

FEATURES

VISION ~

The Birth of Anaadi Foundation Pg. 2

| Pg. 8 - Mahabharata ~ A timeless story
and a timely story for all
| Pg. 15 - Paati Vaithiyam ~ Common Cold

Q & A ~

Is this universe a random phenomenon? Pg. 12

| Pg. 10 - Yuva Spot ~ Breaking Limitations
| Pg. 19 - Kathalaya ~ Gopala and the
Cowherd | Pg. 17 - Prakriti Darshana

Himalayan Yatra 2016

Page 4



Editor's Note

Shri Gurubhyo Namaha!

Guru Kripa! We are happy to launch **Parnika** on Guru Purnima day. It is our humble offering to the *rich paramapara* of India. Parnika - Leaflets of Insights is a monthly magazine to share and discuss insights on life based on Indian principles. The magazine will feature articles on Yoga, Mahabharata, Indian Sciences, conversations we have had with youngsters on various occasions, recipes and many more topics. In many of the articles, we have preserved the conversation style of presentation as these articles are a compilation of discussions and sessions by Adinarayanan and Smrithi at home satsangs, residential programs, retreats or yatras.

In this first leaflet we are sharing our vision for Anaadi Foundation and the various programs we offer. The section on *Mahabharata* sets the context for the grand Indian epic and its relevance to modern times. In future leaflets we will be going into some interesting stories and the principles they bring to light.

Anaadi Foundation had organized a *Himalayan Yatra* in June 2016 and 50 participants were part of it. A vivid account of the yatra has been shared by some of the yatris. Most of our activities and initiatives are designed for the youth. *Yuva Spot* is an exclusive section for young students. *Prashnottara* captures some interesting questions asked during the various programs and insightful responses. The ancient Indian health systems has numerous pointers to health benefits of plants that we see around us. This issue's *Paati Vaithiyam* provides herbal remedies for cold and cough.

Ecology, Sustainability and Self-reliance are close to our heart. Ecology and Environment from an Indian perspective has been discussed in the *Prakriti Darshana* section. *Kathalaya* is an exclusive section for children. This month's *Kathalaya* presents a story adapted from the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda.

Several Mahatmas have walked this planet and their lives are rich with insights. A humorous incident from the life of Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi has been presented in this issue's *Divine Humor*.

Table of Contents

Anaadi Foundation	02	Prashnottara	12
Himalayan Yatra	04	Paati Vaithiyam	15
Mahabharata	08	Prakriti Darshana	17
Yuva Spot	10	Kathalaya	19
		Divine Humor	22

Anaadi Foundation

AN ACCOUNT OF HOW ANAADI CAME TO BE

More than a decade ago, we were successful software professionals in Bangalore. Inspired by the lives of many Mahatmas we led a very simple life with a consistent yogic routine. We were not just practitioners of Yoga but delved deep into learning about the impact of yoga on the mind and body through reading and experimentation. Our evenings were mostly spent discussing about *sadhana*, learnings from personal *sadhana* and how the learnings could be taken to a larger community of people, especially youth. It wasn't too long before we realized that our software jobs were not providing that multi-dimensional playing field that we were looking for. We moved from Bangalore to Coimbatore to join Amrita University. Amrita University, under the guidance of Amma, provides an excellent platform for research, teaching and learning together with value-based and spiritual education. Both of us taught at Amrita for a decade. Initially we had taught Computer Science courses and then we moved to Cultural Education (Adinarayanan) and Educational Technology research (Smrithi). This change in profile had given a more concrete direction to our future line of work.

Around 2012, as a personal *sadhana*, we undertook the study of the Mahabharata and Gita. We found that the Mahabharata provided an excellent context for understanding problems that the society faces and offers *dharmic* solutions to solve those problems. Mahabharata also provided the necessary background to understand and apply the principles of the Bhagavad Gita. What started as informal sessions on the Mahabharata, led to full-fledged curricular courses and weekend programs. Even now, Mahabharata forms a key aspect of all the programs at Anaadi. With more and more students, whom we interacted with, integrating the core principles of *Sanatana Dharma* through the programs that we offered to them, we felt the need to take the programs to a much larger youth community. Anaadi Foundation is our humble offering to the great *Rishi Parampara* of our country. Through its various activities, we would like to see the youth of the country lead an inspired life of happiness and fulfilment.

Anaadi Foundation was started on the auspicious occasion of Guru Purnima in July 2015 with the aim of inculcating *Shraddha* in the minds of young people towards Indian culture and tradition. *Anaadi* in Sanskrit means "beginningless". It represents pure consciousness which has neither beginning nor end. Anaadi Foundation is named so as the organisation does not have a "characteristic" beginning. It flowed as a natural next step in our lives. Anaadi Foundation offers a platform where those connected with us can experience their beginningless nature and lead a life of happiness, fulfillment and selfless service.

Dedicated to self-unfoldment of an individual, Anaadi Foundation inspires youth to lead a sustainable, socially-conscious and self-reliant life. With over a decade of teaching experience, we bring a multidimensional perspective and immersive experience in all their programs. Catering to the needs of the participants based on their age and background, the programs offered at Anaadi are a perfect blend of the principles drawn from modern science and ancient Indian philosophy providing a transformative experience.

Keeping the larger vision of inspiring young people in mind, we offer programs that bring forth simple yet powerful principles. All our programs are designed to give an immersive experience to the participants. Be it the Mahabharata Sadhana program, an intensive 2 Day program or the 12 Day yatras, young people get to learn about and experience different dimensions of life.

