

Sthita Prajna



Guru Vandana

*varṇajâlamidam tadvadbâhyaúâstram tu laukikam
yasmin devi samabhyastam sa guruh sûcakah*

O Devi! The *suchaka guru* is one who is not only well-versed in letters, but is also a scholar of external and worldly sciences.

Guru Gita 273

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FROM THE EDITORS :

Dear Readers,

“If you know who you are, you will be able to live in this world in a totally different way.”

– **Paramahansa Prajnanananda**

The entire world is still suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic. This disaster has put people in agonizing situations in many different ways. Shri Guruji in His message has said, “I am praying for the health and strength of countless people experiencing unspeakable miseries. Let there be peace and prosperity.”

Online sessions by Swamijis and Yogacharyas continue to motivate kriyavans in their personal spiritual practice.

In His message on the occasion of International Yoga Day, Shri Guruji exhorted everybody to accept yoga as an art of successful, sustainable, healthy, happy, and vibrant living.

The Message from the Master talks about the role of the Guru in one’s life and how the relationship between Guru and the disciple is eternal. ‘Prajnanavani’ explains how, though we do not have the desire for sorrow, sadness, and suffering in our lives, they still appear. Shri Guruji elucidates that this happens due to lack of faith in God.

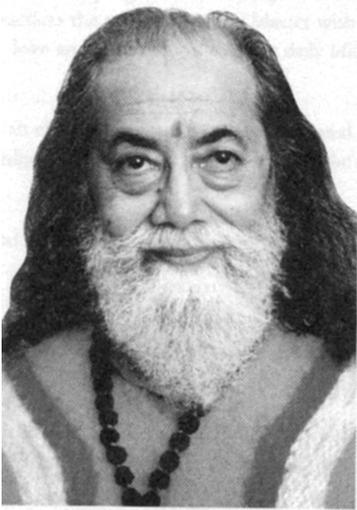
In this issue, the excerpt from the Mahabharatha talks about the life of Shri Krishna, His *gurukulam* days in Sandipani’s ashram, Draupadi, and how Duryodhana is preparing to talk to his father, Dhritarashtra, about inviting the Pandavas for a game of dice.

The excerpt from Law of Karma, talks about how there is an interest in each one of us to know our destiny. The challenging or difficult companions that may appear in the lives of seekers are explained in the sutra that is selected from Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. The news from around the world and activities of Prajnana Mission and other ashrams around the world are also presented in this issue.

As Shri Guruji said, “Let us live in peace, breathe in peace, smile in peace, and hold each other’s hands in peace. Let us march forward in peace and harmony.”

MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER

THE ROLE OF GURU



The Role of Guru

A guru, or preceptor, is indispensable for any spiritual practice. The scriptures say that the guru is Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; and Shiva, the destroyer. The guru creates new *samskaras*, the longing for *moksha* (liberation). the guru preserves the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of the disciple, and destroys the effects of bad karma and base desires and leads the disciple towards light. The guru is God in His manifest and personal aspect. *Gu* means the Invisible (i.e., God), while *ru* means the

visible. The Invisible uses the visible as Its instrument. The relationship between the guru and the disciple is eternal. He is responsible for his disciples until they attain *moksha* (liberation).

Indian culture puts special emphasis on the guru-disciple relationship. The would-be disciple seeks access to the guru through humility, love, and service. the real guru is one who has attained Self-realization, which means complete mastery over the pulseless and breathless state (i.e., *samadhi*). Only then will one be fit for the role of a guru, not because one speaks elegantly or has a large following. If a person sincerely seeks enlightenment, God sees that he gets a true guru. Most people fail to find the Truth because they become lost in the forest of theology and travel from one thicket of theory to another. True religious principles are found in good books, but their full meaning cannot be grasped until their manifestation

is seen in the life of a guru. Such an enlightened person can help his disciples, provided the latter are attuned to him. After that, the physical presence of the master is not necessary for guidance. The real guru is God Himself. The human guru is only His instrument or agent.

The aspirant who seeks to know God must first rise above the consciousness of the body and material existence. By the practice of the great yogic method discovered by the sages of India, we can easily rise above the limited consciousness of the body. We can then feel our identity with God. We can feel that our own existence is spirit. We are the beginning and end of all. We can feel that we work through all hands and think through all minds, that our hearts throb through all hearts. We will feel our presence in everything and perceive that the stars are but the ornaments of our vast body. We are spreading over the stars, twinkling through their luminosity and creation is floating on the ocean of eternal existence.

Body and mind are but two forms of spirit. Spirit manifested as matter is still spirit. The spiritual tradition of

India teaches how to realize that this spirit is living within us. The divine memory of the soul has to be awakened, as it has forgotten its real nature due to the bondage of body and matter. Then we will find that we are God, everything is God, and nothing exists but God. This is the treasure of India that can be acquired by the technique of Kriya Yoga. The profound and ultimate truth will be realized.

All true gurus are alive, regardless of whether they have retained their physical forms or not. In the beginning of the spiritual search, we may have many teachers, but there can be only one guru. They are 'disciples' who come to the guru for an eternal relationship. The guru is the living embodiment of spiritual truth. When the devotee's heart has been purified, God sends the guru; it is easier to follow a living embodiment of Truth than to live on abstractions. no book, however noble' can substitute for the guru. The question is, how to know who is fit for the role of guru in the path of Self-realization. Shri Shankara says, "A real teacher is he who is well-versed in the Vedas,

sinless, unsmitten by desire, and the best among the knowers of Brahman, who has withdrawn himself into Brahman, is calm like fire that has consumed its fuel, who is a boundless reservoir of mercy (i.e., ineffable and a friend of all good people that prostrate themselves before him)” (Viveka Chudamani 33).

The Bhagavad Gita (2:56) says that the person whose mind remains unperturbed in sorrow, whose thirst for pleasure has altogether disappeared and who is free from passion, fear, and anger is of stable mind. A liberated sage is free from desire, selfishness, egoism, “I-ness,” attachment, greed, and hatred. He is full of pure love, compassion, and mercy, and is a powerhouse of spiritual energy. It is a rare fortune indeed to come in contact with such a sage or *sad-guru*. God always sends His representatives to those who earnestly seek Him. Only a few have attained *nirvikalpa samadhi*. But one must seek a true guru, if there is genuine desire for spiritual progress. Of course, a yogi advanced in spiritual practice can also guide an aspirant, but only a realized master can lead him to the goal.

