whole life running after the material world decide to enter into spirituality, they will carry the same mental set-up in relation to spirituality also. In the same way as they were chasing wealth or success earlier, they now start chasing peace, chasing enlightenment. It becomes an ego game for them. Whether their tapas develops or not, they develop a huge spiritual ego! They feel they have done something extraordinary.

The moment you think that you are doing something extraordinary, that very act becomes a burden for you. That very achievement will stop you from making any further progress..! The moment you think you are doing extraordinary meditation, you will try to get up from your seat.

When you are sitting and doing japa (chanting), when you are counting your beads, the moment you think, 'Oh, I think I have been meditating for a long time!', what is the next thought that comes up? 'It is enough for today! I can't do anymore; my knees hurt, my back aches, let me get up!'

Just look at your own life. Whenever you have achieved something extraordinary, it has happened only when you did not feel it to be extraordinary at that time! You only realized that it was extraordinary after you did it.

One problem with spiritual seekers is, we don't know the art of being 'playfully sincere'. We don't know how to approach our seeking. Somehow, we always feel that unless we act in an extreme manner, the goal cannot be achieved.

We cannot believe that enlightenment can be had so easily, so we plan all kinds of ways in which we can torture ourselves, in order to prepare ourselves for enlightenment! It is the nature of the mind to make us feel that enlightenment is very far away, and we have to torture ourselves for it!

A small story:

During his years of performing tapas, even the Buddha made the mistake of falling into extremes. For many years, he performed all possible tapas – exposing himself to the hot sun, starving himself, torturing his body.

Then, it is said, one day he came across a musician tuning his instrument. He saw how carefully the musician was doing this, because if he tuned the string too tight, it would snap, and if he kept it too loose, he could not play the instrument at all. Too tight or too loose - both don't work!

This was a revelation for the Buddha. When you are ready for it, even a small incident can be a revelation for you. When Buddha saw the musician, he immediately understood the truth, and he understood where he had gone wrong.

From the musician, Buddha learnt the importance of walking on the madhyapantha - the Middle Path, the path of balance. Later He shared this revelation with millions of His followers, 'In the same way as you tune the strings of your instrument, so you should hold your mind in meditation – not too tight and not too loose.'

This is tapas or 'intelligent effort'. When you add intelligence to your effort, your effort will become effortless. You will not be acting out of your ego, thinking that you are performing something extraordinary, nor will you be acting out of confusion, doing unwanted things that do not produce results.

Tapas is Passion with Patience

When the longing is intense, tapas becomes a part of your being itself.

What do I mean when I say, 'effortless effort?' What do I mean when I say, 'be playfully sincere?'

Does it mean that you have to be fifty-fifty in your spiritual effort? Fifty percent of the time working, and fifty percent of the time lazy? Or fifty percent of the time playful, and fifty percent of the time sincere?

NO! Tapas means hundred percent effort with hundred percent effortlessness, and hundred percent playfulness with hundred percent sincerity.

Understand, this is not a paradox!

You must be thinking, 'Swamiji, how to be hundred percent playful and hundred percent sincere at the same time?'

Being balanced does not mean not entering into tapas with full intensity. Usually all seekers have this problem. I see this in my brahmacharis in the ashram all the time. When they enter the path, they are too playful; they can't wake up early, they won't sit for meditation, they can't sit for half an hour with their eyes closed!

Then, once they get the taste of this life, they enter into it so completely that

sometimes they swing to the other extreme. If they are doing yoga, they try to do shirasaasana (the yogic posture where you stand on your head) the whole day, and get into trouble! Shirasaasana should not be practiced for more than two or three minutes by beginners. But they become so enthusiastic about their tapas that they get carried away.

Actually, I don't blame them. That is the beauty of this life - once you pick it up, everything else in life just starts dropping away. Once you fall in love with tapas, all that is inessential in your life just starts dropping away spontaneously.

This is what I call vairagya. See, there are three words – raga, araga, viraga or vairagya. Raga is attachment, araga is aversion, but viraga or vairagya is the state beyond both attachment and aversion.

In vairagya, you don't have to make an effort to drop your bondages – they start falling away from you naturally. You spontaneously lose both the craving for pleasure and the tendency for suffering.

Vairagya is not colorless detachment. It is intense detachment. By the sheer intensity of your longing for the Truth, all that is not Truth falls away from you. When vairagya starts flowering in you, you know that your tapas is happening in the right way.

During my tapas period, there is no spiritual practice that I did not try out. Whether it was yogic practices, meditation or worship, I did not want to leave out a single path to somehow reach the Divine.

One of the powerful spiritual practices I performed was panchaagni tapas – meditating inside a circle of fire for eight hours a day with the scorching sun overhead. Panchaagni means 'five fires' – that is, the meditator sits with fire in the four directions of North, South, East and West, and the sun overhead as the fifth fire.

I practiced this tapas for over three months. During that time, a well-wisher asked me, ‘You are such a young boy! Why are you performing such an intense tapas? Won’t your body get burnt by this fire?’

I replied, ‘The fire of longing inside me is so intense that by comparison the fire outside is nothing! This fire is the only way I know of quenching the inner fire!’

While I was wandering, I had no idea where I was going to sleep tonight, I had no idea where my next meal was coming from. I did not even know whether all my meditation, all my spiritual practices would ever fetch any results.

Still, I was living in a state of complete surrender, because I had gambled my life for the Divine, and I was ready to lose it! Intense seeking creates a beautiful waiting in you, a beautiful vacuum into which the Divine cannot help being drawn! It is as if you pull the Divine into you just by the power of your longing.

This is what I call tapas – intense passion with intense patience. Such a tapas becomes a joy in itself.

There is a beautiful story about passion with patience from Srimad Bhagavatam, the life story of Krishna:

In the village of Vraj, there was a gopika who was in love with the Divine Krishna. Understand, the gopikas were not ordinary village women; they were highly evolved souls who had taken birth on this earth only to enjoy Krishna’s Divine play and receive his spiritual guidance. Many of the gopikas were only a few steps away from enlightenment.

One night, this gopika hears Krishna playing the flute in the forest outside the village. It means that a celebration was going to happen

in the forest that night! Krishna was a master flute player, and was playing the flute as a signal, to invite the gopikas to a night of singing and dancing in the forest.

The moment the gopika hears the flute music, she is thrilled. She comes running out of her home to rush to the forest and meet Krishna. She knows that her husband is fast asleep inside, but when she comes out, she finds that her mother-in-law and sister-in-law are sitting right at the doorstep and gossiping!

The gopika is desperate; she doesn't know what to do. If she steps out, they are sure to question her. She doesn't dare offend them and go anyway. At the same time, Krishna's flute is calling her, calling her!

She can't move a step further; she just holds the door-frame and stands there. Both her passion and her patience have reached their peak..! Neither can she move, nor can she hold back anymore. O Lord, O Krishna!

The bhagavata, the writer, describes her state beautifully:

When she listens to Krishna's music, all the joyful ecstatic memories of Krishna fill her being with ecstasy. She experiences the peak of joy, and all her good karmas are exhausted in that one moment of ecstasy. She is rewarded for all her good acts in past lives, by that one moment of intense happiness.

In the very next moment, when she remembers that she cannot go near Krishna, an intense longing, an intense suffering, rises in her. She experiences the peak of pain, and she exhausts the effects of all her bad karmas.

Once you see the peak of pain and the peak of pleasure, your karmas are over. In just two kshanas, both her merits and her sins are exhausted.

She only stood there for three kshana. One kshana is not just one moment, but one wave of thought.

The first kshana, she experiences the ultimate joy, the ecstatic memory of Krishna. In that one kshana, she experiences her heaven. The very next kshana, the pain of physical separation overwhelms her. In that one kshana, she experiences her hell. She lives her heaven and she lives her hell. So all her karmas are over. The third kshana, she just relaxes into enlightenment.

