

# Self Awakening

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



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## 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](http://www.mahayoga.org).

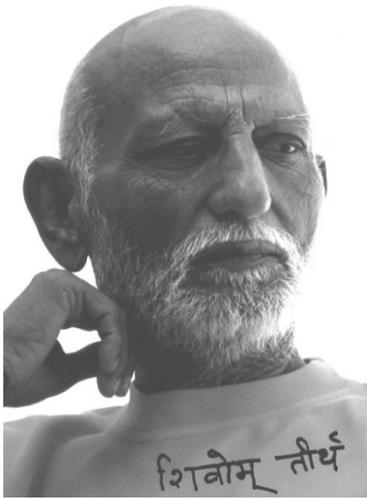
To the thousands of Sadhaks in the Maha Yoga tradition all over the world and other interested readers, this e-newsletter is intended to provide virtual Satsang. It is intended to encourage Sadhaks to remain engaged in Maha Yoga, be informed about Maha Yoga-related events around the world, and to provide 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](mailto:self.awakening@gmail.com).

Past issues of Self Awakening are archived at <http://www.mahayoga.org/selfawakening.aspx>.

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt



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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

In the following excerpt, Maharajshri discusses how integral Karma Yoga is to the practice of Maha Yoga. But he also points out that once the Shakti is awakened, Karma Yoga comes naturally to the Sadhak with the diligent practice of Maha Yoga Sadhan.

## Destiny and Doership

When an aspirant starts his spiritual practice he does not know where to begin because he does not know what his first problem is. Not only new aspirants, but also senior aspirants cannot determine the basics of sadhana, or spiritual practice. They continue to grope around in the dark. A disciple asked this question to Maharajshri: When a person turns toward sadhana after seeing the miseries and futility of the world, what is his first and foremost problem?

"The first problem is prarabdha [destiny based on past karma]. Whatever may be his principles and spiritual path he has to deal with his destiny. Usually sadhaks do not pay attention to prarabdha and remain indifferent to it. Consequently prarabdha keeps them entangled and comes in the way of spiritual progress. Even when the world is worthless it seems useful. Even when it lacks joy the hope of attaining happiness burns on and keeps the individual going round and round in pursuit of tantalizing attractions and sensuous pleasures. Prarabdha is a power that, while remaining invisible, brings happiness and unhappiness. This creates favorable and unfavorable waves in the world and the mind. It stays with the individual every step of the way. Then how can it be ignored? As one begins sadhana it comes up and stands before you. It stands in the way like a great mountain.

"A sadhak focuses on efforts to turn his mind inward. Upon failing to do so he tries to find weaknesses in his sadhana. But this is the mischief of prarabdha. It keeps on pushing the mind outwards. Along with sadhana, one must pay attention to reducing prarabdha, then only will the mind turn inward. But a sadhak makes the mistake of ignoring prarabdha and

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

emphasizing sadhana. Spirituality is a very deep subject. Often things that we think are insignificant become great obstacles.

“Prarabdha is like a bridge between the world and the individual. It pulls the individual back to the world. The individual remains restless but cannot leave the world. The mind keeps on running toward the world in spite of huge efforts to focus internally. The mind is of a harmonious nature, hence it is eager to find happiness. It is always hopeful that, somewhere, happiness will be available. Neither is happiness found, nor does the restlessness cease. This drama takes place in the background of prarabdha.”

Question: “There must be some way to get rid of prarabdha.”

Answer: “Yes. That way is to practice Karma Yoga with a sense of service and fulfillment of duty. Karma Yoga is the beginning of all types of sadhana. Karma Yoga is the door to spirituality. It is a logical technique to end prarabdha after experiencing the results of past karma. Without this, neither yama [internal disciplines] nor niyama [social and external codes of conduct] can be mastered, nor is pratyahar [withdrawal of the mind from the world] possible, nor does the mind become worthy of dharana [single-minded concentration] and dhyana [meditation]. However, the practice of Karma Yoga is not that easy. In fact, this is the hardest part of the spiritual journey. It is not easy to leave the world and accept spirituality. The aspirant wants to leave the world but prarabdha does not allow him to do so. It pulls the aspirant into the world through vasanas [mental tendencies] and vritis [modifications of the mind]. Karma Yoga is like a war between the world and spirituality. The aspirant wins the war only when he knows the techniques of war, when he is full of patience and enthusiasm and has mastered the art of getting up after each fall.”

Question: “Doesn’t Karma Yoga simply mean withdrawing from action while performing sadhan? What is the difficulty in that? The real difficulty is doing sadhan. On the other hand, if you keep working in the world, the mind remains occupied [with worldly matters].”

Answer: “This is not a full explanation of Karma Yoga. Prior to starting Karma Yoga, the decision must be made whether karma will be performed for building new destiny or for depleting destiny. The karma of worldly people is for creating new destiny, and the karma of spiritual people is for depletion of already-formed destiny. Those who do karma for new destiny are worldly people. Spiritual people are encouraged to purify the chitta [psyche] and perform worldly actions that cause depletion of destiny. Karma [actions] performed for creation of new prarabdha [destiny] cannot be Karma Yoga. Work done with attachment and the desire for results, and work done with anger, greed, or for the sake of pleasure are the causes of new destiny. They cannot be Karma Yoga. Those who want to go toward the world perform action such that they create destiny, and those who want to turn away from the world work without attachment to reduce destiny. The action may be the same, but one will create new destiny with that action, while another will reduce prarabdha, or destiny, with the same action.”

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

Question: “How is it possible to take any action without attachment, desire, expectation and ego? Why should one do anything then?”

