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, an effortless, joyful and no cost path to Self-Realization.

P. P. Shri Narayan Kaka Maharaj of Nashik, India was 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. This ancient tradition (Parampara) continues under the leadership of several Siddha Gurus, including the fourteen designated by P. P. Kaka Maharaj as Deekshadhikaris (those authorized to initiate Sadhaks into Maha Yoga). Additional details about Maha Yoga are available at www.mahayoga.org.

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 encourage Sadhaks to remain 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 leaders from P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj’s lineage.

Readers are urged to contribute questions, thoughtful articles, interesting life experiences related to Maha Yoga and news about Maha Yoga-related events to this e-newsletter. Reminiscences of P. P. Kaka Maharaj are also most welcome. We will be glad to include them in future issues. Please send any content, comments, or questions you would like to submit to self.awakening@gmail.com.

Past issues of Self Awakening are archived at http://www.mahayoga.org/selfawakening.aspx.
Mutual Likes and Dislikes

There was discord between two residents of the ashram. They would criticize each other whenever they conversed with anyone. Their own minds were burning in a fire of dislike, and they were spoiling the minds of others. They rarely talked to each other, and whenever they did it was curt and cold. This was poisoning the ashram environment.

When Maharajshri heard about it he called them and said, “I have given you initiation for spiritual benefit. I wished you both well at the time of your initiation. Your animosity toward each other is a path to unhappiness. This will increase the impressions of dislike, hatred and enmity, and that will contaminate your minds. Your behavior is contrary to my will. How can you hope to benefit by behaving contrary to your Guru’s wish?

“Lord Shiva resides within both of you, but you are busy hiding him in the cover of likes and dislikes, jealousy and hatred, and so forth. The nature of Shiva is love and detachment, whereas you are drawing far away from the nature of Shiva by going towards the world. The basis of your spiritual practice is mutual love, whereas you are getting deeper in the mud of
mutual hatred. Know your path. Understand your duty. If you develop love for each other, your Shakti will increase; otherwise it will be depleted in your conflict.

“Love is the essence of the world. Love is God’s commandment. Love is a human obligation. Love is a ship that takes one across the ocean of life and death. Love is a medicine that brings peace to a mind burning in likes and dislikes. Love is a wave of cooling breeze that brings fragrance to life. Love is a high peak of life from which one sees the value and worthlessness of the world. Love is an instrument that offers the sweet and immortal nectar of God’s name to a person to drink when he is burning in the fire of the world. It is an invaluable and holy gem. Leaving such an invaluable and beneficial jewel aside, why do you fight with each other with the intent of drinking the pot of poison?

“First of all your minds should be pure toward each other. There are faults on both sides. Develop a habit of looking at your own faults instead of looking at other’s faults. Then only will you be able to nurture love for each other. Then your heart will become magnanimous and generous. Love will expand in your heart. You will not only love each other, but you will also love birds and animals, fish and serpents. Your heart will be filled with love for the mountains, deserts, rivers and oceans. Lord Shiva will come alive for you in every living being, in nature and in every particle.

“On the other hand, if the process of falling deeper into the darkness of likes and dislikes, jealousy and hate continues, darkness will continue to increase. In the dark you do not even know whose throat you may cut. It is the job of darkness to make you fight with strangers, as well as with your own people. Darkness takes away your clarity about friends and foes. You will want to kill whoever approaches you. In the dark you can see neither yourself, nor your path, nor your destination. The individual continues to sink deeper into the darkness, and believes peace and happiness are hiding somewhere in the dark. If someone tries to lead him to the light, he thinks he is being tricked and harmed.

“The darkness of hate and disgust cannot be sustained in a heart in which the light of love is present. Those who are filled with the darkness of hate cannot see even a single ray of the light of love. Although love is our true nature, we have covered ourselves in hate. These covers have only hidden love, but love cannot be estranged. How long will you remain unaware of your nature? How long will you remain under this pile of unnatural garbage? How long will you burn in the fire of illusion? Get hold of the torch of love and move forward. How long do you want to be lost from your path?

“As long as your mind is filled with hate you will be unable to enjoy the bliss of love. You will not be able to see even a glimpse of love. So, either enhance the light of love in such a way that the darkness of hate is ended, or drive away the darkness of hate in such a way that the love hidden within manifests spontaneously. The light of love indicates that the darkness of hate is gone. The darkness of hate means that the light of love does not exist. Love is spirituality and hate is worldliness. If you talk about spirituality but continue to descend the ladder into the darkness of hate, then spirituality cannot shine.
“Love is a natural feeling of the heart. It does not have anything to do with time and space. The person who loves today will also love tomorrow. The one who is a lover in India will be a lover in America. It is the same story with hate. Feelings of hate are not limited by boundaries of time and space. If you love or hate each other while living in the ashram, the same feelings will persist outside the ashram. If you go to sleep with certain feelings, you will wake up with the same feelings. As long as the state of the chitta remains unchanged, feelings do not change. Feelings that depend upon the state of the chitta change with a change in the state of the chitta. The love that depends upon the state of the chitta is not love. True love is an intrinsic quality of the soul.”

One of the ashram residents said to Maharajshri, “We accept our mistake. We will devote our best efforts to purifying our minds. So far the fire of revenge was aflame in our hearts. Your advice has given us some peace. With your blessings, our hearts will be filled with love in place of enmity. One question arises in the mind: Is there any connection between the practice of love and Shaktipat? The practice of love increases the feelings of love in the heart. Is that correct?”

Answer: “You are repeating the same mistake. Shakti, by its activities, removes filth and layers. Consequently the natural qualities of love, generosity and detachment manifest. Until that happens, practices done with a conscious effort are required to help the processes of Shakti.”

Both residents changed tremendously after that day. Most people were very happy to see their behavior toward each other. Some jealous people were unhappy. With this change, their spiritual practice was also enhanced significantly.

