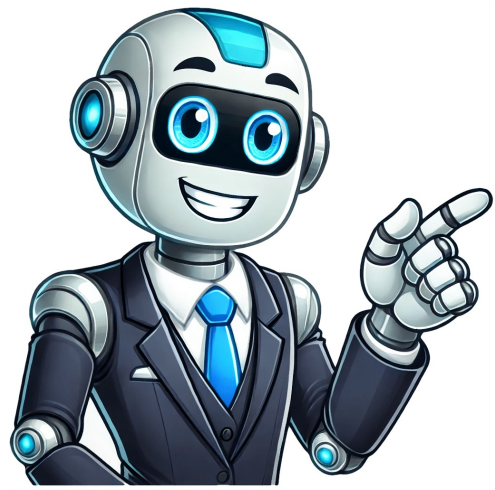


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Bilva has astrincent, edema diarrheal, laxative and appetizer properties hence, can be used to cure both internal and external diseases. The sacred tree is used in many medicinal usages and is advantanageous in curing many human ailments such as : Bleeding gums, Bel fruit clears diarrhea, dysentery, phlegm, high blood pressure, morning sickness in pregnancy, stress. Asthma can be controlled when a mixture of dry bel leaf powder & honey is consumed daily Jaundice can be cured by drinking the powder of the bel fruit mixed with milk Bel fruit keeps the skin rejuvenated when pasted into a face pack; also cures joint aches Pulastya Maha Muni affirmed to Bhishma that Brahma was Narayana Himself and that in reality he was Eternal. But in a formal sense it was stated that Brahma was ‘created’ and in that normally recognised manner Brahma had hundred years of age; apparently, the concept of Time would have to have a basis and that was why Brahma’s age was determined notionally as of hundred Brahma Years; in other words, ‘Para’or the first half was over and his present age has entered the ‘Paraartha’, the second half (viz. Fifty first year).This was how, the concept of Time emerged. Every fifteen ‘Nimeshas’ constitute one ‘Kaashtha’; thirty Kashthas one one ‘Kala’; thirty Kalas make one ‘Muhurtha’; thirty Muhurtas make one day/night, thirty day/nights make on ‘Maasa’; (half Maasa makes one ‘Paksha’), six Maasas make one ‘Ayana’ and two Ayanas-Dakshinayana and Uttarayana- make one ‘Year’. Dakshinayana is a night for Devas and Uttarayana their day. One hundred human years make one day-night of Devas. Twelve thousand Deva Years make four Yugas viz, Satya Yuga, Treta Yuja, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga and these four Yugas make one Maha Yuga which is Brahma’s one day! Satya Yuga comprises 4800 DevaYears including ‘Sandhya mana’ of 400 years and ‘Sandhyamsha maana of additional 400 years; Treta Yuga comprises 3600 Deva Years including 600 years of ‘Sandhya/ Sandhyamsha mana’each; Dwapara Yuga of 2400 years including 200 years of ‘Sandhya/ Sandhyamsha mana each and Kali Yuga of 1000 years including 100 years each of Sandhya / Sandhyamsha manas.Deva Years are 360 times more than human years. For instance, the duration of Kali Yuga in human year terms is 432,000 years; Dwapara’s is 864000; Treta Yuga’s is12, 96,000 and of Satya Yuga is 17, 28,000 years; all the Yugas totalling 432, 00, 00,000 (432 million) make one Chaturyuga and that constitutes one Brahma Day! In one day of Brahma there are fourteen Manvantaras and each Manvantara has 8, 51,000 of Deva Years. There are two kalpas on one day-night of Brahma.At the end of the previous Kalpa, Brahma felt fresh from the previous night and found that Prithvi was submerged in water while Bhagavan Varaha Deva entered into water and Prithvi prayed to him; in response, Varahadeva emitted a ‘Ghur Ghur’ sound which was like the reverberation of Sama Veda, lifted up Prithvi from Rasala loka by the might of his horns, Devas rained fragrant flowers from the sky, Rishis went into rapturous tributes to Vishnu’s incarnated Varaha Rupa; and Brahma implored the latter to allow him recompense Srishti with his blessings as also to preserve and administer the Creation that he would so generate even as the Lord graciously replied to say: ‘Tathastu!’ (So be it!). Brahma’s first Srishti being Maha Tatva, the creation of Tanmatras was known as Bhuta Sarga or the Second Srishti; Vaikarika or Satvika Ahankara was the third Srishti of Indriyas or Aindriya Sarga; the Fourth Srishti is the Mukhya Sarga related to Mountains, Forests and other Sthaavara Srishti; the fifth Srishti relates to Pashu-Pakshi (Animals and Birds); the seventh Srishti was called Deva sarga or Urthva faced and was of Devas; and Seventh Srishti was of Manava Sarga; the Eighth was of Anugraha Sarga which could be of Satvika or Tamasic nature and finally the Ninth Srishti called the Kaumara Sarga which could be of Prakrita or Vaikrita Marg. Depending on the carry forward of one’s own balance of ‘Papa-Punya’of the previous time-frame preceding the Pralaya, placement of lives was commenced by Brahma in the New Age. Arising out of his ‘Manasika Samkalpa’ (Mind born Proposal), Brahma created various species including Devas, Asuras, Pitaras and human beings. From his thighs, the evil Asuras emerged and as per his free will various birds were created. From his stomach surfaced cows, his shoulders the wolves; his face created horses, elephants, asses, nilgais, deer, camels, etc.each species multiplying several