A *sad-guru* (or realized master) can purify the body of the disciple at the time of initiation by infusing spiritual power into the disciple. By purifying the spine at the six centers, the untapped spiritual energy, the cosmic force latent in the human body is awakened. As a result of this, the disciple gets the triple divine qualities: light, sound, and vibration. These six spinal centers keep man attached to the material world in accordance with his karma and do not allow him to transcend animality and rationality. If a disciple, under the guidance of the guru, can control the six spinal centers through the technique of Kriya Yoga and establish God-consciousness there, he will overcome all vices and evolve into a divine being. Then ignorance disappears and the light of wisdom shines upon him.

A Sanskrit maxim says, “Worship God after becoming God.” Unless a person raises the latent spiritual force present in the coccygeal center to the brain, after passing it through the different centers of the spine, he cannot become spiritual. Prayers, worship, and rituals are of no avail. They

produce no change either in his consciousness or in his heart. Only a realized master can rouse the latent cosmic power, the *kundalini*. Direct association with a guru is, therefore, essential.

Shri Shankara says, "There are three things which are rare indeed and they are attained only by the grace of God. These are: a human birth, desire for liberation, and the protecting care of a perfect sage" (Viveka Chudamani 3). Anyone and everyone cannot be a guru. In every age, God incarnates Himself as the guru to teach humanity. *Sat-cit-ananda* alone is the guru. The guru is only one, but *upa-gurus* may be many. An *upa-guru* is one from whom anything is learned. The great Avadhuta, a monk mentioned in the Bhagavatam, had twenty-four *upa-gurus*. God sends the *sad-*

guru or realized master only to the earnest disciples.

P a r a m a h a m s a Yoganandaji says that spiritualism cannot be bought in the market. The father and mother give the physical birth. But it is the guru who gives the spiritual birth and leads the disciples to the shore of Self-realization. The disciple has to follow the instructions of the guru faithfully and sincerely, and practice meditation regularly to gain full benefit from the contact with the guru. Words cannot do justice to the soul-revealing power of Kriya Yoga. It is not necessary to be familiar with the theory of Kriya Yoga in order to progress in it. Only concentration and sincerity are required. A true guru is a nominee of God, through whom God teaches the devotees so that they may realize their real Self.

TEACHERS WANTED

at **HARIHARANANDA BALASHRAM**

(CBSE Board)

(Managed by Prajnana Mission)

Required: Trained, Dedicated, spiritually inclined and Experienced Teachers for CBSE School for the academic Year 2020-21. Salary is not a constraint for a suitable candidate.

Vacancy: English: M.A.-Eng., B.Ed.; Science: B.Sc.(Bot/Zool),
B.Ed.; Special Educator: B.Ed.(Special Education)

Contact: principalbalashram@gmail.com; Last date of Application: October 30, 2020

PRAJNANAVANI - THE VOICE OF WISDOM

FREEDOM FROM SORROW



Where Is the Root of All Sorrow?

As anger and passion hide in each one of us, so do all sorrows and grief. As the seed in the soil sprouts and rises in a conducive environment, similarly, all the propensities toward favorable situations manifest in our hearts, minds, feelings, and expressions, as well as in our tears and fears. These propensities are within every person as time passes since birth. Anger is a reaction, and so is sorrow. When we were young, we expressed our

anger to get things done, and we accepted it as a part of life. Presently, anger appears to be a virtue to many people. Sadness and sorrow have also become a part of life, which is another sign of our immaturity. They are stored within. Sorrow is but one of countless feelings and emotions.

Happiness, unhappiness, laughter, and tears rise up within us against our will; in the course of time they dissolve and disappear, only to rise up again. It is not our desire that sorrow, sadness, and suffering should

occur, but they appear. Why? It is because we do not have control over them.

The cause is lack of faith in God. We do not understand the will of God. Nothing happens by accident, everything is cause and effect. We are the great children of the Divine Mother who is the cause of creation, sustenance, and destruction. We are blissful children of the ever-blissful Divine Mother.

We have to increase our willpower and inner strength so we can pass through every event in life. We have passed through millions of lives, and we have played millions of roles. Whoever has left us has gone back to God, to His loving lap. If we cry, the departed soul receives these feelings and is affected by our so-called mourning. If we pray and accept everything as the will of God, the soul's onward journey becomes joyful.

Shri Gurudev said, "We have come to this world in joy, and we have to leave the world in joy." How foolish we are, hindering the peace and bliss of a person we love. He or she is going to a place of enhanced happiness and bliss.

We should be compassionate regarding the suffering of others; we should be helpful. We should also celebrate others' joy. Many people can be sad about others' suffering, but to be happy for others' happiness is very rare.

What aspect of our loved one do we love - body or soul? The soul is ever immortal, and the body is perishable. We all know that we have no birth and death, but still we cry under the spell of ignorance. Shedding tears is a self-created emotion. We often cry because our selfish desires, our dreams or wishes, have been obstructed. However, sometimes when we shed tears and release emotion, we do experience temporary solace and comfort.

The World Is Full of Bliss

Every object is a manifestation of bliss. Bliss abides even in sorrow and suffering. Why do we take the bitter medicine of sorrow and suffering? We consume it with reluctance because we inherently know it has healing power. We see a dramatic, sorrowful scene, and we become engaged. We do not pull away until the drama is over. However, sorrow and

suffering can also lead us to the door of bliss.

When we cry over the death of others, love and understanding manifests within us. It is a cruel divine play that can arouse divine love. Pure love is the real nature of God. Everyone is dear to us because of the soul within. One who loves all cannot be sad. Whom we love is not going away, he or she is within us as long as we are alive. The true Beloved is within and present all the time. Our mourning and sorrow decrease over time as time is a great healer. All suffering has only temporary existence. Sleeping and being busy with other activities naturally slows down a strong current of sorrow.

Suffering opens the eyes. It reduces our ego and arrogance. We often forget that we are the instruments of the Divine. He is the only Lord and the controller of all. Suffering and sorrow should ultimately be seen as messengers of happiness.

In the Chandogya Upanishad (7:23:1) the *rishi* taught, *yo vai bhuma tat sukhamnalpe sukham asti:* "The great unborn is

infinite, and the unborn is happiness. No happiness resides in the infinite."

If possessions bring us happiness, we will always be victims of sorrow and suffering. We should grow and mature by searching for the infinite within. A Self-realized person is free from all sorrows. We have to inquire: "Who am I? The body, breath, mind, intellect, ego, or what?" We have to separate ourselves from false identification.

