

Self Awakening

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Maha Yoga - Simplest, no-cost and highest method of self-realization



Editor's note

Dear Readers:

The purpose of this quarterly newsletter, Self Awakening, is to inform Sadhaks (seekers of self-realization) and other readers about Maha Yoga, a very simple, no cost and effective method of self-realization.

P. P. Shri Narayan Kaka Maharaj of Nashik, India is a leading teacher and exponent of Maha Yoga, a centuries old tradition, whereby a realized Guru (Siddha Guru) awakens the Universal Life Energy (Kundalini) within the Sadhak, eventually leading him/her to self-realization.

To the thousands of Sadhaks in the Maha Yoga tradition all over the world and other interested readers, this e-newsletter is intended to provide virtual Satsang. It is intended to help keep Sadhaks engaged in Maha Yoga, be informed about Maha Yoga-related events around the world, and to provide a forum for getting guidance about Maha Yoga from P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj and other Maha Yoga leaders.

As I have mentioned in previous issues of Self Awakening, the success of this e-newsletter will depend upon Sadhak participation through their contribution of content. Sadhaks are therefore encouraged to contribute news about Maha Yoga-related events in their parts of the world, thoughtful articles and life experiences (not experiences during Sadhan), questions about Maha Yoga and their Sadhan (practice) they would like addressed, and any comments and suggestions regarding this e-newsletter. Many readers have contributed questions on various aspects of Maha Yoga, and we would like to encourage such continued enthusiasm in that regards. However, we would also like our readers to contribute thoughtful articles, interesting life experiences related to Maha Yoga and news about Maha Yoga-related events. We look forward to receiving such content from those who want to contribute. Please send any content, comments, or questions you would like to submit to self.awakening@gmail.com.

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Discussion with P. P. Kaka Maharaj

In February 2010, the editor of this e-newsletter had the good fortune to spend several hours over a few days with P. P. Kaka Maharaj (Gurudev) in a discussion on Maha Yoga. Following are translated and edited excerpts from that discussion.

Editor: Thank you Gurudev for this opportunity to talk to you about Maha Yoga on behalf of the readers of Self Awakening, our quarterly e-newsletter. Last year we had a similar discussion in which you spoke about your own life experiences and your advice to Sadhaks. Incidentally, that interview was very well received by readers of the e-newsletter as evident in the feedback we got. This time I would like to get your thoughts on Maha Yoga, Deeksha and Sadhan. Shall we begin?

Gurudev: I am happy to hear that the discussion we had last year was well-received. Let us hope the discussion we are about to have will also be useful to Sadhaks. Let us begin.

Editor: Great. We hear quite often from you and others in our Parampara (lineage) that Maha Yoga is the best approach to Yoga. Most of us who have been following this path for a while believe it is, because of the experiences we have had over the years. But people who are new to Maha Yoga often ask us why we believe that is the case. It would be great if you could shed some light on this topic.

Gurudev: As you are aware, there are several different approaches to Yoga, all with the same goal of taking a Sadhak to self-enlightenment. There are Hatha Yoga, Laya Yoga, Mantra Yoga and Raja Yoga, among others which are designed to take a dedicated and diligent Sadhak eventually to self-enlightenment. All these forms of Yoga require a Sadhak to devote long periods of time under the supervision of competent Gurus, in practices that are designed to eventually result in self-awakening. But these are very difficult approaches to follow and most Sadhaks, while deriving many benefits, both physical and mental, fail to become spiritually awakened. Given the popularity of Hatha Yoga these days, I would like to point out that even in the great Hatha Yoga treatise, “Hatha Yoga Pradipika”, after describing all the asanas and other practices, in its very last verse the author, Svatiarama, says:

As long as Prana does not enter the Sushumna (the subtle pathway or “Nadi” along the spine) and reach its highest goal at the crown of the head, as long as the absolute is not manifested in Samadhi, as long as the I does not become one with the Brahman, so long all the talk of knowledge and wisdom is merely the nonsensical babbling of a mad man.

So, even after describing all these difficult and long-term Hatha Yoga practices, there is a disclaimer at the end that these practices may not necessarily result in the Sadhak’s Kundalini becoming awakened.

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Maha Yoga, on the other hand, is a direct approach to having self-awakening happen. A Sadhak following this approach does not need to do anything in terms of Yoga practices; in fact the less he involves himself in intentional “doing” of any practices during Sadhan (meditation), the better will be his progress. So, if the Sadhak is not to do anything, then who is going to be the “doer”? The “doer” will be Prana Shakti (Mother Energy, or Universal Life Energy). Prana Shakti is a subtle form of energy, the gross manifestation of which is the breath we inhale and exhale as long as we are alive. Once awakened, the Prana Shakti will clean out all blockages in the pathways (Nadis) within our subtle bodies, so she can move freely throughout our subtle bodies. All a Sadhak needs to do is to get out of her way during Sadhan; and she will not stop until she enters the Sushumna Nadi and takes him all the way eventually to the Samadhi state! So unlike the other Yoga approaches which involve “doing” various practices under the supervision of a Guru, a follower of Maha Yoga needs to just entrust himself to the inner guidance of the Prana Shakti and let whatever needs to happen, happen. And once unleashed, the Prana Shakti will not rest until the Sadhak achieves self-enlightenment.

Editor: Thank you for that clear and important differentiation between Maha Yoga and other approaches to Yoga. We hope Sadhaks internalize the key attribute of Maha Yoga, which is that the Sadhak is not the “doer” of Sadhan but it is the Prana Shakti within himself which is both the “doer” and the Guru. Now moving on to the next issue, we often get asked about the benefits of Maha Yoga. It would greatly help the Sadhak community if they can hear from you all the different ways Maha Yoga can benefit them.

Gurudev: Maha Yoga has the potential to uplift all attributes of a person’s life (Jeevan Kalyan). Not only that, it has the potential to uplift all human-kind as described in the Bhagvad Geeta. In fact I consider the Geeta to be a discourse on Maha Yoga itself, because all the different Yogas discussed there by Lord Krishna are aspects of Maha Yoga.

As I mentioned earlier, Maha Yoga does not involve “doing” on the part of a Sadhak. So that makes it very simple, because the Sadhak does not need to “do” anything, he has to simply let it “happen” during Sadhan. It does not involve an external Guru. Once the Prana Shakti is activated in a Sadhak, she becomes the Sadhak’s Guru; a Sadhak has to simply allow her to guide him. And unlike an earthly Guru who might make mistakes in his judgment about what a Sadhak needs for spiritual progress, Prana Shakti, which is the Sadhak’s internal Guru knows him intimately, including all the Samskaras (past actions and thoughts which influence a Sadhak) from this and all of his previous lives! So she can guide him in the best possible way, helping clear out all the blockages in the pathways of his subtle body (Nadi Shuddhi) to eventually take him to self awakening and enlightenment. And further, because the Sadhak allows the Prana Shakti to be the “doer”, his ego becomes diminished, and unlike other approaches which have the Sadhak be the “doer” of whatever practices that are prescribed, a Maha Yoga Sadhak has no difficulty letting go completely of his ego, a very important precondition, when he nears the Samadhi state.

The clearing of blockages to the flow of Prana in a Sadhak’s subtle body (Nadi Shuddhi) has all kinds of benefits. It is as if God becomes pleased with the Sadhak! By God, I mean the Prana Shakti. And once that happens, the Sadhak’s outlook towards life changes, he

Discussion with P. P. Kaka Maharaj (continued)

gradually reaches an elevated spiritual state and he finds that whatever needs to happen in his spiritual life or otherwise, happens automatically. He will find himself less directed towards chasing material things not necessary for his spiritual progress, thus he will find himself more contented with his life. He will also find his material circumstances change so as to enable his spiritual progress. The material world experiences he needs to have in order for him to progress spiritually will happen automatically. He will develop a sense of calm, which might help him materially as well, but more importantly, his need for material progress as a definer of his self-worth will gradually disappear. Over time he will develop a sense of detachment and the intensity of his desires and aversions will gradually diminish. He will begin to see his life from a very different perspective. His pleasures will be more in the spiritual realm rather than the material. He will begin to truly experience heaven on earth!

