

Balavin Kural

Balambika Divya Sangam

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Ancient Indian History:
Taking pride in our mo-
mentous and extensive past
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Beat the summer heat
with *Sitali Pranayama*
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Bala Sahasranamam Parayanam:

Mythili Sundararajan's residence,
Bangalore, India

Contact: myyasundar@gmail.com

Chakravarthy's residence,
Ohio, USA.

Contact: 95chikki@gmail.com

Anuradha Srinivasan's residence,
Chicago, USA

Contact: asriniv65@gmail.com



Dolai Utsava Murthy Abhishekam:

Abhishekam will be performed for the Dolai Utsava Murthy on Tuesdays/Fridays. Devotees who are interested please contact Sashikala Venkatesh (9886895627).



Dolai Utsavam:

Dolai Utsavam will be performed for Sanchara Bala, in the privacy of one's home, amidst a social gathering. Devotees who are interested, please contact

Smt. Asha Manoharan
asha.raji@gmail.com



Annadanam and Milk scheme:

Annadanam and serving of milk to nursery children, is performed at Modern English School, Malur.

Those who are interested in contributing towards this cause, please contact

Smt. Asha Manoharan
asha.raji@gmail.com



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EDITORIAL TEAM

Mrs. Asha Manoharan
Mrs. Latha Chakravarthy
Mr. Ramesh Chakravarthy
Mr. Raghuram Ranganathan
Mr. Anthil Anbazhagan
Mrs. Gargi Parthasarathy

CONTACT

If you would like to participate, contribute or require more details, please contact us via email. Contributions can be made in cash/cheque/DD/online transfer etc. Please give us your feedback and do share your ideas and experiences with us so that we can continue to give you the best.

Email: balambikathirupanitrust@gmail.com

Ancient Indian History -

Indus Valley Civilization and the Vedic Age: Introduction

By - Raghuram Ranganathan

India is the seventh largest country by area, second most populous and the largest democracy in the world. With a history spanning 9000 years, and a region comprising various ancient trade routes and powerful dynasties, the diversity of India is truly evident in its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious society.

The name *India* is derived from *Indus*, which originates from the Old Persian word *Hindu*. The latter term stems from the Sanskrit word *Sindhu* (a large body of water, sea, or an ocean), which was the historical local appellation for the Indus River. The greatness of India has been aptly summarized by German indologist and Sanskrit scholar Max Mueller as: *"If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India."*

Throughout India's enduring history, several different cultures have engaged in a struggle for supremacy and

survival. These numerous races, religions and languages have always tried to divide the people, and impart differences between the various ethnicities. Even with this variance and diverse makeup, how did India manage to sustain its culture for generations? This poses an intriguing question.

In order to answer this question and embrace our varied culture, I strongly believe that we need to understand our history. History and information from the past serve as our most vital evidence in the never ending quest to understand why societies and humans behave as we do. Most importantly, history provides us with a sense of identity or where we came from, in addition to helping us answer compelling questions about how families, groups, institutions and whole countries formed and evolved.

A timeline of the momentous and extensive history of the Indian subcontinent from the Indus Valley civilization till independence has been outlined in the table below:

3300 - 1300 B.C	Indus valley civilization, also known as Harappan Civilization
1500 - 500 B.C	Vedic period: The first wave of Aryan immigration into India began
326 B.C	Alexander the Great of Macedonia invaded the Indus valley, and fought the famous battle with King Porus
300 B.C	Earliest references to the South Indian Chola dynasty