others. Brahma’s body hairs created fruits, roots and foodgrains. From his right extreme face, Brahma created, Gayatri Chhandah, Rig Veda, Tvriststoma, Rathantara, Agnihoshtha yagna; from South-faced he created Yajur Veda, Tristhub Chandas, Panchadasha stoma, Brihatsaama, etc. Sama Veda, Jagati Chhande, Saptadashastoma, ‘Vairupa’ etc; from the Western face; Brahma created Ekavimshaststoma, Atharva Veda, Aptoryama, Anushthup chhande, and Vairaja from the Uttaravarti Mukha. Miscellaneous ‘Pranis’ were created from any of the limbs of Brahma. To sum up thus at the beginning of the Kalpa, Prajapati Brahma created Devas, Asuras, Pitaras and human beings as also of Yakshas, Pishachas, Gandharvas, Apsaras, Siddhas, Kinnaras, Raakshasaas, Lions, Birds, Animals and Reptiles. Focussing attention on human beings now, Bhishma asked the highlights of Varnashrama Vidhi and Pulastya Muni explained that Brahma created Brahmanas from the face, Kshatriyas from ‘Vakshasthali’ (chest), Vaishyas from thighs; and Shudras from the feet.These four Varnas are the important constituents of ‘Yagnas’; Devas are satisfied with their respective portions of ‘Havis’ (oblations) to Agni and being pleased with the Yagnas, Devas bestow good rains and good crops which leads to material prosperity. The hearts and hands of every body tend to be clean and social customs and virtuous living would go hand in hand. Prajapati decided the duties of the Four Varnas, depending on the professions that human beings tended to follow like Brahmanas performing Yagnas, Vratas, Temple Tasks, and enabling various religious deeds of Virtue in favour of the members of three other Varnas etc.; Kshatriyas discharging the responsibilities of Kingship, Administration, Security against external enemies, collection of taxes and maintenance of Internal Law and Order; Vaishyas performing business, farming, trading and all matters involving finance, provision of materials to others by allowing reasonable profits for the services given etc. and Shudras supporting the members of the Three Varnas in the discharge of duties being undertaken by them. Brahma materialised the above various kinds of Creations by applying his mental faculties but was not quite satisfied as the next generations so created were not adequate to fill in the universe; therefore he created Sages like Bhrigu, Pulaha, Kratu, Angira, Marichi, Daksha, Atri and Vasishtha, in addition to the four ‘Manasa Putras’ viz. Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanat Kumaras. As not all these sons were interested in family lives, Brahma created Rudra from his forehead and decided that half of the body be a woman; thus Eleven Rudras got materialised along with as many Rudranis who had a variety of Rupas ranging from ‘Sowmya’ (composure), ‘Krura’ (unkindness), ‘Shanta’ (peacefulness), ‘Shyama’ (darkness), ‘Gaura’ (wheatish) and such other colours. Further on, Brahma created Swayambhu Manu and the latter’s wife Shatarupa; the Manu couple gave birth to sons Priyavrata and Uttanpada and daughters Prasuti (married to Daksha) and Akruati (married to Ruchi Prajapati). To Prasuti and Daksha were born twenty four daughters, thirteen of whom were Shraddha, Lakshmi, Dhruiti, Pushti, Tusti, Megha, Kriya, Buddhi, Lajja, Vapu, Shanti, Sidhi, and Kirthi (all these thirteen were married to Dharmas); eleven more daughters were Khyati, Sati, Sambhuti, Smriti, Preeti, Kshama, Sannati, Anasuya, Urja, Swaha and Swadha; they were wedded respectively to Bhrigu, Shiva, Marichi, Angira, Pusasthya, Kratu, Atri, Vasishtha, Agni and Pitras. The sons of Daksha’s daughters were Kamak by Shraddha, Darpa to Lakshmi, Niyam to Dhriti, Santhosh to Tusthti, Lobha to Pushti, Shruta to Megha; Danda, Vinay and Naya to Kriya, Bodha to Buddhi, Vinay to Lajja, Vyavasayak to Vapu, Kshema to Shanti, Sukha to Siddhi, and Yash to Kirti.These were all the sons of Dharmas. Kaam and Nandi gave birth to Harsha, the grand son of Dharmas. Bhrigu and Khyati gave birth to Devi Lakshmi who was Lord Narayana’s wife. Bhagavan Rudra accepted Sati as his wife (Daksha’s daughter) but Devi Sati sacrificed her life pursuant to Daksha’s Yagna to which Rudra was uninvited but Sati insisted in attending it; she felt highly insulted by her father Daksha who also offended Rudra Deva and Rudra eventually destroyed Daksha Yagna. — with SriLan Srisukumaran. “Karma” means action and “yoga” means loving unity of our mind with God. To perform karma and also practice yoga means to remain engaged in activity in the world while remaining in a state of devotional unity with God. This is true spiritual action. Your bhakti yoga meditation practice will combine all these aspects