Editor: Heaven on earth, indeed! But in order to get there, Sadhaks need to become Maha Yogis! So please tell us how Sadhaks can get started. There is of course Deeksha (formal initiation) available to Sadhaks who are serious about following this path, but you have also created an introductory approach to Maha Yoga which can be tried by those who are in the early stages of exploring it. And you have also launched a tradition in recent years, of conducting periodic Maha Yoga Global Trails, with the next one to be held on May 16th 2010. So please talk to us about these different methods for Sadhaks to get started on the Maha Yoga path.

Gurudev: We created the introductory approach specifically for the purpose of introducing Maha Yoga to everyone. As you know, for formal Deeksha to happen a Sadhak has to agree to follow certain lifestyle restrictions. Of course, the purpose of these restrictions is to enable the Sadhak to make rapid and unobstructed progress without encountering any difficulties once Deeksha happens. But we often come across people who are interested in Maha Yoga, but have not actually **experienced** Maha Yoga Sadhan, and are therefore understandably reluctant to make lifestyle changing commitments. The introductory approach has been created for them. By following the introductory approach they can gradually begin to experience Maha Yoga Sadhan without having to make any lifestyle change commitments. So instead of jumping in feet-first, this introductory approach provides an intermediate step to those who are interested, and which over time has the potential to create a strong desire in Sadhaks for making a more complete commitment which will inevitably benefit them.

Also, when we talk to people all over the world about Maha Yoga, they sometimes find it difficult to believe that there is such a simple, easy and no-cost way to achieving self-realization and they want us to give them more theoretical explanations. So then, instead of talking to them further about it and lecturing to them, we simply have them sit comfortably, close their eyes and observe their breathing, i.e. introduce them directly to Maha Yoga. As soon as they do that, Prana Shakti automatically begins to rise within them. This is a subtle process, and when we direct people to observe it, most of them feel it. As the Prana Shakti begins to rise within their subtle bodies, people begin to turn inwards. They have their eyes closed, so they don't have any visual distractions to begin with, but they also gradually stop hearing the sounds around them and awareness of the chair or the

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Asana (mat or seat) on which they are sitting. It is not that their ears, eyes and other sensory organs quit functioning, but their awareness of the room in which they are sitting, or even the world around them, begins to diminish. The Prana Shakti, which usually moves around in a distracted manner through their subtle bodies, and being externally focused provides the constant barrage of sensory inputs, now becomes inward-directed. They automatically begin to experience a sense of calm and inner peace. I think this actual experience is much more useful and valuable to them than my giving long discourses and explanations. This was clearly the case in one of the peace events we took part in during our visit to California, when the organizers of that event were moved to write to us that the introduction to Maha Yoga we conducted there, with a short period of Sadhan, was much more effective in creating a sense of peace within the attendees than all the other discourses on peace given by other speakers.

Further, it is our intent to share this approach with everyone in the world. Not just to keep it hidden for the benefit of a few people. It also costs the Sadhak nothing, not a penny/paisa, either to participate in the introductory approach or to receive formal Deeksha. So cost can never be an issue with Maha Yoga.

As you mentioned, we have also been conducting periodic Global Maha Yoga Trials for Peace over the past few years. Our intent here is to increase awareness of Maha Yoga within all corners of the world. As you know, we have people all over the world participate in these trials.

The next global trial will be held on May 16th this year (2010). People have been asked to sit for Sadhan in their own homes for 21 minutes beginning 6:05 am until 6:26 am local time. They do not need to synchronize their time of Sadhan with the time in India or anywhere else in the world. They should just follow the clock in their own country or time-zone and sit when their own clock reads 6:05 am on that day. They should just sit comfortably, close their eyes and observe their automatic breathing. It is important that they not try to control their breathing or anything else, just observe it. For example, if they find themselves not breathing in for a while after they have exhaled, that is fine, just observe it and realize that a type of Pranayam called Bahir Kumbhak has automatically and involuntarily happened. Bahir Kumbhak has happened, it has not been done! Of course, they might experience nothing breathing-related beyond just their normal breathing patterns, but they will inevitably experience a sense of calm during their Sadhan. It is important for the participant to not “do” anything intentionally during this period. He should just let what happens to his body and his mind happen. Prana Shakti will be the “doer” during this time, the Sadhak should just observe.

Our other intent with the global trial is to spread the concept of peace worldwide and to have people actually experience a sense of universal brotherhood and sisterhood. The air we breathe can be considered to be a gross aspect of the subtle Prana Shakti which resides in all of us. And as you are aware, we consider Prana Shakti to be the Mother Energy, which makes the air we breathe the equivalent of our Mother who supports us all! None of us can live without the air around us, so the air we all breathe on this planet of ours, regardless of the national or state borders within which we live, can be considered to be the Mother to us

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all. That makes us all brothers and sisters! With this in mind, I have a strong desire to make everyone on this earth realize our universal brotherhood and sisterhood, regardless of where we live, and to understand that Maha Yoga can actually and experientially give us this awareness. Therefore, I want to make as many people as possible aware of this path. Of course, it is up to them to pursue it and benefit from it; I just want to make everyone aware that such a path exists. Maha Yoga is the worship of Prana Shakti, our common Mother, which resides within us and supports us all!

Editor: That is a wonderful explanation of the introductory approach and the Global Maha Yoga Trials for Peace. Now, what about formal Deeksha, and how is it different from these introductory approaches?

Gurudev: All of us want a sense of peace and calm in our day-to-day lives, which makes us explore practices such as Yoga in the first place. This desire in our current lives is also to some extent a reflection of our having pursued Yoga or other such related practices in our prior lives. So even though we may not be aware of our prior efforts in these areas, I am quite certain that most of us who have an interest in Maha Yoga do have these Samskaras (past activities, either in this life or in prior lives). The introductory approach is called Purva-abhyas in Sanskrit. This term means “prior study”, which can be interpreted in two ways, as study prior to initiation or study that was done prior to this time. It is in fact a reflection of both; which is why when we have attendees participate in Purva-abhyas (introductory approach), because of their prior involvement with Yoga and related approaches, either in their current or prior lives, many of them are able to get the Maha Yoga Sadhan experience. And continued practice of the introductory approach in the privacy of their own homes, gradually (“Shanai, shanai”, in Sanskrit) has the potential to eventually take them towards self-realization.

The Global Trial for Peace is another way for us to increase awareness of Maha Yoga and for people all over the world to participate in the introductory approach at a propitious local time. For example, the next Global Trial will be held on May 16th, on Akshay Tritiya, the third day of the bright half of Vaishak (a lunar month). This is a very auspicious day; and it was on that day many years ago when P. P. Swami Gangadhar Tirth Maharaj gave Deeksha to P. P. Swami Narayan Dev Tirth Maharaj, the first two documented Gurus in our Maha Yoga Shaktipat lineage. Also, given the large number of people who participate in this event on the same day, it has a reinforcing effect on all participants in creating a shared feeling of Universal Brotherhood.

Deeksha is somewhat different from Purva-abhyas or the introductory approach, because it requires us to pray to our Gurudev to have Prana Shakti in the Sadhak who has requested Deeksha, to be directed and channeled into his Sushumna Nadi (subtle pathway along the spine). It is also called Shaktipat, which is the transfer of Prana energy from the Guru to the Sadhak. For Deeksha to happen, i.e. for our prayer to get answered, the Sadhak has to have a strong urge to receive Deeksha and a willingness to accept certain lifestyle restrictions, including on the type of food he eats, the consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other such items, etc. These restrictions are there only for the benefit of the Sadhak, for him to be able to make unobstructed and steady progress on the Maha Yoga path once Deeksha has

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happened. So, in a way Deeksha is a lifetime commitment on part of the Sadhak. But it takes a Sadhak to a more advanced stage instantly compared with the introductory approach.

