

Akhand Jyoti is not merely a magazine. It is an Incarnate embodiment of my soul. - Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya



Akhand Jyoti

The Light Divine

www.awgp.org

Annual Subs.- India: ₹ 120.00 | Abroad: ₹ 1100.00 | Vol. : 15 | Issue: 4 | July-Aug. 2017



05 | How can Children be molded into Enlightened Citizens?

13 | The Guru-Shishya Tradition is based on Soul Kinship

25 | Let's Join Hands in Adoring Mother Nature

38 | Save Trees - Save Life



Gayatri Jayanti was celebrated with full enthusiasm and devotion at Shantikunj, Haridwar



International Yoga Day was celebrated at Gayatri Chetana Center, New Jersey (USA) on June 18, 2017. Students, parents, volunteers and the general public enthusiastically participated in the event comprising of Pragy Yoga, Pranayam, Omkar meditation and various prayers.

॥ Om̐ bhūrbhuvah̐ svaḥ tatsaviturvareṇyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ prachodayāt ॥
(May Almighty illuminate our intellect and inspire us towards the righteous path)

- Rigveda 3/62/10; Samveda 1462, Yajurveda 3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/3



Akhand Jyoti

The light divine

Founder-Patrons
Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya
Mata Bhagwati Devi Sharma

Chief Editor
Dr. Pranav Pandya

Annual Subscription: India: ₹ 120.00 Abroad: ₹ 1100.00

VOLUME: 15

ISSUE: 4

July-Aug. 2017

Amrit Chintan

Let's Adore Sadguru's Padukas

Padukas are the wooden sandals traditionally worn by saints and seers. Guru's *padukas* are considered holy because they represent guru's spiritual foundation (supreme knowledge, *tapa*, experience, etc). The *padukas* worn by *Sadguru* (the spiritual master) get charged by his lotus feet. When a dedicated disciple bows to these *padukas*, he receives part of his master's *tapa* as a blessing. Adi Shankaracharya has reverently composed:

Nata yayoh sripatitam samiyuh, kadachidpyashu daridravyah |
Mookashcha vachaspatitam hi tabhyam, namo namah srigurupadukabhyam ||

[Adi Shankar's Guru Paduka Strotam, 3rd Shloka]

Meaning: My prostrations to the holy sandals of my Guru, adoring which the worst poverty stricken, have turned out to be great possessors of wealth, and even the mutes have turned out to be great masters of speech.

On the auspicious festival of Guru Purnima, let us prostrate to the holy *padukas* of Param Pujya Gurudev with reverence and seek his blessings.

An Appeal: Let's Nurture Mother Nature

Trees give flowers for fragrance, fruits for food, leaves, roots and bark for the medicines and wood for furniture; and also provide shade and resting place to the travelers and nests to the birds. Scriptures, saints, great men, and thinkers have sung the paeans of praise of trees.

On the auspicious festival of Guru Purnima, let us plant at least five trees and resolve to nurture them till they become self-supporting.

Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed. - Mahatma Gandhi

CONTENTS

1.	Amrit Chintan	
	Let's Adore Sadguru's Padukas	3
2.	From Chief Editor's Desk	
	How can Children be Molded into Enlightened Citizens?	5
3.	Change of Era and Future World - Some Prophecies	9
4.	On the auspicious festival of Guru Purnima	
	The Guru-Shishya Tradition is based on Soul Kinship	13
5.	Science and Spirituality	
	Scientific Spirituality in Education and Culture	16
6.	The Enormous Challenge of Growing Population.....	20
7.	Yug Gita – 7	
	Choosing the Lord as Sadguru.....	22
8.	Let's Join Hands in Adoring Mother Nature.....	25
9.	Youth Column	
	Constructive Criticism is Equivalent to Medicine.....	27
10.	Peace Pilgrim's Wisdom – 7	
	The Pilgrimage - 2	29
11.	Odyssey of the Enlightened – 56	
	Revelation of a New Vision – 2	33
12.	Future Civilization would be a Blend of Science and Religion.....	36
13.	Save Trees – Save Life	38
14.	Amrit Vani	
	Two Steps to Spiritual Ascent — Yoga and Tap – IV.....	40
15.	Helicopter Parenting.....	45
16.	Let's Make Our Neighborhood Polythene-Free	47
17.	Unknown Champions of Afforestation.....	49
18.	Shantikunj News	(Inner Cover Pages & Back Cover Page)

We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children. - *Native American Quote*

How can children be molded into enlightened citizens?

Childhood is the most precious phase of life. If babies receive quality prenatal and postnatal healthcare; and, later on, proper guidance from parents and teachers, they can be molded into enlightened citizens. If we acknowledge how important it is to mold a child right from conception and provide good *sanskars* (moral values) to him / her after birth, then we can claim to have laid a concrete foundation for the future of our nation. Let us contemplate on how we can achieve this.

Prior to birth

The latest research in biology and psychology has revealed that some of the most important learning the baby does happens in the womb; that is before he / she is born. We might think that a newborn baby is a clean slate, unaffected by life. However the truth is that the child has already been molded by us, and by the particular environment we live in.

From conception onwards, a fetus starts responding to the voice of its mother. It even learns to understand and speak its mother's native language. Researchers say that by seven months of pregnancy, a fetus's taste buds and smell receptors are fully developed and functional.

What a mother eats or drinks, the air she breathes, the environment she lives in, what she thinks and the emotions she experiences – all are shared in some way with the fetus and become an integral part of its being.

This clearly shows that a fetus's health and well-being is directly linked to the physical, mental and spiritual health of its mother. Therefore, in order to promote the health and well-being of the next generation, it is essential to focus on what the fetus learns during its nine months in the womb.

To address this, All World Gayatri Pariwar (headquartered in Shantikunj, Haridwar) has initiated a nationwide program for educating the masses, especially women, through *garbh sanskar* (womb ceremony). Some states have made it mandatory for expecting parents to participate in *garbh sanskar*. Who does not want a virtuous child? People from all walks of life are participating in this ceremony and reaping the benefits. If we can ensure such an auspicious start to childhood, then we can aspire to develop righteous youth who can make the nation strong.

Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago. - Warren Buffett

The need for proper childcare

Proper childcare from birth to preschool, and even at later stages, is a critical, and often overlooked, aspect of a child's development. Childcare providers, whether they are parents, family members or others (such as, friends, relatives, neighbors, or professional care providers), are the child's first teachers; hence they play an integral role in promoting healthy growth and development. All children, especially infants and toddlers, need a schedule that is suitable for their needs. They need love, care and attention that will nurture their healthy emotional development. How such care is provided may vary from place to place, but the core principle is the same – the holistic growth of a child.

We must remember that each child is unique. Therefore, childcare should be sensitive and responsive to the individual strengths and needs of the child, rather than trying to make the child become like a particular kind of person.

Some issues that need to be resolved

Prior to developing a plan to promote healthy growth of children, there are some issues that need to be resolved. Unless parents, intellectuals and policy makers understand and resolve them early, holistic growth of children will remain unattainable. In the Indian context, let us see what these are:

- 1. Encouraging children to mature beyond their years:** Most parents inculcate ambition in their children from a very young age. Parents train and push their children to participate in reality television shows, such as Indian Idol, and attain instant fame and success. By doing this, we are encouraging children to behave like adults. This is nothing but a conspiracy of social media to rob children of their childhood.
- 2. Overburdening children with useless knowledge:** Without understanding child psychology, some parents and teachers overburden children with information that is not useful to them in the present or future.
- 3. Pressurizing children to take up extra courses:** Everyone aspires to become an engineer, doctor or manager. In this competitive atmosphere, children are forced to join a professional coaching institute to prepare for competitive exams. This is over and above existing pressures to complete school homework on time and attend tuitions. This has led to unprecedented stress on the present generation of children. No one in school wants to learn the arts, such as, painting, poetry, music, or any other creative skills.
- 4. Promoting unhealthy food habits:** While children should be given fruits and sprouts for breakfast, they are instead being given junk food, such as potato chips and other fried foods, for breakfast and lunch. Thus, children are being deprived of proper nutrition, which is harming their health.

Ten wells equal a stepwell, ten stepwells equal a tank, ten tanks equal a son, and ten sons equal a tree.

- Matsya Purana

5. **Living unhealthy lifestyle:** Parents must limit their children's unhealthy lifestyle habits. Harmful habits, such as watching TV while eating, spending too many hours on the Internet and smartphones, listening to loud music, not exercising, sleeping and waking up late, are depriving children of precious time and energy.
6. **Making schoolbags heavier:** Too many texts and notebooks in schoolbags for homework make attending school an arduous effort. If students are expected to keep studying and completing so many assignments all day, when can they play or find time for other activities? Neurosurgeons are beginning to think that carrying heavy school bags in childhood may result in chronic backaches later in life.
7. **Expecting proficiency in English:** In public schools, the medium of instruction is English and it is also compulsory to communicate in this language. English speaking skill is used as a measure of one's intelligence. If students are unable to speak in English, they can expect to be punished for it. The truth is that most children find fundamental English concepts very tough to grasp; therefore they resort to rote learning. Is this the right way of educating children? Can't native language be offered as an alternative to English in imparting education?
8. **Preferring technical education over values-based education:** The present system of education is focused on developing one's technical knowledge in lieu of social and relationship skills. We need to adopt values-based education that inspires people to adopt and live positive human values and can create an exceptional environment for imparting as well as gaining knowledge.
9. **Preferring boys over girls:** In India, especially in rural areas and among the less or uneducated masses, a boy is considered superior to a girl. This gender bias has led to female feticide (despite the law banning it). Even in the 21st century, this primitive bias still exists.
10. **Exploiting children as laborers:** It is a tragedy that the children, who should have been studying and playing, are forced to work as labourers. Working as '*Chhotus*' in the roadside '*Dhaabas*', they are being regularly exploited by their employers. The problem of child labor and physical abuse is a disgrace to the so-called modern Indian society. Nobel Laureate Sri Kailash Satyarthi, who won the Nobel Peace Prize (2014) for his work on child labor, has rescued more than 85,000 children. But can one person overcome this social issue? Don't we need to create awareness among the masses? Sri Satyarthiji was the chief guest in the recently held fifth convocation of our DSVV (April 15-16, 2017). Gayatri Pariwar has resolved to partner with him in eradicating this social evil. We do not expect recognition for this work. Our sole intention is to save the childhood of such unfortunate kids and ensure that they receive appropriate opportunities for education and personal growth.

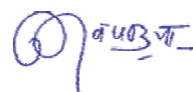
Tree is a poem that the earth writes across the sky. Humanity cuts them down for paper so we may
record our emptiness. - *Kahlil Gibran*

What do we plan to do in this direction?

1. **Educate the masses through Garbh Sanskar** (Womb Ceremony) about the importance of good physical, mental and spiritual health of expectant mothers. This will be done by organizing awareness camps through our network of lakhs of *Pragya Mandals*, thousands of *Shaktipeeths* / *Pragyapeeths*, and several *Chetana Kendras* across India.
2. **Spiritually awaken parents** after the birth of their child by conducting various Vedic rites, e.g. *namkaran*, *annaprasan*, *mundan*, *vidyarambh*, *yagyopaweet*, *deeksha*, etc. All our centers are equipped with facilities for conducting these rites. We will also involve help from Aanganwadi Kendras for this purpose.
3. **Conduct Bal Sanskar Shalas** for school going children. At present, more than thirty thousand *Bal Sanskar Shalas* are in operation. Gayatri Pariwar has created unique programs for children. These are being implemented at *Shaktipeeths*, *Pragya Mandals*, homes of some *parijans*, railway platforms (for orphans), and also for poor children who attend school barefooted, during academic year and holidays.
4. **Conduct Kishore Shalas** on the lines of *Bal Sanskar Shalas*. Adolescence is a delicate period of life. It is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to adulthood. If some organization is ready to take up voluntarily the issue of training adolescents, we are ready to provide a helping hand.
5. **Organize Kanya Kaushal camps** to awaken and strengthen women. A working system for training young women about health and hygiene, education, security, and self-reliance has been established.
6. **Organize one- or two-day conventions** for newly married couples as well as for families. Such conventions have already been organized on an experimental basis and they have been very successful in restoring loving bonds among family members and in nurturing relationships.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of activities to be undertaken by AWGP. We have already taken up 7- pronged strategy for social and moral awakening of the nation. The aforementioned points specifically relate to the scheme of holistic growth of our children.

With prayer-filled greetings on the auspicious occasion of Guru Purnima Parva,



(Pranav Pandya)

Take a quiet walk with Mother Nature. It will nurture your mind, body, and soul. - *Anonymous*

Change of Era & Future World

- Some Prophecies

Curiosity to know the future course of life is a common trait of human beings. Astrologers, Palmists, Numerologists, Tarot Card-readers, and other kinds of foretellers, have always been in demand in different walks of life across the globe. The trend has not changed even in the modern world in spite of magnificent advancement and influence of science and technology. Generally people are curious to know about future course of their personal life, professional career, gain etc. Most often, people go to such foretellers when they are facing some adverse phase of life, going to venture into a new business, or take a risky chance, or want to invest in a lottery, etc.

Usually the fortune-seekers who believe more in luck than in their own efforts, those scared of negative results or hardships, or those with excessive self-obsession and less courage run after the astrologers, palmists, card-readers, etc. However, it is not rare to find that even those who work hard, plan things thoroughly with due gauging of the circumstances and likely consequences, etc, also take into account the predictions and / or advice of the foreteller(s) whom they consider reliable. Moreover, the inquisitiveness of mankind is not confined to personal or professional level; predictions on future of news-making leaders, other celebrities, nations, etc also interest almost everybody.

Whether Astrology, Palmistry, Numerology, Card-reading etc is scientifically valid or not, whether such faculties could be acquired through training, etc, may be debatable. But

the possibility of precognitive, intuitive and other psychic faculties of human mind cannot be denied, as, the evolution of consciousness has no limit. World history has also witnessed many live examples of extrasensory powers and super-human potentials of the human mind that appear simply incredible, astonishing...! Psychic potentials of peeping into the past and future of individuals, prophetic vision of the entire world, etc, are such prodigious talents that have amazed the world from time-to time.

Apart from some spiritual saints of our times, Nostradamus, Jean-Dixon, Jules Verne, Cheiro, etc, are noted among such gifted visionaries, who became globally popular because of their time-tested historic predictions ^[1-5]. Let us look at what they have predicted about the epochal changes and the future of the world by the second half of 21st Century and beyond, as this would help us prepare for the future in a better way.

