

# Sthita Prajna



## Guru Vandana

*Vande gurunam charanaravindam  
Samdarsitasvatmasukhambudhinam  
Jnanasya yesham gulikayamanam  
Samsara halahalamohashantau*

I worship the lotus feet of the guru who has revealed the source of the eternal ocean of happiness, to the Guru who is the very embodiment of the supreme spirit, by whose blessings one is released from sadness and desires.

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**VOLUME 9**

**ISSUE 3**

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## FROM THE EDITORS :

*“Human life is a gift from God. We the children of God have great potential divinity .Through selfless service our hearts will open, the bud of life will blossom, and we will be worthy children of God.”*

### **Paramahasa Prajnanananda**

*In our spring issue “Message of the Master” talks of how sincere and regular meditation can help penetrate the veiling power of delusion, Illusion and error.*

*In “Prajnanavani”, Paramahansa Prajnananandaji comments on a few verses from Adi Shankara’s Bhajagovindam, which stress on the essentials of spiritual sadhana.*

*Rama Katha takes us to Lord Rama’s stay at Panchavati. Pariprashna answers questions on scriptural reading.*

*Kaivalya Upanishad our series on Self Knowledge emphasizes on concentration, purity of the mind and complete trust in god, as the key factors for gaining Self Knowledge.*

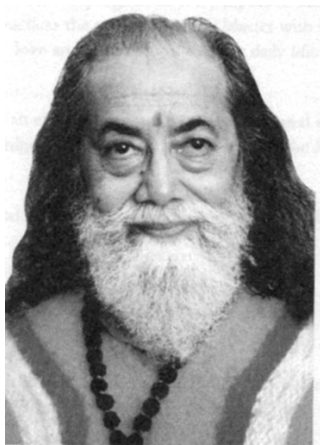
*Relevant excerpts from some of Paramahansa Prajnanananda’s seminal works, ‘The Universe Within’ and the ‘Changing Nature of Relationships’, continue elaborating on body, mind and soul and life’s basic relationships.*

*‘Practical Spirituality’, is a feature article by a literacy professor on her recent teaching and training experience at our Balashram. Balashram was a site for many visitors and happenings from January through March.*

*With Baba Prajnananandaji in residence at our beautiful Balighai ashram, the gurukulam was a hub of activity with the International Seminar and the visits of countless spiritual personalities and dignitaries. We bring you the happenings and highlights at the gurukulam as well as the ashrams across the world. We hope you enjoy this issue and those to come.*

# MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER

## THE VEILING POWER OF DELUSION, ILLUSION AND ERROR



A verse in the Gita says,

“as fire is obscured by the smoke, as dust covers a mirror, or a child remains hidden in the womb of the mother, so the strongest desire and passion, surround and obscure Self consciousness and spiritual knowledge.”

Gita III::38

If you do not meditate, you will feel that God is very far from you. You will be absorbed in delusion, illusion and error. If you live in delusion you cannot see your real face. Delusion, illusion and error and strong ambition for worldly objects cover the human mind with darkness, just as a mirror is covered with dust. On the other hand, when you meditate,

you will rise from lower centers to the top and realize that you and He are one, and have always been one. With this illumination, you see that your own face which you do not posses, belongs to the soul. You no longer see your face in the mirror-you see the face of God. If you take the advice of your guru preceptor and practice yoga, it is like cleaning the surface of the mirror.

Automatically your real face becomes visible.

Until you meditate deeply, you cannot see the fire that is covered by smoke, or you cannot see the divine living baby covered by the womb of the mother. Spiritual power removes the veiling power of delusion and brings enlightenment.

With spiritual knowledge, human ignorance, which is like a covering of dust on a mirror, is cleansed. The more you live a spiritual life, the more your power rises into higher centers. Then you can comprehend God.

Your third eye would be opened. The ignorance of every human being disappears when spiritual knowledge, the light of God, flashes

There are three steps of meditation for God realization, *karma*-work, *jnana*-knowledge and *prema* –love for God. The more your delusion disappears and you come up nearer the soul, the more you will perceive the divine movement sensation and hear the divine sound within you. Through this you will find *prema*, love for God and divine ecstasy.

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## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

- April 2 : Mahasamadhi Day of Swami Brahmanandaji
- April 12 : Ram Navami
- May 10 : Birthday of Shriyukteshwarji
- May 17 : Jagatpur Ashram Foundation day
- May 17 : Birthday of Buddha
- May 27 : Birthday of Gurudev
- May 27 : Birthday of Gurupremanandaji

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# PRAJNANAVANI - THE VOICE OF WISDOM

## ESSENTIALS OF SPIRITUAL SADHANA

(Bhaja Govindam verses 28-30)



*bhaja govindam bhaja govindam  
govindam bhaja mudhamate  
samprapte sannihite kale  
nahi nahi rakshati dukrim karane*

### Discipline of the Senses

‘People indulge in sense enjoyment. Later in the end alas there is disease in the body. Although in the end, death is the only refuge in the world, they still do not desist from sinful activities.’

Mind goes out through the senses -through the eyes, ears, nose indulging in the sense enjoyments. The body which enjoys the sensual pleasures will later be afflicted with diseases.

Most diseases, both physical and mental, are because of the excessive use of the sense organs. People who run after sense pleasures are bound to face sorrow and disappointment as they do not give permanent happiness and cause disease. One who becomes a slave to worldly enjoyment loses the sense of discrimination. Even in the face of death, the mind does not refrain from sinful behavior.

Live a life of understanding and prayer. There is no end to enjoyment. The more you indulge the more will be the desire. Sense enjoyments only make the senses stronger and the craving grow more and more. It is like adding fuel to the fire. Too much indulgence leads to debilitation of the body and mind. Death is inevitable and when you have to surrender to death, at that time how can you remember god with such an extrovert mind. We should understand the insignificance of the worldly pleasures and develop the sense of discrimination and strive for higher goal. One should not give in to senses and lead a wasteful life. We should try repeatedly to gain immortality.

Control of breath, withdrawal of the senses, discrimination between the real and the unreal, control of mind with the repetition of the divine name should be practiced and practiced with great care.

*Sage Patanjali* in his aphorisms on yoga gives eight steps of discipline *yama* – restraint of the senses, *niyama* – restraint of the mind, *asana* – posture, *pranayama* – regulation of the breath, *pratyahara* –

withdrawal of the senses, *dharana* – concentration, *dhyana* – meditation and *samadhi* – absorption in the self. Out of these the latter five are mentioned here.

### **Regulation of Breath**

*Pranayama* means the regulation of breath. For any type of work we do, the breath changes. There is a different type of breath for walking, eating, talking etc. So *pranayama* means regulation of breath and also of your activities. Mind and breath are closely related. Let the mind be elevated through your breath. The mind thus calmed through *pranayama* should be withdrawn from running after material things. So the next step is *pratyahara*.

*Pratyahara* is withdrawing into yourself. In the Gita, an example is given of the turtle which withdraws its limbs into itself. This is not an easy task and can only be practiced by constant alertness and discrimination. You have to watch the mind and see through deceptive situations by discrimination. Previously, say you liked to eat sweets. You know eating too many sweets is not good. Now you teach the

mind that it is not good and stop eating them. This is withdrawing.

Discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent. The lack of discrimination between the real and the unreal is the cause of most miseries. *Atma* is real and *anatma* is the unreal. Identifying with the body, mind and senses which are not real man suffers. Do not be too excited about impermanent things. Accept everything as a gift of God. When we receive sad news we get emotionally disturbed. When you hear of the death of a dear one you are in deep sorrow. With a simple analytical mind enquire into the truth. You are neither the body, nor the senses. Why this death is causing pain in me. The body is impermanent. Only God is real. Why worry about the temporary thing? Analyze – practice breath control, discriminate real and unreal.