Once she has experienced the peak of passion and the peak of patience, her tapas is complete. She just relaxes into enlightenment.





Tapas is the courage to make mistakes

Many times, we are so afraid to make a small mistake that we end up making big blunders!

When spiritual awakening happens to you, suddenly you have to shift your whole lifestyle to align it with the new truth. You have to let go of your old belief system, your old identity, and your old way of functioning.

However at that time, if you cannot find the courage or the strength to follow the spiritual opening, you will fall back into your old ways.

Take the risk and jump! Start to live without calculating. This is what I call virya - courage; the courage to live the spiritual life.

When you take the jump, you will naturally make a few mistakes; don't worry. Allowing yourself to make mistakes and learn is what I call tapascharya - performing tapas.

When you move from ephemeral consciousness to eternal consciousness, when you move from worry to bliss, and when you move from asatya to satya, you will make one or two mistakes.

You will fall and rise, just like a small child when it tries to walk. That is the child's tapas - when it learns how to walk! Is any child going to stop trying to walk just

because it falls down a few times?

No!

In the same way, when you start trying to live beyond your usual logic, naturally it is going to be difficult for you. So far, you have been living safely within your comfort zone, and now you are exploring unknown territory. Naturally, you are going to make some mistakes.

Tapas is nothing but accepting the small mistakes which you may make when the conscious transition happens in your being. That is tapascharya.

Have courage and just enter into the zone beyond the mind.



Tapas is dropping inner and outer Identities

Real tapas demands that you drop not only your outer identity, but also your inner identity.

We are often afraid to take the leap into spirituality, because we cannot tolerate being anything less than perfect.

Understand: perfectionism is madness. The search for perfection is a mad search. Living people are always imperfect. A living system is always imperfect, because it is growing, it is changing all the time. Living with the insecurity of constant change is tapas.

A graveyard is a perfectly secure place, but it is not a place to live in; it is only for the dead. A ship is secure in the harbor, but it has to move out in order to sail in the wide ocean. In the same way, we don't like to lose the safety of our old identity, because who knows what we may find outside it?

It is not just a question of social identity. Real tapas demands that you drop not only your outer identity, but also your inner identity.

There are two types of identities: ahamkara and amamkara, the outer identity and the inner identity.

Your outer identity is your social identity, what you show to the world. Your

inner identity is what you actually think of as yourself. Even the outer identity is possible to drop. You can live even if your ahankara - your outer identity - is destroyed.

Because you yourself are conscious that it is a false identity, it is a little easier to drop it. On the spiritual path, people manage to cross the barrier of the outer identity. Only some seekers will collapse when their outer identity is destroyed. Most seekers can handle this.

The greater danger is the mamakara - the inner identity. This is because, most of the time, you are not even aware that this is also a false identity! You are not even conscious that whatever you think of as yourself is nothing more than a bunch of beliefs that you are carrying.

If you see, your outer identity, the social identity which you project to the world, will always be a little more than what you think you are. But inside, you will be thinking of yourself as something much less.

You will be suffering inside, because you know that the identity which you are showing to the world is not true. But very rarely are people intelligent enough to realize that even the identity that you show to yourself is no more than a false idea!

Breaking the outer identity is not a great job, you don't need an enlightened Master to do that job. Sooner or later, society will do that job for you! Actually, you don't even need the whole of society; just your spouse is enough to question your whole outer identity! But the inner identity is very cunning. Only an enlightened Master is qualified to perform that surgery on you.

All your deep-rooted fantasies, your most concealed fears, your past guilt, your anxieties for the future – whatever you call as you - is no more than all these put together. It is the same raw material, put together in different ways, different forms and different personalities. Different personalities are nothing but the

same ego playing in different ways, using different combinations of desire and pain.

If the disciple permits, the Master can perform that surgery and remove the cancer of the ego, so that whatever you are beyond all these things can be revealed. No outer technique can help you do that, because you don't even know where the enemy is hiding!

When the Master works on your inner identity, there will be pain, because you are habituated to thinking of all your desires and sufferings as part of yourself. So you are going to feel some pain when it is being removed. Enduring that suffering with courage is what I call tapas.





Tapas is taking Responsibility for Consequences

Taking responsibility for the whole happening, is what is called tapas.

Tapas is not just having the courage to take the leap, but the responsibility to face the consequences. Often you may feel disconnected and disoriented, because your old identity has been destroyed. At such times, not blaming the process and not blaming Existence or the Master, but taking responsibility for the whole happening is what is called tapas.

When we feel that the goal is worth it, we will take responsibility for the entire process. We want to go through it, no matter what the cost.

When Goddess Parvati entered into tapas to win the hand of Shiva, she endured all kinds of physical and mental sufferings. She performed what we call 'asaadhya tapas' – impossible tapas - practices which are considered impossible for a woman, especially for a princess who had been brought up so delicately.

She started meditating in the open under the sun or rain. She started living only on fruits and herbs, and later, only leaves. Then she reduced her food to just only one leaf a day. Finally, at the peak of her tapas, she stopped eating even that one leaf. That is how she got the name Aparna – a-parna means 'not even a leaf'.

But in the end, when Shiva appeared before her, all the pain she had endured was forgotten in a moment, because the result was worth more than the effort!

When we know that whatever we are working for is worth the effort, we are willing to face any amount of pain, because we take responsibility for the whole process.

Later, when Devi tells her father that she wants to go and live with Shiva, her father objects, 'No! You cannot go with him. You will not be comfortable. You are a princess, and he is just a wandering ascetic! You will not be happy. He does not have anything to take care of you.'

Devi says beautifully, 'Here I may live in luxury, but not in bliss; with Him I may not have luxury, but I will be blissful.' This is a prestige issue for her father, who cannot see his daughter living with a wandering saint, a beggar. He says, 'If you leave me, you cannot come back.'

Parvati says, 'Alright, if that is what you wish, then nothing can be done', and simply leaves everything to go and live with Shiva in the Himalayas.

Because of the strength of her tapas, Shiva is able to deliver the great truths of enlightenment to her straightaway. All the great truths of the Shiva Sutras are delivered by Shiva to Parvati, because she is worthy.

Tapas purifies your body and mind

I always tell people, 'To receive the truth straightaway, you need the power of tapas. Tapas purifies you. Just like gold is purified through fire, tapas cleanses your body and mind of all the impurities, and all the unwanted garbage that you are carrying.

When your body is healthy and when your mind is unclouded by fantasies, the truth can be grasped by you straightaway. Tapas purifies the intellect, the emotions and the being. When the intellect is purified, it becomes intelligence. When the emotion is purified, it becomes devotion. When the being is purified, it becomes enlightenment.

I always tell people, 'To receive the truth straightaway, you need the power of tapas. Tapas purifies you. Just like gold is purified through fire, tapas cleanses your body and mind of all the impurities and unwanted garbage that you are carrying.

The whole purpose of tapas is to shift your emphasis from your personality to your individuality, from your ego to your Self, from mind to the bliss beyond mind, from suffering to joy, from pain to bliss.

Whatever has to be burned away in that process, let it burn away! Let whatever is not you be removed from you, so that whatever is really You remains. Even if it is a little painful, go through the tapas, go through the fire. You will see that you emerge as twenty-four carat gold. You become pure bliss, shuddha ananda.

Tapas and powers

Extraordinary powers can be achieved by tapas.

The word siddhi (powers) should not be translated as extraordinary powers. The right translation is getting ripe. If your eyes are ripe, you can see anything. When your senses ripen, you can live with them joyfully. Extraordinary powers are only the side-effect of this ripening process.