It has always been in our nature to nurture talent and capability inherent in an individual. We envision Anaadi Foundation to be a platform where all kinds of talent and all aspects of life can blossom: science, technology, education, research, yoga, agriculture. We see it as a playing field where both the inner and outer sciences can be explored. We believe in offering ancient wisdom in a contemporary fashion that young people of today can readily embrace.

Guru Purnima 2016 will mark the completion of one year of Anaadi Foundation. We are looking forward to exciting times where we could reach out to more students in schools and colleges and young professionals. There is boundless divine energy available everywhere and we would like the young people of this beautiful land to tap into that energy and lead a vibrant inspired life. We are excited to be part of this divine work and would love to include more and more people.

Humble Pranams!

Adinarayanan and Smrithi Rekha

Founders, Anaadi Foundation

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Himalayan Yatra

YATRIS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE

Shruthi Sridhar, Shrinidhi and Harshitha

Through this learning-exploring-experiencing journey participants learn various principles of yoga, meditation, philosophy, psychology, ancient history and its connection with modern society, continuity of traditions, diversity, food, art, architecture, science and basically whatever they feel is relevant in their lives in a multidimensionally rich setting of the Himalayas. Many students have expressed how deep the impact of the yatra has been and how transformed and energised they have felt. This gives participants, especially students, a Grand Narrative in their lives to live by.

In June 2016, Anaadi Foundation had organized a 12 Day yatra to the Himalayas. 50 participants, mostly youth, had joined Adinarayanan and Smrithi on a sojourn to some of the most scenic and sacred places in the Himalayas. Blended with yogic practices, engaging discussions and powerful meditation sessions, the yatra was an opportunity for participants to experience deeper states of consciousness in the lap of the enchanting Himalayas. Shruthi Sridhar, Shrinidhi and Harshitha share their experiences of the Yatra.

Rishikesh and the dip

Nearly 40 participants, from different walks of life, met at the Coimbatore Junction on 5th June and boarded Kongu Express to Delhi. And so began the journey that changed lives and perspectives phenomenally. The remaining 12 people joined us from Delhi. We reached Haridwar in the morning and took a 45 minutes auto ride to Kriya Yoga Ashram, Rishikesh.

After a short orientation session, we went to Vashishta Gufa and the riverside of Ma Ganga. There were pebbles of all sizes lying around and Ma Ganga was flowing calmly by the banks. The water was cold and a bridge across the river in a distance completed the setting beautifully. It was like someone had given life to a beautiful painting. After taking a dip in the holy Ganges and absorbing the serenity of the setting we meditated at Vashishta Gufa. Sage Vashishta is said have done his penance in this cave.

Ancient Sthala - Ukimath

The next day we travelled to Ukimath which is about 7 hrs from Rishikesh. We reached Ukimath in the evening and went to the Omkareshwar Temple for the 7 pm arati. The marriage of Anirudha (Krishna's grandson) and Usha (Daughter of Banasura) took place in the square adjacent to the Omkareshwar shrine.



Row-wise left to right: Valley by Tunganath; By the banks of Maa Ganga near Vasishtha Gufa; Enroute Tunganath; Tunganath Mandir; Kedarnath Mandir; Yatris at Kriya Ashram, Rishikesh; Enroute Kedarnath; Meditation at Chandrashila Peak

The thought that we were fortunate enough to tread the place that was once stepped upon by such Avathara Purushas made me feel extremely blessed. Adi Sir initiated us into the Maha mantra “Aum Namaha Shivaya” followed by a blissful meditation session.

The Pancha Pandavas renounced their kingdom and wealth to do tapas in the Himalayas and their penance was so powerful and devout that Lord Shiva decided to test them. He appeared in the form of a huge bull in front of them. Yudhishtira asked Bhima to block the way. But, the bull enlarged itself so much that different parts of the bull appeared on different parts of Himalayas. The Pancha Pandavas built temples in the places where the parts appeared and these are called the Pancha Kedars today. These are Tunganath, Kedarnath, Rudranth, Kalpeshwar and Madhmaheshwar. But, the best part about Ukimath is that visiting Ukimath is equivalent of visiting all other 5 kedars of Lord Shiva.

The Ascent - Tunganath

We then began our journey to Tunganath the next day. It was all breezy in the beginning, picturesque mountains stood as if they were waiting to be photographed, horses strolled by carrying people, other pilgrims walked around taking pictures, putting their selfie sticks to maximum use. Tunganath, at 3680 mts above sea level is the highest Shiva shrine in the world. Mount Kailash is higher but it is not a shrine as such. The temperature inside the Tunganath temple was way lesser than outside and the chill instantly hit the spine reminding us of the sanctity of the place we were in. Namah Shivayam reverberated within the walls of the temple. Once we were out of the temple, we were all set to trek to Chandrashila Peak which was another one and a half kilometers higher. It was 4400 meters above sea level with a narrower and steeper way up. Shedding all inhibitions and apprehensions, we set to conquer Chandrashila. But, in all honesty, the one and a half kilometer climb to Chandrashila was much more difficult than what we had anticipated. The path was narrow, steep and slippery. Chandrashila Peak was such an enchanting beauty that it got us spellbound. The goosebumps we got in the moment we saw the Indian National Flag flying high and proud atop the Kali Temple will be marked as a moment we will remember for a lifetime. After all, we'd trekked half the distance of Mount Everest and it's not a feat that many humans achieve. The inner experience that we got after the one and half hour meditation in the breathtaking chandrashila peak is something that we cannot describe in words.

