

Sthita Prajna



Guruvandana

*yadanugrahamâtrena ækamohau vinaçyatau
tasmai æt desisikendrâya namo'stu paramâtmane*

I bow 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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FROM THE EDITORS :

'The Message of the Master' comments on the mystery of life and death.

We bring you the beautiful message of Paramahansa Prajnananandaji - about the many aspects of Makara Sankranti and the beginnings of the IIKYS. Commenting on Sri Chaitanya's Sishtashtakam Prajnanavani elaborates on humility, tolerance and love for all.

This issue's Ramayana brings you some stories of Hanuman's true devotion to Lord Rama.

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali explain, how even in the non yogic state one can still perceive the unity in diversity. Practical Spirituality reminds us of the wisdom of old ways and human spirit which is at the danger of being lost in the name of progress.

A very interesting topic "Divine Menu" -talk of the offerings that the Lord really likes.

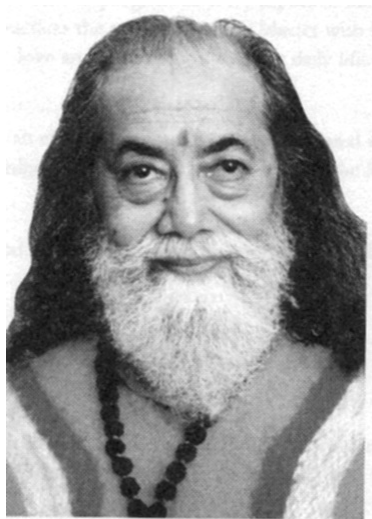
The article on Self Knowledge discusses how the wise burn bondages through meditation on the Pranava .

Excerpts from some of Paramahansa Prajnanananda's seminal works continue. The significance of the Islamic symbol of the Crescent and the Star is commented upon.

We bring you exciting news of the International Intensive Kriya Yoga Seminar 2013 and of the activities and messages of guruji during his short visits to the ashram. We bring you many other inspiring articles, messages, dates to remember, upcoming events, and the ashram news at home and abroad.

MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE AND DEATH



Humanity has always pondered the mystery of life and death from the very beginning. We are born to work out our karma and as we sow, so we reap. The chain that binds us to the wheel of life and death is the law of karma. Karma binds us but it can also set us free. Karma is bondage as long as we cling to the transient world of senses. Once we turn to the eternal, karma sets us free.

Karma is action both physical and mental. Once a person loses his ego and ceases to identify with his actions, they cease to bind. The solution is not inertia but detachment. This

will nullify the law of karma and make one free.

The problem of death is not really a mystery. The truth is, there is no difference between life and death. Nothing is actually dead. Just as atoms in inanimate matter, like metals are in continuous motion and rapid vibration, similarly, the atoms in the flesh of a corpse are in continuous motion and rapid vibration. Different forms of motion are the manifestation of the same life force, just as ice, water, snow, and steam are the different manifestations of the same substance. All matter including inanimate and dead

bodies is the manifestation of life. As Paramahansa Yoganandaji says, "Life sleeps in the crude earth, dreams beauty in the flowers, wakes with power in animals, and in man has consciousness in infinite possibilities."

At birth something enters the world and at death something departs. This something is the theme of all religions and they have attempted to probe it and have come up with certain answers. People are immensely interested in this "something." The actions of prior births produce the character of individuals, leading to new actions that, in turn, help further evolution. This process ends in liberation, the destiny of all living beings. A person is born in accordance with his karma. When the planetary positions are in conformity with his karma, the subtle body enters the womb of the mother and proceeds to manufacture the gross body. At the appropriate time the baby is born.

The individual passes through the various stages of life and gathers the experiences and impressions of its actions in the subconscious. As soon as the parabdhya karma that has

caused the birth is exhausted the astral body is separated from the gross body. This phenomenon is called death. In reality however it is only the separation of the two bodies.

Death is not the end of an individual just as birth is not the beginning. What then is death? Death means that the self along with the subtle body which is comprised of the mind with all its impressions leaves the gross body. These impressions become the seeds of future birth. It is mostly the last thought of the individual that decides future birth. The last thoughts are molded by the predominant desire of life. Therefore desires are the root of birth and death. By destroying desire, one strikes at the root of karma and escapes from the cycle of birth and death. This however is possible only by sincere meditation. The Bhagavad Gita clearly says (2:71), "He who gives up all desire and moves free from all attachment, egoism and thirst for enjoyment attains peace." Such is the state of a God realized soul. Having reached this state, he has overcome delusion; remaining established in this state, even at the last

moment, he attains the bliss of Brahman. When an individual realizes the immortality of the self, liberation is attained. The cycle of birth and death stops for that particular individual. Therefore it is the responsibility

of each individual to attain liberation with the grace of God and liberated ones. By practice of meditation, one can develop intuition and quicken his evolution in one birth.



Inauguration of 14th IIKYS

MAKARA SANKRANTI AND IIKYS

PARAMAHAMSA PRAJNANANANDA

Message for 14th IIKYS



On the occasion of Makara Sankranti and the first day of the 14th International Intensive Kriya Yoga Seminar, I bow to Lord Jagannath, the masters, saints and sages, and all of you. I also send my prayer for world peace and the spiritual growth of all.

Makara Sankranti – Astrological Significance

Today is the 14th of January, which is celebrated as Makara Sankranti, the beginning of the month Makara in the solar calendar according to Vedic astrology. The Sun enters the rashi of Makara

(Capricorn). Sankranti means “movement.” When the Sun enters a new zodiac, it is the movement of the Sun from one zodiac to another. There are two types of zodiac systems in Vedic astrology, fixed and moving. According to the fixed zodiac system, today, the Sun goes to Makara rashi and will stay there for one month. The Lord of Makara rashi is Saturn, who is considered as the son of the Sun. Astrologically, Sun and Saturn and Sun and Venus are enemies. The Sun also stays for two months in the houses of the enemies. The significance of this day is to visit the house of the enemy in order to bring light and love. Ask, who is my enemy? I should try to cultivate love and forgiveness for him or her. This is also like a father visiting and living at his son’s house for some time. Usually the Sun remains in each rashi or zodiac for about a month. According to the fixed zodiac system, today is the winter solstice, whereas in the moving

zodiac system it is on December 21-22. So the Sun is coming to the Northern hemisphere. "North" in the human body refers to the upper part, and the Sun entering the north is the dawn of more light, knowledge, and awareness in human life, which can be utilized in spiritual practice. From today, the days will gradually get longer. So, from today we have to increase our sadhana more and more.

Meeting of Ganga and the Ocean

On the tenth moon in the month of Jyestha (Jyestha Shukla Dashami), which usually comes in the month of June, is the day of the descent of the heavenly river Suradhuni, the Ganga, on the earth due to austere penance and prayer of King Bhagiratha for the liberation of his 60,000 ancestors (the children of King Sagara). This day is celebrated as Ganga Dashahara, the birthday of Mother Ganga on the earth. She descended on the head of Lord Shiva and then on the Himalayas and moved forward as the path shown by King Bhagiratha. Both the Ganga and King Bhagiratha had

to pass through many ordeals, and ultimately today is the day when the Ganga came to the ocean. Today is the day of liberation of all the 60,000 children of King Sagara and there was the manifestation of Sagara (now known as the Bay of Bengal). It is the day of the Ganga meeting the ocean and liberating the suffering Sagaras. It is the day of bringing heavenly knowledge (Ganga) from heaven to the head of Lord Shiva and then to the earth and spreading in the ocean (the ocean of worldly suffering). Today millions of people congregate at the Sagara Island to take a dip in the confluence with a hope of being free from impurities and attaining liberation.

Battle of Asuras and Devas

Today was also the day of the battle between the asuras and the devas, who represent darkness and light, ignorance and knowledge, selfishness and generosity, after the churning of the ocean to find nectar. As a result, the asuras were destroyed and defeated and they were buried under the Hill of Mandara (located in the Bhagalpur District), where Shri

Sanyal Mahasaya established a Kriya Yoga ashram. To take away the pot of nectar, Jayanta, the son of Indra, moved from place to place, and thus from today begins the Kumbhamela in Allahabad.

Kumbha Mela

The significance of the Kumbhamela is to bring nectar into our life by churning the ocean of life and to let the pitcher of our body (kumbha) be filled with nectar. Let our life be sweet and loving like nectar and taste immortality.

Beginning of Uttarayana

In the Bhagavad Gita (8:24–25) there is a description of uttarayana and dakshinayana, the movement of the Sun to the north and to the south. Today is the beginning of uttarayana, the movement of the Sun towards the Northern hemisphere, and so we should read and contemplate the significance of these two verses. The people of India love to leave their bodies when the Sun is in the north. After the battle of the Mahabharata, the invincible Bhishma was waiting for this auspicious moment to leave his body. According to

many, he left his body on this auspicious day.

Sankranti Celebrations in different parts of India

In South India people celebrate Pongal (bhogi pongal, surya pongal, matu pongal), a celebration of three days; in North India people celebrate Lohari and Khichdi Sankranti; in Maharashtra it is Gudi Padava (people take a sweet made of sesame seeds and molasses and declare that til gud khaya, gud gud bola: eating til, or sesame seed, with molasses, we should speak sweetly to each other); in Odisha and Bengal it is Makara Sankranti; and in the other states they celebrate in various ways. In most of India, today is the day of kite festivals, a social celebration. As the kite flies in the sky let our mind fly high with love, prayer, and God consciousness in the sky of divinity and illumination. In Odisha, today is celebrated as the day of friendship. People tie the bond of friendship and meet and greet old friends. Today, all over India people take a holy dip in the river, pond, or ocean and spend the day visiting temples, praying to the Lord and

wishing each other well. Today's celebration is such a mass celebration; it can be compared with the harvest festival in the West, as in many parts of India this is the time of rice harvest and the time of merrymaking. Let our life have a divine harvest of God consciousness.