When your skin ripens you will have the power to expand or contract yourself at will. You can blow your body like a balloon or shrink it as you want. That is what is called mahima and garima.



Anima, lahima, mahima, and karima siddhis are making yourself weightless or heavy or small or big, all of this happens when your skin ripens.

The word siddhi was translated by Ramakrishna (an enlightened Master from India) as boiled, ripened, and cooked. How to cook and boil your senses? By more and more and more tapas, nothing else. Tapas is the only heat which can cook and boil your senses. No other way for boiling your senses.

So when your sense organs and body is ripened, automatically the extraordinary powers start expressing in you. Now not only your senses are ripened, but your bio-memory (emotional memory) knows the science.

The ripening of your bio-memory will give you that particular siddhi power. For example when you are healed of a particular disease that you had, the ripening of that bio- memory, will allow you to heal others with the same disease.

The part of the body when it ripens not only does it heal itself, as a side effect it gets many other powers.

So when the body and sense organs are ripened by tapas, the purification process, all the impurities are eliminated from the body, the sense organs, and bio-memory and extraordinary powers express.

Tapas prepares you for the moment of Enlightenment

Without tapas, even if satori, a glimpse of enlightenment, happens to you, your body and mind will not be prepared to hold the experience.

Many people want spiritual truths only as a kind of lubrication for their lives, some consolation, some entertainment, nothing more than that. Even if they have some spiritual experiences, it will not stay in them. They will simply go back to society and live in the same way as before. Naturally, they will not be willing to give their life to the process.

After all, all our tapas is only for this one thing: to catch the moment of enlightenment when it happens to us. Tapas itself is nothing but a training or preparation for the ultimate moment. Life is always throwing up possibilities of enlightenment. This consciousness shift happens in our life many times, again and again. It is we who are not aware. If you are not aware, you will only keep missing it. You will not even recognize that such a moment has come and passed!

There is a beautiful Zen story:

A Zen nun was fetching water from the monastery well to her room. She was carrying the water in two pots tied to both ends of a bamboo

stick, which she was carrying on her shoulder. It was a full moon night, and the reflection of the moon was seen in the water.

The nun was totally in tune and feeling connected with that reflection, with nature; she was completely connected to the beautiful scene and walking. She was gazing at the moon's reflection in the water and walking.

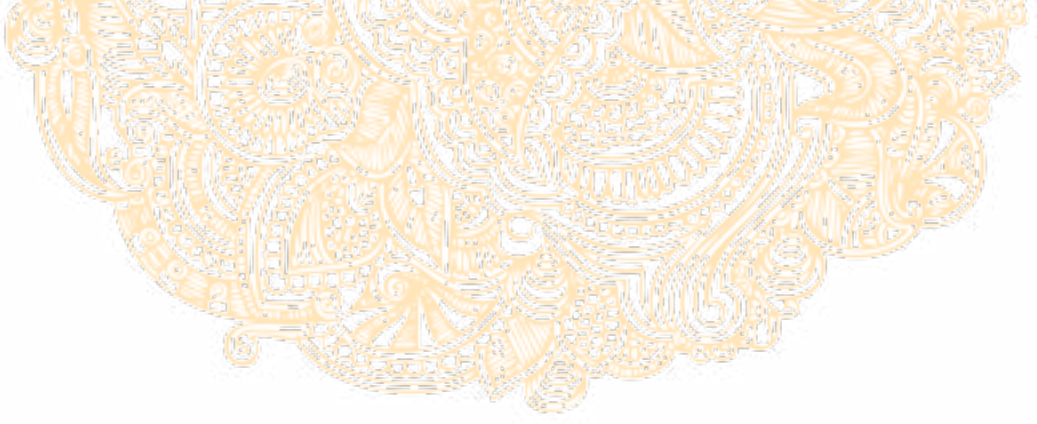
Suddenly, the bamboo broke and the pot fell and broke. The story says, at that moment, in the shock of discovering that the reflection is gone, the nun became enlightened! She says, I was so completely connected to the nature, to the beautiful reflection of the moon; there was nothing else in my mind. When the bamboo broke and the pot fell and broke, the reflection disappeared and something in me broke and I disappeared.

It is not that everybody will have the same experience. You can also pick up a pot, you can also fetch water from the well, carry the bamboo stick, and if you want you can also break the pot. Nothing else will happen except a bamboo and two pots will be wasted! No, seriously!

If the same incident happens in your life, your first reaction will be, 'Oh! God, two pots are gone!' You either worry or fear or suffer. That will be the first thing you will experience. Only if you are aware and conscious enough, you can catch yourself before the suffering starts in your inner space.

How did the experience happen for the Zen nun? Because she was ready, her consciousness was in such a high, intense frequency. She was able to catch that shift. When the shift happened, she was able to be aware and catch that precious moment and center herself. She was able to catch that neutral space when the unclutching happened.





Discovering you



Tapas is getting rid of all that is not
you!

A small story:

Once a man went to visit a famous sculptor.

*He saw the sculptor sitting silently in front of a big marble block,
smiling admiringly at it.*

When he saw the visitor, he turned to him and said, 'Isn't she beautiful?'

'Who?' asked the bewildered visitor.

'This woman hiding in the marble block!' said the sculptor.

'Where? I don't see any woman!' said the visitor.

'You will, as soon as I finish removing all the unnecessary stuff around her!' smiled the sculptor.

On the spiritual path, this process is called tapas. Tapas is the intense, joyful effort that transforms you from what you are to what you can be. Of course, the sculptor was working on the marble, but the material on which you will be working is – Yourself.

Tapas is only for the very courageous, because it is at the same time the process of death and the process of birth. Tapas is death for your ego, because it involves shedding all the false ideas, and false concepts that you are carrying around, calling them as yourself!

The Sanskrit word 'tapas' literally means 'burning'. Tapas is the process of burning your ego with the fire of Truth. When you burn yourself with this Truth, letting IT penetrate into your being, it removes all that is false in you.

Tapas is not a spiritual practice to be added to you. It is the process of destroying all that is NOT you, so that whatever is really YOU may be revealed.



Tapas is finding you

Tapas destroys only your false identities, not You!

You must understand what this process called tapas is about.

Right now, your personality is entangled in too many things, in too many situations and too many people. When you remove all these things, one by one, from your life, what remains will be your individuality.



At so many levels, you are carrying ideas that you think of as YOU.

At the outermost level, you are deeply connected to the world as you experience it. Your social identity, your family, your profession – you are carrying all these inside you, as part of you. That is why, traditionally, seekers on the spiritual path choose a life away from family and society.

I can say that it is not necessary to physically be away from family and society - it is enough if you can psychologically disconnect from them. Understand: I am not asking you to become indifferent to them, to stop talking to them! Just become aware of the subtle influences that the world is exerting on you.

You are carrying the baggage of so many of other people's ideas. Just become aware, how many people are living inside your head right now, telling you how to run your life? Just listen and see, how many voices can you hear? We are living our life based on ideas of right and wrong which are given to us by others, and we don't even realize it.

Becoming aware is only the first step. Many times we are already aware, but we don't have the courage to free ourselves of these influences. We know that we are simply acting out ideas that have been given to us by our parents, by friends, by society, and by television!

But we don't want to let go of those ideas, because we are afraid of living without a social identity. We are afraid of being alone.

As you move from ego to spontaneity, you will surely experience some pain and some fear. This is nothing but the process of transition happening in you. Naturally, the ego will resist the process, and you will experience this transition as pain. You will undergo pain. That's your penance, your tapas!

Have the right idea about you

Having the right idea about you is very important, because based on that idea you are going to function.

Once I asked My Guru, Gurumātā Vibhūtānanda Puri, 'Why is so much tapas required on the spiritual path? Why so much of austerity, facing difficulties, why is all this required?'

