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.
Many Forms of God

Someone suggested that, with so many types of spiritual practices and so many forms and images of God, an average person gets confused.

Maharajshri replied, “God has many forms based on various principles. The form of God that is appropriate to a specific spiritual practice is formulated according to the need. For example, in saguna bhakti [devotion to God with qualities] a god is needed that the devotee can be dependent on. A god who speaks and acts like the devotee, listens to his prayers, is compassionate and forgiving. A god who can destroy evil and guide his devotee. Hence their god is in human form, like Rama, Krishna, Shankar and Bhagavati. Even while retaining his impersonal nature he incarnates in the midst of Maya.

“Yogis contemplate God within. They meditate on the formless — that is, there is no idol; only the feeling exists. A yogi performs all his actions knowing that God is the doer, and that he, himself, must be the non-doer. If he accumulates any impressions he still knows that the god within has no impressions. He reaps the fruits of his actions, but since, ultimately, it is God reaping the fruits, there is nothing to reap. And so a person following the path of yoga is established in individuality but his god is the Supreme Being. There are no signs of individuality in God and this is what makes him exceptional. For the practice of yoga, he requires no other god than this. He does not get into arguments over the qualities of God, such as eternal, pure, totally aware, etc.
Churning of the Heart - Excerpts (continued)

“And as for the seeker of knowledge, the foundation on which his chitta is based is different from that of a yogi or devotee. Bramha is impersonal, formless, beyond vibrations and one and only. Bramha is eternal, pure, boundless truth, consciousness and bliss in nature. Bramha is beyond the reach of the mind, and the senses cannot even reach there.

Due to the power of his discrimination, the emptiness and the transient nature of the world has become apparent to the seeker of knowledge. The sorrowful nature of the world also is apparent to him. That is why he is in search of the eternal element, which is God, the one who is ever blissful in nature. He also knows that the mind, the senses and his intellect cannot reach there. That is why he always makes efforts to lift himself above all these.

“The point here is that the image of God is dependent upon the state of mind of the aspirant—his sentiments, faith and spiritual path. Someone asked Swami Vivekananda how large God is. His answer was, ‘He is as big as the devotee.’

“For some people God is a mountain, a tree or a river. With the development of the psyche, the image of God also develops. At first a temple is God’s abode. Slowly one progresses to believe in his omnipresence. At first the way to attain God is a special mantra. But this belief keeps on changing with the development of the chitta. Hence a true sadhak does not try to change anyone else’s belief. Otherwise the natural faith of that person might be destroyed, when he could not accept any higher faith due to the limitations of his state of mind. Then the person would not be at home anywhere. On the contrary, an aspirant tries to further support and strengthen the faith of the person. And when he develops his faith he will automatically change.

“The perspective of a sadhak is totally different from that of the world. He seeks spiritual welfare for the world and for himself. He does not hesitate if he has to stop and wait for a while for the good of others to manifest. He does not assault anyone’s sentiments. He does not hurt anyone’s ego. This is true for the imagined God as well. He does not play with anybody’s faith. He does not repudiate their belief. He helps.”

Question: “You did not say anything about the God of sadhaks of Shakti.”

Answer: “In the imagination of sadhaks of Shakti the conscious form of God is of prime importance. In other words, the nature of their God is Chaitanya [consciousness]. They do not have to imagine this because the activities of consciousness are visibly present within. The power of consciousness is detached from the senses, but its activities are experienced through the mind and the senses. This path of Shakti-sadhan is the path to reach Shakti, by holding onto the rope of the kriyas of Shakti. Joy is experienced as soon as Shakti becomes active, but in the beginning one may need to imagine Shakti as eternal, omnipresent and singular. The oneness of Shiva and Shakti is a subject to be understood only after the destruction of ignorance.
Churning of the Heart - Excerpts (continued)

“The God of Shakti-sadhaks imparts energy for activating the senses, and also manifests in the form of the world around the sadhak. Nothing is possible in the world without this divine power. The vibrations of Shakti are active in every form, every feeling and every resolve. In spite of that it does not do anything.

“Debates about God are meaningless. Principles have been established according to the experiences of the spiritual masters. On the basis of those principles many different views have developed and followers of these traditions have begun to dispute. God must be wondering, ‘What kind of a living being have I created? On the basis of imagination they are ready to cut each other’s throats. Without any experience they are swinging sticks in the dark.’ A wise and thoughtful sadhak does not get involved in any argument. He understands that these differences are due to different perspectives and experiences. Otherwise, nobody can bind God in any definition, description or explanation.

“For example, if you go to a temple in North India, the costumes of Lord Krishna and Radha will be in a North Indian style. If you go to Maharashtra, it will be Maharashtrian. At a place where I stayed, the head of the household was devoted to rituals, He felt like smoking a hukka [an Indian pipe for smoking tobacco]. He prepared a small hukka and kept it in front of the idol of God. After that he prepared his own hukka and started to smoke. When I asked him why, he said, ‘If I smoke a hukka why should not my God?’