Once this discrimination is recognized we should constantly contemplate on what is real. With repetitive chanting or *japa* one can achieve inner stillness. By this path you can get *Samadhi*. *Samadhi* is absence of perception. In

*Samadhi* all connections with the *anatma* are given up. *samadhi* also means a balanced intellect.

These should be practiced with care and the teacher stresses with great care. Experience results only from the intense sadhana. Spiritual life is not a theory. Take care of the mind through all these methods.

### **Surrender to the Guru**

‘With complete devotion and surrender to the lotus feet of the Lord, free yourself from the bonds of the world without delay. Thus if you discipline the senses and mind, you could behold the Lord seated in your own heart.’

To advance in any profession you need a teacher to guide and direct you. In Hindu tradition, the disciple always learns sitting at the feet of the guru. The feet of the guru does not have to mean always literally. One should follow the foot prints or the instructions of the guru with unflinching devotion and surrender. It is difficult to grasp Vedanta without the guidance of the guru.

Chandyogyanopanishad says,



*acharyavan purusha veda* – he alone that obtains a guru will realize atman.

Even people with profound knowledge of the scriptures are advised to have a Guru to guide them in the path of self realization. A real Guru is one who is well versed in the Vedas and whose mind constantly dwells in Brahman. Guru is one who can help remove the ignorance of the disciple. The Guru teaches us to practice the control of the extrovert mind and the senses. The disciple should be one who knows the futility of the worldly life and has the determination to realize the self. He should

be a sincere seeker with an intense desire for liberation and should have the qualities of discrimination and non attachment for the world. Having thus disciplined the mind and the senses, when the disciple surrenders at the feet of the Guru, soon he becomes free from the bondage of the world and beholds the Lord seated in his own heart.

Be devoted to the Guru, discipline your mind and be free. To realize the truth within there is no other way than to take refuge at the feet of the Guru who has treaded the path and can direct us.

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2nd Anniversary of Matru Ashram Foundation Day  
31st January, 2011

# 104<sup>TH</sup> JAYANTI CELEBRATION OF PARAMAHAMSA HARIHARANANDAJI

May 27, 2011



*"I have only one quality. I love God. That is all. I love God's creation. People come to me because of my love, my simplicity. They love me. Remember - God is love. The love of God will manifest in those who love God. If love of God is manifested in them others will love them. If a flower is blooming, the bees will come. A bee will not come to a plastic flower because it has no nectar. The flower must have nectar and that nectar is within you. Meditate and be realized and the whole world will come to you.*

*People from all over the world will come to sit near you and bow to you. Be humble, loving, be kind and be sweet. I always tried to be all these things, and it is possible through meditation."*

## **Paramahansa Hariharananda**

Birthday of Gurudev Baba Hariharanandaji will be celebrated in the divine presence of Paramahansa Prajnananandaji with Swami Atmavidyanandaji, Brahmacharis and yogacharyas, at the mother center, Homestead, Florida, with a five day seminar of special worship, discourses and guided meditations.

All other ashrams around the world will also celebrate the Birthday with special worship, prayers and meditations.

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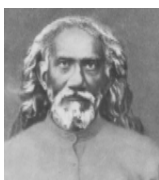
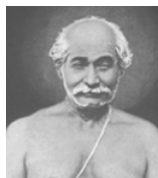


*"To renounce the world is not easy. Wherever man is, the world clings to him."*

Mahavatara Babaji

*"The Guru is always conducting everything; he is always present as the kutastha. Guru is all pervading and permanently gracious. You are your own Guru within your Self."*

Lahiri Mahasaya



*"According to Kriya Yoga one will surely reach the ultimate goal if one keeps one's inspiration fixed on the ideal and one's attention completely absorbed in the soul."*

Swami Shriyukteshwar

*"Strong desire, keeping good company and practice are the three steps for quick spiritual evolution."*

Sanyal Mahasaya



*"Be introspect. Take stock of yourself and your habits and find out what is standing in your way."*

Paramahansa Yogananda

*"Scholarship of the scriptures is of little significance. Was Ramakrishna Paramahansa a great scholar? Yet every word from his mouth was a scripture."*

Swami Satyananda



*"Opportunity should not be neglected for it may never return."*

Paramahansa Hariharananda

*"One has to choose the practice that gives peace and calmness and makes one's mind more focused."*

Paramahansa Prajnanananda



# **PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY**

## **THE QUIET MIRACLE OF BALASHRAM**

I'm sitting in Bhubaneshwar airport on my way back to Hyderabad from a five-day journey to Orissa. I've spent the last few days doing what I love best, working with children, encouraging them to voice their stories and loving them and receiving their love. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly we can bond with others, of any age, once we open up to them and allow them to open up to us. This process cuts across cultures, countries, belief systems and traditions. It cuts across race, religion, caste, and creed and allows us to embrace each other as human beings with warm vibrant souls.

As usual, when my mother and I first arrive in Bhubaneshwar after traveling from the city and all its comforts to the village of Arua, I suffer from culture shock. Even as I appreciate the lush green paddies, the doe eyed calves and the picturesque huts along the way, I dread the lack of creature comforts, the internet, soft beds, warm rugs, clean, dry bathrooms with running hot

water, the minute we set foot in the ashram I have been longing to visit.

Our first night is cold, and I struggle to keep warm under the thin covering, my teeth chattering from the unusual temperatures. After a difficult night we wake early at 5 a.m. the sounds of the children floating down to our room from their dorms upstairs.

Once we get dressed and make our way to the school, I see the children. School starts at 7 a.m. and the children must line up by 6:30 for their morning assembly. Just seeing them in their bright red sweaters and warm red hoods makes me happy and I begin to remember the reason for my visit. I have made it through the first night and now that the children are lined up before my eyes, I don't feel quite so bad anymore. What's a cold night when I can enjoy the company and the laughter and the bright beautiful faces of these young hopeful spirits. Many of them recognize my mother as Sudha Ma, who happened to serve as their

principal a couple of years ago. Some of them recognize me from my previous visit, though they were just third-graders at the time. They approach me, smiling shyly and saying my name, “Jyothi Ma’am.”

At 7 a.m. I enter the first period of the day. It is English class for the 5<sup>th</sup> graders and the teacher has kindly agreed to let me teach her class today. I introduce myself, explaining to them what a professor does and why I am there. I show them the other literate voices, anthologies, and explain that I want to help them write their own book if they are interested. They are jubilant at the thought and respond enthusiastically that yes, they do want to write their own book. Thrilled, I read them some chapters from “Beyond the Fields.” I ask them to write their name chapter and to compare their names to music, to color, to numbers, to moods. We begin.

Each day I spend several hours with the children. We meet in the morning at first period and I teach them literary devices. We write descriptions of each other and of their scariest monster. They draw and describe their drawings, using color and detail. I discuss

the five senses and painting pictures with words and they respond with amazing descriptions of the Bhuvaneshwar bazaar and the Jagannath Temple. In the afternoons, I coach the teachers, training them on literacy methods and content area reading. In the evenings, I go back to work with the students during their coaching sessions, which run from 6 to 8 p.m. We work on the chapters, introducing name, family, friends, neighborhood and dreams. The children struggle at first with the concept of family, since many of them are orphans and some are from broken homes. All of them have left their families but they eagerly retrieve submerged memories and begin to describe their lost mothers, absent fathers and the scenic villages they have left behind. They describe the new family they have found in their beloved baba and the loving brahmacharinis and teachers who have comforted them, loved them and guided them in their education. Each and every one of them is incredibly grateful for the opportunity they have been given to fulfill their potential as human beings. As I listen to



Coming  
f r o m  
California,  
where we  
struggle daily  
with the task  
of motivating  
impoverished  
students to  
come to  
school and  
learn, I

them talk eagerly about their dreams, each hope for a good education and a meaningful job intertwined with the larger goals of helping those less fortunate, I sit back in awe at their resilience and their generous nature.

