

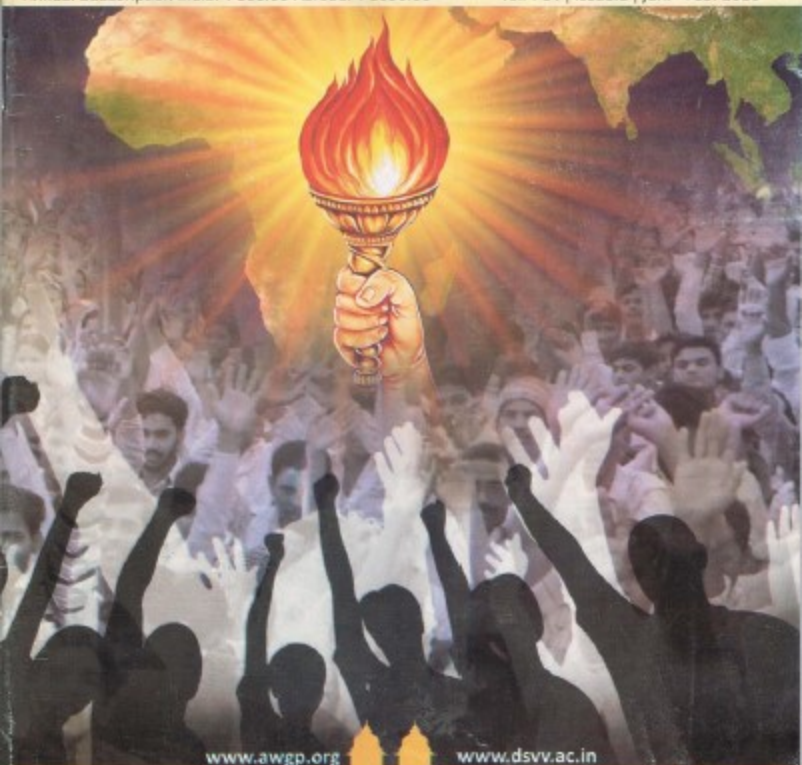
Akhand Jyoti is not merely a magazine. It is an incarnate embodiment of my soul. - Pandit Shriyan Sharma Acharya

# Akhand Jyoti

The light divine

Annual Subscription India: ₹ 100.00 Abroad: ₹ 1050.00

Vol. : 14 | Issue:1 | Jan. - Feb. 2016



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॥Om bhūrbhuvah svah tatsaviturvarenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat ॥  
(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



Volume - 14

Issue - 1

Jan.-Feb. 2016

Date of Publication: 10.1.2016

**FOUNDER - PATRONS**

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Annual Subscription

India: Rs. 100.00

Abroad: Rs. 1050.00

*Amrit Chintan*

## **Welcome Youth!**

*The year 2016 is being observed by All World Gayatri Pariwar as the 'Youth Revolution Year'. In this context, let us recall the clarion call of Swami Vivekananda to the Youth.- Editor*

"I want young men. 'It is the young, the strong, and healthy, of sharp intellect that will reach the Lord', say the Vedas. This is the time to decide your future — while you possess the energy of youth, not when you are worn out and jaded, but in the freshness and vigour of youth. Work — this is the time; for the freshest, the untouched and unsmelled flowers alone are to be laid at the feet of the Lord, and such He receives. Rouse yourselves, therefore, or life is short. There are greater works to be done than aspiring to become lawyers and picking quarrels and such things. A far greater work is this sacrifice of yourselves for the benefit of your race, for the welfare of humanity. .... Life is short, but the soul is immortal and eternal, and one thing being certain, death, let us therefore take up a great ideal and give up our whole life to it. Let this be our determination, and may He, the Lord, who 'comes again and again for the salvation of His own people', to quote from our scriptures — may the great Krishna bless us and lead us all to the fulfilment of our aims!"

**- Swami Vivekananda**

**'Akhand Jyoti - The Light Divine' Team**

**Wishes its readers a Happy, Healthy and Harmonious  
New Year 2016**

Extend your "best before" date by living a youthful life. - Lorii Myers

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Youth is happy because it has the capacity to see beauty. Anyone who keeps the ability  
to see beauty never grows old. - Franz Kafka

# **The Year of Nation-building through Building of National Character**

## **Golden Sunrise for India**

New Year is all set to dawn. If you look up to the skies or listen to the sounds of the space, you will see many indications of upcoming changes. Sun rises every day at a pre-ordained time. We do not see anything special in that. However, there is something different about this year. This sunrise symbolizes the rise of India and the change in destiny for the entire humanity. Yes, it is true that the destiny of the entire world is interlinked with the destiny of India. India and Indians should realize this important national role. In order to fulfill this, we need to understand the uniqueness of our nation and build its character.

Somebody asked Annie Besant once – “Can you tell us what is special about India when compared to other ancient and modern countries?” She said, - “Whatever God has given to India, He has not given it to any other country. Whatever He has given to other countries, he has given all of that to India. God has given beauty to Greece, tradition to Rome, religion to Israel and spirituality to India that is capable of shouldering the welfare of entire creation. Beauty, tradition, religion, justice, rituals, literature, ideals, customs are all embedded in spirituality that God has bestowed on India. So, if anyone wants to see all the boons that God has bestowed on every country in one place, they have to come to India.”

## **India is unique, India is extraordinary**

Max Muller added more meaning to this experience of Annie Besant. He lived in India for several years studying and learning the Vedas and Upanishads. After realizing and imbibing the Indian way of life, he said – ‘If anyone were to ask me for a place under the sky that provides holistic development to the mind, where the most deep-seated problems of human life have been solved, a place of which Plato’s and Kant’s followers also sing praises of, I would unanimously say that the name of that place is India. If anyone was to ask me about a country that has given the literature that transforms our inner mind and leads to fulfillment of human life and makes us truly human, literature that not only refines the physical body but also transforms our subtle body and fills it with bliss, I would again take the name of India for providing the vast and holistic literature.

Irish lady, Sister Nivedita, disciple of Swami Vivekananda, painted this picture of India in her letter – ‘India is unique and special among all the nations of the world. Each and every atom of this country is filled with the divine consciousness. This is the land of spirituality. Spirituality has assumed a body and taken birth on this holy land. The entire creation is propelled by the movement of this spiritual land. God has bestowed rituals and methods of worship to other countries, but India has given philosophical knowledge that encompasses both the animate and

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**You are only young once, but you can stay immature indefinitely. - Ogden Nash**

the inanimate world, an experience not known to others. That is why India is the *Jagadguru*. It is the birthplace for philosophy that encompasses the science and art of living.'

The saint of Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna experienced the Absolute Brahma on this sacred land. He did not differentiate between man and God, and said - 'O people, who take pity on other creatures, listen to me. Who are you to shower your sympathy on creatures? They are also a form of Shiv, the almighty. Why are you taking pride in showing mercy on them? All creatures are forms of the same Almighty. Serve them with the attitude of gratitude that they gave you an opportunity to serve. Do not boost your ego that you served them.' There are so many anecdotes and examples from the lives of greatest of people regarding the Indian philosophy that even if we were to follow one of those, not only India but the entire world can be free of its troubles.

### **Ideals are lofty, why is their practice not so?**

We have observed that though the ideals are lofty, there is no corresponding action. While there is equanimity and oneness, there is also disparity. While the ancestors are great, the next generations are low on character. Why is it that the great country has fallen into such dilapidated state? Why is it scared of its glorious past and responsibility of ushering the illustrious future? Why is it not able to accept its true identity? Sri Guru Golwalkar, the head of RSS went to meet Late Mahomedali Currim Chagla, renowned Indian jurist and union cabinet minister, who also served as chief justice of the Bombay High Court, after he returned from his trip to Russia. Both of them talked for a long time. Golwalkarji asked him, 'What is the difference that you observed between the people of Russia and India?' In reply to this question, Chaglaji recounted an incident. He had gone to a playground in Moscow and asked the youth playing there, 'How many hours do you play and exercise here every day?' They replied that they play for 6-7 hours in a day. Chaglaji was very surprised and said - 'Brothers, why do you waste so many hours in sports and play?' They replied, 'So that we can make our country proud among the other countries of the world. We aspire that our country wins in each and every sports event.' He found each and every person of that nation to be striving for the glory of his country, be it in a laboratory or in a playground. This is the state of affairs in other countries like Germany, America, Japan, France and England as well. How is it in our country? In our country, we still have to define what the glory of our nation is, what its historical greatness is, who its national heroes are and what its glorious past was.

In nutshell, there is dearth of national character here. Patriotism has become limited to cricket grounds. This is an extremely sad state of affairs. There is lot to be learnt and implemented to make things better on this front.

### **Where is our love for the country?**

After so many decades since India got its independence, even today it is not counted among the developed countries in spite of India being a diverse and huge country with infinite possibilities and capabilities. The reason for this depressing failure is the lack of love and respect

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**If you're young and talented, it's like you have wings. - Haruki Murakami**

towards one's own country. This is the fundamental flaw without correcting which we cannot lead our country towards success and prosperity.

### **What is National Character?**

In simple words, national character means love for the nation and the ability to keep the welfare of the country as the supreme priority in all walks of life. Whenever a nation has achieved progress, the primary reason has been love for the nation. Without this enthusiasm, no country can achieve outer or inner progress in any field. In all these years the nations that have been successful in evoking this emotion in their countrymen are Singapore, Korea, Malaysia and Japan and have emerged as developed nations. The question remains as to why our country has remained far behind in this respect. The one and only reason for this is we are trying to achieve the possible with impossible means.

There are many possibilities of developing national character in our country, but it has so happened that we have started treading the wrong path. And once we are afoot on a wrong path, it is certainly tough to get back on the right path. After independence, India was born in terms of political and geographical view point. However at psychological level, where emotions and feelings are at play, we have not reached there. For the kind of country we envisage, our national leaders had proposed a technique that is based on shared heritage. There were three main aspects to this - religious unity, historical unity and cultural unity.

The meaning of religious unity is that basically all religions are the same. It was believed that if this was instilled in the minds of people there would be unity among all the people in the nation. This premise was wrong from a historical perspective. History is witness to the fact that whenever the essence of religion is not well-understood, people of the same religion have fought terrible wars. For example, in Mahabharata war, both sides were Hindus and they belonged to the same family too. In the first and second world wars, people on both sides were Christians. There are many such examples. Efforts to bring religious unity have been present ever since the times of Asoka. Akbar also played an active role in this and provided political basis too.

### **Religion is ancient and timeless**

In the modern times, great scholars like Bhagwandas tried to solve this issue, but things did not work out. It is an irrefutable truth that the methods of worship and rituals are bound to be different for different religions. But the truth is also that at the fundamental level, all religions are timeless and one. If this is understood, then people following different faiths would look at one another as human beings, as members of the same family of humanity and as patriotic Indians. This would lead them to loving and respecting one another.

It is believed that a country where people of multiple faiths live, making them understand the nation's history can evoke patriotism. When this is lacking, one must strive to put this in the minds of people. In all countries, be it a small one like Singapore or a big country like America, people from different faiths reside there. So they too have different facets of historical heritage.

**The secret of remaining young is never to have an emotion that is unbecoming. - Oscar Wilde**

But these countries do not force their citizens to believe in shared heritage. This is the reason why different religions lead a harmonious life in spite of their historical differences and focus on sharing their responsibility for building their nation.

### **Culture cannot be imposed on someone**

The third issue is regarding acceptance of a shared culture. There are problems with this as well. Culture is typically a result of a long historical process. It cannot be imposed on someone or some group through external means. After the Second World War, a movement was started in America with an objective to Americanize the entire nation and bring about a unified culture. A similar process was started in Canada as well but it failed in both the countries. Eventually, they had to relinquish the idea of a unified culture and accept multiple cultures.

In spite of innumerable internal turmoil and differences, patriotism is what binds the nation in harmony. When a person or group feels that their future is dependent on the nation and that their success is linked to the progress of the nation - this is patriotism in its truest sense. The welfare of the nation should be the primary concern for all. If there is a need to sacrifice for the progress or protection of the country, we need to gladly offer ourselves. Without this kind of love for the nation, no country can successfully be on the path of progress.

### **When national ideals are developed, patriotism will awaken**

If we want to build a strong nation, the clash between religion, history and culture should cease. A very broad meaning for these words should be researched. Only then can the emotions of all the people be successfully imbibed in those words. Our main goal should be to develop patriotism. And the basis for this patriotism will be a past that is glorious, a present that is focused on achieving the goal of a promising future. The only way to achieve this is when the mind of each and every person is filled with love for the country. On the foundations of this inclusive patriotism, a strong national character can be built that can handle the heritage of the past, responsibilities of the present and the challenges of the future.

All of us should be inspired by our noble national ideals. There is irrefutable power and inspiration inherent in the ideals. Without noble ideals, a man may progress in the material sense but he can never realize the true meaning of human life. Science and technological advancements can increase the speed of trains and airplanes; they can create deadly weapons, but cannot awaken the consciousness of a society or nation and impregnate the seeds of idealism. Only when a man associates himself with lofty ideals, can his life become noble. The follies of human nature cannot be refuted, but that should not stop us from imbibing noble *samsakaras* and instilling humane values in ourselves. The rich spiritual heritage that Almighty has bestowed on our country considers hurting others to be an irreligious act. It does not consider anything other than wishing the welfare of others as the most religious act. One should understand this definition of *dharma* and *adharma* and guide his actions in life. When you empathize with the sufferings and happiness of those around you, automatically a sense of social responsibility springs forth within you. This

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**There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age. - Sophia Loren**

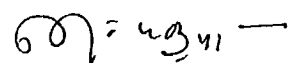
is called the *Narayana Shakti*. It is this power that pulls out the person from his self-centeredness and links him with his family, society, nation and the world at large. The life of a person starts from one point and it finally comes back and merges to the same point. This philosophy of interconnectedness of birth and death is a unique contribution of India to the world.

### **Indian culture is the basis for a peaceful world**

Some people might raise the question – a country in which the people are completely connected to their nation, will there be no corruption, tyranny, violence and harassment? The answer is that they are all there but the magnitude is not such that lack of character itself is defined as their character. This also happens because of those compatriots who have been lured by wealth and not to the ideals of their nation. They are connected to materialism and not to God. They are connected to the body and not to sacrifice and auspiciousness of the creation. They have science and technology, but they are unaware of the divine energy and sanctity present within man. There is life but no ideal in it. This is the reason why they are not able to contribute to building a noble human being and a peaceful world.