and it will include: Daily dynamic meditation woven seamlessly into the fabric of your life’s activities Before we look at guidelines for these, let’s explore how process is described in the Hindu scriptures. Karma Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita: One of the most important scriptures of Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita, was revealed under unusual circumstances: moments before a war and in the middle of a battlefield. It is comprised of a 700-verse dialogue between Lord Krishna, supreme God, and Arjuna, his loving disciple. The all-in-one solution of the Bhagavad Gita for eliminating karma is Lord Krishna’s advice to practice akarma or actions that have no karmic consequences. If we could perfect akarma in daily activity, the consequences of our actions would automatically be neutralized — even though we are engaged in action. This means that from the point of view of karmic debt, no consequences would be added to our “account”. The only key to this is we must maintain an unbroken and continuous devotion to God. Karma yoga philosophy in the Bhagavad Gita is summed up in one statement of Lord Krishna: “Remember Me and fight.” But is it really possible to simultaneously do devotional remembrance and be engaged in activity? Can the mind function in two places at the same time? This is definitely impossible, but for karma yoga to be done properly, both have to happen simultaneously. For example, if you are at work and absorbed in a project, and remember God occasionally, how are both these actions accounted for as karmas? The time you spent in devotional remembrance will be considered devotional action, and the time you spent engrossed in working will be considered normal action. This is not karma yoga. Plus, a common misconception describes karma yoga as “performing action without being attached to the results”. Although this sounds noble, is it psychologically possible for any human being to do this? The fact is because we are constantly trying to find authentic happiness, we will always anticipate the outcome of our actions in advance of doing them. The practical form of the Gita’s karma yoga... In the Gita, Krishna was both supreme God and Arjuna’s spiritual guide. Krishna advised Arjuna to surrender to Him and to simply follow His instructions. By transferring his motivation for action to a divine personality, Arjuna would not be responsible for the outcome of the actions he was instructed to perform. For example, a police officer is issued a revolver, which he is instructed to use in the line of duty by his superiors. It could happen that he kills someone in the pursuit of law and order. In the eyes of the justice system, this will not be considered a crime. He did not use his own mental motivation to decide to kill someone — he simply followed the guidelines given to him by his superiors. In Arjuna’s situation, in spite of engaging in war, all his actions were counted as devotion, because his heart, mind and body were fully dedicated to the will of Krishna. This again highlights one of the most important points of karma yoga: The mind is the performer of action, not the physical body. It is our personal motive that has to be carefully redirected for karmic consequences to change or be neutralized. A Closer Look at the Spiritual Theory If a practitioner is surrendered to a true divine Guru, and performs actions entrusted to him by his Guru, that activity is considered not only karma yoga, but also bhakti or spiritual action. It will be free of a karmic consequence. That practitioner is not directly attached to the results of that activity because his motive is to follow the instructions of his Guru. Arjuna accepted Lord Krishn as his Guru at the very beginning of the Gita when he declared he was Lord Krishna’s disciple. He preserved the understanding during the entire Mahabharata War that he was doing service for his Guru. In this way, just by holding this intention, his devotion remained unbroken and his actions were considered karma yoga. Thus, service to a true Guru is called karma yoga or devotion. Practically speaking, a Guru will give instructions on how a practitioner can keep his mind engrossed in a state of continuous devotional remembrance. Simply by following these instructions, a disciple is automatically practicing karma yoga. Those devotional guidelines take the form of (1) karma sanyas and (2) karma yoga. Karma Sanyas - Quiet Time for Meditation And old method of dyeing fabric in India was to place a cloth in a dye bath and then allow it to dry in the sun. After drying, the intensity of the color faded. Again the cloth was placed in a dye