One wants to be an architect, not only so he can build a home for his family but to provide housing for the entire village of people he has left behind. Another wants to be a gynecologist, so she can help the women of her village who cannot afford proper care and often die in childbirth. Yet another wants to be a teacher because he firmly believes at the tender age of 12, that ignorance is the root cause of all evil and that by educating his villagers, he can help reduce violence and theft and unhappiness.

wonder what makes these children react in such a positive way to hardship. What motivates them not only to study hard but to work towards helping others? What can I take from this that will help me train teachers to better serve their students? What is the magic formula? I can only believe that these children are being raised and educated in an environment that fosters such an outlook. If this is the atmosphere and these are the noble young citizens of the future that the school is preparing, then Hariharananda Balashram is truly fulfilling its purpose. Isn't this what education should be about? Not merely content knowledge but the inculcating of human values, the preparation for the real world and the ability to not only navigate the world but to

contribute meaningfully toward its betterment?

Though I came here to “train the teachers” and “help the children find their voice” I am leaving humbled and amazed at what is already taking place here. I have learned much more than what I have taught. Baba has shown me with his school what one man can do to help those who have no voice. He has become a shining example for the children as a noble soul who came from a tiny village and went out and conquered the world, but returned to help those he left behind.

The teachers I came here to train have taught me the power of patience, resolve and a willingness to take on the role not only of teacher, but nursemaid, mother, father, guide and mentor. They are in class by 7 a.m. and teach until 8 p.m. in the evening with a short break for lunch. They handle their own families and households and pour every ounce of energy into the hundreds of children they have adopted as their own.

And then there are the children. The children are my

heroes. They come from hard pasts and unutterable poverty. They live without parents or siblings, far from family and familiar village homes. Yet their smiling shining faces and bright eyes are a testament to their indomitable spirits and their hope and courage in the face of adversity and challenge. They are loved and it shows. They are grateful, happy and eager to share their good fortune by growing up and saving the world. This is what I call true heroism.

So as I leave Orissa, I am also full of gratitude. I am grateful for the opportunity to witness this quiet miracle, taking place in the tiny village of Arua. I am grateful that baba has allowed me to contribute in some small way to such a noble endeavor. I am grateful for this experience which has reminded me that there are much bigger challenges and much nobler goals to be met than always being comfortable. And most of all, I am grateful for the children, for reminding me that education is a gift not only to be treasured but to be used in the service of humanity and thereby God.

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# MYTHS AND METAPHORS

## RAMA KATHA



*Sri raghavam dasaradhatmajamaprameyam  
sitapatim raghukulanvaya ratna dipam.  
ajanu bahum aravindadalayatasham  
ramam nishachara vinashakaram namami*

Salutations to Sri Rama, the son of Dasaratha, the jewel of the Raghu lineage, of long arms and beautiful eyes like the lotus petals, the husband of Sita, and the destroyer of the rakshasas.

### Panchavati

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana lived in the forest in various ashrams for a period of ten years. Then they went to visit the sage Agastya of great reputation and on his advice decided to go to panchavati where they wanted to build an ashram to spend the remainder of their exile.

As soon as they entered the Dandakaranya, Rama saw many saints and sages living there. They welcomed Rama, Sita and Lakshmana with great devotion. They presented them with beautiful flowers and gave them fruits to eat. Rama spent the night at that ashram and the next morning they set out into the forest again. On reaching Panchavati, Lakshmana built a

beautiful cottage with branches and leaves. It was spacious, beautiful and pleasing to the eye. Rama was very happy with cottage built by Lakshmana. If we can expand our heart with love and compassion for all beings, and make it beautiful with purity and pleasant with equanimity., Rama will reside in our hearts. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana lived very happily in Panchavati on the banks of River Godavari.

Panchavati is a place where five types of trees are growing in one place. One is *asvattha* – the peepal tree, second is the *bilva* or the wood apple, the third is *vata* or the banyan, the fourth is *ashoka* and the fifth is *amalaki*. These are the five holy trees that are



planted together and many people meditate near them.

What is asvattha? There is a description in the Bhagavad Gita –

*urdhva mulamathassakham asvattham prahuravyayam.*

One meaning of *asvatha* is that which may not be there till tomorrow. *A* means not and *sva* means tomorrow *tha* means to exist, that means that which is constantly changing like the body. The world is also constantly changing. You can take the world or the body as the *asvatha*. The second is *bilva* also known as *sriphala*. Sri means beauty. In this world in this body we find some beauty and we are attracted to it.

Ashoka – is to go above the sorrow. In this body we have the source, which is beyond or above sorrow. The fourth is *vata*, means the banyan tree with hanging roots and when the roots touch the

ground a new tree grows and a single tree can cover acres of land. Sometimes it may be difficult even to know the original trunk. Similarly the root of our karma the cause of this world is difficult to find and the fifth is *amalaki*. In the ayurvedic medicine *triphala* – *haritaki* *amalaki* and *vibhitaki* are used. *A* means without and *malaki* means impurities. That which completely removes impurities from the body is *amalaki*. These five trees together represent the world, where you can achieve god consciousness, you can go to the root of creation and you can be free from all the impurities and you can be liberated. In the body is a place free from sorrows and suffering to which you can go through meditation and prayer.

What is Panchavati? Panchavati is the human body of the five *koshas* in which Sita the embodied soul lived with the intellect Lakshmana and the supreme soul Rama.

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# PARI PRASHNA

## **What is the role of studying spiritual books?**

Classical spiritual books –the scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, the Yoga Sutra, the Brahma Sutra, the Holy Bible and the Quran-are the words of God, the experience of the realized Masters that have stood the test of time. They can help the students understand the world and understand life. These books inspire and motivate. They also show us our weaknesses and strengths. These books deal with different aspects of spiritual life and it is good to follow them. But most often it so happens that the intricacies of the scriptures are hard to understand without the help of a teacher. So it is good to take teachers help or listen to the scripture from the teacher.

Another thing to remember is not to read too much but to read a little and practice more. Read a verse from the Gita every day and practice and meditate on it. By practicing what you have read simultaneously, the spiritual

experiences get firmly established. Study the Scriptures with deep love and a devotional attitude.

## **Can you please speak a little about the Gita?**

The Bhgavad Gita is a spiritual hand book for every seeker. It is simple and practical. Your life itself is a Bhagavad Gita. Your body itself is a Kurukshetra. Just as the Kauravas and Pandavas were in the battle of Kurukshetra there are negative and positive qualities in you and the negative qualities should be overcome with the help of breath control and the soul Krishna. If you can do this, then your life will be a life of perfection and success.

## **What is Brahmasutra?**

The Brahma Sutra is a book of aphorisms on the Absolute Brahman written by sage Vyasadeva .It is also known as Vedanta Sutra. It is highly philosophical, intellectual and at the same time spiritual. By studying and contemplating on these teachings you can experience the formless power of God beyond your body, mind, intellect and ego. \*\*\*

## VALUABLE VOLUMES



IN THIS ISSUE WE HAVE EXCERPTS FROM  
*THE UNIVERSE WITHIN* AND *THE CHANGING  
NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS* BY  
PARAMAHAMSA PRAJNANANDA

### THE BODY AND THE MIND

(From *THE UNIVERSE WITHIN*)

#### Three States of Existence

To summarize, we have three states of existence. Every day, we experience the wakeful, dream and deep sleep states. In each of these states, we use one of the three bodies we possess. In the wakeful state, the body, mind and senses are active. In the dream state, the gross body is dormant, but the astral body as well as the causal is active. In the deep sleep state, we are in a blissful state of ignorance, in which we know neither pain nor pleasure. It is the play of the causal body, being free from gross as well as the astral body.

