

# 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).

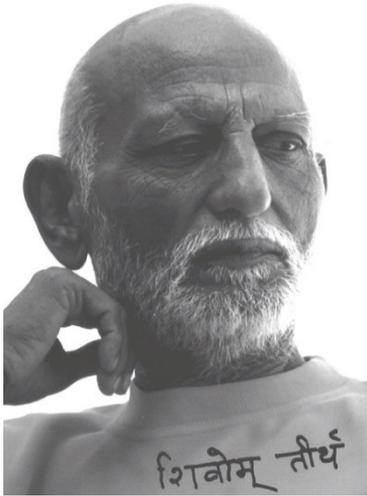
To the thousands of Sadhaks in the Maha Yoga tradition all over the world and other interested readers, this e-newsletter is intended to provide virtual Satsang. It is intended to encourage Sadhaks to remain engaged in Maha Yoga, be informed about Maha Yoga-related events around the world, and to provide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

The following excerpt describes the creation of the universe(s) as experienced and documented by highly advanced Yogis (seers). Unsurprisingly, it is quite consistent with modern cosmology. Maharajshri further draws an interesting parallel between cosmic creation and the creation and the eventual dissolution of individual souls.

## The Sequence of Creation

Today an old disciple came to the ashram. The subject of Maharajshri's discussion with him was new to me. I was listening with great curiosity. Maharajshri said, "Pashu, meaning living beings in bondage, the noose of bondage, and the Lord of the Pashus, meaning Shiva – the awareness and understanding of these three is called jnana, knowledge. The process by which purification takes place, in six ways, and that same process remaining in the control of the Guru, is called kriya. There are three ways to remove obstacles of multiplicity [known with different names] and three ways to remove obstacles of form. Thus there are six limbs of sadhan to free the individual soul in the form of an animal.

At the beginning of creation, through the resolve of Lord Bramha, sound, or resonance, was created, and from that sound arose the name, or word. From this resolve came vibration or movement, and from the vibration came agitation, and from agitation manifested the form. There are two categories of the creation: mobile and immobile. Both have names and forms." Maharajshri narrated the sequence of their manifestation, and then stated that Shaktipat was the means to retract this expansion, which exists in the form of the world:

When the universe was created nothing existed. Neither light, nor darkness. Neither white, nor black. Neither beauty, nor ugliness. Neither man, nor woman. Neither city, nor wilderness. The sun, moon and stars - nothing existed, because all of them are a part of the creation. Before creation how could anything else exist? The Shakti, whose vibrations and

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

sound caused creation, was contained within its causal Bramha. Also the ego, the visible universe, kriya, or happenings, sound, and so forth all -were in the unified, or dissolved, state. If there was no ego how could there be a visible universe? And when there is no visible universe how can there be ego? At that time the Bramha was totally established with his own self. No witness. Nothing to be witnessed! There was no one to talk and no one to listen. Rishis, seers, saw this in meditation and wrote accordingly in the scriptures. This can be experienced only by rising above the human level. It is impossible for humans to even imagine this, Humans can know the world only with the help of the senses, which function with the help of the intellect, which again is only one of the activities of Shakti manifesting through the chitta or psyche. This knowledge attained through the senses is very limited and erroneous. This knowledge, in fact, is ignorance. Experiences beyond this universe begin when the activity of the Shakti in the form of intellect ceases.

A resolve at the subtlest of the subtle level took place in Bramha. It was beyond the limits of subtlety because nothing like subtle or gross existed. Call it a resolve or call it play, in reality it was not a sankalp [resolve]. Then what was it? It cannot be verbalized because humans do not have a word for it; but it is called a resolve. The resolve of Bramha and the resolve of an individual soul are totally different, because Bramha does not have samskaras, illusion and vasana, which exist within an individual soul. Jnana, or knowledge, also was hidden within at that time. It cannot be called knowledge because nothing like knowledge or ignorance existed.

Brahma resolved, "I am one, let me be many." This clarifies a few things: 1) The creator is Bramha. 2) The creation is within Bramha. 3) The creation is Bramha. 4) The creation appears to be multifold, but in its original form it is one and the same, 5) The creation is not separate from the creator, Bramha.

As soon as a sankalp, resolve, arose the first spandan, vibration or change, occurred. Due to this, Shakti, or power, was awakened within Bramha. Shakti of Bramha is not separate from Bramha and it is one and the same as Bramha. If Brahma is the bearer then Shakti is the newborn. Shakti sometimes is latent within Bramha and sometimes awakened, but it is never annihilated. This awakening of Shakti was within Bramha, it was not manifest and separate, and only Bramha knew about this. Bramha did wake up but his eyes were still closed. Then the second spandan or vibration took place and Shakti became discernible, as if it opened its eyes the same way a sleeping person wakes up and opens his eyes.

Bramhavastha is Shivavastha, in which the ego exists but in the seed form. In the absence of creation the ego remains dormant. After the first vibration, because Shakti is awake, it is called the Shakti Avastha [state] or Shakti Tattva. In this state the Shakti is awake but has not yet manifested. Shiva and Shakti still remain merged together. The spandan, vibration or change, that follows [the third spandan or vibration] causes the Shakti to manifest, even though it is still merged or unified with Shiva. This form is exemplified by the authors of the scriptures as the Ardhanarineswar, in which half the body is a woman and half a man [Lord of the Dancers, i.e. Shiva]. This form of Bramha is one step closer to the creation.

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

Prior to creating the universe, Bramha must manifest his Shakti in the fullest form, because without Shakti no action is ever possible and there is no greater event than the cosmic creation. That is why this state is named Shiva-Shakti or Sadashiva [everlasting Shiva]. In other words, just as Shiva existed prior to the manifestation of Shakti, similarly Shiva also exists after the manifestation of Shakti. On the basis of Shiva alone, his Shakti sometimes manifests and sometimes assimilates back. There is no change in Shiva or in the Shakti. Maharajshri gave an example of this state: A garbanzo bean has a skin covering two parts of the bean. When the bean is planted in the ground, the skin tears off and, from the union of the two parts, a new plant sprouts. If the two parts are separated and then planted no new plant will sprout. Similarly, Sadashiva is like two parts of a seed; wherein Shiva and Shakti both are present. Creation is not possible without Shiva and nothing can be born without Shakti. In the universe, wherever Shakti is present, its basis, Shiva, is always present. Even at the gross visible level this unity prevails, hence the name Sadashiva [ever-present Shiva]. Aham, “I” [the Creator], and Idam, “This” [the Creation], the seer and the sight, both coexist like two parts of a seed.

In the next vibration [the fourth principle] the skin is torn off. The I takes the form of Ishwara [God] and “This” takes the form of Shakti, his Power. Here Bramha, having taken the form of Ishwara, becomes cognizant of the work of creation in unison with his Shakti. This state [the fifth vibration] of the Shakti is called Shuddha Vidya, or pure knowledge. Shiva and Shakti are in such a state that peace, stillness or turmoil – nothing exists. So what exists? Only saints on whom God bestows his grace know and experience what exists then. That is why Shiva and Shakti are called Shantyatita [Transcending Peace]. Sadashiva, Ishwara, and Shuddha Vidya are all pure elements, but to show that these are on a separate level, below the Shiva-Shakti level, they are included in the phase named Shanti [Peace]. So far the universe has not been created. Impurity exists in creation, which is the result of a vibration in Shakti. But there is no impurity or disturbance in Shakti.