Deeksha is binding in the sense that it imposes certain lifestyle restrictions, but it is also binding in another sense, which is that it instantly binds the normally unfocused and distracted Prana Shakti directly into the Sushumna Nadi and aligns it upwards in the specific direction needed for the Sadhak to achieve self-realization. So, while the introductory approach will give Sadhak's a sense of what the Maha Yoga experience is like, due to which they might later become interested in asking for Deeksha to happen, Deeksha instantly puts the Sadhak directly on the self-realization path.

It is important to point out here that while the restrictions associated with Deeksha might seem onerous at first, many people who diligently and seriously follow the introductory approach to Maha Yoga or even other Yoga paths, over time automatically and voluntarily change their lifestyles along the lines prescribed for accepting Deeksha. Accepting these lifestyle changes, as a precondition for having Deeksha happen, just accelerates that process and helps a Sadhak make unobstructed progress following Deeksha. The acceptance of such restrictions is also indicative of the strength of a Sadhak's internal urge to receive Deeksha and his seriousness in making further progress.

There is also another important difference between the introductory Maha Yoga approach and Deeksha. Since the purpose of the introductory approach is to increase Maha Yoga awareness, we want everyone on Earth to try it, with no commitments of any kind in terms of restriction, etc. So we encourage all Sadhaks to make as many people become aware of Maha Yoga as possible and to urge them all to try out the introductory approach or participate in the Global Trials. However, Deeksha is something quite different. We do not want anyone to push or urge someone else to ask for Deeksha. The desire for Deeksha has to come from within, and it should be a strong urge from within, not at the urging of someone else. A person desirous of receiving Deeksha has to send us a written note, by whatever means possible, that he or she is very interested in having that happen. Only then can we pray to our Gurudev and to the all-pervasive Prana Shakti, to have Deeksha happen for that Sadhak.

Having said that, we also find some Sadhaks who are simply following the introductory Maha Yoga approach and have not asked for formal Deeksha, show signs of Prana Shakti beginning to flow into the Sushumna Nadi. They begin having physical Kriyas (involuntary body movements) as the Prana Shakti begins its work of removing blockages along their Nadis. It is as if they have received Deeksha without having formally asked for it! I frankly don't know why it happens, but it might indicate that their Samskaras are such that the introductory approach becomes the equivalent of Deeksha for them. In that sense, even following the introductory Maha Yoga approach can be considered to be a form of Deeksha.

Regardless, Maha Yoga is an amazing gift to humanity from our forebears. Once a Sadhak begins following it in whatever form, he can rest assured that he is on the path toward self-realization and he will eventually get there. In that sense Prana Shakti very much becomes

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like his Mother holding his hand. This is quite different from the Sadhak holding his Mother's hand. If the Sadhak is holding his Mother's hand, upon getting distracted he might just let go of his Mother's hand and run off somewhere and not get to his destination. But if the Mother is holding the Sadhak's hand, she will not let go until she has taken him to his final goal!

Editor: Now that you have elaborated on all the different ways for Sadhaks to get started on the path of Maha Yoga, it would be great to hear your thoughts on Maha Yoga Sadhan itself. For example, we hear quite often from Sadhaks that they don't think they are making rapid enough progress and they want to know what they should do about that. What is your advice to such Sadhaks?

Gurudev: Sadhaks should understand that Maha Yoga Sadhan is not something one "does", it just "happens". All a Sadhak has to do for Sadhan to happen, is to sit comfortably in a quiet place with as few distractions as possible, close his eyes, relax his body as much as possible and simply observe what happens. **He should not do anything else!**

For example, if he is breathing in and out at his normal rate, he should just observe his normal and automatic breathing. If he can observe/feel the subtle flowing of Prana Shakti within himself he should simply observe it. And in doing so, if he finds himself not inhaling, or retaining his breath for an extended period of time, he should just observe that as well and understand that Kumbhak, a type of Pranayam (structured breathing), has automatically happened. He hasn't done it with any intent, it has simply happened! He hasn't timed his breathing in any way; he is just observing that it has happened. Another Sadhak might feel his body shake involuntarily or feel a sense of warmth in various parts of his body. Still others might find themselves doing Yoga Asanas or Mudras without having any express intent for doing so. Some also begin the chanting of unique Mantras or emit other sounds, again without intent.

What is happening in each of these cases is that the Prana Shakti has begun its process of cleansing the 72,000 Nadis (pathways) within the Sadhaks' subtle body and it is encountering and removing the obstacles it encounters by having the Sadhak go through physical Kriyas (actions). So you have to **observe what is happening and also give it time.**

Editor: Tell us more about the importance of Kriyas. Many Sadhaks become concerned that they are not experiencing any physical Kriyas, or the Kriyas which were happening to them in the past during Sadhan are no longer happening. What would you like to say to these Sadhaks?

Gurudev: Since every Sadhak has his unique set of accumulated Samskaras from his current and all his previous lives, which result in blockages to the free flow of Prana Shakti, the Nadi cleansing process is likely to be different for each Sadhak. The physical Kriyas that happen during Sadhan are a gross manifestation of the subtle process of Nadi Shuddhi (cleansing of the pathways). They are neither to be feared nor should they be desired. They are unique to each Sadhak and they occur based on his/her situation and needs. If a Sadhak needs to have certain types of Pranayam happen, Prana Shakti will make them happen. If certain

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Asanas or Mudras are needed given the specific needs of a Sadhak, he will find himself doing them without any express intent on his part. And as the Sadhak's Nadi-cleansing needs change over time, the Kriyas he might have experienced previously may not need to occur any longer, because the needed cleansing has already been accomplished, the blockages have been removed. Eventually, when Nadi-Shuddhi is completed, all physical Kriyas will stop. So I want to urge all Sadhaks to simply have the attitude of an observer during Sadhan and also not be attached to any Kriyas at all! **If Kriyas happen, they happen; if they don't that's great!**

In fact, from one perspective, the occurrence of Kriyas is an indication of the continued presence of obstacles along the pathways, which are blocking the free flow of Prana Shakti. So Sadhaks should not become concerned if the Kriyas have reduced or have been completely abated. It is in fact a sign of progress; indeed, a good development! The occurrence of physical Kriyas is good only in the sense that it can be an external indicator that the Prana Shakti is being channeled. But here again they are not necessary. There was one Sadhak from Goa, who had no Kriyas happen to him after Deeksha. He went right away to a calm meditative state! Kriyas were completely unnecessary for him, because of his past Samskaras. In fact, the abatement and non-occurrence of Kriyas is an indication that the Sadhak is progressing toward getting to a calm state. When Kriyas happen, the Sadhak's mind tends to get absorbed by all that Kriya-related activity. So, even if he is simply observing them, his mind is likely to remain active in that process and is unlikely to get into a calm state.

My advice to Sadhaks is to leave it up to Prana Shakti to cause or stop the occurrence of Kriyas. Let Mother Prana Shakti do what is needed. Think of it as your Mother scrubbing a soiled shirt. As long as the dirt does not come off the shirt, she will keep scrubbing it. When the shirt is free of all the dirt and is clean, she will stop scrubbing. Deeksha is the signal to Prana Shakti to begin the scrubbing. Whether the shirt has been soiled by "good" things like food or sweets/desserts spilled during lunch, or by "bad" things like dirt after having tripped on the playground, the shirt has to be scrubbed clean of them all!

Editor: That's good advice indeed! I sincerely hope Sadhaks internalize your advice and surrender to Mother Prana Shakti and let her wash us clean and take us to self-realization. However, there is another area of Sadhan we hear Sadhaks being concerned about. Many of them tell us that during Sadhan they get distracted by all kinds of thoughts. What is your advice to them?

