

Self Awakening

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Maha Yoga - Effortless, joyful and no-cost path to Self-Realization



Contents

Editor's note	1
Churning of the Heart	2
An Alternative View on Siddhis	9
Answers to questions	12
Book announcement	19
Upcoming events	20
Website updates	21
How to contribute content	22

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.

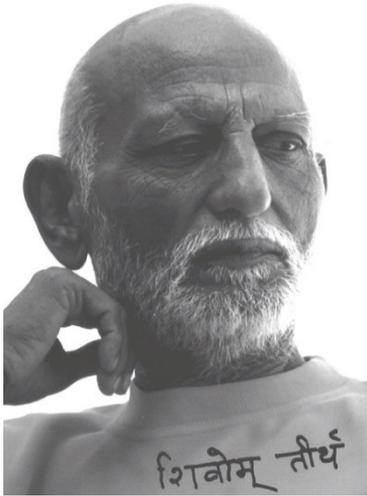
To the thousands of Sadhaks in the Maha Yoga tradition all over the world and other interested readers, this e-newsletter is intended to provide virtual Satsang. It is intended to encourage Sadhaks to remain engaged in Maha Yoga, be informed about Maha Yoga-related events around the world, and to provide 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>.

Churning of the Heart - Excerpts



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

The following excerpts cover the important topic of pilgrimage. P. P. Shivom Tirth Maharaj and his Guru, Maharajshri, beautifully tie the role of external pilgrimages to the internal pilgrimage we are all on.

Tolerance

It was the monsoon season, 1962. There was a bramhachari in the ashram. Whenever he came he served Maharajshri with great diligence.

He had much love for me, also. Whenever I was in his company time passed very well. He wanted to go on a pilgrimage to Badrinath and Kedarnath and he asked me to accompany him. I did not have a single penny. After coming to the ashram I had followed the principle of not accepting money, nor keeping money. It was the third year since my arrival at the ashram and I did feel like going somewhere, but I had I nothing to spend. And then if both of us went away on a pilgrimage, who would serve Maharajshri? That also required thought. Perhaps Bramhachariji understood my dilemma. He said, "Are you worried because you have no money for the pilgrimage? Whatever I have is yours. Yes, the question of serving Maharajshri remains. In any case, before we decide to go we have to get Maharajshri's permission. At that time everything will be sorted out."

When the proposal of the pilgrimage to Badri-Kedar was placed before Maharajshri he was very pleased. He said, "Good. You may go. With this plan you will also have a vacation. One gets weary staying in the same place for long. A worldly person, on getting weary, seeks methods of entertainment while an aspirant goes on a pilgrimage. But you must understand that the pilgrimage takes place inside, not outside. The external pilgrimage is merely a rehearsal for the internal pilgrimage. During a pilgrimage one has to face many difficulties, bear insults, face failures, and still continue courageously with a serene mind. In one place one sees mountain ranges, in another a vast ocean, somewhere a desert appears and elsewhere greenery. During a pilgrimage one sees variety. All this is nothing but a glimpse of

Churning of the Heart - Excerpts (continued)

the internal journey. The inner pilgrimage is very difficult. Extreme courage, enthusiasm, focus, firm resolve to move ahead, strong desire to see God and endurance are essential. During the inner journey one sees numerous sights and has many different experiences. There is a possibility of getting attached to them, but one must keep moving forward. The external pilgrimage is for learning all this, but today it takes the form of comfortable tourism; the sense of austerity toward the internal pilgrimage has disappeared. The main purpose of pilgrimage is made secondary by roads, railways, good places for lodging and boarding, money in the pocket, and the accumulation of things for comfort. When there is no real external pilgrimage, how can there be even the beginning of an internal pilgrimage?

“We did our first pilgrimage to Uttarakhand [in north India] in 1934. At that time perhaps a bus went up to Dev Prayag, but we started walking on foot from Rishikesh. Whenever we came across huts and ashrams of ascetics and saints we stopped for a meeting and spiritual conversation. We never broke our routine of chanting, meditation, and so forth. Going up and down in the mountains, we would enjoy the natural beauty, spend time in spiritual conversations, cook our own food, never buy cooked food from the market, endure comforts and discomforts, recite mantras even while walking and keep on going forward. Those were very inexpensive times, but still Guruji [Shri Yoganandji Maharaj] had given me some money. With this blessing of the Guru, the pilgrimage was completed.

“I still remember one incident from this pilgrimage. I was climbing the incline above Gauri Kund, on the way to Kedarnath, and someone was coming down after visiting the temple. As he walked by me I sensed that he was a follower of the same spiritual path. Possibly he also felt the same. After walking ahead a little I looked back and realized that the gentleman had also stopped and was looking at me. Spontaneously my feet went in his direction. He also came toward me. We were standing in front of each other and looking at each other. He broke the silence saying, ‘I am Gulavani.’ [A famous saint from Pune, a disciple of Maharajshri’s sanyas Guru-brother, Loknath Tirth Maharaj.]

“I introduced myself saying, ‘I am a disciple of Yoganandji Maharaj.’ Thus mine and Gulavani Maharaj’s first meeting took place on the inaccessible heights of the Himalayas. In the inner Journey, also, an aspirant meets spiritual adepts, deities and sages, but one has to go through a long and hard pilgrimage for that, and has to bear oncoming hardships and miseries.

“I recollect another incident on the way to Gangotri. At night we were sleeping in a campground for pilgrims. It was on the banks of the Ganges. It was raining very heavily. One person came with a lamp in his hand shouting, ‘Wake up! The waters of the Ganges are rising!’ We all woke up and went to higher ground. In the morning we saw that the Ganges was flowing where we had been sleeping. In the same way, God warns you about calamities on an inner pilgrimage, but you have to go to a safe place on your own.