“A journalist went to Afghanistan. He learned of a temple of Lord Rama. He became curious and went to see the temple. He saw that the priest brought food for God on a plate covered with a piece of cloth. He kept on watching. When the priest lifted the cloth the journalist was struck with wonder. There were meat dishes. After the offering was finished the journalist enquired about the meat offerings to God. The priest replied, ‘Lord Rama was a Kshatriya [a member of the warrior caste]. He used to hunt so he must eat meat as well. What is so surprising about that?’

“The main reason for this is that everyone in Afghanistan is a non-vegetarian, hence their God is also a non-vegetarian.

“It is human nature to try to imagine things that are beyond one’s reach. A human writes articles and gets involved in arguments about subjects that are beyond his intellect. He knows that his mind and senses cannot reach God, yet he makes temples and places of pilgrimage to try to reach him.

“Human beings have an attachment for the body on the one hand, and, on the other, they try to attain God. The essence of this is:

(1) God cannot be defined. He cannot be limited either by thoughts, sentiments, forms, shapes or words.
(2) Humans are helpless due to their nature, and continually try to understand and explain God.

(3) Although God is unmanifest, formless and beyond qualities, an aspirant needs some basis upon which to worship God. Consequently he tries to find support in an idol, fire, water, sun, thought, emotion, books, and so forth.

(4) Everyone should follow their faith based on their state of mind. When their state of mind changes, their idea of God will also change.”

Spirituality in Daily Life

Now Maharajshri addressed some practical issues, a subject most useful for spiritual aspirants. He began, “A human being is a social animal. Neither can he avoid interacting with people, nor can he accomplish much without doing so. This situation continues from childhood until the end. If he gets too involved in this interaction, however, it causes problems. A spiritual aspirant does not want to be anyone’s enemy, nor should he become too attached to anybody. Neither attachment, nor hatred. This is the only way to remain in the world while being untouched by it, and people fail to understand this. As a result a human being increases his involvement with people until it turns into attachment.

“Not only does infatuation grow by excessive interaction, meetings and dialogue, it also leads to overstepping one’s boundaries. Sometimes this may also result in arguments and mutual discord. It also stops any mutual dialogue. People then say, ‘What happened to them? They had a lot of love for each other.’ In reality, the cause of this is infatuation, an increase in their mutual expectations and the inability to stay within boundaries. I am not asking you not to love anyone. I am asking you to love the whole world, but keep in mind limits and boundaries.

“Just like people, excessive association with places and things is the cause of infatuation. It destroys faith, limits and feelings. People have limitless faith and emotions for the Ganges. People come from far away, spending time and money, to bathe in the waters of the Ganges. But those who live in Rishikesh and Haridwar on the banks of the Ganges seem to be more attached to their families and businesses. Rarely do they care to bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges. On the contrary, they wash their clothes in the Ganges. The dirty water of the cities is dumped into the Ganges. This happens due to excessive contact with the Ganges.

“Like aversions, attachment also pollutes the mind and increases attachment further. There is always a chance that attachment may turn into aversion, anger and disgust. Attachment and aversion are both obstacles in spiritual progress. Spirituality starts with the elimination of attachment and hate. There is no shortage of people who raised their children with delusory attachment, who expected many things, but when these children grew up they
turned away from their parents. The lives of such people were filled with hopelessness and despair because they harbored expectations for others. Too much familiarity increases expectations. Expectation is the mother of despair. The story of Jad Bharat [a great saint from India] is famous. He started to rear a fawn. He became attached to the deer and, eventually, had to be reborn as a deer.

“If work and social conduct are performed with a sense of duty, then they are not a cause of attachment and bondage. However, do not do anything with reciprocal expectations. If you help someone in difficulty, do not expect to get help during your hard times.

Self-examination: “The second thing to do is to observe your own self. This is only possible for that person who is weary of worldly pleasures, who has started seeing the miseries they entail, and who wants to gain spiritual benefit because he knows that the flow of the world is incessant, that feelings of joy and sorrow will never end. Under such circumstances, when will you examine your own self, and when will the hunger for spiritual welfare awaken? The mind is fickle, yet the sorrows associated with worldly pleasures are easy to perceive. As such, self-examination is a constant process, but even if slight attention was directed towards it in the beginning, life could be transformed significantly. The more you look inward, the greater will be the guidance and clarification of doubts you will receive from within. This inner satisfaction is real and natural. There will be no need for you to wander around asking questions. The first and foremost requirement for self-examination is solitude. There should be no work, and no obstacle of any kind, only undisturbed contemplation. Maybe at night before going to bed or waking up just before dawn, even if it is for a brief interval, look within and reflect upon the following questions with closed eyes and a peaceful mind.