Nostradamus was a French physician and seer who wrote his quatrains in the later part of the 16th century. The *quatrains* were visions that he had of the future running ahead beyond 21st century. As the *quatrains* were generally written in very arcane and abstruse terms and not in any chronological order, they were not noticed or validated before the occurrence of major events the glimpse of which was interpreted by some scholars later on. The flowery nature of the language and the often highly allegorical style of depictions in most of his writings (compiled as “*Centuries*”) has now attracted many scholars

Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better. - *Albert Einstein*

across the globe and also posed challenges before them to research and decode what is there in store for the world.

Some of his predictions that have proved true include — his prediction of date of his own death, and the time and circumstances under which his skeleton would be rediscovered; his forecast of the Great Plague of London, the Great Fire of London, and the blitzkriegs of London during World War II, etc. The collage of several of his *quatrains* (C1/Q24, C6/Q97, C9/Q92, C10/Q72, and C10/Q74) also ‘narrates’ the horrifying terror attack of 9/11 on the twin towers of World Trade Centre, New York.

Interestingly, the indications in some of the *quatrains* have not been so obscure and have been interpreted by the scholars almost non-disputably [2-3]. Some of these also clearly cite the specific year or period of a future event. Some of these, relevant to the future at this juncture of change of millennium and beyond are cited (as English translation of the original French text) below.

“In the year 1999 and seven months from the sky, will come the great king of Terror. He will bring to life the great King of the Mongols. Before and after War reigns happily.” - (C10/Q72)

As interpreted by several scholars and as is also being witnessed by the world, this corresponds to the peak of terror, proxy wars, instability, cultural devolution, environmental pollution, global warming, selfish use of veto by powerful nations like China to suppress the justified rights and demands of peace loving developing countries, at the juncture of the change of millennium.

Nostradamus also predicted that this ‘King of Terror’ (‘King of Mongols’, or, as interpreted by scholars, ‘The third Antichrist’ referred in other *quatrains* of Nostradamus) will be around for 27 years:

“The third Antichrist soon annihilates everything, Twenty-seven years of blood his war will last. The unbelievers dead, captive, exiled with blood, human bodies, water and red hail covering the earth.” - (C8/Q72)

As cited by some scholars^[3], in his epistle to Henry II, Nostradamus is supposed to have also predicted occurrences of many natural calamities. In some *quatrains* (in C9) he also warns of global warming in this period.

Dawn of Golden Age: Nostradamus has also predicted rise and blossoming of spirituality, true religious awakening and a golden future of thousands of years after the period of 27 years (approximately, 1997 – 2024) of gloom and doom.

Several scholars have found this positive theme of spiritual growth and development of all people in at least 60 of Nostradamus *quatrains*. For example see the following:

“The body without a soul is no longer at the sacrifice. At the day of death, it comes to rebirth. The divine spirit will make the soul rejoice seeing the eternity of the world.” - (C2/Q12)

“The divine world will give to the substance (that) contains heaven and earth, occult gold in the mystic act. Body, soul and spirit are all powerful. Everything is beneath His feat as at the seat of heaven.” - (C3/Q2)

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin. - *William Shakespeare*

Notably, the predictions of Nostradamus closely match with the dates and descriptions (cited from ancient scriptures) in the previous issues of this magazine where we had discussed with authentic references, the critical phase of adversities at the juncture of epochal change, the year 2025 to mark complete end of the Dark Age (*Kaliyuga*) and onset of about ten thousand years of Golden Age thereafter.

Jean Dixon (1904-1997) is supposed to have had the psychic power of peeping into the future through a crystal ball^[4]. Some of her globally recognized forecasts are — swearing-in of John F. Kennedy as the President of America and his assassination before completion of the tenure; date of Independence and division of India; assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Like Nostradamus, her prophecies also describe the emergence of three antichrists the 3rd of whom would be most dreadful and devilish. Scholars have linked her mentions of the periods and characters of the first two with Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler. The third one is seen by most as among the most dreadful leaders of Islamic terrorist groups at present.

Similar to the prophecies of Nostradamus, Jean Dixon has predicted the dawn of good times after the dark night of wide-spread violence. She is also said to have ‘seen’ that spirituality and human values will be the guiding force of the new Golden Age the light of which may arise from India.

Several of the science fiction and related stories and novels written by **Jules Verne** in the early and mid 19th Century surprisingly became reality of the technologically advanced world of the 20th Century. As cited by Edwin Stepp^[5], Verne’s writings had influence on some noted

space scientists, astronauts, and their path-breaking missions. Apart from narrating the use of television and several high-tech devices in the lives of the characters of his fictions, his imagination of the places of launching in America and landing on the moon also closely matched with those of Apollo 11. It’s amazing that Verne could accurately ‘estimate’ the velocity required for his ‘imaginary’ spaceship to escape earth’s gravitation and also described the effects of weightlessness experienced by his novel’s astronauts. Not only that, Verne also ‘visualized’ that the re-entry in earth’s atmosphere of the craft would be fiery like its propulsion in the space.

“Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation to which you can trace the seeds of every star, every planet, every living thing in this cosmos and on the earth. And they have found that all this happened as a product of forces they cannot hope to discover.... That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact.”

- **Dr. Robert Jastrow**

(Astronomer, physicist and a founder director of NASA's Goddard Institute of Space Studies.)

Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished. - *Lao Tzu*

In spite of his supposed passion for ultra technological development, this visionary scientist-cum-author had warned the human race against excessive dependence on technology and mad rush for high-tech developments at the cost of exploiting natural resources, environment and humane values. His views are likened by some scholars to the gospels in Bible (ref. Matthew 24:27 and Isaiah 2:4) that narrate the peak of sinful acts of mankind and God's intervention to prevent total extinction of life on the earth after which the (remaining) people would learn to live in mutual harmony and peace.

This vision of the future world resembles Swami Vivekananda's prophecy. What the latter had envisaged way back in 1896 about rise of

labourers in Russia and China indeed came true like several of his other prophecies. He had also envisaged predominant role of spiritual culture beyond the age of materialism.

Interestingly, similar to the prophecies of prodigious minds, the insightful visions of some intellectuals of the modern times as well support the dawn of bright future of spirituality after the climax of all-round challenges and adversities across the world. Similar to the views of Swami Vivekananda, the findings of these scholars predict a leading role of India on multiple fronts of socio-economic progress. We shall highlight these findings along with other forecasts about the future society in the next issue.

References:

1. Sharma Shriram Acharya (1995). *Yug-Parivartana Kaise aur Kaha?* Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya Samagra Vangmaya Vol. 27. Akhand Jyoti Sansthan, Mathura.
2. <http://www.theosophydownunder.org/library/theosophical-lectures/prophecies-throughout-the-ages-for-the-21st-century-by-paul-rooke/>
3. <http://yousigma.com/psuedoscience/nostradamusthe21stcenturyandbeyond.html>
4. Jean Dixon (1969): *My Life and Prophecies*. (1st ed.) William Morrow, NY. (ISBN: 978-0688021429).
5. <https://www.vision.org/visionmedia/article.aspx%3Fid%3D741>

“We seek to uncover behind the events changes in the collective consciousness. We reject wholesale references to the “spontaneity” of the movement, references which in most cases explain nothing and teach nobody. Revolutions take place according to certain laws. This does not mean that the masses in action are aware of the laws of revolution, but it does mean that the changes in mass consciousness are not accidental, but are subject to an objective necessity which is capable of theoretic explanation, and thus makes both prophecy and leadership possible.” - **Leon Trotsky**

You will find something more in woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you that which you can never learn from masters. - **St. Bernard**

On the auspicious festival of Guru Purnima

The *Guru-Shishya* Tradition is based on Soul Kinship

Guru Purnima is celebrated every year on the full moon day of the lunar month *Aashad* to strengthen spiritual bonds between *Guru* (spiritual teacher) and *Shishya* (disciple). It is difficult to tell for how long Guru Purnima is being celebrated in our country. But we can certainly tell that *Guru-shishya* tradition and the glory of Guru are as old as our Indian culture. This festival is also celebrated as Vyasa Purnima in the honor of Sage Veda Vyasa. This year Guru Purnima or Vyasa Purnima is falling on July 9, 2017.

In the history of India, Maharshi Veda Vyasa was the first person who collected, compiled and composed the entire repository of knowledge. This way he gave our country rich heritage of noble thoughts and a treasury of knowledge. *Guru-shishya* tradition played the pivotal role of disseminating that knowledge across generations. When wet clay is put in a mould, it takes the shape of the mould. Life of a Guru is such a mould in whose imprint many lives are carved out. If the mould is good, then the disciples that are shaped by them also turn out to be good.

The tradition of Upanishads thrived in India. The term “Upanishad” derives from the Sanskrit words “*upa*” (near), “*ni*” (down) and “*shad*” (to sit) — so it means “sitting down near” a spiritual teacher to receive instruction. In ancient India, whatever knowledge disciple gained by sitting at the feet of Guru was termed as Upanishad. Whenever

a disciple sits near Guru, Upanishad is a natural outcome. This has happened many times in the modern era too.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the saint of Dakshineswar used to sit in the temple on the banks of Ganga. His disciples would gather around. Some of them were bachelors while some were householders. In that gathering, some used to be elderly people, some of them elites and some family men. There would be some light fun, conversations and a flow of eternal knowledge. A disciple of Paramhansa, Mahendranath Gupta, also known as Master Mahasaya, compiled such sagacious conversations under the title ‘Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrit’ (in Bengali).

Sri Aurobindo had a few selective disciples with whom he spent his evenings. He met these people even during his years of solitary *sadhana*. Nirodbaran, Nolini Kanto Gupta, Manilal were among them. There would be many discussions and conversations that were pregnant with occult knowledge. Nirodbaran was a good doctor and he was the one who compiled these conversations under the title ‘Talks with Sri Aurobindo’

There are many types of relationships. Some are related to our physical body, e.g. mother, father, brother, sister etc. Some relationships take birth from emotions; e.g. wife-husband, friends etc. However, there are relationships which take birth from the depths of soul. They are termed as

A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people. - *Franklin D. Roosevelt*

soul-kinship or spiritual relationships. One such relationship is that of Guru and disciple.

A guru understands his disciples in totality. This is the only relationship in which a person is understood so holistically. Others will know a person, but in bits and pieces. A mother understands her child, but she cannot do so completely because when her child grows into youth, his personality changes so much that a mother might wonder if he is the same child she nurtured. The relationship between a wife and husband is very deep. They understand each other very well. Even then, there are instances when they might find themselves as complete strangers. It is only the relationship of Guru and disciple that the Guru understands the disciple completely. His understanding is not superficial. He knows his entire personality, his *chitta* and *samskaras* too. In addition to this life, he also knows the past lives of the disciple.

Purnima or Full moon signifies the quality of giving completely and receiving completely. In this context Saint Kabir says – ‘*kahat kabir mein poora paaya*’. Only a person who can give completely can receive completely. If you hesitate to give, then there will be a problem in receiving too. In this world, people believe more in getting than giving. But one should remember that those who do not know how to give cannot receive. Sri Aurobindo has written that intense

aspiration, self-consecration and total surrender are the principles behind the relationship between guru and disciple.

Emperor Bali was performing a series of *Ashwamedha Yagyas*. He had completed ninety nine of them and the hundredth was in progress. Lord Vamana (Incarnation of Lord Vishnu) went in the form of a short-statured Brahmin and asked Bali for three steps of land. Bali smiled looking at the dwarf Vamana and his feet. Bali’s Guru, Sage Sukracharya however warned him to check what he was granting and to whom. He also said that Lord Narayana had come and what tests he might put forth was to be seen. Bali responded that it was indeed a great fortune that the Lord himself was at his door and was asking for something. Sukracharya did not object to this emotion, though he was not happy. The goal of the Guru is to facilitate the meeting of disciple and God. So, when the Lord came to the kingdom of Bali, he granted three steps of land. Bali was free from attachment and was a responsible king too. However, he still had the ego that he was a great philanthropist. When Vamana measured heaven and earth in two steps, he asked where to place his third step. Bali offered his head because that was the source of ego. So, in the third step, Bali gave his ego and the Lord took his ego.

Goswami Tulsidas says - *bandau guru pada kanj kripa sindhu nararoop hari* – Hari takes

*Gyaan Shakti Samaaroodah, Tatwa Maalaa Vibhooshitaha |
Bhukti Mukti Pradaaneyna, Tasmai Sri Gurave Namaha |*

Meaning: The one who is an ocean of knowledge, who is always in Yoga (in unison With God) who is adorned by the knowledge of the God principle, the one who can liberate us from this mundane existence, I salute such a Guru.

To be poor and be without trees is to be the most starved human being in the world. To be poor and have trees is to be completely rich in ways that money can never buy. - *Clarissa Pinkola Estés*

human form as Guru and lives amidst us. But we cannot see God with our naked eyes because he is formless. This formless God comes to teach us in the form of Guru. He guides us so that we may realize our true self, removes our ignorance, identifies our weaknesses and hones our personality. We just need to take one step towards him and he will awaken us and illuminate us. We are leading our life almost unconsciously. There is no awareness. We are merely bound by the raw threads of relationships. We have forgotten the strong and everlasting relationship of that of the soul.

Guru teaches us, warns us and reminds us of our life. He reminds us of our relationship with our soul. He tells us about the pinnacle of human consciousness. He presents us with the example of his own life - A life, a personality, a pure consciousness, so pious and pure that it is very rare to find in the world. The Guru says – ‘See, if this can happen to me, it can happen to you as well. I

have received the grace and I have understood, so can you. You do not need to run around, you just need to be where you are and be aware.’

There are only two doors to knowledge – intellect and love. Through the door of intellect, we understand the world and through love we understand the supreme God and Guru. The guru we see externally, when installed in our heart becomes the *Sadguru*. As long as his presence is merely outside, he is known as guru. When his presence is felt in our life, our breath and our heart, he is never separate from us. He is within us. He is present within us as the source of all knowledge and emotions. We will never lack anything after that. Only a person who can become a disciple like this can understand the Guru. When the disciple surrenders himself more and more, then the Guru’s presence is felt more and more within the self. If we can achieve this, then we have truly celebrated Guru Purnima.