India and its citizens have to develop empathy for Nature and culture. It is true that other countries have had their own experiences and, as a result, they have different perspectives about life. Similarly, India has its own fundamental view about life. And the experience of this way of life is not just hundred or thousand years old but millions of years old. These experiences tell us how the Aryans-Dravidians, Shaivites-Vaishnavites, Hindus-Muslims forgot their enmity and lived a harmonious life. They fought wars together and emerged victorious. The Indian freedom movement stands as a testimony to this fact that people of all religions came together and attained Independence for the country. Now is the time for heralding another significant National Movement. We should all come together and build a glorious life for each other based on building a noble character for the nation. We should ascend the steps of individual development, familial development and social development and take responsibility for national development. The destiny as ordained by the Almighty is entrusting us with this important responsibility this year. We all should respond to this clarion call, prepare ourselves and mold others too. During this New Year, there is a need for courageous words and even more courageous actions. New Year is giving us the message of awakening. Our country and the entire world are burning in the heat of enmity and violence. How can you sleep during such a moment? *Mahakal* is also calling out to you again and again. He has brought forth the dawn of a glorious future. Let us all absorb the nectar and knowledge emanating from the rays of that rising Sun. Our ancestors have given us the means for building a noble humanity and harmonious world. During this New Year, let us put that knowledge into practical use and act on it.

**Prayer-filled New Year Wishes and Vasant Parva Greetings to all our readers.**



(Pranav Pandya)

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**That's the duty of the old, to be anxious on behalf of the young. And the duty of the young is to scorn the anxiety of the old. - Philip Pullman**



# Are We Utilizing Properly the Source of Our Talents?

On a road we see only the wheels of the vehicles in motion whereas their source of power lies in the combustion of fuel within the engine which is not visible externally. The battery and dynamic parts of machinery have their own role in the motion. They function collectively and make the vehicle run. Human 'entity' is also like a car. His apparent activities are performed through the medium of hands, feet, head, torso, eyes, mouth, etc. Beneath the skin lies the 'dynamic system' comprising internal organs, circulating flow of blood through heart, contraction and expansion of muscles, exhalations and inhalations of respiratory unit, etc. Auto-regulated functioning of this system generates energy through which every component of the body performs its (natural) tasks.

The source of this energy, the 'epicenter' of this vital force, and the (biochemical and bioelectrical) energy of still subtler parts (at cellular and molecular levels), lies still deeper in extrasensory core in the central 'processor' of the brain. This core is referred in the *yogic* science as the *brahmrandhra*. This focal source too is incapable of generating energy independently. It derives the necessary power from the supreme energy (*Mahā Urjā*) of eternal *Consciousness Force* that pervades through the entire cosmos and sublime domains of Nature. All the physical and mental potentials and talents, and capability of development of

humankind, are nurtured by this very force (consciousness-energy) dwelling in the inner self. Thus the seeds of *pratibhā*<sup>1</sup> also exist in every one, but whether and how these would sprout and blossom depends upon one's awareness and ability to righteously use this inherent source.

Most often, only a tiny fraction of this energy is used – mostly in ordinary day to day activities, satisfying the physical and mental desires and aspirations. If left in idle state for long, the natural activity and defence mechanism of the body would weaken and fall prey to the attacks of bacteria and viruses. The same holds true about the brain (and mind). The faculties which remain unutilized tend to become dull, dormant and wane out over time. On the contrary, if awakened and deployed prudently, the inherent immense power and capability hidden in one's own self could bestow *riddhi* and *siddhi* (paranormal potentials and supramental talents).

Here it is meaningless to talk about those whose interests are confined to fulfillment of carnal cravings and who do not think it necessary to rise above their base instincts of personal greed, attachments and ego. On the contrary, those who aspire to achieve something significant in life, find alternatives in endeavors for activation of these dormant nuclei of consciousness-energy and strengthen

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**You are as young as you feel. If you begin to feel the warmth of your soul, there will be youthfulness in you that no one will be able to take away from you. - John O'Donohue**

them by constant practice to a level at which they become capable of undertaking big tasks and achieving higher goals. One should make it a point to be least dependent on others. Exuberance of competence and industry makes the seed of talents inherent in a person bloom like a flower which naturally makes butterflies (of brilliant success) hover around and bees (people around) sing in its praise.

For generation of heat (thermal energy), friction is required. Movement or progress too is dependent on it in one form or the other. Similar process is needed for awakening of talents. Who can ever become a gymnast without practicing hard in gymnasium? Soldiers are subjected to rigorous exercises and drills regularly. In order to flow forward, a river has to remove obstacles and break through many rocks on its path. For success on a war-front one has to exhibit valor as well as strategic experience. Only that boatman is given the honor of efficiency who exhibits the courage to negotiate the boat fast across the rapids in a river. On every front of life, devout endeavors and prudent endurance are essential for attaining expertise in any chosen discipline.

### **Prepare to Identify & Utilize Inherent Talents:**

When "have-nots" face problems one hardly gets surprised but one feels bewildered in finding people who own grand resources, yet they appear lost and confused because of ignorance of appropriate know-how for fruitful utilization of what they possess. Unfortunately, most of the so-called well-off people fall in this deplorable category of ignorance.

There is a tale about some layman selling a piece of diamond inherited from his father ignorantly as a piece of glass; as a consequence of which he spends his entire life in poverty. An ignorant person always remains unaware of his full potential. It is said that the musk deer continues to wander here and there in search of the aroma which emanates from the musk located in its navel itself. There is another tale about a man dying with cold in the midst of heaps of dry grass, as it did not occur to him that he could produce heat by lighting it with the match box in his own pocket. It is often amazing, amusing, and also painful to see that ignorant of the treasure buried in his own house, a man spends his entire life in abject poverty.

Ignorance always brings unhappiness and misery. In unknown terrains, nomads would wander away from their destination during the night on losing sense of direction. In absence of knowledge of proper direction, people are known to have died in wilderness after getting lost, exhausting their potential of thinking in a state of hurry, confusion and apprehension. One often quotes example of herds of deer dying in deserts by endlessly running after mirage of water pools. There is a tale about a cub of a tiger that had somehow lost its way and joined a flock of sheep. It began to behave like a lamb, till it came to know its identity on rejoining the tigers. While asleep, people usually experience meaningless dreams; under the influence of narcotic drugs also man begins to think of things far from reality.

Such instances show that inadequacy or lack of proper knowledge misleads a person and

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**The beauty of collaboration between older and younger generations is that we combine strength with wisdom—a surefire way to accomplish more for the glory of God. - Brett Harris**

also brings him unhappiness and misery. There is nothing so surprising if we come across some stray incidences of ignorance, but it does appear shocking that most people in this world spend not only a part but almost the entire life in thralldom of incongruous ignorance and illusion. Everyone seems to have his specific load of confusions, obstacles, problems, worries and commitments, always looking for someone to help in unloading this burden. Occasionally one might get some help from some odd quarters, but who can undertake the responsibilities of someone else for long and how much help one can extend to others? That too, when every other person is caught in complexities and challenges of his own problems!

Apart from ignorance, most people also have a characteristic drawback of extrovert hunt for other's faults. One hardly ever makes an attempt to look for one's own shortcomings. One of the most self-convincing delusions man has is in assessing the happiness and prosperity of one's neighbor which appear more magnified in comparison to one's own possessions. The grass on the other side of the fence always appears greener.

Everyone knows in his heart that a perfect flawless person probably cannot exist in this world. Still, one hardly likes to think of his own mistakes, since it casts a shadow on self-professed complacency and self-esteem and scares one of failure, losing face, and apparent degradation in society. Hence a simple formula for disowning one's own responsibilities of failures, mistakes or mismanagement is found in putting the blame on some other person. To avoid confrontation with an apparently

powerful fellow, a scapegoat is found in some innocent weak person, who does not have any courage or competence to counter the charge. There are also many, who continue to find abstract reasons for their failures such as inauspicious periods of destiny, unfavorable circumstances, adverse planetary configurations, will of God etc. Since such excuses are based on unilateral reasoning, which is not refutable by facts, the person looking for such excuses does not find it difficult to develop a firm conviction in his reasoning.

In addition to general weakness of finding faults with others for own failures, people are also found suffering from another degrading tendency in which they find it difficult to carry out a self-appraisal. Many, even otherwise healthy and capable people, are found firmly convinced about their 'insurmountable' limitations and do not think that much can be done to increase their competence. They continue to believe that in the past best of personal endeavor was made under the then existing circumstances and nothing better could have been done. Entangled in such rigmaroles, people lose all opportunities of self-appraisal, self-improvement, self-reformation and self-development. Finding no way out to stop recurring failures they become helplessly irritated, stressed, troubled, complaining, anxious, and worried. It is quite easy to become mentally strained by harboring apprehensions. Most people in today's competitive world are found prone to this negative trait.

The foregoing traits of human decadence have become so pervasive that they have assumed

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**This world demands the qualities of youth; not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease. - Robert F. Kennedy**

the dimensions of an epidemic. In the prevailing environment an individual hardly gets an opportunity to appreciate that the powers within his own inner-self are so potent that if energized and activated from their state of dormancy, they are capable of converting a person of average capacity into a superman. There is no myth or miracle in this possibility. Thorough study of ancient and modern history would show numerous examples testifying to extraordinary feats performed by ordinary people who meticulously charted the course of their progress with self-confidence and profound courage and created better and better opportunities successively. The ultimate level of achievement of these persons was so high and surprising, that it appeared nothing short of a 'divine boon'. On the contrary, there have also been many such disgraceful and unfortunate incidences, when, in spite of possessing abundant resources and unusual opportunities, men became victims of self-worthlessness and gradually fell deeper into abyss of decadence.

### **Overcome the Familiar Obstacles:**

We know that our planet which appears static is, in fact, continuously revolving around its axis and at the same time moving in its orbit around the sun. The same holds true about human life. It is not static. It is full of possibilities of progress and evolution. The only obstacle in progress is one's ignorance and deep-rooted negativities in one's mind. Generally, man is so much obsessed with self-pity and helplessness that he begins to believe in what he considers his limitations, without realizing the immense potential for excellence lying dormant in his inner-self.

Even if a relatively more aware person makes an effort to extricate himself from the mistaken concepts and illusions, his attempts are often nullified by the influence of the prevailing social ambience.

For example, the power of money is ubiquitous in this world today and so is the glamour of creature comforts which can be acquired by it. Bodily charm and external beauty seem to have become more important than character. No doubt, there is no dearth of successful businessmen, artists, scientists, and others with distinct expertise. But amongst them we see very few who have also enlightened the path of progress of mankind after overcoming hurdles by their courage and valor, who have lifted the downtrodden, gave support to the infirm, provided motivation to the energetic and enthusiastic, and helped in enhancing the efficiency of others. There is nothing notable if one is capable of looking after one's own interests. Commendable are those who also make many others move forward on the path of progress. This is what would make a talent worth glorifying.

It is pitiable that in spite of having enormous power and capability hidden within us for self-improvement and for motivating many others, we are unable to utilize it because of our ignorance and apathy. Ignorance of self is a bane which one knowingly or unknowingly carries throughout life as an unwelcome burden. In spite of distinguished skill or ability, this would amount to sheer absence of talent (*pratibhā*). Surprisingly, at times even the most robust wrestlers are found lacking self-confidence of their internal strength, or lacking in moral strength of character. But

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**The error of youth is to believe that intelligence is a substitute for experience, while the error of age is to believe experience is a substitute for intelligence. - Lyman Bryson**

then, their wrestling skills and grand success would be no better than exhibition of physical strength and swift and clever movements, which could be exhibited even in the locked-horn fight between animals.

Even rogues, terrorists, sadists and immoral persons are found exercising their skilled power with impunity. What is the worth of such brilliance and strength? Should they be hailed as 'talented'? The same is true about the power of mind, intellectual faculties, and physical resources like wealth. Their misutilization too brings self-reproach and numerous problems for others. Creativity too has often been used for obscenity, disdainful designs, exploitation, or evil effects. Debasing instincts of physical exhibitionism, carnal lust, sensual passions and immorality have often been encouraged by music, art and literature. Should we honor and expand such creative faculties, which attract and influence many and are also remunerative but directly or implicitly generate powerful but debauching effects, negative psychological influence and lead to decline of the society? -

We must note that an achievement is not an end in itself. It must be assessed whether an achievement is accomplished righteously? Whether grand possessions or celebrity status have contributed anything for the welfare of humanity? This can be the only yardstick for applauding one's talents. Nature has endowed us with abundant support and opportunity to make prudent use of our inherent abilities and develop and refine our talents. We should also remember that – unless we use them towards fruitful objective worth the grace of Nature and its Creator, our powers, our talents, would be no better than the beautiful horns of an antler, or attractive artifacts in a showcase, which are good to look at but are of no practical use.

**Notes:**

1. *Pratibhā*: Distinguished skill or ability with a brilliant, brave, and virtuous character. (Unless otherwise mentioned, in this article "*pratibhā*" is referred as talent).

Socrates was reputed to hold knowledge in high esteem. One day an acquaintance met the great philosopher and said, "Do you know what I just heard about your friend?"  
"Hold on a minute," Socrates replied. "Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?"  
"Well, no," the man said, "actually I just heard about it and..."  
"All right," said Socrates. "Now, is what you are about to tell me about my friend something good?"  
"Umm, no, on the contrary..."  
"So," Socrates continued, "Is what you want to tell me about my friend going to be useful to me?"  
"No, not really"  
"Well," concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither true, nor good, nor even useful, why tell it to me at all?"

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Young people are in a condition like permanent intoxication, because life is sweet and they are growing. - Aristotle

# ***A Great Opportunity is Offered Each Moment, If Only We Can Recognize It!***

Each opportunity is a possibility. If we can turn this possibility into reality then the whole life can be oriented towards a new direction and its present state can be completely altered. Opportunities are either veiled or manifest, but to recognize, accept and make best use of them is entirely dependent on an individual. Some opportunities are hidden and some others evident. Some of them knock at our doors and some have to be searched. Sometimes people need to seek opportunities, and sometimes opportunities search for the right people!

Opportunities can be ordinary or very special. It is possible to turn an ordinary occasion to a special one, but often special opportunities also look like ordinary to normal people. It completely depends on an individual how he uses the opportunities he is offered, what he does with them and how much he gets out of them. A stone may look ordinary to a common being, but to a jeweler or a connoisseur it could be a very high valued diamond. Till a person becomes wise enough to understand the importance of opportunities, he keeps wasting his life, regarding them as ordinary stones. In contrast, a wise person understands the value of even ordinary stones and knows how to make good use of them.

This life that is bestowed upon us by the Almighty is also a great opportunity for every human being. How one makes use of his life

depends upon each individual. The action he performs today becomes the basis to determine what will be his future life.

Life as a compilation of moments of time is offered to every individual as a gift by the Creator. Utilizing this one person becomes a great ascetic, another becomes a famous business man, while another becomes just a commoner and yet another becomes a beggar who lives a life dependent on others. Making use of opportunities offered as time, some earn so much that they donate immense wealth in charity, while not making use of the opportunities some others become so poor and downtrodden that their arms are always raised to seek alms. Some become so strong and brave that none can rise to oppose them, while others become so timid that they are obliged to bow down before everyone.

Opportunities are always invaluable; their worth cannot be compared to anything else. By making a good use of these some reach great heights and become rich starting from being poor. Opportunities are like stairs that a person can use to climb and succeed. On the other hand, missing opportunities sometimes become like deep gorges, which push a person into depths that are difficult to scale.

