

// O® bhurbhuva; swa; tatsaviturvareṇīya® bhargo devasya dh°mahi dhiyo yo na; pracoday³t//
(May Almighty Illuminate Our Intellect Towards the Righteous Path)

(Yajurveda 3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/3)
(Rigveda 3/62/10; Samved 1462)



Volume – 1
Issue – 1
Jan/Feb, 2003
Date of Publication :
6.2.2003

FOUNDER - PATRON
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Annual Subscription:
India – Rs. 60/-
Abroad – Rs. 600/-

The Art of S³dhan³

The essence of *s³dhan³* is self-discipline. The deities we worship are in fact the symbolic representatives of our own covert indwelling divine attributes. So long as these attributes are dormant, we live in a miserable state, but when the divine nature is awakened and activated, we realize that we are repositories of supernormal energies (*riddhi* and *siddhi*). The sole aim of *s³dhan³* is to activate these dormant attributes through a focussed and dedicated process of self-refinement and self-transcendence.

A farmer understands the significance of *s³dhan³*. While tending his crops, he remains thoroughly involved in farming day in and day out throughout the year. In this process, he is least concerned about his health or the severity of weather. He takes care of the fields like he would of his own body. He keeps an eye over each and every plant. According to the needs of the crop, he nurtures it with manure and performs several operations such as tilling, irrigating, weeding and the harrowing of the field, and finally harvesting. The wisdom for the preservation and maintenance of the fields, the bullocks, ploughs and the ancillary equipments comes to him intuitively from within. He does all this without feeling tired or bored, or showing any haste. He does not insist on the immediate reward for his labour because he knows that the crop takes a specific period of time to ripen and so he has to wait patiently till then. He remains free from the anxiety of filling his cellar with the produce. He also understands the futility of anticipating a plentiful yield. His *s³dhan³* of farming continues single-mindedly. He does encounter obstacles, but he overcomes them with his own expertise and with the help of available resources. He refuses to relax without fulfilling the needs of the field. When the crop ripens and is harvested, he takes home the produce with a sense of gratitude to Nature. This is *s³dhan³* of a farmer, which he continues to perform from his childhood till death with unwavering faith. There is no rest, no fatigue, no boredom and no indifference. A *s³dhaka* (devotee) should learn the art of *s³dhan³* from the farmer.



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How It All Started....

With the grace and blessings of our Gurudev, the seer-saint, Pandit Sriram Sharma Acharya, the first international edition of “Akhand Jyoti” is in your hands. With its publication we have further carried forward the more than six decades old tradition of the original Hindi magazine “*Akhand Jyoti*”, which first went out in January 1940. Its cosmopolitan readership has already crossed the one million mark. Such is the rich tapestry of Gurudev’s scientific spirituality and divine knowledge that it has inspired millions of people all over the globe, irrespective of their caste, creed and calibre, to explore deeper and more purposeful meaning of their life and existence. It has also given them unflinching courage in the moments of adversity. The account of how this widely read magazine was first published will be a befitting tribute to the single-mindedness and hard and tireless work of Pandit Sriram Sharma, who placed the good of humanity above personal desires and motives. While in deep communion with divine energies in the vast stillness of the Himalayas, he was prophetically inspired to address the issues of global welfare through spirituality. Through his intuitive insight, he could foresee the struggle for political independence of India becoming a reality. A mass movement for Indian independence, led by Mahatma Gandhi, was already in progress at that time. However, the spiritual heritage of India was in tatters. Someone was needed to lead the social, ethical and intellectual revolution in order to re-establish the glory of eternal soul of India. He braced himself for this mammoth task. In order to give a voice to this vision and awaken the spirit of the Indian

citizens and of humanity at large, he decided to publish a monthly magazine of enduring value. Literature is one of the best means of spreading ideas, and writing for the greatest good of humanity has been one of the cornerstones of Gurudev’s mission.

He brought out the first issue of the magazine in January 1940. It was aptly called “Akhand Jyoti”, literally meaning “eternal flame of light”. It was the expression of a divine determination. In those days the birth of Gayatri Pariwar organisation had not taken place and modern facilities were not available. There were no volunteers or supporters to help Gurudev in his work. Despite these apparent hurdles and modest monetary resources, he went ahead with his planned task.

The first issue consisted of 35 pages and was published by the New Fine Art Printing Cottage, Daulat Market, Jauhari Bazaar, Agra. The owner of the company, Pandit Madhusudan Sharan Sharma, knew Gurudev as a spirited freedom fighter and was impressed by his personality and patriotism. He ensured the printing of the first issue at the right time and also its quality. Gurudev opened the “Akhand Jyoti” office in Freejung Muhalla in Agra.

Gurudev had kept the subscription at the minimum, but the quality of the reading material excellent. He did not wish to make “Akhand Jyoti” a magazine readable only by intellectuals. His aim was to make the general public intellectually awakened through the medium of the magazine. The magazine became a centre of attraction due to its remarkable publication format.

The articles in the first issue were also attractive. These were: (1) Why “Akhand Jyoti”? (2) A Call of Duty; (3) The True Form of Religion; (4) Silence: A Divine Radio; (5) Science and Spirituality; (7) The Importance of Shirshasan; and (8) Where There is a Will There is a Way. The first article was the editorial written by Gurudev. Above the article were printed two lines, which clarified his work ethics. These lines were:

*sudh³ b⁰ja bone se pahale, k³lak²ta p⁰n³
hog³*

*pahina mauta k³ mukulá, viiwahita
m³nava ko j⁰n³ hog³*

The overall meaning of the above lines is that to live for the sake of humanity is equivalent to wearing a crown of death on the head. It attests to the ideals and vision of Gurudev, which he cherished throughout his life. He rated the service of humanity above everything else. With this expression of the mission of his life in the poetic form described above, he also expressed the spiritual truth of “Akhand Jyoti” in the following words:

“All the great personalities that have been born to date have said only one thing – real joy, happiness and satisfaction lie in worshipping humanity. At the root of any problem faced by

the world today is the lack of humanity. Political, social, religious, sectarian, economic, mental and family problems can be solved only if our conduct becomes pure and we become true citizens. Righteous conduct is the way to become a real *yogi*. Spiritual knowledge and righteous conduct are two sides of the same coin. The moral and intellectual enlightenment of people through the science of yoga and spirituality is the aim of Akhand Jyoti.”¹ In essence, Gurudev emphasised the purity of conduct and the realisation of spiritual enlightenment.

In the issues that followed, Gurudev wrote articles which covered the entire spectrum of human life, with spirituality and refinement of thoughts as central themes. Every issue has been a rich blend of topicality and permanent value.

“Akhand Jyoti”, which started as a small stream, has now grown into a mighty perennial river from which one can drink the nectar of knowledge to quench his thirst of truth and bliss. We sincerely hope that this international edition of “Cosmic Vision” may reach millions of new readers worldwide and inspire them with the legacy of “Akhand Jyoti”.

Reference:

1. *Akhand Jyoti*, January 1940, page 3.

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Materialism and Spirituality: Two Ways of Living

There are two aspects of human life: one that relates to the physical body – materialism; and the other that relates to the inner self (the soul) – spirituality. Materialism means an inclination towards acquiring material possessions and comforts; in short, it is a tendency to lead a life in which pleasures of the body are given preference above anything else. Spirituality means, “centred and established on the soul”, that is, activities in life are decided keeping in mind the awakening of the soul.

Normally a person’s needs are fulfilled with limited materials such as food to satisfy hunger, few clothes to cover the body, a bed for rest, a house for shelter, etc.; anything over and above the basic needs either remains unused or is misused. For example, if a person who can eat four chapattis for lunch were given eight chapattis, it would be beyond his capacity to eat the extra four chapattis. A single bed is enough for a person to sleep on; any more bed space would remain unused. Considering this, a few hours work is sufficient to satisfy body’s requirements. The same is true for senses also. There are five physical senses: touch, smell, taste, hearing and vision. No matter how beautiful a view may be, the eyes will tire of seeing it after a few minutes. The ears will not be able to listen to melodious music indefinitely. A person will be able to eat only a certain quantity of food of his liking. Thus the senses have limited requirements, beyond which they become saturated. But senses are never satisfied – they always crave for more.

The mind is considered to be the sixth sense. Its attributes are greed, attachment (*moha*)

towards worldly objects and people, and egoism. The mind experiences joy when these three attributes are attended to. Man generally engages his time and effort in satisfying the requirements of the body and the mind. The mind propels him to fulfil the three attributes and also employs the body in its schemes. This is not surprising, since satisfaction of the senses is a bodily requirement, and the mind is one of the senses.

The mind is different from the rest of the senses in that it is always unsatisfied and ambitious. New hopes and ambitions arise once the old ones are fulfilled. Suppose a person desires to buy a house. He would remain preoccupied with that thought because there is an attraction in it. Once a house is bought, the attraction fades. If a person does not have children, he would yearn for them; once he has children, they appear burdensome. A similar principle applies to other things, such as household items, clothes, etc and to attachment towards people. Therefore greed and attachment are attractive only until they are fulfilled.

Egoism also follows a similar principle. A secretary in a company feels his job status is low and aims for a higher status so that he can elevate his standing in the society. It is possible that several persons within the company may be trying for the same position. Therefore he becomes an enemy for them, since now he is an extra competitor in the race. In case he does succeed in fulfilling his egoistic desire in progressing towards his dream position, mental peace would elude him because there would

be several people scheming to dislodge him. His ego thus becomes his own dangerous adversary.

The worth and importance of a well-mannered, disciplined person is obviously more than that of an egoistic person. No circumstances or individuals can challenge a gentleman, whereas examples of egoistic people suffering ruin can be seen all around us. A gentleman is respected while an egoistic person is ignored.

Greed, attachment and egoism can never be satisfied. They function as mirages – they project nice dreams in front of a person and then disappear. The person then remains busy in fulfilling the dreams. This is the reality behind the body-related requirements, desires and cravings, which provoke the person to fulfil them but which remain unfulfilled. Life is spent in this blind race. Time and efforts are expended in trying to realise something that is imaginary and so dissatisfaction continues. Whatever is acquired fuels the dissatisfaction even more. This is the lifestyle of people today. In the end people realize that they have not achieved anything worthwhile in life.

The other aspect of life is the inner self or the soul, called *ātman*³ in spiritual terms. Looking after the soul results in eternal peace, satisfaction, bliss and the acquisition of both material and spiritual benefits. Here, priority is given to the soul compared to the body. Therefore bodily requirements are kept to a minimum and the principle of “simple life, high thinking” is adopted. This means, a person who takes care of his soul has to practise restraint over the senses and remain satisfied with minimum resources. If, for example, the food intake is kept low, it has the double benefit of longevity and protection from diseases. On the other hand the consumption of too much sugar,

salt and fat can lead to diabetes, high blood pressure and arteriosclerosis respectively. An excess usage of other senses also causes problems. For example, watching too much television or too much exposure to computers damages the eyesight. Youngsters today listen to loud pop music, which severely affects their hearing ability. Overindulgence in sexual activities decreases the vitality of a person.

Wearing simple clothes serves the purpose of covering the body. In the eyes of wise people, wearing fashionable clothes decreases the value of a person. Why? Because fashionable clothes are expensive, so in their view it would be a waste of money to possess them. A person who cannot afford such clothes and yet wears them means he is fashion and status conscious, and that he would have purchased them on credit. It should be understood that if fashionable, expensive clothes determined the status of a person, no one would have listened to Mahatma Gandhi, who wore only one piece of cloth over his body. But it is a fact that people sacrificed everything at Mahatma Gandhi’s call for Indian independence.

People who practice restraint never experience financial crisis or remain in debt. They maintain a healthy body and healthy mind. They are called people of character; they receive respect from the society.

A content man thinks: “when several million people can live in conditions worse than mine, why do I need to increase my possessions? If I can earn honestly and spend wisely, there is no need for me to desire to become rich or adopt immoral means.” It must be noted that only a limited amount of money can be earned honestly. Those who wish to possess an unlimited wealth have to resort to unethical practices.

If one wishes to develop attachment (*moha*), why not consider the whole world as his family, i.e. adopt the principle of *vasudhaiva kutu@bakam*? Why spend valuable time and efforts for the sake of a few family members only? When the feeling of *vasudhaiva kutu@bakam* develops, a person exhibits love and compassion towards everyone and offers his services for the welfare of humanity. On the other hand, if one person or a group of persons are showered with excessive love and caring, it spoils their habits and becomes a cause of suffering for everyone concerned.

Thinking about the welfare of the soul protects a person's wealth, time and efforts from unnecessary wastage, which can then be directed towards charitable causes. This has been the path adopted by great personalities. It was the reason why they were continuously occupied in the works of welfare. Because of their righteous deeds, they remained satisfied

and achieved fame. Everyone around them became their friends, admirers or supporters due to the high quality of their qualities, deeds and nature. They receive the blessings of God and always remain blissful. Nothing remains to be achieved by a person who follows the path of the welfare of the soul.

A comparison of the lives of great personalities (who adopted the soul as their true guide in life) with ordinary people (who remained focussed on their body) shows that real joy and happiness lie in looking after the soul. Although it is necessary to look after the body for survival, the point being made here is that one should not get engrossed too much in satisfying the bodily requirements. Giving priority to bodily requirements causes frustration. Conversely, taking care of the soul primarily and also meeting the minimum needs of the body results in permanent joy. It is this joy that the people are after today but seldom succeed in finding...○

The oil in the lamp was over. Its oil-soaked cotton wick was still dimly lightening the flame. It was about to extinguish any moment. Looking at that some one asked the lamp – “You burn yourself throughout your life and spread light to guide others. It pierces my heart with pain to see that in spite of doing such an altruist act, your life has to meet a lonely, tragic end!”

The dimming lamp spread its glow with full strength before extinguishing and said – “Dear friend! Whosoever is born in this world is going to die one day. By no means we can escape our end. Yes, what we can certainly do is to make best use of every moment of the life given to us.”

The Meaning and Purpose of Culture

The word “culture” nowadays is used in so many peripheral contexts that its original meaning has been submerged. For example, we have a “popular culture”, by which is meant the collective human intellectual achievements. There is a “consumerist culture”, which is taken by some as a determinant of the status of a person along with his educational success and/or financial strength. To be an integral part of this culture, one has to have a higher spending power, which yields a greater availability of materialistic pleasures and facilities. We also hear of an “emerging culture”, which reflects the attitudes and the behavioural characteristics of a particular social group. An emerging drug or pub culture among the youngsters of today is an example. Modern colleges and universities take pride in their “competitive culture” that helps to bring out the best in students and aid their intellectual development. However, none of these descriptions highlight the essential features of the true meaning of “culture”.