In the subsequent vibrations, Bramha, in the form of Ishwara, along with Shakti, gets ready to create the universes. First his Shuddha Vidya is transformed into Ashuddha Vidya, or impure knowledge. Although Shakti is Shuddha Vidya, because it faces Maya [i.e., the illusionary knowledge of limitation of the Self; the grand illusion] it descends to the level of vidya [cognizance], and while remaining integral to the phase of cognizance it manifests as Maya, time, kala [phases], niyati [order], vidya [cognizance], raga [attachment] and purusha [an individualized Soul]. The size or shape of the moon does not change, but it appears to wax and wane; these changes in the moon are referred to as its phases. In the same way there is no change in Shiva or Shakti, but, due to the vibration, it seems as if there are changes. These phases, meaning the appearance of changes, continuously go on in the cosmic universe. Vidya [cognizance] takes the form of Maya and causes illusion. Time gives the sense of duration; phases show changes. Vidya, or cognizance, gives us the knowledge of the universe. Niyati, or order, takes the form of destiny through samskara-aashay [the stockpile of impressions]; raga causes attachment; and purusha, the soul who is God himself, gets enveloped in these layers and becomes a jivatma – an individualized soul, a soul with a separate ego identity.

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

There are infinite universes. They keep on flying around like fireflies in the Mahakasha [Great Sky]. One universe dissolves while another one is created. It is an extremely beautiful and enchanting show. Like fireworks the emergence and collapse of the universes go on. Bramha enjoys watching it. The individual souls, enveloped in sheaths, keep on playing different roles like different characters in the drama. Each universe functions like a stage. Ishwara has put out seven different sheaths: of Maya, time, phases, niyati [destiny], vidya [cognizance], raga [attachment] and Jivatva [the sense of individuality]. The jiva, the individual soul, enveloped in these layers, keeps on wandering under the illusion in the world. In other words, Shiva himself becomes subjected to Maya and becomes a jiva when attired with the five layers of time, phases, cognizance, destiny, and attachment.

As the Jiva, the individual being, establishes himself in Maya and adorns the garb of jivatva, the sense of individuality, the following phase is named pratishtha [establishment]. In this phase there are twenty-three principles, including avyakta, the unmanifested form, or the hidden prakriti [aboriginal nature; the creative principle], mahat [the first manifestation of the creative principle], ahamkar [consciousness, or ego], mind, the five senses of perception, the five organs of action, the five states of matter, and akasha [ether], air, fire, water. The twenty-fourth principle is earth, but it is included under the phase called Nivritti because even after this, the spandan, or vibrations, of the Shakti continues without interruption. However it abstains from creating any new tattva, principle. This is the sequence of the manifestation and evolution of creation. Prakriti, the creative principle, has two categories: inert and active. In the inert prakriti, five elements and the visible world are included, and in the active prakriti, those five physical senses are included on the basis of which the chetana, or consciousness, works. At the root of the inert, as well as of the active, creative principle is the same power of consciousness, called cosmic or universal consciousness. In the active aspect of the creative principle the same power is working in every living being at the individual level, which is called individual consciousness.

It became clear to me that spirituality is not a subject of words or scriptural knowledge alone. Long-term sadhana in line with the Guru's instructions along with faith, is essential for that. Just as Shakti, after it starts to pulsate, turns external and remains active in the world, in the same way until and unless the reverse sequence of its upward and inward journey is experienced, the knowledge of Bramha, the Absolute Truth, cannot be acquired. The order in which the tattvas, the principles, have been developed – their dissolution must be experienced in the exact reverse order. These activities are known as kriyas based on the tattvas [principles]. But before one can have kriyas based on the principles, one has to go through a very long and arduous journey of kriyas based on samskaras [accumulated impressions] that must be completed. Samskaras and vasanas [mental tendencies] have created a unique world within the mind. First, the destruction of this so-called world must take place. After the Shakti awakens, that is what it does first. It becomes active to destroy samskaras and vasanas. Those samskaras that have taken the form of destiny [prarabdha] are even more complicated to destroy. The jiva has to helplessly endure the fruits of his destiny. According to the statements of Maharajshri, through logic and tricks one comes to know the cause of creation and knows Bramha, the ultimate reality, indirectly. Then, after

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

purification of the mind, one gets direct and personal experiential knowledge of that. In other words, if, with sadhana, one succeeds in destroying samskaras and vasanas then the path to direct and personal experience, or realization, of Bramha is opened.

Maharajshri said that the world is either symbolized with name or with form, Although the whole universe is the result of the vibrations of the sovereign cosmic consciousness, it appears to be multiple due to different names, forms and functions. Whether the soil in the farm is used for growing fruits, vegetables, grains or flowers, its name is farm and it is in the form of soil. When the same soil is used for making a pot, its name and form both are changed to a pot. Even though the soil is the same, there is great dissimilarity. Similarly, the whole creation being originally the same Shakti, even so, somewhere it is solid, somewhere it is liquid, and somewhere hot. Everything appears different in form, name and function. The jiva gets entangled in the multitude of names and forms. For those established in the Self, names and forms are secondary and Shakti is foremost.

A jiva [individual soul] faces many complexities after getting entangled in multiple names and forms. He believes names and forms are everything. He finds some things good and other things bad. He is attached to some things and despises other things. Desirable things give rise to greed, and discomfort gives rise to anger. The jiva gets tied into many different desires. Then destiny does its work and, with the accumulation of samskaras, destiny starts to form. Once the wheel of destiny starts to move, the jiva spins in it like a top. The root cause of this wheel of destiny is the entanglement in names and forms, meaning avidya or ignorance of the ultimate reality. In *Yoga Darshan*, the root cause of all miseries is said to be avidya.

Not only is Shakti separate from the world, but it is also the creator, and it is the material cause of creation as well. To create the universes it did not need to go anywhere to get the raw material. Shakti itself is the raw material. This means that whatever is visible in this cosmos, all things in different shapes and forms, are the same divine Shakti. God is a very unique sculptor. He makes all, becomes all, nurtures all, and then absorbs and blends all within himself. The jiva does not know the artist. He gets entrapped in the world made by him and gets attached. The jiva becoming attached in the world is also the artistry of the artist. How bizarre is the world and how astute is the artist!

The universes keep on lighting and extinguishing like fireflies. In other words, Ishwara [God] manifests them sometimes, and at other times submerges them within himself. Manifesting is called creation, and submerging within is called Pralaya, dissolution of manifestation. During creation Shakti goes on manifesting in the form of tattvas, or principles, one after another, and during annihilation the principles go on retreating back, one into the other, and finally all are absorbed into Shakti. The emergence and collapse of the universe happens at the cosmic level. After due thought one will realize that the process of dissolution is different at the individual level. The universe remains as it was, but dissolution occurs at a specific state at an individual level and the individual is liberated. By doing the sadhan given by the Guru, the gross or physical principles, in reverse order, fold their qualities within and

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

return to the Shakti. While returning to the origin at the individual level, Shakti gives many different experiences to the aspirant. These are called divine experiences. In reality, the creation of the cosmos and every event that occurs therein are the activities of the Shakti, hence they are all divine. They are not considered divine because the jiva has made them the cause of his attachment to the world. The inner experiences during sadhan are considered divine because they are the cause of liberation. Spirituality is not for the dissolution of the world, but for liberating an individual soul from the bondage of the world. Pralaya, dissolution, takes place at the individual level. *Yoga Darshan* also says that for average people the world remains as it is, but for those who are fulfilled, the world dissolves. Lord Shiva is called “The Destroyer” because he brings about final destruction to the jiva and liberates him from bondage.