Beginning of IIKYS

In addition to all these events, on this special day thirteen years ago we started our International Intensive Kriya Yoga Seminar at Hariharananda Gurukulam. Today is the beginning of the fourteenth seminar. In the first seminar, Pujya Gajapati Maharaj, who was the inaugurator, told us to have this celebration every year. Following his advice, we have been conducting this program every year. The sadhaks and sadhikas come to participate in the program and to get more spiritual inspiration. It is nice to do good things on auspicious days, as it bestows more result. For example, on special days like today, the birthdays of Shri Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Mahavir, or Jesus, people

meditate and pray everywhere and there is a flood of spiritual energy in the environment. We should be grateful to Gurudev for providing such a beautiful ashram for our sadhana.

Foundation of Spiritual Life

As yama (the positive steps to live with others) and niyama (principles of self-discipline) are the foundations in the path of spiritual life, I humbly request that we all try to practice goodness in our thinking, speaking, and acting. There should be harmony in our thoughts, words, and deeds. We should try to be a good citizen, a good person in the eyes of God.

I am bowing to all the guests and seekers present today on this holy occasion and seek your love and compassion. I am sending my love and best wishes to all of you. Let our lives be filled with love, compassion, forgiveness, and a serviceful attitude.

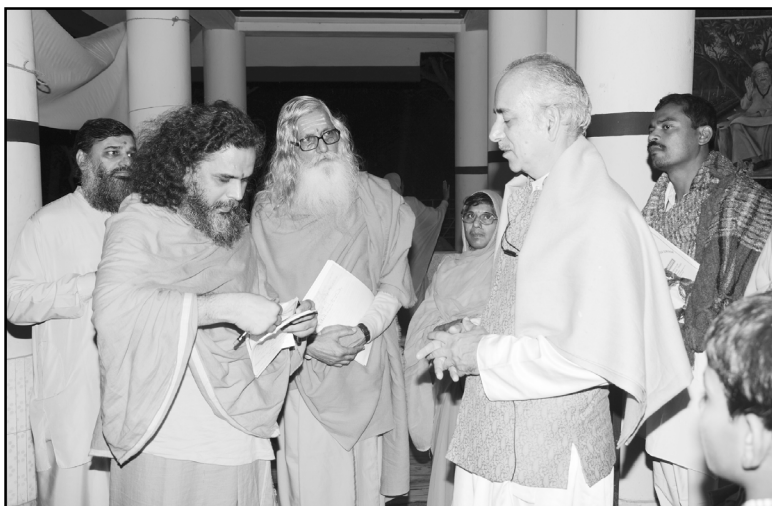
My love to all of you, and I hope to see you very soon.

With deep love and regards,

Prajnanananda



Balashram Cultural Programme, IIKYS



Gajapati Maharaj with Monks at IIKYS

WISDOM AND LOVE

What is the end of knowledge? End of knowledge is love. Let us see how knowledge leads to love.

Suppose you are looking at a person on the street. You do not pay much attention. But suppose you had a terrible tooth ache and someone gave you the name of a dentist and you went to the dentist. If the dentist happens to be the man you have seen on the street a couple of times and he treats you very nicely and helps you to get rid of the pain, then you will start liking him and when you see him again on the street you start greeting him. What has happened here? When you first saw him he was a stranger. Then you knew he was a dentist. Then you knew he was not only a dentist and that he was very nice and a wonderful doctor and very loving and caring. With this knowledge you started loving him. This is the end of knowledge in love.

People say that they are practicing Bhakti Yoga (yoga of divine love) without knowing its

meaning. Whom do they love? Love comes from knowledge and knowledge comes through action.

So the first step is *karma* (action), next *jnana* (knowledge) and from *jnana* comes *bhakti* (devotion).

Upanishad or Vedanta is the end of knowledge in love. What is love? Suppose you love a person – say your guru. When you love him, his thought is constantly remaining in your brain and you do not forget him. If you forget, then you do not love him. Love is constant remembrance in the brain. When you go to this person and he hugs you, at that moment will you still be thinking of him? No. At that time you have become one with him. Love means to be one with. The first stage of love is to think. When you know more and more about a person and you like what you know about him, then your love has increased and as you get closer and closer you become one with him, and that is real love, to be united or one

with. At that stage there is no thought. It is a state of thoughtlessness. That is real love.

Those who meditate when they get that state for one minute or two minutes with no thought when the mind is like a clean slate that is real love. Wisdom and love are one.

There is a difference between knowledge and love. We all have knowledge but not wisdom. We know what is good and what is bad. This is

knowledge. But if we do not apply the knowledge in our daily life we are only theoretically intelligent. Knowledge is *jnana*. Applied jnana is *vijnana* and the happiness we get by applying knowledge is called *prajnana*. Knowing is *jnana*. Applying is *vijnana* through which you get the state of *prajnana*. Established in *prajnana* you will never forget the truth at any moment. He works with love, without anxiety or emotion,.

DATES TO REMEMBER

April – June, 2013

April 11	: Ugadi
April 20	: Rama Navami (Birthday of Rama)
May 10	: The Birthday of Swami Shriyukteshwar
May 17	: The Foundation day of Prajnana Mission
May 27	: The Birthday of Gurudev

PRAJNANAVANI - THE VOICE OF WISDOM

HUMILITY



*Trinadapi sunichena taroriva sahishnuna
amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada harih*

Chaitanya Sishtashtakam - verse 3

"Oh God, teach me, I want to be humbler than grass, teach me to learn from the trees the art of tolerance and forbearance. Help me to be free from ego, pride and vanity. Train me so that I can love and honor each and everyone seeing the goodness in them. Let my mind remember you and my tongue sing your name all the time continuously."

This is a prayer of Sri Chaitanya. Sri Chaitanya is saying to the Lord that he wants to be humbler than the grass. It

is an expression of humility. A devotee, a lover of God in Vedic tradition, considers the dust from the feet of great people as holy. In India it is a common practice to touch the feet and bow at the feet of elders and of saints and sages. There is a song of Tagore that says,

'Oh Lord, I want to be under the carpet on which you have placed your feet while you are seated. I want to place myself below the carpet because the dust from your feet will fall through the carpet and

touch my body." It is a symbol of humility.

Here Shri Chaitanya wants to be humbler than the grass. You might ask, "Swamiji, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's prayer is from 500 years ago, that is fine. We live in modern world; in the modern world everybody is aggressive. If we are not aggressive, we cannot survive. This is the world, Darwin talked of the "The survival of the fittest."

One who loves God is the strongest of all. Gandhi brought freedom to the country with what- Through Non-violence. Was he not a powerful commander? If he is fasting in the prison, whole India was fasting. If he had bad health, whole India was praying for his health. If he had some trouble people had tears in their eyes. What relationship did they have with Gandhi? Can you imagine, Gandhi lived not too long back, 1948 January 30th he was assassinated. Only 65 years ago he lived among us in flesh and blood and he could live like this? His pulse was the pulse of people in India. How was it possible? Because of his love for God and because of his love for truth. Remember a strong person can become humble and

a weak person out of fear shows ego or aggressiveness, not out of strength. There is a misconception of strength, if I am powerful, I should have authority over others. It is not authority it is the humility that brings the real Divine beauty. Here it is said, I want to be humbler than the grass.

Another devotee has said, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is not talking of wanting to be humbler than grass, but is saying the grass is his first guru. What does it mean? Have you looked at the grass and seen the service that grass does? The grass is just like the skin of the body. Grass on the earth is like the skin of the earth. Suppose there is rain and there is no grass on the earth. If it is barren land and there is rain, immediately it gets flooded. I don't know if you have enjoyed rain on your bare body. Sometimes it is very forceful and hits you and you can even feel the pain. When the rain is hitting the earth directly, there would be soil erosion. With the soil erosion, do you know what happens? River bed will be filled with silt, flood and so on. If there is grass, the raindrop falls on the grass. The grass is protecting the earth from soil

erosion. Not only that, the grass allows water to seep into the earth. If there is no grass, do you know what will happen? Water will flow down. If there is grass, it will hold water and slowly water will go into the earth. A big crisis in human civilization now is, the underground water is depleting. There are more floods, rain or snow melting and glaciers melting with water going directly to the sea. The sea level, is rising up. The main cause is we are destroying the forest, destroying nature, destroying the grass. Grass is a symbol, a symbol of protection, protecting God's creation. Grass is a humble storehouse of energy and is food for so many.

Here it is said that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is saying I want a Guru like the grass. Let people walk on me, but my duty is to serve them with comfort and care. If you would have walked bare foot on the street in hot summer, which I have done - I have walked miles after miles. Simple example on Baba's birth centenary closing ceremony at Cuttack, it was over seven miles walking and chanting and it was over one mile long procession, going through the city - very beautiful. Bare foot and I was going back

and forth of the procession walking at least eleven miles. I walked bare foot. But if it were on grass there would be no pain. Grass is as you know the earth and is the non-conductor. It brings coolness, comfort. In these days we have shoes. You think of hundreds of years ago. So grass is a symbol of humility, grass is a symbol of service, grass is a symbol of love. Because where there is love, there is humility; there is no arrogance, no aggressiveness, there is no conflict. Grass never fights - it bends.

Taroh riva sahishnuna - *Taru* means the tree, *iva* means like, and *sahishnuna* means tolerance or forbearance. Next Sri Chaitanya says, he want to learn tolerance from the trees. So trees are symbol of tolerance. How? Trees are symbol of tolerance. I don't know how many of you have climbed up the trees. We torture the tree, but the tree tolerates. The tree also gives us many things- we are sitting here under a roof that is from the wood of the tree, we get our food from the trees, the flowers and fruits are from the tree. Tree serves the creation so much.