Answer: “For reducing prarabdha. I said that karma forms prarabdha and karma also releases one from the bondage of prarabdha. Karma with attachment means bowing down to the world, and pure Karma Yoga is rebellion against the world. The first makes you sink in the unfathomable ocean of birth and death, and the second helps you swim and go across the ocean. One is aimless wandering, while the other is a guiding light. One is receding, while the other is progressive. The action is the same but the results are different. Those who want to walk the path of prarabdha annihilation will take interest in pure Karma Yoga. Pure Karma Yoga is a straight path that will take you directly to the door of spirituality.”

Question: “Then what is the difficulty?”

Answer: “Our ego, fickle-mindedness, and desires for worldly happiness lure the mind repeatedly. While the aspirant is pursuing pure Karma Yoga, even before he notices, attachment creeps in quietly. Even before the aspirant can become careful, attachment finishes its job. In fact, it is already present in the mind. The aspirant tries to suppress it, but like a ball which, when thumped down, bounces back with equal force, attachment, when suppressed, bounces back with the same force.

“Another difficulty is the selfish world, People do not understand his pure sentiments, but the aspirant has to deal with the world. Sadhan is like going through a jungle on fire where nothing is visible due to smoke, and there are difficulties at every step. If the aspirant tries to swim across the river of the world then violent creatures start pulling his legs from below. In and out, everywhere, the fierce dance of desires and perversion is going on. Just imagine how difficult it would be to practice pure Karma Yoga under such circumstances.”

Question: “Then what can the sadhak do?”

Answer: “The journey of Karma Yoga is very long. The path is full of difficulties. There are high peaks on one side and a thick jungle on the other. The ground is filled with rocks and thorns. It is slippery and full of obstacles. You must pass through a thick forest, cross many rivers, and face wild animals. You will have to spend dark nights in the forest alone. Thieves and robbers may rob you. You may have to go hungry and thirsty and bear wounds on your body. All this will require a lot of patience. For completing this journey, firm resolve and endurance are a must, Control over one’s self, fearlessness and a steady mind are also essential for this.”

At this I said, “Maharajshri, because of the way you have described the path of Karma Yoga, I am reminded of an incident from my life. I used to live in Nangal, and I used to go frequently to Himachal Pradesh to tour or to be in solitude. One day I went just to tour. There were no fixed tracks in the mountains. A man from a village accompanied me. When he was about to leave me he showed me a tree at the top of a mountain and asked me to go

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

there. He said that there was a path on the other side of the mountain. If I went on that path for about two miles, I would reach the village I wanted to go to. I walked up to the tree and there I saw not only one, but three or four paths. Now which way should I go? I was confused. There was no one to ask, I waited for ten or fifteen minutes thinking someone would show up. No one came. Finally I started to walk on one of the paths. I kept on walking. I stopped and found myself in a thick forest.

“There was no way to go forward and there was no point in going back. It was a desolate, still jungle. I turned my head in one direction and started to walk, Ferocious noises made me quiver. While crossing a mountain spring I slipped and fell and was drenched. All my clothes were soaked. I did not encounter any wild animals, but I was fearful all the same. After I wandered for another one-and-a-half hours the jungle came to an end. I saw some human footprints covered by bushes. I started following the footprints. Finally I met a young man with a herd of goats. I asked him about the village but he did not understand my language. I asked by making hand gestures while saying the name of the village. He put up his hand in one direction. Here I learned what it meant to be lost. During my tours of Himachal Pradesh I had similar experiences many times. The journey of Karma Yoga must be somewhat like this. Difficulties arise at every step. Temptations, slipperiness and confusion are at every turn.”

Maharajshri said, “Even more difficult and very long. This is only on the physical level, but on the journey of Karma Yoga difficulties and slippage occur on the mental as well as the physical plane, inside and outside. The jiva [individual soul] falls and gets lost, internally first, and then externally.”

Question: “Does this mean that one must practice Karma Yoga and annihilate prarabdha first, and then do sadhan? How long will a person be involved in Karma Yoga?”

Answer: “No. Practicing Karma Yoga does not mean that one must not do sadhana at the same time. Karma Yoga and sadhana go hand-in- hand. They are complementary and support each other. Karma Yoga pushes the mind inward from outside, and sadhana pulls the mind inward from inside. The purpose of both is to turn the mind inward.

“The aspirant must do sadhana with Karma Yoga in mind. It makes no difference what you do, but there is a difference in your feelings about what you do. Your actions will take a form that is consistent with your feelings. First of all, the person whose heart is pure will not be able to take any bad action, and even if something bad happens his intentions are pure. To work with a sense of selfless service is one form of Karma Yoga, and to work with a sense of duty is another form. To do all the work for God, to offer all the fruits of your work to God, and to believe that all work is God’s work, are different forms and levels of Karma Yoga. To work without aspiration and to work without attachment is a higher stage of Karma Yoga. To work as a medium of God with God as the real doer is another form of Karma Yoga. Each aspirant follows the type of Karma Yoga that suits his or her level and feelings.”

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

Question: “Other than this, is there any other obstacle?”

Answer: “The next problem is the ego of doership. This ego is baseless and false, yet it plays a major role in the formation of prarabdha. The sense of doership is the powerful governor of all worldly affairs. The feeling of doership does not really exist, yet it is super powerful. It has no energy, yet it governs all the senses. It is that so-called element through which the sense of individuality manifests. It is like a person whose only accumulated capital is his ego. Just as Shakti contains Kriya-Shakti [the ability to act], false ego contains a false sense of doership. It is like an apparition of the court of Indra in the wilderness, which is based on mere imagination.

