

Sthita Prajna



Guru Vandana

*Om brahmanandam paramasukhadam kevalam jnanamurtim
dvandvatitam gaganasadrisham tattvamasyadilakshyam;
ekam nityam vimalam acalam sarvadhi-sakshi-bhutam
bhavatitam-trigunarahitam sadgurum tam namami*

“He who is the source of all bliss, the source of eternal happiness, personification of wisdom, beyond all duality, formless, whose attention is always on the divine essence - Thou are That. Guru is the only, eternal, pure, steady, witness in consciousness in all, Guru is beyond all thought and beyond the three qualities of nature. I bow to that sat guru.”

Guru Gita

CONTENTS

VOLUME 13

ISSUE 3

Sub	Page No.
• GURU VANDANA	3
• EDITORIAL	5
• MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER	6
• PRAJNANAVANI – THE ART OF SILENCE	8
• MATANTARA AND MANANTARA	13
• IMPORTANCE OF YOGA AND MEDITATION	14
• TEACHINGS OF THE MASTERS	18
• GURUDEV'S BIRTHDAY	19
• PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY	20
• THANKS GIVING - AT ART OF LIVING	23
• NABAKALEBARA OF LORD JAGANNATH	25
• DATES TO REMEMBER	28
• RAMA HRIDAYAM	29
• YOGASUTRA OF PATANJALI	34
• MYTHS AND METAPHORS	36
DEVI MAHATMYA	
• VALUABLE VOLUMES	
PRACTICE OF MEDITATION	42
• MYSTICISM OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS	46
• STORIES TO LIVE BY	
LIVE IN THE PRESENT	48
• ATMA-VIDYA – PURSUING SELF-KNOWLEDGE	49
• AROUND THE WORLD	51

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FROM THE EDITORS :

“The grace of the divine is available to those who dedicate their life to hard work with a positive and prayerful attitude”

Paramahasa Prajnanananda

In Message of the Master Gurudev gives us guidance for balance in life.

With Gurudev’s birthday celebrations coming up in May, 2015, Prajnanavani talks of the Giri tradition and Gurudev’s exemplary life as the message of Gita.

Under Myths and Metaphors we discuss some verses from Narayani Stuti. “Rama Hridayam” from Adhyatma Ramayana discusses the difference between atma, anatma and paramatma which is beautifully illustrated by Lord Rama in his teaching to Hanuman.

We bring you news of the 16th annual International Intensive Kriya Yoga Seminar at the Hariharananda Gurukulam.

World Yoga day recognizes the importance of Yoga and Meditation. We present an abstract of the National Institute of Health, USA from a medical perspective.

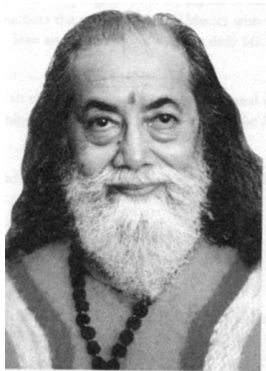
Relevant excerpts from some of Paramahansa Prajnanananda’s seminal works, The Universe Within and Mysticism of Religious Symbols continue.

We bring you news of the many activities of the Indian ashrams and the ashrams abroad and new book releases.

Hope you enjoy this issue and those to come.

MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER

A BALANCED LIFE



With every breath we change. From birth to death human being passes through many stages of life. The perishable body changes every moment, but the soul is imperishable. Thoughts, dispositions, and activities manifest because of the soul in the body, but when we are busy in the material world, we forget the indwelling Self and as a result we feel happiness or unhappiness. God causes this play of duality through the delusive forces of *maya*, but God, the director of everything, remains compassionately detached.

Achieving the state of complete realization and perfect happiness is every human being's birthright. But to

achieve complete realization, you must understand the body. The body is a microcosm of the cosmos. The individual Self in each living being is also the universal cosmic form of God in the complete creation. God is the creator. Having created everything this formless God permeates His entire creation. Even though creation has form, it also comprises the formless aspect of God.

Every individual considers his body to be the nearest and dearest object in all creation. Although this body is constantly modified from birth to death, it is always the temple of God. The body is beautiful as long as the soul stays in its bodily home. Without the play of the soul, without the breath of life, the body is useless.

Love your body as the temple of God. Keep it pure, clean, and divine. Love your body as the gateway to realization, because without the body, you cannot realize the Self. Keep the body in perfect condition; Otherwise your life's journey will be delayed and

incomplete. But do not be too attached to the body temple. Although you must enter the temple of the body to achieve the vision of God through prayer, do not become so busy watching the beautiful play in and around the temple that you forget the reason for being in the body temple in the first place.

Instead of being attached to the temple, be attached to the indwelling spirit. Search for God with every breath, in every action, and with knowledge. If people can lead lives dedicated to truth, they will achieve all round development with absolute peace, awareness, oneness with God and liberation. Those who want to pursue lives of righteousness and truth, seek the presence of a realized master for guidance, where they learn practical techniques for spiritual progress, and can practice with love and loyalty. They lead very simple lives and watch God in every breath. By learning the science of breath, they can perceive energy flowing from the pituitary to the fontanel, while constantly remaining in touch

with the imperishable soul, the indwelling Self. They practice staying alert during every breath. They feel the marvelous power of God within day and night. They watch the soul and the breath simultaneously. They perceive God in every activity. Their life in the practical world is therefore modest.

When they develop an appetite they think of God and thank him. They purify their hearts. They do not allow anger, pride, ego, or hypocrisy in themselves. Those who maintain awareness of this imperishable soul have no negative qualities. They maintain love for every human being and all religions. They try to live at God's door. In every moment they watch the marvelous power of God breathing within them. They perceive God in the pituitary and above, and as a result, they merge into the formless stage and into Godhood. Meditation along with a lifestyle of moderation brings inner peace and freedom from disease. This kind of life makes you free from all negativity. This is a life of Truth and light.

PRAJNANAVANI - THE VOICE OF WISDOM

REMEMBERING GURUDEV



It has been twelve years since Gurudev left his physical body. Gurudev was born on *vaishakaha purnima*- full moon day in the month of May. According to the English calendar the date was 27th of May. His *punyatithi* or mahasamadhi day was *margasirsha amavasya*, a new moon day in the month of December.

Last year the *punyatithi* of gurudev according to the English calendar Dec 2, 2014 coincided with Gita Jayanti or the Birthday of the Gita according to the Indian calendar. Gita Jayanti is celebrated on the day of

margasira shukla ekadashi (11th moon in the bright fortnight, in the month of Dec) in most parts of India. Let us think of Gurudev and Gita together.

In the Gita the Lord said,

M a s a n a m margasirshoham – Among the months I am *Margasirsha*. *Marga* means path and *sirsha* means the highest point. It is the path that leads to *sikhara* or peak. There is the presence of divinity in every being but in the human being the path that leads to the upper part of the body (brain) is *sushumna*.

On the day of Ekadashi, the 11 indriyas or sense organs

should be disciplined and surrendered to God. The 11 indriyas are five organs of action, five organs of perception and the mind. All these disciplined and directed towards God is *Ekadashi*. *Punyatithi* or *smaranotsava* (the day of exit) of a realized person is considered more auspicious than the day of birth or the day of entrance.

We all belong to the Giri tradition of *sannyasa*. Acharya shankara systematized the *dashanami sannyasa* order such as –*puri, giri, aranya, saraswati, tirtha, bharati* etc. Acharya Shankara has written a book called the *Mathamnyaya*, in which there is a verse which defines the Giri tradition.

Vaso giri vane nityam
– one who always lives in the forest.

Gita dhyana tatparah-
one who is committed to meditation on Gita.

Gambhira achala buddhistha-
one who is steady in intellect

Giri nama sa uchya-
– is known as Giri

One who belongs to the Giri order of monks lives in hills

and forests, is committed to the study of the Gita, is well established in a steady intellect.

Gita is the prescribed book for Giri tradition. Gita is special for those practicing Kriya Yoga. Lahiri Mahashaya studied Gita and held *satsang* every day. Spending his own money from his meager income, he printed and distributed the Gita free. He also encouraged those who came to him for initiation, those who came from the west and others to study Gita. He also brought a new yogic understanding of the Gita that has no parallel.

Bhagavad Gita is a yoga shastra. The *pushpika* or the *samputa vakya*, the concluding sentence of each chapter reminds us that it is a yoga shastra.

Yogi tahi janiye, yo gita hi janiye –A yogi is the one who knows the Gita .

Gurudev loved the Gita and lived according to the Gita. When I came to Gurudev in my early twenties, he had a few books all the time by his bed. Gita and Chandi books of Jagadishwarananda, a book of nine Upanishads by Gambhirananda, a Bengali Almanac and a small Bible .The

first three books were Ramakrishna Mission publications. I wondered why a realized Master needed to keep these books and study them. The Masters set an example to others by their way of living.

As it is said in the Gita
Y a d y a d a c h a r a t i
shreshtha...(verse 21, Ch 3)
people follow the example of the Masters. By reading the Gita every day Masters encourage disciples to study the Gita by setting an example. Gurudev advised the disciples to study one verse of the Gita every day, write it down on a paper and keep it in the pocket and to reflect on it throughout the day. He also said to give importance to the practice of the message than just chanting.

Once a disciple asked me, “what book should I read?” I recommended the same method. He sincerely did that and in less than two years wrote to me again asking what to do next. I told him start from the beginning again.