Guru Maharajshri used to say that speech is like the physical expression of knowledge. Just as all activities are done through the senses, in the same way knowledge is expressed through speech [sound or voice]. The orator gives a lecture through speech. At the para [transcendental, unmanifested] stage, speech is hidden in seed form. At the pashyanti [the finest impulse of sound, the first manifested consciousness, the seat of all knowledge] stage, speech sprouts. At the madhyama [mental speech; ideas and thoughts] stage, it takes the form of words. It is expressed at the vaikhari [audible or vocal speech, the grossest level] stage. Speech brings all the knowledge of the world to light. It is the main connecting thread between the “I” and the world. When it turns introvert, it starts to open the seams of the mind and starts a reverse process. Vaikhari folds into madhyama, and madhyama into pashyanti, and finally pashyanti merges into para. The extrovert process is towards the world and the introvert process is towards the soul. Speech is also a kriya of the Shakti, thus discipline and control of speech open the pathway to a direct experience of Shakti. Maharajshri also presented the subject here with the help of speech. When Maharajshri talked it felt as if he had vak-siddhi [the power of spoken words to make reality].

Repetition of a mantra [japa] is equally accepted by all paths as an important part of spiritual practice. Japa hits every breath like a hammer and directly strikes the mind and prana, the life-force. Japa is regarded as the main means for awakening Shakti. On the other hand, in script, and the writings of saints, the grace of the Guru is said to be the main factor and the knowledge of Shaktipat depends on the grace of a Guru. As far as anavi [individual] practices are concerned, mantra-japa and pranayaam are the two primary practices. In today’s age, the right environment for pranayaam is very hard to find, but everyone can do mantrajapa thus it is said to be the primary practice. In the path of Shaktipat also, the Guru may give Shaktipat through a mantra [sound].

Mantra is related to philology, the science of language, and it has three limbs. Varna means the basic alphabet. By joining letters, words are formed. By combining words, a mantra is formed. Some mantras are called “beeja” mantras, or “seed” mantras. In a beeja mantra each letter is a mantra. In other words, in each seed, or letter, a word and a mantra are included. A sadhan of japa is a pathway to go from a lower to a higher level, or to go inward from outward. In other words, this is the path from materialism to spirituality, starting with

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

language, which is a part of this world and also a part of physically-expressed speech. The purification of letters, words and mantra inspire purification of the mind. Meanings and sentiments in the mantra strike the mind and enthuse it to awaken. Some aspirants start to have spontaneous pranayam by doing japa, which is a sign of awakening.

These three components of speech have a direct relationship with the three parts of the visible world: kalaa, or phases; tattva, or principle; and bhuvan, or place. As mentioned earlier the meaning of phase is the transformative quality. Phases sometimes grow and sometimes fade. These changes are illusory. The moon remains the same but it appears to be changing. Shakti does not grow or diminish, yet it appears as if there has been a change in Shakti. This is due to intense vibrations of the Shakti. Vibrations cause waves in the water, yet the water remains water; only the shape of water is called a wave. Due to the same changeability and vibrations, one after another, the tattvas, or principles, seem to manifest, just as the same water may become snowflakes or steam. Then the principles [the five physical principles] – form, qualities, function, nature and condition – start to appear distinct. Bhuvan means the place where principles exist or become. It is clear that they reside in the great vacuum of the sky. The scriptures describe these places of becoming for the five elements in detail, but here, this much understanding is enough for readers.

In reality, if one observes at the individual level, every moment phases are waxing or waning in the body. The wheel of changes keeps on turning. Sometimes the individual is a child or an old man, sometimes a healthy and sometimes a sick man, No one's body remains the same. The state of mind also keeps on changing. Sometimes happy and at other times unhappy, sometimes lusty, sometimes angry, sometimes contented, sometimes dissatisfied. The state of the psyche also does not remain the same. The body is a symbol of the world. The body also, like the world, resides and moves within the sky. It is also made of the same five physical elements [ether, air, fire, water and earth].

The pathway for the inner journey opens up upon purification of the three parts of mantra japa: feeling, thought and action. Feeling, thought and action become impure due to samskaras and vasanas. An aspirant has to wear these away with spontaneous kriyas after the inward awakening of the divine Kundalini-Shakti. With the weakening of samskaras and vasanas, feeling, thought and action are purified. One's attachment to the world is then greatly reduced. This is achieved through Shaktipat. Then one rises above the changeable world made of the five elements and rises above the body. Both of them exist in the sky. This way kalaa, tattva and bhuvan are purified.

As I reached this point in the discussion, I was lost in the churning of my heart. I had lost my way. Where did I want to go and where was I going? The spiritual journey is so long and life so short! The majority of the time of this short life had been wasted. I was drowning in ego when I had nothing else but a sense of individuality. And even that sense of individuality was simply a feeling, a feeling of being small, with a sense of doership, a feeling of happiness and miseries, helplessness, lack of energy. How big my ego was! Nobody was more intelligent, strong and artistic than I. My whole life had been wasted in this false ego. Now,

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

with the sight of the lotus feet of my Guru, some sense had returned. At least now I was aware that I was lost.

The next day, during the morning walk, I asked Maharajshri “Are kriyas of sound and light based on accumulated impressions or the principles?”

His reply was, “Both. If samskaras, accumulated impressions, of past lives are rising and kriyas are taking place due to that then they are samskara-based. If these experiences are happening after samskaras are destroyed then they are due to the tattvas, principles. Along with the process of dissolution of the principles, these experiences continue to take place.”

Question: “Kriyas of sound and light take place during the dissolution of the tattvas, after all accumulated impressions have been destroyed, but where do the accumulated impressions of sadhana done in a past birth come from?”

Answer: “When someone does sadhana with a certain imagination, then, after long-term sadhana, this imagination starts to take a form and experiences start to take place. The impressions of that begin to accumulate. With the passage of time, when the Shakti is awakened, then those samskaras come out in the form of kriyas’

Question: “Aren’t the impressions of kriyas happening due to tattvas accumulated?”

Answer: “Kriyas based on tattva, principles, take place only after the chitta is purified, meaning when samskaras are destroyed. At that stage tattvas are busy ending their so-called existence. In those kriyas there is no place for individual identity as a jiva. There is no surrender either. Then surrender also has finished its job. The sense of individuality is on the way to dissolving itself into the soul.”

Question: “Purification of the six limbs, or parts, as explained by you did not include anything about light and sound.”

Answer: “After the process of the creation of the universe there was only a description of the awakening of the Shakti through the purification of the limbs, and not of the activities following that. There was no discussion about kriyas based either on samskaras or on tattva.”

Question: “Does that mean that Shakti cannot be awakened without purification?”

Answer: “It can be awakened but it should not be. As long as the disciple is not worthy, Shaktipat cannot be fruitful. The disciple cannot get benefits of Shaktipat. All kinds of impurities in the mind - lust, anger, greed, and so forth – drag the mind toward the world and sadhan gets broken. It is best for the aspirant to look within himself and decide whether he is worthy or not for initiation. After that he can make his request of the Guru. Then the

## Churning of the Heart - Excerpt (continued)

Guru may examine the disciple's worthiness and, based on his own strength and experience, decide whether the aspirant is deserving or not."

Question: "Maharajshri, I had not even heard about the purification of the six parts, yet you graced me by giving me initiation. How come?"

