

HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK MEETS THE ONENESS MOVEMENT

Susanne Andrés and Ole Ry

The Oneness movement is a spiritual group founded by an Indian couple, Bhagavan and Amma, often named SriAmmaBhagavan, as they are considered to be one consciousness with an extraordinary spiritual power to induce transformation. In particular this transformation happens through the Oneness Blessing or Deeksha, where the hands of the blessing giver are placed on top of the head of the receiver. The result of the blessing is a higher state of consciousness, a state of Oneness, where boundaries cease to exist, boundaries between people, nations, religions, casts and so forth. To become a blessing giver one has received a blessing and undergone a weeklong course in the philosophy and psychology behind.

It is the vision of AmmaBhagavan that by the year 2012 enough people in the world can be in the same state of Oneness at the same time to make a major shift in consciousness happen globally. The critical number is estimated to be 64.000 people. When this happens the movement has fulfilled its mission and will be dissolved.

The movement is non-denominational in that it embraces all religious systems, even though it is based on Indian traditions. It is claimed that there are millions of followers worldwide. The headquarters is the Golden City, a location outside Chennai (Madras) in southern India. The main attraction here is the Golden Temple, an enormous architectural construction with a main hall that can contain eight thousand people.

The “inner circle” around AmmaBhagavan is the Dasas, comparable to monks and nuns in some orders. There are well over a hundred dasas, most of them at the Golden City, but also placed at many, smaller centers in and outside India. The dasas have all undergone a very long, intense spiritual training. Few of them, called Oneness Beings, are in a constant state of enlightenment, Samadhi, and are able to give particularly strong blessings. They are called Oneness Beings.

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE ONENESS MOVEMENT

We met the Oneness movement through Tony Robbins in 2008, when we were invited to Tony's resort at Fiji, in order to introduce Holotropic Breathwork to him. At the same time, dasas from India were offering a weeklong Oneness course at the resort. We completed this, so called level 1, training to become blessing givers. After having had the opportunity to experience Holotropic Breathwork in practice, it was Tony's opinion that the Breathwork could add a powerful dimension to the Oneness process, and he encouraged us to pursue that idea. With support from Stan Grof, we contacted Bhagavan directly. Stan's support included a DVD with a special designed interview conducted by Susanne. We were also able to send a signed copy of Stan's book *The Future of Psychology*.

Immediately after receiving the letter and watching the DVD, Bhagavan invited us to India to work with the dasas. Bhagavan expressed the view that the Breathwork and Oneness approach were aiming towards the same goal, and that the Breathwork could have potential for speeding up the process, something he would like to explore further as soon as possible.

HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK IN THE GOLDEN CITY

We cancelled all our appointments immediately and went to India with short notice in October 2009. This was our first journey to India, and as everybody, who has been there knows, India is a cultural shock, even though we were offered a fairly protected life in the Golden City. In fact, we were received extremely good care, and could fully concentrate on introducing the Breathwork.

Experiences from around the world have taught to be modest in our expectations of local technical and practical possibilities, but in the Golden City everything was at the top end of the scale. The sessions took place in the spacious, well equipped "Power House" that included a state of art sound system, since AmmaBhagavan's son happened to be the owner of India's largest music company.

Our first "test drive" with the Breathwork was with four male Oneness Beings, who appeared very open minded. To impress people of how powerful the work is, we often like a little action on the floor, but in this case, the breathers turned out to be exceptionally

quiet and motionless. There was absolutely no indication, we could notice, of how far in the process they were, or if they were coming near to a closure. In the end we had to communicate with the sitters about what was going on. They just said that they could wake up the breathers, if we wanted them to, since we could not be sure, when they would come back by themselves. After some more waiting, we encouraged the sitters to make contact with the breathers. They seemed to wake up, and we found it appropriate to ask, how they felt in their bodies. That question caused some confusion, and we did not succeed in getting any straight answers. At this point we were reasonably frustrated and worried about the whole project, since this was supposed to be the beginning of a longer relationship.

To our surprise, in the sharing later, everybody expressed major satisfaction with the Breathwork that had taken them to new territory and given them important insights. We also learned that in the process they had left their bodies and gone to blissful realms, where the question: “What do you feel in your body?” didn’t make any sense, since they were not in their bodies, and didn’t feel any urge to come back to their bodies, unless some outside necessity called for it. For them this was a familiar phenomenon.