She laughed and said, 'When you go through tapas, you will develop such an understanding about you, that even if small things come to you from society, you will feel that is a blessing. You will feel that even a small comfort that you receive from the world is a great blessing.'

Practicing tapas sets a standard about what you feel as you, or what you are qualified to receive from the world, so that you live forever in contentment. Tapas sets a standard about you in such a way that you are forever contented. Whatever comes into in your life will become a bonus for you. You will say, 'Oh, compared to how I lived earlier, this is too much!' This is one benefit of tapas.

Understand: the concept you have about you is the context you set for your life. Having and developing the right idea about you is very important, because it is based on that idea that you are going to function.

If you think you are the body, you will spend your whole life making everything



Falling in tune

Tapas is the practice through which your bio-memory falls in tune with the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-intelligent and all-compassionate atma.

The stuff which is inside your bio-memory, that is responsible for your bio-memory being alive, is called satchidananda. Sat is 'all-knowing', chit is 'all-powerful', ananda is 'always-blissful'.

But your bio-memory is not completely aware of its own sweet truth, satchidananda. Any practice that makes your bio-memory understand and experience its innate nature of being all-knowing, all-powerful, all-blissful is tapas.

Tapas is not always painful. It is not always austerity. Even the very joyful action of eating something sweet can be tapas for you.

Sometimes there are austerities that need to be practiced, but the word tapas itself should not be translated as austerity or mortification. Just because sometimes it is austerity, it does not mean that tapas always has to be austerity. Sometimes, it is a very joyful and happy action, which you always wanted to do. Therefore, it does not become pain.

The ultimate joy is gained by completion and fulfilment. It is not pain to learn completion! You are not going to poke your body with a spear, you are not going to fast, you are not going to kill yourself. No!

The word tapas should be understood or translated as the methods and techniques through which your bio-memory is empowered to look into its innate nature, and experience the all-knowing, all powerful, all blissful, and all compassionate expression of itself.

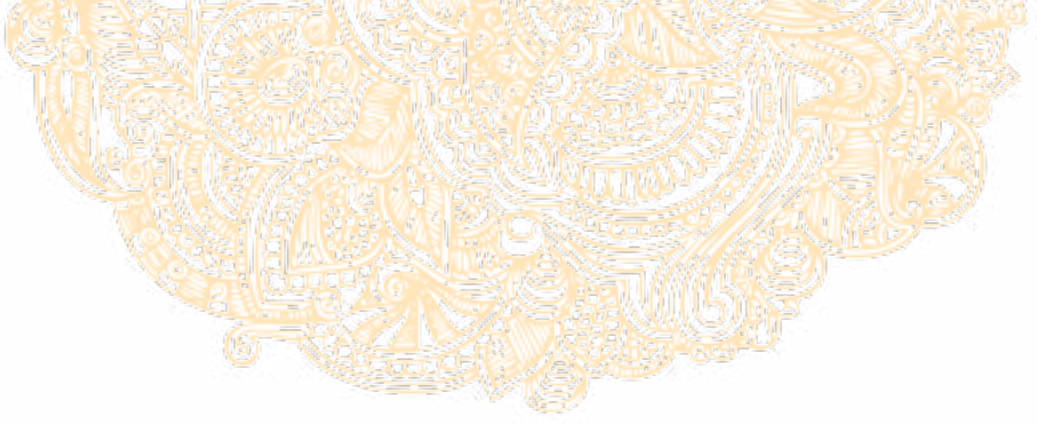
When you feel like falling asleep, if you just remember, 'Wow, by falling asleep I am going to experience my innate nature of eternal peace,' it is also tapas. Whenever you fall asleep, just remember, 'Oh, I think I am tired of running around and projecting the scenes which are not me! So I want to return to my home, which is all-peaceful all the time, and waiting for me. Let me return.' Just with this memory, if you fall asleep, your whole sleeping time itself becomes tapas. You don't need to do anything else.

Tapas is not just mortification and austerities, it is just the pleasant, sweet, and relaxed technique for falling in tune. You are not doing any austerity here, you are not doing any mortification here; but you are killing the wrong ideas. Only the mortification of the wrong ideas is done here.

From my experience, if I have to describe the word tapas, I will describe it as only the mortification of the wrong ideas you are clutching to inside you.







Practising Tapas



The pain of loneliness

The seed has to break and give way; only then can the tree happen. Any process of transition will be both painful and joyful - a 'sweet pain'!

Understand: before any birth, pain has to happen. Before the tree happens, the seed has to suffer the pain. The seed has to break and give way. Only then can the tree happen. Any process of transition will be both painful and joyful. I can say, it will be a 'sweet pain'!

When you start letting go of your social identity, you will suffer the pain of

loneliness. This is what is meant by tapas. To feel the pain of loneliness, you don't have to go and sit in a forest. When you let go of your social identity, you will go through the same pain of loneliness.

During the recent religious persecution that happened on our organization, I saw the same thing happening with many of my devotees! This was an intense tapas period for our whole organization, because we were being reduced to nothing - socially, financially, and in every way.

I can say, it was the kind of tapas that even experienced yogis will be afraid to undergo! Our organization was being targeted in every way for no reason, my ashramites were being abused, our social status was zero.

During that time, many people whose social identity was dependent on me - who had come to me because I was a good brand to be associated with - started to feel the heat. Their social status was threatened by the persecution; their identity was collapsing. So, rather than drop their identity, they chose to drop me. Unfortunately, they didn't realize that they had dropped out in the first few minutes of the race.

The beauty of such a crisis is that it exposes to you the exact place where your ego is hiding, the exact spot where you have pinned your identity. At such times, if you can remember that whatever has been taken away from you is not YOU, you will experience only freedom, not pain.

Remember, whatever is really You cannot be taken away from you. Only the ideas which you are holding on to can be taken away; only your social identity has been taken away!

Such a crisis is actually a beautiful opportunity for transformation. At such times, whatever is happening in you, you can just remember, 'Is it really happening to me? All the things which I am going through, is it really me? Or is it just my social identity that is being destroyed? Am I really only this identity?'

If you have this awareness, you don't even need to go through any sadhana or practice or any technique. If you can remember, just this remembrance is enough; you don't need a separate technique or method or tapas to awaken yourself.

Of course, I am not saying it will be easy to be aware. Whenever you fall out of awareness, it is going to hurt! Even at such times, if you can just witness the pain of losing what you felt to be one part of yourself, if you can just witness the pain of loneliness; you will see a new strength happening in yourself.

For the first time, you will see yourself stripped of your outer identity, your social identity. If you can go through that and come out, you will be succeeding in a huge tapas.

When I returned from my fifty three days of illegal imprisonment after the religious persecution on my organization, I can say that one thing made me really happy: all my ashramites who had withstood this whole cyclone of sensationalism, who had found the strength and the faith to stand strong even when their social identity was collapsing, had become transformed into beautiful, powerful and intense beings.

I could see that their entire consciousness had shifted to a new level. They had witnessed death in a way, and survived it. It is not an easy joke! To see oneself in isolation for the first time is not easy.

But understand - aloneness is our nature.

Whenever you feel the pain of loneliness, undergo it totally, with total acceptance. You will move from loneliness to aloneness, to kaivalya - aloneness that is complete. Accept and welcome this loss of personality, whenever it happens. You will see that you will give birth to yourself as individuality.

Courage of Tapas

If the click happens at the right time, even if it is one click, it is enough to lead you to enlightenment.

A small story:

One day a rich man received a palm leaf manuscript with a needle without an eyelet. The palm leaf said – ‘After death, your whole wealth, not even one needle, will come with you. So realize the impermanence of wealth. Nothing will stay with you. Nothing will come with you when you are going to the ultimate place.’