#### The Five Sheaths

Since the human body is composed of five elements, it is maintained and regulated

through those five elements, through food, drink, temperature, breath and movement. Not only is each body triplicate in nature as gross, astral and causal, it is also made of five sheaths called the *pancha kosas*. These are the *annamaya kosa* (food sheath), the *pranamaya kosa* (vital air sheath), the *manomaya kosa* (mental sheath), the *vijnanamaya kosa* (intellectual sheath), and the *ananda maya kosa* (blissful sheath).

The food sheath is more gross and physical in nature, while the other sheaths are more subtle and astral. When there is a play of consciousness along with these five sheaths, life is more colorful and beautiful.

The sheaths correspond to different activities. The physical sheath is associated with the physical body and the wakeful state, and all the sense activities. The vital air sheath is associated with breathing. The mental intellectual sheaths control emotional and intellectual propensities. The blissful state is the state of happiness and inner calmness that is usually experienced in deep sleep.

When these five sheaths are cleansed through concentration and meditation, the light of the soul is manifested more in the life and activities of the body. As a result, life becomes more divine and peaceful.

### **The Three Qualities**

Human nature and behavior are the result of the three qualities or *gunas*, present within each of us. People can be divided into groups depending on the predominant quality of their minds. The three *gunas* or qualities are *sattva* which is purity, *rajas* which is activity and *tamas* which is inertia. Each of us has these three qualities in varying proportions. When a person is sattvic, they are contemplative,

mature and give importance to the values and goals of life. When a person is mostly rajasic, they are very active and ambitious. When the person is tamasic, they are often lazy and dull, have little or no ambition and compromise their values.

### **The Monkey Mind**

The human body is the playground of the mind. The mind can go in either direction, upwards or downwards. The mind experiences the world with the help of the five elements and the ten senses. Most of our lives, we are too busy drowning out the silent splendor within, with the thousand desires, agonies and doubts of the monkey mind, which is always restless. Perhaps in the womb, we still saw it and bathed in its glorious light, but the moment we are born, the mind takes over, frantic, full of urges, a slave to the senses, it craves for pleasure and comfort from outer sources, beginning with milk, warmth, love from the mother and we begin the never-ending journey toward an ever elusive happiness. The love and comfort we crave draws us along a path of pain and pleasure, happiness and unhappiness, torment and fulfillment, the path of opposites,

which for every scant drop of fleeting satisfaction, drowns us in an ocean of misery and longing.

### **The Monk and the Maiden**

There is a story from the *Puranas* that illustrates the nature of the mind. Two young monks are sitting on the banks of the Ganga when they see a young lady drowning. They have been taught not to look at or touch a woman. One of them jumps into the water as he considers it a duty to save her life, rescues her and brings her to shore, gives her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and revives her. The other monk is shocked by his friend's action as he considers it to go against the principles of monkhood. The lady leaves after thanking them profusely. While returning to the ashram, the second monk complains to the first that he has disobeyed everything their guru taught them while rescuing the woman. "You touched her body, you held her against you, you kissed her lips." The first monk laughs when he hears this

description. "I left that young lady far behind us, on the banks of the river, after I rescued her." he replies, "You, my friend, are bringing her with you to the ashram!"

The mind is infinitely more powerful than the physical body. It attaches itself to various objects, moves from place to place at lightning speed, and is full of thoughts and cravings, which it demands we fulfill. The mind plays in the internal world of the body just as it plays in the external world. Another name for the human spine in Sanskrit is the *merudhanda*, which means staff. Many pictures depict Moses and Jesus as holding staffs in their hands. Many Indian monks also carry a staff or stick in their hands. The staff they hold is a pictorial symbol for the spine. By holding the staff, they are controlling it. One who holds this *merudhanda* and regulates each of its seven *chakras* consciously can have absolute control over one's life.

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# LIFE'S ESSENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS

(From The Changing Nature of Relationships)

Life is our first relationship. If a seed falls on barren ground, it will never sprout or grow, but when the same seed falls on fertile soil, the earth itself will welcome it, enveloping it in warmth and moisture. The earth enfolds the seed, not in order to possess it, but to incite it to grow.

When the small plant peeps out of the soil, it will establish a relationship with the sun. Plants grow in two ways; affirming the roots within the soil, absorbing water and nutrients that will allow them to grow strong, and shooting upwards, season after season, searching the sun's light, and assimilating the essential energy in order to stay alive.

Even a small seed has the capacity of becoming a huge tree. The biggest tree is the *banyan* tree, capable of covering a large portion of land. The banyan tree has an incredible characteristic: when it reaches maturity it is hard to tell where the original trunk

starts and where the roots begin. A root grows out of the trunk and droops down until it touches the soil, but remains just above it. From that root, a new trunk will spurt forth, and so the process continues with four or five successive trunks and their surrounding trees.

The fruit of a banyan tree is no bigger than a ripe cherry, and the tiny seeds inside are smaller than poppy seeds. Another interesting characteristic is that if a seed is planted, it will not produce a tree. Only when birds eat the seeds, and pass stool, conditions become favorable for the germination of a *banyan* tree.

Earth is like a mother, who accepts the relationship with a seed, and helps it to mature into whatever it was designed to be. The earth, water, air and sun combine to bring forth life. The principle of life is our most fundamental relationship, and it involves multiple aspects.

## The Process of Creation

‘God thought I am alone and  
I should be many’

(The Upanishads)

In order to understand the principle of creation, it is useful to compare it on state of deep sleep. Even if we are sleeping beside someone, in a state of deep sleep, we are absolutely alone. Deep sleep is a condition of complete loneliness, since we become devoid of any exterior relationships. When we dream, the outside world is cut off as we become imbued in our inner world, but while we are plunged in deep sleep, there are no dreams. God was alone and wanted to experience multiplicity.

Since God is cosmic energy that cannot be comprehended by our limited minds, the only plausible explanation offered by all the sacred text is that God created the universe from Himself.

The ancient Vedic texts teach us that creation is only

possible when we have a material cause, as well as an instrumental or efficient cause. For example, when a pot is created, clay is the material cause and the skill of the potter, as well as his tools are the instrumental or efficient cause. In the *Upanishads*, the ancient *rishis*, who studied nature in order to understand the mystery of life, gave us the following analogy.

*‘Just as the spider makes its web from its own saliva, so the spider itself becomes the material cause, joined with the instrumental cause.’*

A spider lives inside its web, eats, sleeps and plays. If the spider tires of the web he rolls it into a small ball and eats it. Countless mystics and elevated souls believe that God created the universe out of Himself, and He lives in His creation. God is therefore all-pervading, omniscient cosmic energy.

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# **THE INNER MEANING OF FASTING**

## **(From Mysticism of Religious Symbols)**

Fasting is a common tradition in all religions. The New Testament says that Jesus fasted for forty days. Many Christians fast during the time of Easter as a remembrance of Jesus. Muslims fast in the month of Ramadan. They fast in the day time; some of them do not even drink water, nor swallow saliva. In the night time they eat. The Hindus also fast. Jainas fast for months and months. Fasting is a common practice among people of all religions.

To stay away from food for some hours, or a day or for few days is not difficult to-do, and is not going to create any trouble for you. Fasting for a longer period of time requires that one has better health.