Gurudev lived the message of Gita. Gita says,

Natyasnatastu yogosti
(verse 16 Ch 6)

Those who eat too much cannot be a yogi, those who fast too much cannot also be yogis. Gurudev was much disciplined in his eating habits. Gita also advises moderation in food, sleeping and activities.

yuktahara viharasya
(verse 17 Ch 6)

Gurudev advised moderation in food and sleep. Even into his nineties Gurudev was up little before 4 am and finished his toilet etc. He was very punctual in his breakfast, lunch, snack and dinner, everything at the exact time. Sometimes when we went to public programs and were late for food, he took a few pieces of banana.

First time when I heard the metaphorical interpretation from him and the meaning of the names I wondered if he was making them up. His knowledge of the Gita was so thorough that he frequently quoted from the Gita with the exact verse and chapter numbers. I was checking to see if he was correct as I could not believe he could quote the verses with such precision.

One evening Baba called me to his room closed the door

and gave a book of Adhyatma Gita to me which contains only 15th Chapters. He asked me not to show it to anyone. I translated it to Odiya for my reading and wanted to give it back to him, but he asked me to keep it with me.

Sometimes Gurudev interpreted the same verse differently at different times. He said the meaning changed sometimes after meditative experiences.

Gurudev' was a practicing saint of the Gita. He lived his life according to the Gita. In the Bhagavad Gita Arjuna asks the Lord what happens to a person who will not attain liberation in one life even though he is practicing yoga. The Lord answers that the *sadhana* done during life will not be wasted and one picks up from where he left. One will be born in the family of a yogi so he could easily continue his *sadhana* and achieve the goal.

Gurudev's father while on bed paralyzed and knowing he will not recover, still asked Gurudev to initiate him into third kriya. He said, "If I leave this world after learning the third kriya I can continue from there in my next life." Gurudev's

father was also an astrologist. He knew when he would leave the body He also predicted his wife's death by saying she would have to live eight years as a widow. The monk son would look after her more than the other family members. He was a strict disciplinarian living life according to scripture.

Gurudev was born into a family of yogis where in every 4th generation there was a monk.

Gurudev's father taught him astrology and the means to correct the counter effects of planets. In Gurudev's *agni kundali* (horoscope) he had *mrityu yoga*- danger to his life. One day he was so sick that he could not get up from the bed. But he recovered. He then suffered from Leukoderma which was also cured miraculously.

In 1997 he said to me, "If God will allow me 5 more years of life it will be of great help to you." He left his body in 2002, 5 years after he said that. Gurudev knew when he was leaving.

Nine days before his departure he called me in Europe during a program. That was the last telephone call.

Gurudev on the phone said, “Come soon.” I said the program is going on. He insisted I come soon and I reached the next day.

Gurudev’s was a complete life. He always said, “I am for all” Another time he said, “I am a free bird in the free air.” Gurudev once said “No one has understood Hariharananda. You know a little but that is only 5 percent.”

In the Bhagavad Gita in a few places there is description of what happens to one who dies during specific periods - how those who die during certain times travel through light and some others who die under different conditions travel through darkness and smoke. A devotional Bengali song says, “If you die while living then you will not have the fear of death.” Gurudev experienced physical death many times- no pulse and no breath and people wondered how he came back to life.

Once a spiritual group was visiting Gurudev and argued that in the age of Kali, yoga does not work and you can be liberated only by *nama sankirtan* (chanting and singing the name of God.) Sri Chaitanya was taking the name of God

just once and went into samadhi state. Gurudev asked “Have you seen anyone do it?” They said “No.” Gurudev said, “I can show you” and saying, *hari bol*, went into samadhi. Gurudev did this to show that if you do it sincerely you can get it. He often quoted,

“*yatna krite ya na siddhyati kutra doshah*”- If you tried and could not succeed you should go back to the teacher and ask and learn properly.

Knowing the Master is knowing God. Realizing the Master is realizing God. Are we worthy disciples?

12 years have passed. Time is flowing. It is not stopping for anyone. Flow of the river does not remain still. If you are born you have to die. What are we doing? Struggling with *ahamkara* (ego) and *abhimana* (vanity). *Sadhana* should be easy to do. God in every breath- to love and to thank and to surrender, not to forget a single breath.

During the last week in the hospital Gurudev talked. He talked in Bengali. He said, “Are you ready? Let us go.” He indicated that he is going. O Mind why roam here; let us go

to a place where every day is a full moon.

Another time he said, "All troubles in my life are because of you, because you came to me so late."

Guru disciple relationship is a special and sweet

relationship. Follow Gurudev's instructions. Study Gita every day. Do *sadhana* every day.

(From the talks of Baba Prajnanananda during the Mahasamadhi Seminar Dec 2-3, 2014- at Hariharananda Gurukulam)

MATANTARA AND MANANTARA

There are two words which sound similar but are very different in meaning.

Matantara is difference in your perspective. Different individuals could have different perspectives or ideas of about a given situation. There is nothing wrong with it.

Manantara – is differences in the mind set. Having a preconceived opinion about another in your mind and not wanting to get along. Mental differences give tension and sadness. Playing the old record against someone is a sickness. To be unhappy, sad and worried is not spirituality.

We are all bound by Gurudev. Gurudev is the thread and we are the flowers in a garland. Forget all differences and live like that. There is no problem that does not have a solution. One has to examine the situation and take the right decision and not waste time. Spiritual life is to be discriminative. What type of discrimination? Viveka is to be able to differentiate right from the wrong and lead an impartial life.

In God's eyes we are all equal and we are the children of God. With partiality comes love and hate. If you cannot love all, you cannot love at all. In a spiritual person's eyes one who is against him is also a friend. We all know a lot. Knowing a lot is not a big deal. One has to be loving, humble and serving.

IMPORTANCE OF YOGA AND MEDITATION – WORLD YOGA DAY

June 21, 2015 is declared as a World Yoga Day by United Nations. The importance of Yoga and Meditation has been finally recognized.

What Is Meditation?

Meditation is a mind and body practice that has a long history of use for increasing calmness and physical relaxation, improving psychological balance, coping with illness, and enhancing overall health and well-being. Mind and body practices focus on the interactions among the brain, mind, body, and behavior.

There are many types of meditation, but most have four elements in common: a quiet location with as few distractions as possible; a specific, comfortable posture (sitting, lying down, walking, or in other positions); a focus of attention (a specially chosen word or set of words, an object, or the sensations of the breath); and an open attitude (letting distractions come and go naturally without judging them).

Many studies have been conducted to look at how

meditation may be helpful for a variety of conditions, such as high blood pressure, certain psychological disorders, and pain. A number of studies also have helped researchers learn how meditation might work and how it affects the brain.

Medical Perspective –A Condensed NIH Report

For High Blood Pressure: Results of a controlled trial involving 298 college students in 2009 showed that meditation lowers the blood pressure of people at increased risk of developing hypertension. The findings also suggested that practicing meditation can help with psychological distress, anxiety, depression, anger/hostility, and coping ability. In 2013 American Heart Association recommended that meditation could be used as an adjunct or complementary therapy along with standard treatment. (A study conducted by Swami Matrukrupananda on Kriyavans at Hariharananda Gurukulam was published in Sthita Prajna in January, 2009)

Cancer Symptoms and Treatment, Side Effects.

A controlled trial in 2012 with 229 women following surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy for breast cancer (stage 0 to III) found that an 8-week mindfulness-based stress reduction program improved mood, breast- and endocrine-related quality of life, and well-being more effectively than standard care. American College of Chest Physicians in 2013 recommended meditation for patients undergoing lung cancer treatment,

M e n o p a u s a l Symptoms: A 2010 review of scientific literature found that yoga and meditation-based programs may be helpful in reducing common menopausal symptoms including the frequency and intensity of hot flashes, sleep and mood disturbances, stress, and muscle and joint pain.

Anxiety Disorders: A 2014 literature review of 47 trials in 3,515 participants suggests that meditation programs show evidence of improving anxiety and depression. It reported statistically superior outcomes for symptoms of anxiety in the

meditation groups compared to control groups.

Smoking Cessation:

Findings from a 2013 systematic review suggest that meditation-based therapies may help people quit smoking. It showed a greater rate of reduction in cigarette use immediately after treatment and at 17-week follow up.. Results of a 2013 brain imaging study suggest that mindful attention reduced the craving to smoke, and also that it reduced activity in a craving-related region of the brain.

For Irritable Bowel Syndrome: A NCCAM-funded clinical trial in 2011 that enrolled 75 women suggest that practicing mindfulness meditation for 8 weeks reduces the severity of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) symptoms.

For Ulcerative Colitis: In a 2014 pilot study with 55 adults with ulcerative colitis the researchers concluded that it might help people in remission from moderate to moderately severe disease—and maybe reduce rates of flare-up from stress.