Answer: "You may have heard or not heard about that, but you used to do some japa, dhyana [meditation], study scriptures, sing spiritual songs, and so forth. This made you worthy. When I saw you the first time in Ghaziabad I felt that you were ready for initiation. At that time we had not even talked much."

Question: "This means that, in addition to the purification of the six parts, there are some other techniques?"

Answer: "What did I say? After some philosophical discussions I shed some light on forms of mantra-japa, its effects and awakening. For clarity on the background of the subject, I explained the sequence of the development of creation. By japa, pranayama, bhakti, yoga, knowledge, karma without attachment, and so forth, the mind can be made worthy for initiation."

Question: "The qualities of deserving disciples given in the scriptures may hardly be visible in any aspirant, including myself. Does that mean we are all unworthy? The person who has those qualities would be a great being. Why then would he need to go in search of a Guru?"

Answer: "Yes, you are right. By efforts of sadhana, the psyche does not get fully purified. That is the job of Kriya-Shakti. It brings up samskaras and converts them to kriyas. But prior to diksha [initiation] one must have the desire to be free from samskaras and impurities. If, with sadhana before initiation, one can attain this, it is sufficient. After diksha, with sadhana and Guru-seva, annihilation of samskaras, purification of the chitta and destruction of the mind are received from divine Shakti in the form of alms. Scriptures describe the qualities of a deserving disciple but they do not say that all the qualities should be in one person. It is impossible to have all those in one person. It is the Guru's duty to see whether Shakti will be received or not, whether the disciple will experience the effect of Shakti or not."

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

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## Mind of the Meditator

The following article in the November 2014 issue of Scientific American by Matthieu Ricard, Antoine Lutz and Richard Davidson, describes the multitude of benefits for both body and mind of contemplative meditation practices. Although the article covers Buddhist meditation practices, these practices, especially the practice of mindfulness meditation (Vipassana), are very similar to the Introductory Practice of Maha Yoga meditation as described at <http://www.mahayoga.org/mahayoga-introductory-practice.aspx>. In the broader scheme of things, scientific validation of Maha Yoga is not necessary, because the experience of Maha Yoga Sadhan is itself a validation of its benefits, not only to the body and mind but also to the Atma (soul). But, to the extent that scientifically inclined Maha Yoga Sadhaks might want to seek its scientific validation, they will be delighted to know that science is finally catching up with actual experience by recognizing at least the material benefits of Sadhan (meditation). The article, with all the original graphics is available at <https://www.upaya.org/uploads/pdfs/MindoftheMeditator.pdf>

- Editor



## Mind of the Meditator - (continued)

When the Society for Neuroscience asked Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama (the leader of Tibetan Buddhism), to address its annual meeting in Washington, D.C., in 2005, a few hundred members among the nearly 35,000 or so attending the meeting petitioned to have the invitation rescinded. A religious leader, they felt, had no place at a scientific meeting. But this particular leader turned out to have a provocative and ultimately productive question to pose to the gathering. “What relation,” he asked, “could there be between Buddhism, an ancient Indian philosophical and spiritual tradition, and modern science?”

The Dalai Lama, putting action before rhetoric, had already started trying to find answers to his own question. Back in the 1980s, he had sparked a dialogue about science and Buddhism, which led to the creation of the Mind & Life Institute, dedicated to studying contemplative science. In 2000 he brought new focus to this endeavor: he launched the subdiscipline of “contemplative neuroscience” by inviting scientists to study the brain activity of expert Buddhist meditators—defined as having more than 10,000 hours of practice.

For nearly 15 years more than 100 monastics and lay practitioners of Buddhism and a large number of beginning meditators have participated in scientific experiments at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and at least 19 other universities. The article you are reading, in fact, is the product of a collaboration between two neuroscientists and a Buddhist monk who originally trained as a cell biologist.

A comparison of the brain scans of meditators with tens of thousands of hours of practice with those of neophytes and nonmeditators has started to explain why this set of techniques for training the mind holds great potential for supplying cognitive and emotional benefits. The goals of meditation, in fact, overlap with many of the objectives of clinical psychology, psychiatry, preventive medicine and education. As suggested by the growing compendium of research, meditation may be effective in treating depression and chronic pain and in cultivating a sense of overall well-being.

The discovery of meditation's benefits coincides with recent neuroscientific findings showing that the adult brain can still be deeply transformed through experience. These studies show that when we learn how to juggle or play a musical instrument, the brain undergoes changes through a process called neuroplasticity. A brain region that controls the movement of a

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violinist's fingers becomes progressively larger with mastery of the instrument. A similar process appears to happen when we meditate. Nothing changes in the surrounding environment, but the meditator regulates mental states to achieve a form of inner enrichment, an experience that affects brain functioning and its physical structure. The evidence amassed from this research has begun to show that meditation can rewire brain circuits to produce salutary effects not just on the mind and the brain but on the entire body.

### What Is Meditation?

Meditation has roots in the contemplative practices of nearly every major religion. The prevalence of meditation in the media has given the word various meanings. We will refer to meditation as the cultivation of basic human qualities, such as a more stable and clear mind, emotional balance, a sense of caring mindfulness, even love and compassion—qualities that remain latent as long as one does not make an effort to develop them. It is also a process of familiarization with a more serene and flexible way of being.

In principle, meditation is relatively simple and can be done anywhere. No equipment or workout attire is needed. The meditator begins by assuming a comfortable physical posture, neither too tense nor too lax, and by wishing for self-transformation and a desire for others' well-being and for the alleviation of their suffering. Later the practitioner must stabilize the mind, which is too often disorderly—and occupied by a stream of inner chatter. Mastering the mind requires freeing it from automatic mental conditioning and inner confusion.

We will examine here what happens in the brain during three common types of meditation developed through Buddhism and now practiced in secular programs in hospitals and schools throughout the world. The first one, focused-attention meditation, aims to tame and center the mind in the present moment while developing the capacity to remain vigilant to distractions. The second one, mindfulness, or open-monitoring meditation, tries to cultivate a less emotionally reactive awareness to emotions, thoughts and sensations occurring in the present moment to prevent them from spiraling out of control and creating mental distress. In mindfulness, the meditator remains attentive, moment by moment, to any experience without focusing on anything specific. Finally, another type of practice is known in Buddhist

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tradition as compassion and loving kindness and fosters an altruistic perspective toward others.

### Under the Scanner

Neuroscientists have now begun to probe what happens inside the brain during the various types of meditation. Wendy Hasenkamp, then at Emory University, and her colleagues used brain imaging to identify the neural networks activated by focused-attention meditation. In the scanner, the participants trained their attention on the sensation produced by breathing. Typically during this form of meditation, the mind wanders from an object, and the meditator must recognize this and then restore attention to the gradual rhythm of the inhaling and exhaling. In this study, the meditator had to signal mind wandering by pressing a button. Researchers identified four phases of a cognitive cycle: an episode of mind wandering, a moment of becoming aware of the distraction, a phase of reorienting attention and a resumption of focused attention.

Each of the four phases involves particular brain networks. The first part of the cycle, when a distraction occurs, increases activity in the wide-ranging default-mode network (DMN). This network includes areas of the medial prefrontal cortex, the posterior cingulate cortex, the precuneus, the inferior parietal lobe and the lateral temporal cortex. The DMN is known to become activated during mind wandering and to play a general role in building and updating internal models of the world based on long-term memories about the self or others.