What is the fasting for? Fasting saves time. Fasting is considered to be like a day to rest. Eating requires that someone cooks the food, someone serves it, someone cleans the dishes – it takes a lot of time. When you fast, you

realize how much extra time you have.

Fasting also saves food for others. When you fast, you can set aside that quantity of food for other people or animals, which is sacrificing a part of your food for others.

Fasting also rests the digestive system. When you eat, you eat for only a few minutes. However, for hours the body is digesting the food and eliminating the unnecessary parts. Just like you need rest, sleep, and relaxation every day after hard work; it is good to give a little rest to your digestive system, which transforms so much food into your life. So fasting is resting.

Fasting is also a part of healing. In many natural healing systems people are told to fast for some time and then to eat some specific food. Fasting is considered as healing because food is considered as medicine. If the medicine is not taken at the proper time, the medicine cannot heal the



diseases of the body. Food heals the body with strength, nourishes the body with growth, and decrease diseases and other negative aspects of life. So fasting is a part of healing.

There is also a spiritual aspect of fasting. As said earlier, fasting saves time. So the spare time, which was used for preparing or eating food, can be used for sadhana, spiritual practice.

In Sanskrit, fasting is known as *upavasa*, which means “to sit near.” Through eating, ordinarily people become extrovert. When people eat large quantities of food, they become restless and agitated, but when a person is fasting, he or she is giving the body rest and in that spare time the mind also becomes peaceful. So fasting helps to give spare time with a peaceful mind and rested body to pray and meditate.

*Upavasa* means to sit near. During the fasting period one must be in holy places, in the temple, mosque, or church, or be in the holy company of good people and spiritual teachers, or be in the house in the prayer room with some good thought. This is *upavasa*, to be near, to live near.

The ultimate meaning of “living near” is to be constantly aware of your divinity, your prayerful state, your soul within. To live with the eyes focused on the soul is *upavasa*.

Through fasting one can develop mental strength. Man does not live by bread alone; the mouth is not for bread alone. To live we also need breath, love and prayer. Fasting purifies the body and mind; it helps the person to go deep into prayer and meditation. That is why it is considered a spiritual practice in many religions.

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## STORIES TO LIVE BY

### STRENGTH TO FORGIVE

Sage Vashishta is a shining example of forgiveness as is evident in the story of Vashishta and Vishwamitra, both sages of great spiritual achievement.

Vashishta was a sage living a pure and simple life in the forest. Vashishta had a gifted cow that could give not only milk but any food one could wish for, to any number of people.

Vishwamitra was a king at first. One day King Vishwamitra was passing through the forest with his army. At midday they were hungry and thirsty. The hermitage of Vashishta was nearby. Vashishta welcomed the king and his party and requested them to accept his hospitality. The king and his party went to take a bath in the river close by. By the time they came back, Vashishta had a great feast ready with the help of the divine cow.

Vishwamitra was greatly surprised and on knowing about the cow, wanted to take the

cow with him, saying the cow should rightly belong to the king. Sage Vashishta was not happy with the king's behavior, but could not say anything.

But the cow, which was loyal to the sage, resisted creating its own army with its divine power. Even with the help of his whole army, the king was unable to take the cow. This made him realize that the power of a king is nothing before the spiritual power of a saint. He decided to leave his kingdom and go to the forest to do severe penance and gain spiritual power.

After several years and considerable spiritual attainment, he came to sage Vashishta and asked him to judge his spiritual progress. Sage Vashishta replied that the king still was not fully ready. This enraged Vishwamitra, who secretly killed the sons of the sage. But sage Vashishta still remained undisturbed. Unable to control his ego and anger, the king wanted to kill sage

Vashishta himself and approached his hermitage at night. As he drew near, he could hear the sage talking to his wife.

He heard him say, “Vishwamitra is a great saint. He could renounce his kingdom and all his material comforts to seek spiritual knowledge. This is no ordinary thing; he may still have some weaknesses. True he killed our sons but I do not hold it against him. It could also be our karma and he made us free from bondage with more

time to meditate.” Hearing this, Vishwamitra was transformed. He realized the greatness of Vashishta who could forgive such a great offense even though he was capable of cursing him. He fell at the feet of the sage and begged forgiveness.

Message -It is only the strong that can forgive. One who has the power to punish but forgives is one who really forgives. To forgive is a divine trait.

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Mahodadhi Arati (Puri Sea Beach)

## **MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES THE SPIRITUAL BATH**

AFTER ME WILL COME ONE MORE POWERFUL THAN I, THE THONGS OF WHOSE SANDALS I AM NOT WORTHY TO STOOP DOWN AND UNTIE. I BAPTIZE YOU WITH WATER BUT HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

***MARK 1:7-8, MATHEW3:11, LUKE 3:16***

I TOLD YOU THE TRUTH .NO ONE CAN ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNLESS HE IS BORN OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT. FLESH GIVES BIRTH TO FLESH BUT THE SPIRIT GIVES BIRTH TO SPIRIT.YOU SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED AT MY SAYING “YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN.”

***JOHN 3:1-7***

THROUGH INITIATION THE MASTER PURIFIES THE BODY OF THE DISCIPLE, OPENS THE KNOT OF IGNORANCE AND BONDAGE AND IMPARTS THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ABSOLUTE.

***YOGINI TANTRA***

BY BURNING THE EFFECT OF SINFUL ACTIVITIES, THE MASTER INFUSES A DIVINE ATTITUDE AND BRINGS A TRANSCENDENTAL STATE IN THE SEEKER.THIS IS SAID BY THE MUNI AND THE WISE BEING EXPERT ON TANTRA.

***GOUTAMIYA TANTRA***

I AM SENDING YOU TO THEM TO OPEN THEIR EYES AND TURN THEM FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM POWER OF SATAN TO GOD, SO THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND A PLACE AMONG THOSE WHO ARE SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.

***ACTS 26:17-1***

# ATMA-VIDYA

## PURSuing SELF KNOWLEDGE

### KAIVALYOPANISHAD

The Guru continued his teaching on self knowledge further to answer Asvalayana's question.

“Higher than and beyond the heaven, it is kept in the cave and is shining. The self-controlled people of pure mind with knowledge of *vedanta* and a clear goal through the yoga of renunciation and concentration can enter there.”

(mantra 3, Kaivalya UP)

#### Commentary

It is shining in the cave that is higher than the heaven.

*nakam* means heaven. People want to go to heaven. But sincere seekers don't want to go to heaven because heaven is not permanent place. It is just like going for a holiday. When the vacation is over or the money is finished you have to come back. Go to a place where there is real happiness. Nakam also means the nose. Inside the head in the region above the nose and the eyebrows is the cave of the cranium. The light is shining in there –*sadrupena sada asti*,

*cidrupena sada bhati*. The light of awareness is there and only *yatayaha*- men with self control and concentration can enter there. Without concentration no job can be done right. In India sometimes on the roadside in rural areas you find street shows where a little girl climbs up a tall bamboo pole and walks the rope doing many gymnastics just to make a little money. In any walk of life we need concentration to do a job well. If that kind of concentration can be in spirituality there can be really much gain. Concentration is an essential factor in spiritual growth.

The central theme of Vedanta or the Upanishad is not to gain something but to know what is already there. Knowledge is the only instrument. When it is said *shastra* is *pramana* – it does not mean that the soul is known through the *shastra* but *shastra* helps to remove the *ajnana* or ignorance, which helps reveal the self effulgent soul. The example can be used of the Sun

hidden by the clouds. *Meghapaye amsumaniva-* When the clouds are blown away the Sun shines forth self evident. For this the purity of mind is essential. When you go there with a pure mind with the knowledge of Vedanta understood through the guru's teaching, the truth of the Vedanta is revealed and you clearly see the meaning or the goal. *taddure tadantike*-when you know, it is very near and when you are ignorant it is very far.