Gurudev: Here again Sadhaks should simply observe their thoughts. A Sadhak should think of his mind as a room that needs to be swept clean of all the dust and the clutter of thoughts that have accumulated over the years. These might be good thoughts, or what he considers are bad thoughts; all of them need to be swept away by the broom of Prana Shakti. During Sadhan, a Sadhak should not try to intentionally "do" anything, including trying to suppress thoughts as they arise, whether they are good or bad. Trying to suppress thoughts will not work and doing so will only bring them out later and perhaps with greater intensity. He should simply observe them as they arise and just let them go. As thoughts arise and they are let go, his mind will begin to calm down.

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Our mind is nothing but a succession of thoughts. A thought arises, and by the time it gets resolved, another thought appears. This process during waking hours is almost continuous and overlapping for most people. But what happens if a thought arises, gets resolved, and is followed by a delay before the next thought comes up? That gap between two successive thoughts is the time when the Sadhak begins to experience his true self. That is the time when “he is there, but he is not there”! “He is there” in the sense that his Prana Shakti is there, but “he is not there” in the sense that his mind activity has stopped for that time interval. The objective of Sadhan is to increase the time interval between thoughts. By being an observer to his thoughts as they bubble up, a Sadhak stands apart from them, and in that very process he lets go of them. As this process goes on, the Sadhak will find that thought generation will slow down and the interval between thoughts will begin to increase. And he will begin to find himself increasingly in the observer (Sakshi) role, which will help him eventually to let go of his ego, a key step towards achieving self-realization.

The outpouring of thoughts during Sadhan is therefore a part of Sadhan itself. It is a type of Kriya which the Prana Shakti is making happen to begin the systematic process of sweeping the mind clean. It does not at all mean that the Sadhak is not making spiritual progress, or that it is an obstacle to Sadhan. Having the room of his mind be swept clean by the broom of Prana Shakti is a very important part of Sadhan.

Editor: Thank you for clarifying the role of thoughts during Sadhan. There is another final area of Sadhan which we sometimes hear some concerns about. It has to do with the feeling of Bhakti (devotion) which sometimes arises in Sadhaks. As you have suggested many times earlier that Sadhaks should leave it up to Prana Shakti to “do” what is needed, and Bhakti is indeed a wonderful feeling to have, as so many people who don’t have it wish they had it! But some Sadhaks get concerned that Bhakti might lead to Saguna Bhava (worship of God with attributes) which might keep them from being one with Nirguna or Brahman. It would be great if you could shed some light in this issue.

Gurudev: The purpose of Sadhan is eventually to go beyond the Gunas. As you know there are three Gunas (attributes, or tendencies), Sattva Guna (uplifting tendencies), Rajo Guna (dynamic tendencies) and Tamo Guna (inactive or inertial tendencies). The lifestyle changes we urge on those seeking Deeksha are designed to increase Sattva Guna, or uplifting tendencies within the Sadhak. This is important during the early stages of Maha Yoga because it helps the Sadhak’s mind become calm by avoiding food and other items that have a tendency to create too much dynamism (Rajo Guna) or inertia (Tamo Guna) in the Sadhak. But eventually, Sadhan goes beyond the Gunas, it becomes Gunaatit, i.e. it transcends the Gunas.

Bhakti is a good Bhava to have. But like other Bhavas that come from Sadhan he should understand that it too will be a passing phase. For example, if a Sadhak experiences seeing God as a bright light or some other form during Sadhan, he might get a good feeling from it. He might therefore want to experience it again and again since he enjoyed it so much the first time it happened. It will create an attachment (Moha, in Sanskrit) within him for that

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experience. As soon as the Sadhak gets such a desire and an attachment he inadvertently falls into a trap. As they say in cricket, he gets “clean-bowled”!

So, a Sadhak should not have an attitude of wanting or being attached to any specific type of experience during Sadhan or otherwise. He should have a detached attitude towards all Kriyas and Bhavas. He should leave it all to Prana Shakti and let her “do” with him what she needs to do. He need not worry so much if he develops Bhakti or does not develop Bhakti. If he diligently sits for Sadhan and allows Prana Shakti to do the job of cleansing him she will eventually take him beyond any of the Gunas. He will then become Gunaatit, i.e. beyond the Gunas!

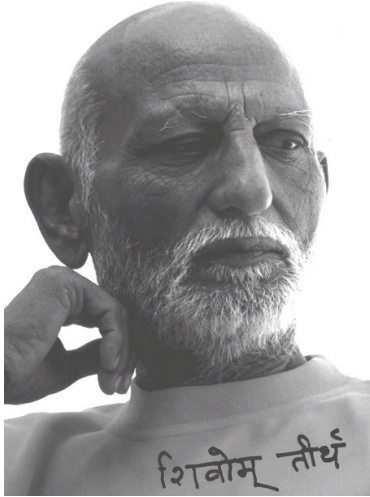
Editor: Thank you Gurudev for that wonderful explanation and advice. Your generosity with your time and the enthusiasm with which you discussed all these important issues have indeed been an uplifting experience for me personally. I hope your enthusiasm and generosity come across to readers of this discussion as well.

Gurudev: Thank you for taking my message to the readers.

I would like to thank Dear Shri Gurudev for the wonderful opportunity to be in his inspiring presence during the course of this discussion. I was personally struck by his enthusiasm and energy, despite his advancing years, in communicating the message of Maha Yoga and his strong interest in the spiritual advancement of the Sadhak community and of the world at large. I hope his words inspire Sadhaks to be diligent in their Sadhan, become worry-free, and to make as many people around the world aware of Maha Yoga, this amazing gift which is available for the asking! Any mistakes in translation or editing are my own.

Editor

Churning of the Heart - Excerpt



The following is a chapter from P. P. Swami Shivom Tirth Maharaj's trilogy, "Churning of the Heart". P. P. Swami Shivom Tirth Maharaj (left) was from the same Shaktipat lineage as P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj, a lineage which can be traced in recent times to P. P. Swami Gangadhar Tirth Maharaj who lived in the 19th century. In these excerpts, P. P. Swami Shivom Tirth Maharaj describes his experiences and interactions with his Guru, P. P. Swami Vishnu Tirth Maharaj, who he refers to as Maharajshri or Maharajji. These excerpts are published here with the kind permission of Swami Shivom Tirth Ashram, Inc. For those Sadhaks who are interested, copies of the trilogy are available at Amazon.com

Guru-Shishya Relationship

In this excerpt, Swami Shivom Tirth Maharaj gets Maharajshri (his Guru, Swami Vishnu Tirth Maharaj) to talk about the importance of letting go of one's ego and allowing the Shakti to do what is needed during Sadhan, and how a Shishya's (disciple's) ego can come in the way of deriving the full benefit from his relationship with his Guru - Editor

The only time I could converse with Maharajshri was during the morning walks. Usually we would be alone. Maharajshri was also in a healthy mood at that time. I did not have any respite from ashram activities throughout the day. There was no chance of sitting near Maharajshri. I queried, "Maharajji, I used to do sadhana and I also do it now, but the mind could never concentrate in the past, nor can it today. Kriyas happen; thoughts pass through. I cannot understand where my attention is diverted. Worldly thoughts keep coming. So what is the purpose of sadhan?"

Maharajshri said, "Why are you trying to put the cart in front of the bullock? You want to attain the state that occurs naturally after all the accumulated impressions are expunged before this has happened. Sadhana is not for attaining one-pointedness, but for removing all the accumulated impressions. One-pointedness is a natural state that never disappears but seems to have vanished behind layers of accumulated impressions. Once all the accumulated impressions are destroyed, it will appear in its original form. One-pointedness or concentration is against the principles of sadhan. Why would you aim at something that is not a goal of sadhan? Ask people how much single-pointedness their minds have achieved. There was a mahatma from Ujjain. When he prayed to his Guru Maharaj for initiation into Sanyas [renunciation], he was told, "When your mind can concentrate for five minutes, come to me then and I shall grant you Sanyas." Even after twenty years, his mind had been unable to attain one-pointedness.

Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

“One-pointedness is surely a natural characteristic of the mind, but as it is buried under unnatural characteristics, it is not experienced. There is no question of attaining one-pointedness of the mind. Since it is a natural characteristic of the mind, it is always there. The task is to get rid of the unnaturalness, which requires sadhan. Unnaturalness increases by unnatural spiritual practices, and thus the mind keeps moving away from its natural tendencies. Yes, if the sadhan is natural, then the negative tendencies due to unnaturalness are removed and the natural one-pointedness of the mind can be seen and experienced.

“This state of one-pointedness is not a very advanced state of spirituality. According to *Yoga Darshan*, the restrained state of the mind, that is, the state of samadhi, is much higher than this. In samadhi all the modifications are inhibited. Consequently all the activity of the chitta stops and the chitta is totally inhibited. The observer [the soul or the spiritual principle] is established in its original form. Asamprajnat samadhi has been obtained. In asamprajnat samadhi the mind is without an object, whereas, in the state of one-pointedness an object is always present. The meaning of one-pointedness is that the attention of the mind is withdrawn from all other modifications and focused on a single object. This happens to an extent that one becomes unaware of one’s ego and modifications dissolve. When there is knowledge of one object, the modification is objective and directed. But the chitta is working and all the modifications have not been inhibited. Whereas, in asamprajnat, the object totally vanishes. The knowledge of an emotion and the lack of it - both are lost.

“One-pointedness is not yoga; it is just the beginning in the direction of yoga. The journey may proceed forward or one could end up turning back towards the world. By the way, the deliberate study of yoga practice begins with an attempt to concentrate the tendencies of the chitta on a single object. It is initiated with an attempt to concentrate on some gross object. Initially a gross object is contemplated, then the object of concentration is reduced to its smallest, to such an extent that finally the pure substance, which is free from all modifications [asmita], becomes the object of one-pointedness. But yours is not such a goal-seeking sadhana. Yours is a sadhan of awakening of the Shakti, of surrender, and to let the awakened Shakti accomplish its work is your duty. Don’t run after one-pointedness. Let the Shakti remove your accumulated impressions. You will attain one-pointedness and at the right time even the chitta will become inhibited. Thus courage has been given a very high position in sadhan. The action of the Shakti directly attacks the accumulated impressions. It purifies them. It cleans them. Whenever the accumulated impressions of one-pointedness come to the surface, one experiences one-pointedness in kriyas. When the chitta becomes saturated with sattva guna, the natural state of one-pointedness is manifest. Thus the awakened Shakti paves the way for the inhibition of the chitta.

“If the aspirant does not force his ego in the kriyas [activities] of the Shakti, the rate of progress will be extremely fast. But the ego is such that it repeatedly comes in between. It lets a certain kriya happen, a certain one not happen. It lets some other kriya be intense, and so on and so forth. It keeps on doing something or the other. Due to this the naturalness of the kriyas is destroyed and the speed is reduced. It is very difficult to get rid of the cycle of accumulated impressions.”

Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

My next question was, “When you were in Nepal, I had opportunities to converse with a number of aspirants. All of them talked frequently of great experiences. It seemed as if all were aspirants of a high order. But immediately discussions about attachments and aversions would ensue. Their talk reflected pride. Sometimes there would be arguments over simple things. At that time it felt as if they were common worldly men.”

Maharajshri became more serious. He said, “Experiences occur not just for their own sake. They create a state of consciousness, which is fully attained after the removal of accumulated impressions. What you have just described indicates that this state of the chitta has not been achieved. The ego, which is sitting inside the conscious-self of a human, prevents the creation of this state of chitta. Why feel proud about a sadhan which the aspirant doesn’t do at all? But aspirants still feel proud. If the mind has pride, everything else follows behind. Whatever these aspirants say, they haven’t yet qualified as aspirants. Pride raises the head; it doesn’t sever it. Arguments over simple matters signify a lack of tolerance. Attachments and aversions denote a feeling that the world is real. If these traits exist in someone, what kind of aspirants are they? Being initiated and sitting in sadhan is not enough. Other things are required: seriousness, generosity, tolerance, humility, surrender, service, discipline and control over the senses, mind and speech. Then the accumulated impressions of an aspirant are eradicated in his sadhan. Tolerance gets rid of prarabdha [ripened samskaras] and service stops the accumulation of impression.

“There is no shortage of people who weave stories in this world, but spirituality is not just a subject of discussion. If it were, the whole world would have been liberated by now. In spirituality one observes the state of his chitta, the destruction of passions and a lack of pride. Becoming eligible for God’s grace is not so easy.

“It is not that I am unaware of these things, but as I look at the helplessness of these people due to their state of mind, I feel pity for them. I know that in their minds they are sad due to these shortcomings and wish to be freed of them, but are unable to do so. They are swinging on the swing of desire, stuck in the quicksand of accumulated impressions. Even as they attempt to get out, they go deeper into it. Now you ask whether they should be scolded or sympathized with. They sought the shelter of the Guru on being pained by desires. While giving initiation, I was aware of their mental states and initiated them, considering them to be deserving of mercy. Now it will take time for them to escape the quicksand of desire. The accumulated impressions of so many births will surely not be removed in a day. Sometimes up and sometimes down, this will keep on happening. This happens with all aspirants. However one thing is sure: their internal journey has begun. After receiving the grace of the Guru-Shakti, the inner light has started to glow. But the fog of accumulated impressions rises again and again and covers the mind.

“Now I would like to tell you something in this context. Your attention towards defects in people cannot be considered proper. You saw the defects, not the awakened Shakti. You saw them falling, not their attempt to rise. You saw the fog spread on the chitta and not the emerging beam of light. Every person is busy fighting his accumulated impressions. In trying to defeat them, he often has to face defeat. In this struggle a being often forgets that he is waging a war, but the struggle continues. If your attention keeps focusing on the

Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

defects of others, you will never be able to rise above your own. Seeing defects in others indicates that these defects are still within us. By paying such attention, our inner defects are strengthened. So give up the attitude of hatred and surprise towards these people and fill your mind with a feeling of sympathy. Pray to God for their liberation and you too will be liberated. Attempt to help them, only then will you find a supporter. Wipe their tears and you will find someone to wipe your own. Spirituality is an extremely subtle path. One is not aware when impressions are accumulated, when they become strong or when they ripen [become prarabdha]. People spend their entire lives in carelessness, and in the end, piles of impressions are accumulated within. The impressions of the good as well as the bad qualities of an action accumulate continuously. To experience these subtle processes, to put an end to them, and to prevent the further accumulation of impressions is a part of sadhan.

“The auspicious and inauspicious, good and bad - both together pervade the entire world, outside in the external world and inside the body. It is up to you to decide what you want to see, what you want to associate with and what you want to accept. Thus saintly people always refrain from pointing out others’ mistakes, speaking and hearing ill about others, avoiding such attractions and aversions lest their minds become attached to evil. If you get involved in seeing evil in the world, then you will see only evil everywhere. If you want to look outward, see only the goodness. If you want to see evil, look inside your mind. Then you will come to know where you stand.”

My mind was enchanted by Maharajshri’s thoughts. These thoughts influenced me so much that the world seemed to be pleasant, beautiful, enjoyable and full of happiness. A fragrance had spread everywhere in it. The bodies of people seemed to be external coverings in which the life-force was shining. But this state did not last for a long time. This was the power of Maharajshri’s words, which had taken control of my chitta. The moment this emotion broke, a negative feeling awakened. The mind started moving towards evil and again I began seeing the defects of others. Apprehensively, I placed my thoughts before Maharajshri. “Maharajshri, there are certain people who do not listen to you at all. They nod their heads in front of you but do exactly what they please once they go. What happens to these people?”