“How can there be a relationship between prarabdha and doership when both of these are imaginary and untrue? Still, both are experiential and their relationship is unshakable. It is like the rainbow that is only a reflection, yet its colors are visible. It looks like an arch in the sky, but none can catch it even if they fly thousands of miles. Similarly, prarabdha does not exist, yet one has to go through it. Doership is only a feeling, yet it makes the whole world go around. Here we must believe and act upon the fact that, as long as both can be experienced, they exist, and they are related to each other.

“Doership flourishes and grows larger due to likes, dislikes and attachment. With this growth of likes and dislikes the belief that the world is a reality is strengthened. Yearning to achieve desired things and to discard unwanted things is reinforced. Then the individual soul does all his work with attachment. His sense of self [I-ness] falls from pure consciousness to the level of the psyche. At that stage, while he is at the psychic level, he begins to believe that pure consciousness [chaitanya] is his Shakti [divine power] and his own quality, and then the sense of doership is born in him. All the activities done by his senses are in reality due to Shakti but because of false ego he thinks he is the doer. As long as he had the experience that all was done by Shakti [and not by him], there was neither any ego, nor any prarabdha. As soon as the ego of ‘I am the doer’ enters the workings that are really those of Shakti, egoism starts to bubble up and memories of everything are engraved in the form of samskaras [accumulated impressions]. All this is imaginary, but still a jiva cannot rise above the accumulated impressions of its memories for many lifetimes.

“Prarabdha and doership are like robbers whose unity and mutual support are unforeseen. Together they rob the individual of his peace of mind and happiness. They are merciless, and rejoice in seeing the sufferings of the jiva. Ages may pass, but once in the grip of these two it is difficult to escape. They suck the blood, but do not allow jiva, the separated soul, to unite with God. Both of them continually influence the mind, and then make him run around and dance the way they please. Intellect also is not spared, and it thinks as both of them wish. Kabir has said, ‘No one remains safe between the two grinding stones.’ Possibly he was thinking of these two – prarabdha and doership – as the two grinding stones. The world is being crushed and the robbers enjoy watching.

Question: “What are the means of getting rid of this sense of doership?”

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

Answer: “We can look for treatments for the disease by examining its causes. The main reason for this sense of doership is the mistake made by the jiva [the individual soul] in believing that the Shakti belongs to him. Consequently the ego of the individual assumes the role of the doer. No matter how much knowledge is acquired, how many discourses are heard, how much sadhana is done, or prayer, japa and rituals are performed – the sense of doership does not diminish unless and until Shakti is experienced personally and directly.

“This is where the subject of Shakti awakening begins. Only this feeling known by personal experience [of awakened Shakti] can diminish the ego of doership and give rise to a sense of surrender. Bhakti [devotion] and yoga start from here. The foremost objective of bhakti and yoga is only to get rid of prarabdha and its cause, the sense of doership.

“True surrender is the surrender that arises after the awakening of Shakti. Bhakti is defined in the Narada Bhakti Sutra as that ultimate love and devotion that arises toward the divine God energy [Shakti]. Bhakti is the ultimate love for the Shakti awakened within the aspirant that talks to him, listens to his prayers, and gives him guidance directly. Thus yoga and bhakti both begin with the awakening of Shakti. Just as the sense of doership is directly tied into the formation of prarabdha, destiny, similarly together they are directly related in depletion of prarabdha. First they are together in the growth of prarabdha, and then they are together during its annihilation. They are always together, in life and death.

“In the beginning the individual soul walks, as it were, holding the hand of his ego of doership. An individual soul cannot walk without any support because he does not have any energy. Prior to giving up his dependence upon doership he must find a bigger and better support. He gets this support in the form of the awakened Shakti. This support does not remain in the form of support forever, but at first it purifies the chitta [psyche] and then merges the purified chitta into Shakti. Subsequently it enables the aspirant to walk without any support. The awakened Shakti, on the one hand, transforms the doer into an observer and makes the doer surrender. On the other hand it weakens samskaras by turning them into kriyas [spontaneous activities of Shakti] and halts the formation of new prarabdha. It also imparts greater endurance to the sense of an observer and opens the path to diminish pre-existing prarabdha. It depends upon the aspirant then as to how far he utilizes tolerance and surrender [as tools for spiritual progress].”

Question: “In my opinion, aspirants are not able to utilize these qualities appropriately.”

Answer: “Hence they do not get the desired results from sadhana. The aspirant starts to become proud about sadhana, whereas sadhana is done for lessening the ego. He grows attached to his sadhana and related experiences. The Shakti that grants the experiences and performs kriyas does not possess ego, nor does it have attachment. This is known as false pride.

“After awakening of the Shakti the aspirant becomes a witness and experiences kriyas. He does not have to make any efforts. He does not imagine any scene, and yet still he sees

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

many sights. He may be totally ignorant of music, but he sings melodious, classical tunes. In the absence of any sound or light he sees light and hears divine sounds. Seeing all this he is struck with wonder, and he is certain that even without doing anything much can happen. He also begins to question whether he can really do anything or he only carries the false pride of doership. On the one hand, the practice of Karma Yoga weakens the base of prarabdha and, on the other hand, the weight of past impressions [samskaras] on the chitta [psyche] becomes lighter due to the effects of kriyas. Additionally, the ego of doership is hit hard by the experiences of autonomously-occurring kriyas. This is how the aspirant's inner journey commences."

Question: "Yes, but you have never explained what the technique is for awakening?"

Answer: "You people are already aware of Shaktipat. This is a scientific technique endorsed by scriptures. It is true that this technique sometimes vanishes and sometimes reappears. All techniques go through this. All principles, techniques and religious sects go through this. Nothing is spared from nature's law of change. Fifty years ago people were totally unaware of Shaktipat. Swami Narayan Tirth Dev Maharaj brought it to light for common people. Even today there are many people who do not believe in it. That is their problem. We have seen the results of this technique, and scriptures and the words of saints give testimony to it.