This was a strong blow and a shock to the rich man. That shock or strong blow became a click and that man dropped everything. He threw away everything in that very moment. He left his home and become enlightened. His name was Pattinathar.

This was an intense click, and not only that, when the click happened, Pattinathar decided to alter his day to day life in tune with the click. He was courageous enough to tune his life with that click.

When the click happened he did not think, ‘Okay, I will maybe until my life ends, keep that much money in my bank balance’. No. Nothing. No second thought. He did not bother about anything. He only had one thing in his heart.

The courage to go with that click. To go behind the click and see the end of it.

This is what I call, courage of Tapas.

Courage of tapas is when a click can do the same thing to you. I am not saying you will leave the wealth and go. No! I am not saying that, but it can do such a big transformation in you. Falling in tune, by putting your day to day activities in tune with a click is taking the jump.



Suddenly, you will see, that the click will reveal deeper and deeper truths and understandings to you. Understand, initiation is like giving you one light. That light can be put off by any cyclone or air or blowing wind. But if you protect it, then it can't be blown away. It cannot be put off. Protecting means, making your day to day decisions and life in tune with the click. Whenever you receive a click, protect it.

I know for sure, Pattinathar did not become enlightened the moment he read what the palm leaf said. He only had a click. A strong initiation. The next thing he did is put all his effort and energy to tune himself to that click.

He immediately started rearranging his thinking and mental setup towards that click. He rearranged his lifestyle to be in tune with that click. The moment he did that, the deeper and deeper truths of that click was revealed, in a few months or a few weeks, he become enlightened.



He achieved the ultimate truth. So allow a click or an initiation to work on you. For example, the understanding which you have that you are the center and your desires, your property, your fears, and your mind is yours is a lie. You are the property of your mind. This will bring so much of disrespect to your mind. So much of rest and unclutching between you and your mind.

As long as you think, your mind is yours, you will never be able to stop fulfilling what it says, and what it anticipates. You will never be able to escape from its roots. Even if you escape from the desires, it will attack you in the name of fear. Your mind is very intelligent.

When you escape from desires, it will create fears and make you do the same thing that it wants you to do in a different. It will enter through the back door. Whether it is your fear or desire, it is not yours. The very understanding your fears are not yours, will leave you so free, with so much of rest, you don't have to stop or you don't have to escape from them.

At the most what can happen? Death? Let it happen. For whom is it not going to happen? For everybody it is going to happen. Not only for you, even for me, or at least what you think as me this body, is going to die. Everything is going to die. There is nothing which is not going to die. Let us have this courage. What can happen? That's all.

Shraddha is not only dedication. It is the commitment to discover the truth, and the courage to follow that truth no matter where it leads!

Shraddha is Tapas

Work leads to purification of the mind.

Whatever work and responsibility you take up, the energy starts expressing accordingly. Whatever load you take on you, and whatever responsibility you take up on you, you will see that your inner space will expand and the energy flows through you!

All you need is just two things: trust that life is good and trust that you expand to the responsibilities that you take up. When that expansion happens have patience during the transformation process. Patience during the transformation process is what I call Tapas.

There is a beautiful phrase of Shirdi Sai Baba's teachings: 'Shraddha' and 'Suboori' – Trust and Patience. This is the essence of life. Trust that you can expand in your life. You expand for all the responsibilities and commitments you take up. Have patience when the expansion or the transformation is happening in your inner space. Nothing else needs to be done.

Trust and Patience. But we seldom have either trust or patience. That is why we just reproduce the same past into our future.

Why we don't allow big breakthroughs in our life? Because we don't trust life leads us into a new space. Just like that seed, we are afraid we may lose what we have.

Shraddha does not only mean faith. It is faith plus the courage to experiment

with the truth. The courage to experiment with what you believe, that is what is called Shraddha. With Shraddha you will never fail, but with faith there is a possibility that you may fail.

When you just have faith, and don't have the courage to experiment with the truth, you will go to the restaurant, read the menu card and go away. You may miss eating, you may never taste the food, and you may never experience it. But when you have Shraddha with sincerity there is no chance of you missing the truth. A person can never miss when he has got Shraddha with sincerity.

Swami Vivekananda, says beautifully, 'instead of knowing the whole library just know five concepts with Shraddha. Experiment with these five concepts. Let the five concepts become your life, that is enough, nothing else is necessary.

Instead of having the whole library in your head, have the five concepts in your heart. Shraddha can transform your whole life. Whatever you believe even if you believe in atheism, no problem. But if you have Shraddha, if you add sincerity to the concept, you will achieve the ultimate.

Tapas: leading you to the highest coherence

Tapas gives you the ability to stand any persecution.

When you are creating, people may go after you and try to persecute you. In the political field the more people you can destroy, the more power you have. In the spiritual field, the more you can stand determines your power.

Tapas is the tremendous ability to stand any persecution. The very civilization and society in which you are living can be transformed by you. You can put the whole society into the highest possible coherence.



Through my tapas of accepting and not causing pain, millions of seekers around the world are raising and connecting with me. So I am transforming the very community in which I am living by this tapas; bearing, accepting and not causing pain.

Any decision to bear pain is tapas. Whether it is physical or mental or emotional decision to bear pain it is tapas.

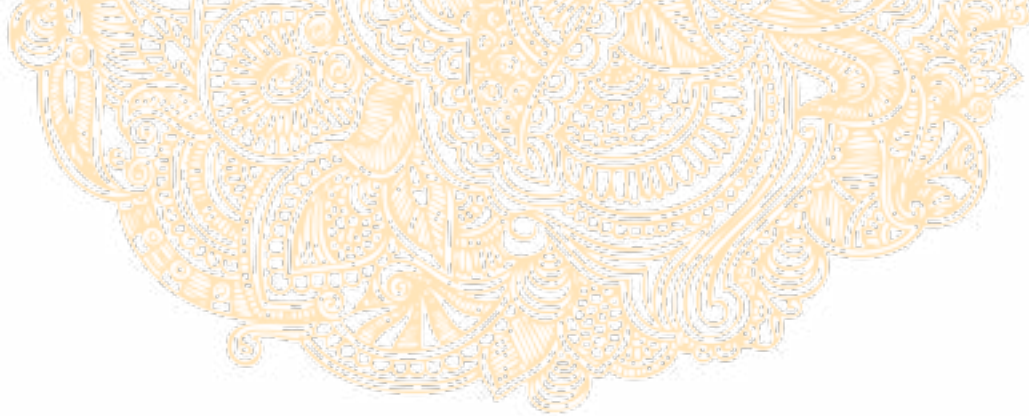
If you have tapas, accepting all the suffering without questioning, suddenly you transform the whole community in which you are living.

If you have inner and outer purity, you put your whole body into the highest possible coherence. If you have bliss, you put the community in which you are living into the highest possible coherence.

If you have tapas where you bear everything and accept the pain, but not cause pain, the whole society in which you are living will be put into the highest possible coherence. If you have constant strengthen in your highest ideas and ideals, you will put the whole civilization in which you are living into the highest possible coherence.

Ultimately if you surrender to the ultimate you will put the whole universe into the highest possible coherence.

Therefore, through tapas you can put your body, the community, the society, the civilization and the whole universe in which you are living to the highest possible coherence.



Tapas, Possibility and Completion



Tapas and Possibility

Remember possibility. Re-eject impossibility.

The ability to build possibility inside you is tapas. Not allowing impossibility in you is re-ejecting impossibility is renunciation. Building the bio-memory (memory in your physical body) of possibility is tapas.

All of us carry the energy to make what we want as reality in our space. That is what is life. What is life? The ability to make what you want as reality is life. Whether you want health, wealth, happiness, relationships, bliss, or completion.