bath, again it was placed in the sun, and again the color faded, but the second time more of the color remained. After entering the dye bath multiple times, the color eventually became intense and fixed. Similarly, to establish devotion in our hearts and minds, it is important to have a structured daily practice of sitting meditation. The main elements of a daily devotional practice include: Heart-centered prayer Kirtan or chanting meditation combined with active visualization Aarti-the offering of light - a brief ceremony that reaffirms the spirit of our devotional dedication Karma Yoga - Dynamic Devotion For the attainment of divine love, the Vedas state that there is only one rule and one prohibition that apply to bhakti yoga meditation. The rule is: ‘Always remember Radha Krishna.’ The prohibition is, ‘Never forget Radha Krishna.’ This means that after our sitting meditation, our meditation should continue — while eating, sleeping, walking, working, talking, resting, and so on. Wherever you are, all the time, whatever you are doing, remember your divine beloved and don’t forget Him! This simultaneous devotion and action is karma yoga. This state of devotional consciousness is cultivated over time with practice. For example, in the old days street musicians with hand organs kept small monkeys. A monkey by nature is extremely active. How to make a monkey’s nature conform to sitting still, and that, too, in a confined space? The musician’s technique was to first restrain the monkey with a 100-foot rope. If the monkey tried to go outside of this range, he was stopped. He thought, “Okay, I’ll jump around in a 100-foot area.” When he was tied with a 50-foot rope he thought, “I went 100 feet yesterday, today I’m restricted to this much.” So he jumped around in a 50-foot area. When the monkey was finally limited to only 1 foot of rope, he sat quietly, “Why should I drive myself crazy? I’ll just sit here.” The human mind has this same monkey-like nature. It roams far and wide. Our goal is not to tame it’s active nature, but to train it to roam in a particular area. This is done by gently tying it with the devotional rope of love. In sitting meditation we cultivate a feeling a devotional relationship with God. In active meditation we can continue this in three ways: Embed your intention — Every person has a mission that guides his life’s activities. For example, very few people like to work, but they do it because their mission is to support themselves or their family. While they are at work, although this motive is hidden deep in their mind, it still guides their decisions and actions.Similarly, when we firmly understand the purpose of our life is God-realization, this intention deeply embeds itself in the mind. If cultivated properly, this subconscious devotional intention remains in all our activities, even when we are sleeping. Feel divine presence — in sitting meditation we visualize and feel our relationship to God’s personal form. In activity, take hourly breaks for 30 seconds or a minute and with open eyes sense the presence of your worshipped form of God or Radha Krishna. Simply feel you are not alone. Imagine them near or far, sitting, standing or in any position, in any mood of love. Share your awareness — After visualizing God’s presence, either feel He is watching you or that you are showing Him what you are doing. Avoid wrong association — your associations and environment will affect your feeling of divine connection. Be mindful and avoid those situations that divert your devotional intention. There is no restriction of time, place and activity for this remembrance. It can be done anywhere, at any time. You do not need to sit in a particular position or have closed eyes. This very simple practice will recall the blissful feelings of your seated meditation and help to stabilize your devotional experience. Atman is Brahman. This is a powerful phrase in yogic circles and I’ve often asked myself what it meant. After a bit of research and answers from a few of my favorite yoga teachers, I’ve come to understand the essence of this yogic saying. In this article, we’re going to discover where the saying came from, the ins and outs of its true meaning, and what it means for us as yogis on the path. Steeped in Vedanta The statement comes from the Vedanta tradition, and encapsulates the relationship between our singular selves and the ultimate divine reality. The essence of the statement is that we are one and the same. The Universe is us, and we are the Universe. Sounds a bit esoteric and ethereal doesn’t it? For our Western, rational minds, sure. But to Hindu consciousness it’s as clear as night and