323 - 185 B.C	Mauryan Empire - the first dynasty in the history of India.; reign of Ashoka (269-232 B.C.); spread of Buddhism
320 to 550 A.D	Gupta Empire: Golden Age of India marked by extensive inventions and discoveries in science, technology, engineering, art, etc. Aryabhata developed the concept of 0
600 A.D	Pallava dynasty governs southern India from Kanchipuram
985 A.D	Rajaraja Chola I extends the Chola Empire to all of South India and builds the temple at Thanjavur in 1010 A.D
1210 - 1526	Delhi sultanate ruled Northern India
1398	Mongol conqueror Timur invaded India and defeated the Delhi sultanate
1336 - 1660	Vijayanagar empire
1498	Vasco-da-Gama landed at Calicut
1510	Portuguese capture Goa
1526 - 1857	Mughal dynasty: Babur wins the First Battle of Panipat and lays the foundation of the Mughal Empire in 1526 A.D. Shahjahan built the Taj Mahal in 1653 A.D
1600	East India company was established
1857	First War of Independence
1942 - 43	Quit India Movement
1947	India gains freedom, and Jawaharlal Nehru is sworn in as the first Prime Minister of independent India
1950	India becomes a Republic. Dr. Rajendra Prasad becomes the first President of India

In forthcoming newsletters, I would be providing an insight into the history of ancient India, predominantly describing the Indus Valley civilization, the largest known ancient civilization in the world, and the Vedic Age which highlights the arrival of the Aryan race in India. The historical facts contained in this article have been compiled from numerous sources, some of which are listed at the end for further reading, if interested.

Valley Civilization will be provided, covering, but not limited to, the following topics:

- i. Discovery and excavation
- ii. Chronology
- iii. Geography
- iv. Cities and governance
- v. Technology and arts
- vi. Religion and writing

In the next few newsletters, a description of the Indus

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You, Me and our cup of Yoga

Sitali Pranayama

- By Gargi Parthasarathy

Summer is fast approaching and with the soaring temperatures, it is not surprising to find our calmness and general cool of mind and body dissipate bit by bit everyday. To beat the heat, we adopt many techniques like drinking more cold fluids and resorting to turning on an air conditioner, etc. But nature has installed its very own cooling system in us which we don't pay much attention to. Have you noticed many animals, especially carnivores breathe through their mouth by sticking their tongue out? This is nothing but their way of cooling their systems. Most animals cannot sweat and hence they pant. Panting increases the saliva as the tongue is stretched out. When the animals breathe through the mouth, the incoming air collects moisture from the mouth and is cooled. This air when circulated inside the body, cools the blood before it reaches the brain.

As we have seen time and again many Yoga techniques were derived from nature and Sitali (pronounced Shi-talee) pranayama is no different. Sitali in sanskrit means cool. Since this pranayama produces a cooling effect inside the body and mind, it is called Sitali Pranayama.

Technique:

1. Sit in a comfortable position with the spine erect and exhale any remaining air from the lungs through the nose.
2. Keep the head level and open the mouth to form an 'O'.
3. Stick the tongue out and curl it lengthwise so that the edges of the tongue touch each other.
4. Inhale through the curled tongue slowly as if you are drinking from a straw. (This siphoning effect further helps in cooling the air that enters the body).
5. Exhale normally through the nose.

This is one sequence of Sitali pranayama. Repeat the above practice for 5-10 minutes at a stretch everyday to feel the benefits of Sitali pranayama during summer.

Benefits of Sitali Pranayama:

1. Cools and relaxes the body and mind.
2. Beneficial in cases of low grade fever.
3. Activates the liver and spleen thus improving digestion.
4. Enhances patience and reduces stress levels.

Practise Notes:

1. Experienced practitioners can incorporate Jalandara Bandha before the exhale.
2. You can pull the tongue in and close the mouth before the exhale.
3. Make sure the inhalation is calm and slow and without any sound.
4. If you experience dizziness, stop the pranayama and resume normal breathing.

So, if you find yourself swooning from the heat and overdoing it this summer, pull out sitali pranayama from your yoga arsenal. It takes only 5-10 minutes and best of all, its free and comes with a huge host of benefits. An amazing bargain if you ask me, for 5 minutes of your time everyday!