The anecdote goes that in ancient times, a yogi appeared in the upper regions of the Himalayas. Nobody knew what his origins were. But his presence was extraordinary, and people gathered. However, he exhibited no signs of life, but for the occasional tears of ecstasy that rolled down his face. People began to drift away, but seven men stayed on. When he opened his eyes, they pleaded with him, wanting to experience whatever was happening to him. He dismissed them, but they persevered. Finally, he gave them a simple preparatory step and closed his eyes again. The seven men began to prepare. Days rolled into weeks, weeks into months, months into years, but the yogi’s attention did not fall upon them again. After 84 years of sadhana, the yogi looked at them again. They had become shining receptacles, wonderfully receptive. He could not ignore them anymore. On that full moon day (now called Guru Purnima), the yogi turned south and sat as a Guru to these seven men. This Adiyogi (Lord Shiva) thus became the Adi Guru. The seven disciples became celebrated as the Saptarishis and took this knowledge across the world.

To be without trees would, in the most literal way, to be without our roots. - *Richard Mabey*

Science and Spirituality

Existence and expression of human life is incomplete without culture and education. However, it looks like that today's intellectually advanced and civilized society is living with partial or even wrong interpretation and implementation of these foundational elements of progressive life. Perhaps this is the reason why the enormity of materialistic development too has kept us deprived of its very goal — prosperity and progress with happiness and peace. Not only that, this incompleteness has led the modern civilization towards lacunae, disparity, uncertainty and risks in several respects. There is a need for thorough review and rectification. Let us discuss some key aspects in this regard.

To many of us, the supposedly cultured and educated people, the word “Culture” implies —music, dance, other art forms, and traditional customs, etc, and “Education” is confined to — learning and skill development at some school/ educational and training centre/institute. No doubt, all these are integral facets of culture and education and essential components of development. However, focusing only on these is like attempting to nourish only the branches and leafs of a tree while ignoring its roots hidden deep beneath the soil.

According to some linguistic experts, the word “Culture” derives from the Latin “*colere*” which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivate and nurture; it shares its etymology with a number

Scientific Spirituality in Education & Culture

of other words related to actively fostering growth. The simple dictionary meaning of the word “Culture” is often described as the ideas, customs, and social behavior of a particular group of people or a society. A more expanded definition of culture scripted by some savants is — shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned by socialization. But these scholarly definitions and practical interpretations leave several issues unaddressed, such as — how is this ‘learning through socialization’ different from ‘influence of social ambience’? “Learning” implies ‘improvement’ in some way, so “is there a definition of culture associated with some improvement”? “What is the purpose of culture? Why it should characterize a ‘society’ or nation? How is it different from “Civilization”?

The prominence of “civilization” seems to have overshadowed the meaning and purpose of “culture” in current trends of life. We must note that “civilization” deals with development on ‘materialistic’ fronts of life and the systems and disciplines like sociology, civics, economics, politics, etc, associated with the use of these developments. “Culture” pertains to the non-materialistic or the so-called ‘softer’ domains of life. In physical or materialist terms these domains and associated developments do not make any direct contribution to one's living. But these indeed enrich and prosper the core of liveliness and fulfillment.

Keep a green tree in your heart and perhaps a singing bird will come. - *Chinese proverb*

A comprehensive meaning of “Culture” is conveyed by Sanskrit translation of the word, viz., *Sanskriti*. “*Sanskriti*” literally means the knowledge and mode of refinement and holistic development of a human being. It is the inspirational energy, the motivating force, and expression of purity, beauty, creativity, and activity in life that elevates and expands the goodness, splendor, and serenity, indwelling everywhere, in everything. It is thus inherently associated with not only the creative expression of feelings and intrinsic talents but also with nurturing and elegant grooming of values, inner beauty, and emotional character of a human being. Therefore, the roots of *sanskriti* (culture in a comprehensive sense), lie in spirituality.

In “*Bhartiya Sanskriti Kosh*” (a Hindi treatise on Indian Culture) the scholarly author Shri Liladhar Sharma Parvatiya considers that the inherited *culture* of a society or nation is collective expression of its spirit, principles, and historic activities and achievements that nurture the elements of welfare of humankind. In his views *sanskriti* of a society or nation defines its ‘intrinsic personality’. The greater the virtues and values of (the members of) a society, the more evolved is its *sanskriti*.

The grandeur and purpose of culture (*sanskriti*) and its direct linkage with spirituality and comprehensive education is elegantly explained in Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya’s treatises on related topics^[1, 2]. Prof. Mahendra Sharma in “*Bharitya Sanskriti Ke Moola Adhara*” (Hindi book on Fundamentals Elements of Indian Culture) discusses *sanskriti* as an ensemble of principles and practices for refinement and ascent of people’s life towards a chosen high ideal. These aspects of relevance of *sanskriti* and spirituality

in education need to be looked at in more detail. In a series of articles in some earlier issues of this magazine^[3] we had reviewed the history of education, multiple traits of intellect, learning, and capacity-building, diverse thoughts and schools of education, formal and informal modes of education, role of education in socio-economic development, etc. Related reports and reviews on systems of basic and higher education were analyzed and views on multiple aspects of education were also sought from several students, parents, teachers/academicians, professionals. Based on these, we had presented a summary of different perspectives and possibilities of filling the gaps and future of education system.

In a nutshell, the study showed that education, as the modern world has understood and practiced it, is mostly associated with civilization. Its linkage with culture has been only peripheral — e.g. confined to ‘teaching’ music, fine-arts, performing arts, and textbooks on ‘moral education’, etc. It seems to have become mainly a key source of developing human beings into human resources for a civilized society.

In other words, by and large, “education” has been confined to what is termed in Sanskrit (and Hindi) as “*Shiksha*” (*Śikṣā*) and has often ignored the core of “*Vidya*” (*Vidyā*). *Shiksha* makes one aware of the worldly nature of life, renders information and knowledge of various disciplines of civilization, enables one to earn his/her living, and trains one to live ‘successfully’ in a civilized society and contribute to its development as per the prevalent norms. It nurtures analytical reasoning and/or creative talents, supports grooming and glazing of professional skills, and helps augment intellectual potentials, scholastic thinking, etc. *Vidya* cultivates moral

The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time is now. - Anonymous

values, inspires positive orientation of thoughts and emotions and helps virtuous development of character. It is thus naturally linked with scientific spirituality^[2, 4].

No doubt, *shiksha* is a crucial component of life. No words would be adequate to describe its importance. But it does not achieve the purpose unless it also teaches self-management under all circumstances and enables one to live a purposeful life with unconditional happiness and goals worth human dignity. It should therefore be complemented by *vidya* — which inculcates wisdom. Even a highly learned person could be ignorant without *vidya*. An ignorant person is akin to a strayed man, as he does not ‘see’ the precious goal and righteous path of life.

Multiple facets of culture (*sanskriti*), morality, and virtuous tendencies incorporated in *vidya* influence and develop the worldly and spiritual domains of life. So far, since the medieval times, this field of human development has largely remained neglected. This is because man has failed to understand the importance and necessity of this aspect of life. In one form or the other, education system (*shiksha*), existing today, barely serves the objective of teaching social behavior, making livelihood, meeting worldly necessities and acquiring comforts and materialistic success. But, we must remember that this alone is not adequate for a truly dignified, happy, and progressive life. In the absence of humane sensitivity and virtuous traits (good *sanskars*), in spite of attaining civility and sophistication, professional skills and extrovert intelligence, the emotional and deeper intelligence levels of a person remain crude and dormant.

Vidya bestows true knowledge (*Gyan*) of self and life and awakens wisdom. It is supposed to be the most precious treasure worth acquiring in human life. It is referred in ancient texts as a source of nectar (*Amrit*). However, its benefits accrue only when one attempts to use wisdom for discretion in actions and for development of virtuous qualities, character and personality to make the best use of one’s talents commensurate with cultural values and needs. Devoid of the light of good, corrupt thinking and immoral actions would make one undesirable in the society. Such a person, despite his high educational degrees and intellectual eminence, would become like a “wise devil” (*Brahmarakṣas*). Our negligence of *vidya* in the education system has indeed resulted in such hazards. We can find ample examples of sharp intelligence, higher technological expertise, and professional skills these days cleverly being used in fraudulent practices, corruption, and even in devilish acts of terrorism.

Shouldn’t these experiences motivate us to rethink and reorient our conceptualization and approaches to education? People who care for the future of the coming generations, who strive to save the future of humanity, would largely agree that it is time we rediscover the lost roots of inherent linkage of education with *sanskriti*. It is time we realize the key role of *vidya* and make collective efforts to adopt it in our education system and continuous learning in different phases of life.

Swami Vivekanand had aptly described the holistic meaning of education when he said — we want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one’s own feet. Eminent Jurist Mr. Nani

No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of a garden. - Thomas Jefferson

Palkhiwala had also underlined the importance of enlightened understanding and character building in education. In his views —“Animals can be trained; only human beings can be educated. Education requires personal participation and transformation. It cannot be given to anyone; it must be inwardly appropriated”. Indeed, real purpose of education would be completely served only when it would incorporate both *shiksha* and *vidya*.

Mutual relevance and importance of education and culture are clearly reflected in Gilbert K. Chesterton’s remarks — “Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another”.

Our ancient educational system was formulated with such a holistic perspective. Its objective was not only to provide informative knowledge and skills about means of livelihood and their adequate use but at the same time, it helped in

bringing about a positive progressive change in thoughts and actions of the disciples for natural resource-management, proper conduct, fulfillment of responsibilities, and progress with values. Most importantly, it also helped inculcating spirituality — self-awareness, self-refinement, emotional maturity, sensitivity, and awakening of discrete wisdom, inner peace, and unalloyed love and blissfulness.

Cultivation of awareness towards the inner-self and knowledge and experience of the real self (soul) and hence spirituality is essential for intellectual and emotional evolution. This is what leads to holistic development on all fronts of life. This is what would lead to the ultimate ideal goal of education (*shiksha* and *vidya*) and *sanskriti*. Holistic development of individuals would naturally lead to holistic development of the society, nation and the world as a whole.

References:

1. Acharya Shriram Sharma: *Bhārtīya Sanskriti Ke Ādhārabhūta Tatva*. Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya Samagra Vangmaya Vol. 34. Akhand Jyoti Sansthan, Mathura. 1995
2. Acharya Shriram Sharma: *Śikṣa Evam Vidyā*. Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya Samagra Vangmaya Vol. 49. Akhand Jyoti Sansthan, Mathura. 1995
3. Pandya P. and Shambhudass (editors): Articles on Education in *Akhand Jyoti – The Light Divine*. Vol.13 (Issues 1-6). Akhand Jyoti Sansthan, Mathura. 2015
4. Pandya P. (editor): *Pioneers of Scientific Spirituality*. Sri Ved Mata Gayatri Trust, Shantikunj, Haridwar. 2009

“Teach the ignorant as much as you can; society is culpable in not providing a free education for all and it must answer for the night which it produces. If the soul is left in darkness sins will be committed. The guilty one is not he who commits the sin, but he who causes the darkness.” - **Victor Hugo**

Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience. - *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

The Enormous Challenge of Growing Population

Every year, July 11 is observed as 'World Population Day'. This event was established by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme in 1989. The day was chosen because it was on July 11, 1987 that the population of the world reached 5 billion. Today the world population has crossed 7 billion. According to one source [1], India, with 1.34 billion people is the second most populous country in the world, while China is on the top with over 1.41 billion people. The figures show that India represents almost 17.85% of the world's population, which means one out of six people on this planet live in India.

Let us look at the statistics of our states in this context. Many of our states lie significantly low on the development index, while their population is more than that of many countries of the world. Population of Tamil Nadu is more than that of France. Odisha is more populous than Argentina. Population of Madhya Pradesh is more than that of Thailand. Maharashtra's population is more than that of Mexico. In terms of geographical area, Brazil is one of the biggest countries in the world. But our Uttar Pradesh despite being so much smaller geographically is much ahead of Brazil in terms of population!

Some more examples are as follows: Population of Rajasthan is more than that of countries like Italy. Gujarat is much more populous than South Africa, as is West Bengal whose population is more than that of Vietnam. Several smaller states of our country also are more populous than

some of the countries of the world. For example, smaller states like Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, and Kerala are much ahead of countries like Uganda, Austria, Canada and Uzbekistan in terms of population. To put it another way, population equal to that of many countries of the world taken together, lives within India.

The reasons for fast growth of population are as follows:

- 1. Steady growth in birth rate:** Due to lack of education, large disparity in development, and weak implementation of family planning methods, there has been a steady growth in birth rate.
- 2. Consistent decrease in infant mortality rate:** Due to significant improvement in medical and health-care facilities during the past few decades, and nationwide usage of preventive drugs / vaccines, the infant mortality rate has reduced considerably.
- 3. Rising life expectancy:** In 1950, the life expectancy at birth in India was 36.2 years. This has increased to 68.3 years in 2015 [according to WHO population report 2016]. This rise has been due to improved living conditions, better health and hygiene, nutrition, education, etc.
- 4. Increased immigration:** Due to rising population and poor living conditions,

Whoever loves and understands a garden will find contentment within. - *Chinese Proverb*

people from neighbouring countries are taking refuge in India for fulfilling even their basic needs.

The adverse effects of growing population in India are many. With the population growth rate at 1.2%, India is predicted to have more than 1.53 billion people by the end of 2030. This will lead to overpopulation, i.e., a condition where population surges to a level that the available space cannot accommodate it comfortably. The pressure on physical resources is visibly increasing. Economic disparity has significantly increased than earlier. A number of challenges like unemployment, improper health care, disintegration of families, poverty, starvation, malnutrition etc. have also increased. These challenges are actually being faced by many countries of the world as well. In our country there is a big dearth of education and awareness. As a result, people are not able to understand the fearsomeness of the problem of rising population for the future. Due to this growth, the entire world including India is beginning to face the danger of food shortage. Water shortage is also increasing continuously. Fast population growth has alarmingly increased the level of pollution. The fertility of land is decreasing and ground water is depleting very quickly too.

Population explosion has led to a large number of distortions. Number of people is increasing while the earth's land area cannot increase nor can its geographical state. Population explosion has given rise to political, social and extreme economic problems in our country. Many environmental problems have also been generated by this because a big burden of the large population has to be supported by limited resources of nature. This adversely affects the quality of both life and nature. Providing even basic facilities like food, clothing and shelter becomes a great challenge when population is large. If enough attention is not paid to this problem now, it can create a great danger to the stability of the country.

Therefore, our first priority should be to check the growth rate of population. This is a difficult task but the proper planning of Government, implemented with courage and wisdom, and well-supported by the citizens, can accomplish it. For the benefit of our nation every citizen must be made aware of the ill-consequences of population explosion. Only then will we be able to get rid of the various related problems; and the country would then become happy and prosperous.