Other Studies

- Results from a 2011 NCCAM-funded study

- of 279 adults who participated in an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program found that changes in spirituality were associated with better mental health and quality of life.
- Data from a 2013 literature review concluded that practicing meditation may enhance immune function, particularly among patients with cancer or HIV/AIDS.
 - Guidelines from the American College of Chest Physicians published in 2013 suggest that MBSR and meditation may help to reduce stress, anxiety, pain, and depression while enhancing mood and self-esteem in people with lung cancer.
 - Clinical practice guidelines issued in 2014 by the Society for Integrative Oncology (SIC) recommend meditation as supportive care to reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and fatigue in patients treated for breast cancer. The SIC also recommends its use to improve quality of life in these people.
 - A 2014 literature review and meta-analysis suggested that mind and body practices, including meditation, reduce chemical identifiers of inflammation and show promise in helping to regulate the immune system.
 - Results from a 2013 NCCAM-supported study involving 49 adults suggest that 8 weeks of mindfulness training may reduce stress-induced inflammation better than a health program that includes physical activity, education about diet, and music therapy.
 - A 2013 review of the scientific literature concluded that mindfulness training improved irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) patients' pain and quality of life.
 - There's some evidence that forms of meditation may help with chronic pain. Research suggests

that meditation can be a powerful tool for learning control of attention, regulating emotion, and increasing self-awareness. New scientific data show that during meditation there are a number of measurable biological changes, and the data suggest that meditation has the potential to impact mental and physical health. For example, neuroimaging suggests meditation may have an effect on brain function that persists even when someone is not meditating. Another study showed changes in certain genes related to inflammation and histones.

.What the Science Says About Safety and Side Effects of Meditation

- Meditation is generally considered to be safe for healthy people.
- People with physical limitations may not be

able to participate in certain meditative practices involving movement. People with physical health conditions should speak with their health care providers before starting a meditative practice, and make their meditation instructor aware of their condition.

- There have been rare reports that meditation could cause or worsen symptoms in people with certain psychiatric problems like anxiety and depression. People with existing mental health conditions should speak with their health care providers before starting a meditative practice, and make their meditation instructor aware of their condition.

(Abstracted by Swami Matrukrupananda from National Institutes of Health • National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.)

Teachings of the Masters

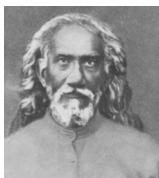
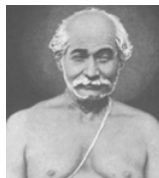


“God is in every living body.”

Mahavatara Babaji

“Behold the light in yourself with a concentrated mind.”

Lahiri Mahasaya



“Control of the senses by Karma Yoga of Kriya Yoga is preferable to indifference to the senses.”

Swami Shriyukteshwar

“When a thought comes into one’s mind, one should immediately think of God.”

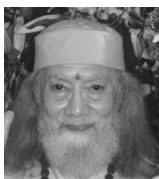
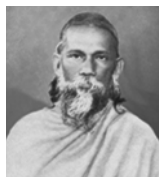
Sanyal Mahasaya



“Of greatest help in your development is the habit of mental whispering to God. You will see a change in yourself that you will like very much.” **Paramahansa Yogananda**

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

Swami Satyananda



“Stay calm but active and remain compassionately detached.”

Paramahansa Hariharananda

“When there is only constant perception of unity, love will not only manifest towards God, the ocean, but towards every wave in the ocean.”

Paramahansa Prajnanananda



GURUDEV'S BIRTHDAY

This year we will be celebrating the Birthday of Baba Hariharanandaji

The life of Gurudev was a manifestation of service, love, humility and compassion. He often quoted the Sanskrit maxim, "Feed the hungry, teach the students, nurse the sick, and

give solace to the distressed." He exemplified this maxim throughout his life and was always seeking the opportunity to serve.

He once said, "I have come to serve, not to be served. I have come here to give, not to take."



*"Always remember that you are God in human being
and a human being in God."*

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

AVATAR

Jyothi Bathina

This year, Lord Jagannath takes on a new self, a physical avatar to replace the one that has served Him for the past 19 years. Interestingly enough, in this ritual that takes in Puri, when there is an extra month in the month of Ashadha, the existing idols are disposed of and replaced with brand new ones. However, the *brahma vastu* hidden inside the idols, a divine object which represents the soul, is carefully transferred to the newly crafted idols which now take their place. This beautiful and symbolic ritual of taking on a new avatar reminded me of my experience a few years ago, when I walked out of the theater after watching the movie Avatar with all the beautiful 3-D images still swirling in my head. There were so many spiritual messages and familiar themes in the movie that seemed to resonate not only with me but all the moviegoers who crowded the theater to see this fantasy movie multiple times, making it a box office hit.

Avatar is the familiar story of going back to one's natural instincts, of trusting in a greater spirit, and of overcoming difficulty through courage and fortitude, made magical and new through technological wizardry and special effects. A crippled ex marine is able to take on a new incarnation through scientific advances and to travel in another world where faith and an intense attunement with Nature allow a people to flourish. He ultimately chooses that world and that avatar, or incarnation, over the one he leaves behind.

I was left wondering what it was that was so alluring about the movie. Was it the fact that in such a world, all wrongs could be made right? The once crippled marine is now strong and agile, a mighty warrior. The cruelty and cynicism of the human world is replaced with the gentle beauty of Pandora's world. And yet this world is no less brutal or dangerous than

the one he leaves behind. It is filled with savage creatures, predators, and terrifying challenges. What makes it different is the way that the clan approaches those challenges. Despite their apparent lack of machinery or technological advances, the people of Pandora are far advanced in their ability to communicate with each other, with the past, and with the world around them.

If we interpret this story in the light of Hindu philosophy, it's clear that each of us has also assumed an avatar in this life. And as the soul resides in this temporary body, we take on a series of adventures each day in the world around us. We battle demons and beasts, we face challenges and triumphs and if we are fortunate, we find some fleeting love and peace amidst the chaos.

The protagonist of the film says at one point that everything is all mixed up. As he gets more and more caught up in Pandora's world, he notices that the dream world seems real and the real world seems like the illusion. In Hinduism we have the concept of Maya, and the idea that all

the world as we see it is merely illusion. While our soul lies dormant, we wander about in the physical body believing that what we encounter is real. It is only when the soul finally awakens to its own nature that the world around us loses its power.

Just like the hero in the movie, we are crippled at the outset, not physically perhaps, but in our lack of perception and lack of self-knowledge. Just like him, we have to fight foes in both the worlds we go between. Outside, we have the Pandoran challenges, hardships, death, disease, poverty, struggle, and like him, we have to use our bodies to fight, fulfill our karma and learn through experience. Inside, in our native state, we have the multiple challenges of ego, anger, jealousy, greed, ambition and all the various internal foes that keep us from waking up and claiming our true self. We have to overcome these as well, since they continue to pull us down and keep us firmly in their grasp.

Avatar is a glorious fantasy, making individual victory and redemption a clear possibility. I believe that we

flock to such stories because they remind us of our own possibilities. If we can rise to the challenge and fight, we too can conquer both worlds and battle scarred and weary though we may be at the end, reclaim our rightful place as free and eternal souls.

The Nabakalebara ritual in Puri reminds us that when our temporary avatar is complete, and we are ready for a new one, the old body falls

by the wayside and is removed so that our own *brahma vastu* or divine spirit can transfer to a brand new receptacle. It is our duty then to treat this body with respect for it serves us until our dying breath in achieving our spiritual goals. It is also clear that we need not fear death, for the soul is transferred just as we see with Lord Jagannath, to our very own *nabakalebara* with which to serve both God and humanity.



Go Puja on Gita Jayanti

THANKS GIVING – AN ART OF LIVING

Normally, we thank someone when we receive help or support. But are we thankful to God in difficult times? It is a common experience that many people do not hesitate to blame God when a critical situation arises: “Why did this happen to me?” But thanking God when problems manifest is a special way to express our love.

A beautiful story in the Mahabharata illustrates thanksgiving. When the battle was over, the Pandavas were victorious. Yudhisthira was enthroned and became the emperor. Shri Krishna, seeing that the Pandavas had been freed from troubles, wanted to take leave of them. He went to say good-bye to his aunt, the queen mother, Kunti, to seek her permission. He said, “My aunt, your sons are free from all difficulties, and you can be happy with your family.” Hearing this, Kunti said, “O Krishna, I have a prayer. Would you fulfill it?”

Shri Krishna looked at her with curiosity. Then she

continued, “O Krishna, let there be countless difficulties and problems. We will embrace them with joy, and we will thank you forever. But do not leave us, saying that difficulties have ended.”

Perhaps it sounds a bit odd that she prayed for difficulties. We always seek pleasure, happiness, and comfort. Why seek difficulties?

Sant Kabir, a mystic and poet in India about five centuries ago, said, “Everyone remembers God in adverse situations.” But a true spiritual person’s heart always becomes filled with love and gratitude in any situation. In adversity or prosperity, remembering God and being grateful with love is the sign of strength and love.

Whom should we thank? It starts with our parents and ends with God. In between, we can fill in with whomever we find worthy. In reality, any tiny insect such as a bee or a firefly, or a huge animal like an elephant, or a flower or a fruit, a farmer or a tailor, a star or a

moon, a rainbow or a clear sky, a sunny day or a snowfall, a lake, river, or ocean, the earth, water, fire, air, or sky, a friend, a companion - we can make an all-inclusive list. What do you think? The entire creation and its Creator are on my list of thanksgiving. Even a person who might have hurt or done so-called harm is befitting of thanksgiving; I have learned a lot from such beings. I am personally grateful to all and seek their love and blessings.

We should learn to be grateful not only with words coming from our mouths, but also from our heads and hearts. The Bible says, "Let our hearts overflow with thankfulness."