*Sannyasa* has a few meanings *sat+nyasa* is *sannyasa*. *sat* means truth and *nyasa* is trust. *nyasi* means trustee. *sanyasi* is one who has trust in truth. Without living in truth how can we achieve the truth? *sanyasa yoga* is the life of inner detachment and *yati* again means a the self-controlled one. Even in mundane things we have to be disciplined to get the right result. *Sannyasa* is also *samyak +nyasa*. *Nyasa* means to leave or give up and *samyak* means perfectly or completely. What do you give up? To purify the mind all impurities have to be given up. To get *suddha*

*satva* or pure mind the obstacles of *avarana*, *mala* and *vikshepa* have to be overcome. *Avarana* is the ignorance that is covering the soul, *mala* is the impurities of the mind – the likes and dislikes which result in *vikshepa* or the oscillation and restlessness of the mind. *suddha satva* means purity in mind. In Chandhyoga Upanishad there is a mantra,

*ahara suddhau sattva sudhi*- if the food is not pure the mind will not be pure,

What is food or *ahara*? *a hriyate iti ahara* – That which is taken in by you is food. When you look at a rose, are you not taking that rose into you through your gaze? When you hear something are you not taking that talk into your mind? When you touch something are you not feeling that touch sensation? So *aharana* is to gather not only the food we eat through our mouth but also the perception we collect through any sense organ, even the thought is food. *sattva suddhi* is not only the physical food but anything that you are receiving into yourself.

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# HARIHARANANDA GURUKULAM

## The Ashram Tour

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of Jan during the Intensive International Kriya Yoga Seminar Paramahansa Prajnananandaji led the devotees and disciples on a memorable ashram tour of Hariharananda Gurukulam. Baba was leading the group with Sankirtan, singing the names of God and the Gurus , stopping at all places of interest and briefly giving the back ground of each site. We started from in front of the Meditation hall. Our large meditation Hall with a stage and the altar of the Gurus, Baba explained, can accommodate few hundred people for meditation and is named as the Yogananda Dhyana Mandir. It serves as the meditation Hall and also is the venue for satsangs and cultural programs during the programs.

Above the meditation hall are two smaller halls – one is “Shriyukteshwar Library “, and the other “Vyasa Kaksha”, which serves as a class room during the programs.

To the right of the main building Baba pointed out to ‘Hariharananda Sarovar’ a

beautiful large pond lined with palm trees and hundreds of flower pots. The pond which was just a body of water, full of weeds, even up to year 2003, was developed later to look as it is now and is the most beautiful spot with the reflection of the palm trees on a clear sunny day and with the stone steps all around that serve as seating areas to sit and meditate.

*Japo Gurur*  
*nam.....the singing continued* as we moved to the front of the property. To our left was the avocado garden. Baba narrated about a conversation of Mahatma Gandhi and Paramahansa Yoganandaji about having Avocado trees in India and this was a fulfilment of that dream. The thirty grafted avocado saplings brought from Miami Ashram seem to have taken to this soil right away and we had the first Avocado harvest last year. There were also Pistachio, Almond, Mamme (big size chiku,) trees and fig trees from Vienna, and most of our kitchen garden is also on this property

growing many seasonal vegetables. This property on the west side was purchased to add on to the ashram property. This property was originally low and hundreds of trucks of soil had to be added. A road little more than a half a mile was laid to stop water coming in from other properties. This property ends at the cow shed in the back.

*Sriram jayaram jaya jaya ram.....the walk continued.*

We continued to the front of the property to one of the main gates. There are four gates to the property, the first one when coming from the Puri side, which opens to the property on the west side is our Gate 4, and this gate is mostly kept closed. The next one which we call Gate number 3 was once the main gate to the buildings but with the expansion of the ashram is now used only for bringing in materials etc. and also remains closed for the public.

Next is gate no. 2, which opens to the Health Centre that opened in the year 2001, during Guru Purnima celebrations in the month of July. In 2002 we added an ambulance service. The Health Centre has grown

from a humble outpatient beginning, to a two story building, with a dental unit in place and is planning to add some surgical facilities especially for the care of the eyes. The centre also has a path lab. The Health Centre serves a few neighbouring villages, giving free consultation and medicines to the poor.

*-Govinda jaya jaya gopala jaya jaya.....* We continued on the main road to Gate number 1. This now is the main entrance to the Gurukulam now. Baba stopped at the office building at the entrance to show us the guide map of the Gurukulam campus. The office building “Haripada Bhavan” was named after the father of Gurudev, and houses the administrative offices and the book store. Pointing to the sign in front of the office that has the names ‘Hariharananda Gurukulam’ and also ‘Prajnana Mission’, Baba clarified that the name of the Ashram is ‘Hariharananda Gurukulam’ and ‘Prajnana Mission’, was started for the expansion, operation and maintenance of Gurudev’s Ashrams.

The main road of the Ashram runs through most of



the property with roads branching off to the right to different buildings. The road is fenced off from the adjoining property on the left for security.

*Krishnam vande Jagad gurum* .....the sweet melody continued. We continued straight for a few yards and took the first right that leads to the Deva Mandir- the ashram temple. Baba pointed out to a special tree by the side of the temple. The calyx of the flower is edible and has a strong sour taste and is known mostly only in Orissa and Bengal. The tree flowers only once a year. Interestingly, he said he found this tree in Brazil, where they called it the April flower. The tree is also known as ‘Elephants apple.’

The ashram temple, ‘Deva Mandir’ (the house of gods), is a beautiful structure, built next to a pond with steps leading to the upper level that houses the deities. The presiding deity is Lord Shiva –called

Vishvanatha. The Shiva Lingam is in the centre of the sanctum sanctorium and on the three sides are beautiful marble statues of Radha and Krishna on the left, Sri Rama parivar of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman in the centre, and Mother Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, on the right. Just outside the entrance on either side are Ganesha and Kartikeya. On the upper part of the entrance are the navagrahas or the nine planets. Nandi or Vrishabha, the bull that Lord Shiva rides is in the outer area directly facing Lord Shiva. On the outer side of the inner temple on the three sides are the statues of Divine Mother in the form of Maha Lakshmi, Maha Kali and Maha Saraswati. The walls are painted with many stories of Lord Shiva and on the side facing the inner temple are the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Daily worship is performed regularly in the temple and on special festivals there is more elaborate ritual. It is the tradition of a gurukulam to have a temple on the premises, said Baba and Gurdev had also prayed to Mother Kali. It is nice to worship the external symbols of gods which help to remind us of the inner divinity.



The Yajnashala –where the fire ceremonies are performed, is to the right of the temple, directly visible from the main floor of the temple. Open on the four sides, the structure has a pit in the centre for the fire. The four Mahavakyas are inscribed on the four sides of the yajnashala reminding one of the immortal Brahman. In addition to the temple activities the yajna shala is also used for special events like thread ceremonies and weddings of the disciple families.

*Raghupati raghava rajaram.....* We moved towards the main dining hall, as Baba pointed out to two other buildings to the left. The Shyama Charan Bhakta Nivas named after our great Guru, the reviver Kriya Yoga in the modern times and the Navina Kali Matru Nivas, named after the mother of Gurudev. The two buildings have rooms as well as dormitories to accommodate the disciples during programs.