The concept of culture:

Intellectuals and thinkers of the world have defined and analysed “culture” in their own way. Prof. Edward Burnett Tylor, a famous 19th century English anthropologist, gave one of the first clear definitions of culture in the West. He defined culture as a complex collection of “knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.¹ According to Matthew Arnold, a poet of the Victorian era, culture means “contact with the best which has been thought and said in the world”.² He considered culture as a “study of perfection”.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, described culture as the outcome and basis of training, establishment and development of physical and mental potentials. Sri Rajgopalacharya, the first Governor General of British India, defined it as the collective expression of the thoughts, speeches and deeds of the learned, talented or creative members of a society or a nation. In the 1950s, A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn collected over a hundred definitions of culture.

A modern definition of culture is given by anthropologist William A. Haviland in *Cultural Anthropology* as follows: “Culture is a set of rules or standards that, when acted upon by the members of a society, produce behaviour that falls within a range of variance the members consider proper and acceptable.”³ In other words, culture does not refer to the behaviour that is observed but to values and beliefs which *generate* behaviour. Some modern definitions of culture tend to be inclusive of the “emerging culture” of society. For instance, in *Culture and Modernity*, Roop Rekha Verma defines culture as “a system of the patterns and the modes of expectations, expressions, values, institutionalisation and enjoyment habits of people in general.”⁴ Note the inclusion of the term “enjoyment habits”.

What is the Vedic view on the concept of culture? Pritibhushan Chatterji in *Knowledge, Culture and Man* says that culture “means something cultivated or ripened... ‘Culture’ also refers to some kind of refinement which is born of education and enlightenment.”⁵ This seems to be largely in agreement with the Vedic

interpretation of culture. The Vedic term for culture is *sanskṛati*, which originates from the word *saṅskṛa*.⁶ *Saṅskṛa* in a linguistic sense implies the process of refinement and purification. Thus, *sanskṛati* means the assimilated treasure of the methods that: (1) purify and uplift the human life; (2) teach us the art of living happily with others, the etiquettes of civilization and the ethics of social benevolence; or (3) encompass those values and practices which effectuate refinement and happy progress of the internal and external aspects of people's life and instil *sanskṛas* in their conduct along with natural enlightenment and strengthening of their mental and physical talents.

There are thus many viewpoints on culture and so it is difficult to find a universal definition. Actually, the meaning and purpose of culture is vast – they incorporate the genesis and expansion of the philosophy, values, goals and modes of life in any society or nation. In short, culture is the traditional yet evolving basis and nature of life of a social or national system that provides support and atmosphere for civilised, liberal and illuminating progress of people. Indeed, culture is an ensemble of immeasurable trends and attempts that have gradually evolved and excelled since the ancient times and have contributed to the overall development and progress of humans. It represents those lines of thoughts and systems of the human society that aim to cultivate *sanskṛas* in every realm of human life. Cultural values and trends of a nation are therefore the foundational elements of its development and strength. The culture of a nation is its true wealth.

Characteristics of culture:

William Haviland explains in *Cultural Anthropology* that there are four basic characteristics of culture.⁷ Culture is shared by

a group of people (that constitutes a society); culture is learned rather than biologically inherited from parents; culture is based on symbols such as a cross, an image, an object of worship, etc; and culture is an integration of economic, political and social aspects.

Culture has several other characteristics too. It is neither the outcome of individual attempts nor the impact of a particular phase of history but evolves through the ages. It is an invaluable inheritance of uncountable experiences, experiments and endeavours. People, families, societies and civilisations develop, change or end with the flow of time but culture is not built or changed in one era. It is nurtured in the infinite lap of time, age after age. It enfolds innumerable phases of rise, fall, obstructions, destructions, reconstructions, trends and tides of the social, national and global history, and geographical, economical, political scientific, artistic, psychological and spiritual developments.

Culture is the spine of any race or society. Social traditions, arts, festivals, rituals, the way of life and the values of community are shaped on the foundation of its culture. Any disruption in the flow of cultural values alters the structure of a society or civilisation. The supplanting of culture shatters the roots of civilisation because civilisation is an external expression of culture. The traditions, conduct, behaviour and ethics of a society depict the external face of its culture. Therefore culture and civilisation are interlinked. Civilisation manifests the nature of culture while culture is the source of sustenance and expansion of civilization. The future of any society or nation thus depends upon the harmony between its culture and civilization.

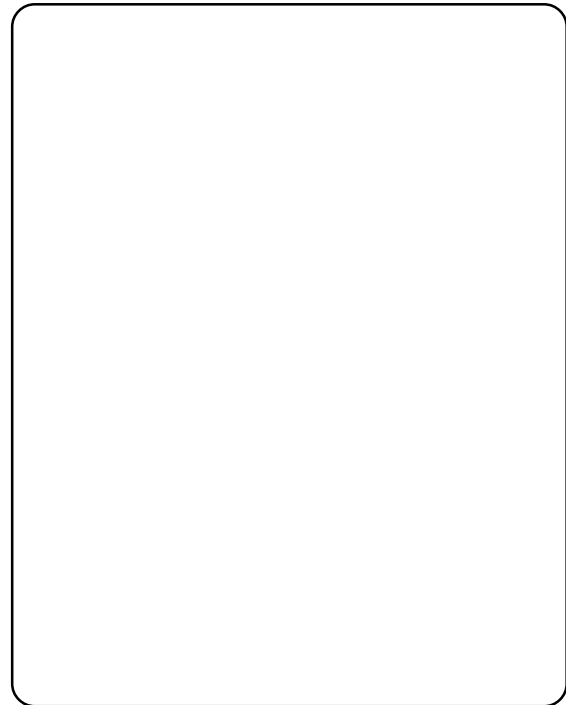
Cultural values lay the foundations of growth, development and prosperity of human life. The place of the culture of one's society and nation

in the welfare of one's life is as vital as the genes of one's parents involved in the creation of one's body. Culture nourishes and shapes the progress of human life. Remove culture from the life of a person and he will be no better than the beastly being of the Stone Age. It is only by the installation of *sa@sk³ras* through culture that a human being displays humane qualities. It is the nectar of the perennial spring of culture that enables the healthy growth and blossoming of the tree of personal, social and national life. The flow of cultural values and civilisation orients the direction of one's life; if a person isolates himself or diverts from it, he would reach nowhere. Therefore knowing our civilization and cultural heritage and learning to adopt its values is necessary for every one of us.

Different races, societies and nations have their own specific culture because of variations in the historical circumstances, philosophies and modes of life, specialties of personal and social life, geographical conditions, the extent of the development of science and others fields of knowledge, etc. This cultural diversity is natural. Still each culture has certain foundational elements that are universal because of which it maintains its identity. The more these timeless, superlative values are present in the core of a culture, the greater would be its expansion and effects. A culture would exist and expand with immortal glory because of its universal relevance even though nations may be born on or wiped out from the map of the globe and societies and civilizations may rise and fall. Cultures emanating from selfish motives and fanatic or narrow ideologies cannot stand the test of time. They inflate and burst like bubbles in due course.

The worth of a culture depends upon the eternity, universality and absolute truth of its foundational elements. On their basis, it can

spread in all directions at all times. The enduring relevance of a culture also depends upon how progressive it is. Culture in its most natural form is like an ever flowing current of a river that overcomes or embraces every obstacle and adjusts its direction accordingly without stopping its flow. It should be noted that some ancient convictions, rigid principles, traditions or customs alone couldn't be regarded as culture. A culture, which is not open and adaptive to the progressive trends as per the needs of the time,



remains backward and gets lost in the mist of time.

Conclusions:

Culture in true sense is like a conscious and radiant aura of enlivened values and progressive principles that have been illuminating our lives since the advent of Nature. Our history, civilisation, ethics, philosophy, religion, literature, science, art, etc are its components and reflections. So vast are the folds of culture that it covers almost every horizon of our existence.

We must know our culture and its origin and depth in the light of the above aspects. We should also search new truths through experiments for the progressive expansion of our culture as per the need and call of the present. Establishing and living with noble values of our great culture is our sacred duty and also a definite source of our advancement on the path of individual and cultural progress towards spiritual unfoldment.

Note and References:

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3. Haviland, William A. (1990). *Cultural Anthropology*, Sixth edition. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, Orlando, Florida. p.30.

4. Verma, Roop Rekha (1994). In the essay entitled *The Concept of Progress and Cultural Identity* in *Culture and Modernity*. Edited by Eliot Deutsch. Motilal Banarasidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi. p.530.

5. Chatterji, Pritibhushan (1976). In chapter entitled *Language, Culture and Man* In *Knowledge, Culture and Value*. Editors R. C. Pandeya & S. R. Bhatt. Motilal Banarasidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi. p.118.

6. Here *sansk³ra* refers to noble tendencies and habits, positive attitude and psychologically uplifting notions.

7. See the book cited in Ref. 3 above. ▲

The fierce battle between King Dasharath and the demon Mayasur had been on since long. All the mighty warriors on the king's side had been defeated by the Mayavi giant. The king's victory was doubtful. But then an intrepid woman entered the battlefield. This was Kaikayi, the wife of Dasharath, who had now taken charge on his chariot. That day Dasharath mustered superhuman strength of a warrior and shook the demon's confidence. But, suddenly the pivot of one wheel got broken. The chariot could not move a single inch. The brave lady got down and instantly put her finger in place of the broken pivot. Without caring for the bone-breaking pain, she continued giving this essential support for the whole day of the battle of giants that day.

History wrote a decisive victory in the name of Dasharath. However, if one would see the truth in right perspective, it would be indeed recognized more as the heroic triumph of the dedicated service of his wife. It is this majestic sincerity of the Indian woman that has formed and nurtured the stout foundation of the Indian society. The glory of such ideals of Indian womanhood is still radiantly shining in the memory of this race.

Yajóá–The Foundation of Vedic Culture

Gayatri and **Yajóá** constitute the foundation of the Vedic Culture. While **Gayatri** imparts wisdom and pure intelligence, **Yajóá** inspires corresponding creativity and actions.

In talking of the *Vedic* age the images of the great *rishis* performing *agnihotra-yajóás* instantly flashes before our sight. In those days, apart from the *rishis*, the rich and the poor, the kings and citizens also had an equally deep faith and respect for *yajóá* and they used to sincerely participate in and lend wholehearted support for different kinds of *yajóás*. The *rishis* used to spend at least one-third of their lives in conducting *yajóás*.

It was a common belief and an observed fact in the Vedic Indian society that *yajóá* was essential for the refinement of human life from a *içdra* (i.e. a person living a life driven by animal instincts) to a Brahmin (i.e. a wise, knowledgeable, charitable person), and ultimately to a divine, great personality. *Yajóás* played an essential role in the all-round progress, prosperity and happiness in the Vedic age. This was indeed natural, as the philosophy and science of *yajóá* and the different modes of performing *agni-yajóá* were discovered and developed by the *rishis* based on their deep understanding and in-depth research of the human psyche, the intricacies of the social fabric and the mysteries of Nature.

The brilliance and purity of *agni* (fire) appears to be a universal symbol for worship. The rituals of different religions affirm this fact. The first *mantra* of *Rigveda* – the most ancient scripture of knowledge on Earth, quotes “*agnim^oĀe purohitam*”, signifying *agni* as a

sacred symbol of God. This is what is referred to in different religious and spiritual scriptures as *Brahmateja*, Divine Flame, Sacred Glow, Divine Light, Latent Light, etc. The Vedic hymn “*agne supath³ r³ye*” prays to this omnipotent, supreme power to enlighten and inspire us towards the righteous path. The same is meant in the phrase “*dhiyo yonaj pracoday³t*” of the great *Gayatri Mantra*.

Meaning of *Yajóá*:

In its gross form, *yajóá* is a spiritual experiment of sacrificing and sublimating the *havana s³magr^o* (herbal preparations) in the fire accompanied by the chanting of *Vedic mantras*. This is only the outer physical process or ritual of *yajóá*, which has scientific importance and beneficial effects. This *agni-yajóá* when performed on a small scale is also known as *havan*, *homam* or *agnihotra*.

The meaning of *yajóá* is not confined to this sacrificial ritual. It has a much wider and deeper meaning. The word *yajóá* is derived from the Sanskrit verb *yaj*, which has a three-fold meaning: worship of deities (*devap³jana*), unity (*saòatikaraña*) and charity (*d³na*). The philosophy of *yajóá* teaches a way of living in the society in harmony and a lifestyle which promotes and protects higher human values in the society, which is indeed the basis of an ideal human culture.

Scientific Aspects of *Yajóá*:

The four *Vedas* signify the philosophy of the eternity and complementarity of *Gayatri* and *Yajóá* in the divine creations. Further, the *Atharvaveda* also deals with the sound therapy aspects of the *mantras*. They can be used for

the treatment of the ailing human system at the physical, psychological and spiritual levels. The *Samaveda* focuses on the musical chanting patterns of the *mantras* and the subtle form of *yajóa* by defining the latter as the process of mental oblation on the surface of internal emotions through the cosmic radiations of the omnipresent subtle energy of sound. The *Yajurveda* contains the knowledge of the principles and the methods of performing *yajóas* as a part of the spiritual and scientific experiments for global welfare.

The effects of *yajóa* include treatment of various diseases and the removal of atmospheric pollution (discussed in detail in the coming issues). Another prominent effect is *parjanya*.

Parjanya implies sublime showers of vital energy and spiritual strength from the upper cosmic planes (higher space). As the natural fertilizers add to the fertility of soil, the unique confluence of the power of *mantra*, thermal force and sublimated herbal energy in *yajóa* increases the vital energy (*pr³ñā*)¹ in the atmosphere while purifying the air. This *pr³ñā* is inherent in the air. The *s³dhaka*, having prepared himself through *pr³ñ³y³ma*, is able to inhale this *parjanya* along with oxygen through inner determination (*sa@kalpa*). The flow of fresh air in the morning has been found to be rich in *pr³ñā*. The larger the scale of *yajóas* and the longer their duration, the greater would be these effects.

The *parjanya* generated by *yajóa* augments the level of *pr³ñā* in the air. This effect is condensed around the *yajóai³I³* (the area where is *yajóa* performed) but is also prevalent in the wider space and continues to expand with the flow of air with the process of *yajóa*. If we pour some oil drops in a pot containing water, the oil separates itself from water and spreads

on the surface of water. In a similar way, the energy of *yajóa* expands all around in the open space. Its *pr³ñā*, its essence, its energy, is also present in the water contained in the clouds. This is showered in the form of rain and thus gets absorbed in the soil, crops and vegetation. The soil irrigated by it is found to be more fertile and the grains, fruits and vegetables grown there are tastier and have higher nutritive value. The milk of the cows which graze the grass grown on such lands is also of excellent quality. Drinking the milk and eating the fruits and vegetables energized by *yajóa* increases our stamina, resistance against infections and diseases, and mental astuteness.