Every moment of life brings with it a unique opportunity making best use of which one can

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**A boy's will is the wind's will, and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.- H. W. Longfellow**

become special from being a commoner. But sometimes there come some special opportunities that are capable of changing the entire orientation of life. Astrology indicates that there come special times which have a unique alignment of heavenly bodies. These times come rarely and persist for a short while, but when special spiritual practices are performed during these opportune moments, astonishing results are obtained. And when such moments have passed then the same spiritual practices do not produce the same kind of results. Likewise in life also opportunities lead to greater successes at some suitable times as compared to at other normal times. So these special moments are sought after and their importance is extolled everywhere.

To identify good opportunities one needs to acquire the keen eye akin to an experienced jeweler who can accurately differentiate between a precious and a normal stone. But such a knack does not get developed automatically. For this, a lot of effort has to be put in and the art needs to be perfected with practice. Similarly, every person must learn how to understand the importance of present situations. One must observe the drifts of time, recognize the directions in which the world is headed, and listen to the door-knocks of opportunities. Normal people cannot make good use of special opportunities because they lack the necessary expertise or capability to recognize their importance.

The only way to make good use of the special opportunities is to put in efforts to enhance our capabilities, develop acumen to overcome difficulties and hindrances, and instill courage

to fight adversities. There is a rule of life that if a person's mental balance gets disturbed when faced with ordinary difficulties, then he would never be able to recognize the great opportunities that present themselves before him.

If a person does not take steps forward towards his goal and makes good use of opportunities that come, he will continue to stay exactly where he was. Also if a person does not change his outlook with changing times he would not be able to grab good opportunities in unfamiliar circumstances. To identify good opportunities, one needs to have a keen eye, capability to fight adversities and ability to act differently from the normal people.

Benjamin Disraeli, the famous politician and novelist of England has said that the true secret of success is to be ever prepared for opportunities and whenever any opportunity comes by, grab it. Favorable opportunities knock at our doors only for a few moments. If we lose those moments, then we may end up wasting months or years to succeed. Inspirational author Swett Marden has said 'Don't wait for extraordinary opportunities. Seize common occasions and make them great. Weak men wait for opportunities; strong men make them'. Wise people also say that people who wait for opportunities are only the ordinary beings. Extraordinary people create opportunities for themselves. So rather than searching for opportunities, we must regard each moment of life as invaluable and make a good use of it.

Better utilization of present circumstances helps create great opportunities. Good

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**Youth is but the painted shell within which, continually growing, lives that wondrous thing the spirit of a man, bidding its moment of apparition, earlier in some than in others. - Lew Wallace**

opportunities can lay hidden anywhere; to find them we must make good use of present circumstances and search for solutions of problems at hand. There is an interesting anecdote in this regard. A king once placed a large rock right in the middle of a path and hid himself behind the trees to observe people's reactions. First he saw rich businessmen pass by. They cursed at the rock and maneuvered their carts around it and moved on. During the day a number of people passed by but none moved the rock. In the evening a farmer came. Seeing the rock obstructing the road he decided to move it off. After considerable effort he succeeded in doing it. There was a packet lying under the rock. In that there were gold coins and a letter

written by the king that said – this is a prize for the person who removes the rock from the road. This anecdote tells us that efforts to overcome obstacles are also a gift like opportunity. If we focus not on the obstacles, but the opportunities that lie behind it, the way to reach our destination can be easily simplified.

Yugrishi Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya says that a person must always work hard to enhance his capabilities and competence. This will help him in utilizing the opportunities well and identifying them easily. This way, life given to us in the form of time will be used well, special opportunities would come to us on their own and we will not have to go searching for them.

“Beauty is one of the great facts of the world, like sunlight, or springtime, or the reflection in dark waters of that silver shell we call the moon. You have only a few years in which to live really, perfectly, and fully. When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it, and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you... Time is jealous of you, and wars against your lilies and your roses. You will become sallow, and hollow-cheeked, and dull-eyed... Ah! Realize your youth while you have it... Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing... The world belongs to you for a season... how tragic it would be if you were wasted; for there is such a little time that your youth will last. The common hill flowers wither, but they blossom again. The laburnum will be as yellow next June as it is now. In a month there will be purple stars on the clematis, and year after year the green night of its leaves will hold its purple stars. But we never get back our youth. The pulse of joy that beats in us at twenty becomes sluggish. Our limbs fail, our senses rot. We degenerate into hideous puppets, haunted by the memory of the passions of which we were too much afraid, and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to yield to... Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth.”

- Oscar Wilde

Youth is the golden period of life, and every well-spent moment will be like good seed planted in an auspicious season. - Eliza Cook



# Seeds of **Extrasensory Cognition** Lie in Every Brain

The number of neurons (nerve cells) in a developed human brain is almost double the human population on the earth! Each of these tiny cells is comparable in capacity and efficiency to a multi-talented, august and stout human being. In fact, people could sometimes be lazy, disorderly, dishonest, or inefficient, but the tiny neurons never ignore their 'duties' and continue contributing to the adept information processing and the other vital functions of the brain and the body.

The network of over ten billion neurons ('brain-cells') works like a 'super computer'. The nerves – 'biological channels' of interconnected neurons are spread in the entire body and constitute the Nervous System. These are broadly categorized as of two types – the sensory nerves and the motor nerves; that make possible the perceptions of 'signals' of the sense-organs and the locomotion activities respectively. The sensory nerves are linked with the sense-organs. Whatever we smell, watch, hear, eat, or experience by touch is perceived with the help of the instant signal processing between the sensory nerves and the brain. The motor nerves and their control unit in the brain conduct the activities of movement, walking, chewing, bathing, reading, etc. This 'physical' understanding of the nervous system, together with the general anatomy and associated physiological functions of the brain have been known to the

scientific community since the advent of neurological research in the past century.

For a longtime, the brain was recognized only as the controller of the motor functions and the perception of the sense organs. The fact that this rather small organ in the human body is a repository of astonishing potentials became clearer with the advancement of neuro-scientific research. Research into cognitive functions of the brain and expression of talents on the one hand, and studies in endocrine (hormonal) secretions on the other has shown the crucial role of the mind. Mind can be broadly defined as the subliminal consciousness-core of the brain and source of cognitive functions and feelings (emotions, sentiments). Progress in contemporary collaborative studies in the fields of psychology, parapsychology, and metaphysics appear to be bringing the modern science closer to the areas of Vedic science that deal with the 'extrasensory' powers of human mind. It is now accepted by many groups of eminent researchers that, as described in the Indian Philosophy, the human mind is a reflection of the *Brahm*<sup>1</sup>. The impulses of whatever is happening, is going to happen, or has happened, anywhere in the infinite expansion of the cosmos reach and can be captured by the inner cores of the mind.

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Today is not just another ordinary day. It is an opportunity to do, or say, something that just might inspire someone to greater becoming...especially a wayward youth. - T.F. Hodge

Our minds are endowed with the power to know about the past, present and the future, at will. However, this supernormal talent remains dormant in general. Dull and drowsy minds or extra-agile, haphazard minds can't even properly experience, recognize, or analyze the present. Brilliance of intellect and foresightedness help the sagacious minds know and shape the future growth of the subject matter of their interest and expertise. This explains why alert and focused/illuminated mind of a person is said to be the architect of his/her life. However, the extrovert attitude, self-centered inclination, and complacency and excessive attachment with the present and the immediate future, often restrain its trenchant vision and talents from reaching the wider and deeper domains of knowledge. Cultivation of introvert and deeper thinking and successive endeavors of intellectual and spiritual erudition gradually arise its hidden powers. This elevation can eventually excel the illuminated minds to the higher realms of precognitive realizations.

Live experiences of great personalities and sagacious minds do illustrate from time to time that the evolution of the inner-powers can indeed exalt the individual self to unimaginable heights. Child-prodigies are often found to have exceptionally gifted brains. Some of them are born with evolved minds and extraordinary talents; whereas in some others, such powers are found activated accidentally.

#### **Accidental Emergence of E.S.P.:**

Our mind can store past memories for ages. At a superficial level, we seem to forget many things quite rapidly. What we seem to have

memorized with great efforts also appears to fade out from our memory after some time, as we are unable to recall it. However, as the neurological experiments reveal, whatever we ever encounter remains inscribed in the ultra-sensitive microfilms of some sub-networks of neurons for hundreds of years. For instance, in one such experiment when Dr. Penfield had electrically stimulated the memory strip in a subject's brain, that person started singing the songs of a film, which he had seen over two decades ago. The story of the film also surfaced afresh in his memory as though he had watched the movie just now. As discussed below, sometimes the 'memory' of the past lives, or some 'supernatural' sensory or cognitive centers also get activated due to accidental stimulation.

Molly Fencer was born and brought up in a middle-class family at Brooklyn. She got fond of horse riding in young age. She used to go for it every evening with her friends. Unfortunately on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1864, she fell down from the back of the running horse. She suffered some head injury and sprain but gained normal vigor in a few days. However, the accident recurred in less than a month on 8<sup>th</sup> June. This time she could not recover so fast and was even not able to eat properly. She appeared to be getting normal at a slow pace. After about seven months - on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1865, when a renowned expert of his times, Dr. Robert Spiegel examined her and found nothing serious, her aunt Susan Kansai and other relatives and friends felt so relieved. However, their hopes diminished when the same evening she went into coma. She could regain clinical consciousness only after several months but had lost her memories of the

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Spontaneity is the province of youth. - Jacqueline Carey

present life. She could not recognize her family doctor, neither her aunt who had been looking after her since childhood.

She remained in this state for nine years. Though her left hand was paralyzed, she was able to sit and manage things using the right hand. In this duration she wrote about six thousands letters (to some unknown 'friends'!), which were remarkably thoughtful and carried deep sense of knowledge.

February 1873, she suddenly got up and started walking. But what a fate! She lost her balance and fell down from the stairs and once again suffered head-injury. This time Dr. Robert's brother, Dr. F. Spiegel had come to attend her. Looking at him she asked - "Hello Doctor! What is your brother, Dr. Robert doing in his new house? Why didn't he come today?" She was startled by seeing the change in her aunt's looks and shrieked - "How come Aunti! Your hair got all grey just in one night?" When she was told about the tragedy and also shown the letters written by her, she could not believe it. She somehow felt as though the letters were written by some departed soul.

The letters were just the first expression of the extrasensory power awakened in Molly. Later on, after yet another accident, this lady lost her eyesight. It is so surprising that despite being declared blind clinically, she was able to see everything - even much beyond the power of normal vision. In her words -- "I feel that I am seeing through an eye between my eyebrows. Many a times I can see distant or remote objects too. I feel as if some bright rays emit from my forehead and collide with (or even penetrate) the objects around me; these are reflected back to me with the 'visual information' of the corresponding thing or scene".

Prof. Henry M. Pasture, a physicist of the Brooklyn University had investigated Molly's extrasensory perceptions (E.S.P.) in late 1875. He was keener on finding two things. Firstly, whether this lady indeed possesses E.S.P. or smartly plays some tricks? And, if she has any power of E.S.P., how she makes use of it in day-to-day transactions - e.g. whether she touches the things with her forehead or just looks at them from a distance, etc.?

The one characteristic of authentic power that most people overlook is humbleness. It is important for many reasons. A humble person walks in a friendly world. He or she sees friends everywhere he or she looks, wherever he or she goes, whomever he or she meets. His or her perception goes beyond the shell of appearance and into essence. ....The next time you feel unworthy, inadequate or inferior, remember that these experiences have nothing to do with humbleness; any more than lowering yourself to connect with another individual has to do with humbleness. There are no lower or higher individuals in the perception of a humble person. There are only souls. There is only love.

- Gary Zukav

Tolerance cannot seduce the young. - Emil Cioran

Once he gave her an unfolded sheet of a letter enclosed in a thick cover. Molly was able to read it even when the envelope was closed and kept at a distance in front of her. Another time he gave her some papers from an old file – again she read them all clearly irrespective of whether the papers were left open or kept inside opaque folders. Prof. Pasture conducted several such experiments and tests at random. Finally he certified her power of E.S.P. and concluded that Molly can see through her third eye. He however had no explanation – in the language of physics or biomedical science – of how it could happen?

Today, when a lot more is known about the human brain, someone might attribute Molly's vision through the sixth sense as a result of some extraordinary or abnormal function of the neuronal network that might have been expressed because of the accidental distortion and partial derangement in her other faculties. Whatever the cause, but it proves that human brain does possess some faculty/potentials of E.S.P. There was a time when the eminent *yogis* and spiritually enlightened *sādhakas* used to activate these potentials at will by controlled use of their elevated *prāṇas*<sup>2</sup> and spiritually enlightened mind.

Several books, such as "The Third Eye" by T. Lobe-Sang, "Spiritual Journey to the Land of Hermitage" by Al Zahir, and "The Making of Heavenly Trousers" by Daniel Bayer, give us a firsthand view of the extrasensory experiences of the authors. These intellectuals had had the divine experience of the awakening of the *Ājñā Chakra* (– the 'sixth sense' or the 'third eye'). What they had

experienced as clairvoyance and glimpses of the past and the future in the specific states of mental engrossment in deeper consciousness – was also authentically verified. Such experiences prove that human mind is indeed endowed with a divine eye in its subliminal core.

Renowned German philosopher and writer, Goethe mentions at one place in his autobiography that -- once when he was sitting in his house at Wilma, he suddenly 'saw' that the island of Sicily, several thousand miles away, is being shaken by horrifying seismic tremors. The feeling was so strong and clear that he even discussed this unique experience with some of his friends. But no one paid any attention. What else but "illusion" could such an experience be called in general? How could one see or explain the happenings of several thousand miles away without any mode of communication? It was only after about a week that the newspapers brought the tragic reports of a devastating earthquake in Sicily. This had occurred on the same day, at the same time, when Goethe had 'watched' this horrifying event 'live' (through the hidden 'telescope' of his mind!).

In his popular book "The Gulliver's Travels", Jonathan Swift had described that -- Mars has two moons orbiting around it; one at a velocity double than the other. His imagination was thought to be mere fiction because, until then it was not known that the planets other than the earth could also have their satellites. After about 150 years, in 1877, a giant telescope in the Naval Observatory at Washington, traced the presence of the two moons of Mars and also proved that the velocity of one is double than that of the other!

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**The secret to youth is to fill your mind with beauty! Amen. - Linda Ballou**

### Possibilities in Every Individual:

Nature has gifted all of us with the fount of many talents and potentials. But, we keep hunting for petty things and supports in the external world; because of our incomplete and superficial knowledge of our own being, we spend all our efforts and energies in fulfilling thoughtless ambitions, short-term gains, and insignificant achievements. We should learn to focus our thoughts, look inward, and contemplate and meditate to realize our hidden capabilities. Little more care and sincere efforts<sup>3</sup> to save and raise our vital energy, and to awaken the hidden potentials of the mind would help us acquire brighter success and strive for higher goals.

Seeds of *riddhis-siddhis*<sup>4</sup> are also immanent in the inner self. Each one of us could gradually activate and evolve these extrasensory potentials through firm determination, adept *sādhana*s and unperturbed perseverance. The ancient Indian science of *yoga* and spirituality enlightens the path to such extraordinary attainments. Authentic reports and experiences of supernormal talents of self-control, absolute mental-concentration, and immense willpower of the spiritual masters and *yogis* have drawn the attention of many

researchers towards the *yoga* practices of *dhyāna-dhāraṇā* (meditation) and *sādhana*s (devout spiritual endeavors).