“There was another similar experience. I was returning from Yamunotri on the way to Gangotri. There was a small, hilly path by which one could go to Uttarkashi directly. I was

Churning of the Heart - Excerpts (continued)

tempted to take the shortcut and I started on that path. In the mountains paths are not clear; during those days there simply weren't any. Someone gave directions and I started walking. The temptation of shortcuts is very destructive on the spiritual path. I lost my way. I wandered in the middle of the high mountain peaks looking for the trail. I had thought I would reach Uttarkashi quickly by using the shortcut, but instead I was surrounded by darkness and still wandering. I started to worry a little. How will I spend the night in this desolate jungle? Hunger and thirst also started troubling me. In front of me the darkness of the night was quickly approaching when I saw an old sage with a long beard and a small water-vessel in his hand approaching. As he came near I bowed, and before I could say anything he said, 'Are you lost? Why did you come this way? The straight road was much better, even though it would have taken a little longer. As it is, by taking this shortcut you have taken even longer'.

"When he learned that I wanted to go to Uttarkashi he asked me to follow him. I started to follow the mahatma. It must have been only fifteen minutes or so and the lights of Uttarkashi were visible. I was looking towards the village in surprise and, as I turned around to look at the mahatma, he had disappeared. Who was he? Where did he come from? God alone knows.

"Once on the journey we met a French couple. After travelling through many countries they had come to India. I asked, 'What did you see in India that you have not seen anywhere else?'

"They said, 'Nowhere else is there a river like the Ganges. It feels as if it is not a river, but a mother. The beauty of its banks, the peace, divine joy, and the flow of pure love at its sight are not experienced anywhere else.' This is about the external journey on the banks of the Ganges. When you play around the banks of the inner Ganga, the joy cannot be described.

"Oh! I was lost in old memories. I forgot that you are going on a pilgrimage. If you want to experience the real joy of the pilgrimage then go on foot. If you want to learn to endure difficulties and make an impression on the mind then go on foot. If you want to learn to bear insults and respect and want to see things up close then go on foot. It is the monsoon season; you will experience the real joy of going through difficulties. Go and take advantage of the holy shelter of ashrams on the way. Saints that are living are like real holy places. They purify the mind. Do not run after comforts, Stay for three days at Badrinath and Kedarnath. May God make your pilgrimage successful."

I submitted, saying, "I am hesitant to go because there is no one to serve you."

He said, "Why is there nobody? There are all these people. You go without any hesitation. There is no need to hurry back. Stay on for an extra day or two wherever you feel good. I am fine here. Do not worry about me."

Churning of the Heart - Excerpts (continued)

The Rules of Pilgrimage

Maharajshri's analysis of the pilgrimage forced me to think about some things – the churning of my heart had already begun. When I left the ashram I was kind of lost. Maharajshri had expressed very relevant and critical thoughts on pilgrimage. In reality, the external pilgrimage is a part of the journey of life and can give a right direction to life. It can bring a life running recklessly on the wrong path back to the right path. Even then the external pilgrimage remains external. Life on a bad path does not let you even start on the internal journey, whereas the right path opens the doors for an inner pilgrimage. Pilgrimages have contributed enormously to bringing lives to the right path. Developing forbearance, making the heart generous, instilling the habit of continuous absorption in japa, contemplation and meditation are all contributions that a pilgrimage makes. My mind was engrossed in thinking about the subject of pilgrimage. I was lost in these thoughts until our train reached Rishikesh. Bramhachariji also did not talk much. I came to the following conclusions:

(1) In the daily flow of life we get angry over small issues. If we do not express our anger, we suffer mentally. During a pilgrimage we lose control during unexpected circumstances and uncomfortable situations. If we practice control over ourselves at least during this time then we may be able to control our anger to a great extent. It is weakness of the mind and a lack of control over the senses that makes one susceptible to external comforts and difficulties. In such a state our mind can neither go on an inner journey, nor can it concentrate on anything. We remain incapable of concentrating even on the kriyas of Shakti. The most direct proof of the influence of worldly happenings on our mind is anger. It arises in the mind but shows on the face. It is expressed with words, and it may create trouble with hands and feet. The person who gets angry burns in its fire; the person who is subjected to anger is also miserable. Anger is a great enemy of spirituality. Therefore a pilgrim must embark with a rule that no matter what happens, at least during the pilgrimage, he will control his anger. The attempt should be to not let anger enter the mind.

(2) Generally, humans are busy collecting and enjoying comforts. One spends time and energy to earn money in order to accumulate comforts. As a result, whether he gets comforts or not, he definitely becomes attached to them. He does not develop a habit of enduring hardships and poverty. The truth is that everyone has to encounter hardships and poverty, but due to lack of endurance one becomes miserable. If, during a pilgrimage, one gives up the desire for comforts and luxuries, tries to accept hardships, and practices doing without things even when there is no shortage then the door to relief from that attachment can be opened.

(3) People have difficulty in maintaining continuity in sadhan and bhajan. To some extent it is laziness, and to some extent they consider worldly responsibilities to be more important than sadhan. Hence sadhan is interrupted from time to time. But if one so desires, he can maintain continuity of sadhan during a pilgrimage. He can learn how to do sadhan while doing work. For example, he can do japa while walking, cooking, bathing or washing clothes.