In fact the cosmic flow of *pr³ñā* is omnipresent in the subliminal realms of Nature. It enables all activities, movements and evolution of living beings. All creatures possess *pr³ñā* and therefore they are called *pr³ñ⁰*. *Pr³ñā* is the source of our vital strength. If it were present in substantial amount in the body, an apparently lean and skinny person would be very strong and healthy (e.g. Mahatma Gandhi). Its elevated levels are expressed in mental radiance, intellectual sharpness and talents. Its reduction on the contrary would render a physically robust person weak, lethargic and dull. Reduction of this subtle energy in plants and trees would diminish the shining beauty of flowers, and nutrient quality of fruits, vegetables and grains. Decreased levels of *pr³ñā* in the air, despite the presence of substantial amounts of oxygen, would lessen its vitality. Even deep breathing of this otherwise 'fresh' air would not have the desired healthy effects. People living at such places are found to lack vital strength, immunity and mental sharpness. The *parjanya* extracted by *yajóa* compensates for these deficiencies.

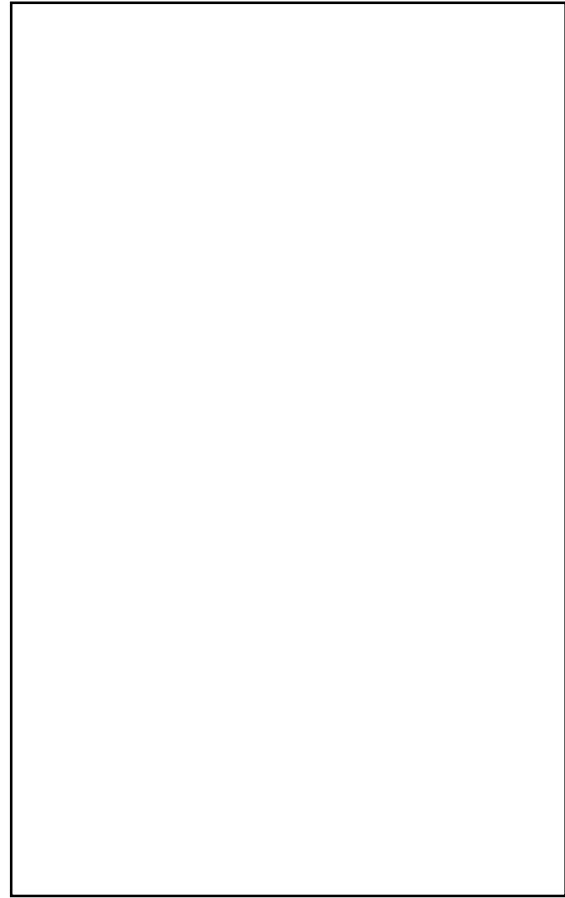
Types of *Yajóas*:

A variety of *yajóas* are described in the scriptures. The *seva yajóá*, meaning service to the society, is a noble example of *yajóá*. The *jó³na yajóá* corresponds to the service of people by enlightening their lives with the glow of knowledge and education. The *pr³ña yajóá* implies the selfless service of saving the lives of people from sufferings and agonies and inspiring liveliness and reverence for life in them.

Modern times and ignorance towards a great tradition:

In the tides of time we lost and forgot the original purpose, relevance and importance of *yajóá* in our life. It won't be an exaggeration to conclude that this negligence has been a major cause of our fallen and miserable state today. Nevertheless, there is a hope of reviving the *yajóá* in its original form, as we have somehow continued the tradition of *yajóá* as a holy custom and occasionally perform it, in some form at least, as a symbolic ritual. Although lifeless and deformed, a feeble and hazy image of this ancient tradition is still with us. All important ceremonies, including the *īoĀaĪ samsk³ras* (sixteen rituals that are performed at various stages of life from birth till death), are conducted with *yajóá*. For instance, the *Vedic* mode of the wedding ceremony (*viv³ha samsk³ra*) takes place in the presence of the sacred flames of *yajóá*. As the melting heat of the fire welds and binds two metal pieces, the pious glow and the spiritual warmth of the *yagy³gni* (the fire of *yajóá*) conjugate the souls of the bride and the groom through the sacred knot of marriage. The cremation rites (*d³ha or aòtyeĪĪ samsk³ra*) is also a *yajóá*. The significance of *yajóá* in the thread ceremony (*upanayana samsk³ra*) is self-evident, as the sacred thread donned to symbolize the initiation of an enlightened life is

called "*yajóopavita*". This thread is always worn in the auspicious presence of *yajó³gni*. *Yajóá* is also performed during the programme of katha-kirtan (the recital of an allegoric story along with devotional songs), religious celebrations and the occasions of special festivals. For example, Holi, which is celebrated



these days as a colour festival was originally a festival of *yajóá* to celebrate the harvesting of ripe crop every year. A handful of fresh grains is required to be sacrificed in the "*holi- yajóá*" as a mark of expressing gratitude to God's grace. It also signifies the spirit of purifying the grain in *yajó³gni* before using it in food preparations.

Yajóá is also performed on religious functions like Satya Narayan Katha, Bhagvat

Katha, Ramayan Parayan, etc. Specific *yajóas* are also invariably linked with the *Vedic* as well as the *t³ntrika s³dhan³-anuĪĥ³nas*. *Gayatri s³dhan³* is regarded incomplete without *yajóá*. The number of *hutis* offered in the *havans* or *yajóas* organized to mark the end of *G³yatr⁰ anuĪĥ³na* or *mah³puraiċarañas* should at least equal the tenth or hundredth fraction of the number of *japas* completed everyday in these *s³dhan³s*. Worshipping various manifestations of God is also required to be carried out with specific kinds of *yajóá*, as described in the holy places of pilgrimage.

The prominence of *t⁰rthas*, the places of pilgrimage, is also associated with *yajóá* since the Vedic Age. The places where grand *yajóas* were organized and conducted by the *rishis*

became *t⁰rthas* and are still revered as holy destinations of pilgrimage in India.

Conclusion:

What we find today in the Indian society is largely a distorted and superficial custom of *yajóá*. The knowledge of the philosophy and science of *yajóá* is as essential for understanding and experimenting the science of spirituality as the knowledge of elementary physics for the material sciences. We shall continue discussing its different aspects, including the scientific research on *yajóá* in some modern labs in the future issues of this magazine.

Notes:

1. For a discussion on *pr³ñā*, see the article “The Philosophy of *G³yatr⁰*: An Introduction” in this issue.

✽

The Gayatri Mantra:

**O⁰ bh₂rbhuva₁ sva₁,
tatsaviturvareñya⁰, bhargo devasya dh⁰mahi,
dhiyo yo na₁ pracoday³t //**

Its essence:

O⁰ – *Brahma* or Almighty God, **bh₂** – Embodiment of vital spiritual energy (*pr³ñā*)

bhuva₁ – Destroyer of sufferings, **sva₁** – Embodiment of happiness,

tat – That, **savitu₁** – Bright, Luminous like the Sun, **vareñya⁰** – Best, Most exalted, **bhargo** – Destroyer of sins, **devasya** – Divine, **dh⁰mahi** – May imbibe, **dhiyo** – Intellect, **yo** – Who, **na₁** – Our, **pracoday³t** – May inspire.

In short it is a prayer to the Almighty Supreme God, the Creator of entire cosmos, the essence of our life existence, who removes all our pains and sufferings and grants happiness beseeching His divine grace to imbibe within us His Divinity and Brilliance which may purify us and guide our righteous wisdom on the right path.

The Philosophy of Gayatri: An Introduction

Indian Culture is founded on the principles of *G³yatr⁰* (the protector of *pr³ñā* and the Goddess of wisdom and pure intelligence) and *Yajóa* (noble deeds). *G³yatr⁰* is revered as the mother and *Yajóa* the father of Indian Culture.

Gayatri - the protector of *pr³ñā*

The scripture “Aitareya Brahmana” defines Gayatri as “*gay³n pr³ñ³n tr³yate s³ Gayatri*”, meaning, “That which protects *pr³ñā* is Gayatri.” *Pr³ñā* means the source of liveliness, consciousness and vitality. The element within us that grants us the ability to move, work, think and possess wisdom and life is called *pr³ñā*. It is the presence of *pr³ñā* that keeps us alive. When *pr³ñā* leaves the body, a person dies and the body becomes useless. Thus in other words, *pr³ñā* is the soul residing in our body. Due to the presence of *pr³ñā*, living organisms are called *pr³ñ⁰*. Physical matter such as rocks, water, wood, etc. is devoid of *pr³ñā*. When the *pr³ñā* of a person becomes weak, his physical appearance may not seem to be affected but internally he feels helpless and powerless, as if his strength has been drained. There are people who appear physically strong but are very weak internally (for example, fearful). They get exhausted very easily and experience dizziness after sometime. Their face looks glim and their speech sounds unimpressive. It takes a long time for them to recover from a minor disease. This is due to insufficient *pr³ñā*.

The insufficiency of *pr³ñā* has damaging effects on the mind also. The mind unnecessarily imagines of incidents of fear, distress and discomfort. For example, a person may think,

“I will run into difficulty” when there is no chance of any difficulty being encountered. And when difficulties really surround him, he becomes nervous and panicky and passes sleepless nights. Apprehension and depression accompany him all the time. He thinks of failure in any task he undertakes. To him, people seem selfish, deceptive, fools and/or enemies. He does not trust people’s honesty and gentlemanliness. Other symptoms that result from the insufficiency of *pr³ñā* include nightmares, tension, impatience, an atheistic attitude, etc.

A person who is full of *pr³ñā* lives in a different world. He is enthusiastic, determined, courageous, patient, hopeful and active. He may be physically weak and less educated and may live in substandard conditions, yet, because of the vibrancy of his *pr³ñā*, he seizes opportunities and executes deeds that surprise even those who cannot succeed despite an abundance of facilities. Human strength is derived from *pr³ñā*, not from bones and muscles. At the time of death, *pr³ñā* leaves the body and all the body components (muscles, heart, lungs, liver, etc.) become inactive. A person whose *pr³ñā* is strong and protected from becoming depleted becomes powerful and hardworking and achieves happiness in the external world (materialistic happiness) and of the inner self (spiritual happiness).

The above discussion leads to the conclusion that the essence of life is *pr³ñā* because it controls the physical capabilities. God has provided this *pr³ñā* in plentiful to us; its infinite store is present all around us. We can acquire *pr³ñā* from this store as per our determination

and worthiness. The fact that some people do not possess *pr³ñā* in abundance means they waste and do not conserve the power of their *pr³ñā*. Preservation of *pr³ñā* makes a person *pr³ñav³na*, meaning one whose *pr³ñā* is exceptionally strong. “Aitareya Brahmana” provides a solution on how to prevent the waste of *pr³ñā* and preserve it – by worshipping Gayatri.

Saints and other scriptures also assert the *pr³ñā*-preserving function of *Gayatri*:

Pr³ñ³gay³iti prokt³tr³yate t³nath³pi v³
– Rishi Bharadwaj

“*Gaya* means *pr³ñā*, and that which protects *pr³ñā* is called *Gayatri*.”

Tadyatpr³ñā@tr³yate tasm³d g³yatr⁰
– Vrihadaranyak Upanishad 5|14|4

“That which protects *pr³ñā* is called *Gayatri*.”

Gay³n tr³yate Gayatri – Shankarbhasya

“That through which *pr³ñā* is protected is called *Gayatri*.”

G³yastr³yate devi! tadg³yatr⁰ti gadyase|
Gaya; pr³ñā iti proktastasya tr³ñ³dap⁰ti v³||
– Rishi Vashishtha

“O Goddess! You protect your devotee and therefore you have been named *Gayatri*. *Gaya* means *pr³ñā*, and the name *Gayatri* means the protector of *pr³ñā*.”

G³yatr⁰procyate tasm³d g³yant³@tr³yate yata; – Rishi Yagyavalkya

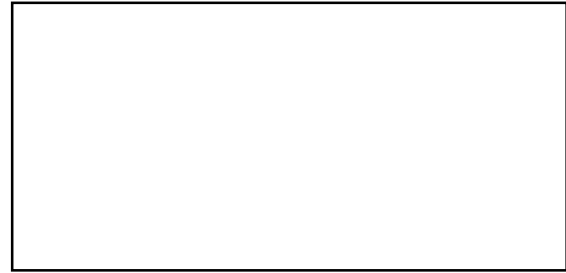
“That (Goddess) is termed *G³yatr⁰* because it protects *pr³ñā*.”

Gayatri - the Goddess of wisdom and pure intelligence:

According to Adya Shankaracharya, *g⁰yate tatvamanay³ g³yatr⁰ti*, meaning, “That through which the Supreme Being (God) can be known is *Gayatri*. The wisdom brain, the righteous intelligence (*ritumbhar³ prajó³*) through which

that Being, that Reality can be known is *Gayatri*.”

Ritumbhar³ prajó³ is the aspect of the brain that enables us to discriminate between truth and untruth, fame and notoriety, good and bad and right and wrong. The decision-making ability conferred by *ritumbhar³ prajó³* is based on divine inspiration. It is an extremely powerful attribute; no other power in the world is as beneficial as *ritumbhar³ prajó³*. In its absence, a person can be intelligent, clever, wealthy, talented, etc., but these qualities do not bestow true happiness. Also, they do not enable him to see the light of spirituality. They may permit him to accumulate materialistic wealth and power but they also bring with them tension, fear,



doubts, greed, *moha* (attachment towards worldly objects and people), bad habits, etc. When these self-degrading qualities pile up, they become burdensome for the soul. Wealth that is earned with an aim to increase happiness without worrying about ethics always yields contrary results. The temporary glitter of the material world destroys the inner joy of a person. He suffers physical and mental ailments as a consequence. His soul also suffers. He may consider himself very intelligent but remains worried and uneasy. The intelligence that is not enlightened by *ritumbhar³ prajó³* thus endows pain and suffering; it is best to have a minimum of such intelligence.

Gayatri inspires the brain to remain saturated with divine, virtuous (*satogun⁰*) qualities, which

in turn inspires man onto the path of true wellbeing. Cultivating noble thoughts and practising righteous deeds safeguards and increases his strength. With every act, he becomes stronger. On the other hand, thoughts and actions inspired by impure intelligence decrease the power of *pr³ñā* day by day. Deeds performed with a consumerist attitude adversely affect the body physiology. Selfish thoughts cause immense anguish to the mind. Therefore, the strength of the body diminishes through such acts. This situation draws a parallel with milk contaminated with solid impurities being passed through a sieve plate containing fine pores: pure milk passes through the pores while the solid impurities are retained on the suave. The *pr³ñā* of a person using his intelligence in wrong directions similarly leaks out of the body. He then becomes vulnerable to even minor disturbances in life.