Kedarnath - Where the Glory Unfolds

After visiting Guptakashi and Kalimath, we set out on our journey to the enchanting Kedarnath. As we were about to start, there was an official announcement saying that due to risk of landslides and heavy downpour, the road was to be closed for 48 hours. We stood there disappointed that Lord Kedareshwara was “So near but so far away” and also little relieved that they didn't ask us to come back after we had gone half way. After all, we had seen on our trip back from Tunganath how much danger rains can cause in the mountains. We took the jeep back to Sonprayag and we were awaiting further instructions when we got the news that the trek was open since the rain had stopped! We hurried to resume our abandoned trek quickly clearing our shoes of logged water and getting into dry socks. We trekked up with a steady pace covering one kilometer in half an hour, halting at scenic locations to take pictures and selfies.

The trek was long and the path kept winding up and up. It felt like there was no end to it. We trekked the whole day and at a higher altitude, the temperature suddenly dropped drastically and we had to wear gloves and mufflers to stay warm. As we were nearing the end of the trek, a dense cover of fog engulfed us

completely, leaving us freezing amidst it. We could see only 10 feet in front of us, whichever side we turned we saw fog, a fog that crept around us quietly and blanketed us with its cold arms. We were walking through the clouds and that moment made history. On cloud nine? Yes, literally.

“

11 kms down and 5 more to go, the tents seemed closer. And that's when it happened. I could feel the soil slipping under my feet, and stones rolling away. I knew I was falling, but there was nothing I could do for the next few seconds except stare in horror at the mud sliding me along the side of the mountain and into what appeared to be the river flowing below. At that moment, I miraculously found a branch to hold that stopped my fall. I mentally thanked all the Gods for having placed that shrub there and that was my first Himalayan lesson. A small fragile looking shrub that I would have previously deemed useless had saved my life. ~ Harshitha

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We reached the base camp at 7:30pm. 3500 meters above sea level, 22 kilometers trek up, we had done it. We had done it after all. The base camp was a neat matrix of white tents. The temperature was about 3 degree Celsius.

Somvar, we went on and had the darshan of Lord Kedareshwara. At that moment, I felt I truly understood the meaning of the line “*Avn Arulale Avn thal Vanangi*” from Manikkavasagar’s *Siva Puranam*. It was an emotional moment to realise how fortunate we were in the plains and how truly lucky we were to have made without any mishap to Kedarnath and to be able to see Him. After the Darshan of yet another of the Panch Kedhars – Kedharnath where the hump of the bull form of Lord Shiva was seen, we sat down and meditated and Chanted “Aum Namahshivaya” followed by a soulful rendition of “*Bho Shambo*” by Smrithi madam. As we climbed down, we were all more grateful and less fussy. This trek up and down taught us surrender and gratitude. Our dinner was hot Maggi personally prepared by Adi sir and Smrithi madam as a token of appreciation for having successfully completed the trek. We left kedar to Ukimath and then back to Delhi. The Himalayas are ranges of profound beauty. It commands respect and reverence, at the same time instilling a deep fear in you, by reminding you of your vulnerabilities and fragility. It is a place where one can lose oneself and find oneself, all at the same time.

Here's raising a toast to this enchanting tale of friendship, love, affection, sacrifice, chai, paratha, trekking, Namah Shivaya and Himalayas.

Mahabharata

A TIMELESS STORY - A TIMELY STORY

Mahabharata, of Sri Vyasa *Maharishi*, is an awesome story, of awesome beings that walked this earth, especially the land of Bharatavarsha. It is called *Itihasa* because it happened, and hence, is our history. Going through history helps us reconnect with our past. It helps us know how our forefathers lived and conducted themselves. It helps clear the cobwebs of the mind. That impacts our lives in a very strong way.

All of us, as children, would have dreamt big. We would have wanted to do so many things. We are all excited, looking forward to life ahead of us. But as we grow up, we get burdened by many responsibilities, tensions and stresses of daily life, and operational difficulties crop up as well. Hence, we start out with dreams, but we lose steam in the daily grind of life. We have to face conflicts within ourselves-What do I do with my life? What is the purpose of my life? As choices explode, our conflicts also seem to explode, and we receive many inputs from others, which lead to more questions. We have so many questions and so many apparent contradictions arise. How do we reliably answer them? That is where the story of Mahabharata helps. Mahabharata has much to offer, because it is the distilled essence of the *rishi parampara* that Vyasa *Maharishi* has given forth for us. Though seemingly it is just a story, it is famously said of the Mahabharata, “What is found here can be found elsewhere, but what is not found here cannot be found anywhere.” That speaks volumes of what the Mahabharata contains. It has everything in it, all aspects of human endeavor - including personal, social, political, economic and scientific - all essentially pointing to *Dharma*, in all these aspects. *Dharma* comes from the root word ‘*dhr*’ which means ‘to sustain’. Even today, all of us are worried about sustainability - sustainable technology, sustainable living and sustainable businesses. Everywhere, there is this buzzword ‘sustainability’. That is exactly what *Dharma* means - those principles that lead to sustainability.

Relevance to Modern Times

Often people ask “Is this ancient narrative relevant to modern times?” This is an extremely important question to address at the very beginning, because it gives a certain conviction. When we are clear about why we are doing something, it gives us conviction. Then, our heart is in it, and energetic action follows. So conviction is of great importance. Towards that, understanding the relevance is very important.