Churning of the Heart - Excerpts (continued)

This practice during a pilgrimage can be helpful during regular life with its routines. Avoiding involvement in useless talk while on a pilgrimage can help prevent the wasting of time and irregularity in sadhan. A pilgrim should talk only when something has to be said or requested, or someone asks him something. In this way the habits of an aspirant will be solidified, and he will become a mature aspirant.

(4) If a pilgrim is a householder then he must donate according to his capacity. If he is a renunciate then he should remain satisfied with whatever is available and consider it as a gift of God. If someone is wealthy then he must go on a pilgrimage only with money earned honestly. A pilgrimage with money earned dishonestly, or by force or fraud, is not a pilgrimage but becomes a pleasure trip. One must remember that a pilgrimage should be taken as a spiritual practice. Then only can it help the inner pilgrimage; otherwise it is a sightseeing trip.

(5) A pilgrim must make every effort to maintain regularity in sadhan during a pilgrimage. First thing in the morning he must do his daily worship, then do japa and study scriptures. He must do meditation whenever it is appropriate. If he has to prepare a meal, he must prepare it and eat it or take it along. Focus on japa while walking. He must walk only so much in a day that he is not tired upon reaching the next stop. On the way, if he arrives at the residence of a saint, he must stop and seek their company. Wherever he stops for the night, he must do his prayers, offerings, chanting, reading, and so forth. Cook dinner, eat it, and go to sleep while meditating or chanting.

(6) These recommendations are for people who take long pilgrimages, such as going around the holy River Narmada or Uttarakhand on foot. Pilgrimage is also a form of sadhan. When the mind is restless, then it is better to wander for God. Only the mind that is free of restlessness can begin the inner pilgrimage. Some people object to a pilgrimage, but it is not a waste of time for all. The intent must be pure, clean worldly behavior, a sense of the futility of the world, and love for God. The pilgrimage of those who have these feelings cannot be worthless. Those who have already gone beyond the fickleness of the mind – for them a pilgrimage is unnecessary.

After crossing Rishikesh, we stayed at the hut of a master. We told him that we were going on a pilgrimage to Badri-Kedar on foot, He also said a few similar things to us, “Whoever suggested that you go on foot has given you an excellent idea. You will be able to enjoy the journey more, and you will see the scenery more closely and clearly. You will be able to sit on the banks of streams and drink water, but the real benefit of this is the spiritual benefit. In a journey on foot one has to undergo many difficulties, such as austerities. The monsoon season has started. There are floods in the rivers and streams. Many insects will be out and there will be many difficulties. You will have the opportunity to do many austerities. By walking you will meet many local people, and your knowledge will be enriched. You will meet many monks and saints, which will purify your mind. You will run into situations where you can help people who are in a miserable condition, and that will enhance compassion in your heart. By enduring respect and insult your tolerance will grow. You will have time for

Churning of the Heart - Excerpts (continued)

sadhan and bhajan. For renunciates like you, pilgrimage on foot is the best. Pilgrimage using vehicles is for those who have less time, or somehow want to 'cut the grass' of a pilgrimage."

The Secrets of a Pilgrimage

The pilgrimage took two months. We went to Nangal after that. Bramhachariji left from there; I do not remember where he was going. I went to Himachal Pradesh to the place where I once lived in a cottage. I came back to Dewas from there.

Maharajshri was sitting in the verandah. After bowing I sat down and he said, "Was your pilgrimage a happy one?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Did you remember the things I told you when you were leaving? I hope you followed my instructions. People develop pride about their travel, from an external pilgrimage. They do not reap any spiritual benefits. They just talk about how the people were, how the scenery was, and how the food was. How strange different things were. Thus they want to impress others. Do not do all this. There is nothing to be proud of in a pilgrimage. The person who becomes proud has not gone on a pilgrimage at all. It is true that today is not the age for a pilgrimage on foot. There was a time when Bhagwan Shankaracharya went on a pilgrimage covering all of India on foot without any baggage or money. In those days there was no shortage of alms for a monk. Today, if a monk goes to a village, people first question whether he is real or a fraud or a thief.

"The pilgrimage that you did is incomplete for a renunciate such as yourself. There is a strong relationship between pilgrimage and seeking alms. Asking for alms while on a pilgrimage strikes straight at the ego. If you do not get donations of food then you may even have to sleep hungry. If someone who is hungry asks for food from you, you may have to give your food to the hungry person. There is a big difference between begging and receiving alms. To beg is a business of worldly people. But for an aspirant, bhiksha, or to ask for alms, is a sadhana — a spiritual practice. The background and the feelings between the two are as different as heaven and earth. Asking for alms, or bhiksha, enhances sadhana. For an aspirant, bhiksha is the highway to perfection, to become a siddha. An ascetic is incomplete without bhiksha. A renunciate's pilgrimage is never complete without receiving bhiksha. The experience of enduring respect and insult that you get in bhiksha can never be experienced simply by a pilgrimage.

"The inference here is that fulfilment in an aspirant's life is not from comforts and enjoyment, but in quiet acceptance of suffering. Therefore pilgrimage and bhiksha are

Churning of the Heart - Excerpts (continued)

recommended, People may prefer to have a comfortable and joyful pilgrimage, but that idea destroys the basic purpose of a pilgrimage.”

I listened to this quietly. Then I said, “Maharajshri, during the pilgrimage I experienced that we can do japa and other spiritual practices, but it is very hard to do sadhana of Shaktipat. It is better to stay at one place and do sadhan regularly.”