To us it was very new, and we did not have any readymade strategy to handle the situation. To be honest we felt some panic lurking in the background, and decided to try to make contact to Stan. Unfortunately, Stan was occupied elsewhere in the world, so we were left on our own.

The Oneness Beings reported their satisfaction to Bhagavan, who decided to let us work with a group of thirty-seven male dasas, and after 3 ½ days with them, another mixed group of fifty-six male and female dasas, and finally a female group of fifty-seven. We continued until all dasas had been introduced to the Breathwork and had each had two double sessions. That amounted to a total of sixteen sessions over a three weeks period, and we felt like candidates for The Guinness Book of Records.

In order to handle groups of that size, we needed help on the floor and had to speed-train the dasas from the first group, and later a few of the more talented women, not an ideal situation, but better than nothing. We needed extra hands, since many breathers took the chance to let go in the beginning of the sessions, probably as a polarity to their more serene daily life.

Male and female dasas are not supposed to have any physical contact with each other, so when we worked with the mixed group, a dividing wall of mattresses was made. After a little initial hesitation both of us were accepted to work with both sexes, since as teachers we were given a special status. This was also reflected in the suffix –ji that we were given names as Susanneji and Oleji.

The issue with ‘the out of body breathers’ resolved to some degree along the way. Many of the dasas went into a state of bliss (Samadhi) during the sessions, and only a few took initiative to return back by themselves, as we are more used to from other settings. We found out that it was usually possible to communicate anyway and to suggest coming back. There were no negative reactions to that, probably because they knew it was a place to which they always could come back. Also we realized that was very contagious to be near a person in such a state, as we experienced the possibility of being drawn into that very state ourselves.

THE FOUR BASKETS

During the sharings, the dasas often reported strong spiritual experiences, which likewise were reflected in the mandalas. There appeared to be a lot of reference to The Four Baskets, a concept that was new to us, but as we found out, had very strong resemblance with Stan’s four perinatal matrices. In our discussions with Bhagavan this resemblance became even more obvious. Bhagavan seems to have developed his concept out of own experience, and was astonished to hear about Grof’s four matrices, and very interested to learn more about how the two concepts were overlapping.

Since the baskets seem to be an important aspect in Bhagavan’s teachings, we go a little more into details with them here. As Bhagavan, to our knowledge, has not written anything about this prenatal period, the following is mainly based on our understanding from our discussions with him and the dasas:

We all journey through four different stages of birth, as we emerge from mother’s womb into the world. The four baskets describe these stages, each having a specific

underlying psychological pattern that will influence our later life. The pattern will be individually colored by the mother's state of mind and physiology during pregnancy.

Later in life we can be more or less stuck in one of the baskets, until the baskets are fully experienced, acknowledged and resolved. This is an important step to set us free to reach a state of Oneness. The overall picture is summarized in the following.

THE FIRST BASKET

WHEN: From the conception to the fourth month in the womb.

WHAT HAPPENS: The fetus tends to be quite still and in a happy state. In the end of this period, though – Bhagavan suggests that as the fetus grows bigger and changes a great deal, it wants to get out of the womb, but cannot succeed. Since there is no way out, a sense of helplessness and inability to act can be encountered.

CONSEQUENCES: People who are quite happy and satisfied with where they are in life. They tend to have no intention – no drive – no motivation – no energy and have absolutely no ambition for achieving anything or to move forward in life. They passively see that everything is happening around them, but not to them. At times they can be quite dissatisfied about the situation, but cannot and will not take any responsibility or action to do something about it. In worse cases they can have a tendency to blame it all on the surroundings.

THE SECOND BASKET

WHEN: From the third to fourth month after conception to the eight month – still in the womb.

WHAT HAPPENS: The womb will become even more uncomfortable as the

fetus rapidly develops and expands. There is no space anymore in the womb, and the fetus might anxiously attempt to get out. At last, hope will begin to surface, as the contractions start, but still nothing happens.

CONSEQUENCES: People who tend to struggle a lot in life with very little outcome tend to be stuck in this basket. There is often intense suffering, helplessness and hopelessness. Lack of concentration, depression and oftentimes desperation and suffocation are all signs of being caught in this basket. People can feel unloved, and have an even more strong experience of nothing is happening. Life seems painfully to lack meaning.