[1] Source: Indiaonlinepages.com

“Whether we accept it or not, this will likely be the century that determines what the optimal human population is for our planet. It will come about in one of two ways: Either we decide to manage our own numbers, to avoid a collision of every line on civilization's graph - or nature will do it for us, in the form of famines, thirst, climate chaos, crashing ecosystems, opportunistic disease, and wars over dwindling resources that finally cut us down to size.” - Alan Weisman, *Countdown: Our Last Best Hope for a Future on Earth?*

A tree does not move unless there is wind. - Afghan Proverb

Choosing the Lord as *Sadguru*

Right in the beginning of the second chapter of the Gita, Lord Krishna admonishes Arjuna. He says –

*Kutastwa kashmalmidam vishame
samupasthitam |
Anaryajushtamaswaryamkirtikaramarjun
||(2/2)
Klaivyam ma sma gamah partha
naitattvayyupapadyate |
Kshudram hrudaydaurbalyam tyaktotishtha
paramtapa || (2/3)*

Meaning: “O Arjuna! In this hour of crisis, how did attachment affect you? This conduct is unbecoming of a brave warrior. You will neither get heaven nor any fame because of it. O Parth! Do not yield to this degrading impotence. It does not befit you. Give up such petty weakness of the heart and rise, stand up and face your enemies.”

It must be mentioned that the Lord starts speaking for the first time through these two shlokas. Earlier, He merely drove the chariot to the center of the battlefield on Arjuna’s request and listened to him express his anguish. Both these shlokas are very significant. Any brave warrior will feel humiliated and agonized upon hearing these words and will not tolerate being called impotent. The Lord is inciting and challenging Arjuna by hurting him to the core. In fact, the Lord gets upset on observing an awakened soul, like Arjuna’s, heading towards *tamas* (or darkness). That is why He reminds him (Arjuna) of the conduct of

virtuous people and cautions him of his present conduct leading to infamy.

In reply to the abovementioned two shlokas, Arjuna defends himself by saying “Both Bheeshma and Dronacharya are dear to me. How can I kill them in battle? You are knowledgeable and great and I accept your reprimand, but I cannot kill my own people. I consider begging to be a better option than killing them because I will not be able to enjoy the blood-stained pleasures of this world.”

All arguments have reached a stage where Arjuna starts talking about begging. He is trying to refute Lord Krishna’s arguments in the same mercurial language. At the same time, he also says, “I don’t know what is good for me – to face the enemy or not. Regardless of victory or defeat, I do not want to live a life established by their deaths.”

Arjuna’s present mindset is worth studying. He is talking the language of ethics that one should not kill one’s benefactors. He is talking like pundits do, trying to convince Yogeshwar Lord Krishna. But his conduct shows that he is not a pundit in these matters. The *tamoguna*, at its extreme, ends in *moh* (attachment) and one of the far ends of *moh* is *nidra* (sleep) – forget everything and go to sleep. Laziness, carelessness, and *moh-nidra* are the different forms of the same vice. Arjuna has been called ‘Gudakesh’ (meaning – *Gudak* – sleep, *eesh* – master; one who has conquered sleep). The same Arjuna has gone into *moh*-

Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing. - Abraham Lincoln

nidra. Param Pujya Gurudev used to say “when I see awakened souls immersed deep in *moh-nidra*, I pity them but also get annoyed.’ The irony of present times is that people spend their whole lives worrying about the welfare of their families and near-and-dear ones, but do not think of the society at all. It seems that Arjuna is also passing through the same state, but gradually his mind changes and ultimately he surrenders. In the seventh shloka of second chapter of the Gita he says –

***Karpanyadoshohatswabhavah, pruchchhami
twam dharmasammoodachetah |
Yachchhreyah syannischitam bruhi tanme
Shishyasteaham shadhi mam twam prapannam
|| (2/7)***

Meaning: I am confused about my righteous duty and have lost all composure due to weakness. In this condition I am asking you to tell me clearly what is best for me. Now I am your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto you. Please instruct me. In fact, it is from this shloka that the Gita begins in the form of a dialogue between *Guru* (Teacher) and *Shishya* (Disciple). For the first time, Arjuna says – I am your disciple. It is considered auspicious if a disciple attains this state of surrender towards this teacher. Prior to this, a disciple is blinded by his or her ego and boasts about his or her abilities – I am highly educated, I am philanthropic, I have donated so much to my Guru, I have given up my whole life for his work, and so on. Overcoming all this, when he or she becomes humble and says – ‘I am your disciple. I have surrendered unto you. Please instruct me on what is beneficial for me’ - then, whether the Guru is available in physical form or not, he transmits such subtle inspirations that are certainly auspicious and provide him or her true guidance.

It is said that the Gita truly begins from 11th *shloka* of the 2nd chapter, because the Lord, manifesting himself as a Guru, provides instruction of *Sankhya Yoga* to his disciple, Arjuna. In simple terms, *Sankhya yoga* is an instruction on how to imbibe ideals in real life. Some scholars say that this kind of yoga is for *Sannyasis*. This is not true. The reality is that it is the foundation of ‘Art of Living’. *Sankhya yoga* teaches how we can awaken our inner powers, how we can understand the true form of God and how we, while living a simple life, can also lead the life of a yogi and *Paramhans* (the enlightened). Everyone - young or old, male or female, a curious mind or a *sadhak* can practice this *yoga*. That is why this chapter has been considered very important in the Gita.

This chapter is very significant as it captures the first dialogue between a *Guru* and *Shishya*. Every Guru can tell only three things to his disciple: First, what his or her duty is; second, becoming one with God while performing his or her duty is a commendable achievement; and third, what the model of *sthitpragya* (a person of steady wisdom) is by giving his own example. We can also explain it as follows:

1. Engaging oneself in one’s duty, while understanding that the soul is different from the physical body. That is, we should try to understand that the soul is above physical body. (This has been explained in the 12th shloka.)
2. Engaging oneself in *swadharma* (conduct and duty) and going beyond it. Go beyond the karma while doing it and also attain the state of stillness. (This has been explained in 31st shloka and beyond).

A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.

- Greek Proverb

3. Understanding how a *sthitpragya* (a person who has realized the soul and reached beyond) lives? How to identify such a person and his or her virtues have been described from 55th shloka till the end of 2nd chapter.

In these three divisions, the Guru, Lord Krishna, gives his message to his disciple, Arjuna. This message has been guiding humanity and *sadhaks* for ages.

It is not the *dharma* of Arjuna to live by begging. Even during *Agyatwas* (anonymity) he did not beg, he worked for a living. His entire life has been spent as a warrior. When a brave person, like Arjuna, talks of earning his livelihood by begging, then only his Guru, Yogeshwar Lord Krishna, can reprimand him and teach him the lessons of truth, *swadharma*, and realization of the soul in the form of *Sankhya Yoga*. Here it is important to understand this form of Lord Krishna as Arjuna's Guru.

We (the Gayatri Pariwar parijans) sing a song '*swayam bhagwan hamare guru – param saubhagya hamara hai*' (meaning – It is our great fortune that our guru is Lord himself). Under the present circumstances, if we truly imbibe the theme of this song, we can easily understand this context of the Gita. People have accepted Gurudev as a miracle man but there are only a few who have accepted him as the Lord. It is the most significant event in the life of a disciple when, like Arjuna, he accepts *Sadguru* as the Lord and surrenders unto him.

Param Pujya Gurudev too considered his Guru to be his Master and the Lord. In his autobiography 'My life – Its Legacy and Message' he writes, "It was the day of *Basant parva*. While I was

engrossed in worship in my room during the early hours of the morning (*Brahma muhurta*) I saw an aura of light. I was stunned, amazed and awestruck. I rubbed my eyes to ascertain whether it was a hallucination or something astral like a ghost or demon, but it was none of these.

An astral body of a *yogi* appeared in the center of that aura. It was astral in the sense that his figure was visible although it was hovering in the empty space with an envelope of light all around it. I was wondering as to who he was. The apparition said, 'I have been linked with you and guiding you during your past several lives. Since your childhood is now over, I have come to impart you the necessary guidance. I shall be helping you now to get all the work done through you, which is essential to meet the challenges of the present times. *Yogis* having only astral bodies cannot establish physical contacts, which are possible only by embodied beings, and hence the former depend on the latter for this purpose. 'I surrendered myself at that moment to that divine soul and regarded him not only my guide, but also equivalent to Divinity Itself. This relationship has been maintained for the past sixty-three years (as of 1985) and I have been forging ahead wholeheartedly and unwaveringly on the path shown by him. No questions or doubts have ever arisen in my mind as to my capability to accomplish His will or what results my efforts will bear.'"

The aforementioned lines have been cited in the context of meeting the *Sadguru*, so that we can get inspired from what is being suggested in the 2nd chapter of the Gita. Only a person who gives priority to emotions over his intellect can surrender totally. The possibilities of the growth of such a soul are infinite. Keeping this fact in mind, we should try to evaluate our dedication towards our Gurudev.

For in the true nature of things, if we rightly consider, every green tree is far more glorious than if it were made of gold and silver. - Martin Luther

Let's Join Hands in Adoring Mother Nature

If man enriches Nature, Nature too enriches man. If man nourishes Nature, Nature too nourishes man. This relationship between man and Nature continues to be unbroken and seamless as long as Nature and man both remain preserved, protected and flourishing. But when this relationship gets disturbed Nature becomes annoyed and man becomes endangered. This is precisely the reason behind the Nature's fury frequently seen now-a-days. Nature which used to shower prosperity as goddess Mahalaxmi and bestowed knowledge as goddess Mahasaraswati has now become Mahakali and showering destruction today.

It is from the bosom of Nature that myriad forms of life - all types of plant and vegetation, all species of animals and other living beings - are born. Nothing is outside Nature. Nature is the mother which has given birth to all without discrimination. All aspects of life, all its pleasures and beauty have blossomed forth from Mother Nature and are in umbilical bond with her.

When we go against Nature, life begins to lose its shine and dark clouds of crises begin to fill the sky. The cycle of death, destruction and misery starts and becomes so intense and encompassing that there remains no escape from it, no space for a foothold. Storms of deluge and devastation blow everything away.

What never happened in the past is happening today; what was never imagined is starkly visible now. The never-heard-of is being heard, the never-seen is being seen, and the never-

experienced is being experienced. Accidents, diseases, earthquakes, floods, and tsunami - all the destructive changes in Nature are happening all around us. Life has become intolerably painful and there is unending flow of misfortunes.

The situation today is horrifying. And why is it so? It is simply because of the imprudence of mankind, of the so-called best specimen of Nature's progenies. He to whom Mother Nature had assigned the responsibility of continuously enhancing the beauty and richness of life is himself doing the opposite. Mother Nature is, therefore, angry with him. Her anger needs to be pacified.

Nature is the mother. Nature is the life giver. She is sensitive and affectionate. Whatever be the provocation, the mother cannot remain angry at her children for long. Why would she want to destroy her own progeny? Her anger is merely to give a lesson to her own child - the mankind and to awaken it. Man has deviated from the right path and is harming himself. The mother would never want that. So she is always striving through various means to chide him and goad him onto the right path.

If the children learn and follow, mother again showers her blessings on them. Today man has turned away from Nature and has adopted an unnatural lifestyle. To fulfil his selfish desires and satisfy his ego he has indulged in mass cutting of trees and devouring of forests; he is erecting huge buildings which are drying up the soil fertility.

What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another. - Mahatma Gandhi

He has not left the air pure enough for breathing and is not deterred from polluting even the space. If we stop committing these inexcusable crimes even now, it would be possible to propitiate Nature. To reverse the damages already done, what is needed is enrichment of the flora and protection of the environment. We need to shut down the factories and plants which are heavily polluting the rivers. The day our rivers are dead from the incessant discharge of chemical and other pollutants, the very existence of life on earth would be in danger.

Water is vital for life. Hence rivers need to be depolluted. Cutting of plants and trees is depriving man of vital breath because they absorb the pollutants from the air and release pure oxygen. Similarly the soil fertility is being depleted. This soil which gives us crops and food is everyday being converted into sand, concrete

and cement. Highly productive land is getting unfertile, or is being devoured by the expanding cities and towns. Damage to environment means damage to Nature. Protection of environment means being grateful to Nature and receiving her boons. By rectifying the mistakes we can restore the balance in Nature. This is akin to adoring the Nature. This way we can start getting her immeasurable benefits again.

What is needed today is that we restart thinking of Nature as our mother, and make efforts to preserve and nurture her. Only an enriched Nature can enrich our life and fill it with bounties. The delicate interrelationship between Mother Nature and man needs to be made lively again so that we may avoid any future crises and calamities. If we adore Nature and nurture her, our own life automatically gets nurtured and becomes joyful.

Deadly Heat May Threaten Majority of Mankind

A new study has found that 30 percent of the world's population is currently exposed to potentially deadly heat for 20 days per year or more-and like a growing forest fire, climate change is spreading this extreme heat. Without major reductions in emissions of greenhouse gases such as CO₂, up to three in four people will face the threat of dying from heat by 2100. However, even with reductions, one in two people at the end of the century will likely face at least 20 days when extreme heat can kill, according to the analysis, published on Monday (19th June, 2017) in *Nature Climate Change*.

“Lethal heatwaves are very common. I don't know why we as a society are not more concerned about the dangers,” says Camilo Mora of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, the study's lead author.

[Reported By Stephen Leahy (Ref: National Geographic – Climate Change, Published on June 19, 2017)]

The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased; and not impaired in value. - Theodore Roosevelt

Constructive Criticism is Equivalent to Medicine

Medicine when taken in appropriate doses is effective in curing the disease. Similarly, constructive criticism motivates us to analyze our mistakes, protects us from arrogance and encourages us to move onto the righteous path. We usually crave for appreciation and honour. No one wants to be condemned, ignored or offended. But, there are times in life, when we have to face it and then it makes us miserable, angry and negatively inclined towards the critics.

On the contrary, if taken in a positive manner, even they could prove beneficial and become the agents of our upliftment. By perceiving criticism as means of introspection, our life attains the brilliance like that of an ascetic. Therefore, instead of running away from the circumstances, it would be far better to face them prudently. We should, thus consider criticism as an inspiration for incorporating those virtues in our lifestyle, which are essential for the development of our personality.

It is true that the person gets demotivated on being criticized. Yet, it is a medium through which he could not only develop a fresh and constructive perspective towards life, but could also move ahead by taking a balanced approach even during adverse circumstances. Criticism gives the person an opportunity for self-analysis and revaluation. The more difficult the situation, the tougher the problem, the deeper the wound, the greater is the prospect of self-analysis and revaluation.