"However, Shaktipat is not the only means of awakening. In my opinion Shaktipat is necessary even when the awakening of Shakti takes place by some other means. It makes the Shakti's awakening secure. By practicing spiritual techniques for a long period of time the awakening of Shakti is possible. We have seen cases where Shakti was even awakened without any spiritual practice. It was possibly the result of sadhana done in a past birth. It is also possible that awakening might have taken place in the past birth. Awakening from birth is acknowledged as a possibility in the path of yoga."

Question: "Is there any other problem?"

Answer: "There are many more problems, such as how to end the separate individual identity and experience yourself as part of the cosmic consciousness, and how to destroy avidya [false or negative knowledge about the Absolute Self] and get rid of ego identity. However these are the two most important difficulties in front of the aspirant. If an aspirant somehow solves these two problems then it is certain that the aspirant has made great progress on the spiritual path. It is very difficult to pass through these two stages. The subsequent path becomes much easier than expected.

"Destiny [prarabdha] and the sense of doership are the only two causes of fickle-mindedness, a restless intellect, attachment to the world, and the experience of joy and miseries. These two entangle the individual soul in the muddle of vasanas in such a way that he cannot escape even if he tries millions of times. The being restlessly suffers like an injured bird, moans like a woman at separation from her beloved husband, and wanders like a lost traveler. Prarabdha and doership continue to increase his suffering, intensify his

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

moaning and add to his wandering. These two robbers have no mercy in their heart. The individual soul goes on consuming these two like sweet poison and wastes his life. Effort to be free from these robbers is sadhana, this is spirituality.

“The sooner a jiva [individual soul] can free himself from the miserable imprisonment of prarabdha and doership the better for him. Prarabdha has an infinite stockpile of samskaras for luring, deceiving, entangling and tormenting the jiva. Doership also has many tricks, pretenses and techniques for keeping a jiva in its clutches. Both have the same objective: to torment the jiva and bring him back to the world after death, to torment him again and then bring him back again, and so on. Thus their amusement goes on. My purpose in telling you all this is to make you aware of the horrific nature and the powerful hold of prarabdha and doership.

“In the beginning, Karma Yoga involves the sense of doership, even when Karma Yoga is done for attaining freedom from prarabdha. Ego helps in these efforts, on the one hand, and, internally, it makes the efforts hollow. In the beginning one must take each step very carefully. Slowly, over time, Karma Yoga becomes the aspirant’s nature.

“Sadhana starts with Karma Yoga. The need for Karma Yoga diminishes as samskaras are depleted, inner experiences increase, and love and surrender toward God grow. An aspirant does not have to give up Karma Yoga. Eventually, at the right time, it drops away by itself. The quality of the practice of Karma Yoga is totally transformed, or should be transformed, after Shakti is awakened. Karma Yoga then becomes natural.

“Sadhana begins with anvopaaya [self-effort; effort at an individual level]. The Jiva [individual soul or being] is atomic, or very small. His efforts are equal almost to zero but his ego is very big. He can start only from where his mental state is. Hence in the Indian tradition, spiritual practices for each individual are decided on the basis of his or her capability. Someone may like to do japa [repetition of God’s name], and others may like reading and reciting scriptures. This decision is based on worthiness, state of mind, faith, preparedness and availability of time.

“At this point I refer to the awakening of Shakti because most people are prepared up to this stage and not beyond. Very often aspirants begin to do sadhana of a very high state, ignoring their own worthiness, and force themselves to renounce and retire from the world. They can neither stay in that state, nor can they fulfil their duties. It is best for an aspirant to take one step at a time and make progress in succession. Put each step on a firm ground, and when the foothold is strong and firm, then take the other step.

“After awakening, the nature of sadhana changes. It becomes sadhan. The place of ego is taken by the kriya, spontaneous activities of Shakti. Hence the form of Karma Yoga also changes. It advances from anvopaaya [self-effort] to the level of shaktopaaya [effortless]. Whether to walk this path or not is in the hands of the aspirant. If the disciple does not

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

cooperate then what can the Guru do? The disciple must be ready to give up everything to walk on this path. The lamp can give light only by burning itself.”

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:

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## Revealing the Paramatma Within

This is a reprint of an article that first appeared in the May 2013 issue of Self Awakening.

**Atmasakshatkar is the actual experience of one's true nature, which is the pure undifferentiated Atma (soul) within us all, or Param-Atma (the Universal Soul/Consciousness), the underlying reality of the entire universe. It is also referred to as "Self Realization". It is a very rare person who has actually experienced Atmasakshatkar because our Atma, our true self, is hidden from our awareness by the five Koshas (coverings) which cover it and make it "separate" from the Paramatma. The diligent practice of Maha Yoga can enable everyone on this earth to remove the five Koshas one by one and experience their true self, the Paramatma - the Universal Consciousness. This short article briefly describes the five Koshas and how Maha Yoga can help a Sadhak clear them and actually experience the Paramatma within. - Editor**

Most human beings go through life identifying themselves only with their body, which is also called the Annamaya Kosha, i.e. the covering/layer/moat which is supported by the food we eat (Anna). This is the outermost of the five Koshas, and for most of us humans it defines who we are. So we think of ourselves as Dilip Kamat or Mary Smith, defining ourselves as the son or daughter of so- and-so, brother/sister of someone, husband/wife of someone else, etc., etc. Our awareness becomes limited to our physical bodies, and we experience pain or pleasure when our bodies feel it. So we tend to do things that give us physical pleasure and avoid things which can cause us physical pain.