To explain this, let us suppose that I hit one hand with the other. I hit my hand and it hurts. For the action of hitting my hand, there is a clear consequence-pain. There is pain, however there is no suffering, since I am conscious. It is conscious action, and I clearly know what the consequences are, and I can handle it. There is a little bit of pain, but it is alright with me, since there is no suffering. This clear understanding can lead us to tremendous depths in our lives. For instance, medical scientists tell us clearly that most of the

diseases afflicting humanity like cancer, diabetes and heart problems, are all grouped together as lifestyle diseases. Style of living is nothing but my actions right now, considered over a period of time. Hence my actions right now, over a period of time, give me the consequence of a cancer or a heart disease. I clearly understand that the disease was a consequence of my actions - my style of living. But most people do not react based on this understanding. Their reaction is, "Oh my God! What did I do wrong? I was a good man. Why, God, why have you punished me?" They look at it as punishment. I am not saying that it is wrong, but understanding this becomes very important - that the style of living has caused the disease. Just that, in the example of hitting my palm(action), the pain is felt instantaneously, hence the consequence of the action is seen immediately. But the consequences of lifestyle may not be immediate. It is drawn over a period of time. What we can clearly understand from this is that the consequences are not random. It is not that – "God dropped it from somewhere and I am not responsible for it". It is not that way. There are consequences for our actions. We clearly see that there are causes and effects of those causes. When we see that events are not random and are able to connect the effects to the causes, that leads to a much deeper understanding of life. If an event happens, it is not random and blind. We may be blind to the connection of effects and their causes. That is where we can remove our blindness by understanding deeper principles.

We look at a mirror right before we start the day, before we go out into the world. We look at ourselves, adjust ourselves. We check if everything is appropriate. But what is the mirror through which we can check if the consequences of our actions will be appropriate or not? Because this is extremely important. Physically we want appropriateness but in which mirror do we check if we are mentally appropriate? Emotionally appropriate? This is a very significant question to answer. Primarily, we look at the mirror of relationships-parents and children, husband and wife, friends, *Guru* and *sisya*. Through the mirror of relationship, we get to understand ourselves better. Taking it deeper, through the mirror of past relationships-how people related with each other-we get to know so much about what is appropriate and what is not. Hence, history-*itihasa*-becomes so very important. Our storyline becomes very pertinent, because it helps us understand deeper principles. We live vicariously through the characters in the story. We get to understand ourselves better, and hence we become better human beings. That is the power of an *itihasa*, the power of the storyline of a narrative. And this *itihasa*-the Mahabharata, is especially powerful. Vyasa Maharishi has clearly mentioned that this *itihasa* is to teach people *Dharma*-"*Dharmo rakshathi rakshithaha*"- Whoever protects *Dharma*, *Dharma* will protect them. Hence, he wanted us future generations, to learn what *Dharma* is, in every aspect. He wanted us to learn *Dharma*, not just with dry concepts, but with an active storyline. More on the Mahabharata in future leaflets.

Yuva Spot

BREAKING LIMITATIONS

Anaadi Volunteer shares insights on transcending our limitations

Many of us are extremely bored with the monotony of routine of everyday life. We might wonder why our life seems dull and boring. We are bored with the routine of college life, the lectures, the assignments, the food and the environment. This boredom leads to frustration, and, not knowing how to bring about a change in the way we function, many of us sink into **lethargy and idleness**. However, instead of settling into a state of stagnation, the frustration we feel, can be used to fuel our motivation to grow and expand the boundaries of who we are.

Great achievements in the world took place when people questioned the limitations set by humanity for itself. Everybody thought that Mount Everest was insurmountable. Along came Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay who strove to scale it, and succeeded in breaking the boundary set by Mankind.

When we challenge ourselves and strive to break our own limitations, we grow in capability and expand in vision. One must start from where one is, at the present time, and set oneself challenges to overcome one's physical and mental limitations.

For example, a simple challenge would be to wake up in the morning at 5.00 am and exercise. Waking up early might be difficult for many. Hence, this is a challenge for the body. By doing this, one overcomes one's physical limitations. Likewise, one can work towards expanding one's physical capabilities.

We all want to feel energetic and vibrant. The food that we eat plays a vital role in determining our energy levels. Food that is excessively spicy, pungent, containing too much oil and masala and especially non-vegetarian food, are heavy on the stomach and much energy goes into digestion. Hence, our energy levels go down and we are not able to stay alert. Consuming fresh fruits, vegetables and *sattvic ahaara*, which are light on our stomach, helps us remain fresh and alert, with the brain functioning at its best. Setting ourselves a challenge, to avoid eating those foods and turning to a *sattvic* diet would go a long way in enhancing the quality of our general health and well-being.

Many people get together to gossip about others, or speak ill of the things and persons around them. This breeds negativity in the mind and makes one's perspective of the world and the people negative. Hence, one

can set oneself an interesting challenge. One could maintain a piggy bank exclusively for this, and each time one gossips about or slanders another, one must remain true to oneself and drop Rs 10 into the bank. This helps to put a check to gossip and slander. Another very powerful challenge is that of *mauna*, silence. One could abstain from all speech for a day and remain silent whilst going through the day's activities.