The second phase, becoming aware of a distraction, occurs in other brain areas such as the anterior insula and the anterior cingulate cortex, regions of what is called the salience network. This network regulates subjectively perceived feelings, which might, for instance, lead to being distracted during a task. The salience network is thought to play a key role in detecting novel events and in switching activity during meditation among assemblies of neurons that make up the brain's large-scale networks. It may shift attention away from the default-mode network, for instance.

The third phase engages additional areas—among them the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and the lateral inferior parietal lobe—that “take back” one's attention by detaching it from any distracting stimulus. Finally, in the fourth and last phase, the dorsolateral prefrontal

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cortex continues to retain a high level of activity, as the meditator's attention remains directed toward an object such as the breath.

In our laboratory at Wisconsin, we further observed different patterns of activity depending on a practitioner's level of experience. Veteran meditators with more than 10,000 hours of practice showed more activity in these attention-related brain regions compared with novices. Paradoxically, the most experienced meditators demonstrated less activation than the ones without as much experience. Advanced meditators appear to acquire a level of skill that enables them to achieve a focused state of mind with less effort. These effects resemble the skill of expert musicians and athletes capable of immersing themselves in the “flow” of their performances with a minimal sense of effortful control.

To study the impact of focused-attention meditation, we also studied its volunteers before and after a three-month retreat with intensive meditation exercises for at least eight hours a day. They received headphones that broadcast sounds at a given frequency, occasionally mixed with slightly higher-pitched sounds. They had to focus on the sounds played in one ear for 10 minutes and react to periodically interspersed high-pitched tones. After the retreat, we found that meditators, compared with a nonmeditating control group, showed less trial-to-trial variation in their reaction times on this highly repetitive task, which lent itself easily to distractions. The result suggested that the meditators had an enhanced capacity to remain vigilant. The brain's electrical responses to high-pitched tones remained more stable at the second session only for the meditators.

### Stream of Consciousness

The second type of well-studied meditation also involves another form of attention. Mindfulness, or open-monitoring meditation, requires the meditator to take note of every sight or sound and track internal bodily sensations and inner self-talk. The person stays aware of what is happening without becoming overly preoccupied with any single perception or thought, returning to this detached focus each time the mind strays. As awareness of what is happening in one's surroundings grows, normal daily irritants—an angry colleague at work, a worried child at home—become less disruptive, and a sense of psychological well-being develops.

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With Heleen Slagter, then in our group at Wisconsin, we sought to learn about the influence of this form of training on mental functioning by measuring the participants' capacity to detect rapidly presented visual stimuli—a means to measure mindfulness meditation, which is also sometimes called nonreactive awareness. To perform this experiment, we used a task in which the participants had to detect two numbers presented on a screen rapidly, amid a succession of letters. If the second number appears about 300 milliseconds after the first one, subjects often do not see the second, a phenomenon known as attentional blink.

If the second number appears after a delay of 600 milliseconds, it can be detected without difficulty. The attentional blink reflects the limits of the brain's ability to process two stimuli presented to the observer at close intervals. When too much of the brain's attention is devoted to processing the first number, the second number cannot always be detected, although the observer usually can see it on some of the trials. We hypothesized that mindfulness training could reduce the propensity to “get stuck,” or absorbed by seeing the first number. Mindfulness practice cultivates a nonreactive form of sensory awareness, which should result in a reduced attentional blink. As we predicted, after three months of an intensive retreat, the meditators perceived both numbers more frequently than the controls did. This improved perception was also reflected in lessened activity of a particular brain wave in response to the first number. Monitoring the P3b brain wave, used to assess how attention is allocated, indicated that meditators were capable of optimizing attention so as to minimize the attentional blink.

Staying aware of an unpleasant sensation can reduce maladaptive emotional responses and help one to move beyond the disagreeable feeling and may be particularly useful in dealing with pain. In our Wisconsin lab, we have studied experienced practitioners while they performed an advanced form of mindfulness meditation called open presence. In open presence, sometimes called pure awareness, the mind is calm and relaxed, not focused on anything in particular yet vividly clear, free from excitation or dullness. The meditator observes and is open to experience without making any attempt to interpret, change, reject or ignore painful sensation. We found that the intensity of the pain was not reduced in meditators, but it bothered them less than it did members of a control group.

Compared with novices, expert meditators' brain activity diminished in anxiety-related regions—the insular cortex and the amygdala—in the period preceding the painful stimulus.

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The meditators' brain response in pain-related regions became accustomed to the stimulus more quickly than that of novices after repeated exposures to it. Other tests in our lab have shown that meditation training increases one's ability to better control and buffer basic physiological responses—inflammation or levels of a stress hormone—to a socially stressful task such as giving a public speech or doing mental arithmetic in front of a harsh jury.

Several studies have documented the benefits of mindfulness on symptoms of anxiety and depression and its ability to improve sleep patterns. By deliberately monitoring and observing their thoughts and emotions when they feel sad or worried, depressed patients can use meditation to manage negative thoughts and feelings as they arise spontaneously and so lessen rumination. Clinical psychologists John Teasdale, then at the University of Cambridge, and Zindel Segal of the University of Toronto showed in 2000 that for patients who had previously suffered at least three episodes of depression, six months of mindfulness practice, along with cognitive therapy, reduced the risk of relapse by nearly 40 percent in the year following the onset of a severe depression. More recently, Segal demonstrated that the intervention is superior to a placebo and has a protective effect against relapse comparable to standard maintenance antidepressant therapy.

### Compassion and Loving Kindness

The third form of meditation under study cultivates attitudes and feelings of loving kindness and compassion toward other people, whether they are close relatives, strangers or enemies. This practice entails being aware of someone else's needs and then experiencing a sincere, compassionate desire to help that person or to alleviate the suffering of other people by shielding them from their own destructive behavior.

To generate a compassionate state may sometimes entail the meditator feeling what another person is feeling. But having one's emotions resonate empathetically with the feelings of another person does not by itself suffice to yield a compassionate mind-set. The meditation must also be driven by an unselfish desire to help someone who is suffering. This form of meditation on love and compassion has proved to be more than just a spiritual exercise. It has shown potential to benefit health care workers, teachers and others who run the risk of emotional burnout linked to the distress experienced from a deeply empathetic reaction to another person's plight.

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The meditator begins by focusing on an unconditional feeling of benevolence and love for others, accompanied by silent repetition of a phrase conveying intent, such as “May all beings find happiness and the causes of happiness and be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.” In 2008 we studied experienced volunteers who had practiced this form of training for thousands of hours and found an increase in activity in several brain regions while they listened to voices conveying distress. The secondary somatosensory and insular cortices, known to participate in empathetic and other emotional responses, were more activated for experts than controls in response to the distressed voice, suggesting an enhanced ability to share the feelings of others without reporting any sign of becoming emotionally overwhelmed. The practice of compassion meditation also produced more activity in areas such as the temporoparietal junction, the medial prefrontal cortex and the superior temporal sulcus, all typically activated when we put ourselves in the place of another.

More recently, Tania Singer and Olga Klimecki, both at the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig, Germany, in collaboration with one of us (Ricard), sought to distinguish differences between the effects of empathy and compassion on meditators. They noted that compassion and altruistic love were associated with positive emotions, and they suggested that emotional exhaustion or burnout was, in fact, a kind of empathy “fatigue.”

