

Śaucam

inner and outer purity

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Śaucam is cleanliness in a two-fold sense, **bāhya-śauca**, external cleanliness, and **āntara-śauca**, inner cleanliness.

Bāhya-śauca is well-understood universal value. It is easy to see the benefit that comes to me and to others from external cleanliness. Clean body, clean clothes, and clean dwelling places make life more pleasant. In addition, the daily discipline of maintaining cleanliness brings about a certain attentiveness and alertness of mind.

ĀNTARA-ŚAUCA

Āntara-śauca is less well recognised.

Āntara-śauca means cleanliness of the **antaḥkaraṇa**, mind.

AŚAUCA

What is **aśauca** uncleanness of the mind? What makes a mind unclean?

Jealousy, anger, hatred, fear, selfishness, self-condemnation, guilt, pride, possessiveness, all these emotions and the climate of despair and resentment which come in their wake, are the unclean qualities of the mind.

Every day, while I go about my business, dust settles on my skin, dirt smudges my clothes, my desk becomes littered, and in my transactions with people and circumstances my mind gathers daily **aśauca**.

MIND MUST BE CLEANED

Linked to my likes and dislikes, **rāgas** and **dveṣas**, smudges of envy settle, a spot of exasperation lands, streaks of possessiveness appear, and overall, the fine dust of self-criticism, guilt and self-condemnation spreads in my mind.

Each day I wash my body, launder my clothes and straighten my desk. It is a day-to-day affair until death. Until my body goes, I must do this.

It is the same with the mind. Each day, until, in the knowledge of the self, my false identification with the mind goes, my mind must be cleaned.

When there is no daily cleaning outside or inside, the accumulation makes the task much more difficult.

HOW CAN WE CLEAN THE MIND? WHAT IS THE DETERGENT FOR THE MIND?

It is **pratipakṣa-bhāvanā**.

Prati, a Sanskrit prefix, means 'opposite'; **pakṣa** stands for 'position' or 'point of view'. **Bhāvanā** indicates thinking or 'state of thought'. Thus, **pratipakṣa-bhāvanā** means a state of mind with the 'opposite point of view'.

The practice of **pratipakṣa-bhāvanā** is to take, deliberately, the opposite point of view, by an act of will, to think the opposite of the unclean thoughts.

I undertake this opposite thinking and act accordingly, even though I feel that my attitude is justified. Someone may do an improper action that insults or injures me. Resentment settles in my mind. The action may have been inarguably improper, but the resentment nonetheless is mine; it is **aśauca** of my mind. If I allow it to remain, the resentment can build up into hatred, a painful disturbing mental state.

When I see, therefore, the personal consequence of allowing **aśauca** to remain, when the object of resentment comes to my attention, I deliberately use my will to think of thoughts, opposite to the negative ones that first come to mind.

BANISH RESENTMENT BY SEEING THE SAINT

Manifest or not, everyone has the qualities of compassion, mercy, love, not hurting and so on that makes one a **saint**. Therefore, to cleanse the mind of resentment and dislikes that solidify into hatred, I deliberately search for those things in another person that indicate his humaneness, his saintliness. They are there in everyone.

When you focus only on the glimpses of **saintliness** in another person, all the other traits you have observed in him are attributed merely to error, mistake, habit, wrong thinking, wrong environment, and wrong upbringing.

You take it as your blessing that you are not in the same position that he is in. You see behind the acts, the person possessed of all the **saintly qualities**, because innately these qualities are the human qualities.

KṢĀNTI, ACCOMMODATION TOWARDS HIM OR HER

Saintly qualities are the qualities of the self, the qualities that really constitute human nature.

The opposite qualities are incidental; they come and go.

When resentment, dislike, hatred towards someone arises, introduce thoughts that are their opposite. See the person behind the action from an opposite viewpoint, and you will discover in yourself some sympathy or understanding for that person.

Your attitude will be one of **kṣānti**, accommodation towards him or her.

In this manner, by deliberate, consistent practice, any resentment, any hatred that appears is erased, cleansed on a daily basis.