Trekking is an awesome way of breaking limitations that we have set for our body and mind. Most people do not take up trekking because they are not comfortable with the pain they feel in the body during and after the trek. If your leg aches..it is just a leg ache! If your head aches, it is just a headache and nothing drastic happens. Your body takes sometime to adapt to the new setting. Definitely things are not going to be the same on the plains and the mountains. Do not panic if you feel different. Just enjoy the trek. In most treks, the last few kilometers are the toughest. Firstly because you are tired, secondly because you may be getting closer to the peak. That's when most people give up. But believe me, it's going to be awesome once you reach there. So challenge your body a little bit. That's the only way to break the limitations that you have set for yourself and that's the only way to understand your true capabilities.

In the Indian yogic system, it has been advised that any form of practice be done for one Mandala i.e 48 days. Just as the embryo needs to spend enough time in the womb to become a fully formed child, a yogic practice needs it's time to mature within our system. It takes some time for our food to digest and give us energy. Similarly, it will take some time for the practices to integrate with our system and offer us benefits. While creating a new habit, like an exercise routine, we create a space in our mind for it. We also make the necessary adjustments in our environment to accommodate the new habit, say an adjustment in our time schedule. It takes time for the mind and body to be tuned to this. Hence don't be quick to judge, keep practicing for a Mandala and then beyond.

Setting challenges such as these, overcoming them and pushing our own physical and mental barriers not only gives us a sense of achievement, but also motivates us to set bigger and greater challenges to keep growing and expanding in ability and vision.

Prashnottara

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Excerpts from the Q&A Session during Rishikesh Retreat Program (Dec 2015)

Q: Is this universe a random phenomenon or is it the work of an intelligent Creator?

A: Let us observe our physical body. Are the design and functions of the body automatic? No! We can clearly see that the body has its own intelligence. Each aspect of our body has been designed carefully. It is not automatic. It is by design. It is a conscious process. It is just that, with our intelligence, we are not able to see it. It is very simple to understand. We all work with computers. Did the computer come into existence automatically? It has been designed by human intelligence. Maybe not by us directly, but definitely designed by the intelligence of humanity. Everything we can look at here, in this room, is designed by human intelligence. Hence, we see that there is a creator and this creation. Different cultures called this intelligence by different names.

In the *Vedanta shastra*, it is said that there are two *kaaranas*, causes for anything to happen. One is the material cause - *Upadana Kaarana*, and the other is the intelligent cause - *Nimitta Kaarana*. To create anything, we start with a material in our hands, the material is put together, and then we have the end product. The creative cause, or the intelligent cause is the intelligence behind putting the raw material together, to get the final form. You can recognize both these causes, even in everyday life. Similarly it is considered that this world, and many other aspects of it, have these two causes again. The intelligent cause is beyond us. It is certainly not our intelligence that has designed the creations we see all around us. I am not referring to the man-made aspects of creation, such as the electronic gadgets, machines, buildings and so on, but the more fundamental aspect of it. For example, take the human body - has it been designed by our intelligence? No, but it definitely is a product of design. How can it be automatic? Our parents have not designed it. They were also causes, but not the designers behind it.

Hence, we look at this higher intelligence as *Deiva*, the Divine intelligence. That's the concept of *Deiva*. Without that superior intelligence, all of this - everything in our experience - would not be. What modern science calls 'Nature' would not be in existence. However, the term 'Nature' is still very vague. Modern science is built around assumptions of several so-called random processes like natural selection, chromosomal crossover, gene mutation, and so on. But how can all these processes be automatic? Just as this

computer cannot be automatic, the processes in our universe also cannot be automatic. Within the universe, there may be a grand design or an inferior design. That depends on the intelligence that designed it and its capability. Intelligence and capability can be assigned to beings, and that is called '*Deiva*', meaning 'of the Divine beings'. Nothing in this cosmos is considered a random or automatic phenomenon. Everything is considered as a design of *Deiva*, the superior intelligence. It is just that, this reality is not accessible to our intelligence as yet, that's all. Hence, it is considered *adrishya*, not visible to us. In Tamil, one can say, "*Namba paarvaiku ettala. Avaloathan.*" (It is not perceivable by us). That does not mean it is not there. It is considered to be not visible. That's the difference. This is very important to understand. In fact, this is the reason why most youth, generally adopt agnosticism. Agnosticism states that *Deiva*, the Divine intelligence does not exist. How can that be so? It implies that there is no design and no superior intelligence governing these processes. That's a dangerous idea.

Q: Why do you say that it is a dangerous idea?

A: Why is that a dangerous idea? I am coming to that point. For example, let us consider our society and the educational system. Are they a product of design or are did they come into existence automatically? Obviously, they are a product of design. Let us say that there is a problem in society. What do we do? How do we take care of it and resolve it? People form committees, cogitate over the problem and formulate policies appropriately. Nothing is automatic. But now, what has happened is, our acknowledgement of the presence of a conscious intelligence is restricted to very limited aspects of human function. We dismiss most other aspects as random. Herein lies the danger of this limited understanding and partial knowledge. If something is random, we cannot do anything about it. We cannot improve it, or aspire to change it in any way we desire. The functioning of the processes in the universe is unknown and hence many fundamental aspects of creation are simply dismissed as random phenomena.

Q: Most of the phenomena which were seemingly random, men have tried to explore deeply and get to the bottom of the mystery. That is when humanity's quest for knowledge began.