Great *yogis* and spiritual masters purify their mind, focus its intrinsic tendencies in righteous direction, and awaken its subliminal powers by unflinching self-restraint, ascetic disciplines and *sādhana*s (spiritual endeavors). Indeed, spiritual refinement of personality and awakening of the inner force of consciousness enable the 'individual self' emancipate itself from the thralldom of ignorance and activate its sublime linkage with the limitless 'cosmic self'. In this process, the domains of mental experiences and cognition naturally expand beyond all bounds of time and space.

#### Notes:

1. *Brahm*: The Omnipresent, Eternal, Consciousness-Force.
2. *Prāṇas*: Vital Spiritual Energy.
3. Sincere Efforts: Fasting with self-restraint over tongue and sensual lust, *yoga exercises* of *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma* are very effective and supportive in this regard.
4. *Riddhis-siddhis*: Supramental intellect and supernatural talents and physical powers

Youth is not a time of life—it is a state of mind. It is not a matter of red cheeks, red lips and supple knees. It is a temper of the will; a quality of the imagination; a vigor of the emotions; it is a freshness of the deep springs of life. Youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over a life of ease. This often exists in a man of fifty, more than in a boy of twenty. Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years; people grow old by deserting their ideals.

- Samuel Ullman

Music and imagination are made of the same substance -they contain soulful substances that are more real than reality. - Aniekee Tochukwu

## The Endeavor of Purification – 3

### Fund-raising through *Bhagvat Katha*

Shriram adopted a new method. He tried to recollect the stories of *Bhagvat Katha* that he had heard several times through the discourses of his father. Then he arranged those contexts properly in his mind and announced conducting of *Bhagvat Masa Parayana* in the Sanatan Dharma temple near the bank of Yamuna River. Normally, the discourses on *Bhagvat* are completed in a week; devoting six hours per day for this task. However, there is also provision of reading through it in a month, but this is done at the individual level by the devotee. Shriram decided to do this experiment for the masses. Due to his busyness in political activities and the work of 'Sainik' it was not possible to devote six hours daily for this purpose. By spreading this program over a span of one month, it was also the aim to motivate the audience through discourses for such a long time.

The management of Sanatan Dharma temple accorded permission to conduct the program. They also started helping in the arrangements. But as soon as they came to know that the *Dakshina* (offerings) collected through *Masa Parayana* would go to Harijan Fund, they revolted. They blamed Shriram of deceit, cancelled the permission to conduct the program; and started propagating - "Shriram is plotting to corrupt *Sanatan Dharma*; foreigners are providing funds for this

purpose, etc". Some people also blamed Mahatma Gandhi. Shriram didn't care for these allegations. Inconvenience was certainly caused due to the cancellation of *Katha* program in the temple. But he didn't give up. He started preparing to conduct *Katha Pravachan* in open space outside the temple on the bank of Yamuna. Congress volunteers too cooperated in this venture and within three days the arrangements were made for the *Vyaspeeth* (stage for discoursing) and that for the seating of about one hundred fifty people.

On the four corners of *Vyaspeeth* four bamboos were tied and they were covered with banana leaves. There was no roof. The audience was motivated to sit in open space. The *Pravachan* began on *Magh shukla pratipada* (first day of bright half of the lunar month of *Magh*). On the first day, thirty people attended the discourse. Shriram began his address like this - "*Bhagvat Katha* is for purifying everyone. Maharshi Vedvyas has written this *Purana* to explain the essence of Dharma to the common man who cannot understand the complexities of scriptures like *Upnishads*, etc. Even the evil spirits get salvation by listening to it. Therefore the common people should not worry at all." By his strong arguments he settled the traditional *sanatan* followers' hash, though he didn't mention anybody's name. After this introduction, he made a daily routine of *Katha* of one and half hours.

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Youth is the pollen that blows through the sky; and does not ask why. - Stephen Vincent Benet

After the completion of *Katha*, everyday people offered one or two paisa or sometimes one – four *annas*. The task of keeping the account of offerings was given to Mangilal. He was from Dalit community. He could not get the opportunity to go to school, but he was intelligent. In spite of being illiterate he was good in accounting. He used to take part in the freedom movement also. When he saw the obstacles coming in the way of *Bhagvat Katha*, he came forward and told Shriram - "We will take the responsibility of doing the required labour and supplying the necessary items." He had four more volunteers with him. So there was no problem in the tasks requiring physical labour or running here and there.

### **Dalits managed the affairs**

When the responsibility of managing the accounts was given to Mangilal, he first hesitated. Shriram explained to him that the event was being organized for the benefit of backward and suppressed people; it would be appropriate if some person from the same stratum of society takes the responsibility of managing the affairs of money also. After this advice, Mangilal agreed to take up the task.

Within eight –ten days, the *Pravachan* started thriving. Apart from common public, people, the volunteers of freedom struggle, writers, correspondents, etc also started participating. The comrades working in the office of 'Sainik' newspaper used to invite the public for *Katha Pravachan*. Some of them contacted even the intellectuals and people who had interest in literature. So they also dropped in, once in a while.

One day Babu Gulabrai also came to attend the *Pravachan*. He had good reputation as a

litterateur. He knew Shriram as a journalist. This incarnation of his as a reciter of *Katha* was new for him. When the *Pravachan* was over, he got up from his seat, went to the stage and said some words in praise of Shriram. He said - "The style of *Katha* - recital of Shriram is like the Ganga descending from the Himalayas and coming onto the planes, which is fast, crude and carefree but it is pure and pious." Babu Gulabrai laid stress on his carefreeness. The important message of this lecture was - "Till now I knew Shriramji 'Matta' as a journalist, a writer and a social volunteer. It is his new incarnation as a *Katha Vyas*. On this occasion, I will call him 'Panditji'; in future also I will call him by this honorific name. I will be happy if you (audience) also call him by this name."

### **And now Pandit Shriram**

The people present there delightedly applauded the announcement of Babu Gulabrai. Shriram Sharma 'Matta' now got recognition as Pandit Shriram Sharma 'Matta'. In those days, the title of 'Pandit' was not conferred easily. A person was called Pandit only when he had mastered the knowledge of scriptures, and achieved purity of mind and thought. A learned and respectable person used to give this kind of recognition. The authoritative declaration of Babu Gulabrai was according to that tradition. From that day on, people coming to *Katha* started calling him either as 'Mattaji' or 'Panditji'. For the senior volunteers, elderly people or friends, of course, he remained Shriram later on too.

By the time *Masa Parayana* was completed, Pandit Shriram's resolve too was fulfilled. The *Dakshina* offered on the *Pothi* (book) of *Bhagvat* amounted to Rupees one hundred and seventy

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The period of youth is the glory of nature, and the healthful development of all the resources of strength deposited in our nature is the glory of youth. - Elias Lyman Magoon

one. The expenditure of the program was borne by Shriram himself and other volunteers like Mangilal, etc. It was decided that the entire amount received in the offerings, though it was more than the target, should be given to the Fund. The amount could have been easily collected by going to the village or contacting some twenty - thirty rich men. The real achievement was to convey the message of purification of society to about 250 -300 people.

Taiji had got the news of *Bhagvat Katha* fifteen -twenty days earlier. She was happy that her son was following in the footsteps of his father. She bowed in front of Thakurji (idol of Lord Krishna) and said - "Lord! Guide my darling (son) on the footsteps of his ancestors." Then she changed her mind. In the emotional mood this thought did come, but immediately she regretted also - "Does Thakurji not know what is good for Shriram? He will himself guide Shriram on His path. I should not have shown haste." With these counter thoughts she got up and moved away from Dwarkadheesh (same idol). Two weeks after that request to the Lord, the news came that the society had started calling his darling 'Panditji'; she got deeply moved.

#### **Mother's wait**

That day she was really waiting for Shriram. From the day she got the news of *Katha Pravachan*, she had an intense desire that she should meet Pandit Shriram; call him as Pandit. The day Shriram was to come from Agra, she had gone to the main gate of the *Haveli* (ancestral house) several times. Earlier three -four times, when he came home after being released from jail, he went straight to his friends. With a view to stop this happen again, she had instructed all concerned that

Shriram should come straight to home. She also told his friends - "Don't stop my son on the way; let him first meet his mother."

Apart from Taiji, there was one more person in the *Haveli* - the better-half of Pandit Shriram - who was overpowered by waves of emotion; but she was silent. In the *Haveli*, she was called *Bahurani* (literally meaning daughter-in-law). Friends of Panditji called her *Bhabhiji* (brother's wife). Panditji himself used to call her by the name of his son 'Om Prakash'. Later on, after the birth of the daughter, he started calling her '*Daya ki Maa*' (mother of Daya) or simply 'Daya'. It appeared as if the name and identity of that silent *Sadhika* (Saraswati Devi) were almost forgotten. The *Sadhana* of *Grihastha Ashram* cannot be accomplished without melting like this. According to the tradition prevailing at that time, Bahuji also called Pandit Shriram in the guise of his son. There were hardly any instances when there was any reason to call him. After the marriage, Pandit Shriram hardly stayed at home. Most of the time, he was busy either in freedom movement or in the work of 'Sainik'. Whenever he visited home and if there was any urgency to call him, Bahuji would follow the tradition of her time. Probably, she too was waiting for her adored husband, and it was likely that she too might have been impatient to meet him; but she was controlling herself.

#### **Meeting with the family**

From the hustle and bustle at the main gate, Bahuji understood that Pandit Shriramji had arrived. The joy on the face of Taiji was quite visible. The way the widowhood and old age causes the Indian woman to wither, that was totally absent in Taiji's behaviour at that time. Taiji was behaving boastfully for the obvious

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The Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity. - Benjamin Disraeli



reason that her child, treading the right path, had achieved first success and had brought home his first earning. She was coming forward (to receive him) saying – ‘Now my Shriram too has become Pandit. I have heard that great scholars have called you as Pandit. What have you brought for me? Did you bring any gift for Bahu or not? You would have certainly brought dolls for Om and Daya?’

There was a kind of torrent of queries. As soon as Shriram gifted his mother a *Sari*, the tears of joy rolled down her eyes. With these tears of love, she became eager to see the gifts for Bahu and children. She was unable to manage her joy. She took her darling straight to Puja room, bowed her head in front of Thakurji and then patted him on the back as a mark of blessing of her Lord.

For a full day Shriram remained at home; caressed the children, enquired about the well-being of his wife. There was neither any complaint nor any expectation from her side. When asked about the general welfare, she replied humbly – ‘There is no dearth of anything here. Of course, I would have considered myself more fortunate, had I got the chance to serve you there. Even in the present condition, there is no complaint.’

Shriram said – ‘If Taiji says, I will immediately call you there. Anyway I will be visiting home more often. Let Om grow up a little more. We will admit him in some school in Agra. So he will be with us all the time.’ Bahuji was listening silently. Her silence itself was a sign of her acceptance.

### Meeting again with Babu

In the meantime Mahatma Gandhi came to Agra. His public meeting was arranged at Kachahari road. He was to stay at Agra only for four hours. Therefore, only two programs were kept – a meeting with volunteers and a public meeting in the evening. Meeting with volunteers was arranged in the office of Congress. There Gandhiji said – ‘I have taken a vow to forget about the freedom movement for one year. In our society, there are eighty percent people who belong to suppressed classes - Harijans, aboriginal tribes, backward classes or Dalits. Without uplifting them there is no meaning of independence. Such independence would be useful only to ten-fifteen percent people. Majority of the people will still remain under the yoke of poverty and slavery.’

Pandit Shriram was also introduced to Gandhiji in that meeting. Paliwalji mentioned about his contribution to Harijan upliftment in that region. When he was informed about the *Dakshina* of *Bhagvat Pravachan*, Gandhiji smiled and said - ‘Offerings on the *Pothi* belong to God. The idea of using God’s money for his subjects is unique. I got an idea for the public meeting in the evening.’

About one thousand people attended Gandhiji’s meeting at Kachahari road. At that time the population of Agra would have been hardly twenty five to thirty thousand. Thus, the gathering was quite good. In his address, Babu mentioned about Shriram’s *Bhagvat Pravachan*. His inspiration was that the money being spent in the temples and religious functions should now be utilized in Harijan upliftment. He said – ‘Pandit Shriram has collected some money through *Bhagvat Katha*.

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The elastic heart of youth cannot be compressed into one constrained shape long at a time. - Mark Twain

This has given me great pleasure. It doesn't matter how much money is collected. What matters is that he has shown the righteous path to the public. The gentleman who has called him Pandit is very right."

### **Mention of Panditji in the address**

In his address, Babu elaborated about his Harijan upliftment program. He stressed the need to allow Harijans to enter the temples and to draw water from public wells; given equal status in community functions and even welcomed in upper caste homes. When the time for giving contribution to the Harijan fund came, the volunteers asked Shriram to lead them. Gandhiji said - "On behalf of this city, a Pandit is coming to donate. This is a good sign. We, the upper caste people, should take the initiative in this direction. If we try to rectify the error committed by our ancestors, the upliftment of Harijans will not take more than a year."

'When Panditji (Shriram) reached near Babu to hand over the contribution of Agra to Harijan fund, Babu became emotional. He got up and held both hands of Shriram in his hands. He touched his closed fist with his nose. As elder people smell the forehead of children, in the same way he expressed his love towards Panditji. Then he said - "*Bhagvat Shastra* is for everyone. Is it? I have heard that this spiritual instruction is only for those who possess a loving and compassionate heart. It is not for those who use logic and intelligence, are inflated with ego and consider themselves to be high-class. Is it true?"

Shriram was overwhelmed by these words of Gandhiji. He could not answer. He wanted to

say - "You are right", but could only nod his head in agreement. Babu asked one more question - "What have you given in the fund from your pocket? The sum of rupees one hundred seventy one belongs to *Bhagvatji*. What is yours?"

"I want to keep it secret." Panditji composed himself and said - "If you allow me then I can tell you in your ear with the condition that you will not tell others." Babu agreed. Shriram told him in the ear. Gandhiji's face glowed with joy. He patted him lightly on the cheek.

Several years after this incident, Poojya Gurudev told that he gave his father's gold buttons used in his *Kurta* in Babu's fund. In order to get these buttons, he went to Aanwalkheda. Taiji had entrusted these gold buttons to Bahurani. When Taiji came to know about it, she felt proud of her son's virtue of selfless giving.

Babu said - "Something is still left with you. You have hidden it. Give that also to me." Panditji was surprised and started looking at Gandhiji; and then said - "I have hidden nothing." Gandhiji said - "See the pocket of your *Kurta*. I can see it from here. Perhaps one rupee coin is there."

Shriram put his hand in the pocket. Babu's penetrating view, humour and forthright talk made Shriram laugh. Smilingly he took out the coin and kept it at the feet of Babu. Raising his hand Babu said - "Now it's alright. A Brahman should believe in God and stop worrying about the subsistence of self. I too don't keep anything with me. There is no pocket in my clothes. By caste I am *Bania* (of the class of businessmen); even then I have resolved to observe *aparigrah* (non-possession)."