(Colossians 2:7). Should we celebrate our offering of thanksgiving just once a year? Thanksgiving should be our art of living, during every moment and in every breath. It should be a lifelong celebration. This will lead to a life of contentment and fulfillment. This is the door to spiritual upliftment and enlightenment.

Let us forgive and forget the wrong-doings of everyone. Let us do good to others in every possible way. Let us pray and meditate not only for ourselves, but for others.

(Excerpted from a message of Baba Prajnananandaji)

SEVA AND SADHANA

Do not differentiate between *seva* and *sadhana*. Each compliments the other. On daily *sadhana* there should be no compromise but the rest of the time serve with love. A *sevak* is also a *sadhaka*.

Duty (feeling that you have to do it as there is no choice) and *seva* are not the same. You can be a worker or a *sevak*. A *sevak* seeks an opportunity to serve. Serving should be voluntary. When you are a *sevak* (serving) who is the *sevy* (one who is being served)? The one whom you are serving is the Guru or God. This should be the attitude. Be loving and humble when you serve. Look for opportunity to serve. Serving with love is a great *sadhana*.

NABAKALEBARA OF LORD JAGANNATH

Esoteric and religious significance

According to the Puranas, the Lord originally manifested in Purusottama-Kshetra as *nilamani* (sapphire gem-stone) *vigraha* Neelamadhava. After the disappearance of Neelamadhava, the Lord re-manifested in His present *Chaturdha-Vigraha daru* form. The significance of the Lord's manifestation in wooden form is revealed by Lord Brahma. At the time of consecration of the *Chaturdha-Vigrahas*, Lord Brahma proclaimed that the wooden images are '*parama brahmakriti*' (the form of the Supreme Being) and He instructed King Indradyumna in the following manner:

"Thinking it is a wooden image, O pre-eminent King, let there not be the idea in you that this is a mere image; this is verily the form of Supreme Brahman. As Parama Brahman (the Supreme Lord) takes away all

sorrows and confers eternal bliss. He is known as Daru. According to the four Vedas, therefore, the Lord is manifest in the form of daru (sacred wood). He is the creator of the entire universe. He has also created Himself."

-Adhyaya XXVIII-39-41

It may be pertinent to mention here some of the unique and distinctive aspects of the tradition in so far as the *vigrahas* are concerned. Neem (Margosa) wood is used for making the images. Scriptures such as *Bhavishya-Purana* and *Vaikhyanasagama*, mention that neem wood is the best and most auspicious material for Vishnu image. However, the injunction in the scripture ('Purusottama-Kshetra mahatmya', Adhyaya XIX-19 to 27) strictly lays down that the wooden form must not be seen by any one and should be covered by silk cloth, resin, sandal-paste, perfumed oil etc; and these coverings are to be changed from year to year. Accordingly, every year during

the fifteen days commencing from Jyestha-Purnima tithi (which falls in the month of June or July and which is the auspicious tithi when the Lord first manifested in *Chaturdha-Vigraha* form) the Lords are kept in a closed chamber and the outer coverings are changed by *Daita-pati sevakas* who are the descendents of the original *Savara* (tribal) worshippers of Lord Neelamadhava. This special ritual is known as *Anasara-vidhi*.

Another distinctive feature of the tradition is *Navakalevara* which involves elaborate rites and rituals spread over nearly three and half months during which period the *Chaturdha-Vigraha murtis* undergo a complete renewal. This extraordinary event takes place whenever there is an extra month (*mala-masa*) in the month of *Asadha* (called *Purusottama-masa*) which can occur in golden image of Lord Krishna. Seen in the above light, Lord Jagannatha is Shri Krishna who is worshipped on the *Ratnasinghasana* along with His elder brother Shri Balarama (Balabhadra), sister Subhadra and His Chakra Sudarshana. Similarly, during festivals

connected with Lord Rama, such as *Shri Ramanavami*, Lord Jagannatha is adorned and worshipped as Lord Rama, Balabhadra as Shri Lakshmana and Subhadra as Devi Sita.

In Adhyaya XXVIII of 'Purusottama-Kshetra mahatmya', it is stated that after the holy consecration and installation of the *Chaturdha-Vigrahas* in the temple built by King Indradyumna, the *Vigrahas*, for some time, assumed the form of Lord Nrisimha. Further, in all rituals during each *Navakalevara* including the *prana-pratistha*, the Lord is invoked with the thirty-two syllabic '*mantraraja Nrisimha mantra*.'

According to Saiva tradition, on the other hand, Lord Jagannatha is worshipped as *Siva-Bhairava-Ekapada*, Lord Balabhadra as *Ananta Naga* or *Sesha Naga* and Devi Subhadra as *Shakti*. We also find elements of *Shakta* and *Tantra* worship in the tradition of Lord Jagannatha wherein Lord Jagannatha is identified with *Mahabhairava*, Lord Balabhadra with *Rudra* and Devi Subhadra with *Durga*. In the daily worship, Devi Subhadra is invoked with

Bhuvanesvari mantra. The *panchamakara puja*, which is an integral part of *tantra upasana*, is performed daily in the sanctum-sanctorum of the temple, though in a *sattvika* form. The shrine of Goddess Vimala located within the inner compound of Shri Jagannatha Temple is regarded as one of the most sacred *Tantra-shakti peethas* of India; and during sixteen days of *Sharadiya Durga Puja* in the month of October, full-fledged *tantra upasana* is performed in this *peetha*. Devi Vimala is regarded as *bhairavi* and Lord Jagannatha as *bhairava* in Tantrika texts (“*Vimala Bhairavi yatra Jagannathastu Bhairava*”); and Lord Jagannatha is himself referred to also as *Dakshinakali*.

In the twelfth century AD. Shri Ramanujacharya (the founder of (the founder of Shri *Sampradaya* and *Vishista-dvaita* school) visited Puri and invoked Lord Jagannatha as *Shri Krishna*, Lord Balabhadra as *Siva*, Devi Subhadra as *Ekanamsa Durga* and Chakra Sudarshana as *Nrisimha*, as per the *pancharatra* tradition. According to the *pancha-devata upasana*, on the other

hand, Lord Jagannatha himself assumes the five distinct forms, namely, that of Narayana when on the *Ratnasinghasana*, Rudra during *Navakalevara*, Gajanana during *Snana-yatra*, Surya-Narayana during *Ratha-yatra* and Durga during *Sayana-yatra*. The *Chaturdha-Vigrahas*, as mentioned in the *Skanda Purana*, also symbolizes the four parts of the *Pranava (Omkaara)* and represent the four Vedas: Lord Balabhadra symbolizing Rigveda, Devi Subhadra Yajurveda, Lord Jagannatha Samaveda and Chakra Sudarshana Atharva Veda.

The great Acharyas and founders of the different Vedic *sampradayas*, namely, Bhagavatpada Adi Shankaracharya, Shri Ramanujacharya, Shri Madhvacharya, Shri Nimbarkacharya, Shri Vishnu Swami and Shri Chaitanya – all of them visited Puri and invoked Lord Jagannatha according to the tradition of their own *sampradayas*. We thus find here a confluence of the various schools of Vedanta, namely, *Advaita*, *Vishishtadvaita*, *Dvaita*, *Shuddhadvaita*, *Dvaita-advaita* and

Achintyabhedabhedha. The Sikh religion, Guru Nanak, and *Chaturdha-Vigrahas* are Sufi Saint Kabir also visited Puri invoked as *Saguna Sakara* or and invoked Lord Jagannatha or *Nirguna Sakara* or even as in their own tradition. *Nirguna Nirakara* depending (from a talk of Gajapati Maharaj, king of Puri at upon the religious inclination of the devotee. The founder of the Ramakrishna Mission.)

DATES TO REMEMBER

April - June, 2015

- | | | |
|--------|---|---|
| May 10 | : | The Birthday of Swami Shriyukteshwar |
| May 17 | : | The Foundation day of
Prajnana Mission |
| May 27 | : | The Birthday of Gurudev |

“If one performs perfectly what is his duty he begets happiness. For this the mind has deep inclination. Unrighteous deeds cause untold suffering and misery to which chitta has entrenched aversion.”

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

“Every day coupled with meditation do regular svadhyaya and study of spiritual books and scriptures.”

Swami Shriyukteshwar

RAMA HRIDAYAM

(From Adhyatma Ramayana)

“The ganga of adhyatma ramayana, which originates from the mountain of siva, and has its estuary in the ocean of rama, purifies all the three worlds.”



Parvati's Question

Once lord Shiva, while seated in the holy abode of Kailasha was addressed by his consort Parvati, the daughter of the Himalayas in the following manner. Parvati asked with great devotion,

“O, Lord, my salutations to you who is eternal and all knowing. You are the supreme Lord. Would you please impart to me the knowledge of Purushottama- the supreme

spiritual truth? I am aware that great spiritual secrets are not communicated without discretion to one and all. I am your devotee and you are my teacher. Please explain to me briefly and in simple words which I could understand the knowledge which gives spiritual experience and supreme devotion and dispassion to worldly desires.

O Lord, in this context I also have another doubt. Please reply to me about that first. Sri Rama is said to be the incarnation of Brahman that transcends all *gunas* (qualities) of *prakriti* (nature). Devotion to the Supreme Being is considered to be the road to liberation and men devote themselves to his adoration and attain the supreme state. But some say that in spite of being the supreme he did not know himself as Brahman due to the power of ignorance and only when instructed by another, he came to know about the

transcendent truth. Also if he had known the truth about himself why would he be stricken with grief by the loss of his wife, just like an ignorant person? Please explain this to me and clear my doubt.”