Mango Juice and the Juice of Joy

Behind the temple there were two mango trees. Both of them have now been removed for the expansion of the ashram. Maharajshri was sitting under one of them on a chair. Some devotees were sitting on a mat on the ground. Ripe mangos were hanging on the tree. It was a pleasant evening. Maharajshri was looking at the mangos and thinking, and suddenly said, “The sweet juice of the mangos is still hanging on the tree while people are busy drinking the bitter juice of worldly pleasure. Worldly pleasure can never give them satisfaction. Goddess Shakti is always inviting her children, ‘Come! Drink the nectar of my love and be content.’ But people, like restless children, keep running after the toys of sensuous pleasures. They remain far from the natural juice of love, sweet like the mango juice. Gurus, saints and scriptures stand like trees, bending with the weight of knowledge, inviting everyone to come and drink the juice of God’s name, but people are busy drinking something else.
“Have you ever looked into your psyche and seen how the mango orchard has turned into a jungle full of useless growth, weeds and uneven soil? The jungle-like environment inside not only stunts the growth of the mango trees, but it strangles the new shoots, flowers and fruits. Why waste life wandering in this deep jungle?”

Question: “Man is busy tending the garden outside. He has neither the time, nor the desire, to look at the garden within. His mango orchard inside is barren and dry, bugs devour it, and branches break in high winds. Useless thorny bushes have covered the mango trees.”

Answer: “This is the irony of human behavior. Instead of carrying a well of sweet mango juice within, one is lost in the external world and pours poison inside. He has lost inner bliss, and chases desires, anger and ego like a blind man. These beautiful mangos hanging on the branches of the tree are symbols of the natural inner juice. The man of today is bent on reducing his sweetness by picking unripe mangos, and then ripening them with chemicals.

“Have you ever considered what a mango gives you in return for being cut by a knife? Sweetness. This tolerance and generosity is the sadhana of the mango. This is its benevolence. The mango is an example of the true saint. It spreads joy in the world by losing the self. Selfish people cannot comprehend this. For them this is stupidity because they experience sweetness in selfishness. However, over time, this sweetness proves to be poison. The mango does not put a knife in the stomach of the person cutting it; instead the mango fills his stomach with sweetness. No resistance, no revenge, only sweetness. This is his saintliness.

“When a mango tree starts to shrivel it is in need of water. The leaves turn yellow, the branches dry out, but when watered again it comes alive. The leaves get firm again. The branches become strong and straight again. Your life, similarly, needs the water of love [for God]. The aridity of likes and dislikes, hate and selfishness has ruined your face. You need the water of love to make your life green and lush, and to fill it with sweetness. Love may appear painful on the surface but it will fill your heart with joy.

“Worldly love is no love. It is a misnomer for infatuation and lust. True love is the love of the soul. It is the giver of inner bliss. It causes release from worldly anguish. It is sweet like mango juice. Mango juice reminds one of the same inner bliss. The sweetness of mango juice fills each and every cell. The juice of love also saturates every part of the body, the heart, and all the senses. When the nectar of love spreads throughout the mind and the body it cannot be hidden even if one wants to hide it. Like the fragrance of flowers, it rides on a horse of air and spreads in all four directions. Love changes one’s perceptions. The world appears beautiful where all the beloved people reside. Love drives away all the narrow selfish feelings such as ego, likes and dislikes, anger, and all negativity.

“The lover loves the whole world and the whole world is his beloved. His connection is spiritual and not physical. He sees the Atma, the highest personal principle of life, the Self, in all beings because the atma-tattva [the Ultimate Reality] is manifest within. He knows the
secret of love. He knows that hate depletes the soul, whereas love awakens and illumines the soul. The Ultimate Reality remains a stranger as long as there is hatred, dislike or jealousy even toward a single person. If there is dislike and aversion toward something, favoritism, too, must be hidden somewhere. This shows that the person is still within the sphere of likes and dislikes.

“Egoism is the enemy of love. The ego in the mind prevents the expression of love. The layer of ego, even though it is unnatural, is a cover all the same and it covers natural love. Ego is merely an illusion, it is treachery, and it is false. How can the soul that has fallen in the deep trench of ego know the hidden essence of love?

“The mango is a living symbol of love and joy. It offers itself not only to humans, but also to birds. Such self-sacrifice is possible only by a lover of God, just as king Shibi offered a part of his body to save a pigeon. How can the soul, dying for selfishness, be familiar with the joy of love? But you are spiritual aspirants. You meditate everyday; you have the grace of a Guru; you talk about divine experiences; you have no excuse for being without love. If you try to find excuses then you fall from the level of an aspirant. Think about it and decide once and for all. If you want to be worldly then do whatever comes to mind. If you want to be an aspirant then be ready to give up everything like a lover.

“You suck the juice from a mango and throw the seed away. You do not accept and develop the qualities of the mango. You start shouting at the slightest difficulty. People break leaves from the mango tree. They strike it with axes. It bears the cold, heat and rain and does not even complain. People keep eating its fruit; it goes on giving juice to all. Its seed is discarded. It sprouts and is ready to serve again. Such a selfless life must be that of an aspirant. Then only will he be able to spread sweetness, love and joy. Then only will he be able to find joy within.”

Presented here with kind permission from Swami Shivom Tirth Ashram, Inc. Thanks to Mrs. Alison Kamat for transcribing the excerpts.

“Churning of the Heart” trilogy by P. P. Swami Shivom Tirth Maharaj is available from:
Devatma Shakti Society
92-93, Navali Gav
Post Dahisar, via Mumbra, Thane 400612, India
Tel. No.: (+91) 22-65148183
November 5th this year will mark the fifth anniversary of the departure of P. P. Shri Narayan Dhekane Kaka Maharaj from this earth. This article was written to commemorate that event by reflecting on a very important aspect of his legacy - his devotion to share the gift of Maha Yoga with everyone on earth.