The small mistakes we make in our life could put us into problems and difficulties. The events which we considered insignificant and did not pay much attention to, could sometime show their relevance and provide us an opportunity to rethink and introspect. This opportunity sometimes comes before us as criticism.

Constructive criticism prevents us from straying away from our path, inspires us to rethink about our faults and provides us an opportunity to rectify our mistakes. It helps us in perceiving the reflection of truth; otherwise the charm of appreciation could take us into such an intoxicated state in which we cannot see the truth. In that case, we would see only that which is being expressed in words of appreciation. Flattery and abundance of appreciation takes us away from the reality, while criticism brings us closer to it. Appreciation blindfolds us, while criticism provides us an opportunity to open our eyes and view the reality.

Appreciation and honour makes a person arrogant and he may be deviated from the righteous path; while, criticism can help in bringing a deviated person back on track. Thus, opposition, criticism and insult are like the bitter medicines which are not easy to gulp and facing them appears to be a cause of affliction. But, they can also have a positive impact on life, provided we carry out self-analysis and revaluation.

Never cut a tree down in the wintertime. Never make a negative decision in the low time.

- Robert H. Schuller

However, sometimes denigration is done only to insult the person. Such sort of criticism should be ignored and one should not pay much attention to it. So, first of all, the person should evaluate that whatever is being said about him is true and to what extent. The method of this evaluation has been suggested by Neil Gaiman “Remember: when people tell you something’s wrong or doesn’t work for them, they are almost always right. When they tell you exactly what they think is wrong and how to fix it, they are almost always wrong.”

We find all sorts of people in the world. They may be our friends or foes. Some people are happy on our success, while others could rejoice in our failures. Therefore, the reaction of both types of people is quite different on our failure and success. Constant criticism and constant appreciation both prevent us from moving forward. Excessive appreciation increases

arrogance while, excessive criticism takes us into depression. True appreciation acts as an encouragement and motivates us. While, genuine criticism prevents us from deviating and shows us the correct path.

If we have to move forward in life, then we have to accept both of them. A very smooth surface is quite slippery. So, a little roughness is essential for walking. Similarly, abundance of appreciation could make one slip on the path of life. Genuine appreciation helps us in moving forward and legitimate criticism protects and refines us. Therefore, we should use both of them for self analysis and move forward on the path of progress. We should always remember Dale Carnegie’s suggestion in this regard - “Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain but it takes character and self-control to be understanding and forgiving.”

There was a little boy who had a very bad temper. His father decided to hand him a bag of nails and said that every time the boy lost his temper, he had to hammer a nail into the fence. On the first day, the boy hammered thirty seven nails into that fence. The boy gradually began to control his temper over the next few weeks, and number of nails he was hammering into the fence slowly decreased. He discovered it was easier to control his temper than to hammer those nails into the fence. Finally, the day came when the boy didn’t lose his temper at all. He told his father the news and the father suggested that the boy should now pull out a nail every day he kept his temper under control. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same again. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar which cannot be erased.

All theory, dear friend, is gray, but the golden tree of life springs ever green.

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The Pilgrimage – 2

When I first started out I thought the pilgrimage might entail some hardships. But I was determined to live at need level, that is, *I didn't want more than I need when so many have less than they need.* Penance is the willingness to undergo hardships for the achievement of a good purpose. I was willing. But when hardships came I found myself lifted above them. Instead of hardship, I found a wonderful sense of peace and joy and conviction that I was following God's will. Blessings instead of hardships are showered upon me.

I remember my first lesson on the pilgrimage was the lesson of receiving. I had been on the giving side for many years and I needed to learn to accept as gracefully as I had been able to give, in order to give the other fellow the joy and blessing of giving. It's so beautiful when you live to give. To me it's the only way to live, because as you give you receive spiritual blessings.

I was tested severely in the beginning of my pilgrimage. Life is a series of tests; but if you pass your tests, you look back upon them as good experiences. I'm glad I had these experiences.

If you have a loving and positive attitude toward your fellow human beings, you will not fear them. *'Perfect love casteth out all fear.'*

One test happened in the middle of the night in the middle of the California desert. The traffic had just about stopped, and there wasn't a human habitation within many miles. I saw a car parked at the side of the road. The driver called to me

saying, "Come on, get in and get warm." I said, "I don't ride." He said, "I'm not going anywhere, I'm just parked here." I got in. I looked at the man. He was a big, burly man—what most people would call a rough looking individual. After we had talked a while he said, "Say, wouldn't you like to get a few winks of sleep?" And I said, "Oh, yes, I certainly would!" And I curled up and went to sleep. When I awoke I could see the man was very puzzled about something, and after we had talked for quite some time he admitted that when he had asked me to get into the car he had certainly meant me no good, adding, "When you curled up so trustingly and went to sleep, I just couldn't touch you!"

I thanked him for the shelter and began walking away. As I looked back I saw him gazing at the heavens, and I hoped he had found God that night.

No one walks so safely as one who walks humbly and harmlessly with great love and great faith. For such a person gets through to the good in others (and there is good in everyone), and therefore cannot be harmed. This works between individuals, it works between groups and it would work between nations if nations had the courage to try it.

Once I was hit by a disturbed teenage boy whom I had taken for a walk. He wanted to go hiking but was afraid he might break a leg and be left lying there. Everyone was afraid to go with him. He was a great big fellow and looked like a

Reversing deforestation is complicated; planting a tree is simple. - Martin O'Malley

football player, and he was known to be violent at times. He had once beaten his mother so badly that she had to spend several weeks in the hospital. Everybody was afraid of him, so I offered to go with him.

As we got up to the first hilltop everything was going fine. Then a thunderstorm came along. He was very terrified because the thundershower was very close. Suddenly he went off the beam and came for me, hitting at me. I didn't run away although I guess I could have — he had a heavy pack on his back. But even while he was hitting me I could only feel the deepest compassion toward him. How terrible to be so psychologically sick that you would be able to hit a defenseless old woman! I bathed his hatred with love even while he hit me. As a result the hitting stopped.

He said, "You didn't hit back! Mother always hits back." The delayed reaction, because of his disturbance, had reached the good in him. Oh, it's there—no matter how deeply it is buried—and he experienced remorse and complete self-condemnation.

What are a few bruises on my body in comparison with the transformation of a human life? To make a long story short he was never violent again. He is a useful person in this world today.

On another occasion I was called upon to defend a frail eight year old girl against a large man who was about to beat her. The girl was terrified. It was my most difficult test. I was staying at a ranch and the family went into town. The little girl did not want to go with them, and they asked, since I was there, would I take care of the child? I was writing a letter

by the window when I saw a car arrive. A man got out of the car. The girl saw him and ran and he followed, chasing her into a barn. I went immediately into the barn. The girl was cowering in terror in the corner. He was coming at her slowly and deliberately.

You know the power of thought. You're constantly creating through thought. And you attract to you whatever you fear. So I knew her danger because of her fear. (I fear nothing and expect good — so good comes!)

I put my body immediately between the man and the girl. I just stood and looked at this poor, psychologically sick man with loving compassion. He came close. He stopped! He looked at me for quite a while. He then turned and walked away and the girl was safe. There was not a word spoken.

Now, what was the alternative? Suppose I had been so foolish as to forget the law of love by hitting back and relying upon the jungle law of tooth and claw? Undoubtedly I would have been beaten — perhaps even to death and possibly the little girl as well! Never underestimate the power of God's love — it transforms! It reaches the spark of good in the other person and the person is disarmed.

When I started out on my pilgrimage, I was using walking for two purposes at that time. One was to contact people, and I still use it for that purpose today. But the other was as a prayer discipline. To keep me concentrated on my prayer for peace. And after a few years I discovered something. I discovered that I no longer needed the prayer discipline. I pray without ceasing now. My personal prayer is:

Except during the nine months before he draws his first breath, no man manages his affairs as well as a tree does. - *George Bernard Shaw*

Make me an instrument through which only truth can speak.

During my pilgrimage through Arizona I was arrested by a plainclothes policeman while mailing letters at the local post office in Benson. After a short ride in a patrol car I was booked as a vagrant. When you walk on faith you are technically guilty of vagrancy. Yes, I've been jailed several times for not having any money, but they always release me once they understand.

There is a great deal of difference between a prison and a jail. A prison is something big that maintains some kind of standards. A jail is a little affair that doesn't maintain much of any standard. And this was a jail!

They put me into a huge inner room surrounded by cell blocks in which they locked the women, four to a cell for the night. As I walked in I said to myself, "Peace Pilgrim, you have dedicated your life to service — behold your wonderful new field of service!"

When I walked in one of the girls said, "Gee, you're a funny one, you're the only one that came in smiling. Most of them come in crying or cursing."

I said to them, "Suppose you had a day off at home — wouldn't you do something worthwhile on that day?" They said, "Yes, what will we do?" So I got them to sing songs that lifted the spirit. I gave them a simple exercise which makes you feel tingly all over. Then I talked to them about the steps toward inner peace. I told them they lived in a community and what could be done in an outer community could also be done in their

community. They were interested and asked many questions. Oh, it was a beautiful day.

At the end of the day they changed matrons. The girls didn't like the woman who came in. They said she was a horrible person and said not to even speak to her. But I know there's good in everybody and of course I spoke to her. I learned this woman was supporting her children with this job. She felt she had to work and didn't always feel well and that's why she was a bit cross at times. There is a reason for everything.

I asked the matron to visualize only the good in the inmates. And I asked the girls to visualize only the good in the beleaguered matron. Later on I said to the matron, "I realize you have a full house here and I can sleep comfortably on this wooden bench." Instead she had them bring me a cot with clean bedclothes, and I had a warm shower with a clean towel and all the comforts of home.

In the morning I bade farewell to my friends and was escorted by a local deputy to the courthouse several blocks away. I wasn't handcuffed nor was he even holding onto me. But he had a great big gun at his side, and so I looked at him and said, "If I were to run away, would you shoot me?" "Oh, no," he said grinning, "I never shoot anything I can catch!"

In court that morning I pleaded not guilty and my case was immediately dismissed. In my personal effects which were taken overnight was a letter which had great weight in my release. It read: *"The bearer of this note has identified herself as a Peace Pilgrim walking coast to coast to direct the attention of our citizens to her desire for peace in the*

A tree is such a rich metaphor in a million beautiful ways. You can consider a tree growing and consider its connectedness to all things above and under the ground. - Ann Brashares

world. We do not know her personally as she is just passing through our state, but since undoubtedly it will be a long, hard trip for her, we wish her safe passage.” It was on official stationery and signed by the governor of the state, Howard Pyle.

When I was being released a court officer remarked, “You don’t seem to be any the worse for your day in jail.” I said, “You can imprison my body, but not the spirit.” It’s only the body they can put behind prison bars. I never felt in prison and neither will *you* ever feel in prison—unless you imprison yourself. They took me to the spot where I had been picked up the day before. It was a beautiful experience.

Every experience is what you make it and it serves a purpose. It might inspire you, it might educate you, or it might come to give you a chance to be of service in some way.

Most of my speaking is now scheduled well in advance but I am still offered speaking engagements in a most unexpected manner. In Minneapolis I was being interviewed by a reporter at a gathering of civic club members who were awaiting an address by the Minnesota Governor. He was unable to make it so they invited me to speak in his place. Of course I accepted!

And speaking of governors, as I stepped inside the big front door of a State House one day, a nice friendly gentleman greeted me and shook my hand and asked if he could help me. I told him I was looking for the Governor’s office and he promptly took me there. “Is there anything else I can do to help you?” he asked. “I thought I might have the privilege of shaking hands with the Governor,” I said. “You *have* shaken hands with the Governor,” said the nice friendly gentleman - the Governor himself.

[Reproduced with glad consent of the publishers – Friends of Peace Pilgrim]

There was a farmer who sold a pound of butter to a baker. One day the baker decided to weigh the butter to see if he was getting the right amount, which he wasn’t. Angry about this, he took the farmer to court.

The judge asked the farmer if he was using any measure to weight the butter. The farmer replied, “Honor, I am primitive. I don’t have a proper measure, but I do have a scale.”

The judge asked, “Then how do you weigh the butter?”

The farmer replied: “Your Honor! Long before the baker started buying butter from me, I have been buying a pound loaf of bread from him. Every day when the baker brings the bread, I put it on the scale and give him the same weight in butter. If anyone is to be blamed, it is the baker.”

Moral of the story: In life, you get what you give. Don’t try and cheat others.

Like any good tree that one would hope to grow, we must set our roots deep into the ground so that what is real will prosper in the Light of Love. - *Billy Corgan*

Revelation of a New Vision – 2

Discernment is essential for adapting traditions

Swamigal had his own opinions about worship of Gayatri, the right to study Vedas, the rituals of purification, religious procedures, etc. When Shriram talked about some of them, he found that his opinions were conservative; but they were not baseless. For example, he said about worship of Gayatri, “It is only for the Brahmans”. However, during the discussion, it became clear that “The essence of Brahman is not taking birth in this caste, but the person should possess the attributes of Brahmanhood as prescribed in the Shastras”. If it is not present, it should be earned. If the inclination of the person is pious and inquisitive, the study of scriptures gives good results; otherwise mere intellectual knowledge may be misused. Like *Asuras* (demons), such a person neither can do his own good nor that of the society. In the temples, *Puja – Aarti* (rituals of worship) should be done according to prescribed methods. Its aim is to infuse life and energy in the rituals.

New methods can also be devised, Swamigal said – “It is possible to amend the traditional ways of managing the temples, but that requires the right to do so. Such rights are obtained only from enlightened seers. If everyone starts doing modifications, it will lead to chaos.” He gave an example to stress his point – “Rules of governing are made by the rulers / government. Isn’t it? Only they are capable of enforcing them. Others cannot do so. In the field of religion / spirituality, introduction of the new traditions or any refinements are done only by the seers.”

Shriram asked – “Is that right earned or given?” Swamigal said – “According to the need of the time and the society, it is given by the Almighty. The touchstone of the given right is that it is accompanied by the power to implement and sustain the required tradition or the method. If you make a rule and on following it no benefit is accrued, then what is the use making such a rule? This is child’s play. Lord Shankaracharya synthesized several modes and methods of *Puja-Anushthan*. He could also generate the power to get the results out of them. Later on the tradition nourished them. Even now, it is possible to synthesize new methods. It can be done any time. The only requirement is the genuine authority to do so.”