Maharajshri said, “It is the best, but it is not possible to do that. The accumulated impressions of fickleness make the mind restless, and to pacify that one has to go here and there. If you want to go somewhere then a pilgrimage is the best, if one follows the rules regarding pilgrimage given in the scriptures. Otherwise a pilgrimage becomes only a trip and there is no spiritual benefit. Those whose minds have become quiet and peaceful do not need to wander.”

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

**“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**

An Alternative View on Siddhis

The following is inspired by Shri Utpaladevacharya's work called the Shivastotravali. Shri Utpaladevacharya, who lived in the 10th century AD, was from the Trika Darshana lineage of Kashmiri Shaivism, which is very much related to Siddha/Maha Yoga as it is practiced in our Maha Yoga lineage. As in our Siddha/Maha Yoga lineage, the practice of Kashmiri Shaivism teaches that the re-recognition of one's true Self (Pratyabhijna Darshan) comes by the grace (Anugraha) of a Siddha Guru, which is also known as Shaktipat - the descent of Divine Grace.

Many people have heard of Siddhis as miraculous powers that become available to Sadhaks who practice the various paths (Margas) and practices (Upayas or Upcharas) of Sanatan Dharma. In fact, many Sadhaks who become interested in Sanatan Dharma do so because of the possibility of acquiring such Siddhis. Some see the attainment of supernatural powers such as being able to fly, becoming invisible, etc. as Siddhis that one should pursue, while others see the achievement of perfection, fulfilment and the complete attainment of spiritual goals as true Siddhis that a Sadhak should aspire for. So, how should Maha Yoga Sadhaks approach Siddhis? Should they pursue the miraculous powers one heard/reads about? Or is there a different way of looking at Siddhis that would be consistent with the practice of Siddha/Maha Yoga?

Sadhaks should understand that there are two types of interpretations of Siddhis. The first type is the Laukika or worldly Siddhi, those miraculous powers that attract the more materialistic Sadhaks to Maha Yoga. Such Siddhis are called "worldly" for a reason. They appeal to the Sadhaks who continue to think that 'I am the actual doer' of actions. And since I think I am the doer, I wish to acquire powers so I can do more. Such Sadhaks remain wedded to the notion that it is the Kala Sharira, or the body, that is the doer. Yet this sense of doership is false. How so?

We have the support of our Shastras and Agamas (scriptures and knowledge that has been handed down from ancient times) on this matter. For example, in the 27th Shloka of chapter 3 of the Bhagvad Geeta, Lord Krishna reminds us: All actions are performed, in all cases, by the three Gunas of Prakriti (qualities in nature). He whose mind is deluded by the sense of 'I' and 'mine' (egoism) thinks 'I am the doer'. This is why the wise inform us that the Sadhaks who think 'I am the doer' can easily get entangled in the attainment of worldly Siddhis. The Siddhis that they might acquire only result in enhancing their sense of doership, thus entrapping them and getting them off the path of spiritual progress.

The second type of interpretation of Siddhis is Daivata or Divine. Let's look at the Daivata understanding of the Ashtasiddhis, or the divine eight Siddhis, through the lens of the attainment of spiritual perfection. In contrast to the Laukika interpretation, the Daivata interpretation is the expression of the fully developed person, unimpaired.

1. Anima - is ani + ma; ani = the point of a needle/atom + ma = measure. In the Laukika sense, this Siddhi means being able to reduce one's body to the size of an atom, but in the Daivata sense it represents humility. One is humble, one is

An Alternative View on Siddhis (continued)

nirahamkari or without pride; 'Me-ness' is reduced to being as small as the point of a needle or an atom, i.e. to almost not exist. If there is any residual 'me' remaining it is the slightest, minute, small (ani) and is the leftovers or remains of ignorance, also called leshavidya (lesha = trace, avidya = ignorance).

2. Mahima - is mahi + ma; mahi = great + ma = measure.
In the Laukika sense, this Siddhi means being able to expand one's body to an infinitely large size, but in the Daivata sense it represents boundlessness. It can also be seen as the boundlessness of Vishnu and Shiva. It carries the notion that one's awareness of being has expanded to that of the measure of Vishnu or Shiva. One is boundless and full. As a Sadhak becomes experientially aware that his Atma is but a part of the ParamAtma, he realizes his boundlessness. As Tukaram Maharaj has said, "Anuraniya Thokada, Tuka Akasha Evadha", or even though I am only as small as an atom, I have become as big (boundless) as the sky.
3. Garima - is gari + ma; gari = heaviness or swallowing + ma = measure.
In the Laukika sense this Siddhi means being able to become infinitely heavy, but in the Daivata sense it represents dignity and venerable-ness. The Sadhak has swallowed and digested the world, i.e. all the differentiated awareness and lives have been transformed into the wholeness of the undifferentiated level of being, which is the ParamAtma. Such a Sadhak has risen to the highest level of dignity, that of being the exponent of Reality, living one's Self in full bloom.
4. Laghima - is laghava + ma; laghava = lightness, levity + ma = measure.
In the Laukika sense this Siddhi means being able to become almost weightless, but in the Daivata sense it represents alacrity, versatility, dexterity & skill. It suggests two things for the Sadhak: experiencing the lightness of being in his day-to-day life, and the ease and effortlessness of his actions without the heavy weight of the concerns that afflict most other human beings.
5. Prapti is defined as attaining, acquiring, finding.
In the Laukika sense this Siddhi means the ability to easily acquire any object, but in the Daivata sense it represents attainment of the final goal. The Sadhak who has this Daivata Siddhi has attained the final abode of his true Self and has achieved Self Enlightenment.
6. Prakamya is defined as freedom of will.
In the Laukika sense this Siddhi means the ability to realize whatever one desires, but in the Daivata sense it represents Svatantrya or independence. It is the core nature of one's true Self. Because the true Self is unperturbed, stainless, unbounded, completely outside of the influence of the three Gunas, it is the gleam of the Divine. This is none other than our essence or Svarupa. The Sadhak who has achieved this Daivata Siddhi lives the dignity of this Svatantrya as his daily reality.
7. Ishitva - is isha + tva; isha = lord, master, Supreme spirit + tva = ability.
In the Laukika sense this Siddhi means the ability to have absolute lordship and the power to create and control things, but in the Daivata sense it represents having the qualities of the Supreme spirit. The Sadhak who has achieved this Daivata Siddhi possesses the auspicious, propitious and gracious qualities of Lord Shiva, having reached the stage of Moksha or liberation.