True wisdom keeps the lifestyle *s³tvika* – pure and austere – by maintaining control over the senses (e.g. wilful avoidance of tasty food),

practising celibacy, simple and natural daily routine, hardworking attitude, etc. These qualities keep life energetic, preserve our strength and increase the life span. The feelings of charity, sacrifice, tolerance, penance, generosity, empathy, friendliness, compassion, faith, theism, etc. remain active in his mind. These feelings impart joyousness and spiritedness.

Normally, an individual is trapped in *m³y³* due to which he remains attached to foul-constricting elements in life. He experiences pain and suffering and ends up having led a purposeless life. This happens because of the lack of righteous knowledge. Gayatri acts as a bright, divine light, a message of hope for people caught in the darkness of ignorance. It opens up the door to material, spiritual and mental bliss. It grants us a “third eye” (the eye of wisdom) through which we can look at the world prudently and attain the aim of life (self-awakening). This is the philosophy of Gayatri.



A person went to a philosopher and began questioning about death. The philosopher said, “Ask something worthwhile. Just as darkness has no independent reality of its own- it is just a shadow cast by withdrawl of light spark from visibility; so also is death a withdrawl of the spark of Life Eternal from visible names and forms which are subject to the inexorable Law of change-birth ,growth, decay, and finally merging back into the Invisible,Unchanging, Absolute Reality-the so-called death. Therefore, ask something about Life.”

Yugrishi Vedmurti Taponishtha Pt. Sriram Sharma Acharya Seer-Sage of The New Golden Era

It is indeed rare in the history of mankind that great souls like Bhagirath and Dadhichi graced the Earth with the nectar of the holy Ganges and nurtured the roots of divinity by their **tapa** and self-sacrifice. Pandit Sriram Sharma Acharya undoubtedly belongs to this category of divine rishis. His life and work represent a marvellous synthesis of the noble thoughts and deeds of great personalities like Swami Vivekanand, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Socrates and Confucius.

Rev. Pt. Sriram Sharma was a **rishi** of the present age whose heart pulsated with compassion for all beings. Every moment of his life was devoted to the welfare of people and the refinement of the moral and cultural environment. He also pioneered the revival of spirituality and creative integration of the modern and ancient sciences and religion relevant in the challenging circumstances of the present times. His personality was a harmonious blend of a saint, spiritual scientist, yogi, philosopher, psychologist, writer, reformer, freedom fighter, researcher, eminent scholar and visionary. It would require several volumes to record the attainments of his life. Here we are only giving a glimpse of his superhuman personality.

Acharya Sriram Sharma (revered as “Gurudev” by his disciples) was a great devotee of Goddess **Gayatri** and had attained perfection in realising its utmost potential. He successfully practised and mastered the highest kinds of *s³dhan³s* described in Hinduism. He also deciphered the hidden science of Tantras. He attained the supreme knowledge of the philosophy and science of the **Gayatri Mantra**

and yoga. In essence, he perfected a vast range of spiritual disciplines. He pioneered experiments on simple *s³dhan³s*, which could be easily pursued by the common masses. He initiated programmes of spiritual and intellectual refinement of millions of people without any discrimination of religion, caste, creed, sex, or social status. He propagated this knowledge for the enlightenment of people across the globe.

The early years:

Sriram Sharma was born on the 20th September 1911 as the son of Pt. Roopkishor Sharma and Mata Dankunvari Devi in Anvalkheda (Dist. Agra, India). That his saintly heart was concerned for the welfare of common masses was clearly expressed since his childhood when, as a small boy, he took a brave step of nursing an old “untouchable” woman suffering from leprosy against the strong disapproval and displeasure of his family.

The eminent patriot, scholar and founder of the Banaras Hindu University Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya initiated Sriram in the worship of **Gayatri mantra** when he was nine years old. On the auspicious day of Vasant Panchami festival, January 18, 1926, a guru by the name of Swami Sarveshvaranandji – a great Himalayan yogi – appeared before him in astral body from the flame of the **d⁰paka** (lamp)¹ during his **Gayatri** worship. This sparked the revelation of the divine origin and purpose of his life and bestowed upon him with the grace and guidance of his guru.

The next 24 years of his life were devoted to 24 *Mah³puraicaraan³s*—each consisting of the rhythmic recitation (*japa*) of 2.4 million

Gayatri Mantra with strictest of disciplines. There is no parallel to this kind of *s³dhan³*. At the same time, he also whole heartedly participated in the freedom struggle of India² under the inspiring guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, while continuing with his altruistic activities for the good of the society and attending to the familial duties.

In 1943, he married Bhagwati Devi, and ever since, the saintly couple dedicatedly pursued the noble mission of spiritual upliftment of humankind.

A creator of evolutionary literature:

His spiritually enlightened wisdom had its reach into the deepest depths of human mind. He felt the pains of humanity in his heart. He could therefore diagnose the root cause of the ailing state of the world today as the crisis of faith, people's ignorance of the powers of the inner self, and the lack of righteous attitude and conduct.

Realizing the potential of inspiring literature and its relevance in the present era of intellectual evolution, he had chosen writing as the principal mode towards uprooting the evil tendencies and blind faith from people's minds and arousing the indwelling wisdom, strength and spiritual bliss.

Sriram Sharma initiated the unique movement of *Vic³ra Kr³nt⁰* (thought revolution) with the very first issue of "Akhand Jyoti". By 1960, he had translated the 4 Vedas, 108 Upanishadas, 6 Darshanas, 18 Puranas, Yogavashishtha, and hundreds of Aranyakas and Brahmanas in Hindi with lucid commentaries to enable the masses to understand the knowledge contained in them. The translation was also aimed at eliminating misconceptions, superstitions and blind customs, which were propagated in the medieval era by deliberate

misinterpretations of the Vedas and other scriptures. This invaluable contribution to the world of knowledge and human culture was highly acclaimed and appreciated by savants and saints like Dr. S. Radhakrishana and Acharya Vinoba Bhave; the distinguished title of "Vedmurti" was conferred upon him in its recognition.

Understanding the modern day psychology of the people, and recognizing the non-relevance, in the present times, of the mythical characters and the background of life depicted in the Puranas, he wrote "Pragya Purana" in the narrative and conversational style of the ancient Puranas to preach the eternal principles of happy, progressive and ideal life with practical guidance relevant to the modern age.

He wrote about 3000 books on almost all aspects of human life, whether it be the elucidation of the esoteric aspects of the subtle science of spirituality, research directions on brain and consciousness, discussions on child psychology and family institutions, guidelines on mental, emotional and physical health, healthy food and positive and cheerful attitude in daily life. In his comprehensive and penetrating analysis we find no place for delusion, confusion or misconception. Through his literature he strikes a chord of empathy in the reader. The message conveyed in the literature touches the reader's heart with deep sensitiveness, producing a sea change in his attitudes and ideologies.

His discourses manifested similar perfection of eloquence. The simplicity of language in his orations and his ability to establish a rapport with the audience had a hypnotizing effect on the listener's mind. The spiritual radiance and integrity of his character, faultless synchronicity of his deeds with the principles he preached and

the purity of his sentiments added to the motivating power of his pen and voice.

A Global Movement:

On the completion of the 24 *mah³ puraicaraanas*, Pt. Sriram Sharma established Gayatri Tapobhumi at Mathura (India) in 1953. He organised a grand **Gayatri Yajóa** in 1958, which served as a base to launch the Yug Nirman Yojna, a global movement for moral, cultural, intellectual and spiritual refinement and reconstruction. The objectives of this movement are to reform the individual, the family and social values of mankind and to change the current ideologies and concepts of morality and social structure for a better tomorrow.

Through various activities at Mathura, including the performance of **yajóas** on large scale, Acharyaji gathered a team of dedicated men and women. Thus the organisation called “Gayatri Pariwar” was born.

As per the plans projected under the Yug Nirman Yojna, the mission has contributed to the upliftment of the personal, familial and social aspects of human life. Its major activities include mass awareness and education on cultural values through small and large scale **Gayatri Yajóas** and collective projects of social transformation with people’s voluntary participation. Propagation of ideal marriages without dowry and extravagant shows has been a significant and trend-setting achievement, especially in the Indian context. Other achievements include upliftment of the social status of women and an integrated and self-reliant development of villages.

The Establishment of Shantikunj:

The period 1971-1990 witnessed remarkable multifaceted accomplishments of Acharyaji’s life. He climbed the arduous and

mystic heights of the Himalayas several times and stayed there for specific *s³dhn³s* as per the guidance of his guru. In 1971 he instituted the mission’s headquarters at Shantikunj (Haridwar, India) as an academy for moral and spiritual awakening and training. Here he began revival of ancient spiritual disciplines that were the hallmarks of Indian Culture.

Gurudev pioneered the resurrection of the *ri³li* culture by simultaneous renaissance and expansion of the reformative and constructive endeavours of the leading *ri³lis* of the Vedic Age. He reviewed the immortal contributions of the divine culture of India to the rest of the world and endeavoured for nurturing and re-establishing the foundational elements of the Indian Culture and the roots of its divine nature in new scientific light through several activities of the Gayatri Pariwar.

As a part of his intensive study of the Indian culture and religious philosophy, he rediscovered the sociological and psychological importance of pilgrimage. He taught us how the ancient glory and the real purpose of the *tirthas* (sacred places of pilgrimage) could be revived in the present times for the welfare of the masses.

The Dev Sanskrati Vishwavidyalaya (Divine Culture University)³ recently inaugurated under the auspices of Shantikunj is an instrument for the revival of the Divine Indian Culture as per his vision.

Scientific Spirituality:

Gurudev was convinced that modern man could not be persuaded to accept the values of life patronised by ancient spirituality until and unless these were proved to be scientifically viable for the welfare of the individual and the society. This was indeed a Herculean task, given the trends of intellectual and scientific evolution over past millennium and almost simultaneous

deterioration of religion and culture, which had resulted in a near total neglect of spirituality in the human life and the emergence of blind faiths, misconceptions, and prejudices. The Brahmavarchas Research Institute founded by him in 1979 near Shantikunj stands as a living example of how his ideas could be implemented and researched in the modern laboratories.

***Sukim^okaraña S³dhan³* and the Dawn of the New Era:**

During 1984-1986, he carried out the unique spiritual experiment of *sukim^okaraña*, meaning sublimation of vital force and physical, mental and spiritual energies. He authored a special set of 20 books (termed Revolutionary Literature or *Kr³ntidharm^oS³hitya*) highlighting the future of the world and conveying the message of the dawn of the New Era of Truth during the 21st Century. On 2nd June 1990, he voluntarily shed his physical sheath.

Thereafter, his soulmate revered Mata Bhagavati Devi guided the series of *Ashwamedha Yagyas*, which accelerated the pace of global expansion of the mission during the critical juncture of the decade of change of a millennium and change of an era. She too joined Acharya Sharma in the subliminal domains of divinity after leaving her physical body on the 19th September 1994.

The divine light of knowledge and human glory kindled by them continues to illuminate the excelling path of their great mission under the auspices of Shantikunj and promises the

ushering in “The Age of Truth” in the years to come.

The last message of Gurudev unfolds the divine purpose of his incarnation and also assures us of the bright future. Part of it reads: “The light, of which I have been an instrument, a medium, will not extinguish with my withdrawal from the physical realm. I assure my followers that I will continue living and working with them at Shantikunj and elsewhere in my astral-causal body and guide, help and inspire them in their efforts to lead humanity into the Golden Era of Truth, Light and Immortality. I will finally merge into the Blissful Luminous causal self, after humanity has taken a decisive leap into the cosmic consciousness and attained the light of the New Era of Spiritual Unity, Harmony and Peace. My blessings, love and prayer-filled wishes to all. I will always be with them in their selfless and noble endeavours in this divine work.”

Notes:

1. This lamp is lighted continuously since that day (Jan. 18, 1926). It is enshrined at Shantikunj, Hardwar.

2. He did not accept any awards during his lifetime. The Government of India honoured him posthumously by releasing a postal stamp in his name in 1992.

3. For details see the article “Dev Sanskrati Vishwavidyalaya – A University Foundation. . . .” in this issue.



Our thinking changes the way we perceive the world and our emotions change the way we think. Thought is a higher order percept and emotion is a higher order thought.

Scientific Spirituality: The Religion Of The Future

The universe comes out of the union of two fundamental forces: matter (*jaĀa*, or ‘that which gives shape’) and consciousness (*cetan*). These are also respectively known as *prak•ati* (the manifested form) and *purjĀa* (the invisible enlivening spirit). Both have their own merits when considered in isolation; however, it is the union and co-operation of these two entities that works wonders. The human body is a very good example of this fact. Our body is made up of five basic elements – the *panca tatvas*¹. The body is an integrated form of various organs, muscles, nerves, arteries, veins etc., and can be used to accomplish any desired work but is non-functional without consciousness. The consciousness part of man (termed “the soul”) thinks, decides and directs organs towards a particular task. The separation of consciousness from matter results in death. A dead body is useless since it is not functional. In the absence of consciousness, it rapidly decays and its constituting elements eventually dissolve into their cosmic states.

In essence, it is the association of matter and consciousness that gives rise to functionality. Matter alone, otherwise, is unorganised and of very little use even though it is present in abundance in the universe. For example, water is plentiful in oceans but is too salty. The atmosphere is full of gases, electro-magnetic rays, X-rays etc. but these components are not useful on their own. It is the human intervention, or alternatively the intervention of developed consciousness, that organises matter so as to make it useful. For example, man has developed methods to process water to make it fit for

human consumption. Fire and electricity were present in the universe since times immemorial, but man’s intelligence organised these entities in a utilisable form. Thus, although the components of Nature are powerful in their own right, their usefulness has depended on the inventive skills of human consciousness.

Science and spirituality:

The discovery of the powers of Nature, their organisation and the skills that make them useful to man is called science. Science can thus be called the unison of matter and consciousness. Science has made possible the progress of the human civilisation.

It should be noted that the knowledge of the use of matter is not enough; its righteous use should also be considered. The same criterion also applies to consciousness. In the absence of their righteous use, matter and consciousness are open to be abused. The attraction of immediate gains is such that its long-term effects are not appreciated and this shortsighted judgement prompts man to misuse power. Ultimately, he creates a web in which he gets trapped, just like a fish caught in a net. This results in suffering, public anger and self-destruction, and yet it is a practice generally adopted by most people. The society and the government rarely succeed in preventing such practices.

Science can be legitimately credited for the current progress and prosperity, but it is incapable of differentiating between use and abuse. The only way to control its misuse is to incorporate wisdom based on foresightedness and the nobilities associated with human glory.

This is the essence of spirituality. *Spirituality* means, “centred and established on the soul”, that is, activities in life are designed keeping the awakening of the soul as the aim. The soul is the individualized consciousness present in the human body.

Consciousness is more powerful than matter. As discussed earlier, it is the miracle of consciousness that organises matter in an orderly way. However, unrestrained consciousness has drawbacks too. For example, it is easy to find faults in others, but does anyone try to observe his own self for their own faults? Usually, an individual is biased towards his shortcomings and considers himself the best. A person trying to prove himself right will present several arguments in his favour. This distorts the reality and generates undesirable thoughts.

