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THE YOGA INSTITUTE

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BREATHING THROUGH MOUTH IN PRANAYAMA

Inhalation through mouth is a bad habit. Not being practitioners of Yoga, many indologists have given us wrong leads to Yoga technology.

In his 'Philosophy of the Upaniṣads' (p.389) Mr. A.E. Gough observes: "Pūraka is inspiration, described in Yogatattvopaniṣad (12), effected either through one nostril, the other being closed with the finger (Amṛtabindu Up. 19), or through the mouth pointed like the stalk of a lotus (Amṛtabindu Up. 13, Dhyānabindu 11).

Now let us consider the remarks of Mr. Gough. He says that in *pūraka*, air may also be drawn in (as an alternative way) through the mouth. The expression 'mouth pointed like the stalk of a lotus', used by Mr. Gough, shows that he wanted the practitioner to keep his mouth like the stalk of a lotus. The whole idea of Mr. Gough is wrong.

I must warn my readers, not to practise *pūraka* through mouth. *Pūraka* through the mouth is allowed only in a very limited number of practices (e.g. some allow inhalation and exhalation to some extent through mouth in the practice of Simhāsana), and that also to the least degree.

It is our well considered opinion, that the Upaniṣad passages do not enjoin *pūraka* through mouth. It appears that a wrong consideration of the verses of the Amṛtabindu Upaniṣad (i.e. Amṛtanāda Upaniṣad as explained later in this article) and the Dhyānabindu Upaniṣad, led Mr. Gough to propound the incorrect view.

Let us take up the Upaniṣad-passages, to justify our view. It can easily be understood that the verse of Dhyānabindu Upaniṣad 38 does not say anything about the operation of the mouth. It simply says that as water is drawn in through the stalk of a lotus, so a yogin should draw air. The commentary by Upaniṣad-brahmayogin is quite clear. The Dhyānabindu passage is :

यथैधीत्पलनालेन तोयमाकर्षयेन्नरः । तथैवीत्कर्षयेद् वायुं योगी योगपथे स्थितः ॥
The commentator says यथैव नर उत्पलनालेन तोयमाकर्षयेत् तथैव योगमार्गे तिष्ठन् वायुमुर्ध्वम् उत्कर्षयेत् ।

It would be wrong to apply the simile, in favour of inhalation through the mouth, by arguing that as water is taken in through the mouth, so air also is to be drawn in through the mouth. The significance of a simile (*upamā*) is to be taken with reference to one desired aspect of the example only, and not to any aspect or all aspects. In the case in question, the simile of the stalk of a lotus, is to be applied to the process of drawing air in the body, and not to the instrument through which air is to be drawn in, for it has been expressly enjoined in *yogic* works that *pūraka*, is to be practised slowly and with pleasure through the nostrils only. I have reason to believe that Mr. Gough misunderstood the drift of the simile, because he did not practice *prānāyāma*, and because he did not know the principle of applying similes.

The expression occurring in the 12th verse of the Amṛtanāda Upaniṣad (Adyar) wrongly called by Gough and also Col. G. A. Jacob, in his "Concordance to the Upaniṣads" as Amṛtabindu Upaniṣad, is corrupt and it should be corrected in such a way so that the reading should bear some sense. Since there is striking similarity of this verse, with the afore-said verse of the Dhyānabindu Upaniṣad (both verses show the technique of *pūraka*), we think, it reasonable to change the reading वक्त्रैणोत्पलनालेन .. as यथैवीत्पलनालेन (no change is required in the second third and fourth feet in the verse). The relevant verse of Dhyānabindu Upaniṣad was already quoted above.

There is no doubt that the printed reading of the Upaniṣad misguided Mr. Gough, in explaining the character of *pūraka*. Not being a practitioner of Yoga, Mr. Gough could not understand the fault of his exposition. The corrupt printed reading of the Amṛtabindu verse (as referred to by Mr. Gough), may now be corrected so that it can yield some sense.