THE THIRD BASKET

WHEN: From the eight to the ninth month after conception - still in the womb.

WHAT HAPPENS: Now the fetus struggles even more strongly to get out of the womb, and will move again and again from hopefulness to hopelessness, from optimism to despair.

CONSEQUENCES: These people are very hard workers. They struggle to do their best, and use a lot of effort, but tend to achieve very little compared to the huge amount of energy, they put into a given project. It is like repeatedly taking three steps forward and two steps back again.

THE FOURTH BASKET

WHEN: The moment of birth, and the first 6 hours of life in this world.

WHAT HAPPENS: This basket is often related to the sense of freedom, since finally the baby is able to move. This particular period is significant as to the way the baby will be, behave, perceive and live in this world. It is like an inscription that is imprinted in

the way the baby is received into this world - because of the appearance, the gender or the color. Whether the child is welcomed with great joy, love and affection, or met with disappointment, disgust and rejection. Caesarean babies can often be born with very little effort from their side, and might therefore need a push in order to move forward in life.

CONSEQUENCES: People who are often happy and free. Their life is running smoothly, and frequently they have success in whatever they do.

THE MIND, KUNDALINI AND BREATH TRIANGLE

Bhagavan describes his approach as primarily dealing with Mind and Kundalini. He sees it as two corners of a triangle, where the third corner is Breath. He had not explicitly been dealing with this third corner and imagined Breathwork as a powerful contribution to that aspect. Though he found it too early for him to draw any major conclusions, he would closely follow the effect of the Breathwork on the dasas in their endeavors inside and outside of India, and he anticipated that it could very well speed up the processes toward the goal for 2012. He also suggested that we organize a formal training in Holotropic Breathwork to a chosen group of dasas – male and female. This would be for “internal” purposes among the dasas, as he did not see offering Holotropic Breathwork to the outer world as something on their agenda. But, if the Breathwork turned out to be as powerful, as we claimed, he would recommend it to the Oneness network, which, as mentioned before, counts millions.

ANTARYAMIN: THE INNER HEALER

In the theory of Holotropic Breathwork, reference is often made to the Inner Healer, as a short term for the organism’s own ability to heal on a physical, psychological and spiritual level. This can be seen as an inner drive towards wholeness that for some reason seems to operate at its best in a non-ordinary/holotropic state of consciousness. Every time we mentioned the Inner Healer for Bhagavan or in our introductions to the

dasas, they appeared to be very familiar with the concept. Their word for the Inner Healer, they told us, was Antaryamin.

In Breathwork theory it's emphasized that healing comes from within and is not caused by some outside authority. This is seen as empowering the individual. At the same time we have our gurus, hierarchies, transferences and counter-transferences. To some degree there is a discrepancy between ideal and reality.

Working with the dasas gave us an impression of another perspective, since - at the same time as they accepted the concept of the Inner Healer / Antaryamin - they also gave credit to AmmaBhagavan for the gifts they received in the Breathwork. This devotional aspect seems to contradict a more western wish for personal empowerment and individual responsibility.

EVALUATION

At the end of our first period at the Golden City one of the dasas gave the following little talk that highlights the positive atmosphere in which the Breathwork was experienced:

Namaste everybody!

At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to sri AmmaBhagavan for making of this program possible.

We thank sri Susanne and sri Ole for accepting our invitation to come to The Oneness University and conduct these Holotropic Breathwork programs.

We appreciate their patience, their understanding, their commitment, and their working together as one being.

These workshops have helped all of us in either deepening our state - or clearing our blocks - or both.

We especially thank them for breakthroughs achieved in the case of [names of five dasas].

We are greatly touched by the way they related to us. We feel they are part of us.

We also wish to record our special thanks and gratitude to sri Stanislav Grof, the founder of Holotropic Breathwork.

We are eagerly awaiting their next visit to India to continue this beautiful work, which we are sure will help us in our mission of global transformation.

For sure we too look forward to our next meeting. It is our strong opinion that Holotropic Breathwork is a powerful means for personal exploration and development, but in order to meet the urgent global situation, it is of utmost importance that we search for new ways of presenting the work to as many individuals and groups as possible, embracing those who want to take part, thus building bridges between nations, religions and tribes. This is how we understand both the Oneness movement and the holotropic paradigm.

Susanne Andrés & Ole Ry – website: www.holoworld.dk

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