(1) A man himself does not know who he is. His thoughts, feelings and resolve change constantly. The form and state of the body that he thinks is his also keeps changing. It is definite that in our constantly changing state there is an element that always stays the same. That element is not influenced by these changes. What is that element? What is its form? What are its qualities and nature? This is a subject of inquiry.

(2) The second question is, ‘Where have I come from?’ Just as he cannot find an answer to the first question, in the same way this question also remains unanswered in front of man. In the path of yoga, types of states are described in which past samskaras manifest before him. Samskaras exist in the form of a chain reaction. If a person gets hold of the chain of samskaras and goes into the past he can know his past lives. This process is not so simple. For this a special development of the psyche is required. Until this state is achieved, man must think about this constantly. This process is also limited to the subtle body, which is not eternal. It does not focus on the atma-tattva [the ultimate reality]. So the question is, ‘Where did the atma-tattva come from? What is that level, state and entity of which the individual soul is a part?’ It is not necessary to know about past births to attain the Self, but it is certainly one of the stages in sadhana.
Churning of the Heart - Excerpts (continued)

(3) What is mine in the world? This question helps to develop detachment toward the world. Money, luxury, house, family, fame, and so forth, are certainly not mine, because they may exist today and not tomorrow. Whatever is mine should remain with me forever, but I will leave these or they will leave me. The mind, intellect, resolves, modifications, feelings and the world are not mine because they keep on changing. They arise and they dissolve. The ideas that I believe are mine also keep changing with time. Then what is mine in this world? Only the ego. But is ego mine? Ego is only an illusion. It is only an imagination. Scriptures say that only God is yours. He never leaves you alone, nor does he change. But where is my God? If God is mine then it is my duty to bring him before me. It is not enough to just say, ‘God is mine, God is mine.’ As long as he does not manifest and I do not see him, I am like an atheist.

(4) There is no means of finding out where we are to go. By grasping the chain of samskaras it is possible to know about past lives, but for the future neither samskaras exist, nor a chain. It depends on the state of mind at the time of death. Good karmas will result in a birth in a higher species and bad karmas will result in a lower species. But the cycle of rebirths does not end with that. This wheel of rising and falling will continue to turn. There must be some way to stop this merry-go-round of entering and leaving different life forms. Why not perform karmas [actions] that are neither good nor bad?

(5) Why did I fall from my Atma, the highest personal principle of life? Due to what factors was I born into this present-day pitiable condition? I understand that the world is unreal, but I still keep running after the world. I know that the pleasures of the world are full of sorrows, but I am dying with cravings for them. If this is not a misconception then what is it? Is this misconception the cause of my pitiable condition? It is definitely a misconception that I am attached to this world with an expectation of worldly happiness. It is definitely a misconception that is making me dance around. So how can this misconception be destroyed?

(6) Due to this misconception I developed a sense of doership, which made me accumulate impressions. Now I am restless, like a bird entangled in the net of prarabda. I want to escape from the net but I cannot. The grip is tightening. I do not see any way to escape. Prarabda is so strong and powerful that it does not leave me alone before bearing fruits. With the accumulation of new samskaras, the wheel of samskaras keeps turning. Why not go through prarabda without being happy or unhappy so that new samskaras are not accumulated. Can I do this? How much endurance and how much patience will I need for that? I will have to destroy my mind to succeed.

(7) The followers of Shaktipat sadhana must also examine how much the sense of surrender is present in the mind. With Shaktipat the sense of an observer may develop, but surrender is different from that. Not to interfere with spontaneous kriyas, to have equanimity in joy and misery, and to fulfill duties without concern for results are parts of surrender. One must ask, ‘Am I able to do that? Does not my ego increase repeatedly and lead me astray from the path of surrender?’
(8) An aspirant must not think about his own virtues, and must never praise himself. This can give rise to ego, and ego is the worst vice. This may mean that those virtues have not yet become natural because nature [temperament] does not have any ego. If one has ego about virtues then it is certain that those virtues are not part of his nature. In the first place, you must not look at your own virtues, and second, never examine the virtues and vices of others. One cannot learn from other’s virtues, while vices can influence the mind very easily. Do I also have these vices? Am I learning from other’s virtues?

(9) One must look at one’s own vices. A common man does not know about his own vices. Even if he comes to know about his vices, he tries to justify them. Consequently faults remain within and keep growing. So long as he is not disgusted with his own vices, the path to control the mind will not open. Only after becoming disgusted will he try to find ways to free himself from those defects. Is there a feeling of disgust towards these faults? Do I try in any way to get released from them?