There is a story about the tree. A man was going to cut the tree on a hot summer day and he was tired and sweating. The tree said, "My child, take a little rest under my shade. And when you get a little more strength then you cut me. Right now there is shade because I am still standing. Rest for a while under my shade and then you can cut me."

Such is the tolerance and the sacrifice of the tree. As winter approaches the tree gets ready to face it and welcomes it with all its colorful leaves. It is as though the trees are saying, "Oh winter, when you arrive people complain that it is very cold but we do not care. We are welcoming you with these colorful leaves. We know it will be cold and snowing, but we know when you will leave, you will give us back the spring with nice beautiful flowers." So the trees are welcoming winter with colorful leaves, and trees have so much of forbearance, they survive the entire strong winter patiently and in spring, are ready to serve us with flowers, fruits and what not. We cut the tree, tree is tolerating. We react even when someone uses a strong word. Gurudev said, "Be calmly active and be

actively calm." But we are aggressively reactive, every little thing we are reactive. We are unhappy from moment to moment. Where is tolerance? Where is peace? Oh God, teach me so that I can learn from the trees how to be tolerant, how I can bear all the problems of life and go on as the trees do.

Amanina manadena - *Mana* means vanity or pride. Here Sri Chaitanya prays to be able to respect all. We walk and talk with a certain individuality associated with pride and vanity of our status. There is a story from the life of Shri Ramakrishna. A very poor man used to come to Shri Ramakrishna very regularly, to bow down and was mentally praying to him to be relieved of his poverty. Then after sometime, he was not seen at all for quite a few days. People who noticed this were asking Ramakrishna, about the man's continued absence and the Master would only smile. One day Shri Ramakrishna was going with some of the devotees and as they passed by a small town and there was this man. It looked like he started a small business and made some money. On seeing Sri Ramakrishna pass by instead of kneeling down and

bowing to him to touch his feet as before, this man sitting in his little shop, waved to him saying, "Hello teacher, how are you? Are you OK?" Shri Ramakrishna commented to the people around him, "He has got little money, that's why you can hear his voice has changed. Previously he was coming with so much of humility." When we move, we move with our own identity, own ego, own pride, own vanity and that is the misery in our life. Amanina means to give up one's own pride, ego and vanity. Manadena is to give respect; to give love; to give recognition; honor to others. I will be myself free from vanity and ego but I should give honor and respect to others.

There is a story from the Mahabharata. After the battle of Mahabharata, Yudhishtira wanted to do a big celebration, a yagna, a big fire ceremony. To that fire ceremony all people in the area were invited and Bhima was to blow the ceremonial conch at the beginning of the ceremony. The mighty and powerful Bhima was unable to blow the conch even with all his efforts. Unless the conch was blown the ceremony could not begin. They went to

Shri Krishna and asked, "Why this bad omen? Why is the conch not sounding at the beginning of this auspicious event? Lord Krishna looked at Bhima and asked, "Have you invited everybody, or left anyone out. If you had invited all, the conch should have sounded." Then Bhima remembered that he forgot invite the cobbler at the far end of the town. Then Krishna said, "You go and invite him with due honor and bring him, then the conch will blow. And when he comes, Draupadi should be there with the flower garland, with the lamp and everything to receive him"

By this Lord Krishna taught them, it is their duty to give honor even to the lowliest of low. You should not discriminate based on apparent human status and should see God in all." *amani manada* is to give honor and love to even the lowly.

There is a beautiful Sanskrit text, Vishnu Sahasranama Stotram, also from the Mahabharata. In Vishnu Sahasranama Stotram which is a compilation of thousand names of Lord Vishnu, one of the names is *amani manada*. The Lord gives love, honor and recognition even to

the tiniest, smallest creature; But we live with so much of ego, that when we walk we trample on others. Here it is said how to be kind, loving and respectful to others seeing the presence of God in all.

Then Shri Chaitanya is saying, *kirtaniyah sada harih* - "Oh God teach me so that I can remember you and I can sing your name, and I can live in your consciousness." *Sada* means continuously. The name of the Lord used here is Hari. Who is Hari? Gurudev's name begins with Hari. Hari is from root - *hari harati papani*. Who is Hari? One who removes all the impurities, all the dirt, from us is Hari. Here it is said, "Oh God your name is Hari and you can remove all impurities from me if I go to you." God is just like the mother. When a little child goes to play and comes back dirty, the mother cleans the child's body by washing and drying and putting on fresh clothes. If the earthly mother can do so much, can you imagine what the Divine Mother could do? - God the mother. What can she not do? But unfortunately we don't go to her.

There is a story. It is said Lord Shiva and Parvati were

playing dice when Lord Shiva suddenly got up and left post haste but came back very soon. Parvati ask, "where did you go so quick and again came back? What happened?" He said, "When we were playing I saw that a devotee of mine was in trouble, and I was going to help him but when I found that he was taking care of himself I came back". Curious, Parvathi asked what the trouble was. Lord Shiva said this devotee is God intoxicated, and looks like a mad person. As he was passing by, some mischievous children in the village were about to throw pebbles at him. So the Lord wanted to protect him. But then he found that the devotee was holding a big stone to throw back at the children, he thought he should let him take care of himself

How much do we really love God and want to be close to him? It is said, a camel can enter through the loop of the needle but not a rich man. What is the meaning? Here rich does not mean wealthy but it is the person with lot of ego.

Thus prays Sri Chitanya for humility, forbearance, tolerance, giving respect to all and never to forget to sing the name of the Lord.

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY OUT WITH OLD.....?

Jyothi Bathina

I'm in a nostalgic mood these days. Despite the fact that I love the convenience of modern life, the wealth of information at my fingertips, the ability to connect to people all across the world in seconds, I long for simpler times.

Remember when the cow came to the house and the milkman milked her right there in front of you? He would talk to her gently coaxing her to yield the warm milk frothing in an aluminum can which he then poured into your own container? Remember when the call of the muezzin and the crow of the rooster were what woke you up in the morning? Remember the fresh vegetables that came in a basket on top of the vegetable seller's head? She would unload the heavy basket carefully in the front verandah, proudly displaying the colorful produce tended and handpicked fresh from the fields. Everything was fresh, closer to nature, unpackaged, unsterilized, unprocessed. From the fish on the fishmonger's cart to the kulfi served on green leaves. There

was no worry of chemicals, pesticides or growth hormone.

I understand that with massive population growth and migration to the cities that small individual businesses could no longer thrive and that mass production was the only way to serve so many efficiently. I remember too how excited we were that our milk soon came in bottles and then in plastic packets. Now, with the organic movement and the green movement growing stronger, we run to Whole Foods to get extremely expensive fresh vegetables and ensure that our fruit isn't full of pesticide. We go to Aveda (short for Ayurveda) to get our hair done with natural products like Shikai. We used to brew the Shikai at home in the old days and squeeze the juice from the fruit. Dr. Oz reveals that turmeric and cinnamon and cloves are good for you and there is a mad rush to the Indian stores to buy spices we have always carried at home.

Still, it doesn't feel the same. I cannot seem to get the

same pleasure and satisfaction from those vegetables or shampoos expensive as they are, as I did from those homemade hand delivered items from long ago. I've realized why. Despite their labels of being organically grown, what they are missing for me is the incredible love that was poured into the products of my youth. Whether it was the milkman who often sang to his cow or the vegetable seller who polished the ripe eggplant with the edge of her sari, or the steady hands of my great grandmother as she brewed that wonderful aromatic mixture of hibiscus and herbs into hair oil for all the girls in the family, each act was an act of love and focus and dedication.

Remember when we wrote letters to each other? Long, rambling letters full of details to grandparents, to parents, to siblings? Remember when we made calls and spoke to one another? Or those long distance calls, trunk calls they were called, to distant places to speak even for a few expensive minutes to loved ones far away? What happened?

Today I communicate through texting. It has come to the point where I no longer

even speak with my son or mother for weeks at a time. We text. It's easier, quicker, no need to stop what you are doing. Suddenly a month will go by and I realize I have not heard my child's voice. What are we doing?

It seems to me that in the human effort to make things better, faster, more efficient, we have lost the human spirit. Not only that, we have lost the wisdom we once possessed. In my education classes, I often tell my students that all traditions must be respected because they carry their own wisdom. I tell them that food habits, customs, dress and culture often are based on practical wisdom, on what is economical, what makes sense for the region, for the time period, for the health and safety of the group. And while tradition can become constricting when it is followed too strictly without regard to changing conditions, it also contains age-old wisdom and knowledge that can be used today.

We scoff at our elders who cooked over open fires, but they already knew that the spices Dr. Oz is touting today had healing properties. We are lured by the pretty packaging

and fancy names of the latest beauty product and grandmother's old fashioned chickpea flour body scrub seems primitive. But we forget that the hands that massaged us first with coconut oil and then scrubbed us vigorously as we yelped in pain were full of love and care that cannot be bottled. By rejecting outright all they stood for, we lose the wisdom they held in their hearts and minds. This is true of any culture and it saddens me that we all do it. We embrace the new with such fervor that we lose sight of the value of the old.

Could I give up my computer, my iPhone and unlimited text package? Would I pass up the convenience of grabbing my groceries prepackaged at the closest Safeway? Should I forego my car because it causes pollution, my house because it leaves too large a footprint? That's the thing about progress though. It rolls on like a mighty bulldozer and seems to leave no options in its path.