The scriptures tell us that Maha Yoga originated from Lord Shiva himself in the form of Shambhavi Deeksha (initiation from Shambho - another name for Lord Shiva). Under this approach, the Sadhak (spiritual seeker) after intensely praying to Lord Shiva for Self-Enlightenment would receive the Deeksha directly from the Lord himself and instantly experience Self-Enlightenment. However this type of Deeksha is not available in our current Kali Yuga, the age of strife and discord, which began in the 4th millennium BC. Since then, there have been two types of approaches available to Sadhaks. The first of these is Anavopaya (matter-driven), whereby Sadhaks through years of effort-based yoga practices such as Hatha, Laya, Mantra/Japa, Raja, etc. under the supervision and guidance of an external Guru, eventually get their Prana Shakti (Mother Energy) awakened and then get on a path towards Self-Enlightenment, again guided by an external Guru until they finally experience Self-Enlightenment provided they have observed the strictures of the Yoga practices all along.

In contrast to the Anavopaya approach, the second approach, which is called Shaktopaya (Shakti, or energy-driven), does not require a Sadhak to make any effort on his part at all! Under this approach, also called Maha Yoga or Siddha Yoga, a Siddha (capable) Guru instantly awakens the Prana Shakti within a Sadhak during Shaktipat Deeksha (transference of Mother Energy from the Siddha Guru to the Sadhak). The Siddha Guru does this in one of four ways: by having the Sadhak chant a Mantra, or by touching the Sadhak in a specific way, or by giving the Sadhak an intense look, or simply by launching a Sankalpa (intent) that the Deeksha happen. Following Maha Yoga Deeksha, the awakened Prana Shakti within the Sadhak, also referred to as the Guru Tattva (Guru Principle), becomes the Guru within him. And when the Sadhak surrenders to the awakened Prana Shakti during Maha Yoga Sadhan and otherwise, he enables the Prana Shakti to purify his Chitta (mind-stuff) and to guide him eventually to Self-Enlightenment.

This gift of Maha Yoga has been present in our Kali Yuga over the centuries and was brought into our historical times by P. P. Swami Gangadhar Tirth Maharaj in the mid-nineteenth century in India. It was passed by him to his disciple P. P. Swami Narayan Tirth Dev Maharaj, who in turn passed it on to his disciples, thus establishing the Maha Yoga lineage in our times, primarily through the Tirth lineage of renunciates. But, the availability of this incredible gift was limited to Sadhaks in eastern and north-eastern India, and it was only through the efforts of P. P. Swami Loknath Tirth Maharaj and P. P. Swami Vishnu Tirth Maharaj that Maha Yoga was brought to western, central, northern and southern parts of India.
Despite its availability in many parts of India, it was not very easy for Sadhaks to actually receive Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha. Sadhaks had to be in the presence of the Siddha Guru during Deeksha, which made it quite difficult for Sadhaks who did not live close to a Siddha Guru and lacked funds for transportation to be in the Guru’s presence, to receive Deeksha.

P. P. Shri Gulavani Maharaj changed all that in the mid-twentieth century. He realized that while the various modes of transference of energy (Mantra, touch, and look) seem different and require the Sadhak to be in the Guru’s presence, none of these approaches work without the Guru’s Sankalpa (intent) underlying them. Since the Siddha Guru’s Sankalpa is the underlying cause that makes Maha Yoga Deeksha happen, it did not matter whether the Sadhak was in the presence of a Siddha Guru or anywhere else in the world. All that mattered was a strong desire on part of the Sadhak to receive Deeksha and for the Siddha Guru to have a strong intent for Deeksha to happen for that Sadhak. P. P. Shri Gulavani Maharaj therefore began accepting applications for Deeksha from Sadhaks in India and from elsewhere in the world without needing them to be in his presence during Deeksha. Sadhaks could write a letter to him seeking Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha. And for those Sadhaks whose applications he accepted he would respond to them citing the rules and restrictions they needed to observe, and if they agreed to follow the rules and restrictions he would give them a date and time to sit for Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha in their own homes, and Deeksha would happen for them just as it would for Sadhaks who were in his presence during Deeksha. This “post-card Deeksha” was quite an innovation, that resulted in bringing Maha Yoga to large numbers of Sadhaks, primarily in India, but also to some in other parts of the world, who would never have been able receive the incredible gift of Maha Yoga Deeksha. I was among those fortunate to have received Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha from P. P. Shri Gulavani Maharaj in this manner while living in Mumbai as a college student, without having to travel to Pune to be in his presence.

Like P. P. Shri Gulavani Maharaj and some of the other stalwarts of our Maha Yoga lineage before him, P. P. Shri Narayan Dhekane Kaka Maharaj was an innovator par excellence. He took P. P. Shri Gulavani Maharaj’s concept of making the gift of Maha Yoga being made available to more Sadhaks, several notches further - by increasing the awareness of Maha Yoga on a global scale and making it available to people all over the world through the several initiatives he undertook.

With the availability of internet-based communications, beginning with e-mails, P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj launched the “internet Deeksha” whereby a Sadhak anywhere in the world could request Deeksha and all communication would be internet-based. Many Sadhaks, even all the way on the opposite side of the world from Nashik, India, received Deeksha in this manner and were able to communicate with P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj on a regular basis through that medium. Sadhaks from all over the world sent him e-mails thanking him, being awed at the experiences they had during and after Deeksha, and finding it difficult to believe their good fortune at being able to receive the gift of Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha thousands of miles away. P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj also leveraged internet-based
P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj’s Legacy – Bringing the Gift of Maha Yoga to the World (continued)

communications to inform Sadhaks all over the world about Maha Yoga by initiating the creation of the Maha Yoga website (www.mahayoga.org), launching Self Awakening, the quarterly Maha Yoga e-newsletter (archived at http://mahayoga.org/selfawakening.aspx), and developing a social media presence on sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