Do we really love the ones who have left us? In truth, we love ourselves more than anything or anyone.

Life Is a Dream

A farmer's two sons died of snake bites while they were working on his farm. The wife was crying loudly, but the farmer had no reaction. When his wife asked him about his silence, he said, "Last night I had a dream that I had seven able-bodied sons who were working with me on the farm. When I got up, I found none. For whom shall I cry, the seven sons in the dream or the two sons now?"

"I" and "mine" are the cause of all sorrow. It is all delusion. Nothing in the world

is “mine,” including the body. We live in a slumber of delusion. To free us from this delusive state, the Divine Mother takes our near and dear ones from us. We are enjoying God’s world, believing it belongs to us. We should accept God’s will, not our selfish desires and design. Let his noble wish be fulfilled.

We should not consider a few as ours, but rather consider all living beings to be ours. We should remember that all is in God, and God is in all. Even those who have left us are in God.

Why do good people suffer more? A good student’s responsibility is greater; he or

she must study more. For a good person to exhaust a large load of *karma* from countless lives in one or two lives produces visible strain. But this is part of the infinite compassion of the Lord to help exhaust the *karma*. Freedom from sorrow is the result of remembering Him and praying.

We should not cry or shed tears. This world is a creation of bliss. We must look at creation and see that all are smiling, so we must smile too. God is our true relative, and He is in all our relatives. God is our refuge. Let our lives be filled with the strength and courage to pass through all the challenges of life with love.

DATES TO REMEMBER

July – September, 2020

July 5	:	Shri Guru Purnima
August 10	:	Shri Guruji’s Birthday
August 11	:	Janmashtami
August 22	:	Ganesh Chaturthi
September 6	:	Tattendorf Ashram Foundation Day
September 22	:	Homestead Ashram Foundation Day / Autumnal Equinox

A GLOBAL MESSAGE

International Day of Yoga

Loving and divine souls,

Let the choicest blessings of God and the masters be upon all of you. I take this opportunity to pray for you, and I send my best wishes on the occasion of International Day of Yoga, which is celebrated all over the globe on June 21 for the last five years. I send my love, prayers, and positive thoughts to all humanity, who have been struggling with Corona Virus. Loss of life, economic disaster, and suffering have overwhelmed countless people globally. This disaster brought humanity together to fight the virus. It created a war-like situation throughout the world. But why are we experiencing these health problems related to the virus? Is it the end of trouble or beginning of much more to come? Will we be awake and alert and discover a permanent solution to the problems to make the world a better and healthier place? Instead of searching for places to live on the moon or Mars, we could make this world more beautiful and conducive

to living with love. The root cause of all suffering is our minds (thoughts and attitude), food (unnatural, uncontrolled palate), lifestyle (stress and struggle), and lack of contentment and peace. To me, yoga has a solution for all human problems as well as for the health of the earth and the environment. Yoga has gained its popularity all over the world with the passage of time. More and more people are practicing yoga. Body-conscious people seek a supple, strong body free from visible aging and disease. Some people are looking for a stress-free life through breath control. Most of these yoga practitioners do not know the higher purpose of life. Yoga not only teaches us to be healthy and happy, but also to befriend nature and natural living. Yoga is not a set of exercises; it is an art of living. Yoga creates natural contentment, a life of self-discipline. If we truly love life and peace, we should follow the yogic lifestyle and spread love and compassion to humans and all living beings, including animals, birds, trees, and

creepers. We should not harm Mother Earth or the environment. We should be disciplined in our food and drink. We should minimize our needs and desires and be content. Let us think about it and find a

healthy and happy way to live. Let us accept yoga as an art of successful, sustainable, healthy, happy, vibrant living. I pray for the entire creation and all of you. I send my love and best wishes.

With Love,

Prajnanananda

GURU PURNIMA

Loving and divine souls, Let the choicest blessings of God and the masters be upon all of you. I take this opportunity to pray for you, and I send my best wishes on the occasion of Guru Purnima, which this year falls on July 5. This full moon day is dedicated to the guru-preceptors, the masters of humanity. In India it is a very special celebration to offer love, regards, gratitude, honor, and homage to the lineage of masters from whom we learn, starting with God and continuing to the present day. Our learning begins in the mother's womb and ends with realization. The first guru of our life is the mother, and the ultimate guru is God. In the guru tradition of

Vedic culture we have human, non-human, and even elemental gurus from whom we can learn. Learning requires no specific age or other conditions. For learning there is no reason or season. It is a natural tendency to expand our lives by expanding our learning. Learning is an attitude. When people open their minds to learning, they can learn every moment. In the Shrimad Bhagavatam, Book Eleven, King Yadu and Sage Avadhuta, a naked monk, converse on the topic of the guru-preceptor. The Sage described his twenty-four gurus. What is the meaning of having a guru-preceptor? A guru helps us learn. With an open heart and an open mind we can

learn. The guru–preceptor teaches us to be good in our minds and hearts in order to benefit ourselves, our families, society, our country, humanity, and above all, the entire creation. We have many avenues for learning that allow us to incorporate values and virtues into our lives. The present virus crisis is faced by the entire human civilization, and to me this threat is also a guru who is teaching us. We should be careful. Many will ask what we can learn from this virus that has created a disaster around the world. To be healthy, we should follow the path of hygiene, and some principles and values. The virus reveals how vulnerable we are to sickness and death in this modern world. To be healthy, we should be careful about what we eat. Many believe that most of the viruses that affect human beings come from specific types of food. To be healthy, we should be physically

strong. For this we need regular exercise and meditation. To be healthy, we should also have fresh air and avoid pollution. To be healthy, we should be kind and compassionate. This situation made us conscious of others' well-being. If we list all the positive things we could learn from the present situation, we could write a book. This virus forced us to lock down, which showed us how we can protect the environment. Our beloved Gurudev has taught us that an ounce of practice is better than tons of theories. We should be practical in daily life in a spiritual manner. Let us be loving and caring toward the environment and all living beings. Let us love each other as the presence of God. Let us love the entire creation as one family. On the occasion of this Guru Purnima I send my love and best wishes to all of you. I pray for health and happiness in the entire creation.