Maharajshri said, “You are still stuck there. You haven’t yet grasped the essence of the Guru-Shishya relationship. The Guru wishes the well-being of his disciple at the time of initiation and he can never wish ill for him. If he ever sees something untoward happening to his disciple, his heart cries out. One thing is clear: that the heart of the disciple is impure. Otherwise why would he come to a Guru? He is filled with defects and desires inside. He listens to the instructions of the Guru with a polluted chitta. He has difficulty in understanding their meaning and essence. Upon awakening, the Shakti begins to work towards the purification of the chitta, but it takes time. Until then the disciple disobeys the Guru. The Guru, being a well-wisher of the disciple, continues to forgive his mistakes with a generous heart. Sometimes, for the disciple’s welfare, he scolds him and sometimes he neglects him. How and when the Guru works should be left to the Guru.

Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

“If the Guru has love for the disciple, the disciple, in turn, has faith and surrender for the Guru. There are different levels of faith and surrender. One cannot immediately expect a mature state of faith. A little faith exists from the beginning, but a lack of surrender is apparent. Surrender is the result of a sense of service and surrender adds a glow to service. Surrender grants maturity to the sense of service. It is surrender that makes the Guru-Shishya relationship profound. What more can be said, but that all sadhanas and sadhan end in surrender. Surrender develops sadhan and eventually encompasses it within itself.

“Pride is an enemy of surrender. Those who nod their heads in front of me and, upon going out, do as they please, do so under the influence of pride. Pride does not go away immediately; it requires long treatment. Love and surrender are needed. If the Guru becomes upset with the disciple and abandons him, who will treat him? In this world no one cares for anyone. Only the Guru thinks of his disciple’s welfare. The guru-Shishya relationship is based on this feeling of welfare. There is no attachment, no selfishness. Hence the Guru’s attitude is very generous. Even if the disciple errs a thousand times, he will embrace him with love. The Guru’s heart is tormented at the possibility of his disciple’s misfortune.

“A disciple is like a small child. Sometimes he sulks, sometimes he is restless. As a wave rises from the ocean it reveals its identity. It takes up various forms and shows its playfulness. However, it attains peace only after merging in the ocean. The disciple too has his own pride, understanding, plans and restlessness but he does not have peace. He receives that only when he has surrendered at the feet of his Guru. That is why the saints and the scriptures have sung the glories of the Guru.”

Today the Guru-Shishya relationship is in grave danger. There are many Gurus and many disciples, but the nature of the Guru-Shishya relationship has changed. The true nature of this relationship is seen very rarely. The level of both, the Guru and the disciple, is deteriorating. Hence the plight of spiritual worship is serious.

I was reminded of an incident from the Ramayana. During Lord Rama’s period of exile he went to the ashram of Maharshi Atri and, in the presence of Sita, highly praised Maharshi’s wife, Devi Anusuya. In response Devi Anusuya said, “I haven’t done anything other than serve my husband with loyalty. I consider him to be my almighty. Due to this total service to him, I have obtained everything.” The same thing can be said about a disciple. If a disciple places implicit faith in his Guru, always remains in his service, doesn’t run after other Gurus and believes his Guru to be everything, then he needn’t do anything else. But pride comes in the way. A disciple disobeys his Guru on a number of occasions. In the presence of the Guru, he lowers his eyes out of shame, but in the Guru’s absence his mind runs wild.

I queried, “If the Guru’s body has merged, then what should the disciple do?”

Maharajshri said, “Lord Rama’s father sent him into exile for fourteen years and thereafter passed away. It never crossed Lord Rama’s mind that, because his father wasn’t alive anymore, he no longer needed to roam in the forests. Lord Rama fulfilled his promises to his

Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

father fully. Even if the Guru's body is not there, the spiritual practice given by him, his instructions and guidance, are with the disciple. And where does the Guru go? Earlier he was visible, now he is invisible. If the disciple is capable, he can see his Guru anytime. Even otherwise, the Guru is always there with an advanced disciple. If he obtains true knowledge of the Guru, then he is freed from the illusion of life and death.”

Maharajshri continued speaking and I was dumbfounded. Trying to understand, as if a fountain of knowledge was flowing by, I kept drinking and quenching my thirst. But the thirst was not quenched. The more I drank the more it increased. Each and every word was impacting my heart. Every thought was showing a new direction, and every sentiment that arose in Maharajshri's heart was leading me towards a state beyond explanation. Now questions had stopped arising in my mind. What world? What attachments and aversion? Everything seemed to dissolve in front of me.

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“Churning of the Heart” trilogy by P. P. Swami Shivom Tirth Maharaj is available from Amazon.com, or in India from:

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Answers to questions from Sadhaks

- **Question:** I have been sitting regularly for Sadhan for many years with a typical Sadhan session lasting for about 45 minutes to an hour. More recently, however, I have been getting the urge to get up and end my Sadhan after just five or ten minutes. What should I do about this recent development, because I would like to continue to be able to sit for Sadhan for longer durations as I had been in the past?

Answer: Sadhaks do sometimes experience such situations when they feel that their Sadhan does not last for as long as it did before, or the experiences they have during Sadhan are not the same or as intense as they had in the past. These are obstacles (Vighna) to Sadhan; and the best way to deal with them is not to get too distracted by them but to continue to sit regularly and diligently for Sadhan.

One thing you might try when you get the urge to get up is to direct your attention to your normal and automatic breathing. If you still feel like getting up, just ignore that feeling and redirect your attention back to your breath, and continue to sit for Sadhan. Continued Sadhan is the only way to overcome this obstacle. Gradually your Sadhan will get back on track and you will continue to progress spiritually. As long as you continue to feel the peace and calmness during Sadhan and during the rest of your day, you can be assured that you are on the right track.

- **Question:** Is the statement “I think, therefore I am” sufficient and right to describing existence?

Answer: Existence is not defined either by our bodies or our minds. If you think your existence is defined by your body you are not correct. If you think your existence is defined by your mind, you are also wrong. You will continue to exist even if your body and mind do not. You exist because of the presence of the Prana Shakti (Mother Energy) alone. So you should think of your true existence as being defined by the Prana Shakti and not by your body or your mind!

Adi Shankaracharya says that our existence is beyond our mind and hence our thinking. If your mind is not there do you perish? No! If your mind is not there, no thoughts will emanate from your mind, but you will continue to exist. In fact when your awareness of your body and your mind goes away you will become aware of your true self, which is the Prana Shakti. That is our true existence. It is beyond our bodies and our minds.

- **Question:** What are the different Chakras? What are the signs of a particular Chakra being opened?

Answer: When the Kundalini Shakti of a Sadhak gets awakened, it is said to rise from the Muladhar Chakra (node) at the base of his spine and eventually rise all the way to the Sahasrar Chakra which is located at the crown of his head. Most literature on Kundalini Shakti describes seven major Chakras including the Muladhar and the Sahasrar, each of which is assigned a resident deity, a number of sounds, a color and several other characteristics. Descriptions of the Chakras and their characteristics can be found in

Answers to questions from Sadhaks (continued)

many different books and treatises on Kundalini Shakti and Yoga practices, and those who are interested can refer to them if they feel like it.

However, the path of Maha Yoga does not call for devoting any attention to this matter at all. Once we begin paying attention to it, it becomes a topic for our thoughts and for our conversation. And whenever we have a topic for our thoughts to get preoccupied with, it becomes difficult for Sadhan to happen. Sadhan happens only when our mind becomes calm and we become devoid of any thoughts. Concern for which Chakra has opened and what signs are evident for that having happened, will only keep true Sadhan from happening. So please do not get distracted by such concerns. Signs of progress along the path of Maha Yoga are the sense of calm one feels during Sadhan and otherwise, as well as a reduction in our attachments (wants and desires) and our aversions.

- **Question:** Is it possible for a Maha Yoga Guru to perform miracles?

Answer: Miracles are events or happenings which go beyond rational thought. They are not “done” but they can sometimes happen. But it is important for Sadhaks not to pay much attention to such things because they will only result in being obstructions to Sadhan. For example, a Sadhak might experience a glowing light approaching him and he might respond to it by getting excited about this happening. But such a happening or “miracle” will only result in the Sadhak’s mind going in overdrive and it will only retard his Sadhan.