But the Annamaya Kosha, by itself, is inanimate. It is animated by the Kosha within it called the Pranamaya Kosha, which is made up of nervous (Pranic) energy. The Pranamaya Kosha not only animates our bodies to action, it also provides the Pranic energy which runs all the systems within our bodies. Some of us with a lot of nervous energy are hard charging individuals, always on the go, always busy doing something, while others who do not have as much nervous energy tend to be lethargic, with most of us falling between those two extremes. In all these cases, it is the outward-directed Prana Shakti which causes our bodies to act as long as we are alive. And separate from our intentional actions and activities, the Prana Shakti also causes our respiration to happen, our circulatory system to function, the food we eat get digested, our hair and nails to grow, etc., etc. But, even most of us who are aware of the nervous energy within tend to connect it directly with our bodies and do not see the Pranamaya Kosha as a separate layer within the Annamaya Kosha. Only when the normally outwardly-directed Prana Shakti becomes inward-directed with Yogic practices or with Shaktipat (Maha Yoga Deeksha), do we become aware that it is in fact a separate entity within us and which causes activities in the Annamaya Kosha, our bodies, to happen.

A smaller subset of us have an explicit awareness of our mind, which is also called the Manomaya Kosha, which is the layer within the Pranamaya Kosha, and which is made up of the thoughts which constantly arise. These thoughts sometimes drive us to action when we are awake and make up our dreams when we are asleep. Even those of us who are explicitly aware of our minds, tend to think of ourselves as being defined by our bodies, our nervous

## Revealing the Paramatma Within (continued)

energy and our minds, i.e. the three outer Koshas which cover our true self, the Atma. These three layers define us as a living entity, with a body, the Prana Shakti animating the body, and a mind. But, these layers contribute to hiding our true self, the Atma, from our awareness.

Excepting for a very small percentage, mostly made up of Yogis, most human beings are completely unaware of the two additional layers within the Manomaya Kosha. The first of these is the Vignyanamaya Kosha, or the layer of the “intellect”. It is the “hard-drive” which holds the Sanchit Samskaras, the accumulated impressions from all our past lives and our current one. These accumulated impressions are the cause for why thoughts arise in our minds in the first place, and which cause us to act or think in a certain manner. This layer is the cause for why we are born with certain specific tendencies; why some people are born musicians, or born yogis, born rational thinkers, born with certain likes/dislikes etc., etc. As we accumulate new Samskaras (impressions) in our current lives, it is in this layer that those Samskaras reside. And after we leave our current physical body and get born into another one, this “hard drive” layer and the innermost layer within which the Atma resides, migrate to the next body. But again, the Vignyanamaya Kosha is not our true self; it only serves to hide it.

The innermost layer covering the Atma is called the Anandmaya Kosha or the “illuminated” layer. It separates the Atma from the Param-Atma, and defines us as separate from the Paramatma. It is the layer which gives each of us, even Yogis, the sense of separateness from everything and everyone else. It is called the Anandmaya Kosha because when all the other Koshas have been eliminated, it is what results in the bliss experienced by Yogis who have reached that state. In that sense it also has the potential to trap the Yogi in that blissful, but separate, state as an individual Atma. It continues to maintain the sense of duality in the Yogi as a separate entity from the non-dual Paramatma. Only when the Anandmaya Kosha gets eliminated does the separate Atma merge with the Param-Atma and Atmasakshatkar happens.

So, Atmasakshatkar is the experiential merger of one’s Atma into the Paramatma. It can be a long process that begins by having the Prana Shakti become inward-directed, by years of Yogic practices or instantly, through Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha (initiation). Once that happens, the Sadhak becomes aware of the separateness of the Prana Shakti within from his awareness of himself as simply a body animated by Prana and perhaps with an awareness of his mind. With regular Maha Yoga Sadhan, the Sadhak begins gradually to achieve a Sakshi (observer) state, allowing the awakened and inward-directed Prana Shakti within to bring up the Sanchit Samskaras from within his Vignyanamaya Kosha into his awareness. These Samskaras get manifested as Kriyas (involuntary physical/Pranic/mental activities and actions) during Maha Yoga Sadhan. By surrendering to the awakened Prana Shakti within and allowing her to make the Kriyas happen while dispassionately observing the Kriyas as the Samskaras get expressed through them, the accumulated Samskaras get gradually erased from the hard drive of the Vignyanamaya Kosha. Simultaneously, the Sadhak will also develop a Sakshi state not just during Sadhan but also in his day-to-day life. He will see the

## Revealing the Paramatma Within (continued)

inward-directed and awakened Prana Shakti as the “doer” and himself as simply the “observer”.

Gradually, as the Sadhak develops the detached attitude of a Karma Yogi, new Samskaras will stop being created and accumulated, resulting eventually in the Vignyanamaya Kosha getting completely cleared. This is when the Sadhak will experience a state of blissful Samadhi as his awareness moves to the Anandmaya Kosha, but it will be a Savikalpa Samadhi state. However, with continued Sadhan, even the Anandmaya Kosha will get erased and he will experience Atmasakshatkar, eventually leading to the Nishpatti state and complete merger of his Atma with the Paramatma. Even though the Sadhak in this state might be alive in his body, his awareness will only be that of the Paramatma; he will be completely indifferent to his body and mind. And after his body dies, even the physical manifestation of his separateness from the Paramatma will have ended, he having become one with the Paramatma.