With Love,
Prajnanananda

REMEMBERING PARAMAHAMSA YOGANANDA

A LIFE OF LOVE AND LIBERATION

Excerpts from ‘My Time with the Master’:

My First Impression of Puri

In the Indian spiritual tradition, it is believed that the guru-disciple relationship is eternal. It is not limited to this lifetime, and it is believed that until the disciple is completely realized, the guru comes in some form or other to guide the student. Paramahansa Yoganandaji himself promised, “I will come again and again to evolve you all in the spiritual path and to lead you to the goal of realization.”

Another Sign

During this period, another experience greatly influenced my life. There was a bookshop near my college from which I regularly borrowed books. Fortunately, I was on the best terms with most of the booksellers in Cuttack. They would let me borrow whichever book I wanted to read, even brand new books. I would handle every book with extreme care without damaging

the pages and then return them intact. This was a great privilege, as a student’s budget does not stretch a long enough way to allow one to buy all the books one would like to read. A few weeks after meeting Shri Gurudev, my eyes were drawn to a particular book on a shelf. It was *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yoganandaji. It was truly a fascinating book, and I was attracted to the path of Kriya Yoga in a very subtle way. At that time I was leading a strict disciplined life. From morning to night, I spent most of my free time reading holy books, trying to meditate, chanting, visiting temples or monks or holy personalities, and participating in social work to help people in need. I tried not to waste a single minute. I observed daily silence for a certain period of time, had thorough control over my food habits, and regularly practiced certain yogic postures. I was not as disciplined in attending my classes at the

college, since I was not very interested in them.

A humorous incident happened one day as I was reading *Autobiography of a Yogi*. I fell asleep with the open book on my chest. A friend of mine came into my room, and looking at the picture of Yoganandaji from a distance, he remarked, "Oh! You pose yourself to be a monk, to be a Baba, but you keep the photo of the Mona Lisa on your chest while you are sleeping nicely."

I woke up at the sound of his voice and exclaimed, "Where is the Mona Lisa? Come and have a closer look and see who *he* is." When he read the name Paramahansa Yogananda, he was surprised as well as ashamed of the hastiness of his remark. He was full of curiosity and asked me if Yoganandaji was a monk. I said, "Yes, a monk from India who spent most of his life in the United States, teaching spiritual life, yoga, and meditation to countless people in the West. He is a true messenger of India's spiritual tradition."

Even now when I look at Paramahansa Yoganandaji, I think how he really became the Mona Lisa of my life. I love

him. I love him much more than anyone else, with the same devotion and love I have reserved for my own guru.

With Shri Gurudev at an Unusual Time

It was Shri Gurudev's habit to move around the property either when others were taking an afternoon nap or at night. I observed at Karar Ashram, as well as other places, that he watched how and what people did during those times of the day. He often came to my room or he called me to his room or we walked on the property. We had spiritual discussions or he instructed me about the ashram management.

In front of my room at Karar Ashram there was a *vilva* (wood apple) tree. Within hand-reaching height, there were a few *vilva* fruits that Shri Guruji smelled every day. The fruit ripened slowly emitting a fragrance that Shri Gurudev savored. Once during that time, he paid me a surprise visit exclaiming, "Baba, our fruit is stolen!" I was shocked and saw the fruit was missing. He closed his eyes for a moment and told me to go with him to catch the thief. As I followed, I thought about the story of the

cauliflower robbery in *Autobiography of a Yogi* by our beloved Paramahansa Yoganandaji.

Shri Gurudev knocked on the door of a longtime disciple who had been a student at the ashram school when he was a little boy. Shri Gurudev looked at me and said, "Here is the thief." I looked at him with surprise. Shri Gurudev asked him, "Have you not plucked the *vilva* fruit? He admitted he had and Shri Gurudev said, "Baba, one should not pluck flowers or fruits from the ashram without permission." The disciple was very apologetic.

A momentous Occasion

In 1998, I was in the Midwest for many programs and in Cleveland on August 10...We all were in prayer and meditation and did not answer the telephone, but I could hear the voice of Shri Gurudev sending me a birthday message: "Today is a most auspicious day, it is the birthday of Paramahansa Prajnanananda. Today I confer all my blessings as Paramahansa."

...After some time, the telephone rang again; it was from Vienna. When I picked up

the receiver, Shri Gurudev told me, "From today I give you the title of 'Paramahansa.' You are no more Swami Prajnanananda, from today you are Paramahansa Prajnanananda."

I was unable to speak. With tears in my eyes I thought, "Until now you were a mystery to me. I have not understood who you are." The image of Yoganandaji flashed through my mind. What had I done to be worthy of such a great honor? Slowly I recovered my voice and was able to murmur, "I am not worthy of all these things. I bow to you, my guru! Let me seek your love, your blessing. I am overwhelmed. Let this life be filled with self-sacrifice, self-oblation, let my life be the oil that is offered as an oblation. I bow to God; I bow to my guru. Let me be your tool."

My life, I realized, had become inextricably bound with that of my beloved master and his lineage.

Excerpt from 'My Brother, Brahmanandaji':

In the Footsteps of Yoganandaji

In May, 2001, Swami Brahmanandaji and Swami Arupanandaji traveled to the

USA to see Gurudev. Swami Arupanandaji had been a long-time disciple of Gurudev. In the Rourkela ashram, he had served his master with heart and soul. He had cooked his food and taken care of Gurudev's needs.

Gurudev loved him, and as the magic touch of Shri Ramakrishna had transformed his disciple Latu Maharaj, better known as Swami Adbhutananda, Arupanandaji was changed in a similar way, by the divine power of Gurudev. His love for his master knew no bounds. Gurudev trained him and made him a monk.

One day we all witnessed how in the presence of Gurudev, Arupanandaji thrilled the audience of the National Institute of Technology in Rourkela with a beautiful and eloquent talk on Kriya Yoga.

We all met in Miami, and with the blessings of Gurudev, Brahmanandaji, Shuddhanandaji, Arupanandaji, and I took a flight to California to visit Yoganandaji's beautiful ashrams. Two disciples, Harinath Baba and Sudha Ma, from Kansas City, traveled with us, and two other disciples, Utam Baba and Sheila Ma, from Los Angeles, arranged for

our accomodation in their beautiful home.

We set off in two cars and it was a memorable journey. It was a modern day pilgrimage to pay our respect to a great yogi and highly enlightened master of our lineage.

P a r a m a h a m s a Yogananda had come to the West in 1920 to spread the message of Kriya Yoga. He established many beautiful ashrams in California, and he founded the Self Realization Fellowship (SRF) Mother Center in Mount Washington, the temple in Hollywood, the temple in Encinitas, and the Lake Shrine. The Hidden Valley Retreat Center was constructed later by his disciples.