The Answer Of Lord Shiva

Pleased with her question Lord Shiva said,

“Never before this was I questioned about the Truth concerning Rama which is extremely profound and subtle. Pleased with your devotion I will answer your question with salutations to the Supreme Being incarnated as Rama in the line of Raghus. Having projected this whole universe by his power he dwells within and without the universe. Ignorant *jivas* superimpose their own ignorance and see him as if entangled in the world like themselves and fail to perceive Rama within themselves. How can there be ignorance in Rama who is pure consciousness condensed in human form? *Maya* the power of ignorance is dependent on him and cannot delude him.

To elaborate this point I will narrate to you a conversation of Lord Rama, Sita and Hanuman that deals

with the attainment of *Moksha* (liberation) and is a spiritual secret. When the events of Ramayana took place, Rama after destroying Ravana along with his sons and army returned to Ayodhya with Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, Sugriva and others monkey leaders. On the day of coronation as the King of Ayodhya, Rama was seated on the throne along with Sita surrounded by great men like Vasishtha. There he looked at Hanuman, his devotee who has fulfilled all his duties, who had no desires and who was a great aspirant of knowledge with a higher mind standing there with his hands folded in great devotion. Seeing Hanuman, he addressed Sita and said, “Impart the knowledge of supreme truth to Hanuman. He is pure and devoted and is a fit disciple for spiritual illumination.”

Sita, who is the Lord’s power, or *prakriti* (nature) agreed to do so and spoke to Hanuman about the real nature of Rama.

Conversation of Rama, Sita and Hanuman

Sita said,

“Rama is pure bliss and is the changeless substance,

free from any ignorance and is the self illuminating consciousness.

Know me to be the primeval *prakriti*, the material and instrumental cause of the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the creation. In the mere presence of Rama the Supreme Brahman, *prakriti* (power), does all this. What is done by me the ignorant super imposes on him.”

Sita then gave an account of all the incidents starting from the birth of Rama, his helping Viswamitra with the sacrificial rites, terminating the curse on Ahalya, Breaking the bow and marrying Sita at the court of Janaka. His living with her for 12 years, then the exile to Dandaka forest, destruction of Viradha, the killing of Maricha and the abduction of Maya Sita by Ravana. She continued about Rama’s giving salvation to Jatayu, Kabandha and Shabari, friendship with Sugriva , killing of Vali and the search for Sita ,building a bridge to cross the ocean and the destruction of Ravana, making Vibhishana the king of Lanka and returning with her to Ayodhya.

All these achievements, she said were accomplished by

her (*prakriti*). These are superimposed on Rama who is really changeless. He is the changeless substratum of his changeless *prakriti*. Being pure Bliss Himself, there is no movement, no transformation in Him. For those who cannot distinguish the substratum from the changeful constituents of *Maya*, the Lord seems to get transformed, whereas in fact it is only the constituents of *Maya* that undergo transformation.

Sita said “Though accomplished by me (*prakriti*), all these actions are superimposed on Rama, who is really changeless in Himself and is the soul of all beings. There is no trace of any activity in Him.”

After Sita instructed Hanuman thus, Rama himself started teaching Hanuman. This direct teaching of Sri Rama is known as Rama Hridayam

Rama Hridayam

Lord Rama said to Hanuman,

“Now I will tell you the truth about *atma* (self), *anatma* (non self) and *paramatma* (supreme self). I will explain this with an example.

The *akasha* (sky or space) has three divisions.

First we have the all pervading sky that is present everywhere. Think of this as the Supreme Self.

The sky also pervades water in ponds, lakes, pools and other water resources. This sky cannot be differentiated from the universal sky even though it is associated with water. Think of this as the self.

Then we have also the reflection of the universal sky in the water. This sky is different from the universal sky and also the universal sky that is pervading the water in that this is only a reflection.

In the same way Consciousness has three aspects.

1. First of all there is the all-pervading Pure Consciousness (Universal sky).

2. Next there is the Consciousness that is associated with the *buddhi* (intellect) which is like the universal sky pervading the water resource.

3. Thirdly there is the consciousness reflected in the *buddhi* (like the reflection of the sky in the water).

While there is no difference between the Supreme self and the individual self there is difference in the universal and reflected self. There is a sense of agency and movement in the *buddhi* of the individual which are assumed by the reflected consciousness. This causes the state of *Jiva* and ignorant people superimpose this on the changeless witness consciousness. *Jiva* is nothing but the reflection of consciousness in *buddhi*. With this pure consciousness is looked upon as something outside to be witnessed. Simultaneously witness hood is assumed in pure consciousness. Both *Jiva* and *buddhi* are products of ignorance while Brahman is indivisible. Divisibility is due to unreal adjuncts.

The great Vedic doctrines like ‘Thou Art That’ assert the unity of this individual Reflection in *buddhi* of the individual (*jiva*), along with the Collective Reflection (*avichinna*) with Pure Consciousness devoid of the association of any adjuncts. When by hearing and meditating on the great Vedic dictum like ‘*Tattvamasi*’ the sense of the unity of the two

Atmas (Jivatma and Paramatma) are recognized. Then ignorance along with all its offshoots like the I-sense with regard to the body etc. will perish. There is no doubt about it.

A devotee of mine, who understands this Supreme Truth, is fit for my Status. On the other hand one who ignorantly engrosses himself in the search for this knowledge in spiritual texts, without any devotion to Me, never attains to this knowledge of My nature and not be liberated.

This truth about Me known as ‘Sri Rama-Hridaya’ has been declared by Myself to you. This knowledge, which is superior even to the attainment of the heaven of Indra, should not be imparted by you to any conceited man who has no devotion to Me.

Lord Shiva’s Conclusion

“O Devi, I have communicated to you this

knowledge known as ‘Sri Rama-hridaya’ which was imparted to Hanuman. It is a highly guarded secret, a panacea for all sins, holy and heart delighting. He who constantly studies with devotion this exposition given by Rama, the Lord Incarnate Himself will surely attain to *Moksha* (liberation). The effect of heinous sins like *brahma hatya* (murder of holy men) committed in numerous lives past, will all be dissipated by the devout study of this - such is the unequivocal declaration of Rama Himself. Even a great confirmed sinner who may be a thief or, murderer by studying this Rama Hridayam and worshipping Rama with true devotion will attain to a state which is difficult for even great yogis.

(Extract from *Adhyatma Ramayana*, Gita Press Publications)

“Everyday practice meditation, recite spiritual songs, discuss among yourselves on these and render service to each other.”

Swami Shriyukteshwar

THE YOGA SUTRA OF PATANJALI

Sutra 12

Practice and Detachment

*abhyasavairagyabhyam tat
nirodhah*

Word Meaning

abhyasa – repeated practice; *vairagya* – detachment, non-detachment, dispassion; *tat* – that (thought waves, *vrittis*); *nirodha* – controlled.

Translation

Through practice and detachment, they [*vrittis*, or thought waves] are controlled.

Commentary by Shri Lahiri Mahasaya

One can get complete control over all thoughts through practice and dispassion.

Metaphorical Explanation

After defining yoga as the means of getting rid of thoughts and after describing the nature of the five different types of thought waves, in this sutra, Sage Patanjali describes a twofold means of self-control.

Chitta (mind-stuff) is compared to a river with two

streams. One stream goes toward the ocean of material enjoyment and the other stream goes toward the ocean of enlightenment and emancipation. In the first ocean, there are whales and sharks of anger and greed, causing constant trouble. The mind is always disturbed by pleasure and pain. However, the ocean of peace is the ultimate goal. Through effort and perseverance, one can successfully direct the stream of *chitta* (thought waves) to the desired goal.

This sutra teaches that Self-realization and peace of mind are possible through the divine techniques of *abhyasa* (practice) and *vairagya* (non-attachment). (This is also mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita, 6:35.) These techniques can be compared to the two wings of a divine bird that enable one to fly into the sky of cosmic consciousness and enter the state of realization.

Although it is said that *chitta vritti* (thought waves)

may be controlled by yoga, the sage tells us here that one can also control thoughts through *abhyasa* and *vairagya*. Yoga, practice, and non-attachment go hand in hand because through *viveka* (the ability to discriminate between right and wrong), one can easily progress. Through *viveka*, *tamasic* qualities are eliminated. Through *vairagya*, *rajasic* qualities get purified, so restlessness disappears. This creates calmness, and calmness is divinity.

Those who have been successful in the practice of yoga say that the state of complete cessation of thought is due to *abhyasa* (repeated practice) and *vairagya* (non-attachment). However, *abhyasa* and *vairagya* are not for external show or exhibition. These two should be internally

followed as continuously as the natural flow of breath. These weapons used to conquer the mind will be discussed in detail in the subsequent sutras.

O Seeker! Just as birds fly with two wings, we walk with two feet. We work easily with two hands. Likewise, spiritual evolution is possible without fail by the two tools of *abhyasa* (repeated practice) and *vairagya* (non-attachment). Through practice, you will grow and through non-attachment, you can maintain this growth. Practice sincerely and faithfully as you have learned from your guru preceptor. Cultivate non-attachment inwardly. Although you live in the world with worldly people, if you follow the footprints of the guru preceptor, you will reach the state of perfection; there is no doubt about it.