An Alternative View on Siddhis (continued)

8. Vashitva - is vasha + tva; vasha = subjugate + tva = ability

In the Laukika sense this Siddhi means the ability/power to subjugate all, but in the Daivata sense it represents the ability to have complete freedom of will. The Sadhak who has achieved this Daivata Siddhi is beholden to no one but his true Self and has become his own Master.

These eight Daivata Siddhis represent the blossoming of the awareness of our true Self, our essence, what we are already. We only need to be re-introduced to it. This is the intent of the Maha Yoga approach - the natural way to re-introduce the Self as it never left, and is the closest thing to us.

By: yajvan (California, USA)

Answers to Questions from Sadhaks

Question: I try to recite the ॐ (Aum) mantra, but I find it brings all kinds of disharmony and negativity in my case. Why is it so?

Answer: I am not sure if you have received Maha Yoga Deeksha or are simply interested in Maha Yoga and spirituality, but Sadhaks who have received Deeksha are asked to not do anything with intent during Maha Yoga Sadhan, and that includes the chanting of any Mantra with intent. If the chanting of a Mantra (any Mantra, not necessarily ॐ) happens automatically as a Kriya during Maha Yoga Sadhan, without any intent or effort on part of the Sadhak, then that's fine. The Sadhak should simply observe that this is happening, just as he observes other physical, mental or Pranic Kriyas that happen during Maha Yoga Sadhan. He should not get attached to such automatic and effortless activities (Kriyas) nor get scared by them nor anticipate them. He should simply entrust the happenings during Maha Yoga Sadhan to the awakened Prana Shakti within him and allow her to do what is needed for his spiritual growth. His role during Sadhan should only be that of an observer (Sakshi), not the "doer" (Karta). The awakened Prana Shakti within the Sadhak is the doer of the Kriyas that happen during Sadhan.

If you have not received Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha but are interested in getting a taste for it, you can try out the Introductory Practice of Maha Yoga as described here <http://www.mahayoga.org/mahayoga-introductory-practice.aspx>. But again, when you sit for Sadhan in this manner, do not do anything with effort, including the chanting of any Mantra. As stated in the instructions, just observe your normal and automatic breathing and any Kriyas that might happen.

In regards to your specific question, the intent-based chanting of ॐ, also referred to as Pranava, is not to be taken lightly. Improper recitation of this Mantra can have negative or deleterious effects on the Sadhak. It is a very potent Mantra and one should do such intent-based Japa Sadhana (as opposed to Maha Yoga Sadhan that is not intent-based) only under the guidance of a Guru knowledgeable about this form of Yoga. If you do insist on reciting/chanting ॐ please do so only at times when the sun is in the skies. Please avoid such Japa after sunset and at night all the way until sunrise. If the chanting of ॐ happens effortlessly and automatically during Maha Yoga Sadhan, then that's fine. As stated above, just observe that it is happening and not get scared by it or attached to it.

I would suggest that if you want to chant a Mantra **when you are not sitting for Maha Yoga Sadhan** or for the Introductory Practice, you may try reciting "Soham", which means "That, I am" instead of "Aum". This is an ideal Mantra for reciting without voicing it externally; the "So" being internally voiced during inhalation and "Ham" during exhalation. It is an Ajapa Japa that you can recite mentally as you normally inhale and exhale. Some Sadhaks find that if they do this during their day-to-day activities for a few days, with some intent/effort initially, over time this becomes an effortless activity, with the mental

Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

chanting of Soham becoming automatic with every breath they take. Such automatic recitation is unlikely to have any negative effects on a Sadhak; in fact it will get him to the Sakshi (observer) state even when he is not sitting for Sadhan; a big plus for his spiritual growth.

Question: I am becoming very disheartened at work. I know this has nothing to do with the Maha Yoga path, but I am not enjoying my work anymore. Whenever a new opportunity arises, I find it being given away to my colleagues. I have tried to be patient and I work hard and efficiently, but yet I find new opportunities going to colleagues who are not as dedicated or as efficient as I am. I have tried to look for another job but I have not been successful thus far, and I feel like all doors are being closed for me.

When P. P. Kaka Maharaj was alive, I would share my problems with him and would feel relieved by his sage counsel. Now I feel somewhat lonely and insecure. Please advise me on this issue.