While increasing Maha Yoga awareness globally, P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj had a strong sense that he did not need to be judgmental about the worthiness of a Sadhak to receive Maha Yoga Deeksha. He never tried to push Sadhaks to receive Deeksha and was a strong believer in not increasing the number of Dixit Sadhaks just to play the numbers game, but he strongly believed that Maha Yoga Deeksha should be made available to all humans, and anyone who earnestly wanted to receive Deeksha should be able to receive it regardless of his/her perceived “worthiness”. This was in contrast to many other Siddha Gurus who refused to grant Deeksha to Sadhaks they deemed to be unworthy. P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj would say, “Who am I to judge whether a particular Sadhak is worthy of Deeksha or not; just the fact that he has sincerely asked for Deeksha makes him deserving, in my opinion.” He would then add, “In these days and times when most people are busy pursuing material things, it is rare to find people interested in spiritual matters. So, if I find someone who is very much interested in receiving Deeksha, I feel there must be something in that person’s current life or in his past lives that is driving him to do so.” He would also say, “If I have a box of Pedhas (Indian sweets), I want to share it with others, so their mouths would be sweetened too. I want as many people on this earth to know that the Pedhas I am enjoying are available to them as well and if they truly want them, who am I to deny them?”

P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj’s desire to share the sweet gift of Maha Yoga with as many of his fellow human beings as possible, while at the same time not wanting to push Sadhaks to receive Shaktipat Deeksha, led him to another innovation - creation of the Introductory Practice of Maha Yoga (described at http://mahayoga.org/mahayoga-introductory-practice.aspx) so Sadhaks all over the world could get a taste of Maha Yoga. Sadhaks who have heard about Maha Yoga but are not ready to make the lifetime commitment to follow the rules and restrictions for receiving Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha can try out the Introductory Practice as a precursor to actually receiving Deeksha. The Introductory Practice has the Sankalpa (intent) of P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj behind it, so if a Sadhak sits for the Practice with a sense of surrender to the Prana Shakti and to the Maha Yoga lineage, the Prana Shakti within him will likely get awakened and he will be able to experience first-hand what Maha Yoga Sadhan is all about. Many Sadhaks from all over the world who have tried the Introductory Practice in the privacy of their own homes shared with P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj and with other Maha Yoga authorities their amazing experiences and several of them have gone on to receive formal Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha.

In addition to the above initiatives to increase awareness of the incredible gift of Maha Yoga all over the world, P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj took it upon himself, even during his advancing years, to travel all over India and to various other countries to spread the word. He established Maha Yoga sites in a number of cities in India and traveled to the United
P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj’s Legacy - Bringing the Gift of Maha Yoga to the World (continued)

Kingdom, the United States and various countries in the Middle East, meeting with Sadhaks, giving short lectures on what Maha Yoga is all about, and more importantly, having Sadhaks actually participate in the Introductory Practice of Maha Yoga.

He strongly believed that Maha Yoga has to be actually experienced by Sadhaks in order for them to overcome their skepticism that such a gift is even possible. So, instead of giving long lectures of what Maha Yoga is and why it works, he would have Sadhaks sit for ten minutes or so and actually experience the sense of calm that comes about as the Prana Shakti within them gets turned inward. At a peace event in California on September 11, 2007, P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj was invited to give a talk on Maha Yoga. In contrast with many of the other presenters who gave long talks about their spiritual approaches, P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj just said a few words about Maha Yoga, but then asked the attendees to participate in what he called a practical Maha Yoga meditation. Very quickly, the audience got transformed as they began to experience the calmness and the experiences that occur during the Introductory Practice of Maha Yoga. At the end of the designated time, most attendees had a hard time even opening their eyes, having become so absorbed in the meditative experience. The organizers of the event later sent P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj a note thanking him for giving them and the attendees such a wonderful experience instead of just a talk on spirituality. He had indeed shared with the attendees the Pedhas (sweets) of Maha Yoga by giving them a taste of the sweets instead of just describing what they looked like.

P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj continued his push to take the gift of Maha Yoga to the world even to the last year of his stay on earth. In May, 2012 he convened a Maha Yoga Global Meet in Pune, India that was attended by hundreds of Sadhaks from all over the world. Even at his advanced age and despite his declining health he actively participated in various activities during the meet, gave a splendid talk on Maha Yoga, and as was his practice, led the attendees in a Maha Yoga meditation that gave them a taste of what Maha Yoga is all about. This was indeed the crowning achievement of a lifetime devoted to bringing Maha Yoga to the world.

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On a personal note, as I had mentioned earlier, I was fortunate to have received Maha Yoga Deeksha from P. P. Shri Gulavani Maharaj, but being a college student at IIT Bombay at that time, and later having moved to the U. S., I did not get the opportunity to spend a lot of time in P. P. Shri Gulvani Maharaj’s presence during his lifetime. But, I did get a chance to be in the presence of P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj on numerous occasions in India and in the U. S. and I sensed the same Guru Tattva in him that I had experienced in the presence of P. P. Shri Gulavani Maharaj, who was in fact P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj’s senior Guru Bandhu (brother-disciples of the same Guru, P. P. Swami Loknath Tirth Maharaj). I also had the good fortune to have P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj indulge me by allowing me to engage with him in long discussions on all kinds of topics related to Maha Yoga, which led to my conducting and publishing four significant discussions with him on Maha Yoga and his heartfelt drive to bring the gift of Maha Yoga to the world at large. These discussions were published in the
P. P. Shri Kaka Maharaj’s Legacy - Bringing the Gift of Maha Yoga to the World (continued)

May 2009, May 2010, February 2011 and February 2012 issues of this e-newsletter, Self-Awakening, and they provide a first-hand window into P. P. Kaka Maharaj’s perspective on Maha Yoga and his intense desire to make it available to everyone on earth.