A: Exactly! As you have rightly pointed out, most of the processes that everyone considered random, a few individuals did not; and hence they explored, and their exploration began to spread all around, and that's how others came to understand, "Oh! These things are not random. There is a process involved behind it. These are scientific ideas." For example, consider human beings. We are something like a "blackbox". We understand, "Okay, I am this way... but why am I made this way?" We are not able to understand why we have been made the way we are. Likewise, birth and death - randomly we popped in, randomly we will pop out - what a random idea! But in our Indian tradition, birth and death are certainly not considered random. There are processes, important processes governing the life of all beings - processes, that are governed by

karma. And hence, understanding these deeper principles, people aspire for a good life, through good means-and that is called *Dharma*.

If you are acquainted with the Big Bang theory, the first three minutes after the occurrence of the “big bang” have been explained through what is called random processes in mathematics. There is a particular part of mathematics called random processes. Explaining the origin and evolution of the universe using the idea of random processes means that this vast cosmos is not a product of design. You are calling it a random process. You want to explore the process but you are not open to the idea that it is an intelligently governed process. Similarly with gene mutation – according to the theory of evolution, genes mutate-but how? Randomly. So, that is the limitation that we face now. We are not ready to agree that a deeper intelligence governs all of this. In India, it is very clear that, it is *Deiva*. And people align with this higher intelligence. You can align with that, wherein you are supercharged with that intuition, that deeper intelligence. You can connect with it. And that is the science of *Yoga*, wherein you are connected with the Divine intelligence, and don’t just function at this present level of intelligence. But in order to do this, we need to first acknowledge the presence of the Divine intelligence, and this is called *shraddha*, deep faith. This is why we say, “*Shraddhavan labhate jnanam*” - A person endowed with *Shraddha* gains knowledge.

At the fundamental level of creation, the difference is extremely subtle, but as creation spreads forth, and as the multitude of beings continue to evolve, we see that the differences and variations in them become massive! It is the One Divine principle animating everything in the whole universe. In fact, all that *is*, is intelligence. The whole of cosmos is nothing but intelligence, *Prajna*. That is why it is said, “*Prajnanam Brahma*.” But in order to be able to see this unifying principle, you need to have *shraddha* in the Divine intelligence. Without *shraddha*, you will not be able to see how everything is related through, and governed by the Divine intelligence. This is the reason why many fundamental processes have been dismissed as random.

Paati Vaithiyam

INDIGENOUS REMEDIES FOR COMMON AILMENTS

COMMON COLD

With the monsoon setting in and the weather becoming erratic, it not uncommon to catch a cold or cough. The Indian system of Ayurveda looks at all diseases as imbalance of the 3 Doshas namely : **Vata, Pitha and Kapha**. When we understand these basic principles, it will be easy to integrate the principles of a balanced diet into our lives. Common cold and cough occur due to the imbalance of *Kapha dosha*. When the weather outside is cold, our digestive fire too becomes a bit dim, thereby making it difficult for the body to burn toxins. This is the time when our body become more susceptible to cold. We will need to include components in our food that will boost this digestive fire and balance kapha dosha. Pungent, Bitter or Astringent tastes can help counter the imbalance. Pepper, cumin seeds, and ginger are some spices that can be beneficial. Here are some herbal remedies for common cold.

Remedy#1

- ★ Pour a glass of water into a vessel.
- ★ Add some *Tulasi* (Holy Basil) and *Omavalli* (Indian Borage) leaves into the water and bring it to a boil.
- ★ Add *panam kalkandu* (palm jaggery) to sweeten the brew and drink this three times a day: in the morning, afternoon and at night.

Remedy#2

- ★ Take equal quantities of pepper powder, *chukku* (dry ginger powder) and *thippili* (Long Pepper) powder.
- ★ Dry roast each of these powders in a pan separately.
- ★ Mix the powders and store them in an air-tight container.
- ★ When symptoms of cold and cough appear, mix this powder in a tablespoon of honey and consume.
- ★ Have this mixture three times a day: in the morning, afternoon and at night.

Remedy#3

- ★ Pour a glass of water into a vessel.
- ★ Crush 5-6 peppercorns, add it to the water and bring to a boil.
- ★ Turn off the flame, and add *panam kalkandu* (palm jaggery) for taste.
- ★ Sip this brew slowly while hot.
- ★ Have this three times a day: in the morning, afternoon and in the evening.

How to grow Tulasi (Holy Basil)



Tulasi is a sacred plant that is found in almost all Indian households. *Tulasi* can be grown very easily in local soil or in a pot and requires little maintenance. Its leaves have a variety of medicinal uses. As per *Vaastu shastra*, the *Tulasi* plant must be planted to the north-east of the house.

- ★ Sow the *Tulasi* seeds in a pot filled with potting soil, or directly in the local soil. The *Tulasi* must be planted in a place that receives direct sunlight.
- ★ The seeds must be sowed ¼ inch deep into the soil.
- ★ Sprinkle with water, and ensure that the soil is always moist, but not soggy.

How to grow Omavalli (Indian Borage)



Omavalli or *Karpooravalli* is also a herb that can be easily grown on a pot or on the ground. It also requires very little maintenance. Propagation of *Omavalli* is by stem cutting.

- ★ Plant a stem cutting of the *Omavalli* herb in the local soil or in a pot. It must be planted in a place that receives direct sunlight.
- ★ The plant requires ample amount of water. Water the plant sufficiently.

NOTE :If the local soil is infertile, work organic compost into the soil, in the ratio 1:1 (one part of organic compost to one part of soil) before planting these herbs.