MYTHS AND METAPHORS

DEVI MAHATMYA



Narayani Stuti

In the 11th chapter of Chandi from mantra 3–35, the verses are titled “*Narayani Stuti*.” Altogether they comprise a beautiful hymn to the Divine Mother, and most of the verses end with *narayani namo’stute*: “O Narayani, we bow to thee,” a hymn extolling the Divine Mother with love and devotion.

The significance of the *Narayani Stuti* is described in the Lakshmi Tantra:

“*Narayani Stuti* is a hymn bestowing supreme bliss and auspiciousness. This is the hymn led by Fire in the presence

of all the other *devas*. When the Divine Mother is worshipped with this hymn, one attains omniscience.”

The hymn begins

Mantra 3

*devi prapannarti hare prasida
prasida matarjagatokhilasya
prasida visvesvari pahi visvam
tvamisvari devi caracarasya|| 3||*

O Devi! You remove the difficulties of those who surrender to you. Be pleased with us. Be gracious. You are the Mother of the entire universe. Be propitious. You are the ruler of the movables and

immovables in the worlds. Be pleased, O Mother of the Universe! Protect the entire world

O Devi! O Divine Mother, you are the mother of light and love. O Prapannarti-hare! You remove all the afflictions of those who take refuge in you. Please be kind. Be pleased. Even a person of little or no wit can win your grace at your feet. *Akhila-jagatasya matah*: “You are the mother of the entire universe.” So you are the Mother of us all. We do not have strength in our hearts. You are the strength of us all. The mother is the strength of the children. O Vishweshwari! You are the controller and ruler of the entire universe. You are the protector of the entire universe. Protect this universe from destruction. *Tvam chara-acharasya ishwari*: - You are the regulator and ruler of all that moves and does not move. Hear our humble and sincere prayer. You are everything. Please protect all of us.

In this hymn, *prasida* (meaning, “be pleased”) occurs three times, relating to the three worlds and the three periods of time.

O Seeker! Use your tongue to pray and praise the Divine Mother. Do not abuse your tongue using unnecessary words for hurting others and even for flattery.

Mantra 4

*adharabhuta jagatasvameka
mahisvarupena yatha sthitasi
apamsvarupasthitaya tvayaita
dapyayate kritsnamalanghya
virye|| 4||*

Translation

O Devi! You are of inviolable valor. You are the only substratum of the world. In the form of earth, you support the world. In the form of water, you satisfy all.

Metaphorical Explanation

O Divine Mother, you are Jagaddhatri, the only sustainer of the universe, the substrate of all creation. You alone are everything. Looking at the earth, your divine form, we can understand your incomparable presence to some extent. As the earth is the basis of creation, no one can imagine the creation of living beings without it. You support the entire cosmos.

You not only support the creation as earth, but also of water. Water is life. Without water, creation cannot be

sustained. You are water and the cause of water. As water pleases, satisfies, and soothes all living beings, similarly, you serve all from your heart.

As food grains remove hunger and water satisfies thirst, you are food and drink. You are knowledge and love. As a mother holds a baby on her chest and feeds the baby from her breast, all creation is near and dear to you. You are dharitri, the earth that holds creation.

You are *adhara*, which is *a-dhriyate iti*: “holding creation close to your heart.”

In this mantra, *swarupa* is used twice. *Sva* means “your own,” and *rupa* means “form.” *Swarupa* is your real form, which is the form of love, holding, and nurturing.

Alanghyavirye: “You are inviolable valor.” Your strength, courage, and talent are unique. No one can imitate it or think of surpassing it. We bow to you again and again. Make us stronger as a mother fortifies her children.

O Seeker! Through your transformation and vision try to see the Divine Mother as the cause of everything.

Mantra 5

*tvam vaishnavishaktirananantavirya
visvasyabijam paramasimaya
sammohitam devi samastametata
tvam vai prasanna bhuvi
muktihetuh ||5||*

Translation

O Devi! You are the endless valor and *shakti* of Lord Vishnu. You are the source or seed of creation. You are supreme illusion. You alone are the cause of liberation when you are pleased. By you, the entire universe is deluded.

Metaphorical Explanation

O Divine Mother, how can we speak of you? The intellect cannot express your glory, but our words do not stop even when they are insufficient. You are *vaishnavi shakti*: “You are the omnipresent power of sustenance.” Your presence is felt in every atom and molecule. You are beloved of Vishnu. You are *ananta-virya*: “Your valor and strength know no limit.” Even mighty *asuras* are like dust at your feet. You are the strength and power of all. You are near us like a mother is near her child. You are *vishwasya bija*: “You are the seed and cause of creation.” You create, you sustain, and then you end everything to prepare for further

creation. You are the cause of everything. You are *parama*: “You are the supreme, the best.”

You are *maya*. *Sa maya palini-shaktih srishti-samhara-karini*: “That *shakti* (ability) that creates, sustains, and ends everything is Maya, the Divine Mother.” *Sammohitam samastam etat*: “O Divine Mother, you are delusion for the entire creation.”

You have dual functions: As Maya, you maintain the drama of the universe. You bring liberation to all. As *mukti hetuh*, you are the cause of liberation. When? *Tvam vai prasanna*: “When you are content or pleased,” you grant liberation. You grant freedom to those who come close to you. Your contentment is the door to freedom.

O Mother! Please open our eyes to wisdom and grant us the taste of liberation.

O Seeker! Behold the Divine Mother as the cause of bondage and liberation.

Mantra 6

*vidya samastastava devi bheda
sriyah samasta sakala jagatsu
tvayaikaya puritamambayaitat
ka te stutih
stavyaparaparoktih|| 6||*

Translation

O Devi! All branches of study (Vedas and others) are part of your presence. All women with different qualities in the world are your forms. O Mother! The entire world is filled with only you. Even words are your form. What can I praise you with?

Metaphorical Explanation

This mantra describes the perception of the seeker who desires liberation through the contentment of the Mother. O Divine Mother! Devi! You are illumination. *Vidyah-samastah tava-devi-bhedah*: “All branches of study are part of your presence.”

Sriyah samastah: “All women are none but you.” *Sakala* means “with different skill.” There are sixty-four skills or arts leading to human perfection. All these qualities are present in different women, in different proportions, but the Divine Mother is the personification of perfection of all these qualities.

Every seeker tries to perceive the Divine Mother in all women. Indeed, the entire universe with its many manifestations is like a woman. O Divine Mother! You are pure

consciousness in all. You are the real *purusha* (male, indwelling spirit). *Tvaya ekaya puritam amba! etat*: “O Mother, the entire universe is permeated by you alone.” You are complete. Grant this experience of completeness to us. You are the only cause of liberation (*bhavi mukti hetuh*, see Mantra 5).

Singing hymns like this, the *devas* wanted to behold the loving and blissful presence of the Divine Mother. They realized the futility of praying and praising. That is why they said, *ka te stutih*: “How can you be praised?” You are everything; you are even pervading the hymn. You are *stavya-para*; “beyond hymns and praise.” *Parokti*: “You are beyond all expression.” Only for sanctifying our speech and words, we sing to you. These are the words of ignorant children.

O Seeker! As a child of the Divine Mother try to master all her skills, which are your divine inheritance.

Mantra 7

*sarvabhuta yada devi
svargamuktupradayini
tvam stutah stutaye ka va
bhavantu paramoktayah ||7||*

Translation

O Devi, when you are worshipped as the embodiment of all beings and the bestower of heaven and liberation, what other words can please you?

Metaphorical Explanation

O Devi! You are the Divine Mother of illumination and wisdom. *Sarva-bhuta*: “You have become everything.” All names and forms and the entire creation is you alone. Give us the ability to see you in all and all in you.

Swarga - mukti - pradayini: “You are the bestower of heaven and liberation.” There are two kinds of seekers: those who want heavenly joy, and those who want liberation. O Divine Mother, you fulfill the wishes of all. *Tvam stuta*: “You have been worshipped, praised, or extolled.” What is *stuti*? There are two types of *stutis* (prayers), human and celestial. The narration of the divine attributes of the lord is human form of *stuti*. The description of the essential nature is the *stuti* by the celestials. Even together, these forms of eulogies are not enough or adequate since no one knows you, except yourself. Therefore, it is

impossible to eulogize you adequately.

Can you please teach us how to pray to you, to praise you, and to sing your glories?

O Seeker! Let your tongue sing the glory of the Divine Mother. Let your every word be filled with love and devotion.

Mantra 8

*sarvasya buddhirupena
janasya hridisamsthite
svargapavargade devi
narayani namostute || 8||*

Translation

You abide in all beings in the form of intellect. You grant heaven and liberation. O Devi! O Narayani! Salutations to you.

Metaphorical Explanation

O Divine Mother! You are Narayani, the beloved of Narayana. You are the power and strength of all. Every *nara* (individual) lives with your support and presence. You are the breath in all. You are the source of energy.

Narayani is *narasya ayana i*: “You are the path, the movement, and the action of all.” The Shvetashvatara Upanishad (3:8) says, *nanyah pantha vidyate ananaya*: “You

are also the final emancipation. There is no other path.” *Narayani* is derived from *nara* (water). O Divine Mother, you are narayani, the path of love and life.