According to the Buddhist contemplative tradition from which this practice is derived, compassion, far from leading to distress and discouragement, reinforces an inner balance, strength of mind, and a courageous determination to help those who suffer. If a child is hospitalized, the presence of a loving mother at his side holding his hand and comforting him with tender words will no doubt do that child more good than the anxiety of a mother overwhelmed with empathetic distress who, unable to bear the sight of her sick child, paces back and forth in the hallway. In the latter case, the mother may then end up with the common experience of burnout, which, in one U.S. study, beset about 60 percent of the 600 caregivers surveyed.

To further explore the mechanisms of empathy and compassion, Klimecki and Singer divided about 60 volunteers into two groups. One meditated on love and compassion, and the other experimental regimen trained participants to cultivate feelings of empathy for others.

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Preliminary results showed that after a week of meditation-based loving kindness and compassion, novice subjects watched video clips showing suffering people with more positive and benevolent feelings. The other subjects, who devoted a week to an experimental regimen that just cultivated empathy, experienced emotions that resonated deeply with others' sufferings. But these emotions also brought about negative feelings and thoughts, and this group experienced more distress, sometimes to the point of not being able to control their emotions.

Aware of these destabilizing effects, Singer and Klimecki added training for the empathy group in compassion and loving kindness meditation. They then observed that this additional exercise counterbalanced the detrimental effects of training in empathy alone: negative emotions diminished, and positive emotions increased. These results were accompanied by corresponding changes in the areas of several brain networks associated with compassion, positive emotions and maternal love, including the orbitofrontal cortex, the ventral striatum and the anterior cingulate cortex. The researchers, moreover, were able to demonstrate that a week of training in compassion increased prosocial behavior in a virtual game specially developed to measure the capacity to help others.

### A Door to Consciousness

Meditation explores the nature of the mind, providing a way to study consciousness and subjective mental states from the first-person perspective of the meditator. In a collaboration with expert Buddhist meditators at Wisconsin, we have studied the brain's electrical activity using electroencephalography (EEG) during compassion meditation in which the meditators described the well-defined sense of self as becoming less fixed and permanent.

We found that these long-term Buddhist practitioners were able, at will, to sustain a particular EEG pattern. Specifically, it is called high-amplitude gamma-band oscillations and phase synchrony at between 25 and 42 hertz. The coordination of brain oscillations may play a potentially crucial role in the brain's building of temporary networks that can integrate cognitive and affective functions during learning and conscious perception, a process that can bring about lasting changes in brain circuitry.

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High-amplitude oscillations persisted throughout the meditation for several dozens of seconds and gradually increased as practice progressed. These EEG traces differed from those of control subjects, in particular, in the lateral frontoparietal cortex. Changes in electrical activity may reflect an increased awareness in expert meditators of their surroundings and their internal mental processes, although additional research is needed to better understand the functioning of gamma oscillations.

Meditation brings about changes not just in well-defined cognitive and emotional processes but also in the volume of certain brain areas, possibly reflecting alterations in the number of connections among brain cells. A preliminary study by Sara W. Lazar of Harvard University and her colleagues showed that among longtime meditators, as compared with a control group, the volume of the brain's darker tissue, its gray matter, differed in the insula and prefrontal cortices—specifically, regions called Brodmann areas 9 and 10, which are frequently activated during various forms of meditation. These distinctions were most pronounced in older participants in the study, suggesting that meditation might influence the thinning of brain tissue that comes with aging.

In a follow-up study, Lazar and her colleagues also showed that mindfulness training decreased the volume of the amygdala, a region involved in fear processing, for those participants who showed the most noticeable reductions in stress over the course of training. Eileen Luders of the University of California, Los Angeles, and her colleagues further observed differences in meditators in the fibers called axons that connect different brain regions, suggesting an enhanced number of brain connections. This observation may support the hypothesis that meditation actually induces structural alterations in the brain. An important limitation of this research relates to the lack of long-term longitudinal studies that follow a group over the course of many years and to the absence of comparisons between meditators and people of similar backgrounds and ages who do not meditate.

Some evidence even exists that meditation—and its ability to enhance overall well-being—may diminish inflammation and other biological stresses that occur at the molecular level. A collaborative study between our group and one led by Perla Kaliman of the Institute of Biomedical Research of Barcelona showed that one day of intensive mindfulness practice in experienced meditators turned down the activity of inflammation-related genes and altered the functioning of enzymes involved with turning genes on and off. A study by Cliff Saron of

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the University of California, Davis, looked at the effect of meditation on a molecule involved with regulating the longevity of a cell. The molecule in question was an enzyme called telomerase that lengthens DNA segments at the ends of chromosomes. The segments, called telomeres, ensure stability of the genetic material during cell division. They shorten every time a cell divides, and when their length decreases below a critical threshold, the cell stops dividing and gradually enters a state of senescence. Compared with a control group, the meditators who showed the most pronounced reductions in psychological stress also had higher telomerase activity by the end of the retreat. This finding suggests that mindfulness training might slow processes of cellular aging among some practitioners.

### A Path to Well-Being

About 15 years of research have done more than show that meditation produces significant changes in both the function and structure of the brains of experienced practitioners. These studies are now starting to demonstrate that contemplative practices may have a substantive impact on biological processes critical for physical health.

More studies using well-defined, randomized controlled trials are needed to isolate meditation-related effects from other psychological factors that can influence the outcome of a study. Other variables that may affect study results are the level of motivation of a practitioner and the roles played by both teachers and students in a meditation group. Further work is needed to understand the possible negative side effects of meditation, the desirable length of a given practice session and the way to tailor it to a person's specific needs.

Even with the requisite cautions, research on meditation provides new insights into methods of mental training that have the potential to enhance human health and well-being. Equally important, the ability to cultivate compassion and other positive human qualities lays the foundation for an ethical framework unattached to any philosophy or religion, which could have a profoundly beneficial effect on all aspects of human societies.

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR(S)**

**Matthieu Ricard is a Buddhist monk who trained as a cellular biologist before he left France to become a student of Buddhism in the Himalayas about 40 years ago.**

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## Answers to Questions from Sadhaks

**Question:** I will be receiving Shaktipat Deeksha soon and I am wondering if older people tend to have fewer and less intense Kriya experiences compared to younger meditators. I have never received formal initiation into any lineage of Siddha Yoga but I did have quite a bit of Kriya activity in my 20's and 30's. That has become less as I have aged. I am currently 65 years of age.

**Answer:** Congratulations on your decision to sign up for receiving Shaktipat Deeksha. I sincerely hope it makes your path to Self-Enlightenment wider and free from obstacles, especially since you seem to have been sitting for Yoga meditation for quite some time.

In order to respond to your specific question I would first like to give you the context for Maha Yoga and Kriyas. So here goes.

We humans come to this earth, each with a unique set of accumulated Samskaras (impressions that include attachments and aversions) from our prior births, to which we add new Samskaras in our current lives as we create new impressions and new attachments and aversions. The trove of accumulated Samskaras continues to increase and we move on from this life only to get reborn in our next birth with a bigger trove. It is these accumulated Samskaras that keep our minds in a perpetual state of activity and which keep us from actually understanding and experiencing our true selves. The purpose of Maha Yoga is to help us get rid of the accumulated Samskaras, so our minds become calm and we can eventually experience the Atma ("soul") within us as being the one and the same Param Atma ("universal soul" often referred to as God).