Answer: Here's a Q&A from a past issue of Self Awakening that might be helpful in addressing your work-related concerns:

- *Question: I think I am a very weak-minded person. I feel quite insecure when I interact with other people because I become concerned that they do not think I am worthy of their attention. I am afraid my lack of confidence is also affecting my work as a branch manager at a bank. I have received Maha Yoga Deeksha and I know that as a Sadhak I am Chaitanya itself. But my Samskaras (past impressions) seem to get the better of me and I tend to lack the confidence I should have. Please guide me.*

Answer: A lot of people have the very same fears about interacting with others and a general lack of self-confidence. This affects their day-to-day work and their life as householders and members of society. Maha Yoga does not have any specific prescriptions for dealing with such issues related to the material world. But, as you are aware, these tendencies are the result of past Samskaras, not just from your current life but from prior lives as well. And Maha Yoga does specifically address Sanchit Samskaras and provides a sure-fire way to gradually free yourself from them through; you guessed it, regular and diligent Sadhan.

When you sit for Sadhan and surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within, the Prana Shakti pulls out the Sanchit Samskaras from within yourself and through the Kriyas she makes happen, gets you released from the effects of the Sanchit Samskaras. So, sit for Sadhan regularly and let the awakened Prana Shakti do her job. She will gradually get you freed from the effects of the Sanchit Samskaras and as a byproduct you might find yourself having more self-confidence. As you discover your true nature you will begin to see other people as children of the same Mother Energy, the Chaitanya Shakti which pervades us all. This will automatically help your interactions with others, not just in a superficial and worldly way but also on the spiritual plane.

Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

You might also want to read Maha Yoga - A Key to Success, a speech given at the Maha Yoga Global Meet held in 2012, and published in the June 2012 issue of Self Awakening (archived at <http://www.mahayoga.org/newsletter/Self%20Awakening%20Vol%204%20Issue%204.pdf>) which might help you with your job-related concerns.

It is clear from your e-mail that you miss P. P. Kaka Maharaj's steady guidance following his departure from this earth, as we all do. But he has designated several Deekshadhikaris to continue the Maha Yoga tradition and to guide Sadhaks on an ongoing basis. P. P. Prakash Prabhune Maharaj is in charge of the Maha Yoga headquarters in Nashik, India and there are Deekshadhikaris available for those Sadhaks seeking guidance in many cities and towns in India. You can contact P. P. Prakash Prabhune Maharaj in Nashik to seek his guidance or any of the other Deekshadhikaris listed here:

<http://www.mahayoga.org/contact-list.aspx>

Their contact information is listed on the page.

Question: Following a recent Shaktipat initiation, I have been benefiting from my Maha Yoga meditation and I always look forward to it. I have an increased awareness of Kriyas as flowing love and joy. Also, I have been reading the book, *Churning of the Heart* by P. P. Swami Shivom Tirth Maharaj. In Volume one, as I am able to understand it, there is a distinction drawn between "sadhana" and "sadhan", sadhan being sadhana that has become effortless, without individual control or conscious motivation. Is this correct?

I have followed several types of meditation approaches over the years, the first being an effortless repetition of a mantra which allows the mantra to flow and change its form as it draws the mind inward into greater silence. The second is Dhyana, in which the individual simply sits and watches whatever appears on his screen of consciousness, whether they are colors or images, sounds, or thoughts, without any attempt to control or suppress the contents of the mind. In my personal experience I have had more experiences of Shakti and Kriyas in the first type of meditation. I know that Mahayoga does not advocate use of a mantra during meditation but since in my case I have used a mantra for 40 years, it seems to have become effortless and allows for Kriyas to happen. Would you suggest that I drop the mantra practice?

I am also wondering if there is a particular mantra in the Mahayoga tradition, associated with Mother Shakti, which a Sadhak may recite when he is not sitting for Maha Yoga Sadhan. If so, please let me know what it is.

Answer: Glad to read that Shaktipat Deeksha happened for you recently and that you look forward to Maha Yoga Sadhan. The Kriyas you are experiencing as flowing love and joy also sound wonderful and suggest that you are on an expedited path due to your past preparation.

Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

As P. P. Swami Shivom Tirth Maharaj has written in his book, *Churning of the Heart*, Maha Yoga is not like other Yoga practices that are effort-based. The effort-based Yoga practices are good for getting a Sadhak prepared for Maha Yoga, but because the Sadhak has maintained a sense of “doership” when engaged in those effort-based practices, he continues to accumulate new Samskaras in his Chitta while engaged in those practices. Most such Samskaras will likely be Sattvik or Rajasik, but they will still get accumulated in his Chitta with effort-based Yoga practices. Such effort-based Yoga practices are referred to as “Sadhana”, i.e. one “does” Sadhana; while the effortless Maha Yoga practice is referred to as “Sadhan”, i.e. Sadhan “happens”, it is not “done” by the Sadhak. So, we usually refer to a Maha Yoga Sadhak as “sitting for Maha Yoga Sadhan” and “letting Sadhan happen”, as opposed to a Sadhak “doing” Hatha/Mantra/Japa/Laya - Yoga Sadhana.

The process of Maha Yoga Sadhan “happening”, with the Sadhak participating in it only in an observer (Sakshi) role, does not create new Samskaras; it in fact eliminates the accumulated Samskaras as they get expressed by the awakened Prana Shakti within him in the form of the Kriyas he experiences and observes during Sadhan. Each Kriya that “happens” during Maha Yoga Sadhan is the expression of specific Samskaras that have accumulated in the Sadhak’s Chitta because of attachments, aversions and tendencies (Vrutis) that the Sadhak has developed over his current and past lives. The entire objective of Maha Yoga Sadhan is to dredge out the accumulated Samskaras (Tamasik, Rajasik and even Sattvik) from the Sadhak’s Chitta, and to free him from the “Koshas” (layers) that cover the Atma (soul, in Western terms) that resides within him so he can experience the Atma within as nothing but a part of the Param-Atma (Universal Soul) that pervades the universe.