(10) Are my lifestyle and food habits Sattvik [harmonious]? Do I behave humbly? Are my words and actions the same? Do I react strongly to small things? Did I betray someone’s trust in me? Do I keep my appointments? Do I go to bed early and get up early in the morning? Do I study some scriptures every day? Do I sit in sadhan regularly? Do I waste time? Do I take interest in gossip or listen to gossip about others?

“Some questions have been suggested here that would help a sadhak in self-examination. A sadhak must assign some convenient time for this. He must scold himself for his mistakes. He must repent and make a resolution not to repeat the same mistake again. This must be contemplative throughout the day, while doing every activity. This way a sadhak can ride on his mind all day. The meaning of sadhan is to change the direction of the flow of life. If life does not change, then it shows there is some deficiency or defect.”

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:
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Editor’s note

Maha Yoga Sadhaks often wonder what Self-Realization is really like, i.e. “What exactly is the Self?” Most of us understand at an intellectual level that our true Self is not our body, nor our mind and not even our intellect. However, Sadhaks like us who have not yet experienced that state, the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi on a sustained basis, have to rely on the scriptures and/or on descriptions by self-realized Mahatmas to understand what our true Self is and what it isn’t.

There are many treatises written on this topic, but the Nirvana Shatakam, also known as Atma Shatakam, by Shri Adi Shankaracharya, provides the most succinct and appropriate Advaita (non-duality) Vedanta-based description of one’s true Self that blows apart the myths that we continue to harbor about ourselves. This description of the Self is very simple; it can be explained in six Shlokas (verses), what the Self isn’t and what it is. However, Sadhaks need to go beyond this intellectual understanding, our understanding needs to be experiential, not just intellectual. And Maha Yoga is the simplest and the most direct approach for gaining an experience-based understanding of what the Self isn’t, and eventually being able to actually experience what it truly is.

Self-Realized Yogis, who have experienced the Self on a sustained basis, simply live in that state of Self-Realization; being in this world, but not of this world. They just live in the Avdhoot state, and not having any Vruttis (tendencies and predispositions) remaining in their Chitta (mind-stuff), have no desires for explaining/describing that state to others. Thanks to a Self-Realized Mahatma like Shri Adi Shankaracharya, who while having reached the Nirvikalpa state and beyond, continued to see the uplift of others as being important, that we have such a description as the Nirvana Shatakam. We Sadhaks owe him a tremendous sense of gratitude for sharing with us his experience-based description of our true Self.

Nirvana Shatakam - In Sanskrit with meaning

निर्वाणशष्टकम्
Nirvana Shatakam

मनोबुध्याङ्गकार चित्तानि नाहं
Na Ca Shrotas-Jihve Na Ca Ghraanna-Netre |
न च व्योम भूमिर्भूमिन तेजो न वायुः
Na Ca Vyoma Bhuumir-Tejo Na Vaayuh
चिदानं-दरुपः शिवोहम् शिवोहम्
Cid-Aananda-Ruupah Shivo[a-A]ham Shivo[a-A]ham ||1||
Meaning:
1.1: Neither am I the Mind, nor the Intelligence or Ego,
1.2: Neither am I the organs of Hearing (Ears), nor that of Tasting (Tongue), Smelling (Nose) or Seeing (Eyes),
1.3: Neither am I the Sky, nor the Earth, Neither the Fire nor the Air,
1.4: I am the Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness; I am Shiva, I am Shiva, The Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness.

न च प्राणसंज्ञो न वै पश्चायुः
न वा सत्त्वधातुः न वा पश्चकोशः इ
न वाक्यालयां न चोपस्थ्यायुः
चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहम् शिवोऽहम् ॥२॥
Na Ca Praanna-Samjnyo Na Vai Pan.ca-Vaayuh
Na Vaa Sapta-Dhaatuh Na Vaa Pan.ca-Koshah |
Na Vaak-Paanni-Paadam Na Copastha-Paayu
Cid-Aananda-Ruupah Shivo[a-A]ham Shivo[a-A]ham ॥2॥

Meaning:
2.1: Neither am I the Vital Breath, nor the Five Vital Airs,
2.2: Neither am I the Seven Ingredients (of the Body), nor the Five Sheaths (of the Body),
2.3: Neither am I the organ of Speech, nor the organs for Holding (Hand), Movement (Feet) or Excretion,
2.4: I am the Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness; I am Shiva, I am Shiva, The Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness.