By: Dilip Kamat
**Answers to Questions from Sadhaks**

**Question:** I was initiated into Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya by Sadhguru of Isha Foundation in 2013. I try to perform the Kriya almost every morning for about 30 minutes. But after reading about Maha Yoga at your website, I think I would like to receive Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha (initiation) on the next Deeksha Day. I have a few questions about Maha Yoga, however, that I would like to get guidance on before I apply for initiation.

- Based on my limited understanding of Maha Yoga, initiation is some form of transfer of energy from the Guru. Will there be any interference in the Shaktipat energy blessed through Maha Yoga vs. other past initiations?
- After I’m initiated into Maha Yoga, should I continue with the Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya practice?
- I have some questions around food restrictions. I’m vegetarian and don’t smoke or drink alcohol. Personally, I prefer to abstain from the use of garlic and onion in my food. But my family is not very flexible in this regards. Are there any methods you’re aware of to neutralize the energy effects of consuming food containing garlic/onion? I will try to avoid food containing garlic/onion, whenever I can after the initiation. But I’m looking for any advice on what I should do if I happen to consume such food in unusual circumstances, such as when I am visiting friends, family, etc.
- During the initiation, and also as part of the continued practice after initiation, do you have any recommendations on the sitting posture? I was taught to sit in Ardha-Siddhasana with Jnana mudra. Should I continue with the same posture when I sit for Maha Yoga meditation?

**Answer:** I am not very familiar with the Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya program of the Isha Foundation. But based on your description that you “try to perform the Kriya”, I suspect it is an effort-based Kriya Yoga, whereby the Sadhak has to perform the Kriya (action) rather than the Kriya happening automatically during Sadhan (meditation). Unlike most Yoga approaches that require the Sadhak to “do” or “perform” the Yoga practice, Siddha Maha Yoga is not an effort-based Yoga and does not ask the Sadhak to “do” anything during Maha Yoga Sadhan other than: sit comfortably for Sadhan, surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within him, and allow Her to be the “doer” (Karta) of whatever happens, with the Sadhak putting himself in the role of an “observer” (Sakshi). With this in mind, let me address the questions you have posed:

- Maha Yoga initiation (Shaktipat Deeksha) involves the transfer of Shakti (Universal Life Energy) from the Siddha Guru (capable Guru) to the Sadhak. It is a Sankalpa Deeksha, i.e. an intent-based Deeksha, whereby the Siddha Guru can by his sheer intent merge his/her Prana Shakti with the Prana Shakti within the Sadhak at the time of Deeksha, if the Sadhak allows it to happen. And when this happens, the normally externally-directed Prana Shakti within the Sadhak becomes internally-directed, i.e. the Prana Shakti within the Sadhak becomes “awakened”, i.e. the Deeksha happens.
The first goal of all effort-based Yoga practices (such as Hatha, Japa, etc.) is the awakening of the Prana Shakti, which can take years of effort on part of a Sadhak, just to have his Prana Shakti become awakened. With Maha Yoga Deeksha, this happens instantly at the time of Deeksha, so the Sadhan following Maha Yoga Deeksha becomes completely effortless. To the extent you were initiated into an effort based Yoga practice, Maha Yoga Deeksha will dramatically accelerate the awakening of the Prana Shakti within you. And if your Prana Shakti was already awakened, either due to prior effort-based practices or otherwise, the Maha Yoga Deeksha will only serve to regulate the flow of Prana Shakti within you, also accelerating your progress toward Self-Enlightenment. So, please do not worry about any untoward interference of Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha with whatever prior initiations you might have had. Maha Yoga Deeksha will only make the path to Self-Enlightenment easier and faster.

• After you have received Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha you may continue with your Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya practice, as long as you don’t “do” that practice when you sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan. When you sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan, please don’t “do” anything with intent. As I mentioned above, sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan with an attitude of surrendering to the awakened Prana Shakti within you, allow her to be the “doer” with you playing the role of an “observer”, and without getting attached to anything that happens during Sadhan.

If physical movements of your body happen without you intending such movements, just allow them to happen. Such involuntary physical movements during Maha Yoga Sadhan are called physical Kriyas and they happen automatically as the awakened Prana Shakti within you brings up Samskaras from your current and past lives into your Chitta (mind stuff) and they get expressed during Sadhan as physical movements, which could include various Mudras, Asanas or just random physical movement. Just don’t get attached to or afraid of any such Kriyas, just observe them and let them happen. Similarly, if you feel the flow of Prana happening within you during Maha Yoga Sadhan, without any intent on your part, these are referred to as Pranic Kriyas. Once again simply observe such Kriyas as they happen without fearing them or getting attached to them. And if you find random thoughts arising during Maha Yoga Sadhan do not get frustrated or try to suppress them or pursue them. Just direct your attention to your normal and automatic breathing and observe your thoughts if you can do so. The arising of thoughts during Maha Yoga Sadhan can be thought of as mental Kriyas.

In any case, if you continue with your Shambhavi Mudra practice, please do so separate from when you sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan and do that practice with a sense of duty, without developing/reinforcing any attachment to it. The entire purpose of Maha Yoga Sadhan is to rid oneself of accumulated Samskaras that result from attachments and aversions, and developing or strengthening attachments, even to Yoga practices, goes against the entire purpose of Maha Yoga Sadhan.
The purpose of the rules and restrictions related to food and drink is to avoid stimulants/soporifics that can retard spiritual progress during Sadhan and to reduce one’s attachments to such items. There is no method to neutralize the effect of consumption of such items, that I am aware of, but since you do not consume such items with any intent on your part, the incidental consumption of such items will likely not have much of a material effect on your Sadhan. Please specifically read pages 11 and 12 of the February 2012 issue of our Self Awakening e-newsletter to understand what P. P. Kaka Maharaj and P. P. Prabhune Maharaj had to say about the rules and restrictions during the discussion with them a few years ago. That issue is available at [http://mahayoga.org/newsletter/Self_Awakening_Vol_4_Issue_3.pdf](http://mahayoga.org/newsletter/Self_Awakening_Vol_4_Issue_3.pdf).