Our first stop was the Mother Center in Mount Washington. We were shown Yoganandaji's room, the meditation chapel, and the Temple of Leaves. It was an extremely moving experience to be in the same place where this great master used to sit and meditate.

Then we went to Lake Shrine where the holy ashes of Mahatma Gandhi have been preserved in a memorial shrine.

In the center of a lake full of swans there is a boat chapel. The natural beauty and serenity of these surroundings was astounding.

There is also a meditation temple and a trail adorned with statues of many divine incarnations. A very kind person from the bookstore gave us a copy of *Autobiography of a Yogi* as a gift. We took it as a *prasad* from Yoganandaji and felt his gentle smile upon us.

The next day we went to Encinitas where there is a beautiful hermitage and a retreat center built on top of a cliff, commanding a magnificent view of the Pacific Ocean. It was here that Paramahansa Yoganandaji stayed in silence and seclusion, but it was also here that he was “a whirlwind of activity,” dictating many of his world famous books.

This ashram is not only beautiful, but well-run and well-maintained. We were fortunate to have a very nice monk, Brother Mitrananda, as our guide. He showed us Yoganandaji’s rooms and told us many humorous stories about his life.

He took us to the dining room and showed us the table

where Yoganandaji used to take his food. Then he narrated a story: Yoganandaji would often invite disciples to share his meal, and one day a family came to eat with him. They had a little daughter who kept staring at Yoganandaji with curiosity. Finally she asked, “Can you please tell me, are you a man or a woman?” Yoganandaji’s face lit up as he smiled, “None of them. I am neither a man nor a woman.”

This story has deep spiritual significance. The body appears to be a man or a woman, but the individual spirit, the soul within, is neither male nor female. A mantra from the Upanishads says, *naiva stri na pumano’si...*: “Neither are you feminine nor masculine, nor are you neutral. Whatever body you take, you appear like that.”

In the Hidden Valley Retreat Center we met a direct disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda who was in charge of the ashram. It is a huge property of about one hundred acres or more. There were gardens full of rosemary and huge areas to grow vegetables. It also has one of the largest hibiscus nurseries in California.

The monk in charge guided us and he was very kind. In spite of his advanced age, he took us everywhere. He knew that we came from India, and he considered us to be kriyavans, followers of the same path of Kriya Yoga. Seeing his love for Yoganandaji, his humbleness, I wanted to bow down to him. I told him that was how we greeted other monks in India, and while we all bowed down at his feet, he chanted: *jay guruji, jay guruji*. It was a beautiful encounter, and he asked us to come back again.

We also visited the temple of Yoganandaji in Hollywood. From there Paramahansa Yoganandaji

started a few vegetarian restaurants, which introduced the value of vegetarian food to this area. We saw a handwritten menu on how to prepare Indian vegetarian food with wheat flour and gluten. Another recipe was mock-chicken, vegetarian food with the flavor and taste of chicken.

Once in a while Yoganandaji would visit the restaurant and participate in the preparation of food. For many decades the restaurant had been run by *brahmacharis* and residents, but it no longer exists. The only thing that remains is a "little India hall," with the flag of India and the flag of the United States.



Avocado Plantation in Gurukulam

Teachings of the Masters

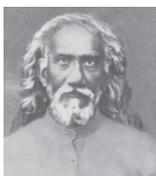
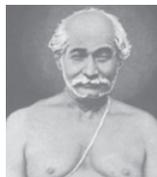


“It is not proper to unnecessarily mention the name of the Guru. By this, he is belittled.”

Mahavatra Babaji

“There is no work without desire. Work which is duty bound is also born of some desire.”

Lahiri Mahasaya



“Men of wisdom are neither deluded nor haunted by the spectre of birth and death. One should, without being inordinately confussed by the words of wise men, follow strictly their methods of Kirya.”

Swami Shriyukteshwar

“The purpose of breath-control is to keep the body and mind free from negative vibrations.”

Sanyal Mahasaya



“Behind the light in every little bulb is a great dynamic current; behind the weaves, vast oceans, and behind the individual lies the Supreme Spirit.”

Paramahansa Yogananda

“Never accuse others of their mistakes. If a person has only one good quality out of 100 then try to see that good one not the 99 bad ones.”

Swami Satyananda



“When your breath becomes very feeble, then you are really practising Kriya. You are established in truth.”

Paramahansa Hariharananda

“A true Guru is humble, always God conscious always ready to forgive and guide with love and compassion.”

Paramahansa Prajnanananda



MYTHS AND METAPHORS

MAHABHARATA

A FATEFUL GAME OF DICE



Life of Shri Krishna

Before going to the play of dice and its ultimate consequence, we will spend a little time reflecting on the life and activities of Lord Krishna and his elder brother, Balarama. Lord Krishna is such a mystery; it is difficult to know who he is. The Mahabharata gives the picture of Lord Krishna when he was grown up. Moreover, the tenth and eleventh books of the Bhagavatham elaborately discuss Lord Krishna's life and activities. He was the eighth son of Devaki and Vasudeva. He was born in the prison of his maternal uncle, King Kamsa, then miraculously taken away from the prison and kept in the

house of the king of milkmen, Nanda, in whose family a baby girl was born. The babies were exchanged without the knowledge of anyone. Neither Nanda nor mother Yashoda knew this happened. Earlier Balarama was born through Rohini, another wife of Vasudeva, who was living at the home of Nanda during the imprisonment of Vasudeva and Devaki. According to the scriptures, this birth was the miraculous transfer of the fetus from Devaki's womb by Yogamaya (the Divine Mother) and placed into the womb of Rohini. King Kamsa had sent Devaki and Vasudeva to prison because he was told that their

eighth child would kill him. This is also the reason for all the divine exchanges of the babies. Baby Krishna grew up in the family of Nanda and Yashoda in Vrindavan, in the company of cowherd boys. He lived there for ten years and eight months. Then he left Vrindavan, went to Madhura, and brought about the death of the evil king Kamsa, his maternal uncle, who had imprisoned his parents, Devaki and Vasudeva.

After this had happened, Lord Krishna and his brother Balarama had their sacred thread ceremony and then went to study in a *Gurukulam* and lived in the hermitage of Sage Sandipani in Ujjain.

