

TAPASYA – Austerity or moderation , practical (i.e., result-producing) spiritual discipline

What is Tapasya?

- A self-discipline or austerity willingly expended both in restraining physical urges and in actively pursuing a higher purpose in life.
- Practicing strict self-denial -a restraint or limitation of one's own desires or interests.
- A focused effort leading towards bodily purification and spiritual enlightenment as a measure of personal and especially spiritual discipline.

Who has done Tapasya?

- Tapas were undertaken by many Rishis to increase their pious characteristics. Examples are: Bhakta Dhruv, Rishi Vishwamitra, Rishi Bhagiratha, Bhakta Prahlad, Saint Gyaneshwar etc.
- Tapas by Param Pujya Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharama Acharya (Founder of Global Gayatri Pariwar): Param Pujya Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya did tapasya by performing 24 Mahapurashcharans (2.4 Million Gayatri Mantra Jap per year -70 Malas a day) for 24 years by just eating bread (Roti) made of Jav (Barley) and buttermilk. Barley seeds fed to the cow and then those barley seeds come with the cowdung were washed and grinded and Roti is made from the flour of those Jav (Barley). He went to Himalaya also to do two years *tapasya* on Bhagiratha Shila (Stone where Saint Bhagiratha did tapasya in ancient time to bring Ganges River on the earth) near Gaumukh in Himalaya.

How Can you Practice Tapasya?

One who undertakes Tapas or Tapasya is called “Tapasvin”. In the Bhagavad Gita it is mentioned that there are three types of austerities: (i) austerity of the physical body, (ii) austerity of communication and speech (mouna), and (iii) austerity of the mind. Tapasya includes control over one’s physical body, speech, thoughts and mind.

1) Meditation:

- Meditative tapas involve focusing entirely upon God, and ignoring all environmental, artificial and other distractions. In the purest state of meditation, no thought but that of God must occupy the processes of the mind.
- A tapasvin also practices brahmacharya, endeavoring to control all his or her biological instincts, functions and senses. Ahimsa and vegetarianism, pure non-violence towards all living beings is practiced to eliminate anger, destructive impulses and avoid the foolishness of hurting others.

2) Fasting:

- It is accompanied by avoiding all cooked foods, especially spices and meats. Only fruits and roots are considered acceptable, and one may strive to reduce the quantity one has to consume.

3) Yoga:

- The disciplined and concentrated practice of yogic arts and exercises is considered tapas by itself.
- A vow to observe brahmacharya, silence or fast is the commitment an individual offers to complete the objectives of Tapas.

Niyama –Principle 3-TAPASYA

What are the benefits of Tapasya?

- The main purpose of attaining tapasya is to be able to meditate properly. It creates a controlled mind which will not accept any interference from the body, like “I’m thirsty!” or “I want food!” or “that hurts!” etc. It also hardens the body, so that these desires aren’t too frequent. It strengthens the organs and makes them healthy in order not to experience painful distractions during meditation. The hardships, through which the body goes, strengthen the mind and chip away all the unnecessary bits, leaving only the true essence of your real self.
- Through *tapas*, a yogi or spiritual seeker can "burn off" or prevent accumulation of negative energies, clearing a path toward spiritual evolution.
- Tapas give spiritual discipline that produces a perceptible result, particularly in the form of purification. It leads from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to the Light, from death to Immortality.
- Tapas may be striving for perfection in a particular sport, field of knowledge or work.
- Tapasya may also be undertaken as penance, to liberate oneself from the consequences of a sin or sinful activities, or karma.
- Tapasya helps to control the ego, making one more disciplined.
- Tapasya is a spiritual magnet; it will give you peace and power. Always become creative and bring newness in your spiritual life. This will increase zeal and enthusiasm.

Exhausting or Violating Tapas

One may exhaust all the merit or virtuous credit one has earned through tapas if one indulges in actions contrary to the principles and discipline of tapas, such as indulging in sense pleasures, or committing a sin or a crime. Tapas may be violated if an outside influence or the tapasvin distracts himself or herself, successfully causing a break in the spiritual concentration or impurifying the environment in which the tapas is conducted.

Homework:

What is Tapasya?

How can you do Tapasya?

Name two Rishi’s that have done Tapasya. _____

After learning about Tapasya why do you think we do fasting on Hindu Religious days?

Name one form of Tapasya that you do in every class at GGKLI. _____

Name one person who exhausted his Tapas by using contrary to the principles of Tapas? _____

Pick one form of Tapasya (Fasting or Meditation or Yoga) and do it for three days within next two weeks. Write down the dates on which you did this Tapasya. Be honest and do not write any dates if you could not do Tapasya. _____