Prakriti Darshan

INSIGHTS ON ECOLOGY, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

A world renowned spiritual leader and mother Mata Amritanandamayi shared recently at a gathering that “Education without any emphasis on values, Sophistication without any emphasis on culture, Development without any concern for nature, and Lifestyle that disregards health” are the root causes of many problems faced by humanity. More and more people are realising that the problems that face us in current times are interlinked systemically. This is more so with the case of ecology and environment. Scientist and ecologist are now realising the fundamental interconnectedness of things in the environment and how touching one thing can have a major impact on other things.

In the Indian system, the highest goal of all aspects of life has been to attain to a state where you see the interconnectedness of all things. The Indian Epic, Mahabharata, provides numerous insights on the same. Some of these include:-

- ★ Action that comes out of a non-inclusive thought process (of mine and not mine) is considered to be the cause of conflict and non-beneficial.
- ★ A true learned person is the one who can see the same divinity in all forms.
- ★ Tracing the various manifestations of life to the same source making it explicit that they are interconnected

Pancha Maha Yagnas

In order to be able to integrate this all-inclusive vision into our daily lifestyle the pancha Maha Yajnas were recommended in the Indian tradition. *Pancha* means five, *Maha* means great, *Yajna* means action performed with the attitude of benefitting everybody or towards a higher purpose. The Pancha Maha Yajnas are *Deva Yajna*, *Pitru Yajna*, *Rishi Yajna*, *Nara Yajna* and *Bhuta Yajna*.

Deva Yajna refers to the action of recognising the presence of higher intelligence governing reality and our gratitude towards it. We human beings have created our living conditions within our sphere of influence. But we look around us and find that we have not created everything around us. For e.g. nature has not been created by us. But for it to be random and for it to be governed by random laws seems illogical and not open to scientific reasoning. And hence we recognise the role of higher intelligence in this creation beyond our sphere of influence. We express our gratitude to the higher intelligence also referred to as Devas through actions such as Homa - fire sacrifice and puja - rituals for worship with devotion. As long as interconnected processes are not seen randomness exists and with randomness comes confusion and delusion.

Pitru Yajna refers to the action of recognising the role of our parents and forefathers in whose lineage we have taken birth and our gratitude towards them. *Pitru* refers to our ancestors. Many of our physical

features and character traits are inherited from the lineage that we are born into. Specifically actions expressing gratitude include taking care of our parents and elders during their old age and *tarpana* which is a ritual where water is offered with certain mantras (sacred chants) in gratitude to the ancestors who have departed from this world.

Rishi Yajna refers to the action of recognising the role of teachers and Rishis for having given knowledge. Rishis are recognised as the seers of knowledge of reality and who having seen it help others see the knowledge of reality themselves. Studying of the texts of knowledge expounded by the Rishis and sharing the knowledge thus learnt with others is showing gratitude towards the Rishis and the teachers as part of *Rishi Yajna*. This is similar to spending time studying the principles discovered by the scientists and those taught by the teachers so that we grow in knowledge and with the knowledge are able to benefit ourselves and the society through our knowledgeable actions.

Nara Yajna refers to the action of recognising the role of other human beings in our lives and offering grateful service to them. This also includes feeding the poor and needy, offering service for the welfare of the community and society, showing love and respect to all.

Bhuta Yajna refers to the action of recognising that we are part of nature and treating all the plants, animals and other creatures with love and affection. This helps restore ecological balance as we do not look at everything as serving our wants and view everything with a utilitarian intent. This yajna includes feeding all creatures that live around us like cows, goats, crows and sparrows, ants and taking care of plants. When we view the rivers as sacred mothers then we will find it difficult to just view them as serving our limited utilitarian requirements and hence wanton pollution will not be possible as we become sensitive to our natural surroundings. We start viewing ourselves in the context of the natural surroundings that we live in. We consciously adopt lifestyles that flow in tune with the larger flow of nature and hence our footprint on the world around us is minimal if anything at all. This does not mean that we cannot progress on economic or other fronts. This just means that we become more sensitive to everything around us and view ourselves as non-separate from all that is. There is a saying that when the left hand gets hurt the right hand automatically nurtures it. Likewise we feel ourselves to be a part of everything around us and hence we would nurture and not wantedly harm it.

Through these yajnas our lifestyle becomes refined in such a way that the unified, all inclusive vision that has been developed finds a means of appropriate practical expression in all aspects of our life. This refines the processes involved in all areas of life and imbues it with the qualities of inclusiveness and oneness that lead to harmonious co-existence with all of nature where human processes of economics, business, technology do not disrupt natural processes but rather flow along with it to create peace and harmonious growth free of conflict.

Kathalaya

STORIES FOR THE YOUNG

GOPALA AND THE COWHERD

(Adapted from 'The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Volume 6')

"O mother! I am so afraid to go to school through the woods alone; other boys have servants or somebody to bring them to school or take them home. Why cannot I have someone to bring me home?" — thus said Gopala, a little *brahmin* boy, to his mother one winter afternoon when he was getting ready for school. The school hours were in the morning and afternoon. It was dark when the school closed in the afternoon, and the path lay through the thick woods.