Sandipani, the Guru-Preceptor

Sandipani had been an average, not brilliant, student. Although his guru taught scriptures and various arts of living, Sandipani could not understand and grasp everything. However, he had a special quality: complete devotion to his guru. Other brother disciples were curious about why their guru loved Sandipani so much when he could not understand and grasp

his teachings. One day, the guru told Sandipani to take his baby son, who was playing contentedly, and throw him into the well. Without giving a second thought, Sandipani threw the little boy in the well. The other brother disciples came running and rescued the baby and started physically assaulting Sandipani. Sandipani did not say anything. They beat Sandipani, but he had no reaction. After sometime, the guru came and rescued Sandipani and said, "Do not hurt him. He is your brother." Sandipani did not tell them that he had done what his guru had told him to do.

Another day, the guru told Sandipani to set all the huts on fire. Sandipani took a burning stick and set alight all the huts. At that moment, the other *brahmacharis* were just returning to the hermitage and they quickly put out the fires and beat Sandipani. He did not say anything. When their education was finished, the guru told all the students to go back home and blessed them to be successful in life. Sandipani also returned home. Since he was not such a brilliant student, he had his own hermitage with his family. One day, he heard that

his guru had become old and expressed his wish to leave his body soon. All the disciples went to see their guru in his last hours. The guru gave all of his belongings to them, which included a rosary, a water pot, books, and so on. He gave everything to his disciples, but nothing to Sandipani. Sandipani continued to stand peacefully until after the others left. He then bowed down to his guru. The guru said he had nothing to give to him. Sandipani said he needed nothing except his guru's blessings. The guru said, "I am so pleased with you because of your trust in me and your love for me. I am blessing you. Go back to your home. Your teaching will be more than anyone else's. The Lord Himself will come to you as a student." In time, Shri Krishna and Balarama came to Sandipani and stayed and studied under him. What greater blessings can one have? If you take the rosary or the water pot, what will you do with it? You can only preserve the items as your guru's belongings, and keep them as a souvenir, but the blessings of the guru are priceless, they are the real treasure.

Shri Krishna's Gurudakshina

Sandipani taught Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna served his guru in a way that really thrilled him. When Lord Krishna wanted to give his guru *gurudakshina*, an offering, after completing his education, Sandipani said, "Your coming to me is *gurudakshina* itself. I am happy and content to have you as my student. I need nothing." When Lord Krishna insisted, Sandipani said, "You can go and ask your guru-mother – my wife – if she needs something. Also, one thing I need to tell you is that whatever you learned from me if you find one or two worthy students, communicate this knowledge to them." In other words, the wisdom Krishna had learned from his guru should be communicated to others.

Lord Krishna had two students: Arjuna and Uddhava. However, some say that Lord Krishna also taught pure love and devotion to the *gopis*. He remembered the words of his guru Sandipani; whatever he learned from him, he had to communicate to others. The Bhagavad Gita is the message of Lord Krishna himself, to each one of us, through Arjuna.

Shri Krishna's Departure from Mathura to Dwaraka

After completing his studies, Lord Krishna returned to Mathura, but he did not stay there because it was not safe for him. His presence was also troublesome for the citizens of Mathura. Why? When the Lord Himself was living there, was it not a blessing? It was a blessing, but the people had to sacrifice. Because the people of Mathura were going to suffer with the presence of the Lord, he decided to go to Dwaraka. It is said that Jarasandha, the father-in-law of the deceased King Kamsa, wanted to kill Lord Krishna and Balarama to take revenge for making his beloved daughter a widow. He attacked the city of Mathura several times. Lord Krishna and Balarama secretly escaped from Mathura and wanted to construct an island-city on the ocean, which at present is the Arabian Sea. Hence he constructed the city in such a way that one could not find the door because everywhere it looked the same. When people could not find the door, they asked, "Where is the door?" and thus the name of the city became Dwaraka,

which means "Where is the door?" In Dwaraka, Lord Krishna and Balarama lived with their family, the Yadava dynasty, and their followers. Lord Krishna was a householder, married, and blessed with children. Lord Krishna, whom people consider as a divine incarnation of Lord Vishnu, came to protect the devotees and to eliminate the vices in society.

Lord Krishna was the cousin of the Pandavas. Because of the Pandavas' humility, honesty, and devoted life, he was also fascinated and drawn towards them. Apparently, Lord Krishna, Balarama, and the Pandavas met for the first time on the night of the Pandavas' wedding at the potter's house. Lord Krishna and Balarama secretly went there for the marriage ceremony because they knew what had happened before. After this first meeting, Lord Krishna and Balarama frequently visited the Pandavas and guided them at the time of need. Thus, Lord Krishna became the friend, philosopher, and guide of the Pandavas in adversity and prosperity. Previously, it was mentioned

how Lord Krishna actively participated in the *yajna* of the Pandavas during the inauguration of the new capital city.

Draupadi, the Willpower

Willpower (*icchashakti*) is a spiritual treasure without which spiritual evolution is not easy to attain. We all have willpower, but we have to increase it. In Sanskrit, willpower is feminine, as it is a form of *shakti* (power or energy). With willpower we can achieve success quickly. That is symbolized in Draupadi. *Drutapada gati, ananta shakti* is *draupadi*; the energy or power to reach the goal quickly. As mentioned previously, *draupadi* means ambition to achieve spiritual progress or success in life. *Draupadi* also means “to quickly go upward and reach the goal of life.”

We should develop our willpower with prayer, self-discipline, elimination of unnecessary thoughts, and self-analysis. Using willpower and concentration together, we achieve success. When we want success in life, we need better health, and a concentrated, balanced, calm,

and quiet mind. Draupadi married the five Pandavas, and slowly the brothers prospered. The five kinds of success they attained, which we also need, include success in material life, family life, maintaining physical health, emotional health, and success in spiritual life. We should achieve real prosperity and Self-realization.

Two Opposing Forces

In each one's life there are two opposing forces acting simultaneously, which are called *pravritti* and *nivritti* in Sanskrit. *Pravritti* means “attachment, possession, or involvement.” *Nivritti* means “detachment, non-possession, and non-involvement.” *Pravritti* and *nivritti* are both derived from a common word *vritti*, which comes from the word *vritta*, meaning “a circle.” *Vritti* means “tendency” or “circular tendency.” When a stone is thrown into a pond, ripples form circles that become bigger and bigger until finally they touch the bank or edge of the pond. The bigger the stone, the bigger are the ripples. But ultimately, the ripples will come to the shore. Think of your body and life as a pond. Like a stone, one thought creates ripples, and

one after another, they touch the shore or periphery of the body. The thought of anger comes from within and it then becomes a circle, and the circle touches the whole contour of the body; every cell of the body is charged with anger. It can be seen on one's face when one is angry. *Vrittis* are circular tendencies. Just like the ripples in the pond come to the edge of the pond, similarly, it comes from every cell of the body and is visible in your face that you are unhappy, sad, cheerful, happy, angry, or greedy. The eyes and face describe all of this.