Balambika Yuvasena Initiative at Modern Education Society, Malur



Compass to Navigate the Spiritual Highway

-By Ramesh and Latha Chakravarthy

Every day we come across a number of instances when we know and are fully aware that what we are doing is not the right thing to do, whether it is a small “white lie” or a much bigger crime, our internal compass or conscience is always trying to wake us up. But sadly, just like we learn to ignore that alarm clock every morning, we finally don’t hear the wakeup call from our internal compass which is always striving to show us the direction to find and navigate the spiritual highway. In the spirit of this discussion, we would like to share a short story published in “Times of India” some 10 years back.

Once upon a time there was a lodge-keeper who managed a mountain resort. Many people visited the area to hike and enjoy the natural splendor of the mountain. One day, a guest checked in and after getting settled, he told the lodge-keeper he was going hiking. The lodge-keeper advised him to keep noticing the direction of the sun because there were no trails in this area. “No trails?” the visitor asked. The lodge-keeper explained that as soon as someone made a path, the wind and dust covered it up. “The sun is your best guide to lead you back to the safety of your cabin,” she said.

The man assured the lodge-keeper that he would remember to do this, but the thrill and excitement of the mountain overwhelmed him. He forgot the lodge-keeper’s advice as soon as he stepped outside. After walking and wandering most of the day, he decided to head back. Then he remembered that he forgot to watch the sun. The hiker tried to retrace the way he came but soon lost his sense of direction after the first few feet. He didn’t see any foot prints behind him and then realized that the wind and dust had thoroughly wiped out the path he had just made. There was no trail for him to follow back to the cabin.

The visitor panicked and started running, but the faster he ran, the more he panicked. The more he panicked, the more he lost his sense of direction. He knew he’d never find his way back before dark without knowing which way to go. Sitting down on the grass, he put his hands in his pocket and watched the sun get lower. Soon, his fingers encircled a strange object. The traveler pulled it out and saw that it was a compass he had with him all along. “I didn’t know I had this,” he mumbled. Watching the needle sway back and forth he somehow remembered that he had walked south when he left the lodge. When the needle stopped moving, he knew that it pointed him in the direction back to safety.

After the man returned to the cabin, he told the lodge-keeper about how he got lost and especially about the unexpected compass he found in his pocket.

“I put the compass in your pocket,” the lodge-keeper said.

“You! Why?” asked the visitor.

“Because I knew that in all your excitement you’d forget to watch the sun,” she replied. “And without watching the sun, you’d never find your way back.”

“Then why didn’t you tell me you put it there?” the man asked.

“Because you’d be offended if you knew I did. I was aware of how you secretly thought you could find your way back without help,” replied the lodge-keeper, “but I fully knew you couldn’t.”

Finding a little bit of truth within is like discovering a hidden compass in your own pocket. Some find it sooner than others but when you discover it, you no longer need to go around asking other people to please show their compasses. You have your own. But how do you make contact with this inner guide? It’s there, but you have to do some digging in order to find it,

like searching for a treasure in your own backyard. You don't have to invent this inner wealth because it's already there. Your job is to remove the obstacles that prevent you from finding it. What obstacles? Here are a few - 1) not wanting to change inwardly, 2) an unwillingness to forgive others and yourself, and 3) Believing that you already have this treasure and there is nothing more to experience.