न मे द्वेषरागी न मे लोभमोही
मदो नैव मे नैव मात्सर्यभाव: इ
न धर्मो न चार्थों न कामो न मोक्षः
चिदानन्दरूपः शिवोऽहम् शिवोऽहम् ॥३॥
Na Me Dvessa-Raagau Na Me Lobha-Mohau
Mado Naiva Me Naiva Maatsarya-Bhaavah |
Na Dharmo Na Ca-Artho Na Kaamo Na Mokssah
Cid-Aananda-Ruupah Shivo[a-A]ham Shivo[a-A]ham ॥3॥

Meaning:
3.1: Neither do I have Hatred, nor Attachment, Neither Greed nor Infatuation,
3.2: Neither do I have Pride, nor Feelings of Envy and Jealousy,
3.3 I am Not within the bounds of Dharma (Righteousness), Artha (Wealth), Kama (Desire) and Moksha (Liberation) (the four Purusarthas of life),
3.4: I am the Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness; I am Shiva, I am Shiva, The Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness.
Nirvana Shatakam - By Adi Shankaracharya (continued)

Meaning:
4.1: Neither am I bound by Merits nor Sins, neither by Worldly Joys nor by Sorrows,
4.2: Neither am I bound by Sacred Hymns nor by Sacred Places, neither by Sacred
Scriptures nor by Sacrifices,
4.3: I am Neither Enjoyment (Experience), nor an object to be Enjoyed (Experienced), nor
the Enjoyer (Experiencer),
4.4: I am the Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness; I am Shiva, I am Shiva,
The Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness.

5.1: Neither am I bound by Death and its Fear, nor by the rules of Caste and its Distinctions,
5.2: Neither do I have Father and Mother, nor do I have Birth,
5.3: Neither do I have Relations nor Friends, neither Spiritual Teacher nor Disciple,
5.4: I am the Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness; I am Shiva, I am Shiva,
The Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness.

Meaning:
6.1: Neither am I bound by Death and its Fear, nor by the rules of Caste and its Distinctions,
Nirvana Shatakam - By Adi Shankaracharya (continued)

Meaning:
6.1: I am Without any Variation, and Without any Form,
6.2: I am Present Everywhere as the underlying Substratum of everything, and behind all Sense Organs,
6.3: Neither do I get Attached to anything, nor get Freed from anything,
6.4: I am the Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness; I am Shiva, I am Shiva,
The Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness.

Here’s a link to the source of the Nirvana Shatakam printed above:
http://greenmesg.org/stotras/brahman/nirvana_shatakam.php
Answers to Questions from Sadhaks

Question: I have some questions related to the rule that Maha Yoga Sadhaks are asked to follow regarding the four days when a woman in their family is menstruating. As a Maha Yoga Sadhak is it okay for me to eat vegetarian food prepared by my wife during her menses? Is it okay for me to eat food that she has purchased in the market at such times? Is it okay for me to sleep in the same bed with her?

Answer: The rules and restrictions that Sadhaks are asked to follow are there only to ensure rapid progress for Sadhaks on the Maha Yoga spiritual path. Sadhaks should follow them to the extent they can. But given the living conditions of many Sadhaks all over the world, it can be difficult for Sadhaks to follow every rule and restriction to the T. I would suggest that you please read the Discussion with P. P. Kaka Maharaj published in the February, 2012 issue of Self Awakening archived at http://www.mahayoga.org/selfawakening.aspx, especially pages 10 to 12, to understand his perspective on the rules and restrictions that Sadhaks are asked to follow. He also had a comment on rules and restrictions in a previous Discussion, published in the February, 2011 issue of Self Awakening; see page 7 of that issue.

So, you should continue to sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan, doing your best to follow the restrictions to the extent possible, but not feel guilty if you are unable to do so. As P. P. Kaka Maharaj has said in previous Discussions, once the Prana Shakti within a Sadhak has become awakened, what the Sadhak does in terms of following the rules and restrictions or sitting for Sadhan on a regular basis is between him and the awakened Prana Shakti within him. And since the awakened Prana Shakti within him is like his Mother, who has grabbed him by his hand to lead him on the Maha Yoga path, he has nothing to fear. As his Mother, she will do him no harm, and if he allows her to do so, she will inevitably and eventually take him to Self-Enlightenment; the Sadhak has to simply allow her to do so by regular Maha Yoga Sadhan. So, sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan regularly, follow the rules and restrictions to the extent possible and leave your progress in Mother Prana Shakti’s hands.

Question: I was initiated into Maha Yoga a few months ago. After the initiation my wife said I looked happy. I felt a light, blissful sort of energy moving upward in my system. I don’t have any gross body movements as Kriyas. I don’t know if it’s entirely automatic but I do feel inclined to rotate my neck sometimes or my whole torso. Mostly I feel sensations or electric like currents or what feels like energy. One time I felt heat moving up the spine. Sometimes I go into deeper void like spaces. Sometimes I don’t feel much.

Since 2015 I have also been involved in Isha Yoga programs. I stopped doing that form of yoga for some time but resumed it recently after attending a pre-samyama meet.