day. To understand the concept, let’s break it all down. First of all, atman is the individual soul. Every living being on the planet—humans, animals, plants—have an atman. They have prana (life force energy) running through them. They have an immortal essence that lives on, even after death. Now, Brahman can be best described as the cosmic soul. It’s the divine Universe, the Ultimate Reality of the cosmos. Brahman is pure Consciousness. It is the Absolute Reality of existence. Brahman is sometimes referred to as the Godhead. Brahman cannot be described. It can only be experienced. So when we say, “Atman is Brahman,” we’re saying that the individual soul is the same as the universal soul. The microcosm is the macrocosm. We’re saying that our sense of separateness is maya, or an illusion. Atman really is Brahman. It’s the illusion that makes them seem to be separate. Make sense? It’s a beautiful concept because it shows us just how divine we really are. It tells us that we’re made of the God-stuff, we’re not separate from this divinity. The higher power is within each and every living, breathing thing. Read: Unlocking the Upanishads. 4 Key Lessons for Yogis Underscored in the Upanishads This theme, “Atman is Brahman,” pervades the Upanishads—the poetic, sacred texts that come from the Vedas. The Upanishads teach us that we are all incarnations of God. However, God isn’t the word used here because the word, god, typically describes a personal god, in the Hebrew or Christian sense. Renowned scholar Alan Watts put it this way: “Brahman is—we would say—supra-personal. Not impersonal, because that is a negation. But I would say, supra-personal. Brahman is not he or she. It has no sex. Brahman is not the creator of the world—as something underneath and subject to Brahman—but the actor of the world, the player of all the parts, so that everyone is a mask (which is the meaning of the word “person”) in which the Brahman plays a role. And like an absorbed actor, the divine spirit gets so absorbed in playing the role as to become it, and to be bewitched.” So, as you can see, Vedantic views of God were much different than Hebrew ones. And this is what the phrase, “Atman is Brahman,” is telling us. While Brahman is the entire universe, we all have a piece of that divinity inside us, and it’s known as atman. Read: Know Your Atman (Self) Tat Tvam Asi Tat tvam asi is a mantra that sums up this theme. Tat tvam asi can be translated as “Thou Art That.” You can integrate this mantra into your meditation practice to really instill the meaning of “Atman is Brahman” inside you. Mantras help us understand these concepts, and we begin to experience their meaning the more we meditate with them. The atman, as well as the Brahman, are eternal states of being. These immortal states are what we’re working toward being while living in our mortal bodies. This is really the primary goal of yoga—to attain the experience of “Atman is Brahman.” Read: What Is the True Meaning of Yoga? In fact, we must attain this state of enlightenment if we are to escape the endless cycles of birth, death, rebirth. To escape these samsaras, as they’re referred to in yoga, we must self-realize. We must experience “Atman is Brahman.” Another term for the freedom that we experience when we break free of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth, is known as moksha. Living ‘Atman Is Brahman’ We practice the eight limbs of yoga every, single day. In a sense, we become the Yoga Sutras. Each day we do yoga asana, we meditate, we practice pranayama; we master the yamas and niyamas; and we practice pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. It’s the final state — samadhi — in which we finally come to self-realize and experience the ecstatic state where our atman is Brahman. Read: The Eighth Limb of Yoga: Samadhi In this state of ecstasy, we merge completely with the Divine. The small self becomes the Higher Self. The atman becomes the Brahman. We experience the profound connection to Brahman and a profound connection to all living beings and the atman that lives within them. The ‘Isha Upanishad’ sums up this divine connection like this: “He who sees all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings, he never turns away from it [the Self]. For he who perceives all beings as the Self, how can there be delusion or grief when he sees this oneness everywhere?” To help you bring attention to your doshas and to identify what your predominant dosha is, we created the following quiz. Try not to stress over every question, but simply answer based off your intuition. After all, you know yourself better than anyone else. Share This Article