**By: Dilip Kamat**

## Yoga May be Good for the Brain

This article, written by Gretchen Reynolds, appeared in a recent issue of the New York Times, available at [http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/06/01/yoga-may-be-good-for-the-brain/?\\_r=0](http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/06/01/yoga-may-be-good-for-the-brain/?_r=0) - Editor

A weekly routine of yoga and meditation may strengthen thinking skills and help to stave off aging-related mental decline, according to a new study of older adults with early signs of memory problems.

Most of us past the age of 40 are aware that our minds and, in particular, memories begin to sputter as the years pass. Familiar names and words no longer spring readily to mind, and car keys acquire the power to teleport into jacket pockets where we could not possibly have left them.

Some weakening in mental function appears to be inevitable as we age. But emerging science suggests that we might be able to slow and mitigate the decline by how we live and, in particular, whether and how we move our bodies. Past studies have found that people who run, weight train, dance, practice tai chi, or regularly garden have a lower risk of developing dementia than people who are not physically active at all.

There also is growing evidence that combining physical activity with meditation might intensify the benefits of both pursuits. In an [interesting study that I wrote about recently](#), for example, people with depression who meditated before they went for a run showed greater improvements in their mood than people who did either of those activities alone.

But many people do not have the physical capacity or taste for running or other similarly vigorous activities.

So for [the new study](#), which was published in April in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles, and other institutions decided to test whether yoga, a relatively mild, meditative activity, could alter people's brains and fortify their ability to think.

They began by recruiting 29 middle-aged and older adults from the Los Angeles area who told the researchers that they were anxious about the state of their memories and who, during evaluations at the university, were found to have mild cognitive impairment, a mental condition that can be a precursor to eventual dementia.

The volunteers also underwent a sophisticated type of brain scan that tracks how different parts of the brain communicate with one another.

The volunteers then were divided into two groups. One began a well-established brain-training program that involves an hour a week of classroom time and a series of mental exercises designed to bolster their memory that volunteers were asked to practice at home for about 15 minutes a day.

## Yoga May be Good for the Brain (continued)

The others took up yoga. For an hour each week, they visited the U.C.L.A. campus to learn Kundalini yoga, which involves breathing exercises and meditation as well as movement and poses. The researchers chose this form of yoga largely because people who are out of shape or new to yoga generally find it easy to complete the classes.

The yoga group also was taught a type of meditation known as Kirtan Kriya that involves repeating a series of sounds – a mantra – while simultaneously “dancing” with repetitive hand movements. They were asked to meditate in this way for 15 minutes every day, so that the total time commitment was equivalent for both groups.

The volunteers practiced their programs for 12 weeks.

Then they returned to the university’s lab for another round of cognitive tests and a second brain scan.

By this time, all of the men and women were able to perform significantly better on most tests of their thinking.

But only those who had practiced yoga and meditation showed improvements in their moods – they scored lower on an assessment of potential depression than those in the brain-training group – and they performed much better on a test of visuospatial memory, a type of remembering that is important for balance, depth perception and the ability to recognize objects and navigate the world.

The brain scans in both groups displayed more communication now between parts of their brains involved in memory and language skills. Those who had practiced yoga, however, also had developed more communication between parts of the brain that control attention, suggesting a greater ability now to focus and multitask.

In effect, yoga and meditation had equaled and then topped the benefits of 12 weeks of brain training.

“We were a bit surprised by the magnitude” of the brain effects, said Dr. Helen Lavretsky, a professor of psychiatry at U.C.L.A. who oversaw the study.

How, physiologically, yoga and meditation had uniquely changed the volunteers’ brains is impossible to know from this study, although reductions in stress hormones and anxiety are likely to play a substantial role, she said. “These were all people worried about the state of their minds,” she pointed out.

Movement also increases the levels of various biochemicals in the muscles and brains that are associated with improved brain health, she said.

Whether other forms of yoga and meditation or either activity on its own might likewise bulk up the brain remains a mystery, she said. But there may be something especially potent, she

## Yoga May be Good for the Brain (continued)

said, about combining yoga with the type of meditation practiced in this study, during which people were not completely still.

The Alzheimer's Research and Prevention Foundation, which partially funded this study, [provides information on its website](#) about how to start meditating in this style.

**By: Gretchen Reynolds (New York Times)**

## Answers to Questions from Sadhaks

**Question:** I have been a Maha Yoga Sadhak, but lately I have found myself struggling in my career and in my life. I hate what I do and I regret whatever decisions I make. I think the best thing I did was to choose to follow the Maha Yoga path, but because of my problems at work, I seem to be moving away from it.

I seriously need a driving force to get me out of this state. I seem to have lost confidence in myself and I think of myself as being the biggest loser on this earth. I had hopes of doing something big in my life that would help many other people and I behave with others in a decent manner, devoid of any guile or deception. But in return, all I seem to get is insults and negativity. I do sit for meditation, but remain preoccupied with a feeling of being lost. Please guide me on how I can get back on track.

**Answer:** I am sorry to read about the troubles you are having regarding your day-to-day life and I sincerely hope you are able to get out of the negative state of mind you seem to be in. But I am heartened by the sense you have that your choosing the Maha Yoga path was the best thing that happened in your life. I strongly believe that your just being aware of this will go a long way towards helping you get out of the predicament you seem to be in. But it will require a strong commitment on your part to sit for Maha Yoga Sadhan on a regular basis and to have faith in, and a strong sense of surrender, to your inner Guru, the Guru Tattva, that was awakened within you at the time of Deeksha. Here are a few thoughts on your predicament:

First, you have to get rid of this notion that you are “the biggest loser on this earth”. Having such an attitude suggests that you believe that you have the power to control others and the power over outcomes that result from your efforts. The only power each of us has is on ourselves and our actions, to do our duties and fulfil our commitments to ourselves and to others. That is all. In Chapter 2 of the Bhagvad Geeta, Lord Shri Krishna says:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोस्त्वकर्मणि

(One only has a right to work/action, but never to its fruits; let not the fruit of action be your motive, nor let your inclination be to inaction).