Gopala's mother was a widow. His father had died when Gopala was a baby. And the poor widow retired entirely from the concerns of the world and gave her soul entirely to God, with prayers, fasting, and discipline. A small piece of land that surrounded her cottage, with its fruit-bearing trees and a rice field, with the help of the kindly village folk, brought forth sufficient food all the year round. For the rest, she worked hard every day for hours at the spinning-wheel. She was up long before the break of dawn, and having finished her morning prayers and bath, she prayed to Him whom her heart most loved, Krishna, who had taken the form of Gopala, a cowherd, to teach and save mankind, and rejoiced that by one day, she was closer to God. For years she watched over her baby with all a mother's love and care; and now that he was old enough to go to school, how hard she worked for months to get the necessaries for the young scholar!

But today there is a dark shadow in her mind. Gopala is frightened to go alone through the wood. Never before had she felt her widowhood, her loneliness, her poverty so bitter. For a moment it was all dark, but she recalled to her mind what she had heard of the eternal promise: "Those that depend on Me giving up all other thoughts, to them I Myself carry whatever is necessary." And she was one of the souls who had deep *shraddha* in God. So the mother wiped her tears and told her child that he need not fear. For in those woods lived another son of hers tending cattle, and also called Gopala; and if he was ever afraid passing through them, he had only to call on brother Gopala! The child trusted his mother.

Putting her son to sleep, the mother prayed for Krishna to help her son. That day, coming home from school through the wood, Gopala was frightened and called upon his brother Gopala, the Cowherd: "Brother Cowherd, are you here? Mother said you are, and I am to call on you: I am frightened being alone." And a voice came from behind the trees: "Don't be afraid, little brother, I am here; go home without

fear." Thus every day the boy called, and the voice answered. The mother heard of it with wonder and love; and she instructed her child to ask the brother of the wood to show Himself the next time.



The next day the boy, when passing through the woods, called upon his brother. The voice came as usual, but the boy asked the brother in the woods to show Himself to him. The voice replied, "I am busy today, brother, and cannot come." But the boy insisted, and out of the shade of the trees came the Cowherd of the woods, a Boy dressed in the garb of cowherds, with a little crown on his head in which were peacock's feathers, and the cowherd's flute in his hands! And they were so

happy: they played together for hours in the woods, climbing trees, gathering fruits and flowers — the widow's Gopala and the Gopala of the woods, till it was almost late for school. Then the widow's Gopala went to school with a reluctant heart, and nearly forgot all his lesson, his mind eager to return to the woods and play with his brother.

Months passed this wise. The poor mother heard of it day by day and, in the joy of this Divine mercy, forgot her widowhood, her poverty, and blessed her miseries a thousand times. Then there came some religious ceremonies which the teacher had to perform in honour of his ancestors. Each pupil brought in his share, in goods or money. And Gopala, the orphan, the widow's son! — the other boys smiled a smile of contempt on him when they talked of the presents they were bringing.

That night Gopala's heart was heavy, and he asked his mother for some present for the teacher, and the poor mother had nothing. But she determined to do what she had been doing all her life, to depend on the Cowherd, and told her son to ask from his brother Gopala in the forests for some present for the teacher. The next day, after Gopala had met the Cowherd boy in the woods as usual and after they had some games together, Gopala told his brother of the forest the grief that was in his mind and begged him to give him something to present his teacher with. "Brother Gopala," said the Cowherd, "I am only a cowherd you see, and have no money, but take this pot of cream as from a poor cowherd and present it to your teacher."

Gopala, quite glad that he now had something to give his teacher, more so because it was a present from his brother in the forest, hastened to the home of the teacher and stood with an eager heart behind a crowd of boys handing over their presents to the teacher. Many and varied were the presents they had brought, and no one thought of looking even at the present of the orphan. The neglect was quite disheartening; tears stood in the eyes of Gopala, when by a sudden stroke of fortune the teacher happened to take notice of him. He took the small pot of cream from Gopala's hand, and poured the cream into a big vessel, when to his wonder the pot filled up again! Again he emptied the contents into a bigger vessel, again it was full; and thus it went on, the small pot filling up quicker than he could empty it. Then amazement took hold of everyone; and the teacher took the poor orphan in his arms and inquired about the pot of cream.



Gopala told his teacher all about his brother, the Cowherd in the forest, how he answered his call, how he played with him, and how at last he gave him the pot of cream. The teacher asked Gopala to take him to the woods and show him his brother of the woods, and Gopala was only too glad to take his teacher there. The boy called upon his brother to appear, but there was no voice even that day. He called again and again. No answer. And then the boy entreated his brother in the forest

to speak, else the teacher would think he was not speaking the truth. Then came the voice as from a great distance:

"Gopala, your mother's and your love and faith brought Me to you; but tell your teacher, he will have to wait a long while yet."

Divine Humor

FROM THE LIVES OF MAHATMAS

Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi of Tiruvannamalai was once staying at the Pachiamman Kovil. With him was staying Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni who was a senior and well-known disciple of Bhagavan, Swami Viswanatha who had come to Bhagavan at a very early age and Kunju Swami. One day Bhagavan was sitting with a group of monkeys and telling them “This body is impermanent and will not last long. The Atma is real and permanent. It should be meditated upon”. Some monkeys were paying attention and some were jumping. Swami Viswanatha laughed and asked “Bhagavan! You are teaching self-enquiry to monkeys. What will they understand?”.

Bhagavan, known for his humor and wit, was quick to reply “Viswanatha! I teach you people the same thing. How many amongst you have understood Atma Vichara?”

Kavyakantha Muni was rolling with laughter.



Bhagavan Ramana feeding monkeys at the ashram

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