The dual accomplishment of the righteous use of science and the refinement of consciousness is possible only through spirituality.

The great divide:

Since the 17th century, when modern science made its first appearance, it has clashed with religion/spirituality. At the root of the clash lie two streams of beliefs. Science believes everything is made up of matter and therefore ought to be demonstrable through experiments.

A spiritualist insists that pure Spirit is reality, not matter. The great Indian seer-sage Sri Aurobindo has termed the scientific viewpoint as “the materialist denial” and the spiritual viewpoint as “the refusal of the ascetic” in his magnum opus *The Life Divine*. Discussing these issues further, Sri Aurobindo says the premise of science is that the physical senses are our only means of obtaining knowledge. Therefore, reason cannot transcend the reach of the senses and so, says Sri Aurobindo, “it must deal always

and solely with the facts which they [the senses] provide or suggest.”² Science says that we cannot go beyond our senses and cannot use them “as a bridge leading us into a domain where more powerful and less limited faculties come into play...”³ In other words, science denies the existence of anything that is supernatural, supraphysical or extrasensory. In doing so, science assumes Nature to be an unintelligent substance or energy and uses this excuse to refuse, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, “to extend the limits of inquiry”. However, science has come to a stage where prominent scientists accept that there are several



phenomena, backed by compelling evidences, which cannot be explained by the current formulations of scientific theories and laws, but only by the presence of an unthinkable, omniscient Intelligence. Examples include: the behaviour of Earth as a single living organism, telepathy, precognition, the presence of a Universal Mind, etc.

Sri Aurobindo says the spiritualist believes that pure Spirit is a reality because there are supraphysical realities that are beyond the grasp of the senses, based on principles other than those that govern gross matter. Therefore, it is not justifiable to reject them as “false positives”. For a spiritualist, consciousness is the unifying factor in the universe, which Sri Aurobindo calls

“the universal witness for whom the world is a field”, while “the senses are [its] mere instruments”. The spiritualist considers the material universe as unreal.

What are the consequences of these two streams of beliefs? Both are seriously flawed, according to Sri Aurobindo. A mixture of matter and consciousness gives a meaningful functionality. If we adopt a purely materialistic view, Sri Aurobindo says we arrive at a *mâyâ* “that is [present] and yet is not [present]”. We see the physical aspects of the universe and so *mâyâ* is present and compelling, leading us to believe what we see is the only reality. Yet, *mâyâ* “is not”, because it is transitory. Transformation is the principle of the universe. On the other hand, the refusal of material existence leads, in Sri Aurobindo’s view, to the development of ego and the purposelessness of the human existence.

In the modern times, the conflict between science and spirituality has further deepened. They have become two separate streams in practice. Both are in a muddled state of affairs and each falsely believes to be complete in its own right. As a result the worldview has become fragmented and has led to manifold problems, a view endorsed by modern thinkers. Eminent physicist David Bohm explains this extremely well in his book *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. He says that everything is treated as separate, rather than as a part of “something bigger and wider”; thus we have separate religions, separate sciences, separate subjects, separate nations, separate societies, separate families etc. And how does this view act as a precursor to problems? Bohm provides a simple answer:

“The notion that all these fragments are separately existent is

evidently an illusion, and this illusion cannot do other than lead to endless conflict and confusion. Indeed, the attempt to live according to the notion that the fragments are really separate is, in essence, what has led to the growing series of extremely urgent crises that is confronting us today. Thus, as is now well known, this way of life has brought about pollution, destruction of the balance of nature, over-population, world-wide economic and political disorder, and the creation of an overall environment that is neither physically nor mentally healthy for most of the people to live in.”⁴

In his best-selling book *The Tao of Physics*, physicist Fritjof Capra says:

“Our tendency to divide the perceived world into individual and separate things and to experience ourselves as isolated egos in this world is seen as an illusion [in the East] which comes from our measuring and categorising mentality.”⁵

Mankind has enormously suffered this conflict between science and spirituality. A person cannot ride a bicycle if one of its wheels is missing. Time has now come for both science and spirituality to widen their thinking horizons and realise the importance of their alliance, since the future of mankind rests on their combined insight and wisdom. How could this be achieved? Sri Aurobindo provides an answer. He says:

“Only by an extension of the field of our consciousness or an

unhoped-for increase in our instruments of knowledge can this ancient quarrel be decided.”⁶

One of the aims of the “*Yug Nirman* mission” is to integrate science and spirituality, which is being attempted at its research wing, Brahmavarchas Research Centre at Haridwar (India). The results of experiments on this front show that spirituality has a sound scientific basis and spiritual principles practiced in daily life yield extraordinary benefits. Further research on this theme will be carried out at the newly founded Dev Sanskrati Vishwavidyalaya (Divine Culture University)⁷ at Hardwar.

Notes and References:

1. *Panca Tatvas*: The five basic elements of the

gross manifestation of Nature. Namely, *prithv^o* (solid matter on or inside the earth), *jala* (water, liquids and fluidic substances), *v³y^z* (air and gaseous elements), *agni* (source of fire and energy) and *3k³ia* (the subliminal etheric expansion).

2. Ghose, Sri Aurobindo (1970). *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry. p.9.

3. *ibid.*, p.10.

4. Bohm, David (1995). *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. Routledge, London. p.1-2.

5. Capra, Fritjof (1992). *The Tao of Physics*. Flamingo, London. p.29.

6. Ghose, Sri Aurobindo (1970). *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry. p.20.

7. See the article “Dev Sanskrati Vishwavidyalaya – A University....” In this issue. ✽

Once upon a time there lived an uncompromising atheist and a devout theist in the same village. The villagers were puzzled by the conflicting arguments of the duo. Whenever the atheist would present his case, people would be carried away by his piercing arguments. But then at some other times the theist would marshal such convincing points, forceful counter-arguments, examples, etc. in favour of his faith in Divinity that they would begin to feel that God was the only all-pervading Reality; even a leaf could not quiver without His consent. Vexed by this confusion, the villagers arranged a face-to-face debate between the two one evening. The trenchant contest continued for the whole night – with eloquent logic, arguments, counter-arguments, from both for and against theism and atheism. It was simply impossible to judge who among the two debaters had the upper hand. The result of this verbal marathon was truly interesting. Impressed by the evidential arguments of the opponent, the atheist had become a strong believer in God while the theist had turned into an atheist by the next morning. But the confusion of the villagers remained unresolved; they were baffled as before, unable to decide “whether God IS or IS NOT” – like most of us in this world. Multiple schools of thought, conflicting philosophies on existence (or non-existence) of God have been there since times immemorial. People often remain entangled in such unending, unnecessary, often baseless controversies, prejudiced intellectual discussions, debates, analysis and what not...., but get nowhere. Those having discerning wisdom do not get entrapped in such fruitless arguments and rather engage themselves in ennobling, creative thoughts and constructive altruistic activities.

Dev Sanskrati Vishwavidyalaya

A University Established for the Cultural Renaissance of the World

The progress of any nation is dependent on the fully developed personality of its citizens, of which youth comprise a significant proportion. The personality of the young generation is highly influenced by education. However, worldwide, the current education system is not structured to develop the personality of students, and does not guide them towards a purposeful path of life through which they can live happily and peacefully as well as be competent enough to fight difficulties. In the olden times, universities such as Nalanda and Takshashila accomplished the task of guiding students in the right direction by imparting spiritual knowledge on a practical basis, that is, how ideals can be incorporated in personality considering the prevalent trends in the society. In the 21st century, Shantikunj has taken up this challenging task in the form of Dev Sanskrati Vishwavidyalaya (Divine Culture University). The University is the fulfilment of the vision of Pandit Sriram Sharma Acharya and Mata Bhagwati Devi Sharma, the patron founders of All World Gayatri Pariwar.

How will the university realise the above task? It will do so by reviving the *rishi* tradition. Universities founded by seers and sages in ancient India had been the centres for the propagation of the Divine Indian Culture through which cultural values enjoyed a global outreach. In these universities both the masters and disciples practised a life dedicated to cultural values. Students at the Dev Sanskrati Vishwavidyalaya will be inspired to live an austere, ascetic life conforming to high ideals. Usual lifestyle is besieged by various unwanted

habits and tendencies, which motivate actions onto a path opposite to the desired aims. Such actions ultimately bring remorse at the awakening of wisdom and self-analysis. However difficulties never overpower a person whose life is disciplined. He never feels depressed by the obstacles of time; rather, he overcomes them effectively. Students will be inspired, in part, by teachers who themselves would be practicing ascetic lifestyle.

The Dev Sanskrati Vishwavidyalaya, Shantikunj Hardwar symbolizes the revival of the divine glory of the *Vedic, Rishi* Culture. It is established with the dawn of the new millennium in the sacred Himalayan region near Shantikunj, Hardwar, Uttaranchal, India. This is the land purified and sanctified by the holy currents of the Ganga and the eternal radiance of spirituality and religion invoked by the devout *tapa-s³dhan³s* of the great *rishis, munis*, saints and *yogis* since times immemorial... The aim of this unique university – the Dev Sanskrati Vishwavidyalaya – is to amplify and expand across the globe the sublime energy of their angelic vibrations.

Admissions to the departments of Yoga, Philosophy and Psycho-Ayurveda have begun from July 2002. The following departments are proposed to be fully operational in the first phase.

1. *S³dhan³* Department: The subtle science of *yoga, s³dhan³* and spirituality devised by the sages of yore will be thoroughly studied, reinvestigated and applied in new scientific light. Specific activities include:

- Basic Education and Practical

Training on the Science of *Mantras* and *Yoga S³dhan³s*;

- Research Experiments in the Science of *Mantras* and the Science of Yoga – including *Haṭhayoga*, *R³jayoga*, *Layayoga*, *Mantrayoga*, etc, in specialized laboratories. Devising simple and effective methods considering the circumstances and complexities of life today will also be emphasized here;

- *S³dhan³* Practices for elimination of the evil and untoward tendencies, impressions and hidden complexes assimilated in the subtle folds of mind and refinement of the inner self will be taught under adept guidance and with scientific explanation;

- Research on the specific *s³dhan³s* for arousal of supernormal potentials and spiritual evolution of human self. Organization of short-term and long-term training courses and workshops on enlightened development of personality to render the benefits of the findings to the aspirants;

- Comprehensive studies and research on the essence of different religious philosophies and realistic unification of science and spirituality.

2. Department of Health: Research, education and service towards vibrant health for all is the major objective of this faculty. The ongoing and proposed projects are — (i) Specialized courses based on alternate systems of healing such as – *Ayurveda*, Magnetotherapy, Physiotherapy, *Pranika* Healing, Psychic Healing, *Yoga*-therapy, etc will be conducted for imparting practical training and also for advanced knowledge.

Research & Development Centre for Herbal Medicine Research: An advanced, non- conventional research centre will be opened to carry out —

- Rigorous scientific research on Herbal Healing, *Yagyopathy*, and *Psycho-Ayurveda* in well equipped modern research laboratories;

- Studies and applications of affordable and effective preventive and therapeutic remedies against challenging psychosomatic disorders and diseases;

- Training of dedicated, eminent doctors who would revive the noble traditions of *rishis* like Charak and Jeevak by offering their services for the wellbeing of the masses

- Resurrection of the glory of the *Vedic* Science of Medicine & Vibrant Health.

3. Department of Integrated Education:

The domain of activities here is quite vast. Principal focus would be to remove the lacunae in the present system of education by nurturing *vidy³* that effectuates cultural evolution and transformation of the intellect into sagacious & compassionate intelligence. The initial plans are:

- Teaching of the major languages of the world so that the true spirit of the divine *rishi* culture and the Indian Philosophy could reach in every corner of the globe without any barrier;

- In-depth study of all aspects of the Indian culture and the eternal ethics of humanity. Search for the harmonious blending of the different streams of religious faiths that would constitute the basic principles of a global religion, which is going to be the religion of the entire human race in future;

- Selected, integrated and broad based elective course programs incorporating suitable components of the modern and ancient sciences to cultivate scientific knowledge and acumen in the students along with instructions in religion, philosophy, art and culture;

- Development of a new generation of Kaudinyas and Kumarjivas, who would be the exponents of divine culture and would spread the light of *Vedic* knowledge across the globe.

4. Department of Self-Reliance:

Projects and plans to counter the employment crisis and offer viable support and hope to the youths will be implemented here.

- Resource management, hospital management, herbal pharmacies, temple management, school management, etc, have lot of scope in the rural context. New educational and practical training projects would be implemented in this regard.

- Special course programmes would be offered to cultivate self-confidence and the notion of self-reliance and industriousness against comfort driven attitude.

- Different kinds of vocational courses would be offered to address the needs and opportunities of different geographical regions. Eco-friendly projects on small-scale industry and self-employment schemes would also be drawn up.

- Workshops and counselling sessions will be arranged to improve the status of the youths and provide them timely guidance and support.

Each of the ongoing and proposed activities of the university would accelerate the

flow of the nectar of the divine *Vedic* Culture in the soul of humanity. It promises a brilliant exaltation of the calibre of Indian youth by endowing them with courage, wisdom, confidence, integrity, creative talents, zeal, assiduity and compassion for all beings. The Non Resident Indians as well as people of foreign origin would also benefit immensely from the unique spiritual attainments of the *rishis* of yore, rare knowledge of the *Vedas* and first hand experience of the methods of *s³dhan³* and the science of *mantras*.

The spiritual energy and the sublime magnetism of *tapa-s³dhan³s* immanent in Shantikunj have attracted many great souls and



inspired them towards dignified, soul-fulfilling life. The energetic ambience and the multifaceted activities here are living testimonies of the authenticity and feasibility of the promises projected with the university-proposal.

The University also aims to provide, by including in its academic syllabi and research schemes, firm resolutions to solve current pertinent problems facing us, such as ecological imbalances, physical and mental health problems, cultural devaluation, the collapse of the family system, etc.

Dev Sanskrati Vishwavidyalaya is not an ordinary academic institute; it is rather a centre of spiritual and cultural transformation, the objectives of which are building ideal personalities, ideal families and an ideal society. Every teacher and student of this institution will be an active participant in this enlightening campaign. ○

Awakening of Supranormal Faculties Through **S³dhan³**

A human being is a repository of innumerable potentials. Being the highest creation of God (Supreme Consciousness) on earth, human beings have, in principle, inherited all His divine attributes. Nevertheless, God has placed necessary safeguards against the misuse of these faculties. These divine capabilities are accessible only to those who have the wisdom of their righteous use. It is a time-tested principle of Nature that boons are granted according to the worthiness of the aspirant. All those who have risen to great heights could do so only by practising this principle in their lives. The principle of accessing supranormal faculties (*siddhi*) through *s³dhan³* (self-discipline) is unquestionable. In fact, through the medium of deities, we endeavour to infuse self-discipline in ourselves. It has been possible for mankind to achieve material and cultural progress through the formulation and observance of the necessary codes of conduct and behaviour for the control and refinement of the wayward and crude impulses of the lower human self.¹ Those who aspire for self-transformation have to adopt this practice of conscious self-discipline in their lives.