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O youth whose hope is high, Who dost to Truth aspire, Whether thou live or die,  
O look not back nor tire. - Robert Bridges

# Silence is the Best Self-control

By remaining silent or by speaking less, not only do we learn control over what we speak, we also conserve our life energy. Silence saves us from unnecessary disputes and also from the problems that get created after disputes. On the other hand, those who cannot remain quiet habitually and keep talking to exhibit their intelligence, are often more likely to get into difficulties. It is possible to express ourselves even by remaining silent. Though there is no language in silence it can still cast a great influence upon others.

Not talking is not silence. Often people confuse silence with discontinuation of talking. But if thoughts are creating a chaos in mind, or if tides of attachment or jealousy towards another person are waxing and waning inside the mind, then this cannot be called silence. Restraint of speech is only external silence whereas silence of mind is the inner and the true silence. The true and complete silence is when both mind and voice are completely silent.

Silence helps in restraining our senses. The mental energy that gets expended while talking gets conserved by silence. It is said that a person who can control his tongue saves himself from a lot of sufferings. We can learn and realize deep, intricate aspects of life only by remaining silent. From time immemorial paeans extolling virtues of silence have been

sung. The great rishis and spiritual masters adopted silence as an integral part of their lives during their penance and carried out intense spiritual practices. By remaining silent they could stay away from worldly, materialistic affairs and attain the inner peace.

We can get acquainted and then truly understand ourselves only by remaining silent. Silence gives us an opportunity to look at and analyze our activities, actions and behaviours minutely. Introspection and analysis of our inner selves is possible only by remaining silent. Through this alone can we discover the complexities of our mind and weed out its distortions. As more and more perfection gets attained in the practice of silence, the hidden capabilities of a person begin to emerge.

Silence is a golden pathway of spirituality which leads to conservation of inner energy and development of personality. Silence takes a person to immeasurable depths of *sadhana* and brings serenity and equipoise in his personality. Just like in the great depths of oceans there is stillness and serenity and no movement, similarly as the practice of silence nears perfection the inner stillness increases within a person and in this state he succeeds in achieving whatever he wishes for.

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Youth is the ultimate limited resource. - William Shatner

When a person speaks a lot and without relevance, he not only wastes his energy, his mind also becomes unsteady. Just like waves in a river keep rising and falling, thoughts keep wavering from one useless fantasy to another in the mind of a talkative person, and such a person is never successful in any worthy task. So it is necessary to develop timely awareness of this habit and save ourselves from speaking unnecessarily so that a comprehensive conservation of inner energy is possible.

This does not mean we must be silent always. Whenever necessary we must speak, but express our thoughts in pithy and meaningful sentences. We must not get involved in unnecessary arguments. A famous saint Maluk Das has said, "No result comes out of meaningless arguments. Disputes generate anger. Both fighting sides compete with each other to prove them better, more truthful and more intelligent than others." When one side's argument counters the opinion of the other side, anger brews. There is only one way to subdue this anger; we should stop trying to prove ourselves as wiser than our opponent. On the contrary we should behave as if we do not know anything. The opposite side would

not continue arguing for too long then and would become quiet on its own after a while. There is a wise saying – the person who knows when to keep quiet can defeat hundreds.

We normally disregard our inner mind and get involved in external activities. Our attention is always in finding others' faults which distracts us from our goal. Our mind does not get silent and focused and we lose sight of success. Once Guru Atmanand taught a lesson to his four disciples. After the lesson, he told his disciples, "Study the lesson carefully. Make sure that none of you speaks a word while studying. I will discuss about this lesson with you after sometime."

Guru Atmanand left and all the four disciples sat separately and began to study the lesson. Suddenly it grew dark and overcast and rains seemed imminent. A disciple spoke out, "Looks like it is going to rain heavily." On hearing this second disciple said to the first, "You should not have spoken." The third disciple said, "You two have broken the discipline, Guru ji is going to punish you now." Only the fourth disciple kept quiet and continued studying.

### **Love is the currency of happiness**

The practical currency or the money or coinage for transaction of joy is Love. He is the richest person who gives the most, and this giving is never in the form of materialistic money. Rupees and Paise are just symbolic, nothing more. Most of the time, they become bondage with worldly matters. Sometimes they symbolize the affection, which can release us from rigidity; but they can never give the real happy moments of perfect joy.

*- Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya*

**Youth is the time when hearts are large. - Herman Melville**

After sometime, Guru came back. Seeing him the first disciple pointed to the second disciple and said, "Guru ji, he did not stay quiet and talked." The second replied, "But you did not remain quiet as well." Third disciple also jumped in and said, "Guru ji, both of them spoke and broke the discipline." This angered the first two and they spoke sharply, "You also did not remain quiet." The fourth one still remained quiet.

Looking at them Guru said, "Only this fourth disciple has truly followed my instructions. In trying to point out mistakes of the others, you all three made the same mistake. This is what people normally do. They look for others' mistakes and in pointing them out, they commit the same mistake themselves. They do not even realize and begin to walk the wrong path themselves." All three disciples realized their mistake and felt sorry for the same. They vowed never to make the same mistake again.

Yug Rishi Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya has laid out four disciplines of *sadhana* - (i) worship, (ii) abstinence, (iii) conservation and accumulation of *prana* and (iv) silence. Extolling the virtue of silence Acharayaji has said that by learning silence not only the above disciplines can be easily perfected, but additional activities like self-study, self-control, service to others etc can be carried out easily as well. By staying silent we not only conserve our energy, we also get the required concentration to properly utilize this energy. So silence is an absolutely essential spiritual practice. With attainment of perfection in silence, all other difficult spiritual practices can be perfected too.

A man, travelling in the woods, was searching for the shadow. He found a tree, which happened to be a *Kalpavriksha* (a wish fulfilling tree).

He sat down under the tree and thought: "I am hungry, so it would be nice if I can get some food right now." When he was just thinking about this, a plate full of tasty delicacies appeared before him. After filling his stomach, he thought: 'it would be nice if I get some clean water to drink'; and a bottle of clean water appeared immediately. After drinking water, he was feeling sleepy; so he thought: 'it would be nice, if I get a bed so that I can take rest'; and there appeared a nice comforting bed.

Lying on the bed in the shadow of the tree, he started wondering: 'Why these miracles are happening? May be some ghosts are residing on this tree.' Suddenly the ghosts appeared. They were terrible and looked like he imagined them.

The man became scared and thought: 'now they will kill me!'; and they killed him.

Life is *Kalpavriksha*. We get what we aspire for.

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In the days of thy youth seek to obtain that which shall compensate the losses of thy old age. - Leonardo da Vinci

## Self-Treatment by Prana Therapy

When thinking about the constituents of human body, one thinks casually only about its physical parts like bones, flesh, skin and arteries, whereas a microscopic examination of parts of body reveals that there are many more elements in the body. Under microscope, a drop of blood shows numerous living particles in motion. Each one amongst these particles is propelled by energy for its animation (*Chaitanya Shakti*). In spite of their apparent variation in shape and size, each of these particles possesses the same element of life. The existence of same element of life in the different units of living cells in a person itself is responsible for their agglomeration into the whole body of man. In the same way, in the variety of flora and fauna of biological kingdom of this planet too, there are units (cells) having the same element of life.

The presence of units of this one life element everywhere in all living beings, is also the reason for their being interactive. This interactivity itself induces the natural

dynamics of life in plants and animals for their growth and makes them interdependent for survival. Had this Super Energy been absent, all living beings would have remained in a state of detached, inactive and immobile existence. In the parlance of spirituality, this Super Element of life is known as "*Prana*". People address it by various names like "Human bioelectricity" or "Bio-electromagnetism", "working power of body" (*Kriya Shakti*), etc.

This energy of *Prana* promotes growth in the living beings and replenishes the elements of deficiencies experienced during course of its development. Rejuvenation of damaged cells in the body exemplifies this phenomenon. When skin is damaged on account of a wound it is this energy of *Prana* which helps the body in recuperating the loss. In the earlier articles in this series it has been demonstrated how one can cure a disease by potentiating the *Prana* energy of some diseased person with the help of one's own energy. We shall now

Intelligence makes clear to us the interrelationship of means and ends. But mere thinking cannot give us a sense of the ultimate and fundamental ends. To make clear these fundamental ends and valuations and to set them fast in the emotional life of the individual, seems to me precisely the most important function which religion has to form in the social life of man.

— Albert Einstein

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A youth without fire is followed by an old age without experience. - Charles Caleb Colten

discuss how one can get relief from one's own infirmity and disease by potentiating personal *Prana* energy.

A weak infirm individual is regarded as a half-sick patient. Many small disorders in a physically weak body manifest as several minor diseases in various organs of the body. Infirmity brings with it many ailments like loss of appetite, indigestion, nonchalance in attitude, inactivity, dullness, lethargy, unsteadiness in gait, frequent pain in head and waist, abnormal tiredness after little strain, dryness in throat, inflammation in eyes etc. Such disorders disappear as soon as the body becomes strengthened on restoration of requisite level of *Prana* energy.

One can become healthy and strong and get rid of common ailments by building up a sufficient reserve of *Prana* energy by carrying out the following exercises:

### 1. **Collect Prana Energy While Drinking and Eating**

Elements of all eatables required for sustenance of life contain *Prana* energy. Water should not be consumed by gulping it hurriedly. It should rather be sipped slowly, as one drinks milk or tea. While drinking water, conceptualize that the life energy in water is being filled in all over your body and that extracting *Prana* energy from it, you are absorbing it within yourself. With each sip, mentally pronounce 'om'. While eating food too follow the same procedure. Chew each morsel thoroughly and while swallowing mentally pronounce 'om' with each morsel. (Enunciation of this mantra facilitates absorption of energy.)

### 2. **Use Auto-suggestion by Gazing at your Mirror Image**

Standing before a mirror, watch each part of your face minutely. Mentally affirm that your cheeks are radiating energy. Eyes are sparkling. There is a smile on your lips. Nostrils are inhaling pure energized air. Ears are hearing properly. Now open your mouth. Looking into its interior in the mirror and affirm that your tongue likes the taste of only healthy food and utters only pleasant words. Similarly give auto-suggestions for throat, palate, teeth, jaws, gums and salivary glands that these too are active, energized, are functioning properly and will continue to do so in future.

### 3. **Absorb Prana Energy from Space**

Choose a lonely place which is neither too cold nor too warm. Keeping minimum clothes required for decency, remove other clothing from the body. Closely look at various parts of your body - your hands, feet, chest, abdomen, waist and other organs. Affirm that these are healthy and strong and be convinced about it. If using oil for massage, affirm that the *Prana* energy in the oil is being absorbed by the body, making it energized.

### 4. **Meditate on All-pervasive Prana Energy**

Go to a quiet, lonely place and relax on an arm chair, or lie down flat on a soft mattress laid on ground or on a raised platform. Let the legs be a little raised by keeping a pillow underneath. Relax the body totally, as though it is made up from a ball of cotton. Make it so relaxed as though it had become dead.

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Try to hold on to youth and it mocks you while it sprints away. - Frank Herbert

Conceptualize that you are floating in an immense expanse of blue space intensely charged with the energy of Prana. Think yourself lying in absolute solitude. At this moment no thought about any natural feature, manmade object or living being should enter the mind. After a few days practice, it would be possible to achieve such a state of absolute tranquility. When it transpires, a miracle will take place. Within ten to fifteen minutes the body will feel totally relaxed, fresh and invigorated.

5. **Acquire Prana Energy by a Hearty Laughter**  
One more way of potentiating personal field of Prana is to find opportunities for

laughing heartily. Besides acquiring surplus Prana from space, laughing accelerates the circulation of energy in the body.

When regularly carried out for a few days, the above exercises result in miraculous benefits. The advantages are far superior to those accrued by using expensive foods or tonics.

The efficacy of the exercises described above lies in the depth of conceptualization and degree of conviction in the result. The promptness and the advantage gained would also be commensurate with the firmness and conviction in the results of affirmations.

Krishna once told Arjuna that Rama was the greatest warrior ever – even better than him. When visiting Rameshwaram, seeing the Nala Setu, a doubt arose in Arjuna's mind. He wondered why Rama, who was supposedly the greatest warrior, needed the Vanara Sena to create the Setu, when he could have just created a bridge with arrows using his powers.

Hanuman found Arjuna engaged in such doubts and went up to him, disguised as an aged Vanara. He explained to Arjuna that the bridge of arrows would not be able to withstand the weight of the Vanars. Challenging Hanuman, Arjuna said that he would create such a bridge and if the Vanara could walk on it, he would win. Otherwise, he would burn in the bridge of arrows. After building the bridge with his powers, he asked the Vanara to walk on it. Hanuman uttered the name of Rama, and merely kept his tail on the bridge. The bridge collapsed.

Keeping his word, Arjuna burnt the bridge and turned to walk in it. That very moment, Krishna appeared in the form of a saint and asked them to perform the task again, with him as a witness. But this time, the bridge did not crumble. When they turned around, they saw that the saint was supporting the foundation of the bridge with his shoulders bleeding. In the saint, Hanuman saw Rama and Arjuna saw Krishna. Krishna hugged Hanuman and thanked him for what all that he had done for him.

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Youth is the gift of nature, but age is a work of art. - Stanislaw Jerzy Lec



# Meditation is An Expression of Tranquil Mind

Meditation cleanses and purifies the mind. It nourishes the soul and makes us firm and focused. It can calm down and rejuvenate our vacillating and tensed mind and also augment its potential. To meditate - means to recall. But, whom to recall? There are two options. Either we memorize something and contemplate upon it. Else, we meditate by forgetting everything and focus on the inner faculty. Deep contemplation is like a beacon light, which can eliminate the darkness of malicious *sanskars*. Accumulated *sanskars* of previous birth present in seed form in the psyche mature with time and yield good or bad results.

There are four states of consciousness. They are the three usual states of waking, sleeping, dreaming and the elevated state of *turiya awastha* (a state beyond the other three). The case of meditation is, however, different. In deep contemplation, there is little awareness and one could dream, even while one is awake. But, the person is neither sleeping nor is he in *turiya awastha*. Even though his body is inactive, his mind remains active. He can visualize his mind, as if he is dreaming. Yet, it is not a dream, but a perception of the awakened and fully conscious state.

Meditation is the process through which the person can free himself from all his attachments. Meditation is not possible unless

this is done. Usually, people stress more on aggressive and depressing thoughts. They think more about pain rather than pleasure. We remember our oppressor more than our helper. In this way, we forget happy moments and keep clinging to the sad ones and thus, remain dejected. But, through the process of meditation, our consciousness becomes free from all adverse sentiments and we begin to live in the present, liberating ourselves from the shackles of the past.

Meditation is to be free from these bondages. Usually, people are either not able to come out of their past or are tensed about their future. Thus, they cannot deal with their present properly. This is because their present is either overshadowed by the memories of the past or the plans of the future. Planning can prevent people from entering into deep contemplation. Similarly, the memories of the past are like those shackles, which do not let us enter in the depth of meditation. Contrary to this, contemplation is the process of living in and accepting the present.