The way this happens is that after Shaktipat the Prana Shakti (Universal Life Energy) within a Sadhak begins to move upwards/inwards. And in that process, if the Sadhak allows the Prana Shakti to move freely by surrendering to it and playing only the role of an observer, he will, through the physical, mental and Pranic Kriyas that happen, begin to get rid of the Samskaras that underlie the Kriyas. It is very important for the Sadhak to simply observe the Kriyas as they happen, not be desirous of them or get attached to them, nor be scared of them. The Kriyas that happen during Sadhan (sitting for meditation) represent the process of "garbage removal", whereby the "garbage" of a Sadhak's accumulated Samskaras is getting removed from his Chitta (mind-stuff). If a Sadhak gets attached to specific Kriyas it is like him getting attached to the removal process for specific Samskaras from his trove. In fact having such attachments will create new Samskaras, going counter to the purpose of Maha Yoga which is to eliminate the accumulated Samskaras and to let the Atma shine through.

Beginning Sadhaks usually have a preponderance of Rajasik (action/activity promoting) and Tamasik (indolence and ignorance promoting) Samskaras, therefore the Kriyas they experience are physically and emotionally intense. But with diligent Sadhan and by living a Sattvik (spiritually enhancing) life, the Kriyas associated with Rajasik and Tamasik Samskaras begin to diminish as those types of Samskaras get eliminated from his Chitta, and they get replaced with the more subtle Kriyas related to the Sattvik Samskaras. So, unless a Sadhak

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continues to accumulate new Rajasik and Tamasik Samskaras at a rate faster than the rate he is eliminating them through Sadhan, the Kriyas he experiences during Sadhan will naturally become calmer, less intense and more subtle. Eventually, as even the Sattvik Samskaras get eliminated, all Kriyas will cease and the Sadhak will begin to actually experience his true self, finally leading to Self-Enlightenment.

To address your specific question, sometimes, as might have been in your case, the process of the Prana Shakti beginning to rise upwards can happen even without having explicitly received Shaktipat Deeksha. This is usually because the Sadhak might have come to his current birth having received Shaktipat, or having experienced some degree of self-awakening in his current or prior life. But regardless, if a Sadhak sits for Sadhan regularly, surrendering to the Prana Shakti within him, and he lives a Sattvik life without creating new attachments or aversions, the trove of accumulated Samskaras will get lighter and the Kriyas he experiences will get more subtle and less physically and emotionally intense. This is not necessarily a function of age, but it is directly related to the nature of the Samskaras he has remaining in his Chitta. Older Sadhaks who had never practiced Yoga but who have a preponderance of Rajasik and Tamasik Samskaras will likely experience physically and emotionally intense Kriyas, not too different from younger Sadhaks with similar troves of Samskaras. So, getting older has less to do with the declining intensity of physical and emotional Kriyas, it is more related to “getting wiser” and having fewer Rajasik and Tamasik Samskaras to deal with.

**Question:** I would like to know if I could receive Shaktipat Deeksha in Mumbai or do I need to be at a Maha Yoga Ashram in Nashik or Pune or some other location?

**Answer:** Shaktipat Deeksha can happen in a Sadhak’s own home, whether he is in Mumbai, New York, Beijing, London, Cairo, or for that matter, anywhere in the world. He does not need to be present at the Ashrams in Nashik, Pune or elsewhere to receive Deeksha.

All a Sadhak need do is to apply for Deeksha to be held on the next Deeksha Day through the online application form at the Maha Yoga website [www.mahayoga.org](http://www.mahayoga.org), have an earnest desire to receive Deeksha, and sit in the privacy of his own home for receiving Deeksha at 6:00 a.m. local time on Deeksha Day by following the instructions that will be sent to him if his Deeksha application has been accepted. The 6:00 a.m. local time refers to the time where the Sadhak lives. So, if you live in Mumbai, the time to sit for Deeksha will be 6:00 a.m. Indian Standard Time on Deeksha Day.

Here’s the link to the online application form: <http://www.mahayoga.org/mahayoga-initiation.aspx> .

Maha Yoga Shaktipat Deeksha is a Sankalpa (intent) Deeksha that happens as a result of the Shaktipat Guru praying to his Guru and to the Guru Parampara (lineage) before him, going all the way to the energy (God, if you want to call it) that created the universe, to awaken the

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Prana Shakti (Universal Life Energy) in all Sadhaks who have earnestly requested it. Because the Deeksha is caused by the Guru's Sankalpa, the Sadhak's physical location is not very important. It needs to be a private place where he will not get disturbed by what is happening around him or disturb others by what happens to him during Deeksha.

When Deeksha happens, the Prana Shakti within the Sadhak becomes awakened and he gets directed internally on his spiritual journey, which eventually, with diligent Sadhan (sitting for meditation), will lead him to Self-Enlightenment. All a Sadhak need do during Deeksha (or during Sadhan thereafter) is to have faith in Maha Yoga and the Guru Parampara, and to surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within him. This surrender is not to anything or anybody external to him; it is surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within him. He should not "do" anything with intent during Deeksha or Sadhan; he should simply sit for Sadhan and observe what happens. This puts him in the role of an observer (Sakshi) right from the start, with the awakened Prana Shakti being given the role of the "doer". If involuntary actions/activities (Kriyas) happen, be they physical, mental or Pranic (energy flow-related), he should simply observe them, without fearing them, trying to control them or developing any attachment to them. The location for Deeksha should therefore be private enough to allow the Sadhak to surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within him without having any reservations or concerns about the Kriyas that might happen. Having a private place in one's home is therefore best for receiving Deeksha. Following Deeksha a Sadhak should sit for Sadhan every day in the same location or in an equally private one.

So, you are welcome to apply for receiving Deeksha on the next Deeksha Day. If you want to apply, please make sure you do so from the website at least two days before Deeksha Day. In the meanwhile, if you want to get a taste of Maha Yoga Sadhan, you can, on a daily basis, try the Introductory Practice as described here:

<http://www.mahayoga.org/mahayoga-introductory-practice.aspx>. This approach was developed by P. P. Kaka Maharaj and has the power of his Sankalpa behind it. It can be considered to be a lighter form of Maha Yoga Deeksha, and many Sadhaks who try it have experiences similar to those experienced by Sadhaks who have received Shaktipat Deeksha.

**Question:** A close relative of mine often visits us during the time of my Sadhan (7pm to 8pm). I had been sitting for Sadhan in my meditation room during one of her visits when a loud Kriya happened and I got concerned about what she might be thinking was happening to me. I was overcome by thoughts like, "If she asks me about the sounds, then how should I respond?", "Should I tell her about my Maha Yoga initiation?", "What if she thinks I am going crazy?" etc. For quite some time I got distracted but I couldn't stop the activities (Kriyas) of the Prana Shakti within me. So, if such a situation occurs again, what should I do? Also, I have similar concerns when I sit for Sadhan when away from home, especially when I am visiting my out of town relatives. Please guide me.

**Answer:** It is very important to be able to sit for Sadhan without being unduly concerned about the outside world, i.e. our external surroundings. Of course, the Sadhak should be

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able to have enough control over Sadhan to be able to stop it if needed, but during Sadhan, he should be able to surrender to the Prana Shakti within without feeling inhibited about what type of Kriyas happen as a result, especially if the Sadhak is at a stage when the Kriyas are loud and/or vigorous. Otherwise, the Sadhak's surrendering to the Prana Shakti will be constrained and the Kriyas that need to happen will get suppressed.