The Pandavas and Kauravas represent the two tendencies. The Pandavas represent *nivritti* and the Kauravas represent *pravritti*, attachment, possession, greed, and involvement. The Pandavas represent detachment because they are the children of knowledge. Knowledge means detachment. In each person's life we all have these two tendencies. We have some degree of *pravrittis* and *nivrittis*. Which one is bigger and which one is smaller? That determines the nature of you, me, and everybody. How are

we to live in this world and to deal with all these *vrittis* (tendencies)?

Duryodhana Speaks with Dhritarashtra

Duryodhana told his father Dhritarashtra that as long as he did not have the Pandavas' treasure, he would not be at peace. Dhritarashtra asked him, "How will you get it? You cannot defeat them." Duryodhana began weakening his father. "O father, do you really want anything good for me? Can't you find anything good in me? Surely after I die, you will be happy." he said to the king. "You are always praising my enemies and their strength and underestimating my ability and talent." Due to his emotion and attachment to Duryodhana, Dhritarashtra weakened. He asked Duryodhana what he really wanted. On cue, Shakuni stood up because both of them had come prepared to convince Dhritarashtra. Without convincing him, nothing was going to happen. They both knew how to persuade the king because they knew his vulnerability. The following story highlights the situation.

A student once asked a Zen master, “Master, I have the habit of smoking. Can I not smoke and meditate?”

The Master replied, “You should not.”

Another student who knew how to get the consent from the master in this type of situation asked the first student what the master had told him. After repeating what the master said, the second student said, “I will go and ask him. You do not know how to ask.”

The second student asked the master, “Suppose somebody is smoking, and while smoking,

he wants to keep the mind detached and contemplative. Can he not smoke and meditate?”

The master said, “Sure.” The question was the same, but it was presented differently. Children tend to know their parents’ mood and how to get or do things through them. Instinctively, they wait for just the right moment to ask the parents to fulfil their wishes and plans. The other word for this is manipulation. Knowing the vulnerability or weakness of a person, they manipulate.



Hariharananda Tapovanam, Ashram in Uttarkashi

VALUABLE VOLUMES



My Own Experience

When I was young, I never believed in astrology because astrology speaks of destiny to a great extent. It was always my belief that whatever I did I would one day reap the results. When I was about sixteen years old, a monk-like beggar came to my village. This man carried many things in his bag, including a musical instrument. I was fond of giving alms to beggars, because it is a good karma. Thus I never let a beggar stand at our front door for very long. As soon as one arrived, I was prepared to offer something. It was my childhood belief that if you made a beggar wait a long time, you were not giving to the beggar; instead, you were paying him for the labour of standing. If I saw a beggar heading towards our

THE LAW OF KARMA

BY PARAMAHAMSA PRAJNANANANDA

house, I would be ready for his arrival. I would stand outside in front of our house. It was my rule that I would first put something in the beggar's bowl, then I would talk to him.

The monk-like beggar was next door in front of my uncle's house, singing devotional songs. My aunt had given him an offering, and they were conversing. I stood patiently waiting with my offering, and I could hear what they said "You have two children," he told her. That was true. "And they are very skinny." True again, "And you are trying your best to improve their health." And I knew that was also true. "But what you are doing is not creating a result." Everything he said was true. Finally the beggar said, "If you wish, I can provide a remedy that will work." My

aunt smiled and said, “Thank you. You can go now.”

He came to our door and I gave him something. He did not say anything to me. He just took what I gave him and went to the next house. So I followed him. At our neighbour’s house, the elderly man who lived there was washing his hands and mouth after lunch. Just as before, the beggar started telling the man specific details about his life, and everything he said was true. After some time the elderly man became curious and told the beggar to have a seat. The beggar noticed that our neighbour was smoking a *bidi* (country cigarette), so he asked for one. Both men were smoking and talking, and I was standing nearby quietly listening. I was a little interested in hearing what that man had to say, because everything he had said thus far was true. However, during the course of the conversation, the beggar found the opportune time to disclose the real purpose of his visit. “My friend, if you want to change your destiny so that these undesirable things do not happen. I have an amulet that can help. “Now he began to get down to business. “The

amulet you need is very inexpensive. It is only two rupees and twenty five paise, so you can easily afford it.” My neighbour pondered for a moment and said, “Yes, I will take it.”

While these two men were talking, quite a few people started to appear — and they also wanted an amulet. Fortunately, the beggar had plenty of amulets to serve every need and purpose. He told the people standing around many true details about their lives. Suddenly, my mother arrived and became curious. She wanted to purchase three amulets for her three sons. However, before she did, I said, “Mother you just need to buy two, not three.” She asked why, so I informed her that I had no need for one. Hearing this, the man who was selling his amulets started scolding me, “He is very egotistical and very stubborn,” and he went on and on. But his insults had no effect on me. I just calmly looked at him and said, “Thank you.”

Should We Know Our Destiny

The results of karma are always with us. If we know the future, it can create fear

and anxiety, and we immediately want to overcome the problem or get rid of it. Many times people asked me for advice, because they did not know how to deal with their karmic load. I often give them an answer that can solve all their problems. The best way to be free from karma, or eliminate it, is by prayer, meditation, and living a better life. It is true that the grace of holy men can change someone's destiny to some extent. In Paramahansa Yoganandaji's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, he described how Shriyukteshwarji helped Yoganandaji increase his weight, and his sister's weight as well. Throughout the ages many accounts have surfaced about saints and sages helping their disciples overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles and challenges.

All our actions can be divided into two groups: good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant, or positive and negative. We all have these polar experiences; to some degree, even divine incarnations have faced them. Some experience these opposites more than others, but all actions

fall somewhere within a range of duality. For instance, suppose a child tries to catch a butterfly and accidentally kills it. Even though the child did not intentionally kill the butterfly, it still receives the karma. Throughout our lives intentionally or unintentionally, our human actions have been good or bad. Many things that we did or said during our childhood we have forgotten; however, the results of these actions are nonetheless deposited in our karmic backpacks.