Namo'stu te: “We bow to you.” Teach us how to bow, how to be humble, and how to surrender. O Mother! You are present as intellect in the hearts of all. You are the intellect that makes decisions in daily life. But ego stands as a barrier. Ego does not let you manifest as intellect. That is why the *brahmins* meditate on you saying the *Gayatri Mantra* three times, *diyo yo nah pracodayat*: “Let our intellects follow the right path.”

O Devi! Mother of Illumination! You bestow *swarga* (heaven or heavenly bliss) and *apavarga* (freedom, liberation, and emancipation). People who want to experience joy and happiness seek your grace. You also grant ultimate freedom and liberation. O Mother! I am yours. Please lift me up to your presence.

O Seeker! In your intellect, see the Divine Mother. She is your real guide.

VALUABLE VOLUMES



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

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(From *THE UNIVERSE WITHIN*)

Tapping the Source

Throughout the preceding pages, I have tried to stress the importance of self-knowledge. Scientists, psychologists, and physicians have been constantly amazed and bewildered through the ages by the miracles which human beings are capable of. The superhuman strength displayed by mothers who lift cars to save their children, the uncanny instincts which warn us of danger or betrayal, the unbelievable acts of heroism demonstrated by people in times of distress or calamity and all the everyday common place miracles of kindness, creativity, scientific achievement, technological breakthroughs and spiritual love are apparent everywhere we turn.

The Human Miracle

How are all these miracles possible? While God's universe is a phenomenon beyond description filled with rare and beautiful wonders, it is far surpassed by the constant wonders streaming forth from our own inner universe. Human beings are capable of tremendous things, not just heroes or geniuses or artists, but ordinary human beings, each of whom has the potential for unlimited achievement.

Hidden Treasures

There was a man who had four sons. By his hard work the father was wealthy. The sons were idle and were enjoying the wealth of the father without realizing the value of self effort. As the father grew old he was concerned

about the future of his idle son's. As he lay on his death bed he told his sons that he had buried some treasure in his land and they could explore and use it. The father died. The sons started exploring for the treasure. At first they tried digging here and there and did not find anything. Then they decided to dig through the whole land and still did not find anything. The time of monsoon was approaching and one of them said, "Since we cultivated the land why not sow the seeds." So they did that and in course of time it yielded a beautiful golden harvest. They realized that must be the treasure the father was talking about as there was no other treasure. Life is the land and when cultivated would yield the treasures lying dormant in us.

Most of our energy lies untapped, because rather than looking in to the source, we spend our precious time searching for answers outside of ourselves. Meditation is the key with which we can unlock the treasures buried deep within us, which can transform our lives from ordinary to extraordinary. We can be successful in every arena of our

lives, living rich, full and powerful lives filled with love and happiness.

By spending a few minutes each day stilling our active minds, shutting down our overactive senses and listening quietly to the voice within, we can tap the source within us and emerge with the unending bliss we have been searching for all our lives.

Dive Deep, Fly High

At one time owning land was considered prestigious. People tried to own as much territory as possible. Soon they even crossed the seas to acquire lands on the other side. Then they discovered the treasures underground which lead to digging and mining and discovering precious metals. Then came diving into the sea for hidden treasures. These activities of mining and diving are associated with a special techniques of breathing as the breath has to be regulated a certain way to be able to do these. It symbolically tells us that if you want spiritual treasures you should learn the art of breath control and self control. Human mind is not happy with superficial gains and pleasures. It wants to dive deep

and fly high to find the treasures of soul. Remaining in the soul center one can go down to the lower centers of earth and water or fly high into the fontanel to tap the real source of joy and pleasure.

A man was walking on the street and on his way he found a dazzling stone which looked precious. He took it to a jeweler for an estimate and it was indeed a valuable gem and he became rich over night. From that day onwards he was always looking down while walking in the hope of finding another stone that would make him richer. He was getting old and one day as he was walking he found another stone which was even more dazzling than the previous one and picked it up only to realize that it was just a piece of broken glass that was reflecting the brilliance of the sun. Surprised he looked up to see the beautiful shining sun and the sky. He did not remember seeing anything so beautiful in a long long time. He threw away the piece of glass and from that day onwards he started looking up. This is human life. We do have to look down some times but should remember to look up also.

Stop the Play of Mind

Tapping the source is possible only if we can stop the play of mind. Mind is the cause of trouble. Mind is always restless and unless it is controlled in a regulated way it will not be possible to tap the source.

Kingdom of Heaven

Every religion believes there is a Kingdom of heaven and also a territory of hell. Heaven where one is rewarded for the meritorious acts and hell the place of punishment for the sins committed. They believe these are outside. Heaven and hell are both within us. The region from ajna to sahasrara, the cave of the cranium is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus said at three different places in the Bible

The kingdom of heaven is near.

The kingdom of heaven is at your hand.

The kingdom of heaven is within you.

The journey to the kingdom of heaven is the way of experiencing peace, bliss and joy.

People are afraid of hell. In the Bhagavad Gita Lord

Krishna said there are three doors to hell. Kama (passion) Krodha (anger) and lobha (greed). If one can close these three doors one can enter the kingdom of heaven.

Blissful State

Happiness is the be all and end all of life. Happiness is not a time bound enjoyment or pleasure. It is a continuous state of inner peace. We should be happy all the time. Upanishad says,

We are born in bliss, live in bliss and merge in bliss By exploring all the chakras and spending a few minutes each day stilling our active minds, shutting down our overactive senses and listening quietly to the voice within, we can tap the source within us and emerge with the unending bliss we have been searching for all our lives.



Christmas at the Gurukulam

MYSTICISM OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

FAMILY : A SYMBOL OF HARMONY

What is family and the symbolism of family? Family is an institution, a philosophy. The entire creation is a family. In a Vedic prayer it is said:

*ayam nija paroveti
gananam laghu chetasam
udara charitamstu
vasudhaiva kutumbakam,*

“Narrow-minded people consider, ‘this is mine’ and ‘that is not mine,’ but the broad and generous people consider the entire earth as their home.”

*mata me parvati devi pita
devo maheshvarah
bandhavah shiva
bhaktascha svadesha
bhuvana trayam,*

“Parvati is my mother and Shiva is my father. All devotees of God are my brothers and sisters and relatives. The whole creation is my family, the whole earth is my family, and the three worlds are my place to live.”

God is the Father and the Mother, and we are His children. We belong to one family. If this world is a family,

we should be familiar with this world. We should be familiar with the Creator, who created this world. A world-family is a broad concept; we belong to one family, one Creator, one Earth. Although there are many languages, many countries, many cultures, many types of food, many types of cloth, and many types of people, we still belong to only one family. This is universal fraternity, universal love.

The second meaning of family is that it is an institution where the parents and children live. Family is a symbol of self-sacrifice, peaceful co-existence, and eternal cooperation. So what is the sacrifice? The parents have sacrificed so much to raise the children. Parents sacrifice – the mother carried the baby in the womb for months, then the parents took care of the newborn baby, training the baby in every possible way, and making the baby healthy, happy, and successful. Similarly, if someone is unhealthy or sick, every

member of the family is worried and does their best to help. The family is a place of sacrifice: we sacrifice our own self, which results in the development of sympathy, compassion, and love for others.

Family is the place of peaceful co-existence. In a family all the members live under one roof in the house. They may have different tendencies, different natures, and different abilities, but in spite of all the differences, there is the thread of unity. They live peacefully, have respect for each other, and have love for each other. This shows how one should be tolerant and compassionate. This quality, which grows in the family, can also be practiced in the outside world with people. We should try to develop this quality of peaceful co-existence, as well as cooperation and compassion.

In the family everyone helps – the mother cooks, the father cleans the house, the children study, and so on. This shows the cooperation, compassion, and lack of chaos in the family. Family is a symbol of living together, living with love, living with peace, living

with harmony. Family is really like heaven, where there is mutual understanding, mutual respect, mutual love, mutual cooperation, and mutual acceptance.

The symbolism of the family is to bring heaven into the family, and ultimately to the earth. In spiritual life, people live together in the community or in an ashram, which shows how they can live together in a family, helping each other to grow in love, and eliminating one's own ego. Just like many flowers put together make a beautiful bouquet or a garland, similarly, the family is a beautiful bouquet or garland of flowers dedicated to God.

In the Taaittiriya Upanishad (1:11:2), it is said:

*matri devo bhava, pitri
devo bhava*

*acharya devo bhava,
atithi devo bhava,*

“Consider your mother as divine, your father as noble, your teacher as divine, and your guest as divine. This is the attitude one should maintain in the family. It brings inner spiritual upliftment and growth. It brings God into daily life.

STORIES TO LIVE BY

LIVE IN THE PRESENT

Once, in India a young married couple was traveling on a train through the Rajasthan desert during the hot summer. Due to the intense heat and lack of drinking water, the wife became extremely thirsty. For a period of time, she sat there complaining that she was dying of thirst. The husband, concerned about his wife, kept looking out of the window watching for a train station stop where they could get out and fill their bottles with water. Every time they passed a train station that had no water the wife became more impatient, and her complaining grew more intense.

Finally, when the train stopped at a larger station, the husband immediately got off and filled the bottles with water and gave them to his wife. She quickly drank the water and was satisfied – at least for the moment. Just as the train was leaving the station, the young lady once again began

complaining – this time about what could have happened to her if there had not been any water at that stop.