A lot of what happens in a person’s life is the direct result of his Prarabdha (destiny based on past Karma) and that his role is to accept what happens with a sense of equanimity rather than getting elated over what he sees as successes and getting depressed over what he sees as failures. There is no avoiding the fruit/result of Prarabdha, but if a Sadhak develops an attitude of accepting all that happens as steps towards his spiritual progress, he will not get depressed by negative outcomes, but he will only see them as experiences essential for getting rid of the accumulated Samskaras that resulted in his Prarabdha in the first

## Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

place. So, if you dutifully do your Karma towards yourself and to others, and entrust what happens to God and to your Prarabdha, and not have a sense that you can control others and the results of your actions, then you will not see yourself through the loser/winner paradigm, but will see all that happens as essential events on your spiritual path. If you accept the fact that you do not have control over others or over the results of your actions, how can you see yourself as a loser or a winner? Having such an attitude of a Karma Yogi is very essential for spiritual progress.

Secondly, having an attitude of a Karma Yogi is a very difficult attitude to develop with intent, but it is an attitude that will come automatically to sincere Maha Yoga Sadhaks who sit for Sadhan on a regular basis. You may be aware that the key to Maha Yoga Sadhan is surrendering to the Shakti within, letting her be the doer (Karta), with the Sadhak only playing the role of an observer (Sakshi). What is also important to understand is that with diligent Sadhan, the Sadhak begins to develop an attitude of a Sakshi/observer not only during Sadhan, but also in his day-to-day life. That is when he automatically becomes a Karma Yogi, having the experiential realization that he does not have the power over other people and outcomes that he had thought he had. Once he begins to experience the power of the awakened Shakti within himself during Sadhan, he experientially begins to understand that his prior notion of him being in charge of things isn't real. He begins to see the Shakti as all-pervading and essentially driving all that happens to him and to everyone else, not just during Sadhan but at all times. He experientially realizes that he has control only over his own actions (Karma), and that the outcomes/fruits of those actions are dictated not by him or by anyone else, but are the direct results of his Prarabdha as well as the Prarabdha of everyone else. With this attitude he also begins to see what happens as the fruit/result of Prarabdha, essential steps on his path of spiritual growth. The key here is to go through the experiences of what results due to Prarabdha with a sense of equanimity, not get depressed or elated, to make sure that one does not create new Samskaras which in turn will result in the creation of new Prarabdha.

So, my advice to you is to sit for Sadhan on a regular basis and not let what happens in your day-to-day life get you depressed or elated. See the unfolding of what happens in your life as essential steps for your spiritual growth, and to the extent you can, please develop a sense of detachment (Virakti) towards the outcomes of your actions. By the way, the practice of Maha Yoga also has the potential to improve the outcomes that result from our actions. This is not because we get more control over what happens, but because the sense of equanimity we develop about the outcomes makes us more confident in our decisions and actions, resulting in better decisions and actions. So, as a side-benefit of Maha Yoga Sadhan, your confidence will also improve. Please read "Maha Yoga - A Key to Success" in the June, 2012 issue of Self Awakening, archived at <http://mahayoga.org/newsletter/Self%20Awakening%20Vol%204%20Issue%204.pdf> for additional guidance on this point.

## Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

**Question:** I am interested in Maha Yoga and understand that it is an easier path to practice than other forms of Yoga. But I read somewhere that the awakening of the Kundalini Shakti can cause mental or physical harm to a person. Is Maha Yoga Deeksha, when the Kundalini Shakti within a Sadhak gets awakened, safe?

**Answer:** It is impossible for Maha Yoga initiation and Sadhan to cause mental or physical harm to a Sadhak if his goal is spiritual progress and eventual Self Enlightenment. Unlike intent-based Yoga practices such as Hatha, Laya, Japa or Raja Yoga, a Maha Yoga Sadhak is not asked to do anything with intent. He does not need to “do” any Asanas or Pranayam, chant any Mantra or concentrate on anything with specific intent. All he need do after Deeksha (initiation) is to sit for Sadhan and surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within him and let her “do” what is needed for his spiritual progress. His role during Maha Yoga Sadhan is not that of a doer (Karta) but simply that of an observer (Sakshi). So, if Asanas or forms of Pranayam happen, they will happen only to the extent they need to happen for his spiritual progress. If he finds himself chanting a Mantra or experiencing any form of physical, mental or Pranic Kriyas, these activities happen only because they are necessary for his spiritual progress. The all-knowing awakened Prana Shakti (Mother Energy) within him will be the Karta that has his body, mind and Prana experience the Kriyas that are needed for elimination of the Samskaras that he has accumulated in his current and prior lives. If the Sadhak were the “doer” of the Asanas or Pranayam, etc., he could cause himself harm, especially if there is no supervision by a Guru. But, in Maha Yoga practice, the awakened Mother Energy is his Guru, so by surrendering to her completely, he is putting himself in the hands of the Mother, who will never “do” anything to harm her child, the Sadhak! So, if your goal is spiritual progress and eventual Self Enlightenment, please be assured that Maha Yoga Deeksha and regular Maha Yoga Sadhan following Deeksha will never cause you physical or mental harm.

Of course, if spiritual progress is not a Sadhak’s goal, then he and others, who may not be interested in spirituality, might interpret the sense of detachment he begins to feel after he has progressed on his spiritual path as being harmful. In that case, Maha Yoga is not for such a person. But if you are seriously interested in spiritual growth, there is no better way to achieve it than through the practice of Maha Yoga.