Meditation not only makes us stable, but also helps us in concentrating in the present. By practicing it, we can accumulate our inner energy and use this accumulated energy to give our best to life. Meditation calms our mind and gives us knowledge of the inner faculty. Meditation can connect us to the

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To find joy in work is to discover the fountain of youth. - Pearl S. Buck

universal consciousness and we can perceive the bond between us and the universe. When we feel empathy with all, our negative instincts get destroyed and give place to the broader concept of 'aatmavaat sarvabhuteshu', eventually leading us to the source of eternal bliss.

Meditation is like the seed which germinates easily if it is cared for and given manure and water. It is similar to the foundation of a building. The deeper it is dug, the stronger stands the building. Similarly, by practicing meditation and deep contemplation, we can develop our body, mind and nervous system. It invigorates every cell of the body, augments the mental strength and leads us to inner bliss. Before entering into meditation, one may face numerous hurdles, the biggest being our pride. Therefore, while meditating, we should keep thinking 'I am nothing'. Any desire may destroy our concentration. So, during meditation we should think- 'I have no desire'. The state of meditation can never be achieved by our efforts, it happens on its own. When one tries to do something in meditation, then he cannot actually enter into deep contemplation. So, during the process, we should try to do nothing. Thus, it is a process of inactivity accompanied by alertness and awareness, rather than a state of activity.

Meditation is the journey of our inner faculty and it is one such journey in which we have to walk alone. There is no companion to walk along and accompany us on this path. Our sole companion is our mind. If it is stable, calm and focused, it will support us. If it is unstable, restless and perplexed, it cannot proceed even

one step with us. The purity of mind helps in moving forward easily on the path of meditation. Its impurity and disorders are like pointed thorns which hurt us while moving on the path of meditation and prevent any further journey. Thus, those who are able to focus easily, who are of *satvik* nature and whose heart is pure find it easy to concentrate. On the contrary, the people of *rajsik* and *tamsik* nature find it a bit difficult to concentrate.

Before beginning meditation, one should practice *dharna* (primitive concentration) and other yogic practices. Therefore, while elucidating the *Ashtanga marga* (the sequence of various yoga techniques, which are to be practiced one after the other), the eminent sage Patanjali kept meditation at the seventh number. The first six steps are - (i) *Yama*, (ii) *Niyama*, (iii) *Aasana*, (iv) *Pranayama*, (v) *Pratyahar*, and (vi) *Dharna*. After meditation, comes *Samadhi* (going into awakened trance), which is the ultimate goal of *yog sadhana*. If the steps before meditation are skipped and one starts directly with meditation, then one may not get the desired benefits.

People, who wish to practice meditation, should also practice the yogic life-style. Only then they may get the real benefits of meditation. Further, common people could also obtain these benefits by incorporating it in their routine. It may be practiced any time - in the morning, at night or at any other time, when the mind aspires to enter into the realm of meditation. If adopted as a regular routine, one would feel its miraculous impact in his quality of life.

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The aged love what is practical while impetuous youth longs only for what is dazzling. – Petrarch

## How to Make Your Personality Magnetic?

The present-day young generation is being increasingly attracted towards personality grooming programs. Scores of young men and women, and even teenagers, are joining grooming institutes and spending hefty amounts with a view to improve and smarten their personalities. Many such places charge as much as ten to twenty thousand rupees for 5-7 day courses. Nevertheless, the youth are not getting the desired benefits. In spite of all the labor and expense, their personalities fail to develop the magnetic pull which they so cherish, or the character traits which could ensure their success in life. The famous maxim "All that glitters is not gold" is proving right in regard to these institutes.

There is, however, a positive aspect to this phenomenon. It signifies an increasingly strong desire in the youth to refine and reshape their personalities, their awakened awareness about themselves and their growing sense of responsibility towards life. This pleasant trend gives a sense of hope. Lucky indeed is the nation whose youth are alert about their overall personality development. They appear to have realized that now-a-days labor by itself is not sufficient for opening the doors to success. The psychological impact cast by the personality, too, is important.

If we want to make a mark in the world, we will have to cultivate some specific attributes in our personalities.

*The first of these is effective witnessing: That is, objectively witnessing with deep understanding what occurs or exists before and around us. Only those who have this penetrating understanding are able to utilize their strengths effectively. Witnessing requires a very keen and perceptive vision; a vision, which is free from the defects of prejudice and ego-sense and whose essence is what the scriptures call 'nīr-kṣīr-vivek, that is, the subtle discriminative power. We should be able to assess, in the very first meeting, the general temperament, firmness of character, grasp of the subject matter and foresight of the person whom we are meeting. It is this discerning ability, which will tell us how we can deal with the concerned person in the best possible way. If we are able to do this, every encounter will become an educative experience. This method is particularly effective in times of interviews, etc.*

*The second attribute required in this connection is far-sightedness. It has been a much talked-about quality for ages but very few actually know the art of its effective application. Those who do are able to ensure a bright future for themselves as well as for their co-workers. What is required is to pick up clues and trends from the present and make a projection on this*

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**Youth is incredible because you really do feel invincible. - Paul Stanley**

basis about what could possibly happen in the future. Chess players, successful businessmen and good administrators possess this quality of penetrating foresight.

*The third characteristic feature of a magnetic personality is pragmatism. This quality is always beneficial, whether it be a matter of examination or career advancement. What is our correct position and situation vis-à-vis the circumstances? What are our strengths and weaknesses? We must have an objective and realistic assessment of all these factors.*

*The fourth attribute is thirst for knowledge. People acquire some degrees and think that the task is over and now the only thing they have to do is to earn a livelihood, somehow. This thinking is retrogressive. Personality acquires power of attraction only when it has a never-satisfying eagerness to acquire wider and deeper understanding and knowledge of itself and the world. In modern parlance it is called updating. All experts of career counseling*

advise that one should keep acquiring more and more knowledge, and learning newer and newer skills in one's field of work. They even recommend that, apart from inculcating a reading habit, one should try to develop the capacity for effective writing, too.

These are some of the salient guidelines for bringing about refinement of the personality. The questions like "Where are we?" "What are we doing?" etc have their importance but of the greatest importance is the luster of personality. That is why Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya at Gayatri Teerth, Hardwar has compulsorily incorporated 'The art of personality improvement and living' in all its programs. It is another matter that at this unique center of sacred and mundane learning, one has to repay for his or her education not in terms of money but altruistic service; because selfless service of society through one's talents and expertise is the only genuine certificate of success of any worthwhile personality grooming program.

There was a magical young man living in a small village in Uganda. He left each morning at 4 am, to get to school by 7 am... On Foot. Yes, he walked - Every day. When class let out at 6 pm, he walked all the way home. 6 hours a day on foot, from age 14-18. And in his last year, when his mom fell ill, and he ran out of money to go to class, he took a year off and hauled timber from the forest, and loaded it onto the big trucks. He got paid \$1 a day. Some of that money went to medicine for his mother...and some he saved for his tuition. To make a long story short...he PAID his way into school...with sheer will. He let nothing stop him. Now he's in Santa Barbara, California...going to college...with a 4.0 grade point average. And he's the star player on the soccer team....bound for the state championships. So, did he cast a magic spell to get what he wanted? Absolutely...and he doesn't even really know it.

First of all, he BELIEVED, with all his heart, he would go to the U.S. and study.

Second, he FOCUSED all of his energy on his desires.

Third, he was THANKFUL for everything he already had.

These 3 things MUST be a part of every task you undertake. If they are, you'll be shocked by the surprises in store for you.

Each day is a little life: every waking and rising a little birth, every fresh morning a little youth,  
every going to rest and sleep a little death. - Arthur Schopenhauer

## Renunciation of the **Fruit of Actions** Leads to the **Grace of the Lord** - I

### Arjuna's Last Question

In the Fourteenth Chapter, life or *karma* was divided into three categories: *sattvik*, *rajasik* and *tamasik*. We learnt that what is *rajasik* or *tamasik* should be given up and what is *sattvik* should be cultivated. The Seventeenth Chapter taught the same thing in a different way. The essence of life is *yajna-dana-tapas*; or to use a single word, *yajna*. Actions like eating which are necessary for the performance of *yajna* should also be made *sattvik* and turned into a kind of *yajna*. Only such actions should be done; all others should be given up. This was hinted at in the Seventeenth Chapter. We also saw why we should constantly remember the mantra 'Om tat sat'. *Om* denotes constancy, *tat* denotes detachment and *sat* denotes purity. Our *sadhana* should have these three things: constancy, detachment and purity. Only then can it be dedicated to the Lord. All this indicates that only some and not all of the actions are to be renounced.

If we look at the whole message of the Gita, we find it advocating at several places that actions are not to be renounced. What it asks us to renounce is the fruit of actions. Everywhere in the Gita it is taught that we should act ceaselessly and renounce the fruit of our actions. But this is one side of it. The other side appears to be that certain actions should be renounced while certain other actions should be done. That is why Arjuna

asks, at the beginning of the Eighteenth Chapter, "On the one hand, it is said that whatever action we do, it should be followed by renunciation of its fruit (*falatyaga*) and on the other hand, it also appears that some actions must be strictly abjured while some actions should be done. How to reconcile these two positions?" This question has been asked to understand clearly the direction in which life should proceed and to have an insight into the true meaning of the renunciation of the fruit of actions. Actions in themselves are to be renounced in what the scriptures call *sannyasa*, while in the *falatyaga* there is renunciation of the fruit of actions. Does renunciation of the fruit of actions as enjoined by the Gita needs renunciation of the actions themselves? This is the crux of the matter. With reference to the criterion of the renunciation of the fruit, is there any role for *sannyasa*? What are the limits of *sannyasa* and *falatyaga*? This is what Arjuna asks.

### Renunciation of the Fruit: The Universal Test

The Lord has made one thing absolutely clear while answering this question: Renunciation of the fruit is the universal test. It can be universally applied. There is no contradiction between renunciation of the fruit of all the actions and the renunciation of *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions. The nature of some actions is such that they automatically

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Youth has no age. - Pablo Picasso

fall off when the test of renunciation of the fruit is applied. When it is said that renunciation of the fruit should be associated with the performance of actions, it invariably implies that some actions will have to be given up. When we act in conjunction with renunciation of the fruit of actions, it naturally involves abjuration of certain actions.

Let us think over it in depth. When we say that whatever actions we do, we should renounce their fruit, actions prompted by desire for the fruit, actions prompted by selfish motives cease immediately. Such actions, as well as actions which are forbidden, being immoral and unrighteous, are ruled out when it is said that the fruit of actions is to be renounced. To act with renunciation of its fruit is not something mechanical, something done without application of mind. In fact, when we apply this test, it becomes clear which actions are worthy of doing and which are not so.

Some say that the Gita enjoins us to act with renunciation of the fruit; it does not suggest which actions should be done. It does appear so, but it is not true. When it is said that one should act and renounce the fruit of actions, it becomes clear which actions should be done and which should not be done. Actions intended to harm others, actions full of falsehood, actions like stealing can never be done if their fruit is to be renounced. The sun illuminates all things, but does it illuminate darkness too? No, it just disappears. That is what happens to selfish or forbidden actions. All the actions should be subjected to this test. When we intend to do something, we should see whether it is possible for us to do it without any attachment and expectation of

returns. Renunciation of the fruit is the only unfailing test for actions. When this test is applied, actions with desire or selfish motives show themselves up as fit to be rejected. They must be renounced. Then pure and *sattvik* actions remain. They should be done with detachment, selflessness and humility. Renunciation of selfish actions is also an action and it should also be subjected to this universal test. Renunciation of selfish actions should not require any effort.

Thus, we have seen three things: (i) Whatever actions we do, we should renounce their fruit. (ii) When the test of renunciation of the fruit is applied, *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions, selfish and forbidden actions stand rejected. (iii) The same test is to be applied to such renunciation too. There should not be any vanity about renunciation, any feeling that 'I have made so much sacrifice.'

Why should *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions be abjured? Because they are not pure; and because of their being impure, they smear the mind of the doer with impurities. But on deeper observation, one finds that *sattvik* actions too are flawed. In fact, every action has some or the other defect in it. The *swadharma* of farming comes to mind as a pure and *sattvik* occupation. But even in such work, which is of the nature of *yajna*, some violence is involved. Ploughing and other operations destroy a number of living beings. When we open the door in the morning, the sun's rays enter the house and kill a number of living beings. What we call purification turns out to be a killing operation. Even *sattvik* work is thus flawed. What is then to be done?

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Everybody's youth is a dream, a form of chemical madness. - F. Scott Fitzgerald

I have already said that we have yet to develop to the full all the virtues. We have been able to have just a fleeting glimpse of qualities like wisdom, devotion, service and non-violence. It is not that they had fully blossomed sometime in the past. Mankind is learning from experience and making progress. In the Middle Ages, it was thought that agriculture involves violence; so it should be avoided by the people believing in non-violence and they should prefer trade and commerce instead. It is strange that to grow grains was considered sinful, but to sell them was not considered so! To avoid actions in this way does no good. Restricting the sphere of actions in this way will ultimately prove suicidal. The more a man thinks of escaping from actions, the more will he get entangled in them. If you have to trade in grains, is it not necessary for someone else to grow them?

If so, are you not an accomplice in the violence involved in farming? If growing cotton is a sin, it should be equally sinful to sell it. Not to produce cotton on the ground of it being an impure work is a sign of warped thinking. An attitude that goes on rejecting actions of all the types on different pretexts is not a sign of compassion; on the contrary, it shows lack of true compassion. We should understand that when the leaves are plucked, a tree does not wither away; it rather gets fresh foliage. In the contraction of the sphere of activities, there is contraction of the Self.

### **The Right Way to Extricate Oneself from Activity**

The question then arises, 'if all the activities are flawed, then why should not all of them be renounced?' This question has already

been answered. Renunciation of all the actions is indeed a very attractive and fascinating idea; but how to renounce innumerable actions? Is the way of giving up *rajasik* and *tamasik* actions applicable to *sattvik* actions too? How to avoid *sattvik* actions that are flawed or impure? The curious result of saying '*Indray takshakay swaha*' [1] ('Let Indra along with Takshak be offered as sacrifice in the *yajna*') is that Indra, being immortal, does not die, and Takshak too escapes death and becomes stronger. *Sattvik* actions have a good deal of merit and a little flaw in them. When you try to sacrifice them because of that flaw, the merit in them does not die because of its inherent strength, but the flaws survive and grow behind the shield of the merit. The flaws which otherwise could have been removed, get strengthened because of such indiscreet sacrifice. If we drive away the cat because it commits the violence of killing the rats, we shall have to suffer the violence committed by the rats. If snakes are done away with because they commit violence, a lot of pests will multiply and destroy the crops, resulting in the death of thousands of people. Renunciation must, therefore, be accompanied with wise discrimination.