What I can do, however, is make some changes. I no longer blindly worship at the altar of progress. I think critically about the choices I

make, the foods I eat, the cars I drive. I seek to live simply and without causing too much damage to the environment. I take the limited options I do have, of buying organic produce and refusing to subsidize factory farming. I choose not to condone child labor or animal testing or abuse by avoiding stores and products that still use those methods to make a profit. But most of all, I have learned to value the old ways, to see in them the wisdom of ages, gathered not in narrow lab studies but in centuries of accumulated and tested experience. I have learned to remember the power of soul to soul connection, one which simply cannot be conveyed in a text or a tweet. We are not mechanical in nature but in habit. While I cannot recapture the days and ways of my youth, I can surely maintain the kind of loving focus and dedication that my elders demonstrated in every action. I can demonstrate the same single minded devotion when I am speaking to those I love, by being wholly present and not multitasking. I can continuously remind myself that true progress is made within and it relies on our ability to choose wisely and act responsibly and most of all, with love. ***

THE DIVINE MENU

Swami Samarpanananda Giri

In Bharata, we have a deep sense of hospitality and a deep sense of gratitude. The Lord in the temple is considered a living presence and offering of food to the Lord and receiving it back as prasada is considered of utmost importance. It is said that in Shri Mandir (the temple of Lord Shri Jagannath), varieties of tons of food are offered thrice a day. Apart from these, special bhog is offered on special days. A beautiful range of delicacies are offered to Gods and Goddesses in the many temples of this country very lavishly in golden and silver plates and we feel we are feeding the gods well day after day. But is the Lord accepting them?

The Lord, out of compassion for His children and grandchildren only graces those plates of bhoga with a divine look and those "love offerings" become His *prasada* for our consumption only. We feel that we are doing our duties well day after day.

The Lord is hungry, the Lord is thirsty. What a wonder! The Master of the universe, the maker of this world, the giver of everything, everywhere is in dietary distress!! The Lord remains *abhukta* (unfed)

If a devotee of the Lord prays, "O Lord! What is your choice of food? Kindly tell us something about the menu of your choice. We are committed and devoted. We will prepare the offering of your choice". The Lord of the universe may reply, "Have you forgotten my words that were spoken to you at the beginning hours of the Mahabharata war? Have you forgotten the menu that I declared in the 26th verse of 9th chapter designated as Rajavidya Rajaguhya Yoga?"

Now the divine menu is rediscovered; the verse referred to by the Lord says,

*patram, pushpam, phalam
toyam yo me bhaktya*

"Whoever offers Me with devotion a leaf, a fruit, a flower, or water, that I accept

of the pure minded man offered with devotion.”

But the devotee is getting more confused, and perplexed after reading the verse. There is no information regarding the ingredients required, no clear idea about the contents of the dish, and no clue to Divine Menu concept of the Lord. At this moment comes the inner voice – the command of the Lord, “Meditate on my menu, the mystery will be solved.” The idea, the golden idea, is crystallizing in the heart of the devotee. He starts thinking of each of the articles that the Lord mentioned.

What is patram? He keeps wondering

“What kind of leaf, My Lord? Do you like *palak* or any other edible leaf that the common man uses for food? Or do you like mango leaf, the symbol of sacredness that is put in the kalasa kumbham? Or the leaf of kadamba tree? Are you remembering those full moon nights of yore when under the kadamba shade on the banks of Yamuna, the rasa with Radharani and other Gopanganas were held with joy? Are you really reminiscing the rasa of romance- your

spiritual feats at far excellence? O Murali Mohan! Will Kadamba leaf give you an enduring solace to that thirst – the thirst for playing the magic flute?

O Kesava! Do you need bunch of Durva leaves to decorate your Krishna kasha in the absence of that lovely peacock feather which is not available because of the present wild life sanctuary laws?”

“Nothing of the sort”, The reply was stubbornly final.

The Lord needs a different leaf: two leaves that are grown in *sadhana vriksha* (the tree of penance). The tree, everywhere in the globe, represents a spirit of tolerance and unwavering commitment to steadfast love and service. The tree is also meditating like the mountain in its posture of yoga forever. The tree is the symbol of hope, love, and peace. When the bizarre force of breeze topples down a tree or the earth removing machine uproots a tree from the roadside, the fallen tree never loses its heart and hope. The fallen tree sprouts two leaves the very next day of the fall in conformity with its character to grow and continues to grow until its death. Similarly in our *sadhana*

tree, that is the spine and the brain, we are to grow two leaves: one leaf representing the everlasting possession of devotion for the God and Gurus, and the other the symbol of enduring practice of the yoga technique that is a gift of God for mankind.

The practice is to be followed every day, failing which the so called spiritual leaf in the *sadhana* tree will become grey and fall down leaving the practitioner with no credit, no merit. Let the two leaves: love for the master and love for the sadhana be ever present in the tree of sadhana of everyone, every moment, everywhere. If the devotee keeps on growing such leaves, he could become a good patra (a capable container) to hold the blessing showers of God and Gurus. This way becoming a patra (upholding blessings), one could become a good putra too (the child of God).

Pushpam

Next is the spiritual flower to be served to the Lord. What kind of flower, of which color, of which fragrance – the seasonal or every timer? The Lord is the father of all flowers of all varieties that blossom on this planet. Is he really

interested in these or is there a mystery behind His expression? Meditation reveals to the devotee the reality. The Lord wants to see the best human flowers in the garden of spirituality. Let every man and woman on this earth become a spiritual flower, with all the goodness of the nature's flower. Flower in the bush, creeper or the branches of tree while dancing with the rhythm of the sweet breeze, looks beautiful and the beauty of its color spreads beauty to all corners. Birds and bees along with the onlookers feel enchanted with brightness of the flower. What a gift of the Mother Nature at the behest of the creator!

Let the heart of the human being be beautiful, bereft of jealousy, envy, hatred, and all evil emotions and passions. Flower is soft, sweet, and fragrant. To hold a flower is to behold the presence of the Lord. To touch a flower is to touch divinity.

Continuous practice of Yoga will breed peace, bliss, and joy of eternal nature – and that is the best way of interior decoration too. No dress, no ornaments, no garlands can make anyone beautiful.

When shall we relearn to be soft and sweet like a child? Our words, our deeds, and our gestures I are to be gentle, soft and beautiful like the flower. Then the corridors of this planet will be flooded with vibrations of fraternity, love, and brotherhood, leading to the reestablishment of the much needed regime of beauty.

A new atmosphere free of tensions, troubles, torments – a new fragrance of peace, a new sweetness of love will make this land a golden place to live. Each one is to be a living lamp of love, spreading the light of joy.

Beauty, softness, sweetness, fragrance – these four good qualities of the flower beget another admiring goodness, that is, purity and because of this purity that we offer the flower with love to God, Goddesses, and Gurus.

When shall we become such flowers to offer ourselves to the Lord of the heaven! When shall the human trees of sadhana bloom and be laden with lovely flowers fit for Lord's lunch!

My beloved Shri Gurudev Baba Paramahansa Hariharananda used to say,

“Becoming a flower is becoming a Buddha, to be in readiness to be redeemed of all worries, all ties, and all cries and become free finally to make the last flight to the Lord.”

Once my Shri Guruji, Baba Paramahansa Prajnananandaji and myself were coming from Shri Guru Mandir towards the meditation hall when I expressed my sadness of the loss of marigold flowers because of the unseasonal rainfall, he immediately remonstrated by saying, “we need man-gold human flowers other than marigold botanical flowers.” Now I feel convinced today as to why the Lord demands flowers to bloom in the sadhana vriksha.

Phalam:

The plate is now decorated with the spiritual leaves, flowers and waiting for the fruit and water in order to become the complete menu-service. Mind is wandering from the mango groves to the grape wines and various orchids from Guava, sapota, wood apple to apple, oranges, pomegranate, or the coconut to be the best or any other fruit of higher taste, even the berry and the dates.

The search continues in preparing selection list that is becoming longer but to no avail.

The lord is no more interested in any ordinary fruit of an orchard on earth. On the contrary the lord inspires the practitioner of yoga to plunge within and to find the fruit of the right order in sadhana vriksha. When the spiritual transformation becomes effective and everlasting then one after the other miracles will take place. As a result of the Romance of yoga the sadhana tree will bear the spiritual fruit of lord's choice.

Each karma has its phala (fruit); every activity will have its harvest in the form of good or bad fruits and life will be receiving mirth and miseries in proportion to the potency of desire, dreams and deeds.

Kriya pranayama (breathing) erases the bad seed of the bad karma to the tune of "one cycle erasing a year's deposit of karmas of past – past days of this life or past days of previous lives. When the sadhakas will do karma, sincerely offering at the lotus feet of the lord and anticipating nothing out of the so called activities, then no action can

bind the doer. He becomes free of doer ship and the responsibilities there of. Continued practice of yoga will make one feel the life is a fire ceremony where we are called upon to offer every action to the master or the master of the creation.

Spiritual sadhaka, step by step and by phase by phase, cleanses the chitta-the quantum memory folder that carries the seeds of un fulfilled desires, life after life, in the journey of man towards Nirvana. When the last single existing desire is offered, the desire free citta is created. And such sacred memory can help us to revive the real svarupa(nature) of the soul, nay, the divinity. At this point in the pilgrimage, illusion (maya) is replaced by illumination (jnana) and this sadhana vriksha sprouts the spiritual fruit in conformity with lord's fondness. Very much like the mortal leaves, the fruits grown in the valley of the nature's garden, pass through the stages of growth and decadence when they ripen and fall down and decay, but the lord's choice is for the un falling and un-dying spiritual fruit, that cling to sadhana vriksha of the practitioner of yoga.

Continued yoga practice full of love and devotion can provide nourishment of different kinds to this fruit, day after day, so that the fruit shall remain ever green.