Determining the New Path

There was a long discussion. Swamigal hinted several times that the time has come for the new beginning. The seers have already chalked out an appropriate path befitting the prevailing circumstances for the inner and outer growth of the people. What remains is its propagation by the right person. He didn’t tell who that right person would be? How could he be identified? Who will certify his existence? Shriram didn’t think it necessary to ask these questions. However, there was one doubt / curiosity lurking in his mind, which he put forth before Swamigal – “There may arise some hypocrites who may claim themselves to be the messengers of God. How will it be possible to distinguish between the genuine and fake?”

No matter what one looks at and finds temporarily pleasing, it can never be as beautiful
as just a tree, really. - David Thewlis

Swamigal said – “The society itself will recognize. It is also evident that it will not descend from the heavens. It will have the power of tradition behind it. There is going to be no refinement by neglecting the tradition (as approved by seers). Wherever such brashness is visible, it should be considered a fraud.” After saying this Swamigal got up from his seat, saying – “One need not go into these subtleties. *Amma* (Goddess Kamakshi) and *Mahakal* (Lord Shiva) will themselves establish and make it evident.”

After the discussion stopped, Shriram too got up. Swamigal instructed a few officials of the Ashram to take Shriram round the *Matha*. They enthusiastically showed him the temple, school, *Gurukul*, and *Yagyashala*, and made him aware of the several social service activities taken up by the *Matha*. Shriram observed them keenly. He inquired deeply about some of the establishments there. This inquiry was done in a manner as if he himself had to run such activities and that he was trying to understand the details of managing them.

Before leaving *Kamakoti Matha*, Shriram once again went to meet Swamigal. The latter presented him a *Mala* (rosary) of *Rudraksha* and *Sriyantra*, but he didn't say anything. Shriram said – “I heartily accept your blessings. Kindly keep on showering on me your grace.” Swamigal said, pointing one by one towards *Mala* and *Sriyantra* – “Your innerself and the power of Bhagawati will make you successful.” By *Mala*, he meant *Japa-Tapa* to be done for self-realization. The essence of *Sriyantra* was the accomplishments to be achieved with the help of divine grace. This *Yantra* is surcharged with the divine energies of prosperity and superhuman powers. Swamigal presented to Shriram the

sanctified and potent *Yantra*. He vowed again and came out. From outside, he looked at the top of the *Matha* once again.

Journey to Sri Aurobindo's Ashram

Those days, Sri Aurobindo Ashram was limited to a few houses and an open ground. Now-a-days, it is spread over about twenty six square kilometers. In the decade of thirties, there were thirty five to forty *sadhaks* in the Ashram, apart from Sri Maa and Sri Aurobindo. Some of them used to live outside the Ashram in rented houses. The disciples of Sri Aurobindo from India and abroad used to visit the Ashram now and then. However, there were not many general visitors to the Ashram as, at that time, there was nothing much to see as such. There was environment for *sadhana* and self-study. At the set time, Sri Maa would daily sit with the seekers. Sometimes there would be discussions on spiritual topics. What interest a general visitor could have in such a discussion?

During his journey, Shriram used to gather as much information as possible about the destination. This had become his habit. Instead of useless gossip with the fellow passengers, Shriram would discuss matters related to history, traditions and the nature of people of the region. Normally people add spices to their talks especially when it comes to giving information about holy places or holy men. But Shriram had also learnt the art of extracting the useful information from that mix.

Background information of Pondicherry

Prior to reaching Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Shriram knew many things about Pondicherry and the Ashram. This was not under British India, but under French rule. There were no crops except

God is the experience of looking at a tree and saying, "Ah!" - Joseph Campbell

that of onion. Production from the adjoining sea was only fish. There was no connection of Pondicherry with rest of India or the British Government. Only packed food that came from France was available. It was relatively cheaper. When Sri Aurobindo came here, he survived only on milk and bread. After the arrival of Sri Maa, some variety came in the food of *sadhaks*. She got planted vegetables and flowers in the vacant land near the Ashram. Slowly they started keeping cows; and in due course a full *Goshala* (cowshed) was developed. Sri Maa started this work in 1926 and it had expanded magnificently in twelve-thirteen years.

Shriram got this information from co-passengers before reaching the Ashram. Evidently, those co-passengers were the people who used to visit the Ashram regularly. It was also known from them that machines were also used in the Ashram depending on exigencies. Extreme care was taken about the purity of food. Cow's milk was primarily chosen as the food for spiritual progress.

Pondicherry was founded by François Martin in 1674. He was the first Governor General of Pondicherry. It was the expansion of the same thing that was seen by Shriram in 1937 and is

visible even now. In Tamil language, *Pundu* means new and *Cherry* means city. In fact the old name of the city was 'Punducherry'; but gradually it got pronounced as Pondicherry. Prior to this, this city was named 'Medapuri' which means city of knowledge. According to a mythological story, seer Agastya had made his Ashram and did *Tapasya* at this place. In order to cause the justice to be given to a sandpiper, the seer drank the entire water of sea from this place. Getting acquainted with all such information, Shriram entered the Ashram at around 1 PM.

A volunteer named Rajani Bhai was posted at the reception. His parents lived in Haridwar. About thirty – thirty five years back they made their home on the bank of Ganga. Rajani Bhai's age might be around forty. He spent a few years of his childhood in Haridwar. He had also visited Mathura – Vrindavan. For the past three years, Rajani Bhai was in Sri Aurobindo Ashram. He was very happy, when he came to know that a *sadhak* from Ganga –Yamuna region had come there. He was delighted to know that Shriram was a *sadhak* but that he was not a disciple of Sri Aurobindo; and that he had gone there not for seeking any spiritual help from him but for learning something which could be helpful in his own spiritual search.

*Na aksharam mantra rahitam, na moolam na-aushadhim |
Ayogyam purusham nasti, yojakah tatra durlabhah | |*

Meaning:

There is no letter which can't be used as a chant.

There is no root that can't be used as medicine.

(Similarly) There is no person (on the earth) is who is completely useless.

(Actually)The good delegators (who recognize the proper skillsets) are rare..!!

Of the infinite variety of fruits which spring from the bosom of the earth, the trees of the wood are the greatest in dignity. - Susan Fenimore Cooper

Future Civilization would be a blend of Science & Religion

Science and religion [1], both, are important in individual and social life. Without these two, life cannot move forward in the right direction. Both are, of course, different in their nature and working. But their union is similar to that of a blind person and a lame one. Separately, they cannot do much, but unitedly they can cover any distance.

Science is the stream of knowledge that unearths the hidden aspects of matter; and, religion is the stream of knowledge that searches deep within human consciousness. Thus both are important. If the world strives to be only scientific, it will see increasing level of material comfort, but the happiness level will not increase. Conversely, if people are only religious, they may achieve happiness but the majority will be suffering from different kinds of scarcity. Science creates conveniences, religion gives peace.

Historically, the civilization of the East was essentially built around religion. But the West developed its civilization on the basis of science. Consequently, the West made tremendous material progress. It produced riches and comforts but lost its collective conscience. As a result it appears restless today.

The civilization of the future, if it has to be for the benefit of mankind, will have to strike a balance between these two core elements of religion and science. This civilization cannot be simply scientific or simply religious. It will have to be a blend of science and religion.

In a human being, the body and the soul are not opposites; they merely work at different levels. A person, who cares only for the body and its comforts, cannot attain spiritual growth. Similarly, a person who always keeps thinking of inner progress only will completely neglect his bodily requirements. This is not good either. Just as human being maintains a harmony between body and soul, the coming civilization too should have the right balance between science and religion. Science should constitute its body, religion its soul.

A short story would be very appropriate and instructive here. The king of Greece once fell seriously ill. The physicians thought that he would not survive. The ministers and the beloved ones were in anguish. The atmosphere was gloomy. A wandering fakir entered the kingdom. He was known to cure any type of illness. He was brought to the palace. He observed the king and said, "Don't go mad. This is no illness. It has a very simple cure." All were surprised. The fakir continued, "Bring a loose tunic from any prosperous and happy inhabitant of the kingdom. The king will wear it and he will be perfectly all right." The state had no dearth of rich persons. The officers rushed outside. They visited such households and asked for used tunic. The residents said, "We are ready to lay down our lives if that would save the king. We are undoubtedly rich but we are not really happy." The courtiers had thought in the morning that the prescribed cure was a child's play, easily obtainable. But with passing hours it began to

The groves were God's first temples. - *William Cullen Bryan*

dawn on them that this medicine was almost impossible to get. When evening came they began to return home, tired and frustrated. The sun was setting. Outside one village, they saw a man playing a very sweet note on flute.

One minister proposed, “Let us make one last attempt and ask this person. He may possibly possess peace.” They approached him and said, “Your music has such joy and peace. We need a tunic from a person like you. The man replied, “Please look at me again. I do not have a tunic.” They gazed in the semi-darkness. He was wearing negligible cloth. They now realised that money is not needed for inner peace. Upon return, the ministers narrated their experience to the king who now fully understood the essence of fakir’s prescription. All sadness now left his mind and he began to feel light and joyful.

This world too will walk the right path if we are able to strike a balance between prosperity and peace. Our problem is that we have always thought about progress in a piecemeal way, not holistically. Our habit is to go to one extreme or the other. This is the biggest weakness of human mind - fragmented thinking and perpetual desire. Our mind is never satisfied with less or the needful; it wants more and more, and this tendency takes it to excesses, dishonesty and restlessness.

Note:

1. The term ‘religion’ here does not imply a particular sect or a particular system of faith and rituals of worship; it implies positive human attributes like humility, honesty, trustworthiness, discipline, fairness, love, peace, caring and sharing, etc.

Nature is a self-made machine, more perfectly automated than any automated machine. To create something in the image of nature is to create a machine, and it was by learning the inner working of nature that man became a builder of machines. - **Eric Hoffer**

Life without love is like a tree without blossom and fruit. - *Kahlil Gibran*

It is unwise to think of one’s body as a physical entity only or a soul only. The human personality is a synthesis of the two. A body without soul is not possible. Civilization too would have a bright future when both religion and science have a harmonious interplay. Of course in this scheme, religion will be at the centre and science will constitute the surrounding mass. In other words, in this synthesis, religion will be the guiding wisdom and science its follower. Just as the corporeal body cannot be the master, science too cannot be the master. Controller can be religion only. Only then we can build a better world. In this scientific age, religion is on the back foot, but we need more of it. The pace at which science is advancing can be both extremely beneficial as well as extremely harmful. It has many inherent dangers which can completely ruin mankind. The entity which has the power to keep this hurtling science within the desirable perimeter is religion.

Religion shows the right path. Science is blind; it is blindly and ceaselessly making experiment after experiment.....any and every kind of experiment without much regard to repercussions. Religion, on the other hand, has eyes but it is lame. It needs the strong shoulders of science to move forward. Only a right blend of the two will save mankind from the impending catastrophe.

Save Trees – Save Life

Trees have played an important role in the evolution, sustenance and development of life on earth. Since the beginning of this world, they have furnished us with life's essentials like food, oxygen, shelter, medicine, furniture and so on. Who would not appreciate a peaceful and aesthetically pleasing environment produced by the lined up trees on the sides of our streets, parks, playgrounds and in the yards of our homes? But the ever-increasing population has led to the deforestation of earth at almost the same rate. This coupled with pollution and modernization has produced an ecological imbalance. If this grave problem is not tackled in time, it may lead to the destruction of life on earth.

According to one satellite survey, at present there are about thirty thousand billion trees around the world. About 24% of them are reported to be in the dense forests in the warm zone, 22% are in the cold zone and the rest of the trees are scattered across the globe. However, the number of trees has been drastically reducing every year. In spite of the warnings of climate experts and scientists about global warming and the possibility of climate change, it appears that all over the world, including India, forests are being converted into cities due to abnormal industrialization, modernization and creation of highways and dams. In Brazil alone, about 17000 square kilometer area of dense forest has been demolished in the past 15 years.

Based on different survey reports, it is estimated that about seven million hectares of forest cover

is destroyed every year, around the world. At this speed, between 2010 and 2017, about 6 to 8 % of forests have already been knocked down. 17 to 35% of the forests will be eloped by 2040. Situation will be more ghastly by then. In this process, 20 to 75 of rarely available plant species will also be demolished every day. This will result in loss of another 15% of plant species permanently. Loss of trees will certainly affect the climate.

If we consider the importance of trees from economic point of view, there is a profit of rupees 1.41 lakhs from a forest of one hectare area in the hot zone of the world. In addition, in 50 years, one tree, directly or indirectly, gives the profit of about rupees 15.7 lakhs. Just one tree helps in maintaining the humidity of the land equivalent to the value of rupees 3 lakhs. It also preserves oxygen valued rupees 2.5 lakhs. Higher benefits of a tree are that it provides fresh air equivalent to rupees 5 lakhs and also controls water pollution. It also provides shelter to other animals and insects equivalent to rupees 2.5 lakhs. Based on the benefits mentioned above, rishis and saints have placed trees in the rank of God and linked their importance with worship to preserve specific trees, such as Peepal, Tulsi, Banyan, etc for unlimited time. However, human greed, selfishness, and arrogance have ignored the importance of trees and their major role in human life, resulting in climatic catastrophe.

Trees contribute in many other ways to our society and human life. For example, trees can

In creating, the only hard thing's to begin; a grass-blade's no easier to make than an oak.

- James Russell Lowell

also be compared with air conditioner, which provide us cold air during summer time. In forests of warm zone, laborers relax under a tree after hard work for some cold air. As per one survey study, one healthy tree provides cool air equivalent to the cool air of ten air conditioners, working for 20 hours. Trees surrounding homes also provide cool air and reduce the need of air conditioner by 30%. Eventually we save 20 to 30% of electricity as well. A forest spread in one acre area, absorbs 6 tons of CO₂ and creates four tons of Oxygen, equivalent to the average annual income of 18 people in India.

Some trees have the capability of absorbing pollution from the air and make the air more

clean and fresh. Peepal has unlimited capacity of absorbing smoke from the air. It can absorb up to 4.15% of smoke from the air and that's why Peepal is worshipped in India as God. Another very beneficial plant is Tulsi, which provides pure air and also destroys harmful insects from the surrounding. It also provides long life to all those who use it as herbal supplement. Other trees as well create important life elements for us.

Therefore, we should support the preservation of trees and play important role in saving them. At individual level, we should plant a few trees in our yards; where possible, plant native species that grow tall and provide shade on the sides of the road; and nurture them.