There is a story that Machchhindranath asked Gorakhnath, his disciple, to give a boy a good wash. Gorakhnath literally washed the boy like a piece of cloth by thrashing him on a washing stone, squeezed him and put him on the clothes-line for drying! Is it the way to give a boy a wash? Clothes and boys are not washed in the same way. Similarly, there is a lot of difference between renouncing *sattvik* actions and renouncing

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Everything is pretty that is young. - Samuel Richardson

*rajasik* and *tamasik* actions. *Sattvik* actions are to be renounced in an altogether different way.

Actions bereft of wise discrimination can result in something adverse and unexpected. Has not Tukaram said, 'If I outwardly renounce the desires and passions, they will enter my heart. O Lord! What am I to do then?' Even if one tries to make a little sacrifice outwardly, the subtle urge for indulgence remains in the mind and grows there in strength, rendering that sacrifice meaningless. If a little bit of renunciation is going to lead us to build palatial houses, it makes no sense; it would have been better to live in a hut. It is better to continue to be dressed in the coat and the turban than to wear a loin-cloth and amass wealth and wallow in worldly pleasures. That is why the Lord has prescribed an altogether different way for renunciation of *sattvik* actions: they are to be done, but their fruits should be severed from them. While some actions themselves are to be renounced, fruits of some other are to be severed from them. A stain on the body can be washed off; but if the natural colour of the skin is dark, what is the point in white-washing it? It is better if no attention is paid to it.

There is a story about a man, who thought that his house was filthy and inauspicious and therefore left and went to another village. He found filth in that village too and therefore went to a forest. There, as he sat under a mango tree, a bird's droppings fell on his head. Disgusted, he cursed the forest and went and stood in a river. There he found big fish eating up the small ones, and that heightened his disgust. Convinced that the whole of creation was abominable, and there was no way out

except through death, he came out of the water and kindled a fire to end his life. A gentleman who was passing by enquired, "Brother, why do you want to end your life?" The man replied, "Because the world is an abominable place; it stinks." The gentleman said, "But imagine how it would stink when your flesh begins to burn! How awful the stench is when even a single hair burns! What would happen when your whole body gets burnt? We live nearby. How would we bear it? Where could we go?" The man was bewildered and exclaimed, "One cannot live in this world, nor can one die! What is one to do then?"

The moral is that if you go on condemning everything as abominable and try to escape from it, you simply cannot carry on. If you try to avoid a small flawed act, an act with a bigger flaw will become inescapable. The nature of *karma* is such that it cannot be got rid of by outward renunciation only. If a man tries to fight the *karma* that has come to his lot in the natural course, if he tries to swim against the current, he is bound to get exhausted in the end and be swept off by the current. His interest lies in acting in tune with the current of *swadharma*. Then the coatings on the mind will peel off gradually and the mind will go on getting increasingly purified. Activities will wither away of themselves even though actions will continue to be done. *Karma* will remain, but activity will disappear.

There is a difference between *karma* (action) and *kriya* (activity). Let us take an example to explain this. Suppose there is a great commotion at a place and it is to be stopped. A policeman goes there and shouts at the top

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It is the way of youth that each fresh piece of knowledge of life should go to its head, and that once uplifted by an emotion it can never have enough of it. - Stefan Zweig



of his voice. To make the people silent, he has to do the intense action of shouting. Someone else may go, stand up and raise his finger; and that will be sufficient to quieten the people. Another person may just go there and his very presence will stop the commotion and the noise. In the first case, activity is intense; in the second case, it is gentle; and in the third case, it is subtle. But action is the same, that of quietening the people.

As the mind gets purified, intensity of activity will go on diminishing. Activity will go on becoming gentler and subtler, and will altogether cease in the end. Action and activity are different things. Even grammatically, these two terms are different from each other.

This must be clearly understood. A man may express his anger either by shouting or by keeping silent. He may thus resort to different activities for the sake of one and the same action. A *jnani* does no activity, but his *karma* is infinite. His very existence induces innumerable people to take to the right path. Even if he is just sitting still, he does infinite *karma*. As activity goes on becoming subtler and subtler, the *karma* goes on growing. Thus, one can infer that when the mind is completely purified, activity will cease altogether and *karma* will become infinite. Activity will progressively become gentler and

subtler till its complete cessation in the end, and then infinite *karma* will take place by itself. *Karma* cannot be got rid of by rejecting it superficially. It is possible only gradually through selfless, desireless work. There is a poem by the poet Browning wherein a man asks the Pope, 'Why do you bedeck yourself with robes etc.? Why do you have all this paraphernalia? Why do you keep a serene face? Why this pretence?' The Pope answers, 'I do all this because it is possible that as I go on play-acting in this way, faith may touch me one day, without my even realizing it.' One should, therefore, go on doing desireless activity; it will finally culminate in the state of no activity.

[To be continued]

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#### References:

1. King Janmejey performed a *yajna* named *sarpasatra*, involving sacrifice and thus killing, of all the snakes as a snake had killed his father, King Parikshit. The snake chief Takshak then took refuge with Indra, the King of the Gods, who was immortal. Along with Takshak, Indra too was then offered in sacrifice.

The young have exalted notions, because they have not been humbled by life or learned its necessary limitations; moreover, their hopeful disposition makes them think themselves equal to great things—and that means having exalted notions. They would always rather do noble deeds than useful ones: Their lives are regulated more by moral feeling than by reasoning.... All their mistakes are in the direction of doing things excessively and vehemently. They overdo everything; they love too much, hate too much, and the same with everything else.

- Aristotle

It is with youth as with plants; from the first fruits they bear we learn what may be expected in future. – Demophilus

# Our Thoughts Shape Our Lives

Life is not a bed of roses. It is full of ups and downs and keeps oscillating between good and bad, pleasure and pain, gains and loss, winner or a loser. Those who look at the dark side often lose confidence and faith in life. They get upset and believe life to be a curse. Life is meaningless - they say. Such thoughts further deepen and make one feel helpless. They lose faith in themselves. They are always depressed and become pessimist. No ray of hope can be seen to transform life. The darkness around further drowns one into the deep well of failure, with no way out.

Here is an instance which advises us how to think and act in adverse situations. A person named Parth started a business of dry fruits. Within a short span of six months he was forced to shut down the business due to heavy loss. He was too upset to restart any other kind of work. He couldn't overcome his grief and so the future remained uncertain. The news of Parth's failure reached his Spiritual teacher (guru) Shreevatsa Krishnaji. He at once called him. Parth told him that he had worked hard but failed in business and also expressed his inability to restart any kind of work. He also confessed that he was unaware of the reasons about his failure.

The Spiritual Guru held Parth's hand and led him to a garden. Pointing at a withered little tomato plant he said, "I planted it carefully. I looked after it. I watered it regularly still it

died. It couldn't bear the untimely hail, a natural calamity. This factor was beyond my control and also quite unpredictable. We work but within our limits. It's the Lord who rules the world and decides the results.

Parth eagerly asked, "Why should we strive hard when the result is uncertain and beyond our control?" The teacher explained, "Many of us think likewise and lose faith in God as well as ourselves. We don't attempt to do what we really can. Before the truth unfolds itself in front of you, open the door to your right." Parth opened the door. He was still, his mouth and eyes wide open as he saw a heap of fresh red tomatoes. Krishnaji then explained, only some of the tomato sapling had withered, not all. When we keep trying, the chances of our being successful increase; but when we don't try at all or give up at an early stage of a trial or two then chances of being a loser are high. The doors of success are shut down. You begin deciding your own destiny. You reject fortune. You accept misfortune in the deal. That's unfair."

The story imparts a good lesson - that failure doesn't mean the end of success. One shouldn't stop and repent over it. Rather one should set his feet strongly on the paddle and begin soon to make up for the loss. Change your working style; think differently. Execute the same task with new tact and vigor. This changes the thought process and makes the mind strong and creative.

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Youth is an emblem of heaven; there alone its bloom is eternal. - F. Valentyn

Our mind is basically ruled by two major traits - the positive and the negative. When we decide to begin a task the positive trait supports it and fills us with enthusiasm and confidence. We are happy, contented and efficient in the beginning but when we encounter any challenge the negative trait begins to show its effect. Inability and inefficiency cloud the mind leading to dejection, anger, tension and frustration. Its impact is so strong that it shakes the confidence, shatters the dream. It gives no way to the positive thoughts to balance themselves again; but this doesn't mean the positive thoughts are weak or feeble. It's time to be cautious and careful not to uproot the positive thought but to strengthen it soon shedding away the negative ones before they spread stench all over. The moment you realize that the negative one is on the slightest backfoot, start driving it out without any hitch. Drag it out and push it away as far as you can.

The negative thoughts are like weeds. The moment they appear they start growing intensely. Their impact is too deep and strong. In the beginning they can be uprooted easily but once they gain strength they cannot be uprooted or destroyed.

Both the traits dwell in a common home. It's our own mind. They originate from it on the basis of previous knowledge or experience of the past. By our conscious effort we can train our mind so as to control their growth in adverse situations, demolish the negative ones as soon as they begin showing up. Cleanse the mind regularly and timely to be a person rich in positive thoughts. In the clear mind and clean heart dwells the pure soul which is a blessing of God.

Sometimes life appears to be a battlefield full of foes but sometimes it's quite easy and comfortable, full of joyous and jolly moments - no challenge, no problems, and no hurdles at all. If we forget the past and don't bother about the uncertain future, slowly we will gain the strength to fight the odds of life.

Actually the challenges or hurdles in the journey of life refine us. They compel us to rinse our thoughts, mind and way of thinking. The change leads to the right direction that ends in success. Without controlling the ongoing thought process in our mind we can't progress or achieve anything worthwhile. Hurdles in life are true teachers. The fear to accept great challenges vanishes as we handle little problems confidently. The thought process changes, experience gained makes us mentally strong and tactful to face adverse situations. We gain maturity and stability to face various unpredicted and unwanted situations in life. Our weaknesses are visible to us. We learn to overcome them as we move ahead. That is why the renowned clinical psychologist Dr. Ron Breazeale considers that facing the odds in life has its own meaning and one has to prepare oneself for it; it can be done.

Problems, tensions and hurdles of life toughen us. Failures dishearten us. We feel dejected and are lost in the race of life but if we gather courage and accept challenges, face them confidently with optimistic outlook, then life can be shaped and set in the right direction according to our own desire. Nobody can defeat us.

Our Revered Gurudev has rightly said: 'Man is not the slave of circumstances. He is the creator, controller and master of them.'

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**Youth is not like a new garment which we can keep fresh and fair by wearing sparingly; youth, while we have it, we must wear daily, and it will fast wear away. - John Foster**

# Nails Indicate Your Fitness Level

Nails reflect the state of one's health. Even if one tries to conceal the reality, his nails and their color can give an idea about his health. Nails of a patient can be examined to find out the disease from which he is suffering and the part of the body associated with it.

The relation of nails with medical science is not new. Even in ancient days, doctors used to diagnose the disease by examining the nails of the patients. Earlier, when there was no facility of diagnostic tests, the type and severity of the disease was ascertained by examining various parts of the body. In this process, the color of the nails was also analyzed. Even today, Ayurvedic and Homeopathic practitioners, during examination, note the nails' color of the sick. This is because nails and their color are a reflection of physical ailments. Our nails are composed of keratin. It is the key structural component of hair and nails, and it provides the necessary strength and toughness for masticatory organs, such as the tongue and the hard palate. This layer gets adversely affected when the body suffers from nutritional deficiency or any ailment. With this, the color of the nails also begins to change rapidly.

According to medical experts, those with cracked or broken nails are often found to suffer from the deficiency of vitamin C, folic

acid and proteins. But, this condition may also arise due to the deficiency of zinc or when one is suffering from psoriasis. But, in the latter case, holes also appear on them along with cracks. The growth of nails varies with seasons. They grow rapidly in summer, while demonstrate a slower growth during winter. Tension and anxiety adversely affect their growth, because stress disturbs the hemoglobin level of the blood. Dermatologists are of the opinion that it is not essential that the changing color of the nails may indicate the same disease in everyone. Many a times, their color, stripes and thickness may be the same for more than one disease.

Thick nails, a bit elevated from the nail bed, indicate fungal infection. Low immunity level could make them dry and colorless, while presence of pus in the body could turn them black. Curling of nails indicates heart disease, while appearance of white lines on them is a symptom of kidney disorder. In case of Diabetes, they either turn white or are marked by few pink lines, while red lines could be seen on the nails of heart patients.

Yellowing of nails could indicate anemia, heart disease, malnutrition or liver disorder. But, this may also be due to jaundice, thyroid disorder, diabetes or psoriasis. Thick yellow nails indicate problem in lungs. White colored nails or presence of white spots on them

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**Tell me what are the prevailing sentiments that occupy the minds of your young men, and I will tell you what is to be the character of the next generation. - Edmund Burke**

indicate diseases related to liver, heart and intestines. Nails which are half pink and half white indicate kidney disorder.

If the nails are raised or the nail folds are swollen, then this could mean swelling of the lungs and intestine. They could turn blue either if the body is not getting sufficient amount of oxygen or due to other diseases like pneumonia, lung infection and heart diseases. Nails could acquire a convex shape like that of a spoon in case of blood deficiency, hereditary diseases and many other diseases. In medical terminology this condition is referred to as 'clubbing' of nails.

Fungal infection may also be a reason behind the changing color of the nails. Initially, they appear white or yellow. But, with increasing infection, they get discolored and turn rough and thin. Experts believe that the chances of infection in nails increase when our body comes in contact with various microbes and germs. If the skin is infected and the affected area is scratched with nails, then they also get infected. Those who swim a lot or spend more time in water or those who wear shoes for long hours are also prone to nail infection. Usually, this infection distorts their shape. Also, itching, swelling and pain occur around them. Doctors say that it could take upto six months to cure

the infected nails of the hands, while those of the feet could require a treatment of nine to twelve months. In many cases, the infected nail needs to be removed all together. If one wants healthy nails, he should look after them properly. For this, it is essential to take healthy food. This would not only keep the nails healthy, but would also prevent them from cracking or breaking.

The consumption of vitamin B would augment their beauty. They may be kept healthy and beautiful by protecting the nail folds. Oil or some other lubricating agent should be applied on them to maintain their softness and prevent them from drying or turning lifeless. The application of chemical products should be avoided, or at least, restricted. Smooth and clean nails, which are light-pink in color, are a mark of fitness. Yet, full care should be given to their cleanliness, otherwise they may get infected and eventually, cause diseases.

Disease-causing bacteria grow rapidly in the gap present between the skin and the nails. Therefore, one should give special attention to keep this area clean. The hands and the nails should always be washed properly after visiting the toilet and before cooking and eating. Nails should be cut and cleaned whenever they grow long and appear dirty. If anything unusual appears in them, then the physician must be consulted.

"There are two kinds of people. One kind, you can just tell by looking at them at what point they congealed into their final selves. It might be a very nice self, but you know you can expect no more surprises from it. Whereas, the other kind keeps moving, changing... They are fluid. They keep moving forward and making new trysts with life, and the motion of it keeps them young. In my opinion, they are the only people who are still alive. You must be constantly on your guard against congealing."