Sometimes one might encounter Gurus or others who have Siddhis (power to perform certain types of “miracles”). But please remember that such Siddhis are manifestations of the person’s mind. Our objective in Maha Yoga is to go beyond our minds, and to the extent our mental powers result in miracles happening, we need to have a completely detached attitude towards them and not devote any mental energy to them. Miracles can therefore become obstructions to progress on the path of Maha Yoga. So one has to go beyond such “miracles” and not look for them nor get excited by them if they happen.

- **Question:** I am doing meditation for the past one year. I do experience different vibrations in my body, but still my mind is not calm. What might be the reason and what should I do about it?

Answer: To begin with, you should not think of yourself “doing” meditation. You should just sit for Sadhan and let meditation (Sadhan) happen. Your role during Sadhan is to just observe any Kriyas (activity), physical or mental, that happen **without getting attached to them**. If you find vibrations happening in any part of your body just observe that phenomenon without becoming attached to it. Let these Kriyas happen and as thoughts about them arise, just let them go. The key is to let go of your body awareness and also to let go of your mental attachments. As you gradually find yourself in the observer role, both in terms of observing your body (physical Kriyas) without any attachment, and also your mind, you will begin to experience a sense of calm and begin to identify yourself with that “observer” which is your true self.

Answers to questions from Sadhaks (continued)

- **Question:** Is it more effective to sit for meditation near or in the physical presence of the Guru?

Answer: Maha Yoga Deeksha (initiation) comprises of Shaktipat, the transmission of Guru Tatva (spiritual essence of the Guru) from the Guru to the Sadhak. It is important to keep in mind that after Deeksha, the Guru Tatva will always be with the Sadhak regardless of whether or not he is near or in the presence of the Guru. And the Guru Tatva in the Sadhak is imperishable.

So, if you believe that the Guru is always with you, there is no reason to think that you need to be in the presence of the Guru during Sadhan. The physical presence of the Guru may enhance the Sadhan for some Sadhaks whose mind-stuff (Chitta) gets calmed by such presence. However, for some other Sadhaks the very presence of the Guru might cause their minds to become preoccupied with the thought of being in the presence of the Guru, and it might keep them from reaching the calm state that happens during Sadhan. So please do not be very concerned about sitting for Sadhan in the presence of the Guru. Just remember that the Guru is always with you and the important thing is to sit for Sadhan diligently and regularly.

- **Question:** Is it important to chant Stotras (prayer verses) regularly or is it more beneficial to use that time for Sadhan?

Answer: Sometimes the chanting of Stotras can be beneficial in calming the mind, especially if it results in bringing the Sadhak closer to the Guru Tatva (spiritual essence of the Guru). But the intentional and active recitation of Stotras will require a Sadhak to read them from a book or recite them from memory, both of which will put him in the role of a “doer” and his mind will become occupied with that activity.

In the Maha Yoga approach, the more time we devote to Sadhan, wherein we put ourselves in the “observer” role rather than in the “doer” role, the more rapid our spiritual progress. So sitting for Sadhan is preferable to chanting Stotras. If the recitation of Stotras or Mantras (chants) happens automatically during Sadhan as a Kriya (action without intention or ego-involvement) then the Sadhak should just let it happen and observe it as a Kriya that will bring him closer to Guru Tatva.

- **Question:** What is the attitude of a self-realized person towards the world around him? Does he feel the same emotions and have similar reactions to the world as do other human beings?

Answer: Outwardly, a self-realized person might appear to be just like any other human being. However, such a person is inward-focused, constantly living in the awareness of his true self, rather than being externally directed. He sees, but does not see. He is there, but he is not there. This means that he is physically present in the material world and his sense organs provide him sensory inputs from the material world, but his

Answers to questions from Sadhaks (continued)

awareness is centered on his true self. There may be all kinds of chaos around him but he will always remain in the calm center within himself.

- **Question:** Is Maha Yoga Sadhan good for children?

Answer: Maha Yoga Sadhan is good for everybody in this world, regardless of caste, creed, religion, age, gender, etc. because Chaitanya Shakti (Mother Energy) resides within each and every one of us! Let me give you a couple of examples about my experiences introducing Maha Yoga to children.

Recently, I was in Andhra Pradesh (a state in India) leading a group of about 50 people in the introductory Maha Yoga Sadhan, when I noticed a 10 year old boy participating in the meditation. So I approached him and asked him to describe what was happening to him during Sadhan. He described how he sensed his breath going in and coming out for a couple of breathing cycles, but after a few breaths he stopped talking and went into a meditative state. The energy he was using to express his thoughts in describing to me what was happening to him began turning inwards and he became “Antar-mukhi” (inward facing).

In another instance when I was at Ranikhet (a town in India) I was asked to introduce Maha Yoga Sadhan to about three hundred and fifty Kindergarten (KG) students, children of 5 or 6 years of age. They of course had no understanding about Yoga or meditation or any such thing. So I told them to just close their eyes and then to “worship the God within themselves”. Then I told them that the normal and automatic breath that goes in and out of their bodies is their God, and the way to worship this God is to just observe Him (the breath) going in and out. They all began doing this as told and after about 3 minutes of this I thought they might be ready to return back to their normally active and excited selves, so I asked them to open their eyes. But to my surprise most of them were reluctant to open their eyes! They were so engaged in the internal worship (Atma-Poojanam, in Sanskrit) that they did not want to stop it so quickly. They became absorbed in it even at such a tender age. It showed to me that introductory Maha Yoga Sadhan can also be practiced by young children!

Of course, the issue of Deeksha (formal initiation) is somewhat different. To receive Deeksha a child has to have some understanding of what he is doing. He has to have a strong internal desire for Deeksha to happen. This morning I had a mother come to see me with Deeksha application forms for two of her children, both boys, one 10 years old and the other 6 years old. I asked the 10 year old if he really wanted to receive Deeksha and he said he wanted it with all his heart. He wasn't going to leave unless I agreed to pray to my Gurudev to grant him Deeksha. But when I asked the 6 year old he said that he did not want to receive Deeksha. It was clear to me that he was being pushed by his mother to receive Deeksha. So I agreed to pray to my Gurudev to grant Deeksha to the 10 year old, but suggested to the mother that her younger son should wait for when he is ready. You have to hear a strong internal voice urging you to receive Deeksha for it to happen. You should not get coerced into asking for it because you are being pushed or

Answers to questions from Sadhaks (continued)

prompted by your parent or some other person. If a child has such an internal urge then Deeksha will happen, but if he is being pushed by someone else it won't.

- **Question:** Would the wearing of Rudraksha (special type of rosary beads) aid my Sadhan (meditation)? What other external things can a Sadhak wear/do to help him progress spiritually?

Answer: The wearing of Rudraksha, etc. are external things. They are connected with the mind-stuff (Chitta). So their use is not at all needed. To the extent that a Sadhak believes such external things can benefit him in his Sadhan, it is okay to use them. The benefit comes only because the Sadhak's mind thinks that such external items will benefit him, and this can help his mind become calm, which might help him become more easily aware of his internal world. If you think it is good go ahead and do it. But Maha Yoga's purpose is to go beyond good and bad. It is to become inward-facing (Antar-mukhi) so as to realize our true inner selves.

- **Question:** We are very happy with our lives and we are also very young. Why should we bother with meditation, Sadhan and Maha Yoga? What benefit does it have for us?

Answer: The urge to sit for Sadhan (meditation) has to come from within. No one should tell you that you should sit for Sadhan and follow Maha Yoga, because without the internal urge Sadhan just won't happen.

Having said that, Sadhan can be of benefit to everyone, regardless of whether you are presently successful and happy with your success, or are encountering obstacles in your day-to-day life. When you are successful and happy you will have a tendency to think that your current state will continue for ever. But as most of us are aware, our lives go through ups and downs. Even with material success most of us will encounter periods of unhappiness and stress at various points in their lives. But it is important to remember that it is our mind that becomes happy or sad, not our true self which is the Prana Shakti (Mother Energy). If we can become aware of the Prana Shakti within us, and **experientially** identify ourselves with the Prana Shakti, our ability to deal with the ups and downs of life will be greatly improved. Maha Yoga and Sadhan will help you experientially become aware of, and identify with, your true inner self. The sense of calm you will derive from this can help you maintain an even keel through the ups and downs in your life. In other words, Maha Yoga can take you beyond the successes and failures of our day-to-day lives.