These mysterious of leaves, flowers and fruits are to be served to god in a delightful way - that is the divine menu; are we ready?

Toyam:

What about the water that the lord needs to quench His thirst?

Should we offer the waters of Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Krishna, Godavari, Kaveri, Narmada, Mahanadhi, Mansarovar, Pushkara or Brahmaputra? Or does he think of sea water of Rameshwaram or the mineral water of the modern world? With the times and god becoming modern, is God longing for beverages like Coco cola or he is thinking the days of Vrindavan, wishing for milk and yogurt?

The practitioner pursuing his meditation gets the right answer as to what to offer. A heart-full of divine devotion of eternal joy- that is the real offering. Lord needs pure love, pure joy, pure bliss, i.e all pure water. If our Father's name is sat-cit-ananda, can't we

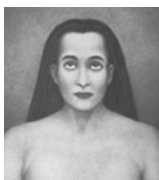
daughters of divinity and sons of almighty offer the real water, in the form of pure love born of sadhana?

Besides the classification of the menu and the style of offering, the lord lays down the qualification of the devotee who could offer him such culinary services. Such being the divine menu, it has to be offered in unconditional love, the way mother Shabari offered to lord Rama, or mother Yashoda feeding the nand-lala and mother Marry taking care of Lord Jesus.

Devotion is a ritual that knows no bounds, nor needs no reciprocity. Devotion is the love offering of a giver-the sadhaka placed at the lotus feet of guru/ god the greatest giver of all mirth all strength, all joy, all beauty and all goodness.

The lord would love to take food from the hands of a chosen few who are not only humble, simple and truthful but are always enduring to rise above the mundane pursuits of sense gratifying measures in life; rise above the waves of illusion, delusion and error: rise above the doubts dilemmas and despairs; rise above the barriers of cowardliness, fear and restlessness.

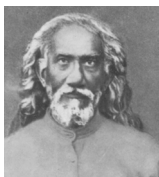
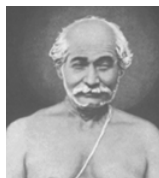
Teachings of the Masters



“Patience, ceaseless efforts and strong determination make everything possible.”

Mahavatara Babaji

“Those who remain merged in Brahman, worship Brahman and whether they are aware of it or not, they constantly realize the atom point within the kutastha.” **Lahiri Mahasaya**



“Like removing one nail with the help of another nail, the evil propensities can be weeded out by good samskaras.”

Swami Shriyukteshwar

“Study the scriptures, which increase your depth and understanding and encourage you to be study in your practice.”

Sanyal Mahasaya

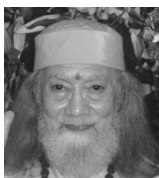
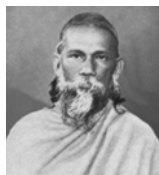


“Trouble and disease have hidden lessons for us. Try to use life’s experience as a guiding teacher.”

Paramahansa Yogananda

“We need a guide and teacher in spiritual life just as much as in material life.”

Swami Satyananda



“Good company will make you good, and bad company will make you bad. All evils; such as anger, pride, viciousness, cruelty, insincerity, suspicion, doubt and jealousy are considered bad company.”

Paramahansa Hariharananda

“Seeking and perceiving one’s own divinity by practicing a technique, does not go against any religious belief.” **Paramahansa Prajnanananda**



MYTHS AND METAPHORS

RAMAYANA



*Sri raghavam dasaradhatmajamaprameyam
sitapatim raghukulanvaya ratna dipam.
ajanu bahum aravindadalayataksham
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.

STORIES OF HANUMAN'S DEVOTION

There are many stories of the love and devotion of Hanuman. Hanuman stands out as the greatest devotee of Rama, a symbol of strength and surrender.

People depict him as a vanara or kapi- monkey God. What does it mean in our spiritual life? - ka means the senses, earth, physical body, water and happiness. Ke pibati iti kapi - one, who drinks the nectar of divinity with the senses, is kapi.

At the time of Lord Rama's coronation it is said that Sita presented to Hanuman a very valuable necklace of precious gems as a token of her love and gratitude. Hanuman

was pulling out each gem breaking it with his teeth and putting it next to his ear and throwing it away in disappointment.

When questioned why he did it, Hanuman answered that he could not find the name of Rama in any of those gems and so they were of no value to him.

Hanuman was always singing the name of God with the mouth and always doing God's work with his hands. It is said, wherever there is the name of Rama, Hanuman is always present there in a subtle way.

*yatra yatra raghunatha
kīrtanam tatra tatra krita
mastakanjalim*

*bhashpa vari paripurnaa
locanam marutīnamata
rakshasantakam.....*

A true devotee fulfills a thought in mind of the guru. Hanuman was like that and the others were jealous of that. There are many stories of Hanuman's implicit devotion to Rama, some of them humorous. On one occasion, many were assigned different jobs in the service of Rama and Hanuman was not given anything. When he asked for a job, he was given the job of snapping his fingers every time Rama yawned, as it was believed it would ensure long life to the person who yawned. So Hanuman sat all day watching the face of Rama ready to snap his fingers when Rama yawned. When it was night and Rama retired, Hanuman sat at the bedroom door and as he would not know when Rama might yawn, kept snapping his fingers all night. Rama to honor his devotee was also yawning all night. The story goes on that it caused concern to Sita, and doctors were consulted. They failed to find a reason for Rama's yawning and everyone finally turned to Rama himself for an answer and found out

that it was Hanuman's simple devotion, which kept Rama yawning. Love reciprocates. Any effort in love never goes unrewarded.

At another time Hanuman was assigned the job of simply looking at Rama's face. He was very happy to do this, as he loved to look at Rama. Again the nighttime posed a problem. When Hanuman wanted to follow him into the bedroom, he was stopped. He was surprised why Sita could go inside and he could not. Someone said she is allowed as she was his wife and wore a red dot on her forehead. The simple Hanuman went to a store at midnight, bought the red powder and applying it all over his body, came back and knocked on Rama's bedroom door. When asked what he wanted, he said if Sita can be with Rama at night for wearing a single red dot on the forehead, he should be allowed to stay with him day and night, as he had red all over his body.

Rama said I could be with you day and night but be intelligent and find a solution. Then Hanuman closed his eyes and found an answer. He said

to Rama "Then be within me" He asked Rama to remain in his heart holding the bow and arrow. When asked why with the weapons, he said, "I am a monkey. I need to be disciplined. Any time the enemies can come .So be with me and protect of me." Those who love God are always on the safe side. God is like the anesthetist. With the help of the anesthesia one goes through difficult and painful operations without knowing the pain. There will be difficulties and problems in life. Even the incarnations had problems. If we live in God consciousness and we tune our mind in God then we can handle the problems and still be unaffected by them.

Such was the love of Hanuman. You cannot analyze love. Love is beyond analysis and interpretation. Was Hanuman mad? Yes. Those

who love God are completely mad. When asked to describe his love for Rama, Hanuman gave not one, but three answers. "When I think of myself as the physical body," he said, "I love you as a servant loves his Master. When I think I am an individual, I consider myself a part of you, and when I think of myself as the soul, then you and I are one."As the body, Hanuman served Rama as the Lord by doing his work as his supreme duty. As an individual he was a part of Rama, as a wave is part of the ocean, a stone of a mountain or a flower of a garland. When experiencing 'I am the soul' he said, "I and you are one."

This is tat twam asi - that thou art, this is aham brahmásmi-I am the Absolute, this is -I and my father are one. This is the highest form of love.



THE YOGA SUTRA OF PATANJALI

Sutra 4

THE NON YOGI STATE

vrutti sarupyam itaratra//4//

Word Meaning

vrutti – the waves of thoughts arising in the ocean of *chitta* (memory); *sarupyam* – perception of identity; *itaratra* – when one is not in the state of yoga (otherwise).

Translation

At other times [when one is not in the state of yoga, as described earlier], one remains identified with the thought waves.

Commentary by Shri Lahiri Mahasaya

When a person is not in *Samadhi* [the state of super-consciousness], he perceives himself according to the *vruttis* [thought waves]. When he looks at his image in a pond, it appears to be distorted because of the ripples at the surface of the pond. The waves are the cause of distortion and differentiation. At that time, he may not realize the cause immediately. Likewise, when

one is not in *Samadhi*, due to the restlessness of *chitta* [mind-stuff], the restlessness of the *purusha* [indwelling Self] is apparent.

Metaphorical Explanation

In the previous sutra, the sage described complete oneness in the Self – no distinction between seer, sight, and seen. Even in ordinary life, one can perceive that the all-pervading God is present in all states of existence. This is the perception of *advaita*, or oneness. However, in daily life, ordinary people lead a life of duality- the seer and the seen. They feel the distinction of the two. Due to ego, they forget the indwelling Self and perceive themselves according to their own thoughts.

A person acts and reacts differently depending on the various roles played throughout the day. For example, when a man thinks of his son, he feels himself as a father. When he thinks of his father, he feels himself as a son. In relation to his wife, he is the husband. For

his brothers and sisters, he is the brother, and so on. This is the play of consciousness in the world of delusion, illusion, and error – one person playing multiple roles.

A person is the result of his own thoughts. By channeling his thinking process, he can perceive himself as the indwelling Self and attain the thoughtless state of divine perception, or, on the contrary, he may forget himself and become engrossed in the material world, due to material thoughts.

Vritti is the perception of finite existence limited in time and space. *Vritti* is the state of cognition that accrues through names and forms and their modification. However, without the indwelling Self, the mind cannot imagine and the intellect cannot decide.