Human life, with myriads of latent physical, mental and spiritual qualities, may be likened to a garden of sweet fruits. Even if only a few of these qualities are cultivated systematically, one can relish the fruits of joy. But if the baser tendencies and bodily habits are left undisciplined, they run amuck. Such aimless life leads to the growth of thorny bushes of misery and suffering in the garden of life.

Like a *kalpavrikṣa* (a mythological tree supposed to fulfil every desire of a person sitting beneath it), the human life is potentially full of innumerable precious gifts. One can benefit

from these divine gifts only when life's energies are properly focused, disciplined and directed towards noble deeds. The efforts made towards this end have been called *s³dhan³*. Many deities are worshipped and it is believed that they grant suitable boons to their devotee. The underlying truth is that while moving along the path of *s³dhan³*, an intrinsic faith has to be developed and the wayward propensities and perversities of the lower self have to be identified, curbed, refined and transformed into divine virtues. Natural adoption of virtuous life is a visible sign of divine grace. Once it is accomplished, an aspirant can smoothly move ahead in the direction of the ultimate goal of human endeavour – self-realisation.

The field of *s³dhan³* is one's own inner being. Buried herein is a treasure-trove of immense spiritual wealth. Futile then is the need of seeking it in the outer world. In fact, the intrinsic virtues have been described as *devi-devata* (deities) by the seers. They have devised external rituals for the awakening of specific virtues within and in the process unearthing the hidden treasure. In order to acquire physical strength one makes use of various appliances of the gymnasium. There is no strength in these appliances; strength is embedded in the muscles. The equipments are helpful only in activating the latent strength in the muscles. The same is true about the external rituals of *ṣtma s³dhan³* (*s³dhan³* of the soul). One can learn a lot by keenly observing the mental state and the physical activities of a wrestler who does his regular practice each day with enthusiasm. Not only does he do the physical exercises but also takes nutritious food, observes continence, massages his body, adheres to a healthy daily

routine and above all keeps himself free from worry. If all other aspects are neglected and only the physical exercises are given importance, his aim of becoming a wrestler will remain a fantasy. Similarly, the rituals of *up³san³* (worship) have their own significance, but they alone do not lead to the achievement of the desired aim. The seeker has to mould his thinking as well as activities according to the set goal.

Musicians do not become expert in either vocal or instrumental music in a day. They have to make a persistent effort. In the absence of practice, the voice of a vocalist sounds erratic and jarring and the fingers of an instrumentalist lack coordination. A true artist remains indifferent both to the reaction of the audience and to the remuneration paid to him. He feels contented with the joy derived from his daily *s³dhan³* of music. A true devotee of art would maintain his inner peace even if he does not get any immediate and tangible reward or recognition for his art. He would continue to do his *s³dhan³* of music without any lessening of interest, even though he may have to dwell in a hut in a remote forest. The mental make-up of a person practicing *3tma s³dhan³* should have at least this much dedication and commitment.

Dancers, actors, sculptors, etc. know the importance of daily practice to maintain their art. Soldiers participate compulsorily in routine parades to maintain their skills of marksmanship and fighting. Fulfilment of an inner resolution (*sa@kalpa*) for some worldly purpose may be achieved by performing the specific *s³dhan³* of chanting a particular mantra for a fixed number of times. But the mere ritual will not satisfy a true aspirant of *3tma s³dhan³*. He understands that in order to mine the gems of his hidden talents he must plunge into the silent depths of his inner self daily and persistently. Brushing teeth, bathing, washing the clothes etc. is a part

of daily routine. One cannot ignore them. The perturbed and perverse environment of the outer world pollutes the inner-consciousness. If it is not cleaned out every day, pollutants keep on accumulating and ultimately give rise to some serious problems.

In order to keep the body alive and functional, there are two basic needs: first, daily intake of food; and second, regular excretion of waste. Obviously, neither of these can be ignored. Through food one obtains the necessary nutrients and energy for the growth and functioning of the body. The disposal of waste through the excretory systems gets rid of toxins produced in the body. Like a physical body, the soul (the consciousness present inside the physical body) also has its own needs. It also feels hungry. It is also contaminated by the inner pollution of perverse thoughts and feelings and so requires regular cleansing. The method by which the needs of the physical and the subtle bodies are fulfilled is called *s³dhan³*. With its help, virtues are awakened that satiate the hunger of the soul. Thus, happiness and prosperity flourish in the field of life.

S³dhan³ is also instrumental in the eradication of those vices and evil traits which obstruct, like huge rocks, the progress of the soul. The two-fold process of self-purification and self-development uproots *kusamsk³ras* (evil tendencies) and in their place sows the seeds of divine traits leading to progressive spiritual and material enrichment. Thus, the devotee simultaneously gets rid of the thorny bushes of vices and receives the ambrosial fruits of inner enlightenment. The spirit (also referred to as *3tma deva*, meaning soul deity) is the source of the cosmos and its highest culmination. Its pursuit (*s³dhan³*) is the highest endeavour; its worship (*up³san³*) never goes in vain. With a set goal in mind, if the right attitude towards life is adopted, the *3tma s³dhan³* may truly be called *amrita*

(nectar), *p³ras* (philosopher's stone), *kalpavrikṣa* and *k³madhenu* (the mythological heavenly cow supposed to bestow the objects of desire).

After disciplining, even animals perform unusual feats. A wild cow in the jungle does not tolerate the proximity of a human being and destroys the crops. But once it is tamed, it becomes an asset to the farmer, providing milk, calves and many other benefits. In this way, both become mutually beneficial – the cow gets protection and comfort and the farmer gets milk, calves, manure etc. The same also holds good for other wild animals. The wild horses, dogs, pigs and elephants of the jungle have to remain hungry frequently, face many difficulties and live an uncertain life. After domestication, they live comfortably and also provide benefits to their masters. The human body and its inner sentient field of mind, intellect, feelings etc. is a whirlpool of many powerful currents and crosscurrents. In the absence of any direction and control they remain wayward like wild animals. As a result, they get contaminated and make the entire surroundings toxic. Where there is a wild fire, it burns the materials around it. Wherever a bottle of acid spills, it destroys the objects that come into contact with it. The uncontrolled animal instincts within the human beings are very much like the wild fire or spilled acid. They can destroy the life of an individual. On the other hand, just as controlled fire and acid are useful, controlled thoughts and feelings create miracles for the concerned person. The accruing benefits are so immense and so many that an ordinary looking person manifests extraordinary qualities and virtues. *S³dhan³* is the process of bringing about harmony, orderliness and refinement in thoughts and actions in life. Understanding and implementing this concept in life is similar to the benefits earned by farmers and other professionals who have mastered the art of

domesticating the wild animals.

The quartet of internal senses, namely, *m³nas* (the mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *citta* (psyche; the unconscious mind) and *ahaṅk³ra* (egotism), of a human being can be compared to a group of four wild animals. In its natural form this quartet is undisciplined. A thick coating of animal instincts of previous births covers them. The method that is used to peel off these coatings may be called *s³dhan³*. It is a special skill of refining the animal traits and moulding them into humane traits, and then into divine attributes. The process of mastering this skill is called *ṭma s³dhan³*. Although this endeavour is as difficult as the training of wild animals or chiselling a statue out of a raw piece of rock, it is full of innumerable benefits and gifts.

The miracles shown by puppeteers and the magicians and the surprising feats performed by the animals of a circus are nothing but the results of persistent, persevering, enthusiastic and dedicated efforts in a specific direction. Such miracles can be seen in all spheres of life, whether it is an ordinary entertainment show or some extraordinary achievement by individuals in their specialized fields. The process of awakening one's own talents and utilising them for meaningful purposes is called *s³dhan³*. It always culminates in supranormal attainments. This is an established law of nature and is eternally true. One who is prepared to follow this course of self-discipline and makes an earnest effort towards refining his personality, is assured of an unending series of miraculous achievements emerging within his inner self, which he had been ignorantly and vainly seeking in the outside world.

Note:

1. Here "lower human self" refers to lowly desires, wishes and ambitions.

□

Is Unravelling of the Mystery of Life and Death Possible Through Science?

During the last two centuries, science has enjoyed a meteoric rise in popularity. Amazing scientific discoveries have enthralled generations and increased materialistic comforts beyond the public imagination. As a result, people increasingly view science as the holder of unequalled power capable of achieving anything. Therefore, one may argue that we should turn to science for obtaining solutions to the present day problems. However, the current state of scientific knowledge is full of gaps and blanks. Therefore any beliefs and inferences based on it are liable to be changed.

Science has been incapable of providing definite conclusions in many areas. For example, initial theories regarding the nature of atoms and molecules had to be modified as new discoveries provided novel insights into their structure and function. The science of matter is yet to be completely elucidated. The author of *On the Limitations of Science*, J. W. N. Sullivan, writes that although our present knowledge of Nature is much richer than in any previous era, it is insufficient because no matter where we turn, we are faced with ambiguities and contradictions. This reality becomes strikingly apparent when we consider the obscure scientific views on the definition of life, the origin of life, the evolution of various organisms, consciousness and personality development.

What is life?

More often than not science has left many questions unanswered. One of them is defining and understanding the process of life and death. The issue of an unequivocal distinction between living and non-living, animate and inanimate has

confused scientists for centuries and is still unresolved. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines life as:

“The condition which distinguishes active animals and plants from inorganic matter, including the capacity for growth, functional activity and the continual change preceding death.”¹

In *The Penguin Dictionary of Biology*, we find:

“Life. Complex physico-chemical systems whose two main peculiarities are (1) storage and replication of molecular information in the form of nucleic acid, and (2) the presence of (or in viruses perhaps merely the potential for) enzyme catalysis.”²

Perhaps if we ask the expert scientists who study the origins of life, we may get a clear view on the definition of life. But even they are confused about it. As Antonio Lazcano writes in *Early Life on Earth*,

“An all-embracing, generally agreed-upon definition of life has proven to be an elusive intellectual endeavour...”³

The book *The Molecular Origins of Life* contains a comprehensive scientific discussion, by leading experts in the field, of how life might have evolved, but nowhere does it define life.

If we review the scientific literature on this subject, we find that scientists only speculate as to how life could be defined but are never sure of their own view. They give a very general and broad description of life in terms of growth, reproduction, metabolism, motion and response.

Scientists seem to be following the attitude “it is sometimes easier to study a subject than to define it” of Nobel Prize-winning chemist Linus Pauling, avoiding a consensus on defining life.

Exceptional cases:

A very crude and superficial classification of living and non-living that appears in standard textbooks is that humans, animals and plants appear and behave differently than stones, sand, etc. This line of distinction becomes blurred when stationary, lifeless objects exhibit occasional life-like features and living organisms exhibit lifelessness. Thus, problems in exactly classifying systems as living and non-living arise because (1) there are systems which are considered to be alive but do not exhibit all of the classical properties, and (2) there are non-living systems that display these properties. Organisms that exhibit “cryptobiosis” belong to the first set. Examples from the second set are fire and atoms of matter. Let us consider these systems briefly.

The phenomenon whereby living organisms that exhibit lifelessness during their life cycle is described as *cryptobiosis* (Latin; meaning “hidden life”), a puzzling natural phenomenon. When an animal or plant becomes so inactive that its life processes almost come to a halt, it is said to enter cryptobiosis. There are a surprising number of organisms that undergo cryptobiosis, including plants (as seeds), the eggs of some crustaceans and small water creatures called tardigrades. Inactive tardigrades can be preserved in a bottle for many years, where they would appear to be dead. Movements can be elicited in them by the addition of water to the bottle.

An article published in March 1983 issue of *Science Digest* magazine described a study of the time lapse photographic snaps of the

bottom of the sea, which revealed some amazing facts. An inanimate object like a stone remained motionless at the bottom of the sea for three months. Then it suddenly ascended one foot above the bottom surface and remained stationary for few hours. It then descended back to its original position. A hand-like texture appeared in another stone. It displayed movements for 12 hours and then remained motionless for 6 months.

Viruses are organisms that defy classification into either of the above two sets. Some scientists say that viruses are not living organisms because they are incapable of independent existence since they use the host cell’s metabolic machinery to reproduce. Other scientists hold that it is unreasonable to deny that viruses are living simply because they need help to do so.

Problems with current definitions of life:

The present concepts on understanding the theme ‘what is life?’ are either too narrow or too broad. For example, the presence of motion cannot be taken as evidence for the existence of life. Elementary particles of an atom such as electrons are in motion in an electric wire, but an electric wire cannot be classified as a living organism. Such a concept is too liberal to be acceptable.

Some scientists believe that life is associated with body architecture and its movements. A living being would demonstrate the phases of growth, movement, activation and reproduction. Others consider this concept too narrow, as it excludes the possibility of the existence of life on other planets. Another concept is that living beings are a systematic and a fine union of matter and energy, which maintains its balance by means of an energy store present in the environment. Various life forms are classified as ‘living’ because they display activity, according

to this theory. But psychics argue that there are souls in Nature that do not possess a visible physical form, and yet they manifest their presence from time to time. The confusion about what is life becomes even more glaring when one reviews the scientific literature on the origin of life and the evolution of species and the dissimilar views of different scientists.

Extraterrestrial Life?

Life scientists consider proteins and nucleic acids as essential components of living organisms. Some scientists disagree with this, arguing that on planets other than Earth, proteins and nucleic acids may not necessarily be required for the propagation of life. Life may exist in another form on these planets and the current techniques and methods used to detect the presence of these life forms may be inadequate to discover them.

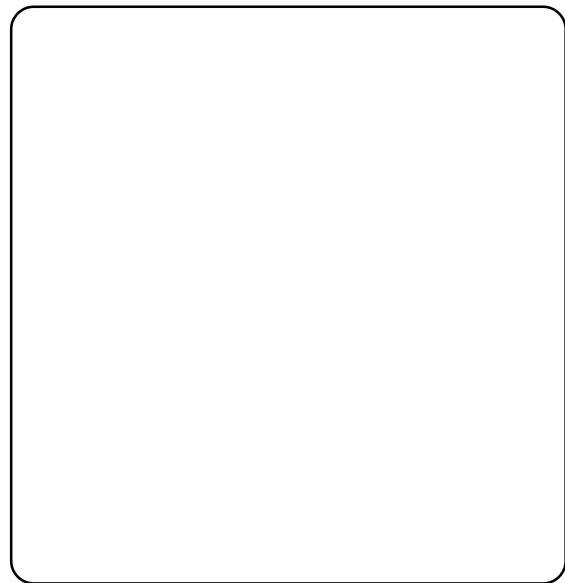
Problems in defining death:

Like life, a complete understanding of death has also baffled scientists. An article titled 'Panel Asks: When is a Person Dead?' published in *Science* journal (August 1980) reported the proceedings of a conference in which scientists, physicians and priests from different countries discussed questions surrounding the exact nature of death. The discussion remained inconclusive because certain unconventional cases raised controversy over the exact nature of death. A person is considered dead when the physician detects a complete stoppage of heartbeats, respiration or brain activities. Some people declared dead based on these criteria have been found to be alive later. "Life After Life" by Raymond Moody and other books on this subject contain many such examples.

