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CHIEF EDITOR
Dr. Pranav Pandya

Shakti Sadhana

Amrit Chintan

Whatever exists in this world (animate as well as inanimate) is the manifestation of *Shakti* (Eternal Power). At some places it appears as dormant inactivity while at others it is seen as awakened activity. All the forms of life have originated from it. It is this consciousness that is seen in all the fauna and flora. It is this energy that is responsible for all the action, growth and expansion in this world. The whole cosmos is the play of *Shakti*.

The play of this *Shakti* in human life is deeply mysterious. The awakening and strengthening of the three layers of our body physical, subtle and causal; and the five *koshas* (shells) *annamaya*, *pranmaya*, *manomaya*, *vigyanmaya* and *anandmaya* generate different types of currents of *Shakti*. The awakening of different subtle *chakras* *muladhar*, *swadhisthan*, *manipur*, *anahat*, *vishuddhi*, *ajóa* and *sahastrar* - is done for unraveling the mysterious world of this *Mahashakti*. In fact *kundalini maha shakti* is the base of human life itself. Mother Goddess *Ádya Shakti* Herself energizes the awakened *kundalini* and enables a *sadhak* to achieve the highest goal of life.

People, who remain ignorant of this mysterious play of *Shakti*, are akin to a fish that is thirsty in the vast sea. Those, who strive to delve deep in this mystery and undertake appropriate *sadhana*, achieve the honor of being called the children of *Ádyashakti*. They become full of spiritual power. Nothing is impossible for them to achieve and accomplish.

The supreme knowledge of this *Shakti sadhana*, capable of transforming the impossible into the possible, is hidden in the twenty-four letters of *Gayatri Mahamantra*. Advanced *sadhaks* realize this truth. From this point of view, the nine days of *Navratri* are very significant and auspicious for *Gayatri sadhana*. Those *sadhaks* who undertake the *sadhana* of *Gayatri Mahashakti*, will become dynamos of uplifting spiritual energy which will be a boon for themselves as well as the society. Let all *parijans* engage themselves in intensive *Gayatri sadhana* during the coming *Navratri Parva* .

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From Chief Editor's Desk

Special Significance of Ashwin Navaratri Sadhana This Year

It has been more than fourteen years since our Teacher, Inspirer and Way-shower, Poojya Gurudev voluntarily shed his gross physical sheath and withdrew into his subtle, sublime, invisible body of Light on June 2, 1990, so that he could simultaneously enlighten, inspire and guide millions of aspirants through his divined self. Vandaniya Mataji, his divine consort, joined him in the invisible realm four years later in September, 1994. On September 28, this year, is her 10th *Mahasamadhi* anniversary and 4 days later, on October 2, will be her 78th birth anniversary. Poojya Gurudev's birth anniversary this year also falls on October 12; and 2 days later, on October 14, starts *Navaratri Parva* (Oct. 14 -22). Thus it is that this *Ashwin Navaratri* is especially auspicious for us.

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Those of us who have the living faith and intuitive vision are certain that both of them have been working through the *Gayatri Parijans* and independently through their bodies of Light as concrete presences amongst us for accomplishment of their epoch-changing tasks, bequeathed to Gurudev by the immortal sages of the *Devatma Himalaya*, including his own Divine Teacher.

Looking back, we feel assured that the Mission's message of life-affirming spirituality as propounded and lived by the *Vedic Risis*, has spread not only in all corners of India but also amongst millions of people abroad, especially those of Indian origin.

As indicated above, this year's *Navaratri Parva* (heralding the change of season) will be increasingly and still more densely surcharged with vibrations of divine energies; and intensive *Gayatri Sadhana* (a mini *anusthan* of *japa* of 24000 *mantras* over the nine-day period), done with conscious focus and faith, will have long lasting and very propitious, ennobling and cleansing effects on the *sadhak's* body, emotions and mind.

Poojya Gurudev and Vandaniya Mataji have been the pioneers and revolutionary propounders of a simple, novel and easily practicable *Gayatri Sadhana* which can be profitably done by all sections of society; elites, semi-literates and illiterates; young and old; men and women cutting across all divisions of education, age, caste, creed,

gender, etc. The basic and only pre-requisites are: firm faith and focused concentration on the underlying meaning of *Mahamantra*.

Let all *Gayatri Parijans* undertake *Ashwin Navaratri Sadhana* with living faith. It requires daily *japa* of 27 *malas* (27*108) over a period of nine days. It takes about 3 hours to complete the *japa*. It is advisable to do it in two or three sittings to avoid boredom, lethargy, hurry and inattentiveness. The *japa* must be done in a relaxed, attentive and unhurried manner. To keep the ninth day free for *Purnahuti yagya*, *japa* of 30 *malas* per day over a period of 8 days will be more appropriate.

Self-discipline and self-control of body, speech, mind and emotions are essential to be able to derive maximum benefit from this *Sadhana*. Light, *satwik* food (fruits, semi-liquids or liquid preparations with minimum of solid stuff) should be taken once or twice a day with minimum amounts of salt and sugar to control the sense of taste. One should observe *Brahmacharya*, sleep on the floor, have as much solitude as possible; and study inspiring literature / scripts during the period of *Sadhana*.

We also call upon *Parijans* to take some solemn pledge at the time of *Purnahuti* to concretely contribute towards furtherance of the *Mission's* aims and objects, e.g. making fixed and regular monetary offerings; motivating a fixed number of persons to subscribe to *Mission's* periodicals, namely, *Akhand Jyoti*, *Yug Nirman Yojana*, *Pragya Abhiyan*, etc and promoting the sale of Gurudev's *Sahitya*.

2004 is also the Silver Jubilee celebration year of the *Mission's* research center *Brahmavarchas Sodh Sansthan*. We have planned to organize a number of yoga-oriented workshops / seminars in different parts of India and abroad as part of these celebrations. Apart from this, the zonal workshops (at Shimla, Jaipur and Siliguri) have created a new wave of enthusiasm amongst the *parijans* to get organized and take up their duties seriously. We have also sent teams of senior *sadhaks* abroad for extensive and in-depth interaction with *parijans* and friends three to USA and Canada and one each to UK, Russia and Mauritius. Our special target groups are the elites and youth associated with the *Mission* as *parijans* and well-wishers. We have also recently released a set of curriculum books on youth moral and ethical education at a youth convention held at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA.

We feel encouraged by what has been achieved so far through Divine guidance and blessings. It gives us hope and confidence to be able to contribute our mite as humble inheritors and torchbearers of integrative spirituality, towards regeneration, rejuvenation and upliftment of humanity to a higher realm of enlightened consciousness, suffused with all that exists. We look forward to active cooperation from all persons of good will everywhere in our humble efforts, which are part of similar efforts being made throughout the world in other countries and cultures towards the same objective.

Healing by Music Therapy - Ragas

Who does not like the melody of music? Whose emotions do not vibrate and flow with the sonorous tunes and rhythm of music? Indeed, we all experience the enchanting effects of good music in some form or the other. The classical compositions (*ragas*) of music create deep impact on our mind and emotions. The melody of vocal and instrumental music soothes our mind and heart. Not only that, the sonic vibrations of its specific compositions also heal psychological disorders. Moreover, depending upon its nature, music can awaken or intensify specific kinds of emotional streams and mental tendencies and thus influence the habits and nature of the engrossed singers/players and audiences.

The immense potential of the power of *Shabda* (cosmic flow of sound) hidden in music was well recognised by the ancient Indian sages and they had devised several musical patterns emanating from the "*Omkara*" for chanting of the Vedic hymns and for distinct spiritual effects. The Shastric schools of music discovered musical octave (*sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, sa*) indwelling in the subtle sounds of Nature and invented the basic classical *ragas* for activating specific streams of natural powers and effects; a wide variety of musical compositions were generated consequently. Ever since then music has been an integral part of human culture with varied applications and forms. Despite its degeneration into the noisy and destructive kinds of so-called 'modern music', the creative and soothing role of music has not lost its prominence. The last few decades have seen revival of classical Indian and western music in a big way through increasing interest of researchers in music therapy.

Rhetorically commenting on the ecstatic impact of soothing music, Carlyle had once said "God walks behind good music". So, how could there be any disease or suffering where God is? There will only be an unflinching flow of bliss all over. His feelings seem to be true if we look at the marvellous effects of sonorous, calming musical compositions on the soft cores of emotions and subtle layers of the mind and also on physiological processes, as observed by some music therapists in the modern laboratories. In this respect, the effects of music can be likened to that of yoga. According to the Vedic Philosophy, yoga and music both are part of *Nada Vidya*. Yoga deals with realisation of *anahata nada* the sublime sound (extrasensory vibrations) of the eternal force of cosmic consciousness. Music pertains to the perception and expression of the infinite spectrum of the rhythmic flow of the *ahata nada* (perceivable sonic currents) pervading in Nature. Both have direct impact on the *shat chakras* hidden along the endocrine column and hence affect our physical as well as subtle bodies.

The seven basic *swaras* (musical notes) of the musical octave have a one-to-one correspondence with these *chakras* (nuclei of subtle energy). The lower most (in the kava equina region along the erect endocrine column), viz., the *Muladhara Chakra* is associated with the *swara* "*sa*"; that means, the practice of chanting this particular musical note will have impact on awakening or activation of this particular *chakra*. Similarly, the *chakras* successively upwards in this direction namely, the *Swadhisthana*, *Manipura*, *Anahata*, *Vishuddha*, *Âjóa* and the top-most *Sahastrara Chakra*... have correspondence respectively with the *swaras* "*re*", "*ga*" "*ma*", "*pa*", "*dha*" and "*ni*".

Significantly, the order of the compositions of these *swaras* in the "aroha" (ascending) and "avaroha" (descending) patterns of the *Shastric* musical tunes also match with the top-down (from *Sahastrara* to *Muladhara*) and bottom-up (from *Muladhara* to *Sahastrara*) directions of the flow of energy.

Some of the sounds naturally produced inside the human body are easily perceivable if one sits quietly at a calm place. Usually these are felt in the heart (beat), throat and head (cerebral region). In the state of deep meditation, while concentrating on the internal sounds of the body, one can distinctly feel these and several otherwise non-audible sounds; their rhythmic compositions are also said to be in tune with the musical octave. The subtler sounds of the heart are said to be musical expressions of the emotions. Also, it is said that humans feel, recognise, create and express music only because of the emotional sensitivity of the human heart. Moreover, music also happens to be the best means for expressing the inner feelings. This is why good music is often described as the voice of the heart.

The original *ragas* of the Indian classical music (*Shastric* Music) are created according to the deep knowledge of harmonious consonance between the seven *swaras* and *chakras*. This is why *shastric* musical compositions are found to have significant positive effect on the mind-body system and also have the potential to awaken the otherwise dormant faculties. There are several historical examples of the immense remedial power of the *shastric ragas*. For instance, in 1933, when the Italian dictator Mussolini was terribly suffering from insomnia, no medicine or therapeutic mode could help him get sleep. Pt. Omkarnath Thakur, a great *shastric* musician was visiting Europe around that time. When he heard of Mussolini's affliction, he agreed to perform remedial musical programme to allay the latter's sufferings. His performance of the *raga puriya* indeed worked magically and Mussolini went into deep sleep within half-an-hour. This and similar incidents attracted the attention of many contemporary musicians, scientists and physicians and triggered research in music therapy.

A group of London based physicians has scientifically experimented on different aspects of music therapy. In their views, the *shastric ragas* could induce healing of all kinds of ailments. They argue that the immediate benefits these ragas offer is mental peace by alleviating tensions and providing an enchanting and creative diversion to the mind. Interpretation of the Vedic scriptures on *Nada Vidya* implies that *Shastric* Music helps synergetic augmentation of the *panch pranas* (the five major streams of vital energy in a human being). In concordance, research in energy medicine (*pranic* healing) and classical music shows that specific *shastric ragas* enhance the level of vital energy. It is the deficiencies and disorders in the vital energy distribution in the mind body system, which is the root cause of its ailing state. The smooth and increased flow of vital energy rejuvenates the mind and empowers the immune system as well as the auto-regulatory healing mechanism of the body. This is how classical music generates new hope, joy and enthusiasm in the otherwise dull or depressed mind and removes the disorders and relieves one of the untoward pressures and excitements of inferiority, despair, fear, anger, etc. Because of its fast remedial effects, which lead to eventual cure of the psychosomatic disorders, music therapy based on classical *ragas* is being used or advised these days for the treatment of insomnia, migraine, hypertension, chronic headache, anxiety, etc. and empowers the immune system as well as the auto-regulatory healing mechanism of the body. This is how classical music generates new hope, joy and enthusiasm in the otherwise dull or depressed mind and removes the

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Because of its impact on the *chakras* (and hence on the *pranas*), *shastric* music not only vibrates and soothes the mental strings, but also energises and balances the organs of the body. According to Dr. W. H. J. Wales, the Indian classical music can cure the problems of the digestive system, liver including the diseases like jaundice. Dr. Jane remarks that this music rhythmically vibrates the tissue-membranes of the ear and, relaxes the nerves and muscles beneath the temple and in the brain; as a result of which the sensory and motor systems are energised and activated.

The empirical studies on therapeutic evaluation of the classical *ragas* have shown interesting results. Singing or engrossed listening of *Raga Bhairavi* has been found to uproot the diseases of *kapha dosha* e.g. asthma, chronic cold, cough, tuberculosis, some of the sinus and chest related problems etc. *Raga Asavari* is effective in eliminating the impurities of blood and related diseases. *Raga Malhar* pacifies anger, excessive mental excitements and mental instability. *Raga Saurat* and *raga Jaijivanti* have also been found effective in curing mental disorders and calming the mind. *Raga Hindola* helps sharpening the memory and focussing mental concentration. It has been proved effective in curing liver ailments.