We approached the Annapurna dining hall with beautiful paintings. On one side is the painting of Goddess Annapurna giving alms to Lord Shiva. Mother Annapurna gives not only food for the stomach

but also of knowledge and dispassion to the sincere seeker who prays to her. On the other side is the painting of Lord Krishna teaching the Gita to Arjuna. Towards the front of the hall is a creation of life like picture of Gurudev sitting in the ashram. The dining hall accommodates 150 people at each sitting and meals are served and taken with prayers. Baba reminded us how we have come a long way from the 2002 Brahmachari training, when we ate in the open area and had to run inside the meditation hall area when monsoon rains poured down without notice.

We walked past the dining hall towards the meditation hall and took the small paved road that leads to the Guru Mandir from inside. Baba talked of how In 2002, for *bhusamadhi* of Gurudev they had to carry the body on a sand trail since it was not paved then. The path winds through beautiful wooded area. To the left we have a two story building under construction which would be a museum on the ground floor and the future brahmachari quarters on the top floor. The museum is named Sannyal Mahasaya Museum, in

memory of our Guru Shri Bhupendranath Sanyal.

As we proceed, on the right is the Gayatri Nivas, that was built to accommodate the Brahmacharinis (lady trainees), away from the general public to give them a more disciplined and spiritual atmosphere. Then comes the Satyakama Nivas built to house the Brahmacharis, but the growing numbers required the building of bigger premises.

Cashew nut trees lined both sides of the small road that ends at the Yati Nivas, the residence of the monks on the right side. Directly in front, at a distance, is the back side of Shri Guru Mandir, a marvel of architecture, where the physical body of Gurudev was laid to rest and is a place of meditation and a temple for the Gurus of the lineage. Baba talked of how the construction was continuously done for the building to be ready in time for Gurudev's centenary.

A path for parikrama around the Guru Mandir has huge stone benches to sit and meditate and as we walked further past Yati Nivas we came upon the latest addition "The Unity Trail - A Temple of

Harmony. On the way Baba pointed out to the huge bush of Tulasi (holy basil), the Vakula tree (known as Spanish cherry) that has edible fruits that are good for the teeth and also the Ashoka tree. The ashram has some rare flora and fauna and takes care to preserve them.

*Radhe Krishna gopala* .....we followed Baba on the trail through the woods singing, He points out to the beautiful idol of Lord Krishna playing the flute and asks with a smile, "If you can sit here and meditate and listen to the flute of Krishna, would it not be nice?"



We continue as we see the idols and symbols of Hindu Gods, Jorathrusta, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity with Baba making brief comments on each and saying – "form and formless, East and

West – it is all that same all pervading God”.

*Guru Guru japana, aur sub sapana* – As we sing Baba remarks, “chant the name of the Guru – the only truth, the rest is all a mere dream. You are walking with your teacher, watch your breath. This is a walking meditation.” He talks of the discipleship of the Sikh religion and the humility of Sri Chitaya Mahaprabhu .

Humbled by the whole experience of the many paths and the one God we follow him to Panchavati.



“Panchvati means the five trees,” Baba explains “Asvathha (Peepal), Vata (banyan,) Bilva, (wood apple), Amalaki (Indian goose berry) and Ashoka are the five sacred trees and when these are grown together the place becomes one of special significance for meditation. These grow together intertwining with each other and are known to live for hundreds of years. Baba went

around the trees chanting ‘*Urdhvamulam athasakham asvatham prahuravyayam-*

Next we came upon the area designated for the Samadhi site for the ashram residents. Baba remarks with a laugh “If you want to be here you have to be monks.” He stopped first at the Samadhi of Brahmanandaji and then of Mother (also the physical mother ) Gurupremanandaji singing “vande mataram – I bow to the mother”

From there we went to the back of the property to the Goshala – to visit the cows. Baba lovingly fed bananas to the holy cows and bowed to them.

On the way back we came from the front side of the Guru Mandir back to Yati Nivas. Baba talked of the wild



life in the reserve forest area of the Guru temple - deers, rabbits, mongoose come up to the Guru mandir. There are also

raccoons, wolves, Hyena, snakes and black buck deer and many types of birds. Baba said they are the permanent residents of the ashram. We also have monkeys visiting the ashram regularly.

The historical tour took more than two hours and left us in awe of how much was

done on this property. The vision of Gurudev, and its fulfilment by Guruji, both have no comparison. Every nook and corner of the ashram resounds with the names of the Gurus and their presence. One can only bow in reverence to the glory of the Guru and his divine will, wisdom and action.



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## NEWS FROM THE BALASHRAM

Balashram was the site for several visitors and happenings from Jan through March.

### **The Literacy Institute**

A five day Literacy Institute was held for the teachers of Balashram by Dr. Jyothi Bathina from Jan 11-15. This was a follow up Institute to one she conducted at the Balashram two years ago. She also worked with the students to encourage student voices.

She taught 'Content Area Literacy' to the teachers which included,

Differentiating instruction, to teach students at different levels in the same class room.

Teaching critical thinking and questioning skills to see and learn beneath the surface and learn to navigate the world.



How to conduct reading and writing workshops where teachers read aloud, predicting and questioning and interacting with the text so it comes alive for the students and becomes relevant.

Dr. Bathina also spent several hours with the upper class children each day teaching them literacy devices. Using personal narrative as a tool, she engaged them in the writing process to think deeply about their own lives and circumstances and finding their place in the larger world.

The principal and all teaching staff attended the sessions with great enthusiasm and interacted well for learning the skills. The seminar was very educative and helpful to the teachers and the taught. The Principal appreciated the program and thanked Dr. Bathina expressing interest in having more and more of such seminars.

(Dr. Bathina is a professor of literacy in the Literacy and Early Education Department of the Kremen School of Education at



California State University,  
Fresno.)

### **Visits of Hand in Hand of Europe and USA**



Members of Hand in Hand of Europe and USA, the nonprofit organizations that work in collaboration with Prajnana Mission to support their many charitable projects visited Balashram and were pleased with the progress of the school on all fronts.

### **Cultural Programs**

The students of Balashram gave a beautiful performance of music and dance at the Intensive International Kriya Yoga Seminar

### **The Educational Tours**

Accompanied by their teachers the children also had a few educational tours during this quarter to enhance their learning.

The Nursery and K.G children visited the nearby Jagannath Temple at Choudakulat.

### **The Annual Sports Event**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Sports event was held on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Jan'11. The children of different age groups participated in several individual and group sports that included running race. Javelin throw, Discuss throw, Long jump, High jump,

The growing children are flourishing well with all round development under the care of the ashram staff, the benevolence of the many benefactors and the guidance of Guruji.

The construction of the Boys Hostel and the new wing of the KG and Nursery building are almost complete.



Boys Hostel, Balashram

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## AROUND THE WORLD

### INDIA

#### **Kolkata Program Jan 1-3**

A Kriya programme with Paramahansa Prajnanananda was a meeting point for many long time disciples of Gurudev. Many new initiations also took place.

#### **Gita Jnana Yajnas at Cuttack and Bhubaneshwar, Jan 7-12**

The Gita Jnana yajnas by Paramahansa Prajnanananda held at Bhubaneshwar and Cuttack drew large audiences. The unique metaphorical interpretation of the Gita and the question and answer sessions at the end of each lecture were especially enlightening. The 3 day lecture series at each of the venues also served as meditation camps with initiations and guided meditations, where several people were initiated into Kriya Yoga.

#### **The 12th International Intensive Kriya Yoga Seminar - Jan. 14 to 20**

The Seminar started as usual on 14<sup>th</sup> of Jan, the auspicious day of Makara Sankranti under the loving guidance of Guruji assisted by many monks,

brahmacharis and yogacharyas of Prajnana Mission. A fire ceremony and gurupaduka puja were held at the Samadhi Mandir in the morning.