When I attended the pre-samyama meet, at the end I decided I was done with that path for various reasons. I began to tell my wife my reasons by text. Then I felt a blissful sort of energy beginning to start in my system that became overflowing. My mind changed about the program and now I find myself considering it and participating in the 7 day samyama program.
Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

I am torn because I really want to stay on the Maha Yoga path. However the preparation for sanyama is intense and would take up all my time. I also realize that this yoga is very different from Maha Yoga.

I don’t know if you have any advice or inspiration to offer me. But anyway thanks so much again for putting this whole process on.

**Answer:** Glad to read that you received Maha Yoga initiation (Deeksha) a few months ago. Even though you indicate you have not experienced “gross body movements as Kriyas”, it is quite clear from your note that Maha Yoga Deeksha happened for you. The flow of “blissful sort of energy”, the “sensations of electric currents or what feels like energy” and “heat moving up the spine” are clear indications of Pranic Kriyas (i.e. the flow of Prana energy) happening during Maha Yoga Sadhan. The inclination you feel to rotate your neck and your whole torso during Maha Yoga Sadhan suggests that these physical Kriyas are getting initiated by the awakened Prana Shakti within you, but perhaps you might in some manner be inhibiting them from happening. When you sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan, sit with a sense of surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within you and allow her to be the “doer”, with you playing the role of a detached observer. Just allow yourself to go with the flow that the awakened Prana Shakti within you is bringing into your Chitta (mind stuff). The feeling you have of going into “deeper, void-like spaces” is also an indication that Deeksha happened for you, and more importantly, it is confirmed by the fact that even another person, your wife, said that you “looked happy”. Ultimately, the feeling of happiness is the litmus test for Deeksha having happened.

Just to provide a context, physical Kriyas are not the only type of Kriyas that Maha Yoga Sadhaks experience. The other types of Kriyas can be Pranic (energy flows), as in your experience, or even mental. The types of Kriyas that happen to a Sadhak depend on the nature of the Samskaras (impressions) the Sadhak has accumulated in his Chitta (mind stuff) during his current and past lives. The process of Kriyas happening is the process whereby individual Samskaras get brought up in the Sadhak’s Chitta and get expressed as physical, mental or Pranic Kriyas. By simply observing the Kriyas as they happen in a detached manner, not fearing them or getting attached to them, the Samskaras underlying the Kriyas get eliminated from the Sadhak’s Chitta. Gradually, with regular Maha Yoga Sadhan, the trove of Samskaras accumulated over lifetimes gets eliminated and the Sadhak is actually able to experience the Atma (soul) within himself as being one and the same as the Universal Soul, the Param Atma - i.e. he experiences Self Enlightenment. That is the ultimate goal of Maha Yoga.

In this context, the happening of Kriyas, whether they are physical, Pranic or mental, is not at all the central goal of Maha Yoga. The elimination of all Samskaras is the goal. So, as a Sadhak progresses on his spiritual path, he will experience fewer and fewer Kriyas, physical, mental or Pranic. And the Kriyas become more and more subtle. So getting attached to Kriyas is like getting attached to the process of “garbage” elimination. Maha Yoga Sadhaks
should not get attached to the Kriya process nor fear it. They should just observe it in a detached manner during Sadhan.

We are not intimately familiar with the work of the Isha Foundation, but our understanding of it is that it is an effort-based yoga practice, quite different from Maha Yoga, which is an effortless form of Yoga. The purpose of all effort-based Yoga practices is to awaken the Prana Shakti within the Sadhak. These practices require a Sadhak to spend significant amount of time, money and effort in the presence of a well-trained Guru/instructor just to get his Prana Shakti become awakened. On the other hand, Maha Yoga Deeksha received from a Siddha Guru makes this awakening happen instantly and effortlessly during Deeksha and does not cost any money or require any effort or time on part of the Sadhak. All a Sadhak need do after Deeksha is to sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan regularly, surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within him allowing her to “do” what is needed, and simply observe what happens. Once Maha Yoga Deeksha happens, the usually outward-directed Prana Shakti within a Sadhak gets inward-directed (awakened), and she will eventually take the Sadhak to Self-Enlightenment, whether he wants it or not. The fact that you “felt a blissful sort of energy beginning to start in my system that became overflowing” during the Isha pre-meet suggests that indeed the Maha Yoga Deeksha had already resulted in the awakening of the Prana Shakti within you and your condition during the pre-meet allowed the awakened Prana Shakti within you to cause the Pranic Kriya you experienced.

So, while it is entirely up to you whether or not you pursue the Isha approach, we do not think it is at all needed in your situation. Your Prana Shakti is clearly awakened from the Maha Yoga Deeksha, so it is quite unlikely that the Isha practice will contribute substantively to your spiritual progress. You already have what such effort-based Yoga approaches hope to have their practitioners achieve after intensive practices. Sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan regularly, surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within you, allow her to be the “doer” while putting yourself in the role of a detached “observer”, and do not expect/anticipate, fear or get attached to any Kriya (physical, Pranic or mental). The awakened Prana Shakti within you will hold your hand and take you where you need to go! You don’t need to hold her hand; she has already grabbed you by your hand!