Apart from the classical *ragas* played on musical instruments, the rhythmic sounds of temple bells and *shankha* (conch shell or bugle) produced during devotional practices have also been found to have therapeutic applications. A research study in Berlin University showed that the vibrations of the bugle sound could destroy bacteria and germs in the surroundings. More specifically, it was found that if the *shankha* is played by infusing (through the mouth) twenty-seven cubic feet of air per second, within a few minutes it will kill the bacteria in the surrounding area of twenty-two hundred square feet and inactivate those in about four-hundred square feet area further beyond.

Dr. D. Brine of Chicago had treated hundreds of cases of hearing impairments/deficiencies by making the patients play or listen to the sounds of *shankha* played rhythmically at appropriate (as per the case) pitch and intensity. Several research experiments on music therapy in general and on the sounds of temple-bells and bugles are going on in the Moscow Sanatorium and some research centres in Germany, Holland and Australia. The results are very positive and encouraging towards developing suitable courses on music therapy that could be an integral part of medical practices. The need and importance is especially felt and emphasized for healing of psychosomatic disorders. According to Dr. Hacken, although western classical music is also being used in some studies, its applications are limited to certain kinds of diseases/disorders and are also of much lesser significance in terms of the intensity and impact of positive effects as compared to the Indian classical music.

Rock, pop, jazz, rap and disco types of western music have become quite popular in the modern times especially among the teenagers and youth. But these and other varieties

of fast and high-beat music are found to have detrimental effects on health in general. Dr. Balaji, who has been a part of music therapy research teams in Sweden and Germany, has shown that although, listening to such a music for five-ten minutes removes lethargy and instantly generates new alacrity, listening to it for longer periods and frequently has damaging effects on the ear drums and the spinal column. The smooth and balanced flow of several important physiological fluids also gets disturbed and leads to different kinds of physical ailments. Further, as this kind of music induces sexual and other kinds of negative and unnatural excitements, its harms on mental health are far more serious; apart from its debauching effects on spiritual well being.

As mentioned earlier, the scope and utility of music therapy should be viewed, considering its intimate and delicate connection with the inner emotions. These and the core of consciousness force in the inner mind are most sensitive to the musical currents and corresponding vibrations in the sublime expansion of cosmic sound. The next is the nervous system and brain functions. The corresponding effects on the organs and the physiological system of the body as a whole are obvious consequences. From its very origin, the Indian classical music is most suitable and beneficial in this respect and also for spiritual elevation because of the soothing and harmonising impact of the *shastric ragas* on the *sat chakras* and the *pranas*. The findings of research laboratories on immense potential of the *shastric ragas* in music therapy scientifically support these theories. The results and well-tested applications should be propagated by the researchers for the benefit of large number of patients suffering from varieties of psychosomatic disorders these days.

Deeper research on the spiritual aspects of the Indian classical music and compositions of the *shastric ragas* might also give some clues about the lost links of the knowledge of the Vedic Science of *mantras*. This might also open new avenues of reviving the applications of *mantra*-therapy, as elaborated in the Scriptures.

The Occult Science of Upasana

Upasana (practice of divine worship and devotion) is of paramount importance for spiritual refinement and elevation. Depending upon one's intrinsic faith, conviction, mental make up and religious training his/her mode of *upasana* might vary. It begins with a simple practice of worshiping and praying to the Almighty. With the piety and depth of emotions and surrender of the devotee to the Deity of worship, *upasana* could gradually become a sublime source of living linkage between the *upasaka* (worshiper, devotee) and the *upasya* (the divine object of reverence or worship, God). These majestic effects are not just mythological, occult or mysterious magic; rather, these are natural outcome of the scientifically affirmed immense potentials of *upasana* in relation to human psychology, intrinsic tendencies and the inner mind.

Noted medical expert and healer Dr. Henry Lindlehar mentions in his book "Practice of Natural Therapeutics" that the mental and emotional state of a person has significant

impact on his health. One can improve his physical and mental health by making a mental and emotional connection with the cosmic consciousness force, or with the evolved consciousness of angelic beings or elevated souls. He further explains that deep meditation on any conscious-object activates (sets) the linkage on one's mind with it, as of a radio or TV set with the selected broadcasting center or channel.

Whether we are awakened or dreaming in a state of sleep, our mind constantly receives good or bad thought-waves or consciousness-signals according to what it is tuned for at that moment. During *upasana*, we concentrate on divinity, divine grace of God, so our conscious and unconscious minds also get purified and naturally attuned to corresponding vibrations; the elevated flow of our thoughts and sentiments orients accordingly and also our inner mind receives and registers the sublime impressions. The intensity and continuity of these enlightened effects depends upon that of our intrinsic faith and engrossment in *upasana*. Whatever be our mental or spiritual level at present, our regularity and sincerity in this devotional practice certainly results in gradual progress and also awakens our hidden virtues, thereby cleansing of our psyche of negativities.

The much applauded book "Mental Radio" by U. Sinclair highlights some higher levels and expanded potentials of deep mental engrossment. It is illustrated therein by examples that a person can send his thoughts not only by the physical modes of communication; he can also do so by invisible, subtle means e.g. telepathy. Great *yogis* and *siddhas* attain this supernatural faculty and can send their thoughts in the cosmic expansion through the sublime realms of consciousness; deserving souls (people whose minds are sensitive and attuned to the vibrations of those realms) receive those subtle vibrations and inspirations. Each one of us has this capacity to grasp such sublime vibrations; we only need to condition our agile mind and awaken its otherwise dormant powers. *Upasana* is a simple, safe and sure means for this purpose.

What kind of *upasana* one would select naturally depends upon his intrinsic tendencies and psychological makeup. *Upasana* transforms the devotee's personality as per the nature and qualities of *upasana*. This is a natural psychological effect, as also pointed out in the "Yogasutra" what becomes of one depends upon what he thinks and does (one's thoughts and deeds make him what he is). The Gita (Ch. 17, Shloka 3) elaborates this fact more elegantly

*Satvanurupa Sarvasya shraddha Bhavati Bharata |
Shraddhamayoayam Purusho Yo Yachchhadraj Sa Eva Sai ||*

One is attracted towards the characters or objects according to his own values and inner inclinations. This is what accounts for his compatibility with the colleagues, his selection of friends and ideals in life. As the above shloka points out, one's devotion to the object of natural reverence depends upon his inner sentiments and nature. The deeper this *Shraddha* (intrinsic reverence and faith) is, the more intense and effective will be the influence of devotion in one's psychological transformation. That is what is implied by "*Yo Yachchhadraj Sa Eva Sai*" (one is

what one's *Shraddha* is).

The principles of implicit autosuggestion and corresponding emotional conjunction in terms of modern psychology also reflect this fact. These theories rely on the consideration that the unconscious mind tries to contact the soul by some sublime process. The subtle aspirations of the deepest core of the inner mind shape one's ideals for which one has natural reverence. Engrossment of the inner mind in this sublime object (may be, by concentrating the mind on the Deity's physical manifestation or image) during meditation sets up an active linkage between the two.

The above process at the level of the inner mind could be understood by the example of similar experiences at the level of the conscious mind. The engrossment of our conscious mind in reading a book of our liking or listening to our favorite music is a familiar example of this sort. While watching a sports event of their choice, the viewers' mood and excitement are driven by that of the game. More so, look at the instantaneous emotional 'unification' of a viewer with that of his preferred character while watching a movie....! But these kinds of emotional linkages, being at the level of the conscious mind are temporary and vary with the agility of the latter. It is only by long term practice and awakened inner force that the unconscious mind overcomes the conscious and gets engrossed in deep meditation; but once it does, the impressions of its inner emotional connections with the focus of meditation are far more intense and lasting.... The supramental attainments through yoga-meditation are consequences of these kinds of sublime effects. The highest stage of this engrossment is realized in the state of trance in *upasana* when the devotee's individual identity unifies with its *upasya*; the devotee and the deity become one.

Meera Bai's devotion to Lord Krishna stands as an immortal example of complete immersion of devotee's self into the supreme consciousness. Thuleson has cited the example of Saint Katherine in "Psychology of Religion" which illustrates that intensity of this effect could be experienced in its manifestation in the physical body as well. In specific moments of her devotional state of semi-unconsciousness, Saint Katherine used to feel the same injuries and pains in her body as Jesus Christ might have at the time of his crucifixion. On several occasions, the doctors on duty had found that the pains experienced in her body in this state were indeed real.

In view of its sound foundation in terms of the authentically established positive psychological effects, *upasana* is affirmed to be a scientific process of mental and emotional healing and refinement and transformation of personality. The effects normally experienced in the initial stages of *upasana*, include awakening of the devotee's self-confidence and courage to boldly and wisely face the challenges of human life. With the depth of the devotee's faith and sincerity, it gradually awakens virtuous faculties and talents hidden in his inner mind and eventually leads to transmutation of his ego into the limitless Divine Self.

Amongst the founders of modern psychology, Carl G. Jung had strongly advocated incorporation of devotional practices as part of psychological healing and personality development. He also opined that the positive effects of devotional practices in mental healing far outweigh what even all the psychotherapists and psychiatrists of the world together might provide. His views indeed prove insightful if we analyze the real nature of

human life.

A human being is not just a psychosomatic system of the mind and the body. Neither are the dimensions of human life confined only to the individual self, family, society, nation or the visible world. Its emotional and spiritual existence is most consequential and preeminent. Emotional depth and spirituality are the distinct keys to the fulfillment of the quest for peace and joy in human life. These alone can satisfy the natural aspiration of the inner self for ultimate bliss and beatitude. Without realizing this origin, we remain driven by the cravings of the conscious mind and keep searching for happiness in the illusive mirage of worldly pleasures and egotist satiation. This is the reason why, despite the amazing advancement of science and technology and the plethora of comforts gained thereby, most of us are most often trapped in the feelings of insecurity, skepticism, fear, anger, jealousy, gloom and despair. Happiness remains a dream, a mirage for us....

The materialistic societies and the societies deprived of religious faith and spiritual knowledge are experiencing an alarming rise in psychosomatic disorders and complexities because there is no place of devotional practices or any other mode of emotional soothing and caring for the inner self in people's life. *Upasana* is certainly the simplest and most effective method for fulfilling this soul-hunger and hence inducing mental peace and lasting joy....

Man remains dissatisfied and deluded mainly because of the ignorance of his own true identity. His domain of acquisition of knowledge is, in general, determined by the perceptions of the physical body, conscious mind and intellectual reasoning as per his education, training and experiences in the extrovert ambience of the family, society and schools. Learning from the encounters in the physical world also has its limitations. Neither of these, nor the gamut of high-tech accessories enable understanding of the origin and purpose of life; none has a reach in realization of the true "self" and the spiritual nature of life. For want of the inner light and spiritual strength one often fails in facing the adversities and struggles of life, or, on the other extreme, keeps running after more and more possessions and higher and higher worldly achievements. The end-result? Unbearable suffering and agony leading to a sort of insanity, anguish, ill health and untimely death... or a stressful, desperate, discontented, superficial life in an illusive search out there for joy and peace which remain ever attainable.

Dr. R.K. Mukherji draws a touching picture of the pathetic scenario of today's society in "Sequence of Civilization". He points out that our single-tracked materialistic thinking in the scientific, socioeconomic and other fields of civilization and progress has not only neglected but also injured and deformed our spiritual nature and thus ruined all the possibilities of inner peace. In this blind race of progress, the developed nations are exploiting the poor ones and are engaged in a devastating game of grabbing global power, thus endangering the future of the world. The entire human society is suffering as a consequence, in the form of ever-new tensions and psychosomatic ailments without a ray of hope. He calls this age of discontent, suffering and insanity as a simultaneous outcome of the ascent of modern civilization. The attempts of the concerned savants and the forums for reformation are also superficial and appear more of intellectual exercises only. If at all, devout efforts of spiritual awakening and enlightenment of human psyche

alone would be able to rescue the world from these dark dungeons of devilish urges.

According to the Indian Vision of Spirituality, the human self is endowed with all the attributes of divinity; the source of immense knowledge, power and beatified bliss is hidden deep within the inner-self. Realization, awakening and expansion of this inner light is the ultimate key to resolve all the problems, howsoever daunting they might be, of life. *Upasana* is a scientific mode to accomplish this. It is suitable for all men and women in all circumstances of life. It gradually induces spiritual progress, which begins from within and also encompasses all dimensions (including the worldly spheres) of life.

Whatever be one's faith and religion, emotionally dedicated endeavor of *upasana* leads to projection of the entirety of the soul in the *upasya* god or ideal of reverence. The process of inner awakening, enlightenment and spiritual transmutation begins with the devotee's deep faith, emotional and harmonious consonance (of the devotee's inner mind) with the *upasya*. Daily practice of devotion intensifies one's faith and accelerates the pace of progress. It fulfils the otherwise unnoticed void in one's life and bestows unique strength and sense of security and optimism; and gradually it awakens the otherwise dormant folds of the inner mind and eventually fulfills the eternal quest of the inner-self.