Gajapati Maharaja of Puri and Baba Chaitanya Charan Dash of Bhagavatashram Puri, were the chief guests for the Inaugural function. The seven days of the Seminar were filled with guided meditations, divine discourses and question and answer sessions by Guruji Baba Prajnananandaji, satsangs by invited guests and a cultural program of devotional songs, dance or drama on each day. Many reputed artists gave concerts of music and dance. The children of our Balashram gave a nice performance of dance and music on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January.

Many spiritual stalwarts like Hamsananda Saraswati of Rishikesh, Swami Asangananda Saraswati, Mahamandaleshwar of Paramarth ashram of Rishikesh, Swami Shiva Chidanandaji of Divine Life Society, Swami Satyaprajnananandaji, Swami Jyotirmyanandaji and swami



Sahajanandaji, to name a few, gave their valuable messages on spiritual life, sadhana, Yoga and Vedanta and their blessings and benediction to the assembled kriyavans.

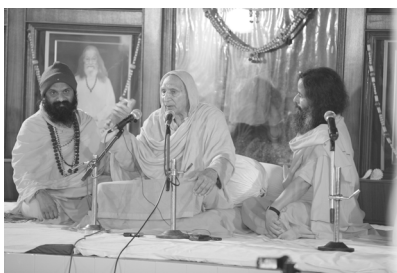
The beauty of our Balighai Ashram with its picturesque ponds lined with palm trees, the ashram temple, Meditation Hall, Guru Mandir and the Unity Trail providing an



excellent spiritual atmosphere was appreciated by most of the visiting monks who congratulated us on having such a beautiful place to meditate. Highly impressed by the revival of the ancient Gurukulam atmosphere by Guruji, they urged us to take advantage of it to rapidly progress in sadhana. Baba's discourses covered a variety of subjects. He talked of the power of silence, the qualities of a sadhaka. As the

18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January were the birthday and mahasamadhi day of Sannyal Mahashaya, Baba also talked about Sannyal Mahashaya and the lineage of Kriya Yoga Masters with emphasis on Lahiri Mahashaya, who revived the ancient method of Kriya Yoga sadhana in the modern times. Baba said,

*"A tree is known by its fruit. Similarly a Guru is known by the disciples. A good tree cannot give bad fruit and a bad tree cannot give good fruit. Bhupendranath Sannyal was a fruit of Lahiri Mahashaya. In course of time the fruit becomes the tree and gets its own fruit. A worthy disciple becomes the teacher and gets other disciples. A disciple who is attached to the tree ripens well. If the fruit does not stay attached it will not ripen. One should be always looking up to the Guru to be a good disciple. If you do not look at the Guru how you know that the Guru is looking at you. The Sishya should be Gurumukhi and the Guru*



*should be sishya mukhi - the disciple should be looking at the Guru and the Guru should look at the disciple and both together should be looking at God. God is the goal. Some students instead of having God as the goal use the teacher just as a support to fulfill their own desires.*

*Lahiri Mahashaya's life, teaching and message should be of great inspiration to all of us. We are all indirectly the fruits of that tree through the lineage of the gurus."*

*The program was well attended by many disciples from all over India and abroad.*

### **The Ashram Tour - A Tribute To Gurudev.**

The highlight of the program was an ashram tour with Baba Prajnananandaji leading sankirtan and stopping at all the main buildings to give a brief history of the places. The large number of the seminar

participants rejoiced singing and following the master on this historical tour covering acres of our beautiful Gurukulam. The tour took close to two hours and was a true tribute to Gurudev of making his dreams come true.

### **Mahodadhi Arati – Vesper Service To The Ocean**

Paramahasa Prajnananandaji was an invited speaker at this beautiful ceremony celebrated on the full moon day of the month of Pushya on the sea beach. This was started by His Holiness Sri Shankaracharya of Puri, 4 years ago. The huge podium constructed on the the Puri sea beach, serves to facilitate the voice of spiritual leaders reach humanity to guide and advise them on the many issues of the present day life. It was a great opportunity to listen to the valuable messages of Sri Shankaracharya of Puri, Paramahansa Prajnananandaji, Swami Hamsananda Saraswati of Rishikesh and Swami Ramdev of Patanjali Yoga Peeth of Haridwar. To uphold righteousness and the values of sanatana dharma was the clarion call of all the spiritual masters, as thousands of people listened and cheered. The

ceremony ended with giving Arati to the ocean, (the destination of many holy rivers), by Sri Shankaracharya , and other spiritual leaders from a specially erected high point with blowing of conches and other instruments, that could be seen and heard from miles around and was an elevating divine experience.

### **Hariharananda Dhyana Mandir, January 23**

Our ashram at Pattamundai is now completed with the building of a second floor with additional housing for the brahmacharis and the monks. The first floor houses a large meditation Hall and office. The ashram celebrated its first Anniversary of Foundation Day on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January, which was attended by a great number of devotees.

### **Kriya Program at Rourkela, Jan 28- 30**

Paramahansa Prajnananandaji, accompanied by Swami Samarpananandaji and other brahmacharis was in Rourkela for a kriya Initiation program and gave discourses in Bhagabat Gita.

### **Hariharananda Matru ashram at Arua, Jan 31**

Our ashram exclusively for

mothers celebrated their 2nd Anniversary of Foundation Day on Jan 31<sup>st</sup>, with an early morning nagar sankirtan through the village of Arua and later a fire ceremony and meditation at the ashram. Many mothers of the village joined our Brahmacharinis and Swami Gurukrupanandji with great enthusiasm. There was a special satsang in the evening with Baba Prajnananandaji presiding. The chief guest was Swami Asimananda Saraswati. Several talks at the satsang focused on the great role of Mothers in building of strong families and a strong nation with right values. Special satsangs for women and programs for children are planned by our ashram to promote awakening and spiritual values in women of Arua & the neighboring villages.

### **Punyatithi of Swami Gurupremanandaji, Feb 5**

Chanting of Guru Gita and Bhagavad Gita, special worship and meditation at the Samadhi site and a Sadhu Bhandara marked the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Mother's punyatithi day.

### **Amrakantak Program, Feb 7-9-**

Our beautiful Ashram in Madhya Pradesh by the sacred

Narmada River, was a scene of great festivity welcoming Baba Prajnananandaji for the Kriya Initiation program. The other Swamis present included the present resident Swami Paripurnanandaji and Swami Atmavidyanandaji resident Swamiji of our Miami ashram.

A special event was the birthday celebration on Feb 8, of our beloved Swami Brahmananda Giri who had pioneered the building of Amrakantak ashram. Feb 8<sup>th</sup> also happened to be the auspicious day of Saraswati Puja.

### **Retreats with Paramahansa Prajnanananda**

#### **Dubai Retreat – Feb-24-27**

The disciples of Dubai were blessed with the visit of Guruji

who conducted a retreat at a quiet hilltop resort in the outskirts of the city.

### **Other Events**

#### **Upcoming Retreats with Guruji**

**Australia** –March 29-April 1

**New Zealand-** April 6-April 10

#### **EUROPE**

April 22-25 –Spring Retreat, Tattendorf Austria

April 27-May 1– Higher Kriya Retreat, Tattendorf Austria

June 3-12 Retreat Sterskel, Holland

#### **AMERICAS**

April 12- May 17 Higher Kriya Retreat

May 5- 8 Midwest Retreat – Kriya Vedanta Gurukulam..Joliet

May 26-May 30 Gurudev's Birthday Celebration Seminar, Homestead FL

### **BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS**

**For available Books on Yoga, Philosophy, and Spirituality, please visit our websites.**

For **India** – [www.prajnanamission.org](http://www.prajnanamission.org)

For **USA** – [www.kriya.org](http://www.kriya.org)

For **Europe** – [www.kriyayoga-europe.org](http://www.kriyayoga-europe.org)

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