THE AŚAUCA OF SELFISHNESS

Selfishness provides a good example of **aśauca** that yields to **pratipakṣa-bhāvanā**. In the case of selfishness, the **pratipakṣa-bhāvanā** thoughts often can be reinforced by action as well.

When I see myself inconsiderate to the wants, needs, happiness of others, I can consciously programme myself to overdo in the opposite direction.

Making myself alert to the needs and happiness of those around me, I can find ways to be considerate.

Whenever I can do something that will compensate some selfish omission or commission on my part, I do so.

It not only settles and frees my mind from that account but also underlines, by deliberate action, the attitude of unselfishness that I wish to develop.

When a decision to change an attitude is well expressed physically, that is, confirmed by action, it is hard for the negative opposite attitude to register in the mind again.

THE AŚAUCA OF SELF-CONDEMNATION

Universal ethical values, consciously or unconsciously, remain as a matrix for self-judgement of any thought or action that transgress their standards.

Whenever I fail to abide by a general value, some conflict usually registers in my mind. Conflict becomes guilt and guilt turns into an underground chorus of self-condemnation, **aśauca**, subtly pervading my mind.

Self-condemnation can be controlled by **pratipakṣa-bhāvanā**, by refusing to condemn myself while at the same time deliberately thinking non-self-condemning thoughts.

Analysis of the nature of self-condemnation will help me exercise **pratipakṣa-bhāvanā**. On analysis I will always find that in this body-mind package, which I term 'I', the body that carries out the act cannot be condemned.

The hands, the legs, the feet, the tongue and all the other parts of the body are inert. The body itself lacks self-consciousness or independent will.

Similarly, the senses and the various functions of the body are not independent, conscious processes.

Neither can the mind be labelled the culprit. The mind is not a simple, definable entity, but is an ever-changing aggregate of thoughts in motion, some beautiful, some not beautiful, and some useful, and some inconsequential.

The mind is only a process that performs as a useful instrument. It cannot be condemned.

THEN WHAT CAN BE CONDEMNED?

Can ātman, the name for first-person-singular, I, be condemned?

From the scripture, **śruti**, I know that **ātman** illumines the mind. **Ātman**, is **sat-cit-ānanda**, boundless, timeless, awareness, fullness, form-free, and action-free. Being neither the doer nor the enjoyer, the **ātman** cannot be blamed.

Therefore, what can I condemn?

I can condemn just a given **thought, neither my body nor my mind nor my ātman**. If there is anything that justifiably can be condemned, it is but a given thought born of ignorance and error, a thought that ordered an improper action.

When I recognise the basis of an action, be it desire or anger, it makes my mind alert. Alertness helps to break the conditioning; thereby making the mind receptive to the knowledge that dispels ignorance.

THE AŚAUCA OF JEALOUSY

Jealousy is a reaction of sorrow over a lack, which I conclude exists, when I compare myself with some other human being who is seen as superior. This supposed superiority, if it exists at all, when examined would always be found as partial, incomplete.

Upon close examination, the one who is jealous would never be able to consider the aggregation of parts and functions that constitute the entity, the object of jealousy, totally superior.

If I am jealous I will never be jealous of all the aspects of another person; nor will anyone who is jealous of me find me totally superior.

When analysed, it becomes very clear that jealousy is unfounded and unjustified.

At the most elementary level of analysis, I can see that there is no absolute ranking of entities as 'subject to jealousy' or 'causing jealousy'. I am jealous of some; others are jealous of me. I can also see that there is no one who is an object of absolute jealousy.

PRATIPAKṢA-BHĀVANĀ, A DAILY ACTION

Jealousy, resentment, selfishness and self- condemnation are only few of the attitudes that can be handled by **pratipakṣa-bhāvanā**.

Any attitude that is opposed to equanimity, accommodation, not hurting, absence of pride and similar values, can be neutralised by choosing to entertain the opposite point of view.

This should be done daily.

Pratipakṣa-bhāvanā, at first, may seem false but as they are deliberately done, every day, they will become real and spontaneous.

A mind kept clean in this manner will be a quiet and alert mind.

Such a mind is comfortable with itself, is ready to learn, and to be taught.