Brahmavarchas Shodh Sansthan

**A Research Institute committed to the scientific exposition of
spirituality**

Introduction

Brahmavarchas Shodh Sansthan is the embodiment of the will and vision of the ageless sages/seers engaged in *tapasdhana* in their non-material bodies of Light in the inaccessible Himalayan ranges. It is a unique endeavor initiated and nurtured by Yugrishi Poojya Gurudev Pandit Sriram Sharma Acharya, the founder of the Global Gayatri Mission, at the behest of the immortal sages of the Himalayas, including his own Divine Teacher. The tiny and tender sapling has grown into a sturdy, shady and esoteric fragrantly fructifying tree during the past 25 years. At the time of its establishment, the Yugrishi had explained the esoteric significance of this project thus "Brahmavarchas Shodh Sansthan has been established for the revival and rejuvenation of the traditions of ancient sages/seers like Kanad and Atharvan. The methodology of the modern science which has been confined only to the material realm will now be used to investigate the deeper layers of cosmic consciousness". He had given a hint about this project in Akhand Jyoti - December 1969 issue. Therein he writes: "The other objective of my future *tapasadhana* is to highlight and restore the scientific aspect of spirituality so that the common people could benefit from its practice. The masses got attracted towards science and technology because they got concrete psychosomatic benefits from their discoveries and inventions. Today only those things are considered true, which pass the test of scientific methodology; otherwise they are declared false. We have to prove the validity of divinity, prayer, morality and spirituality on the basis of their

scientifically proven benefits. We have to give a scientific foundation to spirituality". Brahmavarchas Shodh Sansthan is the concretization of this vision of Gurudev, aimed at the integration of science and spirituality.

The structure of Shodh Sansthan

Situated on the bank of Ganga, about half a kilometer from Shantikunj, Hardwar, the structure of the Institute is four-fold: (1) Temples of twenty four manifestations of Primordial *Shakti* of Bhagwati Gayatri, (2) a laboratory complex of scientific spirituality, (3) a reference library, and (4) a group of dedicated seminal thinkers and scientists engaged in in-depth research of psychosomatic and parapsychological domains of human consciousness.

1. Temples of twenty-four manifestations of the Primordial *Shakti* of Bhagwati Gayatri

Twenty-four types of modes and methods of *sadhana* are incorporated in the twenty-four letters of Gayatri Mahamantra. Out of these (1) Adya Shakti, (2) Brahmi, (3) Vaishnavi, (4) Shambhavi, (5) Vedmata, (6) Devmata, (7) Vishwamata, (8) Ritambhara, (9) Mandakini, (10) Ajapa, (11) Riddhi, (12) Siddhi these twelve divine powers govern *Vedic Sadhanas*. The remaining twelve, namely

(1) Savitri, (2) Saraswati, (3) Laskshmi, (4) Durga, (5) Kundalini, (6) Pranagni, (7) Bhavani, (8) Bhuvneshwari, (9) Annapoorna, (10) Mahamaya, (11) Payaswani, (12) Tripura govern *Tantrik Sadhanas* of Gayatri. Gurudev, through his intensive *sadhana*, attained the esoteric and occult knowledge of the divine mysteries of these twenty-four forms of *Shakti*. The ground floor of the Institute houses temples of these 24 forms of *Shakti*, which were consecrated by Gurudev himself 25 years back on the auspicious occasion of Gayatri Jayanti, on June 5, 1979. On both sides of each temple, *Yantra*, *Beej Mantra* and the mode of invoking that specific *Mahashakti* as well as the fruits of *sadhana* obtained therefrom have been symbolically indicated. Due to the synthesis of the scientific elements of sculpture, *mantra* and *yantra*, all these temples inspire and awaken the urge to learn more about spiritual mysteries.

2. Laboratory Complex of Scientific Spirituality

It comprises of three main sections (1) Yagyopathy Lab, (2) Lab for measuring the psychosomatic effects of spiritual *sadhanas*, and (3) Herbal Research Lab and the accompanying herbal garden of nearly 200 very rare Himalayan medicinal herbs. All the sections

of the laboratory are equipped with the state-of-art computerized instruments and machines. They include rare instruments for recording the aura and the bio-energy of the body. That is why this laboratory has made its own unique place in our country. It is like a *Mahateerth* (holy place) for conducting research on different aspects of scientific spirituality. Scientists from different parts of the world consider themselves to be fortunate to work here.

3. Reference Library

Apart from the literature of major religions of the world e.g., Hinduism, Islam,

Zoroasterism, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, etc., the library houses more than 50,000 volumes on varied other subjects like astrology, philosophy, history, culture, Ayurveda, modern medicine and surgery, chemistry, physics, astronomy, etc. It contains about 100 encyclopedias on different subjects and several rare manuscripts. The library subscribes to nearly 300 journals of repute.

4. The Team of Researchers

There are two types of researchers working in the Institute. The first one consists of seminal thinkers. They are engaged in research related to the social, political and philosophical aspects of life. The second category consists of scientists. They are investigating yagya-therapy, herbal medicines and the effect of spiritual *sadhanas* on human personality. The number of these highly qualified researchers is about forty. The unique feature of the team working here is that they are not salaried employees. Rather they are all life-long *Sadhaks*, who have dedicated their lives to the ideals of Poojya Gurudev.

Objectives of Brahmavarchas Shodh Sansthan

1. To discover the mystery of life in its totality in the light of scientific spirituality.
2. To awaken and develop the latent potentials of individual souls through spiritual experiments.
3. To discover and disseminate the science behind spiritual *sadhanas*.
4. To investigate the effects of herbal medicines on the human body and mind.
5. To research on the effects of yagyopathy on holistic health.

Achievements of 25 years

On Gayatri Jayanti 2004, this Institute has completed 25 years of its adventurous and fruitful existence. During this period, under the guidance of Dr. Pranav Pandya, Director of this Institute, its achievements have indeed been impressive and encouraging. Some of these are:

1. Publication of Akhand Jyoti magazine in ten languages. This magazine is devoted to the spread of scientific spirituality. It has more than one million subscribers.
2. Dissemination of literature written by Gurudev amongst the masses and the creation of new relevant literature.
3. Guidance of about 40 Ph.D. level research projects related to the life and mission of Gurudev and ancient Indian scriptures.
4. Participation of the researchers of the Institute in more than 200 national as well as international seminars / conferences.

5. Publication of the results of research work carried out in the Institute in international journals.

Dev Sanskriti Vishwa Vidyalaya (DSVV) An organic extension of Brahmavarchas Shodh Sansthan (BSS)

If Brahmavarchas Shodh Sansthan is a fragrant flower grown by the *mahatapa* of Poojya Gurudev then DSVV (established in April 2002) is the fruit grown out of that flower. The students and faculty of this university are totally committed to work towards the achievement of the objectives of BSS.

Future Plans

During the Silver Jubilee Year (2004-2005) of this Institute (BSS) several plans are afoot, the aim of which is to accelerate the process of achieving the set goals. Some of these are as follows:

1. Organize research symposia / seminars / conferences at national and international levels.
2. Undertake research projects related to finding spiritual solutions to individual, familial, social and other complex problems of human life and provide guidance in these areas.
3. Discover the scientific basis of ancient scriptures.
4. Manage projects on *Hathayoga, Rajayoga, Layayoga* and *Mantrayoga*.
5. Research on diseases caused by present-day lifestyles and dissemination of the knowledge of their prevention/cure.
6. Intensive research on the methods of awakening para-psychic energies lying dormant in human psyche.
7. Development of new aspects of Yagya Therapy.
8. Accelerating research in Ayurveda.
9. Formation of a Research Foundation.
10. Organize a grand research festival on "Scientific Spirituality" every year up till the Birth Centenary Year (2011-2012) of Param Poojya Gurudev.

Invitation to the Intelligentsia

These plans are only an outline of the future. There are many other tasks that are to be

undertaken this year itself. But all this will be possible only if the intelligentsia of India is awakened and it comes forward to participate in this divinely inspired effort. The celebration of Silver Jubilee will be fruitful only when we get glad and willing cooperation of the intelligentsia. This is crucial for the success of our future plans. Talent / genius is a valuable gift of God. It is worthwhile only when it is utilized for the highest good of all. We firmly believe that those who emphatically feel the sufferings of human life will definitely come forward. Indeed, it is through the glad cooperation of intelligentsia that BSS will succeed in showing a new way and Art of Living in the new century. It is an open invitation and fervent call to all those who are awake, alert and sensitive to the gravity of the human situation overwhelmed by the forces of darkness to come forward and contribute their mite towards finding lasting solutions to the ills of humanity by treating them at their roots.

Vastu Shastra

An Established Science - V

Some Guidelines on Arrangements in the Kitchen

As mentioned in the previous article of this series, kitchen is given paramount importance in the ancient Indian and Chinese science of architecture. There is a popular folk-saying in India that household discords begin and end in the kitchen.

While constructing a new house, the gas-platform should be constructed along the eastern wall with substantial portion touching the south wall as well; so that the stove could be kept in the southeast corner and the person using it would face the east. The width of the slab should ideally be about 1.5 to 2 ft. The slab would, obviously, touch the south but should be kept at least 3 inches away from the north. In case the house is already constructed or is rented, where the platforms cannot meet these requirements, then the platform could be in the westward direction and gas-stoves could be placed in the north-west or west direction. If that, too, is not practical in the existing house, then electrical utilities of cooking may be kept in the southeast corner of the kitchen or a small lamp of *ghee* or oil could be kept lit for as much time as possible.

As we had discussed earlier, the best place for the kitchen is in the *agneya* (southeast) direction. In view of the Shastric interpretations, heat and reddish (-yellow) color are supposed to be most auspicious for this direction. This is another reason why keeping the source of fire (gas-stove, etc) in this corner of the kitchen or lighting a lamp here is advised. There has been the vedic tradition of constantly keeping the *ghee* or oil lamp lit in this direction (corner). This is supposed to significantly reduce the negative effects of the faults (in terms of the *vastu*-principle), if any, in the design of the house.

The southeast direction is also referred as having the place of the Goddess of food (grains). Some experts of Vastu Shastra specify "*Pakashala Agnikone Syatsuswadubhojanaptaye*"; meaning the food cooked in the southeast direction is especially tasty. The scriptures also mention of having the dining room, dining hall or

place of eating in the west (*Bhojan Pashcimayam Ca Vayavyam Dhan Sancayam*). It is supposed to add some benefits of soothing mental health; all members of the family would then enjoy an extra support of having their minds balanced and calm. If dining facility is to be arranged inside the kitchen, this could be in its west or northwest part. Washbasin should best be placed on the north or east of the dining room; west could also be a choice. Bathroom should not be made adjacent to the dining room.

Sitting in the west and facing the east while eating is ideal. Although, sitting on a piece of cloth or jute on the floor and keeping the food-plate above a wooden plank is ideal, the use of dining tables is becoming more and more common these days. The shape of the dining table should be square or rectangular.

Round, triangular or elliptical shaped dining tables are considered inauspicious, in general. Eating in a relaxed and peaceful mood induces enormous healthy effects. Apart from the habit of cleaning the hands, that of chanting specific mantras and prayers with deep feelings of regarding food as a divine gift would bring magical changes for the better in health and harmony.

According to the Chinese principles of *Feng Shui*, the south direction represents the principal direction of fire element, and the east represents that of wood-elements. As the latter is used in the fire for cooking, the southeast direction being combination of the two is best for placing the kitchen. Both Feng Shui and Vastu Shastra specify east as a natural alternative in case it is not possible to construct the kitchen in the southeast. It is often difficult to construct the kitchen in the southeast corner of the houses that open in the east or the south. In such cases, the second alternative as recommended by Vastu Shastra, is the northwest (*vayavya*) direction. As stated earlier, the kitchen slab should preferably lie along the southeast or eastward wall of the kitchen.

Kitchen should not be constructed in front of a bathroom/toilet, bedroom, makeup room (if any) or the worship room. Because of space constraints, the idols of deities are placed and arrangements for worshiping made in the kitchen in many homes. In such cases, care should be taken not to have the worship corner towards the southeast, or near, above or below the sink or the gas-stove/cylinder.

Having the kitchen in the northeast or the west directions, although termed as generally inauspicious, one should not worry if there are compulsions to make the kitchen in either of the direction only. In these circumstances, the positioning of the slab or especially the gas-stove should be chosen in the corner of the kitchen, which is towards the southeast or east. The northeast corner should be used for keeping water storage vessels to compensate for the negative effects. The northeast corner of the kitchen is best suited for the latter; in fact, it is said that keeping the gas-stove or fire-source there leads to counteract the harmful effects in terms of the natural energy currents, because fire and water have mutually opposing properties. The arrangement of cooking should be such that the gas stove (or heater etc) should not be below a window or in front of a door or outlet this, apart from the Vastu guidelines, is essential in order to prevent the mixing of dust or pollutants in food. The person who is cooking should not face the door(s); further, as per the Chinese beliefs, he or she should also not have the back towards the door. Care should be taken that no one is able to see the kitchen, especially the cooking-

process, from outside.

The gas-stove or burner should not be placed next to the sink or refrigerator; it should not lie right in front of the water storage vessels in the kitchen. These should be placed at a distance of about 3 to 4 inches from the wall but should not be kept in the middle of the kitchen. In case of a gas-stove, care should be taken to keep the gas-cylinders well protected from heat and fire. The knob should be properly closed while not in use. If the gas stove is placed in the southeast corner, its burner should be kept on the eastern side of this corner and the cylinder (in use) in the western side. If there are more than one gas-stoves or burners, the extra ones may be kept in the south of this main corner. Extra cylinders, if any, may be kept in the southwest direction.

In case the kitchen is placed in the northwest direction, the gas cylinder in use should be kept in the middle of the western corner. As said earlier, the cooked food gains maximum benefits of natural energy fields if the cook faces the east while cooking. The second choice prescribed in Vastu Shastra is that of facing the south for good effects. Chinese scriptures on *Feng Shui* give significant importance to the cooking appliances such as the burners, heater, gas-stove, cooker, etc. Food grains are supposed to be the sign of good omen there. The disorder (of *Feng Shui*) in the kitchen is believed to be harmful for the health and prosperity of the head of the family.