Whatever you want. Causing that in your life is life.

The ability to cause exists in everyone. Unfortunately, if too much wood is dumped on a small fire the fire can be put off. In the same way, too much impossibility can be dumped on possibility. If the fire can somehow manage to catch the wood, it will burn any amount of wood. It can even burn forests.

That crucial initial moment where the wood is dumped on fire, if the fire gives up on itself, everything is over. But if the fire is supported by a little bit of wind, encouraged, enriched, and initiated, it catches the wood and the fire cannot be put off.

All of you have the possibility as a fire in us. The space of possibility as fire in us. But unfortunately, the idea of impossibility is too much. When you remember your impossibility in you, the impossibility gets strengthened. Anything you remember again and again becomes a part of you.

If you remember about integrity again and again it becomes part of you. If you remember about authenticity again and again, that becomes part of you. If you remember about possibility again and again, that becomes part of you. If you remember impossibility again and again and again, it becomes part of you.

Anything you remember again and again becomes your muscle memory. If the impossibility comes inside you in the form of remembering eject it out! Again and again, reject it out, reject it out, reject it out! That is tapas.



Tapas and Completion

*Continuously live in the space of Completion.
Completion itself is Tapas!*

Incompletion is anything that leaves you with an experience of low energy, low emotions and a general feeling of un-fulfillment. Any action that is un-fulfilled as per your expectation, either because of an outer hindrance or an inner hindrance, is incompletion.

Anything from the past that hinders you from participating in life as it happens, is incompletion.

Completion is the state which leaves nothing left to be desired, either in the inner world or in the outer world. When in completion, there is no space for fear, greed, anger, doubt, envy or any of the low-energy emotions and conflicts you create for yourself.

Completion is an unclouded inner space. In such a space, irrespective of what is happening in the outer world, completion alone remains.

Incompletion come out of the assumption that something larger than you exists out there for you, which can complete you. Your life is nothing but a journey from incompletion to incompletion.

The idea that something outside you can complete you, can add to you, can fulfil you, immediately reduces you to the level of matter. You forget that you

are not matter – you are life!

Only life can infuse life into matter; matter cannot infuse life into life! Only you can infuse value into anything that is outside you. Even the so-called positive happenings in your life are usually a result of incompleteness. Your success, your relationships, your wealth – everything is triggered by a sense of incompleteness.

Whether you realize it or not, you are complete unto yourself. Then why do you look to something external to complete you?

Since completion is your innate nature, you are never comfortable with your own incompleteness. For that very reason they remind you of your incompleteness.

Everything in the cosmos resonates innately with completion. It is completion here, it is completion there. Completion is born out of completion. If you remove completion from completion, completion alone remains!

Completion means creating a space which is full and where you can live. Completion keeps you full and gives you the space to live! Incompletion keeps you full, but never fulfilled; you will never be able to live there.

Building that space of completion is Tapas!

Technique: Identify your Patterns

ABOUT THE TECHNIQUE

Below is the process in which you can identify your major patterns.

DURATION

As much time as needed.

INSTRUCTIONS

Think of a recent conflict or a time when you felt powerless or when you felt your energy was down or when you felt depressed or felt fear or anger.

Now visualize that event vividly as if it is happening right now and relive the situation. Recall what was said, how you felt, everything you can visualize of that event.

Identify three things in the conflict:

- MAMAKARA – what you think you are inside at that moment. It is the image you carry for yourself; what you felt as you at that moment. For example: I am a loser, I always let my parents down, etc.
- AHANKARA – what you project to others as you: the way you react, your body language, your actions, and the statements you gave about yourself to others at that time. For example: I project friendliness even when I feel I am a loser.
- SWA-ANYAKARA – what you cognize as Life at those moments. What is it that

you felt life was for you at that moment? For example: life is humiliating me, because people are laughing at me at that time.

When you identify these three statements, you will see that they have been there inside you during many situations in your life before.

These statements are only the branches. They are the sign of the pattern that exists deep inside you. The root is hidden from your own view due to your current cognition. But we can start with cutting off the branches.



Technique: Complete with your Patterns

ABOUT THE TECHNIQUE

The next step is the process of self-completion – swapoornatva kriya. The purpose of self-completion is to make you whole or complete. When you are complete, you will feel light as if the heaviness inside you is lifted. You will also feel energized and feel your inner space expanding.

When you are incomplete or not whole, you will feel powerless, upset, lifeless, and have low energy.

DURATION

As much time as needed.



INSTRUCTIONS

Have a medium-sized mirror in which you can see your face comfortably. You are going to have a conversation with yourself!

With the mirror in front of you, sit in a relaxed way and cognize that you committed for completion to happen. The complete part of you is holding the mirror. The incomplete person is the image in the mirror.

Look at the image in the mirror and bring up the situation again that caused you conflict. Listen intently to what the incomplete person in the mirror has to say to you about the conflict.

Keep listening till there is nothing else the incomplete person has to say.

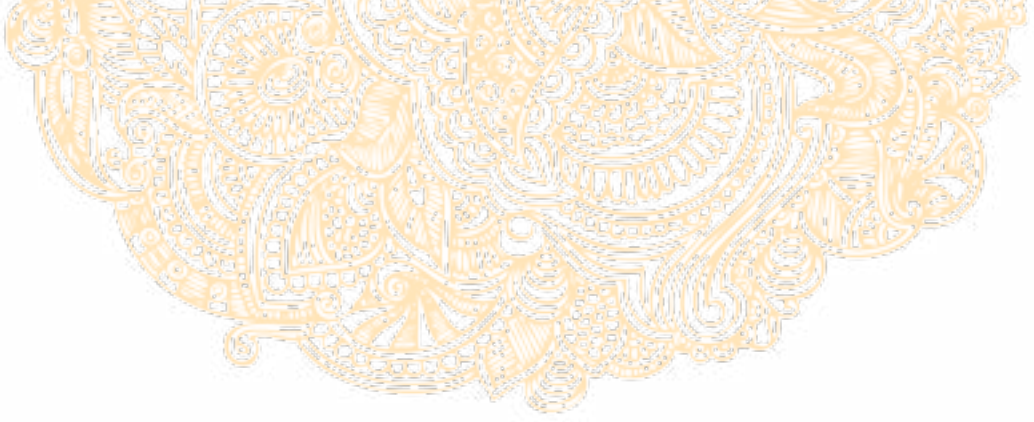
Now, as the complete person, say to the incomplete person in the mirror 'that you heard what has been said, and that the incomplete person was functioning from a cognition that was created in the past, and that it is not the cognition you now have as a complete person'.

Say to your mirror-image, 'that you are functioning from this new cognition, and that you will not be functioning from the old cognition you had at that time'.

Heal the incomplete person in the mirror completely. Tears may come and/or laughter may come. Allow both to happen.

On completion, you will feel a lightness, an expansion or a deep feeling of relief or a sigh. You may have sudden clarity about other past events, which are based on the same pattern you were dealing with during the completion process.

Repeat the same process for any other major pattern you want to complete with. NGo on completing every day if needed. This technique is especially useful when done at night before sleep where you can review your conflicts or patterns or actions for that day!



Questions and Answers on Tapas



Beloved Swamiji, I am not able to maintain a constant state of motivation. Even though I have had many glimpses, sometimes the mind and body just give up, and I feel that it is not worth the effort.

Understand, Tapas means sacrificing everything else without compromising. Whenever a cognitive shift happens in your life. When your internal understanding is trying to set a new routine for your body and mind, naturally they will protest, because they don't want their old way of life to be disturbed.

Whenever a cognitive shift happens, you will suddenly see that your regular routine is a little disturbed. It becomes a little chaotic. Your body and mind will be struggling to cope up with this change.