A landlord had two sons. Elder one was very greedy, arrogant and egoistic. Younger one was hardworking, helpful and kind to others. After the death of the landlord, elder one started taking care of the land. Everyone was unhappy because of his ruthlessness. Seeing the plight of others, younger one started helping them in the hind sight of his brother. Elder brother didn't like it. So he gave a small piece of land to the younger brother and told him to go away. Younger brother planted mango trees in that land. He took good care of the land. Slowly the trees started producing fruits. Travelers passing by would rest under the tree, eat sweet fruits and give blessings to the younger brother. Younger brother's generosity and kindness earned him more fame and accolades. Elder brother thought that if he also plants mango trees, everyone would applaud him too. He set-aside some land and got mango trees planted. The laborers were appointed to take good care of the trees. Time passed but the trees didn't produce any fruits. He became sad and invited a saint to resolve his problem. Saint arrived and stayed for one day each in both brothers' residences. After that he said to the elder brother, "Son! The reason for the trees not producing the fruits does not lie in the land. It lies in your behavior. If you leave your ego and arrogance and be kind to others your trees will also give fruits and the fame."

Knowing trees, I understand the meaning of patience. Knowing grass, I can appreciate persistence. - Hal Borland

Two Steps to Spiritual Ascent - Yoga & Tapa - IV

[This is the final instalment of the discourse on ‘Two steps to Spiritual Ascent – Yoga and Tapa’ delivered by Pujya Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya. In the previous instalment, the in-depth meaning of “Yoga” was discussed with motivating guidelines on adept execution of this spiritual endeavor. Here we continue with the guidance and live-examples, including Gurudev’s personal experiences with the miracles of true yoga. His further discussions and thorough instructions on Tapa are also presented.]

Friends,

The first step to *yoga* as part of your spiritual development is that you should endeavor to become a *devatā* (divine being — a generous giver) and not a possessor or a beggar. Let us look at another example of a *devatā* in human form, who in spite of being deprived of worldly resources and support, made such great contributions to the society that have glorified humanity forever.

A Unique Well:

If you want to see a mark of what is selfless service to the society, you must visit the “*Pisanhāri kā Kuāñ*” (a well named after a grain-grinding woman) in Mathura, U.P., India. About a century ago, there lived a poor widow in a village near Mathura. She used to grind wheat flour by hand-driven stone-grinder to earn her living. She used to earn about two *paisa* per day on an average by hard work. She would save one *paisa* and somehow manage the expenses of her simple living using whatever remained. By the time she

grew very old, she had saved about two big pots filled with one *paisa* coins. One day she called some responsible citizens of the village and asked them to use her savings for the welfare of the village. They all discussed and collectively decided to dig a well near the road, as there was no good well in the village at that time. Upon her consent, a big well was built along-side the road used by the villagers to commute to-and-from the village on foot. The total sum saved by that lady was about five hundred rupees, which, in those days, was quite substantial to dig a deep well and build concrete walls inside it.

Surprisingly, the water of this well was soft and tasty, whereas water available elsewhere in Mathura town was hard, which tasted somewhat salty. Even now, the underground water found in Mathura, including the wells dug as deep as about eighty feet, is hard and ‘salty’, but the water of the well built by that saintly woman still gives clean, ‘sweet water’. In the honor of her altruistic activity the well is rightly known as *Pisanhāri kā Kuāñ*. It continues to be a popular spot (located about 5-6 kilometers from Mathura) on the

He who plants a tree, plants a hope. - Lucy Larcom

Mathura-Delhi road. Considering its utility, some mango trees and gardens have also been grown around it. For long distance tourists, it is a point of sojourn; for the people in and around the town, it is a picnic spot; many times villagers also bring some patients — including those of tuberculosis and typhoid, and some other diseases here, as they believe that the water of this unique well also has medicinal properties. Sometimes people camp here for few days and live in the tents to improve their health. So this place also serves as a ‘natural sanatorium’.

A distinct Jain temple popularly known as *Pisanhāri kī Maḍhiyā* on a hill-top in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh, India is also said to be built by the savings and dedicated efforts of a poor flour-grinding woman. The two grinding stones that were the source of sustenance of her life are prominent part of this monument.

You should also introspect to find, whether, instead of piling up varieties of things (in your possession), can you distribute some of your belongings or share some of your resources for some welfare activities, contribute for the betterment of the society and nation, deploy your potentials for some worthy cause? If you sincerely proceed and progress on the path of generosity and self-less service, I will call you a *devatā*.

My Personal Experiences and Message:

I had got my share of about 80 *bigha* (about two hundred fifty thousand square feet) of land from my ancestral property in my village (Anvalkheda, district Agra, UP, India). The village was quite green and full of farm fields, as it had water canals for irrigation. But the literacy level

was quite low there when I left. Only three persons, including myself, had studied up to middle school in that entire village. I donated my land and established a Higher Secondary school on it. Hundreds of village-girls, including those from the so-called extremely backward class of society, also got educated there. By now this school has expanded into a full-fledged degree college with an enrolment of about three to four thousand students from the village and nearby region.

Many of my relatives had asked me to give that land to them. But I told them — if you are physically disabled or otherwise handicapped, then I can consider helping you in the best possible way; otherwise you should not depend upon my support; you should earn your living through your own hard work. In my views, even I don’t have any right on using this property that my ancestors had earned by hard work. So I have donated it on their name for the upliftment of the poor and needy people here and in the neighboring villages.

The Almighty has gifted me with bright intellect; I have not let it go waste in any wrong or selfish activity. If the royalty of all my writings (books, magazines and other articles) was claimed, this monumental literature would have generated an income of several lakhs (hundred thousands) of rupees per annum. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru used to get royalty for his books, after him the successive generations of his descendents continue to get this royalty. That way using the royalty of my books, several generations of my descendents would have enjoyed fat income free of exerting any work from their side. But I did not do that; as you might know, none of my writings is copy-righted. I have dedicated my intellect, all

Noble is the birth of trees who give life to all beings. They are like gentlemen who never turn anybody away disappointed. - *Srimad Bhagvat Purana*

my talents, and potentials, to my divine mentor; I have sacrificed every moment of my life, all my efforts for the noble goals guided by Him.

Invaluable Returns from the Almighty:

In return of my wholehearted sacrifice for benevolent objectives, my divine mentor – the Almighty God has offered me everything, in fact, enormous boons, without any request or expectation from my side. As evidence, you may look at the miraculous accomplishments of our great mission (of global enlightenment and awakening of divinity in humankind through thought revolution). It is said that the Indian mythological scripture (Puranas) were written with the combined efforts of two divine powers — Maharshi Vyas used to utter the text / narrate and god Ganesh used to write it down. All alone I not only translated and wrote the commentaries on all the Puranas, but also did it for the four Vedas and the 108 Upanishads, which the great *saptarshis* (seven divine sages of the Vedic Age) together had compiled. Moreover, I could do so without any library or any other support or resource, in a limited time period of about one year sitting on a rock at the arduous heights of the Himalayas. Isn't it miraculous? Well, although visibly it was my endeavor, in reality it was also the divine force of my angelic Guru that worked from behind because of my complete surrender for a divine mission.

As per the subtle instruction of my Guru, once I was to visit abroad to disseminate the light of spirituality. (During my sublime communication with him) I expressed my inability saying that I can only speak Hindi, how will I communicate with the people over there? What will I do there? He assured me that his 'brain' and 'tongue'

will be with me whenever required. Indeed, Friends! I could understand and speak in several languages during that tour of several countries across the globe. So you see the miracle of (true) *yoga*! In return of sacrifice of all my ambitions, expectations, talents and other resources, and thus an absolute connectivity (*yoga*) of my soul with God, my Almighty Guru's powers and resources, became mine.

I had donated the few *lakhs* (as part of the ancestral property in my name) for altruistic purposes; and in turn the Almighty's treasure got open for me for all the benevolent projects undertaken as part of our mission. Look at our mission's establishment of *Yug Nirman Yojna*. The land and the construction here valued about a million at that time (late 1950s). I hardly had any resource for it; my wife voluntarily donated all her jewelry for it. But you see all this construction and the activities here became possible without any external grant or support!

Upon completion of my 24 *Mahāpurūsharan Sādhanā*, a thousand *kuṇḍīya* (altars) *Gayatri Yagya* was organized here. Apart from arrangements of the *yagya*, we also arranged for the 5-days stay for nearly four hundred thousand participants from different parts of India. Apart from them, the local participants, volunteers, also used to get free meals here twice a day. Sanitary facilities, drinking water, electricity, everything was arranged for free, no fee was charged. This grand arrangement of about five million (rupees) became possible as a 'dividend' of my five lakhs 'investment' (donation of all I had ever earned/acquired from ancestors) in God's funds.

These are only few examples. The magnificent growth of our mission on no-profit basis stands

A man does not plant a tree for himself, he plants it for posterity. - Alexander Smith

as testimony to the limitless grandeur of *yoga*. As a tiny drain becomes Holy Ganges after sacrificing itself in the river, similarly, my selfless dedication to the divine objectives has blessed me with infinite grace.

If you want to endeavor true *yoga*, you will have to first conquer the hurdles, the barriers of ego, ignorance, selfish attachments, vices and weaknesses rooted within you. As I had explained earlier, *tapa* is essential for this inner purification.

Glazing through *Tapa*:

Tapa (*tapasyā*) pertains to self-discipline and self-refinement. Penance and various disciplines of fasting, restraining of the sensory passions, etc, are practised under *tapa*. This is like willingly imposing some kind of self-restraint on the body and mind. Not taking any meal on one day particular day in a week or a fortnight; or living only on water on such a day, etc are common examples of fasting to restrain the greed of the tongue. Observance of silence, sleeping on the floor, walking barefoot, restrain from watching favorite entertainment show, etc, are other common practices of penance. Living under scarcity and hardship, while one has abundance of comforts in his free-possession is what helps restraining the passions and agility of mind.

Ample examples around us illustrate the importance of “*tapa*”. Glorious peaks cannot be reached without climbing up the arduous heights and conquering challenging hurdles and adversities on the way. Look at the lives of great personalities and their immortal achievements! They have renounced self-comforts and sacrificed

self-interests for the welfare of humanity. “*Tapa*” literally means “to heat up”. The glow of eminence like gold emerges only from the intense heat of the furnace of refinement.

Gold attains its precious glow only after purification in fire. Initially the bricks are soft and unstable like the wet clay-mix they are made up of. But once they are processed in the extremely high temperatures inside a brick-kiln, they get so strong that stout structures / buildings stand on their support for hundreds of years, bearing severity of monsoon, winter and summer. *Bhasm* (a kind of high-potency traditional medicine) is a special kind of ash prepared by slow and tedious process of heating and burning of specific metals. Wrought iron is melted, purified, and processed in fire for longtime; then only it gets converted into strong, high-quality steel. This is what unflinching *tapasyā* (*tapa*) does — it purifies, ‘processes’ (trains), and transforms ordinary mortals into great, eminent, glorious, immortal, ideal, venerable, and angelic characters.

Raw, sour mango fruit gets its superb sweetness only after it is naturally ripened under proper warming. Tiny filament in a bulb gets heated up (by electric current); it then illuminates the surroundings. The thread of a candle or the wick of a *dīpaka* (lamp of ghee or oil) burns and spreads light in its surroundings. The effect of your *tapasyā* with a feeling of devotion should also sweeten your sentiments and behavior. Your *tapa* coupled with *Swādhyāya* and *Satsang*¹ will help spiritual illumination of your thoughts and intellect. *Swādhyāya* and *Satsang* would also inspire and motivate you for difficult *tapasyā* and render great support in this endeavor. You are being given initial training and experience of this in the *sāadhanā* course here.

My heart is glad, my heart is high, with sudden ecstasy; I have given back, before I die, some thanks
for every lovely tree, that dead men grew for me. - V. H. Friedlaender

Permanent joints of metals are made up by welding, which is also possible only by heating and melting in the flames/high-voltage electrical currents. Devout *tapasyā* and consequent spiritual illumination helps the ‘welding’ (*yoga*) of the individual self (*jivātmā*) with the Absolute, Eternal, Divine, Supreme Soul (*Paramātmā*). Our great *rishis* (Vedic sages) had attained supernatural powers, supramental talents, ultimate divine realization and eternal beatifying bliss through *tapa* and *yoga*. Our ancient (Vedic) texts of divine knowledge, our divine culture are focused at this ultimate truth of holistic development of life and evolution of consciousness.

Friends, I hope that you would continue with your *tapa* after completion of the *sāadhanā* session

here. Remember that the first and most important step for you is self-control over the sensory organs. Unchecked sensory pleasures drain out your vital energy; the passions of instinctive joys and consequent excitements will also weaken the mental strength and energy that you might acquire through devotional and spiritual practices, and by blessings of saints. Restraining this severe loss will result in significant improvement in your health. Vigor and vitality of body and mind is important for your progress in higher-level endeavors of *tapa* for mental and emotional purification and strengthening. *Tapa-Sāadhanā* will gradually result in spiritual refinement and enlightenment of your subtle and astral bodies and thus advance your spiritual journey on the path of ultimate *yoga*.

|| *Om Shanti* ||

Notes:

1. *Swādhyāya*: Self-study and self-training in the light of sagacious thoughts and teachings of elevated souls. *Satsang*: Attending enlightening discourses, discussions; being in the company of great personalities.

Once upon a time, a King got a boulder placed on a roadway. He then hid himself and watched to see if anyone would move the boulder out of the way. Some of the king’s wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many people loudly blamed the King for not keeping the roads clear, but none of them did anything about getting the stone out of the way.

A peasant then came along carrying a load of vegetables. Upon approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to push the stone out of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. After the peasant went back to pick up his vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the King explaining that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway.

There is always Music amongst the trees in the Garden, but our hearts must be very quiet to hear it. - *Minnie Aumonier*

Helicopter Parenting

All parents are concerned about the future of their children and take full care of their upbringing. However, when this care and concern becomes more than required, the independence of the child begins to get affected. In today's times, it is termed as 'Helicopter Parenting'. The term is derived due to the actions of the parents who hover above their children like helicopters, overseeing their child's life. Helicopter parents attempt to "ensure their children are on a path to success by paving it for them." Though they want to help children, their involvement is so all-pervasive that slowly children lose their self-reliance.

The term 'Helicopter Parenting' was first used by Dr. Haim Ginott in 1969 in a book titled 'Between parents and teenagers'. This term became so popular that it was subsequently added to the dictionary in 2011. In these changing times, it is required that parents take care, guide and be with their children. But helicopter parents get involved and interfere with all the activities of the child – school tests, choosing friends, going outdoors, playing etc. They accompany them everywhere. This makes children feel stifled and dominated. They lose their freedom and this has a very negative impact on the development of their personality.