So the more important issue is not so much what you should or should not tell your guest about the sounds that emanate from the Sadhan room (although that is important as well), but whether you are able to sit for Sadhan in that situation with an attitude of surrender, or whether a part of your mind is concerned about the type of Kriyas that are happening and is actively inhibiting their expression. So, unless you can find some other soundproof accommodation for Sadhan, my suggestion to you would be to sit for Sadhan at a different time from your regular schedule if you are expecting your guest to come for a visit, at least for as long as your Kriyas are resulting in loud sounds that people outside the Sadhan room can hear. Incidentally, the Shastras (scriptures) say that the best time for Sadhan is during Brahma Muhurta, which is approximately a couple of hours before sunrise. I don't know if that is at all practicable for you, but you are likely to have fewer interruptions if you sit for Sadhan say at 5:00 am or 6:00 am. Also, the surroundings are much quieter then, especially compared to the evening hours.

The same points as above apply regarding your question of Sadhan at your out of town relative's residence. You can try to make the best of it, but it is always better to sit for Sadhan at the same spot, preferably at home and with as few inhibitions as possible, especially at the stage when your Kriyas can be loud or physically energetic.

Regarding the issue of whether or not you should tell others about Maha Yoga; there is nothing wrong with it if you are doing it without boosting your own ego. So, for example, if despite your trying, you cannot change your schedule for Sadhan, and the next time the lady visitor comes to your home the same thing happens and she then asks you what all the noise was about, you can simply state the fact that you were sitting for Sadhan and surrendering to the Prana Shakti within and letting what happens, happen. (You don't have to say anything about your Deeksha, etc., unless she specifically asks you about it). If she asks for more information about your Sadhan out of a genuine interest in Adhyatma (spirituality), there is nothing wrong in letting her know about Maha Yoga. But you have to make sure that you are not sharing this information with her to boost your own spiritual status in her eyes or even in your own eyes, but are only doing so because she expressed a genuine interest in knowing more about Sadhan.

The key in all this is that Maha Yoga Prasar (spreading the knowledge of Maha Yoga) by itself is not Varjya (prohibited), but the Sadhak has to have an attitude of surrender when he participates in it and not do it to enhance his ego. Again, in any such conversations, with your visitors, with your relatives, or others, while it is fine to talk about Maha Yoga in general, there is no reason to bring up the issue of Deeksha (your own or in general) unless specifically asked. And there again please do not share your personal Deeksha and Sadhan

## Answers to Questions from Sadhaks - (continued)

experiences with anyone other than your Deeksha Guru or someone he has designated to guide you.

**Question:** Namaste. I would like to know if Kundalini awakening can be experienced as a sudden charge of (not sure of the word here) Pranic energy which was very forceful enough to cause the whole body to vibrate for several minutes? This is what I experienced during Deeksha.

**Answer:** Congratulations and welcome to the Maha Yoga brother/sisterhood! What you experienced is an unmistakable sign of Kundalini awakening on Deeksha Day! Different Sadhaks have different experiences, but the surge of Pranic energy you felt, followed by your body vibrating for a period of time is a classic sign. You are indeed very fortunate to have had such a clear and vivid experience of the Mother Energy acting without any intent on your part. It is a clear demonstration of the active Kundalini causing physical and Pranic actions (Kriyas) to happen. It should encourage you to sit for Sadhan regularly and to surrender to the Mother Energy when you do so.

Just one caveat; please do not get attached to any of the Kriyas such as the one you experienced. Please remember that the Kriyas are the process by which the activated Kundalini Shakti works during Sadhan to remove all the accumulated impressions (Samskaras) of your current and past lives. When the Samskaras get erased one by one through the automatic happening of specific Kriyas, those Kriyas do not need to recur because they have done their intended job. The proof of the pudding is the sense of calm you experience, regardless of whether Kriyas continue to happen or not.

Wish you all the best in your Sadhan, and otherwise.

**Question:** I am a Pranic healer and an Arhatic yogi although have not been practicing it regularly. I recently happened to visit your Maha Yoga website and read some of the articles there on Maha Yoga. Today I tried the Introductory Approach (described at <http://www.mahayoga.org/mahayoga-introductory-practice.aspx> ) and had a wonderful experience during Sadhan. Initially random thoughts were coming and going through my mind, but after sometime I felt a great force pulling me up and I felt completely weightless and my body fell loose. And then all I could hear was the continuous chanting in my mind of "Shree Swami Samartha"! (This is a Mantra chanted by devotees of P. P. Akkalkot Swami Maharaj - Editor). I have been an Akkalkot Swami Bhakta (devotee) for the past two years. The experience was truly wonderful.

I am wondering whether I should continue to practice the Introductory Approach until I receive formal Deeksha. I don't think I am ready to receive Deeksha yet because of my family situation and my having young children. Please guide me on what I should do. I just want to be sure I am on the right path for making spiritual progress. I feel really blessed today. Your response would be much appreciated.

## Answers to Questions from Sadhaks (continued)

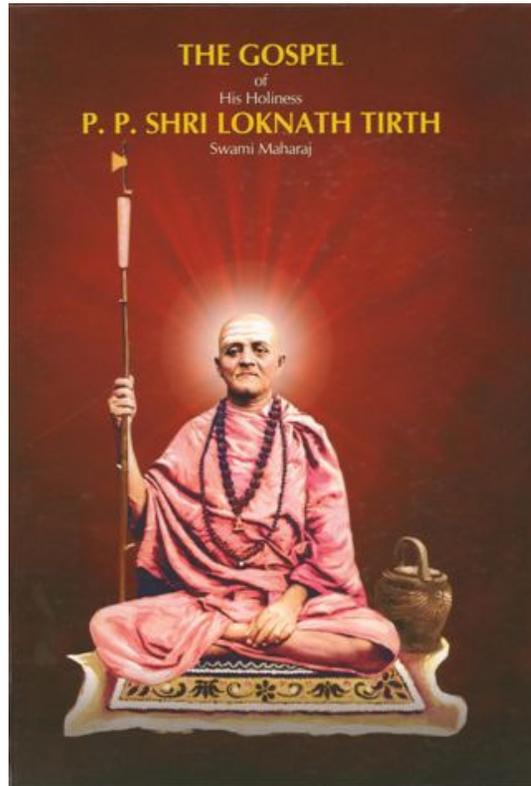
**Answer:** You have indeed had a wonderful experience from having tried the Introductory Approach to Maha Yoga. The experiences you had are indications of your Kundalini Shakti having been awakened. The Introductory Approach (Purvabhyas) is considered by many as a type of Deeksha without the restrictions suggested for receiving formal Deeksha. And it has clearly functioned as that in your case. So, you should continue following the Introductory Approach on a daily basis.

When you sit for Sadhan do so with an attitude of surrender to the awakened Prana Shakti within you. Let whatever happens, happen. Simply observe what happens. Let the Prana Shakti be the doer (Karta), you play the role of observer (Sakshi). If you hear the mantra of “Shree Swami Samartha” or find yourself automatically chanting it, just let it happen. Allow whatever Kriya, either physical or mental, to happen without any constraint on your part. But at the same time please do not develop a sense of attachment to any specific Kriya. Kriyas will come and go, as the process of purification continues and the accumulated impressions (Sanchit Samskaras) of your current and past lives get eliminated.

Gradually, you will begin to develop a sense of detachment (the attitude of a Karma Yogi), and devotion to daily Sadhan, which will eventually lead you to your destination. You can apply for formal Deeksha when you feel you are ready.

**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 September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

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 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>.



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## How to contribute content to the e-newsletter

The goals of our e-newsletter are:

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

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

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

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

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