When you sit for Deeksha, or Sadhan after Deeksha has happened, please sit cross legged on the floor (on top of a rug/mat covered preferably with a white sheet) in a comfortable manner, without sitting in any specific Yoga Asana. Ardha Siddhasana is fine, provided you not make any effort to keep your spine or your body rigid in any manner. Simple Sukhasana is fine as well. No reason to “do” any specific Mudra. Take two or three deep breaths to start with, each time gradually releasing the air from your lungs. Then just relax your body in the sitting position, not bothering to keep your spine straight or putting any such constraint or rigidity on your body. The idea is to lose awareness of one’s body. Please do not do any structured breathing (Pranayama) at this point; just breathe normally and simply observe your normal and automatic breathing. Our normal and automatic breathing is an involuntary Kriya that we all experience as long as we are alive, and by simply observing our normal breathing and by letting our body be relaxed, we give control over our body, our Prana and our mind, to the awakened Prana Shakti within us. Just observe what happens to your body, your Prana and your mind during Sadhan. That is all there is to it.

If specific Yoga Asanas or Mudras or Pranayama, etc. happen during Maha Yoga Sadhan without any specific intent on your part, please allow them to happen. These are Kriyas that the awakened Prana Shakti within you is making happen for you to observe as the Samskaras underlying such Kriyas are getting brought up into your Chitta (mind stuff) by the Prana Shakti. Simply observe them as/if they happen without fearing them or getting attached to them. Just observe them and let them go.

**Question:** I sat for Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha on Deeksha Day and I am glad to report that I think the Deeksha happened. When I sat for Deeksha, after a short while I felt some kind of pressure in the center of my head. Is this normally what happens? Later, I felt so relaxed that I thought I was going to fall asleep. It was a very good experience and I can already see the difference in my life. I feel much better, have a lot of energy, but I also feel a sense of calm.

**Answer:** Congratulations on your Deeksha having happened!
Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

Each Sadhak’s experience during Maha Yoga Deeksha is unique, based on the accumulated Samskaras (impressions from his current and past lives) the Sadhak has in his Chitta (mind stuff), and on how fully the Sadhak surrenders to the awakened Prana Shakti (Universal Life Energy) within him. The experience you had clearly suggests that the Deeksha happened for you. The pressure you felt at the center of your head is very consistent with what many Sadhaks experience, as is the feeling of being relaxed to the point of even falling asleep (Yoga Nidra). The key here is that you had a very good Deeksha experience and you can see and feel the difference in yourself. That is the proof of the pudding! Please sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan on a regular basis and enjoy your journey on this path.

**Question:** I recently received Maha Yoga Deeksha and have seen a big positive change in my life. I am not married and want to live a spiritual life, so I have been wondering if I should take a vow of remaining a Brahmachari. However, I have to work for a living and I am very busy working during the week, but I do sit for meditation every week-day for at least 15 minutes, and for an hour or so on weekends. Is this okay and should I take a vow to observe Brahmacharya?

**Answer:** One can live a spiritual life while remaining a householder, therefore there is no need to take a vow to remain a Brahmachari for life or become a Sannyasi (renunciate). In fact in Chapter 3, Verse 4 of the Bhagvad Geeta, Lord Krishna says:

न कर्मणामनारम्भा नैषकर्म्य पुरुषोऽन्ति
न च संन्यासानादेव सिद्धि समाधिगच्छति

Na karmanamanarambha Naishkarmya purushoshnute
Na cha sannyaasanaddeva Siddhi samadhigacchati

Which means: Not by merely abstaining from action can one achieve freedom from reaction; nor by renunciation alone does one attain perfection.

In fact, by taking a vow to remain a Brahmachari or to become a Sannyasi when the Sadhak’s Chitta (mind stuff) is not ready to give up being a householder, the Sadhak will only create feelings of frustration and guilt within himself, thus only adding to the Samskaras he has accumulated. Only when the Sadhak has developed a strong internal commitment to become a Brahmachari or a Sannyasi, based on a clear understanding of what such commitments entail, does it make sense for him to take such vows. So, if you think you have developed a strong internal commitment to take a vow of Brahmacharya and your Chitta has developed a strong affinity for renouncing life as a householder, and are unlikely to feel frustrated or feel guilty if you violate such a vow in the future, by all means go ahead with it. But make sure you are not doing so because someone else told you to do so or you think by taking such a vow you will be accelerating your spiritual progress.
Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

Sitting for Maha Yoga Sadhan (meditation) every day for an hour is very important for a Sadhak’s spiritual progress. Not because he made a commitment to his Guru to do so, but because it is the key to progress on the Maha Yoga path, a lot more so than taking a vow to remain a Brahmachari. The reason daily Sadhan is important is because it is only during Sadhan that most Sadhaks allow the awakened Prana Shakti within them to “do” what is needed for their spiritual progress. And the more they allow Her to be the “doer” during Sadhan, the more rapid will be their progress on this path.

So, ideally it is best if you can find the time to sit for Sadhan for an hour every day. Perhaps you might be able to wake up a bit earlier so you can sit for Sadhan in the quiet period prior to daybreak for an hour. If you cannot sit for more than 15 minutes at a stretch, perhaps you might be able to get such 15 minute breaks for Sadhan four times a day, so you will have given the awakened Prana Shakti a full 60 minutes to do what is needed for your spiritual progress. The commitment to sit for an hour every day is only to ensure that you make good progress on this path; it is only between you and the awakened Prana Shakti within you. So, there is no reason to ask the Guru “if it is okay” if you can sit only for 15 minutes on workdays. Just listen to the awakened Prana Shakti within you, your Inner Guru, to get Her guidance.