The internal arrangements inside the kitchen also play important role in terms of *vastu* or *Feng Shui* effects. Positions of the basin for washing hands, sink for cleaning the utensils, tap, drinking and cooking water containers, electrical appliances, milk, curd etc should also be optimized according the science of *vastu*, taking into account the practical constraints. As a broad guideline, it should be remembered that the elements of mutually opposite or conflicting nature (e.g. fire and water, or those naturally having or expanding heat and those being cold, etc) should not be kept together or facing each other. For example, water container should not be kept in front of, below, adjacent or above the source of fire (gas-stove, heater etc). The fixings of racks, exhaust fans etc, should also be adjusted accordingly. In fact, all these should be taken into account while designing the house so that the positioning of ventilators, windows, doors, kitchen platforms, sink, taps etc does not pose any problem in making the internal arrangements as laid down by the *vastu- Shastra* experts.

The washbasin, sink, bathroom or laundry-section should not be in the southeast direction; neither should be adjacent to that corner of the kitchen. This direction, as stated earlier, happens to be the principal axis of the natural subtle field of fire. In such cases, the mutually incompatible characteristics of fire and water disturb the peace in the house and enhance the chances of imbalance, clashes and quarrels in the house. If the kitchen is in the southeast direction, the water-related utilities could be placed appropriately (e.g. sink inside and washbasin etc outside at a distance) in the northeastward region, but not exactly in the northeast corner. These should preferably be more towards the east; these may be positioned in the northward direction as well. If the kitchen lies in the northwest or west direction then the sink and water-tap etc should be placed in the western corner of the kitchen.

The pipelines or other arrangements for outlet of water from the sink in the kitchen

should be so constructed that the water flows out towards the south, west or southwest direction. The water storage tanks (on the terrace of the building or the small ones inside the kitchen), if any, could be made in the northeast. The water-container in the kitchen should also be placed in this corner of the kitchen ideally; the second best choice for it as per Vastu principles would be the side or corner of the kitchen towards the north.

The rack or cupboard for keeping utensils inside the kitchen should ideally be placed along the walls in the south or the west. These could be anywhere except the walls in the east or north, as doing so is supposed to attract untoward effects in terms of *vastu*. Care should be taken not to fix or place them above the gas-stove or other fire-sources, as this would be inconvenient and risky in practice. Milk, curd etc should preferably be kept in the north-east corner of the kitchen. The facilities like refrigerator should be kept in the south, north, southeast, west, or northwest corners. Northeast and southwest corners should be avoided, because, if kept in these corners the electrical and thermal machines would require frequent repairs. If it is a must to keep them in either of these two directions, they should be kept at least 2-3 ft away from the walls. Microwave oven, mixer etc could be best kept somewhere between the south and southeast directions. Grinding stone, broomstick etc should be kept in the southwest corner; the northeast corner is prohibited for such things. The containers of grocery should be kept in the northwest direction; nothing empty should ever be kept in this direction. Second choice could be the southwest direction. The region between the northeast and the southeast is also described to be good for grocery storage. As per the Vastu guidelines for arrangement of other utilities inside the kitchen, the heavier ones should be arranged towards the west or south and the lighter ones be placed somewhere in the east or north side.

The Vastu teachings cited in an earlier article in this series specified that having the kitchen-windows in the east and the north directions gives healthy effects of sunlight and fresh breeze; this design would also satisfy Vastu principles. As per the latter, having the entrance door of the kitchen in the south direction is inauspicious people in the house would face tussles and tensions. There should not even be a window in this direction; may be a small ventilator could be made if it is a must; the best place for ventilators is towards the northeast. Having proper exhaust facility is necessary for the kitchens where firewood or kerosene is used as fuel or where there is no cross-ventilation; the best directions for fixing the exhaust fan are east and north.

Having the floor-level of kitchen above the other rooms is beneficial with respect to *vastu* effects. According to Vastu Shastra, the flooring of the rooms placed in the southeast, south, west, northwest or southwest should never be below that of the other rooms. It is practically the best to have all rooms at the same level. As for any other room, the downward slope (if required for water-exit) of the floor in the kitchen should be towards the east or north but never towards the west or south. The color of the walls and floor also matters. Light blue, gray or brown is supposed to be good for the kitchen while red and yellow are not.

The description of the internal design of the kitchen presented above should also give broad idea about the best directions for placing the furniture / furnishings commonly used in other rooms. Most important thing to be noted here is that the rooms should not be cluttered with unnecessary furniture, decorative pieces etc. There should be proper

ventilation and availability of fresh air and sunlight. The internal settings of each room should be such that the mind gets naturally attuned according to the purpose of the particular room. For example, the living room should induce feelings of cooperation and sociability; entry in the study room should make the mind alert and energetic; the atmosphere in the kitchen and dining room should induce appetite; bedroom should give a feeling of relaxation and tranquility, etc. In the next issue we shall look at Vastu principles for the bedroom(s) in detail.

(Series to be continued)

Dhyan & its Benefits

Dhyan is a state of pure consciousness, which transcends the inner and outer senses. The climax of *Dhyan* is *samadhi*. In Indian tradition, it is used for inner soul growth. Western psychologists link it with mental concentration and consider it a special state of mind. But this is only the early phase of *Dhyan*. The techniques and nature of *Dhyan* might vary but even the modern scientific research validates and highlights its benefits.

The term '*Dhyan*' comes from '*dhyai*' *dhatu* used in '*lat*' *pratyaya*. Its meaning is contemplation or the natural tendency and direction of senses. Patanjali Yogashastra links it with *ekagrata* or concentration. According to Sri Aurobindo, *Dhyan* is that state in which the inner mind tries to see the reality behind things. *Ekagrata* means focusing the consciousness on one point or object and keeping it steady in one state. In yoga, *ekagrata* is achieved when the mind is deeply engrossed in a special condition like quietude, or action or aspiration or resolve. This is called meditation. It is a form of *Dhyan*. *Dhyan*, when constant, is called *dharana*. In *dharana*, for the first time, the power of consciousness is directed towards the inner being. When the mind, fixated with only one object, sees only that object and nothing else, it is the state of *Dhyan*. And when meditating upon the object the mind becomes completely still and merges into that object, the yogis call this condition *paramdhyan*. In yoga, the process of keeping *chitta* centered on any external or internal object for a long time is called *avadhan*. In *dharana*, the flow of this process or action remains constant in the desired direction. In its normal condition it is not continuous. The action of making this very flow of *chitta* continuous and unbroken is called *Dhyan*. It is a special state of *chitta*. *Dharana* and *Dhyan* may be compared to the flow of water and *ghee* (milk fat). When *Dhyan* is centered on the desired objective, it activates the power of resolve. *Dhyan* helps to strengthen resolve, and the resolve regulates *Dhyan*. The two are mutually complementary. and the resolve regulates *Dhyan*. The two are mutually complementary.

According to *Sankhya* philosophy extermination of attachment is *Dhyan ragopahati dhyanam*. According to *Agni Puran*, contemplation with a calm mind is *Dhyan*. To be engrossed in *Brahmibhav* is also *Dhyan*. *Dhyan* is concentration of *chitta* in the object *dhyai chintayam to dhatu Visnuchinta muhurmuju. Anaksi pnetan manasa dhyanmityabhidhiyate. Brahma samasaktidhyarnam naman dusyate. Garud Puran* has

used the term *Dhyan* as

*Brahmachintan Brahmachinta dhyanam syadharana manaso dhtij, Aham
Brahmetyavasthanam samardhibrahmana; sthitij.*

Likewise, in Visnu Puran, too, *Dhyan* has been used in identical terms. It is the indivisible flow of *vtti* that is devoid of all sensory knowledge. According to Srimad Bhagwadgita *Dhyan* is more important than *jóan* as it cuts away the ties of *karma*.

Sruti says that *Dhyan* leads to attainment of *prajóa*. This is the right and best yoga.

“*Âmenanumanen dhyanabhyasarsenach tridha
prakalpayet prajóam labhate yogamuttamam*”

The Mahabharat declares *Dhyan* as the highest and greatest attainment of a yogi. It is of two kinds *ekagrata* and *pranayam*. *Pranayam* together with five other means leads to *pratyahar*, which in turn enables one to have twelve kinds of *dharanas Bhavedishvar sangatvam dhyanam dvadvasham dharanam*. To merge oneself into one's *ista* with full dedication is also called *Dhyan samahitenmanasam chaityantavartita. Âtmano abhista deshnam dhyandhyanyabhi uchyate.*

Tantrasar mentions three kinds of *Dhyan*. Generally *Dhyan* is classified into either *sagun* and *nirgun* or *sarup* and *arup*. Modern thinkers make three categories full consciousness (central region), dim or unclear consciousness (middle region) and complete unconsciousness (outer region). Its change from one state into another is very rapid. Different experts have prescribed different techniques of *Dhyan* either individual or collective. It can be practiced with closed or open eyes, in silence or even while singing. The Jains achieve the state of *Dhyan* through *pranayam*. The transcendental meditation is a quiet type of *Dhyan* while the followers of ISKCON do it with song and music.

The quiet or silent *Dhyan* has three methods *ekagrata, dharana* and chanting of *mantras*. In *dharana*, mind is focused on an object, which may be a statue, picture, color, flower or a flame of *deepak*. *Ekagrata* is considered more difficult. In it, the object of focus could be a Hindu or Buddhist lotus, Islam's moon, Jew's Star of David etc. It purely reflects the growth of consciousness.

Dhyan is regarded as a fundamental attribute of the behavior of all living beings, not simply, of humans. Woodworth writes in 'Psychology' "The mind reacts to certain selected actions only rather than react uniformly to all actions which it receives in a given moment. It concentrates on only one single impulse or a group of impulses and virtually neglects the rest. In the next moment, another impulse takes the place of the former at the center". According to Woodworth, *Dhyan* means becoming alert and activated for the purpose of seeing an object or doing some act. Thus according to him *Dhyan* may be of two types momentary and continuous. In the beginning, it is of course, momentary but it gains continuity by continued application of mind in it.

Sidney Smith opines that *Dhyan* is nothing but to forget everything else except the objective. Yosen Meredith says that a person who seeks only one thing in life may rest assured that he would get it before the end of his life. According to Charles Dickens *Dhyan* is a useful, harmless, definite and beneficial process. Swet Mordon thinks that concentrating the power of resolve is *ekagrata*. Once *ekagrata* is achieved no work can remain unaccomplished.

The views of western psychologists about *Dhyan*, in some respects, very much resemble the principles of yoga. In this context, Earnestwood holds that *Dhyan* begins where *dharana* ends. *Dharana* localizes concentration to a very small region of the mental image with the objective of intensifying the light of consciousness on that subject. In *dharana*, there is a contraction of the field of vision while in *Dhyan* it expands. Hence, the progress of *dharana* is inherent in the success of *Dhyan*. *Dhyan* demystifies self. It increases physical and mental efficiency too.

Bergansa has said that suppression of external distractions is essential for the deepening and expansion of *Dhyan*. This view is very close to the *Sankhya* yoga, which holds that only by *asana* and relaxation can *Dhyan* be *detached* from the accompanying actions. According to Edgar Casey, *Dhyan* brings to the fore the latent powers of creativity in a person. This power enriches and improves the physical, mental and inner aspects. Eminent philosopher Haridas Chaudhary also holds similar views about the power of *Dhyan*. John White in his celebrated work "The Meeting of Science and Spirit" has enumerated the many benefits of *Dhyan* in life. It promotes physical health, reduces tension, anxiety and aggressiveness and leads to self-realization and self-development. Experiments suggest even strengthening of personal and familial bonds through *Dhyan*. Thus, apart from people with psychiatric problems, *Dhyan* is beneficial to all. *Dhyan* has been described in detail by Michael Murphy and Steven Donovan in their research work "The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation". They mention many kinds of experiments and uses of *Dhyan* and hold it to be a very intense experience.

Donovan in their research work "The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation". They mention many kinds of experiments and uses of *Dhyan* and hold it to be a very intense experience.

Dhyan regulates and controls electrical and chemical activities in the brain, heart rhythm, blood pressure, skin's capacity of resistance and many such functions inside the body. It is an active hypometabolic condition. Psychologists call *Dhyan* a state of "relaxed attention". John White has enumerated some special benefits of *Dhyan* thus:

1. A feeling of tranquility and freedom in daily life,
2. Reduction in psychological disorders like anxiety, tiredness and depression etc.,
3. Relief from various pains, such as headache, joint pains etc.,
4. Very beneficial in insomnia;
5. Infinite patience, and increase in affection and sympathy for others
6. Growth in devotion and belief in the Supreme Being and
7. A stronger urges and aptitude for service and cooperation in social life.

John White's definition of *Dhyan* carries an imprint of the *Dhyan* as described in the Indian yoga. He, too considers it a special state of consciousness which climaxes into *samadhi*. Tibetan Lama Angarika Govind, who is of German origin, thinks that *Dhyan* makes a person fulfilled, dissolves the petty ego and helps the individual consciousness attain at-one-ment with *Brahma* consciousness.

According to Yogiraj Sri Aurobindo, the right subject for *Dhyan* is always The Absolute

Brahma, and the focus of awareness during meditation should be concentrated on the Truth that all manifestations live, move and have cheer being in the Divine. This is *sarvani khalvidani Brahma*. A secluded and peaceful place and a calm and quiet mind are essential for *Dhyan*. Among the many obstacles in path of *Dhyan* are the fickleness of mind, forgetfulness, sleep, physical and nervous impatience, volatility etc. It is only the firm resolve of the *sadhak* that would cut through the maze of these impediments and lead him on to the spontaneous awakened awareness of meditation.