If you are interested in trying out Maha Yoga, without actually receiving Deeksha, you are welcome to try out the Introductory Practice of Maha Yoga as described here: <http://www.mahayoga.org/mahayoga-introductory-practice.aspx>. This is not a formal Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha (initiation), but it will give most Sadhaks who try it out a sense for what Maha Yoga is all about. So please try it out and see for yourself.

**Question:** I followed the Introductory Practice of Mahayoga as stated at the Maha Yoga website ([www.mahayoga.com](http://www.mahayoga.com)) for a couple of days and I had some experiences that have surprised me.

## Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

I sat as instructed on each day for about half an hour. On the first day, soon after I sat for meditation I felt a sensation of heat on the seat beneath me and suddenly I felt a wave of energy begin from there and rise to the top through my body and then begin to diminish. This happened just for a fraction of second. I had never experienced such a thing before then. On the second day I experienced an involuntary physical movement, a to and fro motion from my back to front, for about half a minute. I simply observed it.

I would like to receive Maha Yoga Deeksha on the designated day and follow the prescribed rules and restrictions, but I would like to know what has just happened to me.

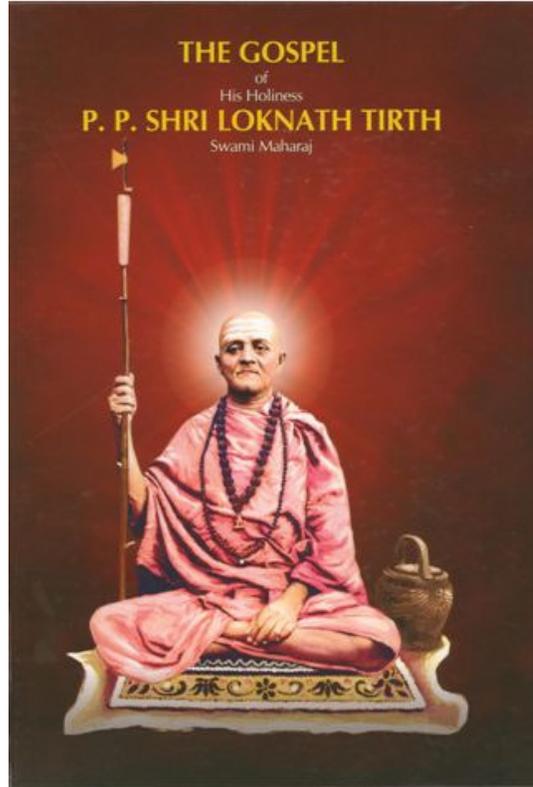
**Answer:** Glad to read that you have been sitting for the Introductory Practice of Maha Yoga and have had a couple of very good experiences. You are also wondering what happened to you that you had such experiences during your Sadhan. It is quite clear from your description that the Prana Shakti within you has become awakened and you are beginning to experience the Kriyas that result from your surrendering to the awakened Prana Shakti within you, thus allowing her to play the role of the “doer” (Karta), with you simply being the “observer” (Sakshi) of what happens. This is the entire purpose of having Sadhaks try out the Introductory Practice, so they get a first-hand experience of the awakened Prana Shakti within them.

This happens because even though the Introductory Practice is not the formal Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha, it has the intent (Sankalpa) of P. P. Kaka Maharaj behind it. It can be thought of as Deeksha “Lite”. And that is why, sincere Sadhaks who follow the instructions for sitting for the Introductory Practice and surrender to the Prana Shakti within them, find in many instances the Prana Shakti has automatically become awakened. This also suggests that the Sadhak is very much ripe for receiving formal Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha.

So you have nothing to worry about. Your decision to apply for Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha is the right one given your readiness for receiving it. You can apply for Deeksha online at <http://mahayoga.org/mahayoga-initiation.aspx>. Meanwhile, please continue to sit for the Introductory Practice every day with an attitude of surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within you.

**Editor’s note:** Please send your questions regarding Maha Yoga and Shaktipat to: [self.awakening@gmail.com](mailto: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 Day (Initiation Day) on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

Those desirous of receiving Maha Yoga Deeksha (initiation) should go to the website: [www.mahayoga.org](http://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 2 pm. Sadhaks sit for Samuhik (Communal) Sadhan, which is followed by a discourse on Yoga. Maha Prasad (lunch) is also served. About 250 Sadhaks typically attend this monthly event. These and other events at the Nashik Ashram and at other locations are posted at <http://www.mahayoga.org/progcal.aspx>.

The Nashik Ashram is located at:

P.P. Shri Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj Mahayoga Trust

P.P. Shri Loknath Tirth Swami Maharaj Chowk, Shrirang Nagar, Gangapur Road,  
Nashik 422013, Maharashtra, India.

Tel. no.: +91 - 253 - 2311616

### **Lecture Series at the Maha Yoga Ashram in Thane, Maharashtra, India**

The Thane Ashram hosts a series of lectures/talks on Maha Yoga and Yoga on the first Sunday of every month.

The Thane Ashram is located at:

A/9 Sector # 7, Behind Omega Apartments

Vasant Bungalow, Shree Nagar, Wagle Estate, Thane 400604, India

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

## Website Updates:

We have an active discussion group at:

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

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

We also have a Facebook page, Mahayoga World at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/mahayogaworld>.

We also recently began a Twitter feed at [https://twitter.com/Mahayoga\\_Org](https://twitter.com/Mahayoga_Org). Please check it out for photographs of the recent Guru Pournima events held at various Maha Yoga Ashrams.



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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](mailto:self.awakening@gmail.com)

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

**May all desire to follow this nectarous Siddhayoga Path!**