**Question:** I have been told that when Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha happens, the Kundalini Shakti awakens and makes its way up through the Ida or the Pingala, and that passing through the Sushumna is an entirely different matter. Please clarify. (Editor’s note: The Ida and Pingala Nadis are secondary pathways for the movement of Prana within the body, on each side of the Sushumna Nadi, which is the main pathway for the Kundalini Shakti to rise up through during Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha).

**Answer:** Not sure where you got the notion that the awakened Kundalini Shakti gets directed into the Ida or Pingala Nadis during Maha Yoga Deeksha. Please rest assured that during Maha Yoga Deeksha the Sadhak’s Kundalini Shakti gets awakened and gets directed into the Sushumna Nadi. This is referred to as the normally outward-directed Kundalini Shakti becoming inward-directed during Deeksha and going all the way to the Brahma-randhra through the Sushumna. In most cases, depending on the Sadhak’s spiritual situation, it does not stay there, but descends to one of the lower Chakras. With diligent Maha Yoga Sadhan following Deeksha, the awakened Prana Shakti cleans out all the Nadis, the pathways for the flow of Prana within the body, gradually making its home in higher and higher Chakras, eventually residing in the Brahma-randhra when the Sadhak attains Self Realization.

Having said that, I would like to emphasize that Sadhaks should not focus much on what Chakra the Kundalini is residing in and where they are on their spiritual journey. That amounts to “score-keeping” which can only lead to boosting one’s ego if one concludes one is making good progress, or getting depressed if one concludes that one is not making enough progress. It is best for a Sadhak to surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within him and allow Her to do what is needed. The Sadhak should develop an attitude of
surrender to Her, accept whatever happens without developing any attachment to, or fear of what happens, and be patient. The awakened Prana Shakti knows what exactly is in the trove of Samskaras the Sadhak has accumulated over his current and past lives. She will, through the Kriyas (physical, Pranic and mental) that happen with the Sadhak observing them in a detached but accepting manner, gradually get rid of the accumulated Samskaras, leading to चित्त वृत्ति निरोधः (the elimination of tendencies of the Chitta) and eventually, Self-Enlightenment.

The Kriyas that happen serve two purposes. The first is to have the Samskaras that have been accumulated in a Sadhak’s Chitta over lifetimes get expressed through Kriyas caused by the awakened Prana Shakti, which the Sadhak by observing the Kriyas with a sense of detachment and a sense of “letting go”, enables the underlying Samskaras to get eliminated from his Chitta. The second purpose of the Kriyas during Sadhan is to help the Sadhak see himself increasingly in the role of an observer (Sakshi) and the Prana Shakti that pervades everything in the Universe as the “doer”, thus enabling him to carry over this Sakshi attitude to his everyday life as well. When that happens, the Sadhak becomes a true Karma Yogi, ending the accumulation of new Samskaras or strengthening existing Samskaras through his actions (Karma) in his day-to-day life. The elimination of accumulated Samskaras during Maha Yoga Sadhan and the prevention of new Samskaras being created in his day-to-day life results in the eventual elimination of all Samskaras in the Sadhak’s Chitta, leading to Self-Enlightenment.

Question: I will be receiving Maha Yoga Deeksha on the next Deeksha Day. Will it be okay if I continue my practice of Pranayam (structured breathing) and Yoga Asanas after initiation? Also, is it necessary to sit cross-legged during Maha Yoga meditation?

Answer: Yes, you can continue your practice of effort-based Pranayama and Asanas, separate from Maha Yoga Sadhan (meditation), even after Deeksha (initiation). But please don’t do these activities with intent when you sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan. If Asanas or Pranayam happen as Kriyas during Maha Yoga Sadhan, without any intent on your part, let them happen. Just observe them with a sense of detachment, just as you would observe any other Kriyas.

Sitting cross-legged (on a soft rug covered by a white cloth) on the floor for Maha Yoga Sadhan is not a requirement, but it is suggested that Sadhaks do so to avoid the possibility of hurting themselves in case they experience intense physical Kriyas during Sadhan. You can begin Maha Yoga Sadhan by sitting in any position that is comfortable for you, that allows you to lose awareness of your body, but is stable while allowing your body to move unhindered without encountering any other objects or furniture that might hurt you physically if you inadvertently come in contact with them. Sitting on the floor, cross-legged on top of a soft rug/mat covered by a white cloth and away from walls or furniture is the safest way to lose awareness of your body while avoiding injury in case you experience intense physical Kriyas during Maha Yoga Sadhan. You can sit in Sukhasana or Padmasana or...
in any other manner that you are comfortable sitting, that can help you lose awareness of your body while providing it some level of stability without curbing any physical activity (Kriyas) that might happen.

But please remember that once Maha Yoga Sadhan begins and physical Kriyas like Asanas, Pranayam, other types of body movements, including getting up, dancing, etc. start happening, allow them to happen, unless you sense that they are getting too intense and might cause you to get hurt. Such intense physical Kriyas rarely happen, but in case they do, just open your eyes and they will stop.

**Question:** Does the Prana Shakti work only when I sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan or does it continue to work regardless of what I am doing? What is its status when I am lying in bed but not asleep, travelling in a bus or being comfortably seated but not for Sadhan?

**Answer:** Prana Shakti works in all of us all the time. It is what keeps us alive. It also pervades the entire universe, animate or inanimate, and is the source of all creation. In most of us, the Prana Shakti is outward directed at all times, and this is also referred to as the Prana Shakti being in the Supta Awastha (dormant state as regards spiritual awakening), i.e. it has not become “awakened”. Those of us who have received Maha Yoga Deeksha, or having pursued other Yoga or similar practices either in our current or past lives, might have had the experience of the Prana Shakti within us become inward directed, i.e. have our Prana Shakti become “awakened”. Maha Yoga Deeksha causes this inward direction of the Prana Shakti to happen instantly, whereas other Yoga approaches and similar practices require years of diligent efforts on the Sadhak’s part, under the guidance of an experienced Guru for this to happen.

