



Moksha Mantra ~ Sharon Gannon class talk

Date: Sept. 8, 2005

Focus: Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati

Place: Jivamukti Yoga Centre, NY

Contemplate the challenges in your life right now. There are probably one, maybe two great challenges that you face right now. Try to wrap your heart mind around that. Acknowledge those challenges or that challenge. And then also contemplate the inspiration or inspirations in your life at this time. And see if you can just now silently in your own way say a prayer of appreciation for those challenges and for those inspirations. Appreciation is the great solvent.

We'll chant OM, we'll also chant a very potent healing mantra to help us with those challenges and inspiration, number 9 on page 1. It is many times referred to as the Moksha mantra, the mantra for liberation, the mantra that brings about the state referred to as Jivanmukta, the Jivanmukti in a state of Jivanmukta. This is a very special mantra to all of the teachers of staff and many of the students here at the Jivamukti Yoga Center. It really describes the process of the Jivanmukti, how it comes about. Things to look for. When David and I first opened the Jivamukti Yoga Center on 2nd Avenue, which was after the Jivamukti Yoga Society on Avenue B, when we sort of had to get more serious, our dear teacher from the Sivananda Association Swami Shankharananda, very kindly agreed to come and help us open the center. And the first thing that he did when he walked into the place, he said to David and myself, *"Let us walk through together and chant the Moksha mantra so it will permeate every floorboard, every wall, every corner, every part of the ceiling, every window, so that we always remember why this place is in existence."*

So I want to ask us in the tradition of Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati to rub our hands together until we feel heat. This is an indication that we are alive, that prana is there, and as we chant 3 times the Moksha Mantra, lifting our hands up and allowing the divine radiation to emanate from our fingertips into the room, into the atmosphere, into the world.

*OM tryambakam yajambahe, sugandhim pushti vardanam
urva rukhamiva bhandanan, mrtyor mukshi amamritat swaha*

*OM tryambakam yajambahe, sugandhim pushti vardanam
urva rukhamiva bhandanan, mrtyor mukshi amamritat swaha*

*OM tryambakam yajambahe, sugandhim pushti vardanam
urva rukhamiva bhandanan, mrtyor mukshi amamritat swaha*

OM shanti OM shanti OM shanti OM

OM shanti OM shanti OM shanti OM

Bring your hands in blessed namaste prayer position. This mantra is used as a happy birthday song to celebrate the appearance day, what we commonly call birthday, because the purpose of one's birth is to attain liberation in this life. With your eyes closed, on this special day let us acknowledge a great saint who was also a doctor like Shri Brahmananda, who gave his life to help others, healing the body mind and soul, the great Swami Sivananda from Rishikesh.



Even if you don't have direct experience of Swami Sivananda his organization and work you are touched by it every day as you come to this center because we have been touched by this saint. Once again through acknowledgement and appreciation healing can come. Magic is allowed to enter into your life. Magic of course is a shift in perception. We acknowledge these great doctors and saints who have entered into our lives to help us through healing. Sometimes you never know - there could be a great saint sitting next to you. They say it takes one to know one, so if we want to actually begin to meet saints and see saints in our own lives then we have to start becoming saintly too.

Please take this final moment to appreciate and acknowledge this great being that has come to this earth plane to help us to remind us what is valuable, truly valuable in a life. When you are finished release your hands.

We worship the Supreme Light, the Absolute Shiva, who has three eyes, who is fragrant and nourishes well all beings. See this mantra is a riddle and if you can, like a koan, if you can crack the riddle the message will be revealed and profound wisdom will arise. When I first heard this mantra I didn't understand what it meant, especially the part about the cucumber. That was very mysterious to me. And I would ask many people, when I would get to know that they were interested in yoga, I would say "Do you know the Moksha mantra?" 'Oh yes.' "Well what is the thing about the cucumber? And why does Shiva have a fragrance? What does it mean?" No-one could really tell me, they would give me some answers or maybe my mind was too dense and I couldn't hear the answers they were giving me. That's probably more likely the case.

But then the very first time that I went to Ananda Ashram, Shyam Das came and knocked on the door of my apartment and he said, "*I have my father's car, do you want to go anywhere? I'll take you anywhere you want to go.*" So I had a rare day of and I said "*Well, I don't know where this place is but I know that there is this special being called Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati and he lives at this place called Ananda Ashram and I want to go there.*" And when I said that -- see I was always giving Shyam Das these impossible tasks, the first part of our friendship, you know, he was trying to get to be friends with me and I was really playing hard to get. I would give him these impossible tasks. But he answered this one he said "*Get in. I know where it is.*" And I was like 'What?' and he said "*I know him.*" And I was like 'You know Shri Brahmananda?' "*Yes I've done programs with him. I know where the Ashram is. Many of my friends are there.*" And I'm like well I guess I'd better go then.