The other essential requirement is to maintain the quietude of thoughts and emotions that rise with the growth of inner consciousness. When the inner consciousness is thus engrossed in *Dhyan*, the deeper realms of enlightened consciousness starts.

Peace Pilgrim's Guidelines for Individual & collective Peace

**[See a brief note about Peace Pilgrim's life in May-June, 2004 issue.
Editor]**

- Peace is much more than the temporary absence of war. It is the absence of causes of wars, which are so much still with us in the world today.
- The situation in the world around us is just a reflection of the collective situation. Only as we become more peaceful people will we be finding ourselves living in more peaceful world.
- Humanity, with fearful, faltering steps walks a knife-edge between abysmal chaos and new renaissance, while strong forces push toward chaos. Yet there is hope.
- I see hope in the tireless work of a few devoted souls; I see hope in the real desire for peace in the heart of humanity, even though the human family gropes toward peace blindly, not knowing the way.
- Knowing that all things contrary to God's laws are transient, let us avoid despair and radiate hope for a warless world.
- Let us never say hopelessly, "This is the darkness before a storm." Let us rather say with faith, "This is the darkness before the dawn of a Golden Age of peace which we cannot now even imagine." For this let us hope and pray.
- My prayer is that this war-weary world of ours will somehow find the way to peace before a holocaust descends.
- Peace and freedom these things shall be. How soon these things shall be whether

now or whether after great destruction and new beginnings and aeons of time is up to us.

- All people can be peace workers. Whenever you bring harmony into any un-peaceful situation, you contribute to the total peace picture. Insofar as you have peace in your life, you reflect it into your world.
- We people of the world need to learn to put the welfare of the human family above the welfare of any group.
- A few really dedicated people can offset the ill-effects of masses of out-of-harmony people, so we who work for peace must not falter.
- We must continue to pray for peace and to act for peace in whatever way we can. We must continue to speak for peace and live the way of peace.
- To inspire others, we must continue to think of peace and to know it is possible. What we dwell upon we help to bring into manifestation.
- What people really suffer from is immaturity. Among mature people war would not be a problem. It would be impossible.
- If we were people who had done a full growing up, not only the mental and emotional but also the spiritual growing up, we wouldn't have wars. We would have learned the lesson of sharing and the lesson of non-killing.
- If I am killed, it destroys merely the clay garment, the body. But if I kill, it injures the reality, the soul.
- This immaturity, which the world suffers from, manifests in things like greed, grabbing more than our share; in things like fear, which causes to build up armaments against one another. These are the direct symptoms of our immaturity.
- War is really a symptom of a symptom. It is a symptom of the fear, which causes us to build up armaments, which results in war.
- Starvation is a symptom of symptom. It is a symptom of greed, which causes some to grab more than their share while others are starving.
- In our immaturity we want, at the same time, peace and the things which make war.
- The price of peace is obedience to the higher laws: evil can only be overcome by good and hatred by love; only a good means can attain a good end.
- The price of peace is to abandon fear and replace it with faith - faith that if we obey God's laws we will receive God's blessings.
- The price of peace is to abandon hate and allow love to reign supreme in our hearts love for all our fellow human beings over the world.
- The price of peace is to abandon greed and replace it with giving, so that none will be

spiritually injured by having more than they need while others in the world have less than they need.

- In a conflict situation you must be thinking of solution, which is fair to all concerned, instead of a solution, which is of an advantage to you. Only a solution, which is fair to all concerned, can be workable in the long run.
- There is magic formula for resolving conflicts. It is this: Have as your objective the resolving of the conflict not the gaining of advantage.
- There is a magic formula for avoiding conflicts. It is this: Be concerned that you do not offend, not that you are not offended.
- The key word for our time is practice. We have all the light we need; we just need to put it into practice.
- Physical violence can end even before we have learned the way of love, but psychological violence will continue until we do. Only outer peace can be had through law. The way to inner peace is through love.
- A world language would be the biggest single step we could take toward world understanding, and a long stride toward world peace. When we can talk together we will realize that our likenesses are much greater than our differences, however great our differences may seem.

Kalpavriksha of Human Life on Earth

Indian scriptures have given figurative and metaphorical descriptions of subtler realms of reality, which were experienced by the sages and seers in their deep meditative state of *sadhana*. These descriptions have often been misconceived, when taken in their literal sense, without attempting to uncover their hidden meanings. One such victim of the ignorance of the masses is the description of *Kalpavksa*.

Kalpavksa, according to Indian scriptures, is a tree in the land of gods. Anyone who sits under it can fulfil his desires. For example, if a person desires wealth then he will become rich. The story has it that when people on Earth came to know about its existence, they desperately went in search of it, for the simple reason that such a tree would be an invaluable asset to its possessor. Common ignorant people blindly and frantically chase happiness in the world outside - in pelf, possessions, power, name and fame - a futile search of *Kalpavksa* in the backyard. Mankind has been searching for *kalpavksa* for thousands of years, and tragically, no one has found it certainly not the one that fits the literal meaning, as imagined by people.

Spiritual scientists have discovered *kalpavksa* and proved its authenticity. It definitely functions in the way explained so vividly in the scriptures. But there is a snag: we

humans cannot see *kalpavksa*. Although invisible, it is full of qualities ascribed to it by the scriptures. It works equally well on Earth as it does in the land of gods. We can benefit from it. But what is it? It is *Satwic tapa*, which means sincere effort and hard work to realise a specific noble aim. Several people in the ancient times were blessed with *siddhis* by the grace of deities by initiating, nurturing and developing the process of *tapa*. Selfless single pointed *tapa* was the only righteous means, the scriptures assert, to please the gods. Since deities grant valuable *siddhis*, with which one can accomplish any desired noble aim, it is but natural they assess the qualifications of the devotee before blessing him with *siddhis*.

In the modern world too, one does not get a university degree unless one passes the requisite examinations. In deities' book of wisdom, success is the jewel that decorates the personality of an industrious person. An idle, indolent person is incapable of handling unearned success or blessings. A 14-year old, if given a gun, can injure himself and others too, and so adults take great care in such matters and keep a sharp eye on the activities of their children. The Almighty God too operates similarly. The possessor of valuable *siddhis* will be the one who deserves them. The test for such worthiness is: has one put in his best efforts to realise his desired aim (which must be noble and altruistic)?

It is possible that one may live in a prosperous, rich country but he may not be financially well off. On the contrary, one may be a successful businessman in a third world country. Without *tapa*, without efforts, without hard work, one cannot succeed. In this respect, the scriptures mention the episode of "*samudra manthan*".

The bottom line is, nothing is achievable without diligent efforts. Cases of persons inheriting a vast sum of money or a business empire are so rare that they cannot be considered to deduce a general rule. Furthermore, such cases can be explained by the sudden manifestation of the results of previous *sanchit* (accumulated) *karmas*. Such persons, thus, cannot be construed as undeserved recipients of fortune. *Karma* means action, and if a particular *karma* gives good results, it means *karma* was performed with dedication. The same criterion applies to beneficial *sanchit karmas*.

The entire universe works under a perfect law. There is no scope for random chance. In this respect saint Kabir has said:

*Rama jarokhe baithakara sabako mujara leya |
Jaisi jaki chakari taiso tako deya | |*

These verses convey the meaning that Lord Rama* keeps tab on everyone's activities and grants results commensurate with the efforts. Therefore, the principle of "As you sow so shall you reap" is widely observed in the world. Those who work hard succeed; those who remain idle are seen blaming fate for their piteous condition. Through sincere effort and hard work, the capacities hidden in a human being are manifested on the basis of which a person can achieve anything he aspires for just as if he would be sitting under the *kalpavksa*.

The key to success is meticulous, focused, unrelenting efforts; these can bring knowledge, wealth, fame, heavenly conditions, happiness and peace. *Tapa* means to sacrifice mundane pleasures and perform noble deeds in the hope of a golden tomorrow. God helps those who help themselves this is an irrevocable principle.

Suppose we were to find a tree on Earth which functions like *kalpavksa*. Would it prove useful to people? No. Rather, it would turn out to be harmful. Imagine the resulting rush,

the scramble, the conflict and chaos, if people were allowed to fulfil any desire for free, without any efforts. It would create a state of complete anarchy. Also, since this would amount to the fulfilment of desires without putting in hard work, it would corrupt the minds of people. Cautioning people to the dangers of unearned wealth and *siddhis* (misusing hard-earned wealth and *siddhis*), scriptures mention a tale of a person who sat under the *kalpavksa*. He was thirsty and wished to drink water. A glass of water appeared before him out of thin air. Delighted by the magical response, he wished for delicious food, new clothes, the possession of a kingdom, etc. As he began leading a suitably comfortable life, he feared a lion might come and kill him. His wish came true. He was devoured by the lion!

The moral of the above story is clear. Unworthy persons cannot handle precious *siddhis*. And therefore the Almighty has so organised Nature that this never happens. Even if it does happen, that particular *siddhi* makes a guest appearance in the person's life and then disappears.

Enthusiasm, alertness, diligence, courage, patience, determination to face and overcome difficulties are signs of *tapa*. A person is called a *siddha* if he endeavours to develop these qualities for the pursuit of his aims. All the *siddhis* attributed to the *kalpavksa* are then acquired by him, and he becomes competent to achieve anything worthwhile. Anyone who fancies leadership, skills, wealth, fame, knowledge, etc. should become a *tapasvi* first. He has to give up laziness and instead develop qualities associated with *tapa*.

One must remember that *tapa* is the *kalpavksa*. Any successful person in the world has been a *tapasvi*. Infuse your life with enthusiasm and *tapa* if you wish to succeed in your noble ideals.

Note: *Here saint Kabir refers to the Almighty God when he talks about Lord Rama.

Guru ***The True Protector***

It is an old story, but the truth contained in it is ever relevant. A Guru and his disciple were extremely tired due to continuous walking. Seeing a proper place, the master stopped for taking rest. When the disciple was fast asleep, the master was awake. Suddenly a black serpent came hissing and moving towards the disciple. Moving aside, the master tried to divert it, but the serpent had come very close to the sleeping disciple. When the master tried to stop it, the serpent spoke in human tongue, "Oh! Great Sage, I have to bite this disciple of yours; so do not stop me."

“After all you must have some reason to bite him,” the master asked.

The serpent put forth the reason. “In the previous birth he had drunk my blood; now I have to drink his. In the previous birth he had tortured me a lot. It is in order to take revenge that I have taken birth as a serpent. So you please don’t stop me. If you now stop me, I will come at some other time in your absence and do my job”.

The serpent continued - “In the previous birth, I was a sheep. In order to satisfy his selfishness, he mercilessly slaughtered me with a sword and drank my blood. In front of his eyes I fluttered in agony and died.”

“Is the ire of previous birth is still there? “ The master asked, as if immersed in deep contemplation. The sage thus explained to the irate serpent bent upon taking revenge, the eternal secret of spiritual wisdom. “Dear One! Our own soul is our enemy and no one else. If you bite him, hatred towards you will be generated in his heart. After leaving this body, he will take a new one and take revenge. You will again die bearing hatred and after death take revenge in the next birth. Then it will be his turn. In this way the chain of hatred will go on forever. And what will be the gain?”

“Oh! Great Master, what you say is true, but I am not as spiritually enlightened as you are. Please excuse me, I will not leave him without taking revenge,” the serpent said.

When, even after repeated persuasions and pleadings, the serpent did not give up his resolve for revenge, the sage said, “Would your blind urge for revenge be satisfied, if I take out his blood and give it for you to drink?”

The serpent agreed to the sage’s suggestion.

The wise sage then sat on the disciple’s chest and holding a cup made of leaves he made a slit in his throat with a knife. Collecting the blood in the cup, he began to feed it to the serpent. No sooner did the knife touch his throat, the disciple woke up, but seeing his master he remained calm and assured. Sitting on the chest, the master was taking out blood from the throat and feeding the serpent. Seeing all this he immediately closed his eyes and lay calm. When the serpent drank the blood to its satisfaction, it went off. Like a surgeon, the master closed the slit and after applying herbal medical paste, bandaged it. When he got off the disciple’s chest, the latter sat up.

Scoldingly, the master asked him, “How deep is your sleep?”

“Yes master, under your protection, I was calmly seeing everything. You were sitting on my chest. You had a cup of leaves in your hand. Making a slit in the throat, you were taking out blood. As soon as the knife touched the throat I became awake”, the disciple said humbly.

“Yes, my son! Why didn’t you speak then? Asked the master.

The disciple said “I have unshakable faith in you. I have surrendered myself completely body, mind, and soul at your feet. On hearing the serpent’s talk, seeing its deed and listening to your advice to renounce the feeling of hatred my blind urge for revenge, too, was calmed down like that of the serpent. I am blessed.”

He continued “No other harm can touch me as I have taken refuge under your protection. You are not only my spiritual guide, but also the protector of my body. Everything of mine is yours body as well as life. You can use them, as you deem proper. How can I, a mere novice, understand your supreme wisdom? I have fully surrendered myself to you. I have no worry about my well-being and safety.”

Hearing these words of the disciple, blessings poured out from deep within the master’s heart.

Your Health

Guidelines from Ayurveda VIII

As for other facets of the daily routine, the founder *rishis* of Ayurveda have also paid significant attention to the activities before sleep to enable healthy and hearty sustenance of life. We had discussed most of this (*ratricarya*) in the previous issue including eye-care before going to bed. Here we highlight some more health tips especially those pertaining to sleep.