The issue of Mantra repetition is a complicated one. Usually, Mantra repetition is effort-based, so it is suggested that Maha Yoga Sadhaks not “do” it during Maha Yoga Sadhan. However, there are certain branches of our Maha Yoga Parampara (lineage) that confer Deeksha on a Sadhak by giving him a Mantra to chant, at least in the initial stage of Sadhan, to awaken his Kundalini Shakti. The Guru’s Deeksha intent (Sankalpa) is behind the Mantra given to the Sadhak, so by the Sadhak chanting the Mantra given to him by the Guru, his Kundalini Shakti gets awakened during Deeksha. In contrast to those branches of our Parampara that offer Mantra-Deeksha, our branch, as do some other branches of the Parampara, confer a Sankalpa (intent) based Deeksha. Since the Guru’s Sankalpa (intent) lies behind whatever form of Shaktipat Deeksha, be it Mantra, Touch, Look, or sheer Intent, the Gurus within our Parampara do not feel a need to have Deeksha happen through Mantra, Look or Touch; the Intent (Sankalpa) of the Guru is sufficient for Deeksha to happen! Therefore, the Gurus in our branch of the Maha Yoga Parampara do not see a need for a Sadhak to chant/repeat, with intent, any Mantra during Sadhan. Simply sitting for Sadhan and surrendering to the awakened Prana Shakti within is sufficient to make Sadhan “happen”.

Having said that, it is okay for a Sadhak to chant a Mantra with intent when he is not sitting for Maha Yoga Sadhan. This can happen “effortlessly” when an effort-based practice of Mantra repetition gets synched with one’s breath, so even without realizing it a Sadhak finds

Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

himself effortlessly chanting (usually internally voiced, i.e. not in a spoken manner) the Mantra as he is doing his day-to-day activities. This is also referred to as “Ajapa Japa”, i.e. Japa that is not “japed” (to coin a word) with intent. The Mantra “Soham” which means “That, I am” is ideal for soundless/unspoken Ajapa Japa; the “So” being internally voiced during inhalation and the “Ham” during exhalation.

During Maha Yoga Sadhan, though, the Sadhak should not “do” anything with intent other than to sit in a relaxed manner and simply observe what happens, to his body in the form of physical Kriyas (involuntary activities), to his mind in the form of mental Kriyas usually expressed as thoughts that arise, and to the flow of Prana Shakti within him in the form of Pranic Kriyas. If he finds himself chanting a Mantra without any effort or intent on his part during Sadhan he should just observe it as it happens, not develop an attachment to it or have any expectation that it should or should not happen. This too is a Kriya associated with some past Samskaras in the Sadhak’s Chitta and it is best for him to simply observe it as it happens and to let it go.

The other practice, which you referred to as “Dhyan” is fine. It is in fact having the Sadhak play the role of an observer (Sakshi) that I mentioned above, whereby one simply observes the physical, mental and Pranic Kriyas that happen. The key for Maha Yoga Sadhan though is to surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within and to grant her the “doership” role during Sadhan. So the Kriyas that happen and which the Sadhak observes are not random, they are the result of the awakened Prana Shakti bringing up the accumulated Samskaras from the Sadhak’s Chitta for the Sadhak to observe and to let go.

As a Sadhak progresses on the Maha Yoga path, the intensity of the Kriyas, whether they are physical, Pranic (Shakti flow) or mental, will gradually diminish as the Samskaras that underlie them get depleted. So, having more intense Kriyas as opposed to serene Kriyas is not a good or a bad thing. It just is. A Sadhak should not try to judge whether certain Kriyas are good or bad, whether they are more intense or otherwise. The process of Kriyas is like the process of “garbage removal”. There is no need to get attached to that process as it happens. Such attachments create new Samskaras which will simply add to the trove of Samskaras which in turn will need to get eliminated for enlightenment to happen.

I hope the above addresses your questions and concerns. Wish you the best in your Sadhan and Maha Yoga practice.

Question: I received Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha a few years ago and I have been diligent in sitting for Sadhan regularly. In recent weeks it appears as though Ma Shakti is giving me a bit of a rest, as the physically intense Kriyas seem to have eased off a bit, although I still very much feel Shakti flowing within me. Should I be concerned about this development or just accept it as a phase?

Answer: There is nothing for you to be concerned about. The fact that the more intense physical Kriyas have eased off a bit indicates that the Rajasik (action related) Samskaras

Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

that needed to get erased, have been erased. So why look for more physical Kriyas when they are not necessary? Just let the Prana Shakti do her job. You can simply observe what she is up to. Your experience of Ma Shakti flowing within you suggests that she is still very much active and is doing what is needed for your spiritual progress. The key here is whether or not you have an increasing sense of inner calm and inner peace, not just during Sadhan but at other times as well. That is the ultimate test of whether or not a Sadhak is making spiritual progress.

Question: I received Maha Yoga Deeksha a few years ago and I had been trying to sit for Sadhan regularly. But recently, I have been in a low energy state, beginning to feel doubts about Maha Yoga and I have found myself not very motivated to sit for Sadhan. I have a background in science and I tend to have a very materialistic view of life. Yet, I am interested in spirituality. Can I be excused from having to sit for Sadhan for an hour every day? Can I expect to have positive results from the continued practice of Maha Yoga if I don't sit for Sadhan regularly?

Answer: Once a Sadhak has received Deeksha, i.e. the Deeksha has "happened" as experienced by the Sadhak; it is his duty to the awakened Prana Shakti within him to sit for Sadhan on a regular basis. This obligation is not to an external Guru, but it is to the inner Guru, the awakened Prana Shakti within the Sadhak himself. So, this is not something that the Sadhak needs to get permission for, it is entirely between him and the awakened Prana Shakti within him.