If you try to live your life based on this new understanding, many things are going to be thrown slightly out of gear – it may be your job, your relationships, your routine. At such times, have the courage to go through the disturbance, to go through the chaos and settle into the new understanding, establishing yourself strongly, permanently in the new understanding, is what I call tapas.

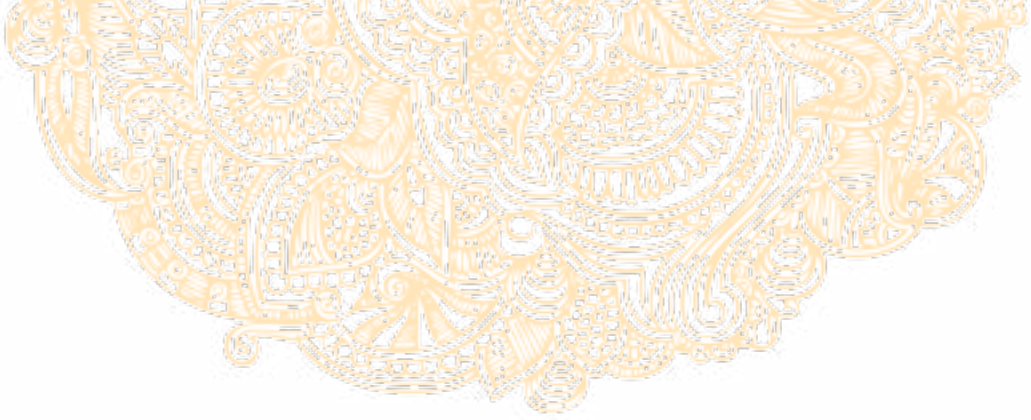
Swamiji, even internalizing a new understanding demands a lot from me! Somehow, a lot of fear comes up whenever I feel that I might have to make many changes in my life to accommodate a new truth.

Have courage. For a few months, even if you feel your life is completely shaken, okay, nothing wrong! Call sick if you want to. Better call sick, otherwise you will be sick! And let that understanding churn you.

The non-mechanical parts of your brain will be awakened. That is what I mean when I say that even in your dreams, you will remember very clearly the great ideas and teachings which you heard, which have become part of you.

If you have heard or remembered my teachings at least a few times in your dreams, it means the non-mechanical parts of your brain has already awakened. The awakening has started. I tell you, surely you will see a beautiful new order arising out of that awakening.





Tapas: glimpses from my life



My whole life was tapas

During my days of tapas, my spiritual wandering, I endured all kinds of rigors. Many times I had to go without a meal for days. I lived in so many kinds of harsh climates, wearing just a single piece of cloth on my body.

When I talk about it, people say, 'Oh, you have done so much tapas!' But to tell you honestly, at that time I never felt that it was something extraordinary..! I never felt that I was doing some great tapas. Actually, I was enjoying it, because there was such a deep longing in my heart to experience the truth! If I had realized at that time that it was extraordinary, that idea itself would have been too intense to let me to achieve the results.

Ananda tapas

There is a very intense meditation technique called 'Ananda Tapas', where the meditator sits within a circle of fire for several hours every day, for many days or weeks as required, under the guidance of an enlightened Master. This technique dissolves the samskaras and engraved memories that act as obstacles on the path to enlightenment.

A beautiful incident happened in my life while I was performing Ananda Tapas. When I was sitting for meditation, I had requested a villager to take care of the fire by continuously adding fuel whenever needed.

The villager gathered wood and dried cow-dung cakes to keep the fire burning. But he was a poor guy and had no money to keep the fire burning continuously. I was wondering what to do about this situation, I remembered a lamp that I received as a gift when I had gone to a feast in Mysore.

I gave the lamp to the villager and told him to sell it to buy how much ever fuel was needed to keep the fire burning. When the villager came back, he said that it was a silver lamp, and he got good money for it.

I was surprised, because it was not a silver lamp! I suddenly remembered the sadhu (monk) who used to handle this lamp. This sadhu was a great enlightened being who never needed anything - no clothes, no food, no water and no sleep.

This sadhu used to smoke ganja (hashish) by placing it in a chillum (clay pipe sometimes used by wandering sadhus). Whenever his stock of ganja ran empty,

he would place a few copper coins in the chillum and tap it – and gold coins would fall out of it! He knew the secret science of alchemy – the process of converting baser metals into gold. This sadhu had played with the lamp for a few moments and given it back to me.

After a few days the money that the villager got by selling the silver lamp was exhausted, but the meditation had to be continued..! I remembered this sadhu and jokingly said to myself that the sadhu should have changed the lamp into a gold lamp instead of a silver lamp.

A few days later, I was invited to a nearby ashram for bhiksha, where a rich man was offering food and gifts to all the monks in that area. When he came to pay his respects to me, I was shocked, because he brought the same silver lamp as an offering!

The rich man said that from the day he bought the lamp from the villager, a sadhu appeared in his dream every day, telling him to offer the lamp to a young Swami. The rich man had noticed that I was the youngest sadhu in the group, so he offered it to me.

I still needed money to continue with my tapas, so I offered to exchange the silver lamp for money with the rich man. When he heard the reason for the exchange, the rich man joyfully offered to take care of all of my needs till the tapas was completed and requested me to keep the lamp also.

My simple but honest request to the sadhu who gave me the lamp was immediately granted through the generous rich man who came in search of me. Whenever you request help from enlightened beings with the highest purpose in mind, they just respond to you, beyond time and space.



My experience of enlightenment

My experience of enlightenment happened when I was between the age of eleven and twelve years old.

It all started when I went to listen to Annamalai Swamigal, an enlightened being who was a disciple of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi.

There were a few seekers sitting around him, listening to the spiritual truths he was sharing.

Annamalai Swamigal said, 'We are not the body. There is no pain or suffering for us.'

This really surprised me, because I had seen children cry when they were beaten, although I had never been beaten myself.

Even though I didn't understand what Annamalai Swamigal said, I was in the pure space of listening, so whatever he said was intensely working on me. At that time, I was not capable of fully cognizing what he was saying. If I had, I would have become enlightened right at that moment! But since I wasn't capable of cognizing what Annamalai Swamigal had said, I only listened. This was the beginning of my search.

Sri Ramakrishna describes how a pearl is created only under the rarest circumstances. He says, 'An oyster has to receive rain showers during Swaati Nakshatra, and catch that drop of water. Then the oyster goes into the ocean and processes that drop of water, which eventually becomes a pearl.' Because

I was in the pure space of listening, I could receive the words from the Master, and they could work on me to bring out the pearl of enlightenment in me, one-and-a-half years later.

Because my listening was so pure, I was possessed by those words! After a lot of contemplation, I decided to experiment on myself to see if I experienced pain or not.

I picked up my father's razor and made a very deep and long cut on my thigh! At the time, I didn't have any technique to go beyond pain, and I had not experienced enlightenment either, so when the blood started gushing out, I was shaken. My parents came to know about what I had done, and rushed me to the local hospital, where the doctors needed thirteen stitches to sew up the cut.

After a few days, I approached Annamalai Swamigal again. I asked him why he had said that there is no pain or suffering, after whatever had happened to me. Annamalai Swamigal laughed and told me, 'You have not understood what I said, but your attitude of experimenting is a great quality. Hold on to it and you will achieve the Ultimate.'

This conversation did not satisfy me. I said, 'I need not have gone through this suffering if you had uttered these words before I had cut myself!'

Annamalai Swamigal just said, 'Don't worry, you will understand when the time comes.' He gave me one last teaching. He said, 'Find out WHO has the feeling that there is pain or suffering.'