Cleanliness of nightdress or the clothes worn while going to the bed is also emphasized in Ayurveda. One should preferably avoid wearing the same clothes, which one has been wearing during the day. The clothes on the body should be loose while sleeping. The bed should be neat and tidy; the sheets covering the body and the bed should also be clean.

According to the adepts of Ayurveda, the mattresses and bed-sheets should be made up of cotton. Use of foam, sponge, nylon etc for long is harmful. As far as possible, one should develop the habit of sleeping on a thin mattress; only a mat with bed-sheet should be enough in the summer. Cots having straight wooden planks are preferred to maintain the natural vigor of the body (especially the spinal cord) as compared to those having the base made up of plastic fibers, jute or metal etc. The Ayurvedic scriptures also advise not to use the bed sheets or body-covers used by others (including family members) unless these have been washed and dried properly. Beds and even the cots should not be shared; this is essential to restrain the spread of infections. Sleeping on separate mats put on the floor is best if one can’t afford separate cots for each family member.

The bedroom should have sufficient cross-ventilation. Windows and ventilators should be kept open while sleeping (for airflow), with arrangements of mesh etc, to prevent mosquitoes and other insects) while sleeping. This is not only necessary to avoid suffocation but also to minimize the chances of infections of common cold, flue etc.

The following *shloka* of Sushrut Samhita is of particular relevance in today's circumstances when the world is threatened by varieties of contagious diseases

*Prasangat Gatra Sansparshanti shwasatsahabhojam |
Sahashayya Sataccapi Vastramalyanulepanam ||
Kustham Jwarasya shothashrca Netrabhisyanda Eva Ca |
Auparsargika Rogashca Sankramanti Narantaram ||*

Meaning: Sexual relationship, other kinds of bodily contacts, inhaling others' exhaled breath, exchange of body-fluids, sleeping on the same bed, sitting neck to neck, eating together from a common plate, or eating somebody's leftovers, sharing clothes, ornaments, unguents (soap, lotions etc) spread leprosy, infectious (viral, etc) fevers and other diseases, conjunctivitis, common cold, etc from person to person.

Sleep is referred as *bhutadhatri* (which takes care and nurtures all creatures) in the Ayurvedic scriptures.

Rishi Charak writes

Ratriswabhava Prabhava Mata Ya, Tam Bhutadhatrim Pravadanti Nidram ||

Meaning: The sleep of night is a natural (gift), which is rightly termed by the sages as *bhutadhatri*.

In the views of Chakrapani

'*Bhutani Pranino Dadhati, Pusnati Iti Bhutadhatri |* ';

Meaning: Sleeping in the night is essential and most beneficial. As a *dhatri* (wet nurse, *aayaa* or governess) looks after an infant, sleep also nourishes all creatures. It is therefore called *bhutadhatri*.

According to Chand Kuashik

*Chittam Prasadayati Laghavamadadati
Pratyangamujjalayati Pratibhavishesam |
Dosanudasyati Karoti cha Dhatu Samyam
Anandamarpayati Yogavishesagamyam ||*

Meaning: Good sleep induces happiness in the mind, relaxation in the body and rejuvenation in its every component; it also enhances mental talents and intellect. It helps eliminate the defects and weaknesses and ensures harmonious balancing

between healthy functions of the body; sound sleep also offers the joy that one would experience by doing certain kinds of yoga exercises.

But who is the one to get this natural bliss of good sleep? Charak Samhita provides the answer:

*Brahmcaryarate; Gramyasukha Nispaha Cetasa; |
Nidrasantosataptasya Swam Kalam Nativartate ||*

Meaning: One who reads good books and attempts acquiring knowledge (and mental enlightenment), who does not indulge in sensual pleasures and accumulation of material possession, whose mind is contented, his/her sleep remains punctual in its proper timings and duration.

"Padma Puran" also states that one who has disciplined his sense organs and who sleeps at the right time will enjoy good sleep and get up at the right time in the early morning with fresh energy.

One should have deep sleep during the night. As far as possible, one should avoid sleeping in the daytime; the time of lying down on the bed during the day should be kept to the minimum. Ayurveda describes the sleep of night as *pitta-nashak* (which eliminates the *dosa* of *pitta* the problems of acidity, excess of heat or lack of specific fluids in the body, abnormality in metabolism, etc). The sleep during the daytime is termed as *kapha-sangrahak* (which aggravates the *kapha dosa* the problems of breathing, cold and cough, drowsiness, etc). With adoption of the present day habits of sleeping late in the night and getting up late in the morning, sleeping after lunch in the afternoon etc, the cases of problems pertaining to *pitta* and *kapha* have indeed increased in the modern times.

The Ayurvedic sages of Vedic Age emphasized the importance of sleeping in the second and third phases (out of the four phases since sunset to sunrise) of night. The evening (lying in the first phase of night) time should be used for reading and contemplating on the teachings of vedic scriptures and/or devotional prayers etc.

The last phase which lies at the junction of night and morning called *Brahm-Muhurt* (the four hours period beginning 2-3 hours before dawn) is best for spiritual practices of *mantra japa*, meditation and other *sadhanas*. The period for sleep (approximately between 9p.m. to 3:30a.m.) is referred as *mahanisa* in the scriptures and is said to be the most suitable time for healthful sleep. All the body-functions of a person who sleeps only during this specified period remain in good order and energized and so do all his other faculties. Even simple food works like ideal nutritious diet for such a person and he enjoys and relishes a purposeful and vigorous life.

Along with sleep, Ayurveda mentions a great deal about dreams also. In fact, analysis of dreams used to be an important method of comprehensive diagnostics in this ancient science of healthy life.

What the "Charak Samhita" states at one place implies that one who does not get sound sleep sees varieties of dreams through the agile subconscious mind. Experiencing too

many or too frequent dreams is a sign of unbalanced or perturbed state of the mind-body system. According to Ayurvedic theory, dreaming abruptly during sleep disturbs the sleep and prevents proper relaxation of the body and also deprives the mind of rest and relaxation. Hard working laborers or those who practice substantial physical exercise and go to the bed in a relaxed mood get good sleep; their body and mind are infused with new energy and joy when they get up in the morning.

The Ayurvedic scriptures describe seven categories of dreams of which five correspond to the dreams that are meaningless and mere reflections of disturbed sleep and non-pacified emotions, mental excitations, tensions or simply the agility of the (subconscious) mind. The dreams of diseased, agonized, stressed, insane, and sensually excited or erogenous persons fall in this category. Only two categories of dreams are said to of notable importance these include precognitive dreams and spiritually enlightening dreams.

The Vedic literature contains rare and precious knowledge of the science of sleep and dream, from which Ayurveda derives several of its methods and measures of characterization of natural constitution and diagnosis/prognosis of the existing ailments as well as prediction of future (likely) diseases. We shall elucidate some of these aspects through articles on dreams from time to time.

With this article we have glanced through the routine of the entire day (twenty-four hours) as per the Ayurveda-guidelines on health. The next set of articles in this series will bring new information on Ayurvedic herbal medicines especially based on the research findings at the scientific laboratories of Brahmvarchas, Shantikunj, Hardwar.

(To be continued in the next issue).

Navaratri Sadhana The Bestower of Celestial Boons

The festivals of *Navaratri* are auspicious occasions for the purpose of *sadhana*. They fall around the two main six-monthly equinoctial divisions of the year and have special temporal and spiritual significance. The importance of morning and evening *sandhya* (specific prayer-rituals) at the junctures of day and night in daily life is also because of this. The wise do not waste this time in eating, sleeping and other mundane affairs. Rather they use this time for prayers and meditation like *sandhya-vandan*, self-contemplation and self-refinement, because at a subtle level these times are so charged with harmonizing vibrations that even small effort in *sadhana* bear extraordinary fruit.

During this auspicious confluence of seasons, the subtle nature undergoes great

changes. In the *Puranas*, it is even held that the seasons remain in a state of menstruation for the nine days. Just as a menstruating woman has to observe a certain discipline about food, thoughts and conduct, even so during the transitional time-slots of dawn and dusk, one ought to remain in a calm and receptive mental and physical condition. According to *arogyashastra* (the normative science of health), too, this nine-day period generates a tidal wave in the physical life force, which nullifies and expels whatever toxic elements had accumulated in the body during the preceding six months on account of irregularities in food and living schedule. Routine bodily imbalances like fever, cough, cold, etc. should be considered a natural symptom of this elimination process. Similarly, there is an enhanced flow of vital spiritual energy all around during the *Navaratri* period. Therefore, *sadhana* done during this period fructifies with multiple benefits ranging from expulsion of toxic wastes from the body and mind to the bestowal of divine gifts of fulfillment of noble aspirations. Those with intuitive insight (*prajna*) never miss the special occasion of *Shakti-sadhana* (*Shakti* - the energy aspect of Divinity) during the *Navaratri Parvas*.

This *sadhana* takes different forms. The devotees of Ram read the *Ramayana* while that of Krishna, the *Gita* or *Srimadbhagvat*. The *Devi*-worshippers devote themselves to different forms of *Durga-stuti*. Ascetics undertake rigorous penance and austerities.

In tantric cults, *Shava-sadhana* (*sadhana* with a corpse), *Kumari-pujan* (worship of a maiden), *Kundalini-jagaran* (awakening the *kundalini*), *chakra-vedhan* (piercing extra-sensory energy centres) and other such practices are especially undertaken during this period. The *prajna-parijans* perform the mini *anusthana* of *Gayatri sadhana* in the form of 24 thousand *mantra-japas*.

It is necessary to grasp the essence of *Navaratri - anusthana* propounded by our *rishis*. According to them, *Navaratri* symbolizes the nine doors or sense organs, which are situated in the Ayodhya of the human body. Through misuse or abuse, bred by ignorance, they are clogged with dross. Hence, through *anusthana*, we have to reflect on all the doors (one door each night) and by cleansing them awaken the divine potencies latent in them. Indeed, this is the real meaning of *Navaratri - sadhana*. For want of self-restraint and discipline, all the inner energy gets drained out of these outlets making the individual emaciated, feeble and poor. Through *sadhana*, this wasteful discharge of energy is checked and the purpose of *Shakti-sadhana* fulfilled.

In the *anusthana*, the *sadhak*, with solemn inner determination, conducts himself within a set frame work of discipline and austerities and adopts a specific method of *upasana* (worship). He thereby engages in refining and purifying his inner-self. In the course of mini *Gayatri anusthana* of 24 thousand *japas*, a daily *japa* of 27 rosaries of the *mantra* recitation is prescribed which, at normal pace, is completed in 3 to 4 hours. If a novice is unable to recite the full *Gayatri mantra*, he can still complete the requisite number of *japas* with the five-syllable *Gayatri* "Om bhurbhuva; sva;". This takes only one hour daily. The *Navaratri - sadhana* done with reverential faith (*Shraddha*) fructifies with miraculous effects with respect to self-elevation. This is because *Gayatri* is the supreme creative energy, which bestows virtuous qualities and enhances the elements of divinity and spirituality in the body, mind and soul of the *sadhak*. This is the royal highway to self-realization.

A question may arise here that *Navaratri* is associated with the worship of *Durga* and so, how is *Gayatri anusthana* related with it. One should know that *Durga - Mahakali* is a

form of *Gayatri Mahashakti*. *Durga* is the name of the form of the supreme force that destroys whatever is base, evil and dark. The worship of *Durga* in her nine external forms is done precisely with a view that she destroys the vices, which have taken root in our sense-consciousness. It is the sinful tendencies / instincts of man that are the *Mahisasur* (the buffalo-demon). In *Navaratri*, an attempt is made to restrain and throw out of our psyche those tendencies through mental resolve and regulated conduct. A self-controlled and purified soul is endowed with the power of *Durga*, *Mahakali* or *Gayatri*. This very force, upon refinement of inner consciousness, becomes the destroyer of *Mahisasur* (*mahisasur mardini*).

During *Navaratri anusthana*, meditation is sought to be intensified and focused with *japa* to maintain the flow of mind towards deeper and higher stages of consciousness. In *sakara upasana* or worship of a visible form of Divinity, contemplation is on the Idol of *Gayatri* or the *Gurusatta*, while worshippers of the *nirakara* (indeterminate or attributeless) concentrate on the Sun and its radiating rays as *Gayatri Shakti*. When the appropriate mood is achieved, the mind turns effortlessly to the Mother-sentiment (*Matribhava*), lips continue automatically with the *japa* and the fingers with the beads of rosary, and the mind is absorbed in receiving uninterrupted affection and energy from the Mother. In this period, one should specially engage in introspection. The mind should be kept free from anxieties and distractions as far as possible. In introspection, there should be an attempt to evaluate the direction of life led so far, to consciously be aware of the negativities within oneself and to outline concrete course of action for their rectification through self-refinement and penance. A firm resolve should be made to inculcate the qualities of excellence and goodness in life. An effective programme should be chalked out for integration of the elements of *sadhana*, *svadhyaya* (study and contemplation), *sanyam* (self-control) and *seva* (service of the needy) in life so that there emerges a composite way of life in which self-development goes side-by-side with due observance of familial and social responsibilities. Thus, if a clearer and better outline of the future course of life could be formed and confidence be generated to implement it during *Navaratri sadhana*, it should be deemed that one has received an immediate *prasada* (divine grace) of Mother *Gayatri*. It should be clearly understood that only through noble deeds could we actualize our higher potentials and be the rightful recipients of God's grace.

Some basic rules of *Navaratri sadhana* should be strictly followed. Important ones among these are fasting, continence, sleeping on a hard bed, not taking service from others, and keeping the daily routine well regulated and disciplined.

