The Power that is Prana: A Peek Into Svashakti Re-Birthing Breathwork



Posted on October 6, 2018 by hari

Ritambhara is proud to announce the start of a new series of workshops entitled Svashakti. The first of these workshops Svashakti: Re-Birthing Breathwork will take place at Ritambhara Ashram on October 11th, 2018. Anuradha Ramesh aka Usha, the lead facilitator for the program, shared her understanding of the work and her personal journey in developing Svashakti.

The Origin of Svashakti and its Meaning



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Svashakti is an acknowledgment of the power that each one of us holds within ourselves. When we haven't had the opportunity to dive deep into ourselves and access that power, then by default we are rendered powerless, which makes us grab at external symbols of power. We tend to draw our power from symbols that are outside of us.

Svashakti points to the inner power which is inherent in all of us. The program offers various frameworks and tools and practices that enable participants to access that power, and find their true north, in a manner of speaking.

I've been a member of RASA from last July, but my line of work has developed independently of the group and from much before its inception. I have been in this field of Energy work and Metaphysics for the last 18 years now, what I would prefer to call working with the Human Energy Field. I met Raghu when he conducted the first Mahabharata Immersion. We conversed a lot and he was very interested in the kind of work that I was doing, which was different from the strongly yoga centric work that most of the other members of RASA were

doing. Although I am a practitioner of yoga, it isn't my core learning and teaching area of expertise.

I had been running a program called Self Mastery for many years before I joined Ritambhara (and still continue to do so). Self Mastery is a year-long engagement to working with the self and Svashakti is inspired by that program. We decided to integrate Energy work into the activities of Ritambhara, so we could focus on understanding the science of Consciousness through this form of work.

Understanding Re-Birthing Breathwork



Photo by Ameen Fahmy on Unsplash

Re-Birthing is a process of completely releasing all toxic content, akin to being born again. I say this for two reasons. The first is that this toxic content, that we as humans tend to

accumulate, is what causes ageing, illness, and disease, and eventually it takes over completely. So the term Re-Birthing is because we get to release all toxins at all levels, not just physical but emotional and mental toxins as well.

The other reason is that during this process, we access all stored memories, especially the traumatic ones. More often than not, it's the traumas that get stored in the body. Joyful moments get lived in the moment; we experience them fully, and then they're out of our system. The traumatic ones are the ones that get stored.

One of the memories that people access during this process is their own birthing process. They re-experience being in the womb, they often go into a foetal position and go into the process of moving through the birthing canal and actually being born. That entire memory is recalled and re-lived. That's also another reason why it is referred to as Re-Birthing.

The Life Force Energy that is Prana



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Breath equals Prana. When we talk about breath here, we are referring to the life force energy that all of us receive. Not all of us are familiar with this idea. When most people think of breath, it's in reference to the respiratory system and the exchange of gases like oxygen and carbon dioxide, but here, we are referring to the flow of Prana.

Through certain practices, when we learn to access that Prana and allow it to enter our physical body consciously, we experience a complete shift in the body itself.

Prana has the amazing capacity to heal, to break through certain mental blocks, and offer insights to yourself and your world view. Re-Birthing Breathwork is a certain technique of breathing, so when we engage with it, all of these shifts and changes happen in real time in the physical body. You can observe it happening while it is happening. It's not a flight of fancy, you're not left to fantasize or visualize; it is a very real, cellular experience, for want of a better word. An observable experience.

You are the Raw Material and the Tool is your own Breath.



Photo by Arthur Lambillotte on Unsplash

During the workshop I teach this technique to the participants. There isn't an indoctrination or filling up of the mind with theories and concepts. It's really working with the breath. We teach the technique in small steps, and once the participants become comfortable with the technique, only then do we take them into what is called a full breathing cycle.

In following the technique the participants allow themselves to be taken over by the prana. This is a process that happens unfailingly with every person. That by itself is very fascinating.

It's just about breathing in that particular manner, which is completely under your control, and then the prana takes over. It takes so little to connect to such an overwhelming power that becomes accessible to you through your breath!

I am able to supervise and I have other students who have done the program who assist me. We also work in pairs, so you have a partner who would watch over you while you go into the breathing cycle. We build an environment that is safe and that encourages trust.