The reason a Sadhak needs to sit for Sadhan regularly is that the entire purpose of Sadhan is to have the awakened Prana Shakti remove the Kachra (garbage) of the Samskaras (accumulated impressions from his current and prior lives) from his Chitta (mind stuff). This garbage removal happens during Sadhan when the Sadhak simply plays the role of a Sakshi (observer) observing what happens during Sadhan, and does not play the role of a doer (Karta) of the Kriyas that happen. And since we all tend to accumulate new Samskaras in our day-to-day lives when we are not sitting for Sadhan, the only way to clean out all the accumulated Samskaras from our Chitta is to sit for Sadhan regularly. If you cannot sit for Sadhan for an hour at a stretch you can do so with breaks. But, when a Sadhak has too many breaks between short intervals of Sadhan, it is difficult for him to get into a Sakshi mode each time he sits, so the Sadhan that happens becomes less effective in cleaning out his Samskaras. So my advice to you on the topic of Sadhan would be to sit for Sadhan on a regular basis preferably for an hour at a stretch, but if you cannot do so for some reason, at least make sure you allow yourself enough time each time you sit, to surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within and reach the Sakshi state, so she can do her job of cleaning out your Chitta. Please do not get frustrated with yourself and get concerned about your mental state. The Sadhak's role during Sadhan should only be that of an observer not the doer. And please do not worry whether you can get back on the Sadhan track. Once the Prana Shakti within a Sadhak is awakened, he has the greatest gift available to us humans. All he need do is to let this gift take him down the path of Self Enlightenment through regular Sadhan. Once a Sadhak's Prana Shakti is awakened, he is on the path of Self

Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

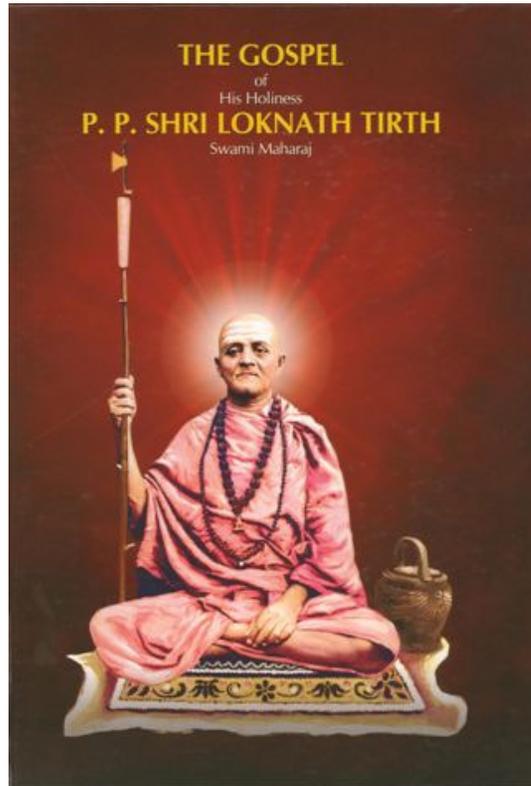
Enlightenment. He can rest assured he will get there. The pace of his progress will depend entirely on himself; i.e. how diligently he sits for Sadhan and allows the awakened Prana Shakti to do her job!

And about having a scientific attitude, there is nothing wrong with that. Many Sadhaks in the Maha Yoga community come from scientific backgrounds. P. P. Kaka Maharaj himself had a Master's degree in Civil Engineering and was a senior Engineering Manager in the Maharashtra Government during his professional life. P. P. Prakash Prabhune Maharaj, who is in charge of the Maha Yoga headquarters in Nashik, India, is an electrical engineer who was the Deputy General Manager at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited before he retired a few years ago. Dr. Deshpande Maharaj, who is one of the Deekshadhikaris, has a PhD in Civil Engineering from IIT Bombay. Dr. Bhatkar, a renowned Information Technology leader and who is the Chairman of IIT Delhi, received Maha Yoga Deeksha from P. P. Kaka Maharaj. I am telling you this not to brag about the scientific backgrounds of some of those in our Maha Yoga Parampara, but to help you understand that having a critical mind and a background in science/engineering is not at all a negative for Maha Yoga practice. Our ability to think critically can actually be a plus because it helps us avoid getting into situations of blind faith and it trains us in the importance of critical observation and actual experience as opposed to faith based religion. It can only be a hindrance if we use it to deny what we observe experientially and to convince ourselves that our observations during Sadhan must not be real because we cannot explain them based on the limited knowledge of Science we as a society currently have.

So, my advice to you on this topic is to continue to have a critical mind, but do not become a cynic. What you might have experienced as a Maha Yoga Sadhak, especially as a Sakshi (observer) during Sadhan may not be explainable with the limited knowledge of science we currently have, but please do not deny those experiences or try to be cynical about them. Take them at their face value and observe them. Do not deny them, get scared of them, or get attached to them. Simply observe them and let them go! And by all means, sit for Sadhan regularly with an open mind, surrendering to the awakened Prana Shakti within you and accepting whatever happens with patience and equanimity.

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

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



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

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

P. P. Shri 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

Upcoming Events:

Deeksha Days (Initiation Days) on December 7th and December 24th, 2015

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.

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 1 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>.



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

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

self.awakening@gmail.com

We're on the Web!
<http://www.mahayoga.org/>

May all desire to follow this nectarous Siddhayoga Path!