Sarupya means to be one with the thought-object. One should realize that the waves and the ocean are one; they have an inseparable existence. The ocean can remain without the waves, but the waves have no existence without the ocean. Similarly, the soul is the ocean of cosmic consciousness where there are

no thoughts, however, when one descends into body consciousness, there are turbulent waves of thoughts.

There are two ways of living that each person chooses: *svarupe avasthana* (to be established in the Self) or *vritti-rupe avasthana* (to be established or engrossed in thoughts). In the first case, one is firmly anchored in the center; in the other, one is roaming at the periphery. In the center, there is no movement; one is in dimensionless existence, but at the circumference, there is restlessness and distraction. People choose one of two positions in the world: to become a yogi (meditating and enjoying the soul's beauty) or a *bhogi* (extrovert and restless, enjoying the dual world of pleasure and pain). Harmony in life is achieved through meditation. When one meditates, one goes beyond the domain of mind and thoughts, and enjoys the ecstatic beauty of supreme bliss. One cannot remain in such state for a long period of time; yet in coming back down to worldly consciousness, one can still perceive unity in diversity.

VALUABLE VOLUMES



IN THIS ISSUE WE HAVE EXCERPTS
FROM THE *UNIVERSE WITHIN* AND
MYSTICISM OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS
BY PARAMAHAMSA PRAJNANANANDA

SAHASRARA CHAKRA (From *THE UNIVERSE WITHIN*)

The Sahasrara is located in the fontanel at the top of the head. It corresponds to the soft place in the scalp and a passage (hole) in the skull when one is a newborn, and which closes around three or four months of age leaving a very small space still open. The Sahasrara is the chakratita chakra, beyond all chakras. Sahasra means thousand and ara means the spoke of a wheel. It is a wheel of thousand spokes. Why thousand? It is a multiple of 1x10x10x10. It is one supreme self-the soul within the body expressing in three states of existence. The first ten represents the ten directions, the four sides, the four corners and above and below which cover the entire space. The self manifested through these is the

causal body. When expressed through the mind and breath it is the subtle or the astral body and when expressed through the ten sense organs it is the physical or the gross body. The wheel of life rotates in a thousand directions. The thousand is not to be taken literally. It represents a multiplicity of activities.

It is also called the thousand-petalled lotus. It is the biggest lotus. Unlike the other chakras, where the lotus blooms upwards, in the Sahasrara, the lotus blooms downwards. Modern scientists have defined this chakra as the energy surrounding the brain. The yogis call it the doorway to the Infinite. When one concentrates in the Sahasrara there is a mixture of seven colors just as

sunlight passing through a prism is split into seven colors. The outermost is indigo, followed by blue, green, violet, red, orange, and yellow. The innermost place is also called the brahmarandhra, the hole of the Absolute. Through this opening, the soul enters the body and then it is closed.

The Vast Inner Sky

When one goes into deep meditation and goes beyond the ajna chakra one experiences the Sahasrara as a vast inner sky. There are stars and planets in the outer sky. If one goes higher up beyond the stars and planets there is only a vast sky with appearance of light. In deep meditation when one reaches great heights one experiences the limitless, formless aspect where all light merges into one light where there is no play of mind.

Polarity

The earth has terrestrial magnetism. It has a north pole and a south pole. Similarly the body also has a north and a south pole. We normally say up north and down south. South is a place of material activity and North is an area of spirituality and calmness. Between these North and the South poles of

the body all activities, material, physical, emotional, religious and spiritual are possible. At the extreme end of the North pole when one reaches the atom point one gets realization. It is a place where everything dissolves.

Beyond The Name And Form

A father of five children took them to a store where the children bought candy. The candy was in the forms of different animals and each of the children picked a different form- a lion, an elephant, a deer, a bird and a human. Each thought his candy was better than the other. The first one said that the lion is powerful as it can eat the rest. The second said the elephant is better as it was the biggest of all. They all started arguing when their mother came in and asked them about the reason for the argument. When they presented their argument, the mother said the essence of all candy is sweet and there is no need to quarrel. Taste the candy and enjoy the sweetness

The five children represent the five lower centers busy with name and form and the mother represents the sixth

center saying names and forms are only apparent and once in the mouth the candy melts leaving only sweetness and joy. When in Sahasrara one is free from all names and forms and is absorbed in oneself experiencing inner peace and happiness.

Chakra Purification

The seven chakras form a garland of fourteen lotuses going up and down along the spine. Dedicate this garland to God. God has given us these cosmic energy centers. Let us always connect each center with the source of energy. When acting through any chakra, act in god consciousness. Never forget. While meditating, when you focus your attention on each chakra, offer each one to God.

Chakra is a wheel indicating movement and progress. Body is the vehicle and has to move towards the goal with the help of the chakras.

Unfortunately many do not know the goal or the direction and move down or south instead of moving north. Chakra purification and energization through meditation and the help of a teacher can ensure reaching the goal of life. Concentrate in each chakra and pray for getting a real guide who can teach and direct.

Concentrate and make each chakra pure and energized, with your concentration, the negative propensities of each chakra will be removed. Your mind will be clean, happy and peaceful.

Stars And Planets

Just as the outer universe has stars and planets that are believed to influence human life, the inner universe also has the entire zodiac along the human spine. By meditating and energizing the spine the adverse effects of the stars and planets are neutralized.

CRESCENT AND STAR

(From *MYSTICISM OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS*)

In Islam we see a crescent and star symbol. What does it mean? Every religious symbol has a metaphorical meaning and spiritual significance, and it directs our mind toward many truths which can be applied in our daily spiritual life.

The moon and stars symbolize nighttime. Night is the time when people forget God because they are engrossed in pleasure or sleep. In the Bhagavad Gita (2:69), it is said:

*ya nisha sarva bhutanam
tasyam jagarti samyami
yasyam jagrati bhutani sa
nisha pashyato mune,*

"During the time that is night to all beings, self-disciplined persons remain awake, when all beings are awake, it is night to the sage."

During that which is night for all creation, the disciplined and dedicated one is awakened. Forgetfulness of inner divinity and the presence of God constitute metaphorical night and sleep, while awakening and prayer constitute the time of

light. In the night the sun is absent, but people can see light even at night.

Thus, even those who are not awakened can see the moon and stars. Be awake at night, that is, do not forget the presence of God. From ego and ignorance be awakened, be alert in divinity.

The first meaning of the crescent and stars is that the One God is always with you, reminding you not to forget Him.

The second meaning speaks of inner transformation. The crescent is a very little moon. It appears on the first evening after the new moon. It is only a trace of the moon in the sky. The moon symbolizes the mind. In Purusha Sukta there is a Vedic prayer *chandrama manasa jatah*, "moon is born from the mind of the Cosmic Being." The moon and mind are correlated. Just the full moon and new moon create high tides in various bodies of water; they both also create a lot of waves and troubles in the mind. So be careful of the tides

of the mind. The tides of the mind make life miserable. The crescent symbolizes a disciplined and regulated mind - a sign of growth in spirituality.

Eliminate the restlessness of the mind. With only a little mind you can enter divinity; you can go towards God. A little moon symbolizes thorough control over mind. On Lord Shiva's head, in the locks of hair, there is a little moon. Little moon symbolizes divinity; little moon symbolizes the mind in God, the mind absorbed in God consciousness.

The Star symbolizes the goal of life, just like the polestar. When the disciplined and prayerful mind is always conscious of the goal in life, it symbolically teaches the togetherness of the crescent and star.

The star can be seen at the midpoint of the eyebrows. The kriya symbol, the logo created by Swami Shriyukteshwarji, has a star and a little moon in the middle of the third eye. It is a beautiful emblem of the combinations of yoga, meditation, and spiritual experience. Below the two eyebrows is the play of the sense organs and above the

eyebrows is the domain of spiritual experience. The two eyes represent the duality of the world, such as heat and cold, pleasure and pain, success and failure, and so on. But above them is the third eye, the eye of wisdom and spirituality. It is the eye of unity and God consciousness.

When one meditates, one experiences the star and the moon-like light. So let the mind be always conscious of the goal of life, realizing the presence of divinity everywhere.

What is the real goal of life? Is the goal of life to suffer in misery, to worry, or is the goal of life to be peaceful, loving, and God conscious? Living a peaceful, loving and God-conscious life is possible when your mind is always directed towards the goal. If the mind ignores the goal, the result is that misery and troubles appear in one's life. When the mind is conscious of the goal - the goal is light, the goal is divinity, the goal is love, the goal is to be united with God - then life is beautiful and ever more perfect. So the crescent and star symbolize the disciplined mind and consciousness of the goal of life.

STORIES TO LIVE BY

THE FIRST MAN

In Indian mythology it is said when Brahma (the creator) created, the first creation was Kásyapa the mythological man, just like according to the Bible, God created Adam and Eve the first couple. Kásyapa was a sage - a wise person. He had two wives. One was Aditi and the other was Diti. From the first wife Aditi, Adityas, the gods were born. From Diti, the second wife, daityas or demons were born. From the same father but two different mothers two groups of children were born, one representing good aspects and the other representing the bad aspects. Each human being is a Kásyapa. Each human being is married to two wives-two types of mind. Sometimes your mind is full of joy and happiness and sometimes your mind is full of restlessness, tension, worries, and anxieties. It means you as an individual -a Kásyapa have two states of mind. One is Aditi and the other is Diti. Kásyapa means one who sees. One who is able to visualise, one who is able to experience and recognize.