There could be many reasons why parents end up being helicopter parents –

1. Some parents want to see their kids excel in each and every aspect. Such

parents are very much worried about the successes and the failures of their kids and hence tend to accompany them everywhere. They are worried that their children not remain behind in this rat race. They feel that their presence will make their kids succeed.

2. Some parents feel that the coming times are challenging and are not confident of their child's ability in handling them. Such parents are also worried about their child. They follow their child like a shadow to protect him from getting into depression in the event of a failure.

3. There are some parents who did not get what they wanted in their childhood. So, now they want to give all those to their children. Parents, who faced indifference and lack of attention in their childhood, want to give more love and time to their children. They want to compensate for what they did not receive.

4. Some parents get involved with their children owing to peer pressure. When they see other parents busy with their child's activities, they too feel compelled to get involved.

5. Many parents are worried about the future of their child. So they tend to help the kid in his activities in order to secure their future.

Those who want better future should plant good trees around tanks, and raise them like sons, as the trees are considered like sons in our religion. - Mahabharat

With helicopter parenting, there is no growth of self-confidence and self-reliance in the child and they tend to be dependent on others for any kind of work. They are hesitant to face any situation, cannot face any challenges and cannot take any decisions by themselves. For such children, it is very important that they prove themselves worthy in the eyes of their parents. They get depressed when that does not happen. Such kids, even though become successful, do not attribute it to themselves because they believe that they succeed because of their parents.

Mother bird teaches the baby bird to fly. However, the baby bird needs to flap its wings if it needs to learn and fly. If the mother bird does not prod its baby to flap its wings and push it off the branch, it will never fly. Similarly if parents keep helping their children constantly, follow-up closely, control them as per their wishes, keep doing each small and big work that the child needs to do, then such children will never learn to do things on their own. They will always be dependent on their colleagues and class mates to accomplish anything.

Hence helicopter parenting is an extreme form of parenting where parents take excessive care of their kids. While it is necessary that parents take care of their wards and be mindful of their requirements, it is also a primary duty of the parent to ensure that their child is instilled with self-confidence that will enable him to walk the path of life and face the challenges with strength and resolve. This can happen only when parents teach children to tolerate pain, to work hard, to face challenges and not be bogged down by failure.

Small plants cannot survive in the shade of a big tree because they lack the nutrition of sunlight. Similarly, children cannot grow strong when they are overshadowed by their parents. They should be encouraged to work hard and given the opportunity to face challenges and solve problems by themselves. Only then can they lead a successful life. While it is necessary to extend little support, it is also important that parents teach their kids to learn to walk without support as well.

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. It suddenly stopped making any progress, and looked like it was stuck. So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily, although it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings.

The man didn't think anything of it, and sat there waiting for the wings to enlarge to support the butterfly. But that didn't happen. The butterfly spent the rest of its life unable to fly, crawling around with tiny wings and a swollen body. Despite the kind heart of the man, he didn't understand that the restricting cocoon and the struggle needed by the butterfly to get itself through the small opening were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings to prepare itself for flying once it was out of the cocoon.

Those who plant trees in deserted and difficult to reach place give salvation to their previous and future generations. - Shiva Purana

Let's Make Our Neighbourhood Polythene-Free

Everyone knows that polythene is harmful. Many awareness campaigns have been organized to educate people about the harms of polythene. Socially active groups have been organizing rallies and educating consumers and shopkeepers in the markets. Government officials have also been conducting raids, confiscating material, and imposing fines on people who don't comply. Yet its usage is quite rampant. The irony is that though everyone knows and agrees that polythene is very harmful, the affinity to polythene is so strong that it keeps on reaching consumers in some form or the other, whether in the form of milk packets or new clothes wrapped in polythene packs or in the form of packets of chips, biscuits or snacks. When everything from curd, butter milk and many other milk products are all packed and sold in polythene then how is it possible to check its usage? Even if people stop using carry bags made from polythene, it reaches them as wrappers of packed food items. How can this be stopped is a question worth pondering about?

Polythene is not just destroying our today; it is ready to destroy our future as well. It lies around as heaps of garbage and does not disintegrate into manure. Wherever it gets accumulated, it turns the land infertile. When cattle eat polythene it accumulates in the stomach and kills them. It gets into pipelines and blocks them. A big portion of the budget of city municipal corporations goes into cleaning of drain and sewer lines which get choked due to heaps of polythene. But people still carelessly strew them as they don't have to personally clean these drains. Hundreds of

cities in different states of our country have tried imposing complete ban on polythene, but the results have not been satisfactory. This is because there is no really good alternative available.

Polythene is a petrochemical which is deadly both for humans as well as animals. Poor quality polythene causes skin and respiratory diseases and can also lead to cancer. Because it does not disintegrate, it is slowly destroying the fertility of soil by making it poisonous. It forms a layer in the soil, reducing its capacity to absorb water, which then reduces the ground water table. At temples, historical heritage places, gardens, and national parks, in rallies and processions, polythene packets and bags are misused rampantly. The entire beauty of our country is getting eclipsed by polythene.

During the past two decades, polythene has become a source of income for more than 20 lakh people who work on its production, sales, or collecting and recycling them. Other synthetic bags that are now being introduced for usage in the markets are not only more expensive, they are not so strong as well. At some places, paper bags and envelopes are being used but these are not so convenient as they tear easily, cannot take much load and of course can't be used to carry liquids. Cloth bags are also used but they cannot replace polythene fully because in the supply of milk, juice and other liquids, cloth cannot be used. However, for these, containers of aluminium or some other alloy may have to be used.

To reduce the harm caused by synthetic

**Trees are like gentlemen who help others. They stand in the sun but give shade to others.
Their fruits are also for the use of others. - Vikram Charitam**

plastic, development of bio-plastics can be a good alternative. Bioplastics are made from biodegradable objects like sugar, beet root, corn etc. Some (not all) bioplastics are created to be biodegradable. These biodegradable plastics are used in packaging and catering industry for creating disposable items like crockery, cutlery, plates, cups etc. These plastics are also used for making bio-dustbins which turn into manure along with the food waste and garbage that is deposited in them.

Bioplastics are used to create containers for storing fruits and vegetables. Bottles for milk and cold drinks, and thick sheets for storing fruits and vegetables are also made from these. After recycling they can also be used for making covers for mobile phones, decorative items, fuel pipes, water pipes etc. A new type of electrically conductive bioplastic is also being developed which could be used later for supplying electricity.

Production and usage of bioplastic is being regarded as a good and sustainable medium because, for the source of carbon it is less dependent on fossil fuel and when it disintegrates it releases much lesser amount of greenhouse gases. Compared to plastics produced from petroleum oil, it hardly

generates any toxic waste. So a new era has set in with the creation of bioplastics in the packaging technology and industry.

Despite these encouraging efforts, the plastic waste that is spread everywhere in our country also needs to be properly managed. One good experiment carried out in Bengaluru can be quite helpful for people who earn some money by collecting plastic waste. In this, waste polythene bags are mixed with other waste and are converted into manure. In Himachal Pradesh, these bags are mixed with tar to make roads. In Germany plastic waste is used to generate electricity as well. DSVV has also pioneered a new process of recycling paper and other substances using simple method. The method can be learned by Gayatri Pariwar parijans or others by visiting DSVV.

There is a clear possibility that once bioplastics present themselves as good alternatives to petroleum based plastics, a reduction in usage of these synthetic materials will happen provided entire public becomes aware of them and gets ready to adopt them. But at the same time, attention has to be given to properly dispose of all the petroleum based plastic produced till now so that our neighbourhood remains clean and the environment also remains protected.

*Aapadaam kathitah panthaa indriyaanaamasamyamah |
Tajjayah sampadaam maargo yeneshtam tena gamyataam ||*

Meaning: Not controlling the senses is the road to adversity and sorrow. Conquering the senses is the road to prosperity and happiness. Choose either of the two which you like; that is your decision.

**Just one tree with flowers and fruits makes the forest and environment fragrant and heavenly,
like a good son to a family. - Chanakyaniti Darpan**

Unknown Champions of Afforestation

Everyone knows that forests and trees play a crucial role in purifying the environment and in balancing the nature and climate. But, there are only a few people who are sensitive towards them and want to foster, nurture and conserve them. It is said – ‘where there is a will, there is a way’. Therefore, despite the hurdles on their way, people with high willpower and dedication can achieve even the most difficult targets. The following are some of the unknown yet inspiring champions who are consistently working for the conservation of forests and the environment.

One such person is Simon Uraon of Jharkhand. Even at the age of eighty-four, he wakes up at 4:30 in the morning and begins his self-imposed duty of looking after the plants, trees and forest cover present around him. He gets so busy in this work that he would return home only in the afternoon. Until now, he has firmly stuck to his pledge of planting a thousand plants every year and nurturing them. For ensuring adequate supply of water, he has constructed wells and lakes at short distances. This scheme is benefiting about fifty villages of his block.

Simon not only promoted afforestation, but also attempted to eliminate the water crisis of the village. Initially, he built temporary dams for storing water, but they could not be sustained for long. So, he took aid from the government and constructed permanent dams. This helped the villagers in rain-water harvesting. With his companions, he made many dams and linked them with wells and lakes. Consequently, the

fields which could raise only one crop in a year have begun to support upto three crops.

Saalumarada Thimmakka of Karnataka is another champion of afforestation. She continues to plant trees at the age of hundred and five and looks after them just like her own children. Born in a poverty-stricken family, she never got the opportunity to go to school. She began working as a labourer early in her childhood. She got married at the tender age of ten. Her husband, Chikaiyya worked as an agricultural labourer at the fields of other people. She also joined her husband in this work. When twenty-five years of their marriage passed and she was not able to conceive, the relatives and neighbours started taunting. This became unbearable to her. So one day, she planted a banyan plant near her house and began fostering it like her own child with the hope that this may bring some relief to her.

Later on, in order to fill the void of her life, she began the practice of planting trees. In this practice she also got the support of her husband. In the first year, she planted ten plants of banyan, which increased to twenty in the subsequent year and now this number is over four hundred. These are spread in an area of about four kilometers between the Hulikal and Kudoor regions of Ramnagar district on both sides of the national highway. She is still continuing the process of planting new plants and looking after them.

Deviram Gurjar is another example. He a farmer of the village Kala Khera located near Ranthambore

How is it possible that the most intellectual creature to ever walk the planet Earth is destroying its only home? - Jane Goodall

National Park in the Sawai Madhopur district of Rajasthan. The residents of this village cut trees not only for their daily requirements, but also for selling wood. About two decades back, when Deviram tried to save the trees and forest of the region, he had to face stiff resistance from the inhabitants of his own village. Then he began planting trees of neem and babul in his own ten bigha land to compensate for the trees cut by the villagers. This has set an unprecedented example of afforestation in a village where even electricity and other means of development have not reached even today.

Jadav Payeng belongs to the Mishing tribe of Aruna Sapori, an estuary of Brahmaputra in the Jorhat district of Assam. The land here is sandy and a lot of silt deposits every year due to constant flooding. Once when he came to his village after his high school examination, he saw that over hundred snakes were lying dead on the hot sand due to scorching heat. The heat became the cause of death of other creatures also. He thought that one day even humans could meet the same fate as these helpless creatures. So he started planting bamboo plants and seeds on this barren land. It was not easy for a single person to water so many plants on the daily basis. Therefore, he kept an earthen pot on the top of every bamboo plant and made small holes in it. In this way, the plants got water drop by drop.

Within a few years there developed a flourishing bamboo forest. Then, he began planting other trees as well. Today, there are numerous plants, trees and medicinal plants present on this estuary. After about thirty-six years of Jadav's hard labour, this land now has a dense forest spread over 1360 acres. People call him Molai, which means 'forest'; and this jungle is known as Molai forest after him. Today, this estuary is home to hundreds of species of birds, deer, leopards, tigers, bears,

monkeys, rhinoceros and many types of snakes.

There is yet another passionate man, named M. Yoganathan. He was born in an extremely poor family of Mayavaram in Tanjore district. His father expired in his childhood and mother went to work in the tea gardens of Nilgiri. He lived with his elder sister. In his school days, he made handmade posters against the timber mafias of Nilgiri and stuck them on the walls at night. Whenever he saw someone cutting the trees, he immediately informed it to the police and the forest department. Once he met Jayachandran, an environmental activist associated with 'Tamil Nadu Green Movement'. This meeting fuelled his passion for conserving the environment.

He learnt many things about the trees from the aborigines of Nilgiri. He loved to live in the forest with them. He was weak in studies but knew everything related to the environment. He began planting trees when he was in the eighth standard and up till now he has planted over three hundred thousand trees. About half of his salary goes into this.

Another good example of collective efforts for afforestation comes from the Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. Here women volunteers of Gayatri Pariwar, have planted over ten thousand trees on a mountain range and converted it into a flourishing forest. There is another volunteer of Gayatri pariwar from Rajsamand district of Rajasthan, who planted over 1.25 lakhs plants in her lifetime. Everyone, from the government to the local authorities, is amazed at the enthusiasm of this seventy year old woman. The above-mentioned examples amply demonstrate that if there is a firm determination, one can do a lot for conserving the environment; and in the process, get people's respect and also soul satisfaction.

Nature is man's teacher. She unfolds her treasures to his search, unseals his eye, illumines his mind, and purifies his heart; an influence breathes from all the sights and sounds of her existence. - Alfred Billings Street



Celebration of World Environment Day at Shantikunj, Haridwar; during the ceremony, it was resolved to intensify India-wide tree plantation drive



Shakti-Kalash Pujan by reverend Dr. Pandiyaji and Shail Jiji for the Prayaj of Ashwamedh Yagya to be conducted next year in Mangalgiri (Vijaywada)

Annual Subscription:
India: ₹ 120.00
Abroad: ₹ 1100.00



Akhand Jyoti
RNI No. UPENG/2003/9850



Under the auspices of 'Nirmal Ganga Jan Abhiyan' more than one lakh Gayatri Pariwar volunteers cleaned Ganga in different cities of India; picture above shows cleaning operation at Har ki Paudi, Haridwar by Shantikunj volunteers

Publisher & Printer - Mrityunjay Sharma, Printed by - Akhand Jyoti Sansthan at Jan Jagran Press, Mathura 281003.
Chief Editor - Dr. Pranav Pandya • Editor - Shambhudass
Ph. 0565-2403940, 2400865, 2402574 Mob. 09927086291 Fax 0565-2412273 Email ajsansthan@awgp.org