These apart, at the mental plane, too, one should try to remain in an exalted state of happiness, goodwill, calm, peace and contemplation. Even while engaged in meeting your normal daily obligations, the *sadhak* should remain immersed in *Ista*-remembrance and keep oneself free from envy, jealousy, idle-gossip and slander. Maintain your mental poise even in adverse circumstances. All creatures of the world are the progeny of Mother *Gayatri*. The Mother indwells all. This awareness should be the basis of all activities of the *sadhak* while heading the path of *sanyam*, *svadhyaya*, *sadhana* and *seva* and inspiring others, too, to do the same.

The *Navaratri sadhana* completed in this lofty state of mind and within the framework of the above mentioned prescriptions will certainly prove to be the bestower of heavenly blessings of *Gayatri Mahashakti* and *Gurusatta* on the *sadhak*. The *sadhak* must participate in the *Havana* (offerings into the sacred *yagya*-fire) on the *puṇahuti* day

praying for universal peace, well-being, and happiness with every oblation.

My Life

Its Legacy and Message - 10

**Second round of pilgrimage and projection of the field of work
(Autobiography of Poojya Gurudev Pt. Sriram Sharma Acharya -
Continued)**

A period of about ten years had passed since I had been summoned to the *Himalayas* to appear in the first test. It was not considered necessary to call me in between. I used to see *Gurudev* in the same posture in which I had seen him for the first time and he used to express his approval of what I was doing. Never did I feel that I was alone. Throughout these ten years I felt that he was always with me.

The struggle for freedom of India was continuing. The weather was fine. I again received a message, after I had returned from a visit to Sabarmati *Āshram* in 1937, to reach the *Himalayas*. His orders could not be ignored. I informed my family members and started for the pilgrimage, the very next day. Motorable road was up to Uttarkashi only. Road construction work beyond Uttarkashi was in progress.

The route was known to me. Weather was not so cold as it was last time. *Chattis* were not desolate as pilgrims were coming and going. I found no difficulty this time. I had comparatively less luggage with me. Although I was not feeling as comfortable as at home, the inconveniences of the journey on the whole were not unbearable.

I was not put to tests like the ones to which I had been subjected last time. The way up to Gangotri was well-beaten and known. Only the track of fourteen miles from Gangotri to Gomukh changed every year due to melting of ice and breaking and falling of rocks. Small rivulets also sometimes changed their course on account of falling of rocks. This route can be crossed by seeking guidance of some local persons or by using one's own hunch and intuition. In this manner, I reached Gomukh.

I had to cover the rest of the journey with *Gurudev's* messenger. He was a shadowy person of the status of *Virbhadra* and was in his astral body. *Gurudev* used to give different assignments to him from time to time. Whenever I visited the *Himalayas*, he used to guide me from Gomukh to Nandanvan and back. By his help I reached the destination in comparatively less time. There was no conversation between the two of us during these journeys together.

As soon as I reached Nandanvan *Gurudev* appeared before me in his astral body. My excitement and joy knew no bounds. My lips started trembling and the eyes became wet with tears. I felt as if some separated vital organ of my own body had been miraculously restored to me and I had been made whole again. As a symbol of his deep love, he put his hand on my head. The formality of adoration and blessings was thus completed. *Gurudev* hinted to me about meeting the *Risis* again for seeking their guidance. I was

overwhelmed.

Almost all the *Risis* of *Satyug* live in this region of the inaccessible *Himalayas* in their astral bodies. I had met them there earlier. Although they do not need any specific place or objects for maintenance of their astral bodies, they have each, for their convenience, reserved a specific cave.

In my first visit, I could simply bow before them and received their blessings indirectly. This time I had the privilege to listen to their messages. *Gurudev* took and introduced me to each one of them. Their forms appeared as condensed light. But when I became aware of and identified myself with my subtle body I could see them in physical bodies in which they lived in *Satyug*. They were in the same forms in which worldly people see them in their imagination. Necessary formalities were observed. I prostrated on their feet. They touched my head. I was thrilled and was overwhelmed with joy.

Coming to the main purpose, they said through *paravani* that the life-transforming missions that they had initiated for upliftment of humanity while in their physical bodies had become almost extinct. What remained was nothing but their ruins. They said that they are deeply pained when by their divine insight they perceive the present conditions. The entire region from Haridwar to Gangotri was the region of *Risis* in which they used to remain engrossed in *tapascharya*. There were several *Âshrams* here and there, on the lines of *Gurukul Âranyak* of *Risi* Jamadagni at Uttarkashi. All *Risis* were engaged in their own research work and *tapascharya*. *Devtas*(gods) used to live where the *Risis* lived in their astral forms at present. After the ice age everything has changed and the missions of *Risis* have almost become extinct.

The *Risis* said that some temples have, no doubt, been built here and there in Utrakhand so that offerings in the form of money could be made to deities and the priests (*pujaris*) may earn their livelihood. But nobody asks for or gives an indication of who the *Risis* were, when they lived in physical form and what they did. Thus *Risi* traditions have almost vanished.

All the *Risis* whom I was introduced repeated almost the same sad story. While bidding farewell there were tears in their eyes. It appeared as if all of them were sad and afflicted with sorrow. What could I say? How could I do the missionary work, which so many *Risis* used to do? I had no strength of my own to do it. I was moved when I saw them heavy-laden with sadness. I thought, had God made me capable enough, I would not have remained mute and returned in this manner after seeing the *Risis*. Silence overtook me. I was stupefied. There were tears in my eyes. It pained me as if I had been stung by a scorpion to see so many *Risis* (who were all great and most capable) so unhappy, helpless and concerned.

Gurudev's soul and my soul were vibrating in synchronicity. We were looking at each other. His face was also sad. Oh God! What an odd time has come when no successor of these *Risis* has been born? Their lineage has come to an end. Not a single purposeful activity which was initiated by the *Risis* is alive at present. There are crores of *brahmanas* and millions of (so-called) saints. If amongst them there had been only ten or twenty true *brahmanas* or saints, they would have worked wonders like Buddha or Gandhi.

I recalled that in the past when the princess (daughter of the king) of Kashi shed tears and asked, "Who will revive the Vedas?" Kumaril Bhatt appeared and said, "Please do not lament so long as Kumaril is alive on earth." Kumaril Bhatt achieved what he undertook to do. But today there is no *brahmana*, no saint; and a *Risi* is almost out of question. Only hypocrites are seen screaming everywhere like wolves disguised as lambs. Such ideas filled my mind for the whole day after I had returned to my cave. *Gurudev* was reading my mind. He, too, was unhappy like me.

Gurudev said, "Then do one thing. Let us again go to meet all the *Risis*. Tell them: "If you so direct, I may sow the seeds but you will have to do the manuring and watering so that the crop may grow. At least by making such an offer you will feel much relieved". Also ask them how to make a beginning and what will be its outline. Also tell them, "I will definitely do something. If all of you are kind enough to shower your grace, there is bound to be greenery in this deserted graveyard".

On *Gurudev's* command I could even say that irrespective of the consequences I was prepared to jump into the fire. *Gurudev* could read my mind. This time, I saw his face beaming with joy like *Brahmakamal*. Both of us were quiet but happy. We decided to again meet all the *Risis* whom we had met last night. When they saw us again, each one of them expressed satisfaction as well as amazement.

I stood spellbound, with folded hands and head bowed down before them. *Gurudev* conveyed my aspiration, resolve and zeal to them indirectly in *paravani* and said, "He does not lack life-transforming energy. He will do whatever he promises to do. Kindly indicate how the seeds of the tasks left unfinished by you are to be sown. If manuring, watering etc. is done by us, his efforts will not be in vain."

Thereafter, *Gurudev* invited them all to attend, in astral bodies, the *purahuti* of *Sahasra-Kundi Gayatri yagya* which was to be performed at Mathura on the completion of *Gayatri Mahapurashcharanas* in the year 1958 and pointing towards me said, "He is monkey but *Hanuman*, a bear but *Jamvant*, a vulture but *Jatayu*. Kindly direct him and rest assured that what has been left unfinished will be completed and the sapling will grow up into a huge tree." He further said, "Why should we be disappointed? Why should we not rely on him when he had discharged with great devotion responsibilities, which were entrusted to him during his past births?"

This talk was going on with one of the *Risis* but hardly did it take a moment for this invitation to reach them all and they gathered together. Disappointment disappeared, hope was revived, and future programme was chalked out. It was resolved that seedlings of divine tasks that the *Risis* had been doing be sown again in field, a nursery of fragrant flowers of divine aims and purposes be nurtured and then transplanted all over the globe, so that the world blooms again with divine fragrance.

This was the scheme of building Shantikunj, which was to be undertaken after conclusion of my stay at Mathura. The schemes of buildings Gayatri Nagar and raising the structure of Brahmavarchas Shodh Sansthan (Research Institute) were also explained in detail. Each and every word, which I was told, was engraved on my mental canvas and I decided that soon after completion of twenty-four *Gayatri purashcharanas* of twenty-four lakhs each, I would prepare an outline of this work. It was impossible that a person who was recipient of *Gurudev's* protection and patronage could ever be

unsuccessful.

I stayed for a day more. Explaining in detail about the *punahuti* of *purashcharanas* *Gurudev* said, "I have been closely observing all the events and activities of the past few years of your life and rectifying the lapses, if any. I called you this time to explain to you the plans for the future. There is not much time now left for completion of your *purashcharanas*. Go to Mathura, complete them and start the second phase of your life from Mathura.

"Next to Prayag, Mathura is a central place in the country. It is convenient from the point of view of communication. After independence, your political activities will be over, but the work towards the fulfillment of your life's primary mission will continue. Political restructuring is bound to be there. Government will look after the economic restructuring and other allied matters but three more transformations will have to be initiated through the agency of moral and spiritual movements. The country became enslaved and weak not because there was paucity of brave persons who could defeat the aggressors. Internal strife and weaknesses were responsible for the downfall and degeneration of the country. Others had only taken advantage of these shortcomings.

"Moral, intellectual and social transformations are to be accomplished. For this, it is necessary to gather around you a band of dedicated and awakened persons and to explain to them the highlights of the work to be done. So, leave your village and go to Mathura, hire a small house there and publish a monthly magazine and also publish material relating to these three kinds of transformations. In due course, you have to build a grand *Gayatri* temple near Mathura in the land where *Durvasa Risi* had performed *sadhana* and make arrangements for the board and lodging of your colleagues. Then you have to perform a *Mahayagya*, after the completion of twenty-four *Mahapurashcharanas*, by way of *punahuti*. It has always been the tradition in *anusthans* to perform *yagya* along with the *jap*. After completion of twenty-four *anusthans*, each of twenty-four lakhs of *japs*, you have to perform a *Mahayagya* in a *yagyashala* comprising of one thousand *kunds* and offer twenty-four lakh *ahutis*. On that occasion foundations of a huge organization will be laid which will initiate the work of mass awakening through the agency of moral and spiritual movements. This is the first phase of the completion of *anusthan*. After discharging these responsibility, you have to go to *Sapta Sarovar*, *Haridwar*, live there and complete the work of revival of *Risi* traditions for which you have given your word to the *Risis*."

Gurudev explained in detail how the work at Mathura was to be done. He also indicated the outline of the work of translation of ancient scriptures, their publication and publicity and setting up of an organization of *Gayatri parivar*.

I had assured *Gurudev* in my very first meeting with him that nothing would be left undone to carry out his directions. How were the needs of money and manpower to be met for the accomplishment of so huge a task? *Gurudev* read my mind, laughed and said, "Do not worry about these material and human resources. Start sowing whatever you possess. Its harvest will be hundredfold. All the tasks which have been entrusted to you will be fulfilled." *Gurudev* himself indicated to me what I possessed, how and when it was to be sown and how and when it would yield the rich harvest.

I kept everything which *Gurudev* said firmly in my mind. There was no question of forgetting it. How could a soldier forget the command of his general? I could not neglect or disregard what I was asked to do.

Our interaction concluded. This time I was directed to stay in the *Himalayas* only for six months. All necessary arrangements were made for my stay. *Gurudev's Virbhadra* left me at Gomukh. I reached the indicated destination and stayed there for six months. When I returned home my health was much better. My happiness and earnestness had increased. It was reflected on my face. People started saying that there was some haven of happiness and comfort in the *Himalayas* to which I periodically retired and from which I returned every time far more healthier and happier.

I now prepared to shift to Mathura. I had visited Mathura once but did not know anybody there. There was great scarcity of houses in those days at Mathura. I went in search of a small house suitable for the publication of *Akhand Jyoti*. After considerable search, I found a house in Ghiyamandi, which was lying vacant for quite a long time. The landlady was an old woman. When I asked about the rent, she said it was fifteen rupees per month. She handed over the key of the house to me. I went inside and found that in all there were fifteen rooms in it. Although the house was in a dilapidated condition, it was not costly from my point of view. I paid one month's rent in advance. The landlady was extremely happy.

I went to my village, brought my family and luggage and started living in it. There was some whispering in the whole locality as if my decision to live in this house was a matter of astonishment. On enquiry, I was told this was a house haunted by ghosts. Whosoever had come to live in it had suffered loss of life and property; and nobody could stay here long. I was told that being an outsider; I had been befooled, because nobody could have rented out such a huge, three-storeyed house having fifteen rooms, for a paltry monthly rent of rupees fifteen. I was warned that I would be harmed.

I decided to continue living in that house because so cheap, spacious and useful accommodation could not be had elsewhere. It turned out to be true that the house was haunted by evil spirits. There was tumult and turmoil throughout the first night on the roof of the house and shrieking sounds of jesting, wagging, weeping and fighting were heard. There was no electricity in the house. I took a lantern, and went up and saw some shadowy male and female figures running away. I could not meet them. They did not harm me. This continued for about ten days.