For me, these words were an initiation. Whenever I had free time, I would sit and contemplate, 'WHO is feeling the pain in me?'

This self-enquiry was done by me when I was ten years old, and I was practising it without even knowing I was practising it. About a year and a half later, on the auspicious occasion of Vaikashi Vishakam, I had my experience of enlightenment.

I went to the foothills of Arunachala Hill in the evening, where there is a coral hillock called Pavazha Kundru. It is on the same rock that Devi Parvati did tapas and became enlightened. So it is a very powerful space and carries a high spiritual vibration. I was practising the same technique of self-enquiry, and asking myself, 'Who am I? Who is having the experience of pain and suffering?'

Between sunset and moonrise, I suddenly experienced a revelation. My eyes were closed, and I suddenly knew who the experiencer was. I felt alive and being present in everything. I could literally see everything with a 360 degree vision.

The very next moment, I was able to see and feel everything as myself, in the same way that one feels powerfully alive in one's own skin. I felt powerfully alive inside everything – the plants, the hill, the rocks, the sky, everything!

For about an hour and a half, my body did not move. Later, I slowly descended the hill, and even though it was dark, I did not need light to see. I felt this way for two and a half days. I could see and feel everything as my own presence.

Because I was in completion, the words of Annamalai Swamigal entered my being. Because of my integrity, the words were continuously working on me.

When I cut myself, I was stretching myself to the truth, I was acting from authenticity.

I took the responsibility to find the root source of who was feeling the pain and suffering. Just by living them in a state of completion and in the space of pure listening, I could directly experience enlightenment itself.

Tapas to overcome death

Death is a mystery - but more importantly, it is man's greatest fear. That is why in some Catholic nunneries, the nuns lie down in open coffins every morning and meditate that they are dead. In Vedanta, this is one of the most used techniques for enlightenment. In Buddhism, anyone initiated into sannyas has to spend three months in the cremation grounds, continuously observing the bodies being burnt, while visualizing oneself being burnt. The logical mind finds it difficult to understand how one simple experience can give such courage.

I myself had this particular experience in Varanasi, India.

When I went to Varanasi, I saw that about three hundred dead bodies were being cremated every day in a place called Manikarnika Ghat.

Traditionally, it is believed that if somebody leaves the body in that area, or if their body is burnt in that area, they will be liberated. Ramakrishna confirms this and says that he saw Mahadeva (Shiva) himself going to every pyre and unclutching every soul from its body and liberating it.

The men working there would carry the bodies to the Ganga river, reaching there by evening. As they walk, they keep chanting 'Ram Naam Satya Hai,' which means, 'The name of the Lord is the ultimate truth.'

There is no special ritual involved. the bodies are dipped into the Ganga three times as they say 'Raam Naam Satya Hai.'

I sat at that particular ghat to observe what was going on, and an hour later,

death was no more a strange incident that happens to a distant relative.

Bodies of all sizes, genders, ages, colors, communities and religions were burnt in that hour. When one sees so many bodies, it feels like there is nothing to it. Death means that the breath that goes into them does not come out, that is all. Everyone has to leave their body someday, and they will have company as well!

Knowing that death is inevitable will bring down the respect that one has for the ego. Whatever one thinks should not leave them is their ego. When one knows for sure that everything is going to leave them, the respect for the ego goes down immensely.

Being a very straightforward person, I immediately dropped my ego and decided that if I am going to die after all, I should have a death experience now itself, and live without the fear or die and see for myself.

I sat down in a small Shiva temple nearby and started watching the dead bodies being burnt. The big 'click' that I remember even to this day, happened when an old lady's body was being burnt, and I could see the fat from her stomach melting. This fat made the fire burn brighter!

Seeing this made me think that the very same thing is going to happen to me..! This opened up a deep, terrible fear of death in me, but I decided to face it consciously.

The fear was spreading all over my body, and when it met my awareness, it became a death experience. I saw clearly that the body was dead. For two and a half days, I did not sleep, eat, drink or think. Suddenly the 'click' happened to me that this body is dead, but I am still existing! This was such an intense ecstasy that the fear of death just left. Slowly I opened my eyes, and the first thing I felt was a deep gratitude.


I performed a small puja for Vishwanatha (Shiva) at the temple, and I could see clearly that Vishwanatha was alive. When I died, Vishwanatha became alive to me. Till the previous day, because I was alive, Vishwanatha was a dead stone.

When a fear is suppressed, it stays inside the person. When one does not consciously face the fear, it shakes one's whole nervous system. However, when it is faced consciously, it becomes a death experience.

Facing the fear of death consciously and coming out is the ultimate tapas.







About His Holiness Paramahansa Nithyananda

His Holiness Paramahansa Nithyananda is recognized today as a clear, legitimate, apolitical voice of Sanatana Hindu Dharma, and revered as a living incarnation of superconsciousness by millions worldwide. He is a Mahamandaleshwar (spiritual head) of Mahanirvani Peeth, the world's most ancient apex body of Hinduism. He is the most watched spiritual teacher on YouTube.com with over 21 million views, and the author of more than 300 books published in over 20 languages. His lectures are watched live every day on <http://www.nithyananda.tv>, as well as on multiple international television channels and via video conferencing.

Paramahansa Nithyananda is considered the foremost authority in the world today in the field of Consciousness and Kundalini awakening. He has successfully demystified yogic sciences like Third Eye AwakeningSM, spiritual healing, levitation, teleportation, materialization, anti-ageing and going beyond the need for food.

A spiritual genius with an enlightened insight into everything from management to meditation, relationships to religion, success to spirituality, Paramahansa Nithyananda brings to us a wealth of practical wisdom and techniques for lasting inner change.

Paramahansa Nithyananda is the spiritual head of several non-profit

organizations worldwide which enrich lives through personal transformation programs and courses, publications, spreading Vedic sciences and wisdom, spiritual healing and humanitarian services.

As a global humanitarian, Paramahansa Nithyananda is working to promote global peace through the transformation of the individual. His spiritual mission includes ashrams and centres worldwide, which serve as spiritual laboratories where inner growth is profound and outer growth is a natural consequence.

Service activities include conducting meditation and de-addiction camps, free medical camps and artificial limb donation for the needy, support for education and vocational training, support for children in rural areas, conducting meditation camps for prisoners and disaster relief activities.

Paramahansa Nithyananda is also deeply committed to creating international awareness about Indian culture and the ancient Vedic tradition. As an enlightened mystic, a spiritual evolutionary, a trained yogi, a powerful healer and a siddha, Paramahansa Nithyananda is an inspiring personality for millions of people worldwide. His authenticity, depth of experience and his rare gift for making spirituality both practical and enjoyable have allowed His teachings to reach far and wide.

Paramahansa Nithyananda has healed thousands of people of a wide range of diseases, often with a single touch. Working and sharing with over 10 million people worldwide every year, Paramahansa Nithyananda and His mission are committed to help humanity make the next big breakthrough: into Superconsciousness.



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- **Nithya Yoga & Nithya Kriya** – authentic yogic solutions for 108 physical & mental disorders
- **Scientific & safe initiation into mystical yogic sciences** like kundalini awakening, levitation, hunger-free Sammyama etc.
- **The Nithyananda Sannyas Order** for spreading and continuing the sannyas parampara (tradition)
- **Nithyananda Gurukuls and eN-Vidyalyayas** offering holistic traditional and modern education in a healthy environment
- **Inspiring the youth to be the ambassadors of Vedic tradition** by enriching them through scripture study, rituals and kriyas



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The seed has to break and give way; only then can the tree happen. Any process of transition will be both painful and joyful - a 'sweet pain'.

Having the courage to go through it and break free is what I call TAPAS!

- HIS HOLINESS PARAMAHAMSA NITHYANANDA



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