Question: I received Maha Yoga Deeksha a few months ago. Over the last few days, during Maha Yoga Sadhan, a being manifests in front of me and I feel a strong vibration in my right arm. I also see the number 488 and a chameleon, and I have no understanding of why these things appear to me during Sadhan. In my dreams, I often seem to get advice on my concerns, and I find that my mental clarity seems to be improving, I feel inner joy and my mind has become a lot calmer. I also find myself feeling a strong sense of love towards my Master as well as towards all the Masters and Sadhaks of our Maha Yoga lineage. Please advise me on what this all means and let me know if I am on the right track.

Answer: Thank you for sharing your experiences during Maha Yoga Sadhan. Your experiences suggest that you are on the right track, especially your sense that you are getting greater mental clarity and joy, peace and mental calm. Also glad to read that you
Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

are also experiencing a sense of devotion to the Masters and Sadhaks in the Maha Yoga lineage. This sense of devotion (Bhakti) to the Maha Yoga Guru(s) and the lineage will only serve to increase your commitment to sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan (meditation) which, in turn, will enhance your spiritual progress.

About the visions of a being, the number 488, the chameleon, etc., and the other Kriyas that you are experiencing, like the electric current that results in a strong vibration in your right hand are also indicators that you are making progress on the Maha Yoga path. But my advice to you is to not devote much thought or concern regarding such Kriyas. The Kriyas that happen during Maha Yoga Sadhan are the result of the awakened Prana Shakti within you bringing up in your Chitta (mind stuff) past Samskaras (impressions from your current and past lives) which get expressed as the Kriyas that happen automatically without any intent on your part. By simply observing them in a detached manner, i.e. by not fearing them, trying to interpret what they mean, or getting attached to them, but by just letting them go, the Samskaras underlying the Kriyas will get eliminated from your Chitta.

This is the process of “garbage removal” whereby the awakened Prana Shakti is cleaning up your Chitta by helping get rid of the “garbage” of Samskaras that have accumulated there over many lifetimes. This is a key objective of Maha Yoga Sadhan; to get rid of the accumulated Samskaras from your Chitta so your Chitta will become clear and no longer block the presence of the Atma (soul) within you, enabling you to actually experience the Atma within as being one and the same as the Param Atma (the Universal Soul). If you give a lot of attention/importance to the Kriyas that happen during Maha Yoga Sadhan by thinking about them too much or spending a lot of mental energy wondering what they mean and what the underlying Samskaras might be, instead of getting rid of accumulated Samskaras you will begin to accumulate new Samskaras related to the impressions the Kriyas themselves create on your Chitta. So, it is best for Maha Yoga Sadhaks to not dwell too much on the Kriyas that happen; just observe them in a detached manner and forget about them. Don’t fear them, get attached to them or even anticipate or hope that they happen. Just observe them and let them go.

I want to reiterate that you are on the right path and are clearly making good progress.

Question: I come to you humbly to ask for Shaktipat Deeksha (initiation). I’ve been seeking enlightenment, divine source of love, looking within for some time now. Granted at first I was looking in places that I probably shouldn’t have but eventually decided to move to Rishikesh India for 3 months to learn more about yoga. It’s been a truly incredible experience and I have been practicing yoga, pranayama and meditation on a regular basis. In this time in my life I really do feel like I need a huge change in my life. I’m back in Miami Florida where I live and once again feel like I am falling into the same rabbit hole. Can you please help me? I’ve been seeking from so many places but I need someone who really knows what they are doing!! Is it possible for me to receive Shaktipat Deeksha without being in the presence of the Guru?
Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

**Answer:** Glad to read that you have been practicing Yoga and meditation for some time now and have had the good fortune to spend a few months in Rishikesh, India. Also glad to read that you are interested in receiving Shaktipat Deeksha (initiation). The Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha of our lineage is a Sankalpa Deeksha, i.e. the Sadhak can receive Deeksha purely driven by the intent (Sankalpa) of the Siddha Guru (i.e. a Guru who has the capability to awaken the Prana Shakti within a Sadhak) without the Sadhak needing to be in the Guru’s presence. So, you can receive Deeksha in the privacy of your own home without having to travel to India to be in the Guru’s presence.