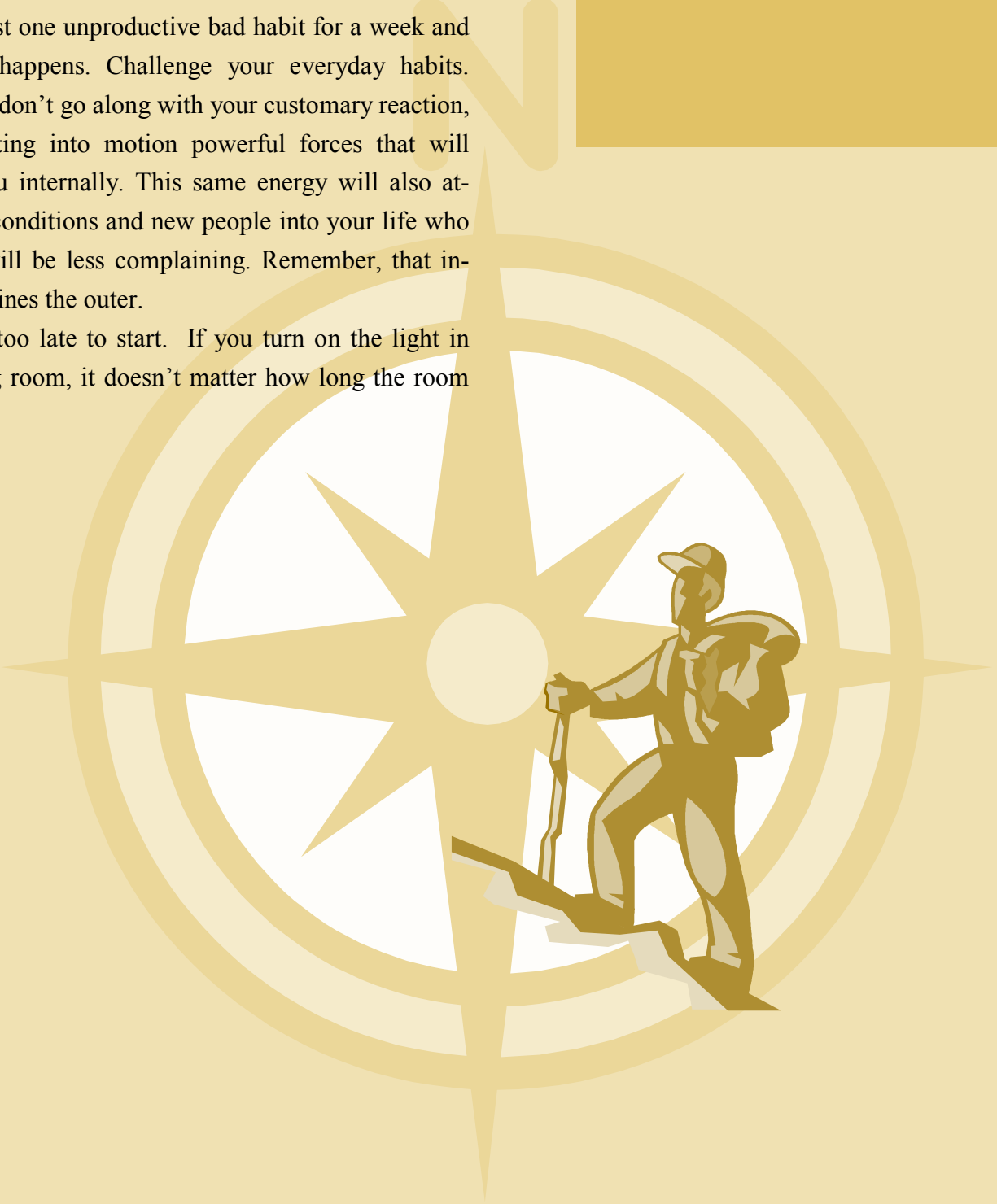
Release just one unproductive bad habit for a week and see what happens. Challenge your everyday habits. When you don't go along with your customary reaction, you're setting into motion powerful forces that will change you internally. This same energy will also attract new conditions and new people into your life who likewise will be less complaining. Remember, that inner determines the outer.

It's never too late to start. If you turn on the light in your living room, it doesn't matter how long the room

was dark. Don't sell yourself short. Discover your inner compass to navigate along the spiritual highway and go all the way. What you have always wanted is already waiting for you.

References:

This story was adapted from the Times of India, July 2003 edition, written by Patrick Drysdale.



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