There is no indoctrination; nothing put in your mind that would be alien or suggestive in any manner. At the most, I would share my definition of prana or breath, and my understanding of the relationship between the breath and the body, for instance, at a very general level.

There is no attempt to induce anything; there is nothing suggestive in the entire discourse. It's your body and your energy field or koshas. You are the raw material and the tool is your own breath. There is nothing external at all, in that experience.

Tapping Into A Higher Intelligence: A Surgical Strike



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For me, Prana is the direct connection between the higher intelligence and myself the human, as a physical representation of that intelligence. That intelligence guides you, through your own process, which is solely and entirely yours. It could be cathartic, or enlightening; there is no real way of saying what you will encounter, and there is no attempt on my part to manipulate or control what you are going to experience.

If you are holding on to something, a narrative, a thought pattern, a belief etc that is not in alignment with your higher intelligence or your truth, this process will break through those patterns and narratives. And this is not done externally, by someone telling you, “It is not like this or like that.” This is done between you and your breath. Hence the insights register a lot more powerfully because nobody has influenced you to think differently.

Although the Re-Birthing technique was developed by Leonard Orr, as a yoga practitioner I see the correlation it has to our own tradition of Pranayama. The two are similar in that they both engage with Prana. However, there is a distinction.

Pranayama is like your daily maintenance program. It allows for the unfolding of probably the exact same layers you are able to touch in a Re-Birthing, but in a more gentle process that happens over a period of time with regular practice. In contrast, I would say that Re-Birthing is like a surgical strike. It is a focused, pointed intervention with the intention of breaking through some rigid, chronic blocks. Stuff that you are probably not aware of when you get started or at times some physical complaints or issues that you are aware of but may not know how to access. It cuts through several layers of blocks and resistance and gets to the core of the issue. That’s how I see it as distinct, and at the same time similar.

Bridging Traditions in The Discovery of Truth



I have been involved in this work for the past 18 years, but it's only recently that I've been informed that this is all Yoga. I would not have known that.

I am a yoga practitioner, but I still have a blow-hot-blow-cold relationship with yoga on the mat, I must admit. I have to use a lot willpower and manoeuvring to get myself on to the mat and do that practice everyday, but this relationship with the breath is something that has developed in me over the years.

It's only after meeting Raghu and our discussions together have I found that all of my work is validated in the Yoga Sutras. It was a very welcome surprise and validation for me, because this has been my own personal journey. I arrived at most of these definitions through my own experience. In fact, in one of my conversations with Raghu, I light-heartedly referred to myself as Ekalavya in the Mahabharata. I told him that I resonate a lot with that character because I have reached wherever I am through a parallel track. I was just doing my own thing and making meaning of my own experiences, and as it turned out, pleasantly, there was a convergence.

I'm uneducated in Sanskrit, I haven't studied any of the ancient texts, I don't have a guru that I can attribute any of this to. I am inspired by Seth, a non-Energy personality who was channeled by an American woman called Jane Roberts. That has been the single largest influence in my thinking and my understanding of life itself. I took to it very passionately and intimately, and it has fashioned a lot of what I understand and believe in today. To my great surprise and pleasure, all of what I have understood and the meaning that I have made of that work has been affirmed by several Indian texts.

I started to do Seth classes in 2005 because I felt that I had found a treasure and it would be completely unjust if I sat on it and didn't share it. That's how I started my career of teaching this work. I've traveled extensively, teaching Seth in small towns in India and abroad, and when I taught Indian audiences I received a lot of affirmation from them saying this is exactly what it says in the Gita, or the Upanishads, all of which I was completely unaware of.

I thought I was a lone person on a lone journey, and it was my inner conviction that told me I was in touch with something that was "the truth". So it's wonderful to be validated by sources that have said the same thing from our culture.

I would like to highlight also that Ritambhara is making a point of including bodies of work and wisdom that are not solely based in the Yoga Sutras. There is this notion that we are only

about Yoga and the Yoga Sutras, however we have a much wider scope of work and we are inclusive. For example this work is not taught traditionally in Yoga but it is very much embedded in the science of yoga. And this speaks to the work that Ritambhara is doing as well; bridging the ancient and contemporary, the traditional and alternative fields of wisdom.

Svashakti is an ensemble of programs of which Re-Birthing is only the first. There are more to follow! If you would like to sign up for the upcoming Svashakti workshop, click here.