Human

consciousness is Kásyapa. A means not, diti means dual. Aditi is one who is not in duality. That means one who is always in unity. Although there are many bulbs in each bulb the same electric current is flowing. Although we are looking like different plants, animals, humans, there is one life of God manifested in all. One who experiences that is called Aditi. The eldest child of Aditi and Kásyapa is known as Vivasván. Vivasván means the sun. Who is the sun? If you look at the sky you find a sun in the sky. If you close your eyes and look within into the inner sky there also is a sun. The sun in the outer sky is giving life, energy, and light to the entire creation. The sun in the inner sky is giving light, life and energy to the human body. This is Vivasván. The son of Vivasván was Manu. In Indian mythology Manu is considered the first man. If you read the Old Testament, Moses brought the law to the people. In Indian Mythology, Manu is the first person that introduced a code of conduct- Manu Smriti.

ATMA-VIDYA

SELF KNOWLEDGE

KAIVALYOPANISHAD

Mantra 11

*atmanam aranim krtva pranavam cottaranim
jnana nirmathanabhyasa pasham dahati panditah*

Meanings

atmanam - making the self, *aranim*- a piece of wood (used for producing fire in Vedic fire ceremonies) *krtva*- making, *pranavam*- om, *ca*- also, *uttaranim*- the other piece of wood, *jnanam*- knowledge, *nirmathanabhyasa* - by the practice of rubbing or churning, *pasham*- bondage, *dahati*- burns, *panditah*- man of wisdom

Substance

Using the atma as the lower piece of wood and the pranava or omkara as the upper piece of wood, by churning through meditation combined with wisdom, wise men burn the bondages.

Commentary

The last line is pandita means a wise man. Pasha means the noose or the knot. A person of knowledge burns or cuts the knot. If you have a

dog you tie the dog with a chain. If you have a cow you tie the cow with a rope. Pasha means bondage. Each individual is tied like with bondage, like the animal is tied with the rope. There is a proverb that says each individual is tied with the rope of destiny and is pulled here and there. When tied with a pasha, then we are pashu or animals. If we are human beings then we should have freedom. If we do not have the freedom then we are living like the animals.

manusya rupena mrga caranti-we are like animals in the human form running after sense pleasures. The eight bondages are *lajja*, *ghrina*, *bhaya*, *krodha*, *jugupsa*, *kula*, *sila*, and *jati*-shyness, hatred, fear, anger, jealousy, vanity of caste, pride of character and gender.

Pasha baddha bhavet jiva, pasha mukta sada shivah - one who is in bondage is human and one who is free from these bondages is god.

The wise men burn the noose. With what type of fire does the wise man burn the fire? It is with the fire of knowledge. *Jnanagni dagdha karmanam* says the Gita

After describing the meditation on formless and form, now the Upanishad comes to *pranavopasana* or the meditation on Om. The first half of the mantra refers to producing fire in Vedic fire ceremonies. By rubbing two pieces of wood the spark of fire was produced. These two pieces were known as arani.

The mantra says

atmanam aranim krtva - making the self as the lower piece of the aranis and making the pranava or omkara as the upper arani, by their friction the fire of knowledge is ignited. Om is the pratika or the name of God. *Tasya vachaka pranava* - Om is the name of God as all names and forms are included in Om. There is no difference between the name and what the

name indicates. Describing his glories in the vibhuti yoga of the Bhagavad Gita the Lord says,

Pranavah sarva vedeshu - the essence of all Vedas is pranava.

Pranava is the primordial sound, which is ever new. All sounds are in om. Om is made up of three letters a, u and m and any letter we use to produce sound can only be a, u or m. Pranava also means that which takes you near for evolution through *nadopasana* or *shabdha brahmopasana* - Listening to the divine sound.

Another explanation is the breath is om. Breath is soham. Every inhalation is sa, and every exhalation is ham.

Ham karena bahiryati sa karena viset punah.

Together it makes soham. If you remove the sa and ha from soham what remains is om. The subtle part of the soham or breath is om. Listening to the divine sound is *pranavopasana*. Through the art of breathing, churn the mind to produce the fire of knowledge and with that you can burn or eliminate all the bondages and become free.

THE MAHA KUMBHA MELA



This ancient pilgrimage finds mention even in Ramayana and the Mahabharatha. Mythologically Kumbha means a pot containing precious elixir. There are many mythological stories associated with this event. Millions of people –Sadhus, sannyasis and tourists visit this place to have a dip in the triveni sangama of Ganga, Yamuna and the invisible Saraswati.

Year 2013 is the year of Maha kumbha Mela. Millions of people will gather along the sacred banks of Ganga and Yamuna in India's Allahabad, to celebrate the Maha Kumbha Mela. 2013 is the year of Purna Kumbha Mela one that is celebrated every twelve years. This event is held from Jan 27 through Feb 25. A dip in the sacred Ganga at this time is considered especially powerful.

It is believed that all saints and sages from times immemorial congregate at Kumbhamela hoping to catch a glimpse of them or be seen by them.

Kumbhamela is also of special significance to Kriya vans. It was during the winter months of Feb – March Kumbhamela took place at Prayag. Shriyukteshwar, then Priyanath Karar visited the

place with great joy to meet holy people. It was here that he had the darshan of the deathless Babaji Maharaj who instructed him to write about the philosophies and metaphysics of East and West.

The three sacred rivers –Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati are also flowing within us. There is a description in the Jnana sankalini tantra (11-12),

Ida the channel on the left is Ganga, the channel on the right is Pingala and in

between is the central channel Sushumna, which is river Saraswati. This is the confluence of the three rivers by taking a dip in which one is absolved of all sins.

Our breath flowing through the nostrils represents the flow of the holy rivers as well as taking a dip in the rivers. To watch and observe every breath is also another meaning of taking a dip in the holy river. This is the message of Kriya.



PARAMAHAMSA PRAJNANANANDA

- A WEEK AT THE GURUKULAM

Even in his seclusion and silence, besides his personal sadhana, Baba Prajnananandaji has been working on bringing out more inspiring books and has also been serving the needs of remote villages of Orissa to fulfill the spiritual needs of people through temples, satsangs and bhajans. Go-seva and Go-rakshana also seem to be of primary concern.

Talk at the Divine Life Society

Baba Prajnananandaji came out of his seclusion to address the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Divine Life society held at Bhubaneswar. Baba broke his silence to address a gathering of 5000 people who were eager to listen to his talk. There was another talk on the following day. He continues his silence at other times communicating through writing when necessary.

Address to the trainees of 6th RBTC

The trainees and the participants of the 6th

Residential Brahmachari Training Course at the Hariharananda Gurukulam were blessed with the rare opportunity of the presence of the Guruji for a short period at the Gurukulam.

At the request of the Brahmachari trainees he addressed one class of the training session. Baba gave a very inspiring talk about Gurudev's sadhana of silence, meditation and prayer and a strict austere life while in Puri and how Gurudev reached a stage of enlightenment.

Baba also talked of his personal life – how as a boy of ten he was influenced by the writings of Mahatma Gandhi and was fasting and observing silence on every Sunday.

As he went on to college although there was even more freedom than before, and he continued his silence not only on Sundays but also on the week days before 8 am and after 8 pm. This helped him to avoid the useless gossip



students indulged in, during these times.

As he went on to a teaching job which gave ample opportunity for his sadhana, Baba continued his silence and during summer vacation he practiced seclusion and silence living in a small cottage cooking his own food, with no electricity and using a kerosene lamp. During this time in addition to his own personal sadhana he could also write the Biographies of Shri Lahiri Mahashaya and Shriykteshwar in Odia language.

“Joy of silence is difficult to compromise”, said Baba. One will not be able to talk after a long silence. When he had to go back to work after this silence Baba talked the minimum when absolutely necessary.

Then came the call of gurudev in 1994. It was 24 hours of work and the weekends were even busier with programs.

He left all his plans and took up the guru’s command and spent the next eighteen years in teaching and writing, sleeping less than four hours a day most of the time.

“Now I have taken some leave and observing silence again” said Baba.

“In each one of us there is a conflict –of Shreyas (what is good) and preyas (what is pleasant). One has to resolve this conflict. When we understand the simple question of “who am I?” at least intellectually, that we are not the three bodies, or the mind but pure consciousness

that is the stage of real freedom. Soul is ever free. Body, mind and ego are the cage .For a realized person *Ishavyasham idam sarvam* — —everything is God.”

January 21st - Laksmi Narasimha Temple Pratishtha

Kalikapur, on the banks of River Mahanadi was a scene of great festivity on Jan 21. It was the concluding ceremony of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha mandira pratishtha. It was doubly auspicious as Paramahansa Prajnanananda was present for the Purnahuti – or the final oblation of the fire ceremony. Baba was welcomed by the villagers with great love and was lead in a procession through the narrow village roads stopping at most houses, while

the villagers young and old, men and women, offered flowers and incense and arati with great devotion and sought his blessing. The resident Brahmachari trainees and participants of the International Intensive kriya Yoga Seminar (IIKYS) along with the other devotees and Sankirtan groups followed the procession with great joy.

After the conclusion of the fire ceremony Baba addressed a gathering of a few hundred people.

He lauded the efforts of Prof. Aurobinda Routray who hails from this village of Kalikapur (presently working as a Professor in IIT, Kharagpur) who was responsible for the construction of this beautiful temple. It was a good thought of putting money to some good





use and constructing the temple for his village which would serve as a spiritual center.

Baba elaborated on the meaning of mandira. The word originated from the root *manda* – which means slow and also a place of sleep. It is place of worship where you do don't rush but take your time in the presence of God and putting all your restlessness to sleep you concentrate on the God. Mandira is also one's own house. The body is also a mandira, said Baba, and once pranapratishtha (the presence of prana) takes place it is the living presence of God.

Baba referred to the three Narasimha temples in the Jagannath temple.

Baba encouraged the villagers to visit the temple each evening and to have a satsang of reading Bhagavatam, Nrusimha Purana and chanting the name of the Lord. He

blessed the Village to prosper spiritually and encouraged those who leave the village for higher prospects to come back and do something for the village.