P. P. Prakash Prabhune Maharaj is the current Siddha Guru in our Maha Yoga lineage who grants Shaktipat Deeksha to Sadhaks who apply for it, and he does so for Sadhaks all over the world on certain auspicious days during the year. We refer to such days as Deeksha Days, when Sadhaks who have applied for receiving Deeksha and whose applications have been approved, can receive Deeksha in the privacy of their own homes. You can apply for Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha online at [http://www.mahayoga.org/index.aspx](http://www.mahayoga.org/index.aspx) by clicking on “Click here to apply for initiation” in the “Upcoming Initiation Date” box.

Meanwhile, if you are interested in experiencing Maha Yoga prior to receiving a formal Shaktipat initiation on the next Deeksha Day, you can try out the Introductory Practice of Maha Yoga as described here [http://www.mahayoga.org/mahayoga-introductory-practice.aspx](http://www.mahayoga.org/mahayoga-introductory-practice.aspx). The Introductory Practice has the Sankalpa (intent) of P. P. Kaka Maharaj himself, and many Sadhaks who try it out get a taste for what Maha Yoga is all about. Unlike other Yoga forms which are effort-based and which require a Sadhak to make the effort to practice that form of Yoga for years under the guidance of a Guru just to have their Prana Shakti become awakened, Maha Yoga is an effortless form of Yoga. So, when you sit for the Introductory Practice of Maha Yoga, do not “do” anything with intent. Just sit comfortably, keep your body relaxed, observe your involuntary and normal process of breathing in and out (not “do” any Pranayama or structured breathing). And if you experience any involuntary physical movements, any flows of energy within your body, or the emergence of thoughts, (these involuntary activities are referred to as Kriyas) just observe whatever is happening and redirect your attention back to your normal and involuntary breathing. The key is to not “do” anything with intent, but to put yourself in the role of an observer (Sakshi) of whatever is happening. Sit for this Introductory Practice on a daily basis as you wait for Shaktipat Deeksha to happen on the next Deeksha Day.

**Question:** My request for Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha has been accepted and I am excited about receiving Deeksha. What should I do during Deeksha and daily after that day? Should I just sit in silent meditation for an hour? Is it okay if I sit outside in the open for Deeksha since I have such a place for prayer and I think I will feel better sitting there?

**Answer:** Congratulations on your upcoming Maha Yoga Deeksha. Please follow the instructions in the Deeksha letter (pdf file attached to the e-mail you received) to prepare for the Deeksha on that day. When you sit for Deeksha on Deeksha Day, please do so with an
attitude of surrender to the Prana Shakti (Universal Life Energy) within you, keep your body relaxed and simply observe what happens. When Deeksha happens and the Prana Shakti within you gets awakened, please allow her to be the “doer” and put yourself in the role of an “observer”. If physical Kriyas (involuntary activities) happen, just let them happen without trying to enhance them or control them. If you find yourself experiencing Pranic Kriyas (involuntary movement of energy within your body), please do not get scared by them or try to control them, just observe that such things are happening. If you find random thoughts arising, just observe them if possible, without getting too engaged in pursuing them or suppressing them. The key is to simply observe what happens and to allow the Prana Shakti within you to do as she does, without getting scared by or getting attached to any Kriyas (physical, Pranic or mental) that happen. You don’t need to specifically time the sitting for one hour, but it would be good to sit for an hour on Deeksha Day. If you lose track of time and find that you have been sitting for longer than an hour, that is fine as well.

Sitting in a private place for Deeksha and Sadhan is suggested so you don’t get distracted by things happening around you and you don’t get inhibited in allowing the Kriyas to happen if other people might be observing you. But if you have access to a safe outdoor location where you will not be disturbed or become inhibited by concern that you might disturb others, please feel free to sit there for Deeksha and for your daily Sadhan following Deeksha.

After Deeksha Day Sadhaks should sit for Sadhan every day, just as they did on Deeksha Day. The daily Sadhan is the process by which the awakened Prana Shakti cleans out the Sadhak’s Chitta (mind stuff) and eventually enables him to experience Self Enlightenment. So sitting for Sadhan every day is a must for experiencing spiritual progress on the Maha Yoga path.

Editor’s note: Please send your questions regarding Maha Yoga and Shaktipat to: self.awakening@gmail.com.
The English language translation of P. P. Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj’s biography is 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 Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj Mahayoga Trust
P. P. Shri Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj Chowk,
Shrirang Nagar, Gangapur Road
Nashik, Maharashtra, India 422013

Phone: +91-253-2311616

A couple of copies of the book are available for Sadhaks in North America. Those interested can send an e-mail including their postal address, to self.awakening@gmail.com. The cost, including shipping, will be $11 for shipment within the US, but about $24 for shipment to other countries.
Upcoming Events:

Deeksha Day (Initiation Day) on July 20th, 2018
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. Dates for 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/](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](https://www.facebook.com/groups/mahayogaworld).

We also have a Twitter feed at [https://twitter.com/Mahayoga_Org](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

May all desire to follow this nectarous Siddhayoga Path!