- Gail Godwin

**Youth should be radical. Youth should demand change in the world. Youth should not accept the old order if the world is to move on. - William Allen White**

# Plans and Preparation to Usher in a Bright and Blissful Era

(Translation of a discourse given by Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya sometime in mid 1960s on the topic "*Yug Nirmāṇa Yojanā Aur Usake Bhāvī Kāryakrama*")

Let us begin with collective chant of the Gayatri Mantra:

"|| *Om Bhūr Bhuvah Swah, Tatsaviturvarenyam Bhargo Devasya Dhīmahī, Dhiyo Yonah Prachodayāt* ||"

## **Sisters and Brothers,**

Our *Yug Nirman Yojana* (mission to lay the foundation of a new era of peace, progress and bliss) has begun with the noble aim of refinement and evolution of thoughts, sentiments, and emotional development of the masses. Of the many wonderful faculties bestowed upon human beings, the faculty of emotions, the source of sensitivity, love, and unalloyed joy, is supreme. More than the circumstances, environment of life, or any resources, it is this faculty which is responsible for one's happiness, or tensions and sorrows in general. Evolution and righteous use of the power of emotions can also solve most of the problems faced by the world today. How?

Nature has provided substantial means and resources for 'naturally healthy and joyful' survival of all creatures. Have you ever heard of wild animals being dissatisfied or frustrated of their lives, or being concerned, worried, and sad about anything? The

domestic or captured animals, or the animals harassed by mankind might fall sick or suffer in several ways, but not the wild ones. Then why is it that a human being, despite being endowed with so many potentials and the splendid faculty of intelligence, often becomes unhappy, desperate, anxious, annoyed, jealous, frantic, etc.; suffers in several ways, and keeps complaining about something or the other? The root-cause of these complications lies in his emotional core, which influences his mental state, and hence his attitude, thoughts and behavior in a significant way.

It is ironical that in spite of making amazing progress and advancement in producing and possessing enormous tools of comforts and pleasures, today's society is starving for happiness and peace of mind! Surprisingly this complexity and problem appear to be more prominent in the urban society than the rural, or the less privileged sections. Is it that they just remain 'contented' with whatever they get to fulfill their hunger, whereas the more 'privileged' ones strive for further progress? Well, but why in the endeavor of higher progress they have to embrace negativity, lose the peace and natural joy of their minds? Look at our ancestral history of Vedic Age! How our *rishis* enjoyed unalloyed bliss and peace in utterly austere and ascetic life! Moreover, in spite of having no materialistic resources and facilities, they were far more advanced than

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**Youth are diamonds in the sun, diamonds are forever. – Alphaville**

us in terms of physical and intellectual potentials, progress and knowledge.

On the contrary, think of the life of the giant, mighty, intrepid, brilliant and talented kings like Ravana! Ravana was supposed to have conquered many parts of the world and grabbed gigantic treasures and facilities; what is more, his kingdom was made up of gold! Still he remained dissatisfied and unhappy in his life and generated adversities for others too wherever he went. You may also find similar examples today. What is wrong with such people? Mainly, they lack humane sentiments, they might have accomplished advancement on worldly, extrovert fronts of life but their inner selves have remained crude and might have even accumulated the filth of vices and negative impressions of unethical thoughts and deeds.

Impurity of blood is at times manifested in appearance of acnes. If one acne or pimple is removed by minor surgery, by applying medicinal gel, or by some other treatment, another will crop-up, and so on...; their growth and consequent effects would continue to trouble the patient till the real cause - infection, or impurity of blood - is cured. Similarly our emotional complexity, our mental impurity, our wrong attitude would continue to create one problem or the other for us and also our family, friends and others with whom we interact. At a larger dimension, similar is the case of adversities and problems faced by the world today. Emotional impurities like selfishness, untoward passions, greed, cravings, excessive ambitions, arrogance, envy, hatred, anger, cruelty, animosity, etc, of individuals have given rise to numerous problems, disorders, disparities, anomalies,

disturbances, complexities, adversities, and challenges at personal, social, national and global levels.

The ancient history of India is that of holistic development, prosperity and divine peace and happiness. This land was reputed as the land of gods. But there weren't technological tools, facilities, comforts there; no one there would have even dreamt of the superb materialistically advanced development, transportation and communication facilities that are seen today. In spite of this, ancient India was so progressive and prosperous! People were so happy; life was so majestic here that ancient India was glorified as *swargādapi garīyasī* (superior than the heavens)! This was because people lived for high ideals; their hearts (emotional core) were full of selfless love, compassion and mutual respect. Sacrificing self-interest and bearing discomfort and pains for the service of others, for the good of the society, was common. Social harmony and mutual cooperation, coupled with adoption of simple living and high thinking led to all-round prosperity in ancient Indian society. Disciplined life and hard-work and blissful attitude blessed them with superb physical and mental health.

And, what is the state of our society, our lives today? We have chosen to forget our great cultural heritage and ignore the ideals of human life, and have let ourselves deluded, allured, and driven by the glitter of name, fame, glamour, and passions of instinctive pleasures. In the rat-race of materialistic gains, outer progress and false-pride and mindless ambitions, we have lost the nectar of soothing peace and emotions indwelling in our inner

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Youth is the season of hope, enterprise, and energy, to a nation as well as an individual. - William R. Williams

self. Driven by artificiality, our sentiments of love and compassion, our feelings of joy and calmness too have become artificial and adulterated. Before it is too late, we must rectify this mistake, remove this impurity, and protect, nurture and rejuvenate the natural spirit of humane emotions. *Yug Nirman Yojna* has emerged to motivate and help more and more people in this endeavor, irrespective of their creed, caste, religion, and faith.

Thought-Revolution (*Vichāra Krānti*), and dissemination of scientific spirituality (*Vaigyānika Ādhyātmawad*) and adept art of living a worthy and progressive life (*Sanjīvanī Vidyā*) are our major initiatives as part of *Yug Nirman Yojna*. It is a global socio-spiritual movement aimed to give positive and righteous direction to people's thoughts, to enlighten their mind, to awaken their divine sentiments, and thus reverse the wrong, declining trends of the present, and transform adversities into opportunities for courageous rise. The problems and challenges before the world are many and appear intractable. But they all could be checked and resolved if their root-cause is removed.

Most of the problems of today are self-created, and consequent adversities and threats are invited by mankind. The origin of these lies in people's own thoughts, attitude, aspirations, and mental malice and emotional weakness. For example, if one is lured by glamour, lavish life-style, or pompous status, etc, his needs would never be satisfied and so would be his thirst for more money. If income/production is less and the population and its expenditures and demands are more, the economy of a family, a country is bound to be

trapped in debt. Artificial life-style, addictions, and luxuries, and the culture of inflated consumerism and commercialization has not only weakened our health but also disrupted the eco-system and the environment.

To a large extent, cravings of the consumers for instinctive pleasures, lavish comforts, and excessive possession, and passions of the industrialists/businessmen and traders for making huge profits and expanding their hold on market-power, are responsible for corruption at a grand scale. Self-obsession, greed, and mentality of immediate gains, success without merit, etc., spread this evil on other fronts of personal and public life. As we all know, an arrogant, short-tempered, narrow-minded, self-obsessed, revengeful fellow generates foes and spoils the harmony of ambience wherever he goes. In a more expanded form, this emotional malice and mentality of individuals and its cascading effects are directly or indirectly responsible for disharmony and conflicts at social, national and even international levels. Therefore, apart from contributing to, and cooperating with, multifaceted approaches to save the future of the earth and mankind, our mission's main focus is – treatment of the root.

Religious teachings and sentiments have deep impact on emotions and thoughts of those who have faith. More than 80% of the Indian masses fall in this category. If their superstitions, blind faith, and emotional exploitation in the name of religion are to be stopped, if they are to be awakened, taught the truth of religiousness, and shown the light of prudence and reasoning, this can be most effectively done only through the medium of religion. As

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**Youth is the gay and pleasant spring of life, when joy is stirring in the dancing blood, and nature calls us with a thousand songs to share her general feast. - Joseph Rigdway**



they are mostly illiterate, innocent, and deluded, we have chosen to disseminate good thoughts, cultivate scientific temperament, guide and motivate them through religious platform for their uplift, welfare, and intelligent and emotional development. Socio-cultural and grass-roots educative development activities, and self-reliance and personality refinement training programmes also are integral part of *Yug Nirman Yojna*.

The power of religious organizations is no less than any government in the social context. Religious organizations should therefore come forward to help social reformation and uplift. In India there are about five to six million hermits, *sanyasis*, saints, priests or religious personalities, who have been surviving on alms or devotional offerings. They are spread almost across the entire country. There are nearly seven hundred thousand villages here. So if about eight of these 'religious masters' adopt one village each and work for the awareness and welfare of its people then the goal of all-round progress would be achieved in a short time. They may begin with teaching basic hygiene, literacy and inspiring storytelling, and discourses; they may generate social harmony, and motivate people for collective efforts to resolve the problems specific to their village, help them make adept use of the existing grants, if any, and seek support of non-governmental organizations, in the nearby region. Most importantly, they should inspire people's devotional sentiments in righteous direction to help spread goodwill and courage, dutifulness, and spirit of collective progress.

In many parts of Indian society, people confuse devotion or religiousness with some

traditional rituals, idol worshipping and offerings made in a shrine. Such blind faith and practices should be uprooted. People must understand and also make others learn that true worship, devotion or service of God is offered through compassion, altruistic service of the needy and sincere efforts for the welfare of all, for the beautification (betterment) of His creation – the world. I am happy to see that our *Yug Nirman Yojna* has succeeded in generating mass awareness in this regard and has also motivated many to voluntarily join this noble mission.

Many of the grand shrines in our country are so affluent that even if a fraction of their monthly income is used for social reformation, and skill-development projects and farsighted self-reliant progress, it would significantly strengthen the economy of our villages. Some fraction of the charity received by religious trusts should be used to develop and support educational institutes that would produce dedicated talents who would disseminate the message of humanity, and divine Indian culture and wisdom that has the potential not only to help revert the declining trends and allay the adversities, but also to guide holistic wellbeing and progress to usher in the era of unalloyed love, enlightenment, and lasting bliss. In spite of its meager resources, *Yug Nirman Yojna* has taken pioneering and trend-setting steps in this direction\*.

|| *Om Shanti* ||

**\*Remark:** As per Acharya ji's vision, his mission has now accomplished a milestone in its glorious journey with the establishment and successful completion of a decade of first of its kind, full-fledged university – the "*Dev Sanskriti Vishwa Vidyalaya*", Shantikunj, Haridwar.

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Youth, enthusiasm, and tenderness are like the days of spring; instead of complaining of their brevity try to enjoy them. – Ruckert



Massive turnout of AWGP volunteers of Rajasthan at the Zonal Workshop conducted at Jaipur from December 18-20, 2015



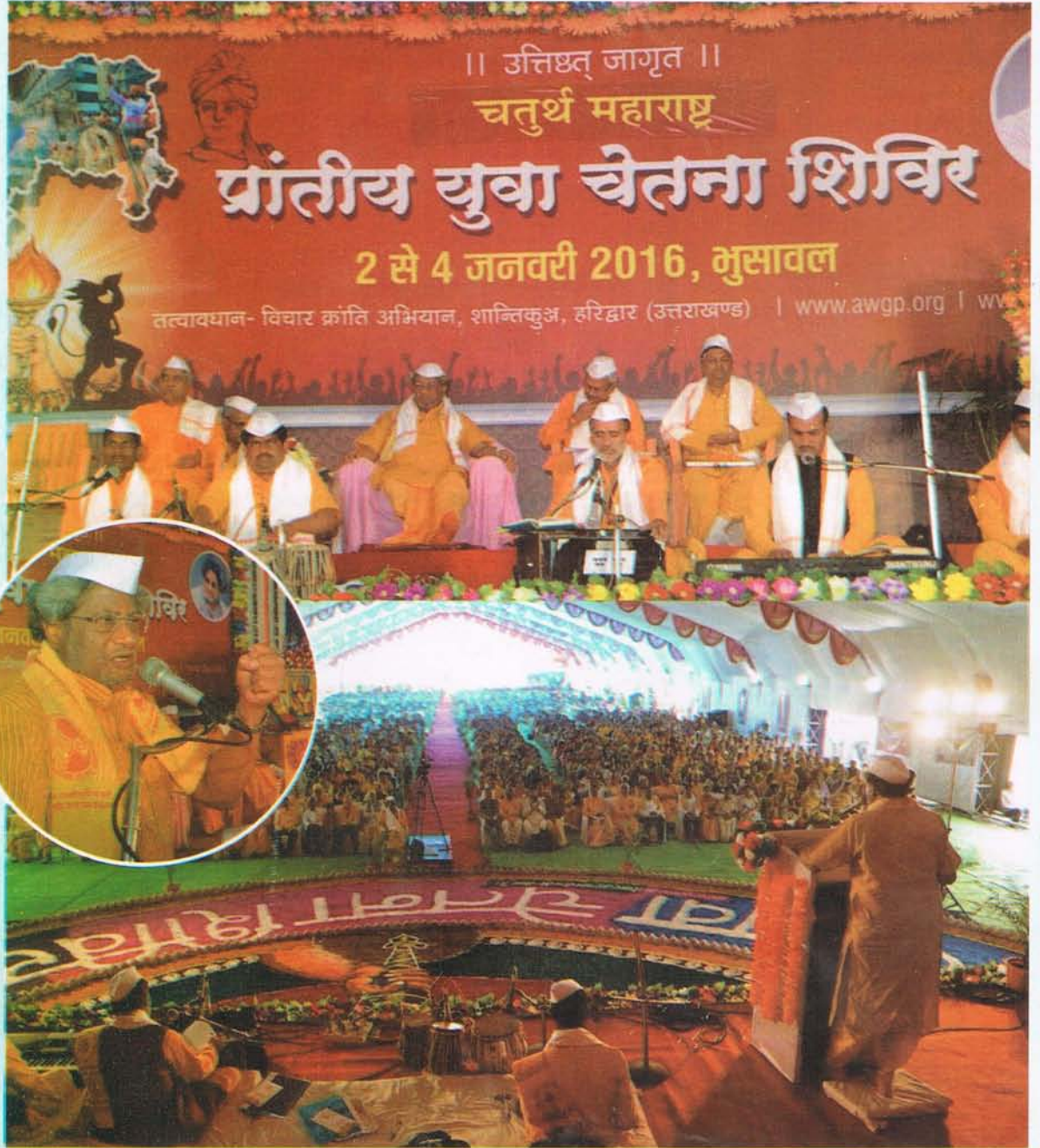
4th Chhattisgarh State youth awakening convention held at Bhilai from December 25-27, 2015 under the aegis of Shantikunj, Haridwar

**Akhand Jyoti**

RNI No. UPENG/2003/9850



www.awgp.org



Glimpses of 4<sup>th</sup> Maharashtra State youth awakening convention held at Bhusaval from January 2-4, 2016 under the aegis of Shantikunj, Haridwar

**Annual Subscription: India: ₹ 100  
Abroad: ₹ 1050**

Publisher & Printer - Mrityunjay Sharma, Printed by - Akhand Jyoti Sansthan at Jan Jagran Press, Mathura 281003.

Chief Editor - Dr. Pranav Pandya • Editor - Shambhudass

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