So we drove to Ananda Ashram which turned out to be an hour away from New York, and so we got there very late at night so we didn't see Shri Brahmananda that night, but the next morning, come into the satsang room, and anyway, at the end of the meditation, you know every body did this (*rub hands*) and they chanted the mantra and I thought "*Oh, I'm gonna ask HIM what this means.*" And so he explained to me and I've been explaining what he told to me since that time. And many of you have heard this story but do you want to hear the translation? Do you have some time? Before I give the translation let's do this. (*asana exercises*)



Come sit in virasana and I'll tell the story. Prop your body with whatever you need -- blocks, blankets, belts -- so you feel you can sustain the position. Be comfortable but be a little bit on the edge. A little bit on the edge is always real good for a yogi. If you're too comfortable in life then you forget why we're here.

We worship Shiva, *tryambakam*, the one who is having three eyes. Shiva is another way of describing the Self, the I-AM, our higher Self, our eternal true nature, our true identity. We should always worship or focus on that. That is what is described here. In other words, and you know this is a tall order, but it is saying, don't identify with your body and mind. Don't identify with your personality. That's just karma. That's your karma from many lifetimes. Let it pass through, let it do its thing, but know that you are transcendental. You have three eyes. You can see near and far but you can also see beyond either of those. You have the eye of wisdom.

And this Shiva, your true nature, smells good. That's what I asked Shri Brahmananda “*Yes. Smells good.*” And I said ‘Well how could, I mean, Divine Beings should be above things like smells.’ And all he said to me was “*Where does smell come from?*” All he did was ask me that question (*snaps fingers*) he didn't tell me the answer, just asked me the question. And I had to look inside. And of course inside is where all the answers are. The sense of smell originates in the muladhara chakra. It's like all of our five senses originate in one of the sacred centers. The sense of taste originates in the swadisthana. In the manipura, the third chakra, solar plexus, seat of the individual will, the sense of sight. You know these things, the origination of senses. You should know them if you want to gain control of your senses, you should know where they're coming from.

So the sense of smell originates in the root chakra, the most primal level of being, the level of awareness that has to do with survival, food, shelter, safety, parents. Your birth. So the riddle says that Shiva who resides in the ajna chakra, the place of the Third Eye, smells good. So the meaning here is that when Self-realization or realization of the truth of yourself as Shiva occurs, there will be a good smell. It's referring to the Jivanmukta, liberated while living, meaning that the body will still be there. It may appear that there's a normal person there who has food, shelter, clothing, who's got their act together on the earth plane, where the sense of smell comes. But that being has allowed that level of existence which we may call mundane to become exalted. So the Jivanmukta lives in the mundane world but they don't live a mundane life. They live an exalted life. The sense of smell has risen all the way up to the most exalted level of awareness in the ajna chakra. Very beautiful.



This life, this Shiva, is the communication of our life. It is our physical, mental and spiritual radiation and prosperity. Kindly release us from all calamities, bondage and suffering. The mantra is asking Shiva, our higher Self, to do the releasing, because only the Divine can do the releasing. We cannot become released if we identify who we are with our smallness, with our personality. Our personality cannot solve these big problems. Only through surrender to the transcendental then these major problems of life can be solved. Just as the cucumber is released from its stalk have you ever seen cucumbers growing? Have you ever seen them growing like in an organic garden? The cucumbers that we get in the stores in all of the cities, any city, when you get it you'll see it has a navel like a little scar on the skin, showing that it has been attached to the stalk, right? It has that because it was picked too soon. It was picked too soon and still has a remnant of the umbilical cord, basically. When a cucumber is allowed to become very pushti, know what that word means? Full, phat, like p-h-a-t fat, Phat Farm, you know? Russell's no dummy, he's a very mystical person Russell Simmons. Phat. Pushti means fat with grace, with God's grace. So fat that it's ripe, very ripe, and when the cucumber is that fat and that ripe it just falls off the vine. And when it falls off the vine, if you look at that kind of cucumber, there will be no scar, there will be no little navel mark, meaning that it will look self-originated. It will just appear there in the garden like 'where did it come from?' It will appear that it was never attached to anything else. And this is the description of enlightenment. When enlightenment comes there will be the realization that there was never any other that there was never any bondage, that there was never any suffering, that the truth was always bliss and it always smelled good.

So this is like, when he told me that about the cucumber, I had in my mind when I was a little girl and I saw when the rocket went to the moon and they showed it on TV, Cape Canaveral, and that all this hubbub, you know, getting that rocket ship ready to go, and all that fuel and all that ignition and you know (*makes rocket ship sounds*) and then it's up in space, you know. But then there comes a point when all the other parts of the spacecraft they drop away, and then it's like a 2001 thing, just floating in deep space, like not attached, appearing that it was never attached. Totally free, no effort. That's the cucumber. That's the Jivanmukta. The cucumber. So now we know.

Thank you to Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati and all the great beings who have remembered to keep this mantra sacred throughout all the many years.