Even when the Prana Shakti within a Sadhak has become awakened, i.e. it has become inward-directed during Deeksha, it does not mean that she will remain inward directed at all times. When the Sadhak is not sitting for Maha Yoga Sadhan, i.e. in his day-to-day activities when he considers himself to be the agent (“doer”) of his actions, the Prana Shakti within him will be in an outward-directed mode, providing the energy to help him execute the activities/actions he intends to do. But, whenever the Sadhak sits for Maha Yoga Sadhan and surrenders to the awakened Prana Shakti within him and allows her to be the “doer” (i.e. he is no longer the agent of the actions - Kriyas - that happen) while putting himself in the role of an observer, she becomes inward directed and works on reducing the trove of Samskaras he has accumulated over numerous lifetimes.

As the Sadhak progresses on the Maha Yoga path with diligent Sadhan, he begins to recognize gradually that he does not need to be the “agent” of his actions even during his day-to-day activities; i.e. he starts to become a Karma Yogi. He develops an attitude of surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within him at all times, thereby avoiding the accumulation of new Samskaras and continuing the elimination of accumulated Samskaras. This is when his life becomes Akhand (continuous) Sadhan, i.e. he is in the Sadhan mode at all times, even
Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

when he is not actually “sitting” for Maha Yoga Sadhan. This is an advanced stage when the Sadhak is very close to Self-Enlightenment; he is always in the Sakshi (observer) mode. It does not come about with intent or effort on the Sadhak’s part; it happens when all the accumulated Samskaras have been eliminated and all the Koshas that had kept the Atma within the Sadhak hidden from his awareness get cast off and the Sadhak experiences his Atma as being one with the ParamAtma, which is Self-Enlightenment.

So, once Deeksha has happened for you, the Prana Shakti within you will become awakened, i.e. inward-directed during Deeksha. But in your day-to-day activities, even during comfortable activities like when you are lying in bed or travelling in a bus, as long as you have an attitude of being the “doer” of your actions, she will be outward directed, providing the energy to help you do the actions you intend to do. However, when you sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan and surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within you, she will again become inward directed and do what is needed for your spiritual growth, i.e. make the Kriyas happen. It is not recommended that Sadhak’s in the early stages after Deeksha get into the Maha Yoga Sadhan mode, i.e. have an attitude of surrender to the Prana Shakti within them, while lying in their bed or sitting comfortably in a bus. Lying in bed will not allow the awakened Prana Shakti to make the Kriyas that are needed to happen freely, while doing so on a bus while seated comfortably will likely inhibit you from surrendering to the Prana Shakti within you because of concern that the Kriyas that happen might draw undue attention to you from others. If in the middle of the night you find yourself awake and would like to experience Maha Yoga Sadhan, it is better to sit on your bed rather than remain lying down.

Eventually, when you effortlessly develop an attitude of surrendering to the Prana Shakti at all times, the awakened Prana Shakti within you will remain in an inward directed mode even when you are not “sitting” for Sadhan. But by that time physical Kriyas will likely have ceased to happen (because the Samskaras that get expressed through such Kriyas will already have been eliminated) and whatever Kriyas happen will be very subtle and the activities you “do” will be the work of the Prana Shakti within you as you remain in the mode of a Sakshi (observer). For most of us mortals, this is a very advanced spiritual stage, not something that happens overnight, so we have to also develop an attitude of patience and acceptance of whatever happens.

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

Deeksha Day (Initiation Day) on November 29th, 2017
Those desirous of receiving Maha Yoga Deeksha (initiation) should go to the website: www.mahayoga.org for instructions. The online application form is also available at the website. The dates for two subsequent Deeksha Days are posted on the Maha Yoga program calendar at http://mahayoga.org/progcal.aspx.

Maha Yoga Sadhan Shibirs (workshops) at Nashik Ashram
The Nashik Ashram holds Maha Yoga Sadhan Shibirs on the first Sunday of each month from 8 am to 2 pm. Sadhaks sit for Samuhik (Communal) Sadhan, which is followed by a discourse on Yoga. Maha Prasad (lunch) is also served. About 250 Sadhaks typically attend this monthly event. These and other events at the Nashik Ashram and at other locations are posted at http://www.mahayoga.org/progcal.aspx.

The Nashik Ashram is located at:
P.P. Shri Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj Mahayoga Trust
P.P. Shri Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj Chowk, Shrirang Nagar, Gangapur Road, Nashik 422013, Maharashtra, India.
Tel. no.: +91 - 253 - 2311616

Lecture Series at the Maha Yoga Ashram in Thane, Maharashtra, India
The Thane Ashram hosts a series of lectures/talks on Maha Yoga and Yoga on the first Sunday of every month.

The Thane Ashram is located at:
A/9 Sector # 7, Behind Omega Apartments
Vasant Bungalow, Shree Nagar, Wagle Estate, Thane 400604, India

Please contact P. P. Dr. Deshpande Maharaj in Thane, India at 22-2581-2811 for additional information. The Thane Ashram also hosts Samuhik Sadhan (communal Sadhan) every Sunday from 8:30 am to 9:30 am. The lecture will follow the Samuhik Sadhan (communal Sadhan) on the first Sunday of every month.
Website Updates:

We 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.

We also have a Facebook page, Mahayoga World at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/mahayogaworld.

We also have a Twitter feed at https://twitter.com/Mahayoga_Org. Please check it out for photographs of the recent events held at various Maha Yoga Ashrams.
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

P.P. Shri Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj Mahayoga Trust
Shrirang Nagar, Gangapur Road, Nashik 422013, Maharashtra, INDIA

Phone: 91 - 253 - 2311616

E-mail: self.awakening@gmail.com

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Editor: Mr. Dilip Kamat

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May all desire to follow this nectarous Siddhayoga Path!