In the USA, brain death is taken as an evidence of death in certain states, whereas in other states the cessation of the functioning of

the heart and respiratory system is considered as clinical death. Also, law approves such diverse views. However, the issue is not as straightforward as it seems. There is a sense of uncertainty arising from using brain death alone as a tool for deciding the death of a person.⁴

Brain death experts say that there should be a general definition of death that covers the features of brain death, failure of heart as well as other medical symptoms. Many believe that



medical care should not be terminated on the basis of brain death alone. Unconsciousness should not be mistaken for death because there have been cases where people were found to be alive while being unconscious or brain dead. There are also examples of many yogis whose practice of spiritually motivated severe self-discipline enables them to stop and control the activities of brain, heart, respiratory systems etc. at their own will.

It seems that the current definitions of death are inconclusive. A myriad of telltale signs should thus be examined before declaring a person dead. Clinging on to one feature as being the hallmark of death would be erroneous; e.g., EEG

(electroencephalogram) is a very good device for measuring brain activities, but it can give false results when a person is unconscious.

Life and death: The spiritual viewpoint:

A complete understanding of life and death seems to be a great mystery to scientists, but things start becoming clearer once we step into the domain of spirituality. Life and death are simply two stages of the perennial flow of the supreme, divine consciousness. Life never ceases to exist and death comes as a body-transfer process. Death is merely a resting place in the long journey of the soul. As this view of death is not widely known, it appears to be complex and scary.

Man has acquired immense knowledge with the progress of time and civilization, but it is trivial compared to the knowledge that has yet

to be discovered. Science cannot help him in this venture. Spiritual quest must begin where science starts to fumble and falter. Spiritual knowledge is capable of explaining the mysteries relating to human nature and beyond.

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Explaining importance and philosophy of *up³san³*, which is the first essential pre-requisite for spiritual upliftment, Gurudev said, "God cannot dance to your tune. You will have to become His devotee and act according to His will. If you are able to do so you will become identical with God. Fuel has no worth except when it embraces fire and becomes fire itself. Fire does not become fuel. It is fuel which has to be transformed into fire. A drain meets a river and becomes as purifying and great as the river itself. But it never happens that a river flows in reverse, meets the drain and becomes dirty like it. Iron comes in contact with *p³ras*, (the mystical stone which is said to convert iron into gold by mere touch), and turns into gold. It does not become *p³ras*. It is the *s³dhak* who has to dance to the tune of God like a puppet. God does not fulfil the wishes of the *s³dhak*. A *s³dhak* has to surrender himself to God and fulfil His will. A drop of water merges into the ocean and becomes one with it. The ocean does not become a drop. This is the philosophy of *up³san³*. If a person wants to do *up³san³*, he has to sit near God, fulfil His will and become His follower."

Humanity : Our Precious Heritage

No country, community or culture has made a more subtle and deep study of human life as the *rishis*. It was not an easy task to study the subtle nature of man. For this, Indian sages and saints gave up material comforts and consumerist attitude and researched human life through *s³dhan³*.¹ Keeping in view the inferences so drawn they prepared an exhaustive code of conduct and gave instructions to lead the life accordingly. An perennial Philosophy and an ideal model of Culture evolved in India, the like of which is not found in any other country. It is so extraordinary and comprehensive in every respect that even a little contemplation of its glorious aspects overwhelms our hearts with reverence for the sages.

When the whole world was following the policy of selfishness, whereby a person would accumulate in excess and deprive others, sages in India mused what was the uniqueness of man if he continues practising this dictum? Everybody is desirous of indulging in pleasures. Everyone is willing to commit unethical deeds for earning money. The society is tormented by people's habit of loafing around in idleness. Who does not crave to eat the best food and wear the best clothes? All these are the features of an ordinary man. Many of these tendencies are found in animals too, and if man also wallows in them, what is his speciality? Such an attitude does not make the right use of his knowledge, intellect and wisdom. In spite of being the possessor of extraordinary strength and abilities, if man leads a contemptible life, then where does lie the meaningfulness of the human existence? Superior possessions should be used for

superior deeds – only Indians have apprehended this fact. For this very reason alone our authority and eminence have survived the vicissitudes of the tides of time.

The problem of bread and butter could not be more important for man than the need to understand the aim of life. Even an atheist will accept that human life is a rare gift. It would be unwise to waste it like ordinary people. Going in an opposite direction of the blind routine of the masses, the purpose of human life can be discovered. The outcome of living life casually – pain and suffering – is evident to us all. Therefore the sages asked: why not go in an opposite direction and discover some new facts? With this ideology a new philosophy emerged in India. It inspired the birth of *s³dhan³*. The achievements (*siddhis*) of *s³dhan³* were majestic and great. The dispersal of even a fraction of these achievements resulted in heavenly happiness in the world. The name of these achievements was “humanity”, meaning practising the dictum “I do not want it, you take it. Nothing belongs to me; everything belongs to the Almighty God” (i.e. selflessness and sacrifice). After thorough *s³dhan³s* and the resulting experiences, saints concluded that everyone is entitled to God's gifts, so they should be distributed amongst all. By pursuing this guideline, the emergence of free happiness can take place and the world can be kept secure. Without it, there is no other way to establish peace in human life.

Worldly glories are automatically attracted to the one who can differentiate between justice and injustice and between righteousness and

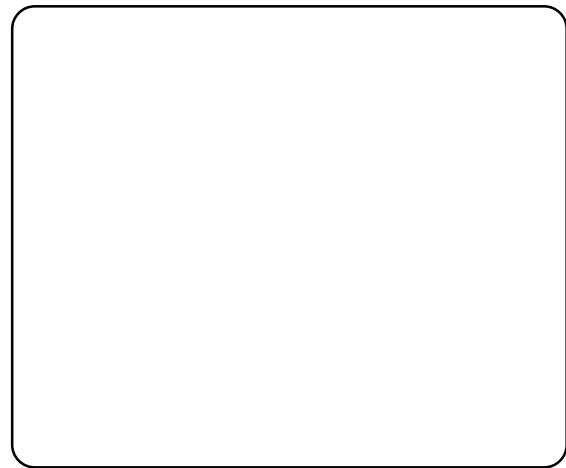
unrighteousness, and who perceives the same consciousness in all living beings. A person experiences happiness as a by-product resulting from voluntary sacrifice for the welfare of others. A person whose heart is filled with loving kindness becomes so powerful and capable that material pleasures seem trivial to him. What could be the value of transient pleasures compared to the effulgence of the soul?

It is beyond the intellectual capacity of the modern man to contemplate the achievements of sages like Vashishtha, Vishwamitra, Gautum, Dadhichi, Kanva, Angira, Jamadagni, Bhardwaj, etc. The whole world bowed before their spiritual and material attainments. Through their *tapas* they had command over the sublime energies of the universe. They could have, if they wished, accumulated material wealth in unimaginable proportions. But they never desired it. Compared to the welfare of humanity they considered the pleasures of the world worthless. They were ever ready to serve mankind. One of the most famous cases is of sage Dadhichi, who permitted Lord Indra to take his bones and construct an indestructible weapon called "*vajra*" to defeat the evil forces threatening mankind. Dadhichi experienced immense happiness in self-sacrifice, which he had not experienced by attaining spiritual and material powers. Achievements are meant to aid man realise his goal. Man is born for the service of humanity.

There was an era during which ennobling feelings of helping others reigned supreme. A person used to think, "How could I be of help to others? Whom should I offer my services so as to uplift his condition?" This was considered a measure of superiority. People did not yearn as much for riches, worldly glory, etc as they did for sacrificing themselves in the interest of

the society and the world at large. They considered it a blessing to give up life for noble ideals and whosoever got such an opportunity considered it as God's grace bestowed upon them.

History contains several examples of sacrifices of the highest order. Pannadai sacrificed her son for the security of the royal throne. Sukanya had accidentally damaged the eyes of Rishi Chyavan. In repentance, she married him and shared in all his austerities. Gandhari's husband Dhritrashtra was blind; she could not bear the difficulties he was going



through due to his blindness. Hence she voluntarily chose blindness by covering her eyes with a strip of cloth. Can anyone forget this episode of history? Such glorious examples of unbelievable sacrifices have been the backbone of the Hindu culture. This is the reason why India's fame radiates even today like a brilliant constellation in the sky.

Hindus have exhibited steadfast determination and faith in religious beliefs, gurus, family members, society and the nation in the development of humanity. The original beliefs of the Hindus have not been wiped out, though their purity has been adulterated. Owing to the conditions of the Medieval Age, blind faith,

irrational faith, narrow-mindedness and sectarianism have sapped the true Hindu ethos and vitality. Who won't lament over the dimming of the light that once guided the world? This downfall can be a cause of sorrow particularly for those who have faith and trust in the ideals of the *rishis*. No one could have expected that the Hindu would demean the legacy of their ancestors, and let the glory of their culture be left to the mercy of fate and helplessly watch its demise.

Today, awareness of the rich Hindu heritage is again growing. The spirit of India is awakening from a state of stupor. Today, the hordes of evil are bent upon destroying every single noble ideal of humanity **but the divine forces** are determined to foil these evil designs of the devil. It is our sacred duty to welcome this change since the founder fathers of our culture lived for strengthening and stabilising humanity. If we are firmly committed to revive our ideal heritage, it will enhance our glory and self-respect.

Rishis, rightly evaluating the human life, had

preached *manurbhava janay³ daivya@janam*, meaning, "O man! Be a human being in the real sense (i.e. practice the principles of humanity)." To accomplish this, certain things must be kept in mind. One should not think only about self-development. He should not remain contented by himself adopting humanity but should also try to spread it by precepts and practice. He should be always ready to sacrifice for the sake of ideals so that the flow of the stream of humanity is not interrupted and allowed to dry up.

The purpose of human life is contained in the above single *mantra* and the implementation of its meaning is the imperative need of today. Humanity is the legacy of our ancestors. The responsibility of its protection rests on our shoulders. How vigilant we are about it is being closely watched with hope by the future.

Notes:

1. See the article "Awakening of supranormal Faculties Through *s³dhan³*" for a discussion on *s³dhan³* in this issue. ❀

If the two principles of *tmavat sarvabh₂te¹u* (seeing one's own Self in all forms of life) and *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (to consider oneself as member of one integrated global family) are followed, people will immediately be able to know which are undesirable tendencies and vices lodged within themselves and how much struggle and courage is required to get rid of them. Human capacity for progress and growth is unlimited. Once a person makes up his mind to work for a high, noble and sublime aim there is nothing difficult for him to achieve.

Spirituality – The Key to the Resolution of the Problems of Our Age

The modern human society is engulfed by challenging problems such as pollution, environmental imbalances, unethical practices, religious intolerance, terrorism, etc. on the social and global fronts and stress, fear, job uncertainty, etc. on the personal front. Even birds, animals and other living species have suffered due to selfish human activities; deforestation and the dumping of the industrial waste into rivers for instance have had detrimental effects on the food chain and the habitat conditions of several species, generating fear of extinction of some of them.

The idea that changes need to be made in order to solve problems is widely accepted across the globe. It is also recognised that it is our duty to ensure a bright and better future for the coming generations. How can these two requirements be met? What approach should we take? Several suggestions have been put forward. For example, a group of intellectuals has been saying for a long time that financial hardships give rise to all problems. If the economic condition improves, prosperity will increase and then no one will remain backward nor will anyone have to adopt dishonesty or theft as a means of earning money. Thinkers of this group do not lay as much stress on increasing the production or savings on expenditure as they do on equal distribution. They argue that if money is taken from the haves and distributed amongst the have-nots, the financial condition of the masses will improve. As a result, solutions to moral and other problems will also be found. The people of this group identify themselves as communists.

A second group considers the lack of education to be the cause of backwardness. This group believes that the solution to all the national and international problems, including that of morality, can be found in improving the educational level of the masses. A third group says that the government has enormous power in its hands for halting the activities of criminal elements; at the same time it can use national resources for opening the doors of progress and prosperity. A fourth group considers the exclusiveness of communities or nations as the cause of mutual conflict. They think that in order to unite everyone, we must put an end to all differences, so that a single world-nation, world-religion, world-family could be created, that can automatically lead to peace and prosperity. A fifth group, comprising of scientists, has a solid faith in science to solve all the problems of the world. However, scientific knowledge is relative and thus incomplete; it does not have definite answers to many basic questions pertaining to human life, such as the mystery of life and death.¹

In fact, most of the time, problems are created due to the errors, wickedness or immoral behaviour of people. Sometimes circumstances too generate hardships. Wise persons try to find solutions to such problems with the help of existing resources. Efforts are made to compensate the damage and curtail the corrupt practices but a long-term solution is not found. Problems continue to arise from time to time. Circumstances are never created in which an individual is given protection and the society is seen in an orderly state, although such circumstances are hoped for and anticipated.

Peace therefore remains only a pleasant illusory dream.

The above approaches for finding solutions to problems are only partially correct. Even if all the suggestions are implemented, it can solve the problems faced by the human race to a limited extent, because they suggest the eradication of symptoms that apparently seem to be the causes of many hardships and disturbances. It is akin to using allopathic medicine to suppress the symptoms of a disease. For a permanent cure of any disease, the root cause has to be diagnosed and then targeted.

The universal governing power of a human being is "consciousness".² It gives birth to beliefs, faith and desires. These impulses form the personality of an individual. It is the faith that generates desires. Thoughts play an indispensable role in fulfilling desires. A person will first have a thought to fulfil a desire and then he will perform the necessary action. Since the performance of a task is visible to our eyes while thoughts are not, we base our judgement of whether the task is good or bad and deserves praise or blame on false appearances. From the materialistic point of view, only this is possible and in fact it is appropriate too. However the fact remains that it is thoughts that lead to actions and so they deserve praise or blame in the real sense. Thoughts possess the power to mould the personality and give it a direction towards progress or failure. A person is what he thinks.

Thoughts are extremely powerful. They inspire a person to take decisions regarding what is to be done and what is not to be done. This decision-making capability lies with the brain. Motivations are generated in the brain. The organs of the body simply obey them like faithful servants. Therefore, it is the brain that is responsible for good or bad deeds.