During our current lives we have had many thoughts, we have had many expectations, we have done a lot of planning, and we have acted and reacted throughout the day. Just think of all the activities we perform in twenty-four hours, let alone over an entire lifetime. All these activities, our thoughts, words, and deeds, will either bear fruit in this life or ripen in a future life. As we discussed, some karma manifests instantly, some appears later in the present life, and some will turn up in the next life. How? You may have noticed that in every classroom one student is receptive, but

another one is not. In a family with two children, one child might be brilliant, but the other child might not be. Sometimes even with twins, one can study very nicely, but the other one cannot. The results of past life study habits are carried into the next life. We always receive some results of karma instantly, in the form of joy, pleasure, or satisfaction, but we also experience some results later in life, and the biggest share goes with us into the next life. All karma manifests in three stages. When we do something bad we instantly experience an uncomfortable feeling – our conscience says, “Why did I do this?” The results of our actions also arise later in our lives. What is more, we may experience the results again in the next life. But do not worry; be good now, and the future will improve.

Prarabdha is exhausted completely for those who will not come back after realization. We should never allow the law of karma to create fear and anxiety in us. We should never look back on our lives and wonder, “What will happen to me?” But do not worry; instead understand this philosophy, this

theory, a little more; then we can live better lives. With this deeper understanding, we can improve the quality of our lives, our thinking, and our interactions, while decreasing our reactions, our emotions, and our fears. A spiritual person should not have fear.

Let us consider how we can be free from *prarabdha*. *Prarabdha* (destiny) is normally exhausted in the current life through enjoyment and experiences. Let us take the example of a potter. A potter, having set the potting wheel in motion with a rod, removes his hand and the rod, allowing the wheel to revolve until the momentum imparted to it has been exhausted; in the same way, a *jnani* even after attaining *jivanmukti* (living after realization) through Self-knowledge, continues enjoying the fruit of his *prarabdha* up to the end of the present body..

Just as the potter’s wheel continues revolving after being set in motion, even after the connection with the potter is cut off, a realized person continues to enjoy the fruit of *prarabdha*. Realized ones’ actions cannot produce a seed of *sanchita* karma because of

their non-attachment and the absence of craving.

Enjoying the fruit of *prarabdha* results in future destiny by the force of *prarabdha*, but realized people are free from desire, so their enjoyment will not in any way affect their destiny. If they experience happiness and misery, due to their non-attachment, the seeds of *sanchita* karma cannot be produced, just as roasted seeds are impotent to germinate and produce a crop.

Ordinary people can modify *prarabdha* through sincere prayer and spiritual practices seeking earnestly the grace of the Divine. It depends upon the strength of their desire and willpower.

Take some time and pray:

O God, You have given us a human life. A human life is Your grace. You have blessed us with the good company of spiritual friends and the wisdom of the masters. Such a gift is Your grace. You have given us the rare opportunity to understand and know life. O Lord, all that we are and all that we have is naught but Your grace. While we are here, let us use our lives, our breath, and our time intelligently. Bless us to remember You, to love You during every breath. Bless us to change our thinking and our approach to life. Help us be divine.



Plantation at Hariharananda Upavanam, Athagarh, Odisha

THE YOGA SUTRA OF PATANJALI

Sutra 31

Distractions Accompanying Obstacles

*duhkha-daurmanasya-
aEḡgamejayatva-
úvâsapraúvâsah̄ vikc̄epa
sahabhuvah̄* ||31||

Word Meaning

duh̄kha -pain, suffering, unhappiness; *daurmanasya*-dejection, despair; *aEḡgamejayatva* - tremor in the body; *úvâsapraúvâsah̄* - exhalation and inhalation; *vikc̄epa* - of mental distraction; *sahabhuvah̄* - companions

Translation

Pain, despair, tremor in the body, and [irregular] exhalation and inhalation are the companions of these mental distractions.

Commentary by Shri Lahiri Mahashaya

The companions of mental distraction are described as three types of afflictions, *adhyatmika* [proceeding from bodily and mental causes within oneself], *adhibhautika*

[*bhutanimitta* or related to created beings], *adhidaivika* [*daivanimitta* or proceeding from divine or supernatural agencies], along with restlessness of mind, perspiration, and irregular inhalation and exhalation. By eliminating these, and being desireless, one should be established in *samadhi*.

Metaphorical Explanation

In the previous sutra, Sage Patanjali, having described many aspects of distractions on the spiritual path, goes a step further to explain some more challenging or difficult companions that may appear in the lives of the seekers. Here four such obstacles are elaborated:

Sufferings

Life is a playground of pleasure and pain. There are different types of suffering one faces in life, which are due to physical and living beings, like insects or bugs and snakes, or even through external elements such as rain, food, lightning, earthquakes, and cyclones.

Despair

On the spiritual path, one might lose hope or feel dejected, which brings stagnation in spiritual evolution.

Tremor in the Body

In the course of regular practice, when a state of inner calmness dawns, the body experiences steadiness; but after a while in that state, one might feel tremors or shakiness in the body, or unusual sweating, which brings distraction.

Irregular Breathing

Breath is the key to calmness and inner peace. Through regular practice of breathing, the mind becomes tranquil. The breath becomes so

feeble that it will move only in the nasal passage. But irregular breathing sometimes appears with the inner imbalance.

These four are the external visible states of restlessness and distraction.

O Seeker! The spiritual path is not always even and smooth; it is slippery. On the inner journey of soul culture, when you travel sincerely with steadiness, watch out for these obstacles. With prayer and practice, eliminate the hindrances step by step and reach the summit of realization. Love God. Pray from your heart. If you try sincerely with implicit faith, then success will be at hand.



Shri Gurudev's Birthday Celebrations
in Hariharananda Gurukulam

AROUND THE WORLD

Activities of Prajnana Mission

Kriya Programs : Due to COVID-19 crisis Kriya yoga initiation programs continued to be suspended during April-June, 2020.

Balashram : Balashram continues to be closed; waiting for State Government's

instructions for the reopening of the school.

Ashrams abroad : Birthday celebrations of Gurudev Paramahansa Hariharanandaji were celebrated around the globe in all ashrams with a special worship and meditation.



Shri Gurudev's Birthday Celebrations in KYC, Tattendorf

Visit our web site:

www.prajnanamission.org

For current information.

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