One night, I went up at about 1 A.M. with a lantern in my hand and asked the shadowy figures to stop. They stopped. I told them, "You have been living in this house for quite a long time. Let us come to a gentlemanly compromise. You may live in seven rooms on the top floor and we will stay in the remaining eight rooms. Thus you will not be inconvenienced. We will also not be bothered." Nobody replied, although they remained standing. From the next day everything changed. On my part, I complied with the terms of the compromise. They also appeared to be agreeable to the arrangements. Sounds of some movement on the roof were, no doubt, heard sometimes but there was no mischief or disturbance, which could upset our sleep, frighten the children or cause any

obstruction in the work. I got the damaged portion of the house repaired at my cost.

Publication of *Akhand Jyoti* was again started from this house. I started corresponding with *parijans* and associates from here. In the first year itself about two thousand subscribers were enrolled. I used to write letters to them and invited them for personal contacts.

I used to study while going for a walk for two hours daily. My *anusthan* continued in my small room of worship. In place of political work relating to the Indian National Congress, I speeded up my writing work. My pen started moving in writing books and articles for *Akhand Jyoti* and translating ancient sacred *Sanskrit* texts for educating the masses through the medium of moral and spiritual instruction. *Akhand Jyoti* was printed in my own hand-operated press. This routine went on. But I was worried throughout how money and manpower would be arranged to accomplish the huge task of publication, installation of the press, building of Gayatri Tapobhumi and performing a huge *yagya*, which had not been performed since after the *Mahabharata*? For this the message of *Gurudev*, "Sow and Reap" used to appear before my open eyes often. This message was now to be materialized, in the field of society. I had to become a true *Brahmana*, devoid of all possessions (*aparigrahi*). My mind started constantly visualizing the outline for the achievement of this noble aim.

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Amrit Vani

The Foundational Emblems of Indian Culture: Shikha and Sutra

(Translation of Hindi discourse: "Bhartiya Sanskrati Ke Pratik Shikha Aur Sutra ")

Let us begin with the collective chanting of the Gayatri Mantra:

*"Om Bhur Buvaj Swaj| Tatsaviturvarenyam Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi| Dhiyo Yonaj
Pracodayat ||"*

Idol Worship and The Importance of Symbols:

Sisters and Brothers,

I often talk about the importance and necessity of the devotion and worship of God. Worshiping the idols of deities is an integral part of the Hindu religious practices. Multiple representations of divine manifestations in the idol forms were visualized by our *rishis* of

the Vedic times. The specific forms symbolize specific divine qualities and powers of the manifestations of God and also incorporate ethical teachings for us. The Arya Samajis do not believe in idol-worship, but they also respectfully place the idols and photographs of Swami Dayanand Saraswati in their *yagyashalas*, community halls and offices and pay due regards before these symbols of his memories. The followers of Islam are against idol-worship. But, paying reverence to the sacred black stone (*sange avsad*) at Kaba by kissing it is essential for making their holy pilgrimage to Makka-Sharif complete. So, the rectangular sacred black stone is for them what a round, smooth black idol of Shiva is for a Hindu a sacred symbol of God. Every religion has its holy symbols and rituals of worship.

The communists deny all religions and even deny the existence of God. Worshiping His idols is therefore a mark of blind faith and absurdity in their views. But, what if somebody burns their red flag, or tears off the manuscript of the manifesto of communism? They would certainly feel hurt and insulted and react furiously against any such attempt. But why should they? After all, the flag is only a piece of cloth and there must be several copies of their manifesto available in print. Well, it is not the physical entity, but the sentiments, the faith in the implications associated with it that count. So many of our freedom fighters had dared to risk their lives for protecting our national flag; great revolutionaries had sacrificed their lives by placing this mark of our national prestige in place of the British flag those days!

The idols we enshrine in the temples, the Holy Scriptures like the Vedas, Bhagvad Gita, the Ramayana, and the Guru Granth Sahib are symbols of deities for us. We worship them. The symbols of our faith, our reverence for them are the source of light in our lives. Many times people also place the photographs of their ideal heroes, their guides, their gurus, in their houses and at their place of work. My disciples have also placed the photographs of Mataji and myself at the Gayatri Tapobhumi Mathura and in our old house (now Akhand Jyoti Sansthan) in our memories since we left that place. This indicates their affection and respect for us.

Well! In fact, emblems carry within them a message, an effect and have great importance in our lives as sources of inspiration and moral support and guidance. They have intimate linkage with sentiments and create immense impact on human psychology. I do have great regards for them and have also enshrined them in the form of idols, pictures and other models. Look at the temples of Goddess Gayatri at Shantikunj and Brahmvarchas for example; or the model of the Himalayas there. Some of you might wonder then why do I sometimes criticize symbolic worship and even admonish you against it in some of my writings and speeches? Good, if you have noticed that, I will certainly admonish you if you remain stuck only to the symbol and learn nothing from it. If you regard an idol as omnipotent and believe that just bending your head and praying before it will solve all your problems, then you are living in a fantasy, in blind faith. Then, for some of you Lord Krishna sitting in the temple of Badrinath would be superior to that in the temples of Mathura or Vrindawan; while the latter would be mightier for some others.... Does it have any sense?

Prophet Hazarat Mohammed had opposed idol worship because of the sinful customs

that were propagated and practiced through it during his times. The place where he was born was dominated by the blind rule of “might is right” those days. Dacoits and hoodlums used to rob the villages and take away all the crops, cattle and young women for their pleasure; some of them used to possess ten to fifty women. Some of the children born by them were allowed to grow to serve as bonded labors or work in the dacoit gangs. As it was found a waste to raise the rest, those kids were killed in the name of sacrifices before the giant idols made in the lands occupied by the dacoits. The angelic soul of Hazarat Mohammed was born in human form to eliminate such heinous acts and insane customs. He destroyed the roots of such evils by opposing the mindless and cruel ‘rituals of worship’. It was the necessity of that time and that place. This does not mean that all kinds of idol-worship are bad or irrational.

You must remember that all the idols of Divine manifestations are simply the source of reminding us of God. We may, for example, go to the temples of Lord Krishna and also bend our head and offer prayers. But we should know that this “*pranam*” and prayers are not for the stone that is enshrined in the temple. Rather, these are for Lord Krishna, whose divine incarnation in human form had taken place about five thousands years ago to bestow the light of divinity, to establish the law of righteousness, to give new direction of enlightened progress to the world. The idols simply help awakening our devotional sentiments. These may activate the linkage of our inner mind with Him during meditation or emotionally engrossed prayers, if we have really purified our mind and have adopted the true meaning of devotional faith in our lives.

Our worshipping the idols is no better than kids’ toy game if we do not have any living aspiration to imbibe divine attributes and values and make no efforts to materialize our worship by following the disciplines and teachings of the divine incarnations in real life. What is the point in saluting the book of Bhagavad Gita or lighting a lamp near it, if we don’t read it and learn from what Lord Krishna had taught to Arjuna?

The blind attachment to the gross symbol with a desire of gaining favor from this inert ‘God’ in return for the offerings of worship make a mockery of the deep philosophy and psychological intensity underlying idol-worship. It is this superficial devotion and emotional excitement of ‘affinity’ with the symbols of deities that correspond to blind faith and superstition, which are criticized by the savants. These misconceptions and associated insane customs were at their peak in the medieval times. The real meaning and importance of the emblems of Indian Culture, founded by the *rishis* (the seer-sages of the Vedic Age), were also lost in the mists of this dark phase of ignorance and religious anarchy.

Origin of Religion and Culture:

If we are to revive the glory of religion, we will have to look into its origin. The varieties of communes and sects mushroomed in the field of religion since the post Vedic Age need to be converged towards their fundamental unity. Recalling the emblems (and the associated knowledge) of this origin could be one effective way of achieving this goal. I have always believed in that. Our national flag is the symbol of our national unity, strength and prestige; we all, irrespective of whether we are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs,

Christians or someone else by faith, respect it. See how a symbol unites us!

What is the origin of the Vedic Religion and the Indian Culture? It is the ultimate knowledge, the preeminent force of spirituality, the divine light, and the eternal values, embedded in Gayatri Mantra. I have therefore motivated you all towards the *sadhana* of Gayatri Mantra. This mantra is the root of the Vedas. You may be follower of any incarnation of God. That is fine. For example, you may chant “*Shri Krisnaya Namō Namaḥ*”; very good, continue with that. But that won't lead to unity. The incarnation of Lord Krishna is said to have occurred about five thousand years ago; was there no religion before that? Then, what was the mode of devotion at that time? In fact Lord Krishna himself was a devotee of Gayatri Mantra. Look at the Valimiki Ramayana; it mentions of Lord Ram also having given the *diksha* of Gayatri Mantra. Further back, this mantra has been described in the vedic scriptures as also being the root of inspiration and activation of the powers of the eternal Trinity: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. It is said to be the source of all creation and existence in the gross and the subliminal realms of manifestation.

You all should also adopt the spiritual devotional practice of the Gayatri Mantra together with whatever other mode of worship you are used to. You may keep the written script of the mantra at your place of worship or enshrine an idol or picture of the deity Mother Gayatri as symbolized by the *rishis* to represent the divine power of this mantra. Collective efforts from all of us will lead to convergence and unity of all cults / sects and revive the glory of the divine culture which emanated from the universal (vedic) religion.

Shikha and Sutra:

What are the emblems of this divine culture (the *Rishi* Culture or the original Indian Culture) that remind us of its principles and disciplines to be followed in human life? These are *Shikha* and *Sutra*, the idols of Gayatri that are enshrined in the temple of the human body. [*Shikha* is a knot of hair, tied at the crown-point (right above the suture) on the central top of the head; this point is given distinctive importance in the science of yoga and spirituality as the point of contact with the brain-centre of intellectual and emotional sensitivity. *Sutra* is the sacred thread, also called *yagyopavita*, which is worn on the shoulders and the chest after the sacrament of *upnayana* or thread-ceremony].

Shikha symbolizes the presence of discerning intellect, farsightedness and the deity of knowledge upon our head. It is a flag of human culture. It reminds us of the religious principles of morality, righteousness, responsibility and dutiful awareness. The moral and social duties of human life are worn on our shoulders and kept attached to our hearts in symbolic form as the sacred thread of *yagyopavita* (*Sutra*). It also hangs on our back. It has tied us from all sides, as a reminder of the moral disciplines and ethical duties as human beings. With the advent of different religious doctrines and diversities in the religious practices *shikha* and *sutra* might have gotten confined only to the Hindus, but the principles and teachings associated with them are eternal and universal. I have written several articles and booklets to elucidate these facts with historical evidences.

This body is the fort of the individual self upon which the flag of *shikha* is hoisted as the mark of the dignified values and virtues of humanity. The foreign invaders, the crusaders against the Vedic (Indian) Culture had attempted to eliminate the roots of this divine culture by first cutting the *shikha* and removing the *sutra* from the bodies of the

followers of Hindu religion. Thousands of innocent heads were cut off just for protesting against this attack. It was for protecting the glory of these universal emblems of human religion that Maharana Pratap, Vir Shivaji, Guru Govind Sigh, and other great martyrs of India had dedicated their noble lives. Today, we have forgotten their sacrifices and done what even the foreign invaders of the medieval times could not do. We have let ourselves be swept away from our roots by the storm of cultural pollution coming from the West. We have lost faith in our own values. We feel ashamed in wearing the *sutra* and keeping the *shikha*.

If we go to some college and ask the students whether they wear the *sutra*, they would look at us blankly. They would not have even heard about it. It is not their fault. We have never bothered to tell them about these things. How will we explain the meaning and purpose behind these symbols when we ourselves don't know it? We have just shunned such things as signs of superstitions, blind faith and backwardness. The braided or tied hairs of women have at least preserved the custom of *shikha*. But look at the boys; they may have long hair as per the fashion but maintaining the *shikha*! Just don't talk about it!! On one hand we are running blindly after 'modernity' and on the other, we have let ourselves be entrapped in blind customs in the name of religion for example, in many parts of the Indian society, girls / women are deprived of chanting or even knowing the Gayatri Mantra; they can't wear or even touch the *yagyopavit (sutra)*.
Gayatri Mantra; they can't wear or even touch the *yagyopavit (sutra)*.

The military officers wear different kinds of stars/stripes/badges as signs of their rank; the police uniform also has different kinds of badges stitched on it, which reflect the identity of the rank/post/ state, etc of the wearer. If any police or army personal is found guilty of deviating from his duties, the first punishment is that his medals and badges are taken away. This is like wiping out his identity. No penalty would be more painful to him than losing his uniform. The Christians wear a cross; few people would know that even the custom of wearing necktie had begun as a mark of wearing the thread-symbol of the holy cross. The Sikhs keep *kirpan* (tiny sword), comb and maintain their hair uncut; they also wear a turban. Then what do the Hindus have as a sign of their identity of being the followers of the Vedic religion? If a Hindu has left *shikha* and *sutra*, should not he/she be regarded as someone who has disowned his religion?

Friends! I am not telling you to become fundamentalists. But I am trying to make you aware of the importance of the symbols of our cultural dignity, which our forefathers the great seers and sages, the scientists of yoga and spirituality had invented. These are not only the symbols of the eternal values and disciplines suitable for men and women of all ages, in all eras, but also have scientific and spiritual relevance. I have mentioned about these in some of my articles. I have also requested the *parijans* of the Gayatri Pariwar to propagate these teachings in scientific light with logical justifications during the *yagyas* and other religious ceremonies. If we explain the meaning, purpose and importance of these sacred symbols of our faith, there is no reason why our children, our acquaintances would not respect and adopt these basic symbols of the vedic culture.

(To be continued in the next issue)