Problems and hardships do not come out of the blue. They are created by the activities of people. In order to overcome adverse circumstances, undesirable activities must be closely examined and shunned, but such an examination is not possible merely by imposing physical restrictions. If the mind is not happy with the method of keeping a sharp eye on undesirable actions, some other means will have to be found to carry them out because a person normally invents ways to bypass barriers.

Laws have been made to deal with every unlawful activity and there exists a system of police, courts and jail to punish the criminals. In order to investigate crimes, government inspectors and detectives operate round the clock and incur heavy expenditure in the process. In spite of all this, crimes are still committed. Many criminals are not caught. Of the criminals that are booked, several walk away free by unfair means. Only a few get really punished for their crimes. Also, after getting the punishment, they become more hardlined criminals. Once inside the jail, they get trained by other inmates. When they come out after completing their term, they become masters of other "jobs" instead of reforming their ways.

The intention here is neither to say that the police and jail are redundant nor to make a mockery of the judicial system. The only thing that is being conveyed is that enforcement is not sufficient for eradicating or stopping the disturbance caused by innumerable problems in this world, which are created primarily due to evil tendencies. In fact, thoughts of people should be refined. Their viewpoints should be modified so that they can visualise directly the benefits of moral conduct. A person must realise that his dignity and good lie in following the righteous path. If he can visualize correctly the

ill consequences of adopting evil tendencies, then his decision will support morality. Thus, it is by one's own will that one can get rid of evil instincts and habits. On the contrary, if one fancies evilness, the root of evil will remain strong and attempts to improve oneself will fail.

More efforts should be made to refine the level and flow of thoughts and emotions than the efforts made to prevent the evil tendencies by putting restrictions and inspections. If that could be done, then every person will become his own guard, inspector, magistrate, jailer, etc. He will become his own guide, preceptor and teacher and instead of needing a guard, he can serve as a guard to others. If it becomes possible to refine one's level of thoughts and make one's point of view noble, then certainly, civility and gentleness will be reflected in his activities. In that state, his character will be idealistic, one that augments human dignity, and also praiseworthy and worth following. A person whose thinking is exalted can never indulge in base activities. He will never step forward in a direction leading to his downfall. Therefore, in comparison to augmenting the physical facilities, it is preferable to make the mind cultured and moral.

There is one more notable fact – the brain too is not independent in itself. The mind rules the body and the consciousness makes the mind dance like a puppet. The field of consciousness encompasses emotions, beliefs, faith and desires. Thoughts can be changed easily with the help of arguments, facts, evidence and examples, and also be changed under the pressure of fear or greed. But consciousness is different. Its roots are very deep. If a person's inner faith does not conform to morality and his conduct is not good, then externally he may act as a religious preceptor but internally

he will remain a total atheist and secretly he will fulfil his immoral desires. Under such circumstances, the brain will also fully cooperate with him. On the contrary, people endowed with moral convictions and saintly attitude will exemplify integrity of character and deeds and inspire many others towards higher values of humanity.

The method of refining the inner consciousness is called *yoga* and the devout endeavour that can accomplish this transformation to the higher state is called *tapa*. One may call *yoga* "principle" and *tapa* "conduct". Together they form the science of spirituality. In other words, *spirituality is the science of refining and uplifting the inner self to the level of divine self*.

Considering the fact that the other constructive approaches (including political, economical, scientific, psychological) have not been successful because they have been focussed only on the materialistic domain of life, it seems imperative that the mentality and character of the people also needs to be improved to achieve viable solutions to the all round crises faced by the world today. Therefore scientific spirituality along with the ongoing efforts in various fields is the key to lasting solutions of our problems. It is with its help that the objective of a bright future and the beginning of a golden era can be accomplished.

Notes:

1. Refer to the article "Is Unravelling of the Mystery of Life and Death Possible Through Science?", this issue.

2. Also refer to articles "The Philosophy of *Gayatri*: An Introduction" and "Scientific Spirituality: The Religion of Future" for an explanation on "consciousness" in this issue.



Awakening Divinity in Man

(Translation of the original Hindi discourse given by Gurudev Acharya Sriram Sharma to the participants of *S³dhan³* training camp at Gayatri Tapobhumi, Mathura)

Let us begin with the *Gayatri mantra*:

“*Om bhur bhuvāḥ swāḥ
tatsaviturvareṇyaḥ bhargo devasya dhīmahi
dhiyo yonāḥ pracodayāt*”

You all must have heard of the grace of God. His special incarnations entrusted with specific cosmic tasks are called “*devat³*” (deity) in the *Vedas*; *devat³* means “one who gives”. Many of us pray to and worship the deities because we either want something or we need help in adverse moments. Let us discuss about deities.

There is no doubt that deities do bless us enormously; otherwise they would not have been named as “deities” because by definition deities always give something. There is nothing wrong or unnatural if one requests something from someone who always wants to give. But what do deities give? They give only what they themselves possess. Naturally, one can give only what one has. Deities have only one thing – divinity (*devatva*). Divinity is the most refined and virtuous form of one’s nature, conduct, qualities and deeds. Deities gladly bestow divinity upon the devotees, saying that, “we have given you the best we could; now it is up to you to accept and make use of it in the way you find it suitable and succeed accordingly.”

There is one thing in the world that indeed yields commendable success and that is excellence of personality. It is the minimum requirement to achieve anything worthwhile and fulfilling. If one has somehow gained something despite having an inferior personality and without demonstrating his talents, hard work and

essential qualities, then his success will be short-lived. If your digestive system is weak then an excessive intake of eatables is sure to create problems and upset your health. Similarly, if you don’t have wisdom and the ability to make proper use of the resources and facilities available to you, then, these would be a cause of trouble to you in one way or the other. If there is a lack of nobility and wisdom then your inherited or inappropriately grabbed wealth will act as a catalyst for your evils and weaknesses; these would lead to pernicious addictions, inflate your ego and sooner or later ruin your life.

What else do the deities give?

What else do the deities give? Well they give you the capacity to digest and handle success. To wisely handle worldly possessions, powers and comforts, which appear to you as treasures of joy, you should have appropriate qualities. This ability – the key to real joy – is what could be described as an offshoot of divinity. If divinity is awakened in you, then you could accomplish high goals with small or insignificant resources and effort; if you have greater opportunities and resources then well and good, but you would be happy and successful even without them. However if you desire something you do not deserve, or you are eager to acquire success without caring to improve yourself, then, well, what can I say...! God help you!

Vigour and strength of human body is good but if it is not controlled by wisdom, it would

become an instrument of demonic deeds, resulting in effects similar to that of adding fuel to the fire. Deities never commit the mistake of showering wealth or worldly resources on the unworthy. If they do, then they would be helping the evil forces to inflict incalculable disaster on humanity. Dear children! “Humanity” signifies the power which elevates and excels our thinking, attitude, ambitions and activities.... It is a great attribute.

Attempting to fulfil your desires is not bad per se but is subject to one scrutiny – what is being desired and what for? If they are for a worldly (materialistic) purpose then it is necessary to know whether you deserve the object of your desire, how would you digest it if received, and how will you utilize it? Man is prone to make mistakes but not the gods. Deities can’t bless you with things you often crave and ask for. Great personages who had living contact with deities did not generally benefit materially. What did they receive? The virtues of humanity, the seeds of divinity. The virtuous talents and powers thus acquired enabled them to progress. The cultivation of these noble qualities has allowed great men and women to accomplish what sounds impossible for a normal human being. With the growth of divinity in personality, anybody can reach great heights of glory in the worldly as well as spiritual domains. It is only the wise usage of your virtues that is important; it does not matter whether they are used in the spiritual or material field. Your qualities, deeds and nature are sources of power in themselves. Where and how to use them depends entirely upon your choice.

Success is earned by unflinching courage. Courageous temper is a spiritual quality. A *yogi* accomplishes miraculous feats with its support; *t³ntriks* and great personalities also achieve

grand successes because of their extraordinary courage. Everyone needs it for attempting and succeeding in something (significant), even if he is a dacoit or a terrorist. If you are a *yogi*, you will be able to perform difficult *yoga* practices with the strength of your inner valour. If you are a leader, a reformer, then also you will progress as per your courageous zeal. It is a divine quality by origin. You may choose to use it the way you want....

What is noteworthy or specific in a person is the effect of his inner qualities. If deities bestow something upon someone, it will always be the wealth of virtuous qualities, virtuous potentials. Goddess *Gayatri*, whom you pray to and worship through *anũth³nas*, will also endow you with divine qualities. What will happen with the virtues you acquire? Well, virtuous qualities and potentials can bring you all that you aspire for. Whether materialistic or spiritual, whenever someone has gained success, it has been attained with his virtuous potentials and talents only. Without the qualities of character and talents one cannot gain anything worthwhile – neither worldly nor spiritual.

Our folly!

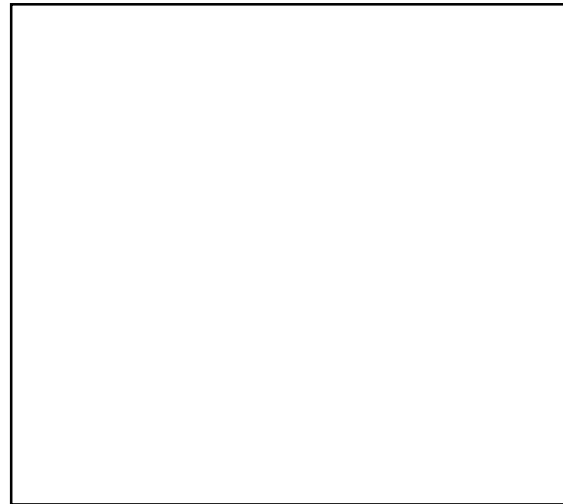
Man is an intelligent being but at times displays his foolishness more than his intelligence. I don’t know from where he has developed the notion that gods fulfil all desires; they bestow the boons of wealth, son, job, victory... and what not. Unfortunately, this misconception has entered in the field of spirituality too. This delusion has caused great harm as it has deprived the deluded devotees of enormous benefits and bright possibilities of genuine spirituality. Deities have given only one thing in the ancient times and will give only one thing in the future too. As long as deities survive; devotion (to God) is sustained; and if the regularity of worship is

maintained, one thing will be granted – divine virtues. If you are endowed with the virtues of divinity, then you will acquire far more glorious success than what you dream of and desire now.

What do you want from the blessings of a deity or a great saint or from the power of a *mantra*? A job of few thousand rupees in lieu of the invaluable treasure of divinity? If any deity bestows divinity upon you, then it will raise the worth of your job so much that you will be grateful forever. Vivekanand had gone to Paramhans Ramkrishna to ask for a job but instead he got what a great soul like him indeed deserved –divinity, true devotion (*bhakti*), strength (*īakti*) and peace (*ī³nti*). What are these? These are divine virtues. When saints shower their kindness upon you, they inspire unique enthusiasm and optimism in your inner self, which propels you towards enlightened values of ethics and morality. When one is attracted by the soothing wave of ideals and is immersed in it, then his magnetism, his charm, his voice, his overall personality and his authenticity are so overpowering that everyone is impressed by him, attracted towards him and wants to cooperate with him. Vivekanand got abundant love, honour and support from all over of the world. Who showered them? The Goddess Kali. If gurus like Ramkrishna are alive somewhere or are reborn, they will always grant blessings that will develop virtuous personalities of their disciples.

If your personality is refined and has evolved in the righteous direction, then cooperation and harmonious association will be showered upon you from all directions according to your wishes. You won't have to ask for them. You will receive them effortlessly. When divinity is expressed in your personality,

benevolence and respect begin to bless you. So many examples are available before you. Look at revered Baba Amte! He donated everything and dedicated his whole life for the service of the socially discarded leprosy patients. This is an act of greatness, a symbol of true humanity, a boon of divinity. Blessings of deities cannot be expected by sacrifices of any lesser magnitude than that of people like Baba Amte. And there is nothing greater to be blessed by... Begging has never brought anything worthwhile



to anyone and will never be able to bring anything in future either.

What do the deities do?

Deities keep doing one thing. What do they keep doing? They keep showering flowers. Look at the scriptures. The holy Ramayana, for instance, describes at fifty odd places that deities showered sacred flowers from heaven. What are these flowers? They symbolize goodwill, cooperation, cooperation, guidance, respect and caring. What attracts these virtues? Divinity, which is covertly present in the world. It alone had survived (in the past) and will alone survive (in the future); it can never be wiped out. If the demons (evils) do not die then why should God (the highest symbol of divinity) die? Like-

minded people are attracted towards each other. A deity is attracted by deity-like humans and ideals are attracted by ideals; this results in the growth of benevolence, opportunities and co-operation from all directions. This is what has been happening, is happening and will continue to happen.

I am admiring deities. Where do they live? They are present in the integrity of the human character and the inner self. They inspire the motivation and zeal that clears all illusions and breaks and destroys the web of complications, infirmities, ignorance and worries. Divine inspiration compels one to follow the righteous path. This is the true blessing of a deity. Anything lesser or lower than this can't be a blessing of a divine power. The doors of eminence, success and achievements open up as soon as your qualities, deeds and nature are illuminated by the spark of divinity.

Whosoever has gained immortal, glorious progress or notable success in any field in the world to date has accomplished it through his virtuous personality. A deity's blessing consists of supremacy of qualities, talents and thoughts. The life history of every great personality demonstrates it. Almost all of them were born in ordinary or underprivileged families and circumstances. But they reached greater and greater heights and accomplished brighter and brighter goals! Look at our late Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's life, for example. He was blessed by God's grace. How? In the form of two qualities – responsibility and wisdom. These great virtues establish the linkage between God and the devotee and also strengthen it further. This is the only way to communicate with the Omniscient Presence and Power.

(To be continued in the next issue....)

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Thou-prayers should be worth thy dignity subtly immanent in us. We must pray the Almighty to arouse our own inner strength that would support and guide us in all phases of the perpetually revolving wheel of circumstances. We, being the devotee of thy grace, are ought to pray for illuminating our inner self with the sublime glow of divinity — no storm of hardship or turbulence of ups and downs of life could ever quaver the flame of our faith in the divine origin of our souls. May the eternal light of thou–inspirations guide us to the righteous path....

“.... ‘O’ Lord! Please bless us with courage and wisdom so that we could welcome adversities as the opportunities to refine our qualities and strengthen our potentials. The knock of hindrances and challenges today should sound like the messages of brighter tomorrow....” — This would be an ideal prayer to elevate our zeal and optimism at all times and would protect us from becoming weak or coward.

We have to become intrepid warriors and not perplexed fugitives in the battlefield of life. Praying for anything else is equivalent to begging, which would further suppress our morale and accelerate the force of negative thinking. We must pray that our minds be kept away from such timid and bathotic acts of ‘begging in praying’.