- **Question:** How do I know that Maha Yoga meditation is right for me?

Answer: There are many different approaches to Yoga and meditation, so you can try any or all of them. You can also try Maha Yoga and if you think it works for you go ahead and keep following it.

But remember one thing, all the different Yoga and meditation approaches are intended to get you in touch (union) with Prana Shakti (Mother Energy) through rigorous,

Answers to questions from Sadhaks (continued)

supervised and long-term practices. For example Raja Yoga involves eventually achieving union with Prana Shakti by living a virtuous life and the long-term prescribed and supervised practices of Pranayam (regulated breathing), Asanas (physical postures) and meditation. Hatha Yoga involves the calming of one's mind by the long-term and supervised practice of the slow and deliberate execution of Asanas, eventually leading to Raja Yoga. All these Yoga practices require their deliberate and long term pursuit under the supervision of a Guru in order for the Sadhak to eventually become one with the Prana Shakti, i.e. achieve Yoga union. All these practices also have the Sadhak in the role of the "doer" (Karta) which also makes it somewhat difficult for the Sadhak to shed his ego, which is a must for achieving self-enlightenment. In practice, most Sadhaks find these pursuits quite daunting and many of them give up along the way, although they often derive clear benefits from them.

Maha Yoga, on the other hand, directly connects the Sadhak with the Prana Shakti. And once that happens, Prana Shakti becomes his Guru. All a Sadhak needs to do is to sit for Sadhan and to let Prana Shakti do what is needed to eventually achieve Yoga union. Whatever practices are needed for the Sadhak's spiritual progress, whether Pranayam or Asanas or Raja Yoga, will happen automatically. The Sadhak has to just let them happen and keep himself in the role of an observer. Since the Sadhak is not to consider himself as the "doer" during Sadhan, his ego does not come in the way of achieving self-realization.

So you can try any of the Yoga and meditation approaches you want and pursue whatever approach works for you, given your proclivities and your situation. Regardless of which approach you pursue, you eventually have to come to Maha Yoga when you let Prana Shakti itself be your Guru.

Editor's note: Please send your questions regarding Maha Yoga and Shaktipat to: self.awakening@gmail.com.

Universal Brotherhood Day and Global Maha Yoga Trial - May 16th, 2010 from 6:05 am to 6:26 am local time

P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj would like to invite everyone on this earth to participate in a Universal Brotherhood Day and Global Introductory Trial of Maha Yoga Shaktipat (Siddhayoga) for the uplift of all humankind. This introductory trial will be held on May 16th, 2010, from 6:05 am to 6:26 am local time. Those interested can participate during that time at no cost, from the privacy of their own homes. All are eligible to participate in this trial regardless of religion, race, sex, age, caste or creed. This world-wide trial can be considered to be a “trailer” or a precursor for the awakening of one’s Kundalini Shakti (Universal Life Energy) through Shaktipat (transfer of Energy) from a Siddha Yoga Master. It is a rare opportunity to experience first-hand such a transmission of Energy from a Siddha Guru.

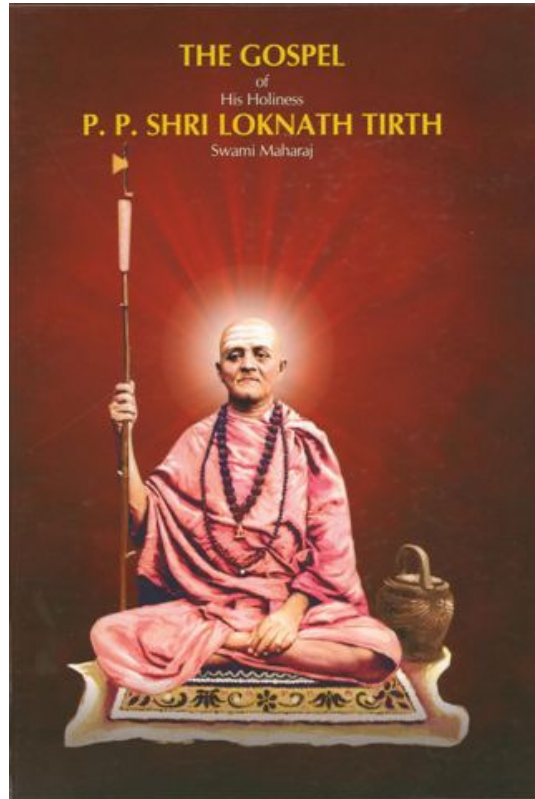
Here’s how to participate:

- At the designated time (on May 16th, 2010, from 6:05 am to 6:26 am local time) sit comfortably with your eyes closed in a quiet location in your home. Instantly observe a wave of energy along your spinal column.
- Relax your body completely in order to minimize the awareness of your body.
- Let your mind observe your involuntary breathing.
- Observe your experiences during the designated time interval and if you wish you may share them by e-mail with P. P. Narayan Kaka Maharaj at (mahayoga_kaka@yahoo.com).

A flyer (pdf document) describing the event is available at <http://www.mahayoga.org/MahayogaGlobalTrial-16May2010.pdf>

Please feel free to post the flyer at message boards on the internet or at physical locations as appropriate. Please share it with anyone you know who might be interested in participating in the event.

P. P. Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj's biography- English translation now available



The English language translation of P. P. Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj's biography is now available in hardcover edition! P. P. Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj was the Shaktipat Deeksha Guru of P. P. Narayan Kaka Dhekane Maharaj as well as P. P. Gulvani Maharaj. The original biography was written in the Marathi language by Shri A. S. Potbhare and it was translated into English by Dr. R. V. Urankar.

Copies of the book are available in India for Rs. 299 plus postage at:

P. P. Shri Vasudevanand Saraswati Swami Maharaj &

P. P. Shri Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj Trust

Vasudev Niwas

41/17 Erandvane,

Pune, India 411004

Phone No. +91-20-25455584

Sadhaks outside of India can send an e-mail indicating their interest, including their postal address, to self.awakening@gmail.com. The price will be determined by the number of orders received from each country and estimated shipping cost, and Sadhaks will be notified accordingly. The price is unlikely to exceed US\$20.

Upcoming Events:

Deeksha Day (Initiation Day) on May 16th, 2010

Those desirous of receiving Maha Yoga Deeksha (initiation) should go to the website: www.mahayoga.org for instructions.

Universal Brotherhood Day/Global Maha Yoga Trial on May 16th, 2010

Please see announcement on page 24.

Website Updates:

The Maha Yoga website www.mahayoga.org has several recent updates. They include:

- Photographs of P. P. Kaka Maharaj's meeting with the leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Jalgaon, India
- Siddha Yoga for children - audio file
- Flyer announcing the Global Trial for Peace to be held on May 16th, 2010. Link at: <http://www.mahayoga.org/MahayogaGlobalTrial-16May2010.pdf>

We also have an active discussion group at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/kundalinishaktipatayoga/>

Please feel free to post messages there about Maha Yoga, the website, or this e-newsletter. You will need to join the group to read or post messages.



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How to contribute content to the e-newsletter

The goals of our e-newsletter are:

1. Spread the word about Siddha/Maha Yoga.
2. Provide virtual Satsang to Sadhaks
3. Share relevant life experiences which might help the Sadhak community
4. Seek and provide guidance on Siddha/Maha Yoga
5. Share news about Siddha/Maha Yoga events around the world

If you want to contribute content (articles, news reports, questions, life experiences) or comments related to any of the above objectives please send them to:

self.awakening@gmail.com

We're on the Web!

<http://www.mahayoga.org/>

May all desire to follow this nectarous Siddhayoga Path!