Reflection

When there was no water there was misery, when there was water there was misery. Misery comes because of anxiety. Anxiety comes before, during, and after enjoyment. By complaining and thinking about the lack of water, the thirst only increased. We should accept the reality. When there is no water, have patience and wait until you get some, and once you get what you want, forget your troubles and be happy. To again complain about what could have happened is just catching hold of the past. The past is gone. The future is uncertain. Live in the present and work; your future and past will both be good. Time is continuous flow and does not wait. Remain aware of the present.

(From **Pebbles from the Pond**)

ATMA-VIDYA

PURSuing SELF-KNOWLEDGE

KAIVALYOPANISHAD

Mantra 19

*mayyeva sakalam jatam mayi sarvam pratishthitam
mayi sarvam layam yāti tadbrahmadvayamasmyaham*

Meanings

mayi-from me, *yeva*-alone or indeed, *sakalam*-everything, *jatam*-is born, *mayi*-in me *sarvam*-everything, *pratishthitam*-established , resting or remaining, *mayi*-in me, *sarvam* –everything, *layam*- merged or dissolved *yati*- gets, *tad*- that, *brahma*-divinity, *advayam* –without a second, *asmi*- am *aham*-

Substance

In me everything is born, in me everything is remaining, in me everything is dissolved, I am that Brahman, there is no second to me, and I am alone.

Commentary

We look at this universe with the people animals, plants. When I look outside if I don't have the outlook of unity we think – I and my wife, my children, my family, my church and so on. By interacting in such a way we developed likes and

dislikes. I thought myself and others were different and because of duality we are suffering. The conditioned state of likes and dislikes is the cause of suffering in our life.

In meditation I saw through spiritual transformation, in tune with god in one consciousness, I understand that from me alone everything is coming, my suffering is also coming from me, my pain is because of me and it also dissolves in me. So now I will change my consciousness. From the individual consciousness it is expanded to universal consciousness – I am that pure consciousness and whatever I see is my own creation. One wonders how I can say this whole universe is coming from me or existing in and dissolves in or me. But that *me* remember, is not the swami talking or a disciple listening but the pure expanded universal

consciousness and when tear in you I feel that suffering
attuned with that one perceives also in me. When one expands
complete unity and complete in love, one feels oneness with
harmony of me in all. When I the whole universe and that is
see a smile in you it is my smile what is explained here.
in your face or when I see a

-
1. *Always remember that you are God in human being and a human being in God.*
 2. *Be still and know that you are the living power of God.*
 3. *When imagination stops, realization starts.*
 4. *Meditation is beyond imagination, hallucination, and speculation.*
 5. *In deep meditation the seer, the seen and the sight become one.*

Paramahansa Hariharananda

AROUND THE WORLD

INDIA

Gurudev's Mahasamadhi Seminar Dec 1-3

Gurudev's Mahasamadhi anniversary was observed through many events at the Gurukulam in the divine presence of Baba Prajnananandaji who was in residence at the Gurukulam.

On 1st December several new initiations took place and the technique was taught in different languages.

There was a discourse on Kriya Yoga in the morning by Swami Samarpanananda.

On 2nd December yogacharyas Siddheswar Sahu Baba and Kantha Rao Baba shared their inspiring experiences with our beloved Gurudev.

2nd December also happened to be the Gita Jayanti or the birthday of Bhagavad Gita. Baba Prajnananandaji talked on the Gita and how Gurudev was a living example of the Gita and practiced every principle of the Gita.

On the 3rd, the day of Mahasamadhi of Gurudev, there was Gurupaduka puja at the

Guru Mandir organized by Swami Muktipriyananda Giri. Few hundred people attended the ceremonies and offered their pranams to get the blessings of the Gurudev. The Gurupaduka puja was done with abhishekam (a ritualistic washing of the guru's sandals) with the recitation of vedic hymns and Guru Gita, followed by ashtottara archana – worship with flowers chanting of the 108 names of Gurudev .

This was followed by a havan, offering oblations into the sacred fire with the chanting of the 108 names. There was devotional singing and bhajans. The ceremonies were performed in the presence of Baba Prajnananandaji. The program ended with a grand arati and the disciples offering their oblations and bowing to Gurudev and Guruji. The morning ceremonies ended with special *prasad* in the dining hall.

In the afternoon, there were talks about the life and teachings of Gurudev by Swami Matrukrupananda, Swami Arupananda, Swami Gurukrupananda and Swami

Gurupriyananda with Swami Samarpanananda presiding. This was followed by Guruji's talk.

Baba continued his talk on the Gita and Gurudev's life. Baba urged all to practice the beautiful technique of Kriya yoga taught by Gurudev and assured that one who practices is bound to get the results. He alerted us that time is passing away and not to neglect *sadhana*.

Every day in the evening there was arati, a beautiful vesper service at the Deva Mandir where Sivamahimna stotra was chanted. This was followed by meditation. There were guided meditations three times a day in three different languages.

On 3rd evening a *sadhu bhandara* was held in honor of Gurudev. Several invited Sadhus gathered in the meditation hall with devotional singing and bhajans. This was followed by the serving of Mahaprasad of Lord Jagannath in the dining hall and distribution of gifts to the sadhus.

Celebration of Gita Jayanti

Gita Jayanti or the Birthday of the Gita is usually celebrated on *Marghasira*

shukla Ekadashi, but in the city of Puri it is celebrated on *trayodashi* which is known as *ananga trayodashi* which happened to be on the 4th of December.

On the 4th of December there was *Go puja* at the Devamandir followed by Gita yajna. Seven hundred verses of the Gita were offered with oblations into the holy fire to propitiate the blessings of Mother Gita and various deities including the navagrahas (nine planets).

Christmas Celebrations

Christmas Eve was celebrated with a long meditation guided by Baba Prajnananandaji that welcomed the birth of Christ at midnight. This was followed by a beautiful candle parade with Baba leading from the front lawn of the meditation hall to Guru Mandir and back. Disciples sang Christmas carols and sweets were distributed. Baba presented each one with a book of spiritual message as a Christmas gift.

New Year - 2015

Baba Prajnananandaji guided a long meditation on New Year's Eve that ended at midnight. Year 2015 was ushered

in with delighted disciples bowing to Gurudev and Guruji and exchanging greetings. Sweets were distributed to welcome the New Year.

16th IIKYS Jan 14- 20

There were 2nd and 1st Kriya Yoga initiations on the 13th and 14th of January at the Gurukulam.

The 16th Annual International Intensive Kriya Yoga Seminar was inaugurated on the 14th of January, the auspicious day of Makara Sankranti. The morning started with Go puja (worship of holy cow) and an elaborate worship of Lord Shiva in the Deva mandir. The inauguration was held in the afternoon in the divine presence of Guruji Baba Prajnananandaji and invited speakers who gave their messages.

Daily guided meditations, inspiring discourses, question and answer sessions helped the disciples who gathered for the guidance of guruji and to deepen their spiritual practice.

Teachers Felicitation Ceremony, Jan 25, 2015

A felicitation ceremony was held on the grounds of our residential school Balashram, to

felicitate and honor Baba Prajnanananda's many dedicated teachers. Over two hundred teachers were welcomed and recognized. Baba has always said any one from whom one learns anything is a teacher and a guru. While one can never repay the debt of a guru, it is a great opportunity to be able to honor your teacher and express your gratitude with a token of appreciation.

Two books on Education one in English and another in Odiya were released in this connection. The books honor many great teachers of mankind who were exemplary and also review the methods of present day teaching and means to make teaching and learning flourish.

Prachi Parikrama 9-15 Feb

The Fourth Annual Prachi Parikrama was completed as planned from 9th -15th of February.

Maha Shivaratri Feb 17

Maha Shivaratri was observed at the Gurukulam with special worship and abhishekam to Lord Shiva and a night long vigil of worship and devotional singing in the Deva Mandir in the divine presence of Guruji.

New Book Release

The Road Less Traveled
– My Journey to Monkhood,
by Swami Gurupriyananda Giri,
was released on the 14th of
January at the Inauguration of
the International Seminar.

The book describes the
fascinating journey of an
educated wife, mother and
professional from a worldly life

to the rigorous spiritual path of
monkhood. This deeply personal
account of one woman's
transformation offers a first
person view of the growth of
Prajnana Mission under the
leadership of her beloved guru,
Paramahansa Prajnanananda
and offers a wonderful glimpse
into one's spiritual journey with
the guidance of an enlightened
teacher.

Some reviews of the book

“Time stopped for me as I read the book - it was like being
merged in meditation itself.

The countless people who have been touched and
transformed by Baba will find their own experiences reverberate
in their heart, as they read along, and they will also learn so much
more about Baba from all the times they couldn't be with him.
.....

This book will itself be a great reference for what it means
to be the ideal devotees of a God realized and divine Master.”

“Swami Gurupriyananda's life is worth remembering. Her
life informs women that they can walk the same path as men and
discover the power of the Divine Mother in their lives. Perhaps
her book will help others to find their own special path to happiness.”

“Swami Gurupriyananda Ma, as I observed her through
the years, was like a shadow of Pujya Guruji Shri Paramahansa
Prajnananandaji Maharaj and with a detached attachment through
these writings, she has become a torchbearer to show us all, the
sunlit path to knowledge, detachment and liberation.” ***

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