Jan 24 - Foundation of Shri Raghunatha Mandir

Another great event that took place during Baba's short stay was the pratishtha of Raghunath mandir, of Lord Sri Rama. It is about 100kms away from Cuttack city in the district of Kendujhar in Northern Odisha. close to Ramachandrapur, with Angarua on one side, Bandhagoda and Pulugadia on the other and forest on the third side is a little hill, on the top of which is the Raghunath Mandir. It is in a beautiful setting of natural woods.

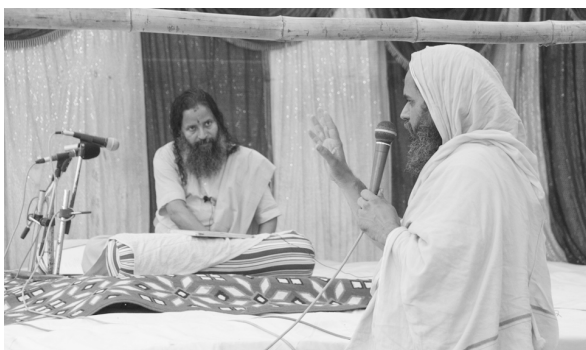
Incidentally Swami Shuddhanadaji hails from village Angarua from a well known spiritual family and was actively involved in the new temple.



It was a sacred sight to see Baba and swami Shuddhanandaji climb up to the top of the temple to perform the Kumbhabhisheka (pouring of the consecrated water from the many Kalasas over the Shikhara.)

Then followed the elaborate ritual of carrying the beautiful idols of Lord Rama , Mother Sita and Lakshmana

along with Hanuman into the main temple and installed with due ceremonies. Then the concluding havan and purnahuti were completed. Paramahamsaji looked like a happy child with great joy during the entire ceremony. The temple was a beautiful structure with scenes from the Ramayana painted on its walls.



It was a great gift to all the neighboring villages to have Lord R a m a installed on the hill top temple that

could serve as a spiritual center in future.

The ashram residents and the trainees along with other devotees travelled to the site to participate in the auspicious event.

Prasad was distributed to thousands of people who attended the event and then was Baba's talk in open ground at the bottom of the hill.

The program began with Swami Shuddhanandaji's introduction and request to the villagers to strictly observe the rule of not carrying any plastic on to the temple premises and also not to use candles for lighting lamps.

In his talk Baba Prajnanananda said,

"There is no dearth of temples in India and so also there is no lack of saints and sages and there is also no lack of people. This is the sacred land of Hindu dhrama, vedic dharma, sanatana dharma or whatever you want to call it, is the land in which God has incarnated again and again and played his leelas among us all. This is the land in which Lord Raghunath walked bare foot from North India to South India. The very dust of this land is sacred.

This is the temple of every one. Think that in his



vanavasa while roaming the forests, Lord Rama had come to this village just as he stopped at Shabari's place. Worship the Lord with devotion.

Let there be the reading of Ramacharita manasa, Bhagavata Purana and Harinama sankirtan at the temple every evening.

Soon there would be a *Goshala* here. We will have domestic cows for providing the temple needs for milk and ghee.

There will also be opportunity to do *Goseva* – to take care of the sick and helpless cows.

In the body of the cow are said to be crores of devatas.

People are now realizing the value of panchagavya sevana – a mixture of milk, ghee, curd, gomutra(cow urine) and gobara(cow dung). Cow's urine is considered as valuable as Cow's milk.

Let this be a beginning. See how many saints and sages have already visited this place. Celebrate more festivals like Ramanavami, Sita navami and Sita vivaha.

I bless this to be an auspicious beginning and the village to prosper spiritually."

Dec 25,

After these beautiful spiritual events , Baba left the ashram on the 25th and his message before departure conveyed through writing to the ashramites present were two couplets which meant,

"Keep yourself engaged the whole day and night. Never allow laziness to overpower you."

"What do you become if you do not do sadhana? You will be like an empty husk without the grain in it."

Visit our web site:

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ANNUAL PROGRAM AT BHISHINDIPUR, WEST BENGAL

The 2 day event of the Annual program of our Bishindipur Ashram was held from 9-10 Feb 2013.

Our Bishindipur Ashram in West Bengal also known as Yuktashram was established by Our Gurudev Baba Hariharanandaji along with Prabhuji or Swami Narayana Giri who was also a disciple of Shriyukteshwar and a brother disciple of Gurudev. They had also started a school for the children at the time within walking distance from the ashram to provide education for the village children.

Later Prajnana Mision, had financed the remodeling and the extension of the school building, which is now known as the Hariharananda Centenary building. The school has grown in strength and is now a High School run by the government. It is rewarding to see the seed planted by Gurudev to have grown into such a beautiful and full fledged school now providing education

to so many young boys and girls.

We reached the ashram on the evening of 8th via Khadagpur and travelled by car to Bishindipur which is an hour away. We were warmly welcomed by the ashram residents and rested for the night. Early morning on the 9th there was a Prabhat Bheri in which several disciples of the village participated along with the ashram residents who went in a procession through the village streets chanting and singing the name of God and Gurus. There were higher kriya initiations held in the Meditation hall later in the morning . Then there was the guided meditation.

The Ashram abounds in natural beauty with many exotic plants and beautiful gardens full of flowers, and surrounded by green fields. The ashram has expanded quite a bit in the last few years. It now has few guest rooms and dormitories have been added to the old building. A new building in the front,

houses the beautiful meditation hall and some class rooms on the upper floors and the school office and the medical facilities on the lower floor. The new school started on the ashram premises has grades 1 through 5. There is also a plan to build a Shiva Taemple, a Kali Temple and also a smriti Mandir for Gurudev and Prabhuji on the Ashram premises for which foundation has already been laid. The Brahmacharis of the ashram conduct regular guided meditation every evening and also have satsang programs of Gita and Bhagavatam.

At 2 pm in the afternoon there was the Bishindipur High School program. The school welcomed Swami Shuddhanandaji, Swami Samarpananandaji and the other resident and guest monks and Brahmacharis. Swami Shuddhanandaji addressed the students giving them advice on real education which should include education in human values and spiritual awareness and not just the study of school books. He encouraged the students to take advantage of the closeness of the school to the ashram and learn about



meditation and scriptural study. Then there was the unveiling of a beautiful statue of Guru dev Baba Hariharanandaji in front of the school building by Shuddhanandaji,. Swamiji also inaugurated a couple of new classrooms that were added on the top floor. The school building has the name Hariharananda Centenary building.

In the evening there was cultural program at the ashram by the students of our ashram primary school. It was an amazing show of talent in dance, music and drama. The program was followed by a satsang by Swami Shuddhanandaji, Swam

Samarpananandaji and the other monks of the ashram. Several topics like the teachings of Gita and Bhagavatam, service to parents, and educating children in real values were addressed. The two day program ended with blessings from the monks to the assembled congregation.

It was remarkable to see the love of the village people who worked with great enthusiasm to make the program a success. The program was well attended by hundreds of the village people. There were also many disciples from Calcutta and Khadagpur who had travelled to Bishindipur to attend the program.



AROUND THE WORLD



INDIA

6th Residential Brahmachari Training Course (RBTC) 6 Dec, 2012 – Mar10, 2013

The 6th Residential Brahmachari Training Course is in full session. The class of 35 Students are given theoretical and practical training through several spiritual discourses and guided meditation classes. The classes on Upanishads, yogic scriptures are taught by Swami Shuddhananda Giri, Swami Samarpanananda Giri and Swami Atmavidyananda Giri.

14th IIKYS Jan 14-20

The International Intensive Kriya Yoga Seminar

was inaugurated by Gajapathi Maharaja –the king of Puri. The Seminar continued with guest speakers from other ashrams, the resident swamis and yogacharyas. Three guided meditations each day and the daily question and answer sessions helped enhance the spiritual progress of the many participants who attended the seminar. Baba Prajnananandaji sent an elaborate message that was read out at the beginning of the program.

Foundation day of Dhyana Mandir –Pattamandai

Our Pattamandai Ashram celebrated its Foundation

day with special worship and fire ceremony.

Foundation day of Matru Ashram –Arua

Matru Ashram celebrated its 4th Foundation day with special worship and havan and the release of its annual journal. Brahmacharini Sasmita of Chinmaya Mission was the invited speaker. Baba Prajnananandaji blessed the occasion with his surprise visit as the program stated and gave a beautiful talk on Motherhood and the work of the Matru Ashram.

Saraswati Puja was celebrated on a grand scale at the Gurukulam and at Balashram.

Vishva Shanti Yajna at Ekam Kona Ashram

Our Annual Vishva Shanti Homa will begin this year from the 17th of Feb

Kumbhamela- This year our Allahabad ashram has procured a tent on the Kumbhamela site providing accommodation to the ashram residents who wish to participate in the Kumbhamela.

Prachi Parikrama March 2-8

Prachi Parikrama that was started last year by Prachi Parikrama Charitable Trust supported by Prajnana Mission will be held this year also from March 2-8

Shivaratri March 10

Upcoming Retreats

75th Anniversary of Gurudev in Puri, Odisha June 12

AMERICAS

April 17 to 21 –Higher Kriya Retreat

Mother Center USA will hold the Higher Kriya Retreat with Swami Atmavidyananda Giri and other Yogacharyas.

May 3-5 – Midwest Retreat

May 10-12 – Mountain Region Retreat

May 23-27 – Gurudev's Birthday Seminar

June 15-30 – Himalayan Retreat

EUROPE

April 25-30 – Higher Kriya Retreat

May 27 – Birthday Seminar

May 30-June 13 – Himalayan Retreat
